

Ayreon



ELECTRIC CASTLE LIVE AND OTHER TALES

In the Hallowed tradition we look at the year that past
and a little forward at the coming year.



Hydrogyn did one of the best albums of 2020

TEXT: DANIEL KÄLLMALM
PHOTOS: PROMO PICS AND COVERS
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So, another year comes to conclusion and the next one is about to begin. That means some new graphics for the new year and new sections for the reviews of the new year. A decent year for Hallowed with similar amount of pageviews as last year based on the last time I checked, I

no longer add google scripts and stuff to track views as I don't really like google and the less they have to do with my stuff the better it is. In terms of reviews and articles it was a slightly less productive year than the previous one, the spread of ratings was wider with albums receiving every rating which isn't happening every year, it was also less albums receiving the middle rating with little over forty percent compa-

red with little under fifty percent last year. The curve looked better, though that is more random than anything else.

I found 2020 to be a year where people (at least here in Sweden) complained a lot, about restrictions or lack of thereof and other silly things. All I have to say about the Covid-disease is that it is not Ebola, Spanish flu or any of the really nasty

diseases, and as a side note to that; according to the WHO air pollution kills about 8 million people, every year. There are other more serious things to worry about, but this is about music so let's leave the non-music stuff by saying that if Covid19 was Ebola my wish on Trump and Bolsonaro probably would have come true.

The year in music was actually pretty good and more diverse than the years before, at least in terms of the albums I heard, which is just a small cross-section. More and more music is released and that makes it more diverse but it also seems to make it more difficult to find the greatest stuff. But when favourite bands releasing albums it gets easier, like Ayreon had two releases this year, probably the best two of

the whole year. I got to relive the show in Tilburg and then came "Transitus" that was a slightly different album for Arjen and his Ayreon project. So there were some highlight but most of what I reviewed was indifferent and that is probably the consequence of the ever-increasing album releases. I think the ease of releasing albums yourself, probably cheaper production costs and other things helping aspiring bands to



Arjen Lucassen was number one and number two on the top ten of albums this year, photo by Lori Lindstruth

get their work out there has the backside of promoting a more sense of indifference towards the world of music. I have noticed that very few albums have excited me this year, probably fewer than before even though the overall quality has increased.

So, what was noteworthy amongst the stuff I heard this year? Well, to draw

complete conclusions is a bit early still as there will be some 2020 reviews going into 2021 as well, but the two albums by Ayreon stands out, *Hydrogyn* and *Vega* gave us great albums as well, those four are the really memorable stuff of the year. There were other good albums like *Urtidsdjur's* self-titled debut, *Helion Prime's* "Question Everything", *Wobblers' "Dwellers of the Deep"*, *CNJR's* album,

Esogenesi, and *Kekal* to name a few. Then there were some really terrible albums as well, and in a way it is fun that this was the most dynamic year in a while with ratings all over the scale, there were 2-6 in both 2018 and 2019, so 2020 was more interesting in that regard. And while I think that big portion of 2020 was forgettable there were some positives and some pretty memorable

albums to enjoy and perhaps add to the record collection.

Some reflections from the Hallowed standpoint have been a somewhat messy time with many things outside going on making it more difficult to write and this had an impact on the number of reviews and articles, giving very few articles and less reviews than pre-

vious year. During the year I once again lamented the poor build quality of my macbook bro that I bought very expensively, and it completely failed just four years into its life. And according to Apple service people it was that I replaced the battery after the computer had failed that caused the failure, I guess I was doing some Star Trekking then considering that effect came before the

cause. I had to buy a new computer and I have to ask myself if it is really worthwhile buying anything Apple, they have to be the embodiment of greed and complete disregard for the customers. I think liking Apple would be idiotic, I prefer the system more than windows but why do they build so bad machines to such high price? Hallowed recommends avoiding Apple products. And



Vega's album *Grit Your Teeth* was number four on the list

we hope for less technical issues in 2021, graphics and the pages for 2021 has been made and we are ready for the next year.

We are making smaller changes to the site all the time, perhaps there will be some evolution in 2021. I am also hoping for more reviews and articles in 2021. The first albums are already ready to be reviewed,

and hopefully the albums will be as diverse and possible even better than before. But before moving onto 2021, lets have a look at what was best this year that will soon come to an end when I write this text, so lets go backwards through the ten best albums of 2020 (not an easy choice behind the top four):

10. *Moloken - Unveilance of Dark Matter...* possibly the best album

by **Moloken**, a band that already have a few impressive albums in their discography.

9. *Kekal- Quantum Resolution...* a highly enjoyable album that looks great in quantum resolution, how about that?

8. *Mountaineer - Bloodletting...* a great, fresh and creative album that rewards your attention.

7. *Stand Atlantic - Pink Elephant...* this album looks great, and it pro-

bably sounds even better, I love this album.

6. *Helion Prime - Question Everything...* but don't question this album because it is one of the best power metal albums in a while.

5. *Monoscream - Aeon...* a memorable and captivating album that you shouldn't miss.

4. *Vega - Grit Your Teeth...* one of the real highlights heard in 2020 cements **Vega** as one of the best

bands out there.

3. *Hydrogyn - The Boiling Point...* "The Boiling Point" is a brilliant album with a parade of excellent tracks, lots of hit potential here and pretty unmissable.

2. *Ayreon- Transitus...* Arjen has taken his **Ayreon** in a somewhat different direction and therefore made a really excellent album, probably not his best but excellent and it keeps him relevant.

1. *Ayreon - Electric Castle Live and Other Tales...* the first album receiving the highest possible in Hallowed since 2017, that says why it deserves the number one spot.

And with that Hallowed says happy new year!