

HALLOWED

**Summary of
the year 2016**



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2016-12-31, it is the end of one year and another one is about to take its place. And on this new year's eve I thought I go nuts and just write whatever comes to mind, from now and until the new year takes over - so this text will not have been touched by human hands for anything but fixing the spelling, otherwise what is written is as written and in the order it comes to mind.

Of course you think that I am nuts celebrating the New Year like that, but why not? The regular way we celebrate New Year in Sweden does not appeal to me, I hate parties, get-togethers and that sort of thing that is constructed in the social structure - it is way more fun to be home, exercise a little, watch some movies, listen to some of the musical highlights of the past year and write. Just to watch this little story come to life on the imaginary paper on the new retina screen on

this way too expensive computer that I will probably throw out a window very soon.

So what about 2016 then? The year the world was on fire according to many people, at least here in Sweden. I think those people are wrong, parts of the world have always been on fire but we want to save the world from becoming better by making choices to make it worse. Man isn't the smartest of animals, that's for sure. Just talk to a sympathiser of Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden's version of the German Nazi party, even though they try to claim otherwise themselves) or the average industrial worker anywhere and you realise how dumb people really are.

It could be wise to visit the music of Sharky Sharky if you want to escape that a little while, realise that it isn't as the media tells you or like that average Joe likes to think it is - it is better and way more fun. I reviewed that album in January and I would claim that it is one of the most brilliant ac-

quaintances in the musical world right now. And as the sharks weren't enough, Fraser Edwards one of the founders then goes on to make a solo album towards the end of the year - a brilliant one at that.

And on the subjects of the funny an humorous things of the year, Formula 1 is mostly known for being rather serious but in Mexico we got a real highlight on Sebastian Vettel's team radio where he told the race director to fuck off and some other great obscenities - absolutely brilliant. Following that it is ridiculous to read and hear what all those English speakers say, they think he should be punished for his language and that sort of thing. I think the experts and writers who think Vettel should have been punished for swearing to his race engineer should all be ass-fucked by Charlie Whiting. Being offended by so-called foul language is just stupid, so here's some obscenities for you - or not, let us respect the weak-minded who can't handle that.

Less obscure but more adventurous was probably the two best albums of the year. I think that objectively Fates Warning and Frost* created two of the best musical works of the year. One can really look at it as fascinating that the former can still create fresh and relevant stuff after such a long career that contains many albums but Matheos and company still manages to create great stuff. And it seems as where John Mitchell is involved, great stuff is sure to come - "Falling Satellites" is definitely a highlight. But let us not forget the perhaps best album, especially the best from a band whose name doesn't start with an F; Enbound's "The Blackened Heart" is probably the best album of the year but unlike the other two I don't own it - it was not released on vinyl and I don't care much for CDs.

Helion Prime my favourite album of the year, but not really the best, is another one I don't own thanks to it not being released on vinyl. Along with Scanner

their spacey metal made a great impression this year, Scanner of course did so after their "Hypertrace" being rereleased almost thirty years after its release. But American heroes Helion Prime came riding in on the back of T-Rex just to deliver some great space tunes to the world in the most enjoyable power metal album I have heard in a long, long time. Through the space-time continuum we must ride, let the winds of the universe be your guide, take my hand and hold on for the ride of your life - and so it goes on.

On the subject of good things, my new computer is good on the hardware side. But seriously Apple, why do you have to make your OSX worse for every new iteration and anyone using Wi-Fi is a serious idiot - which reminds me that I have to buy an Ethernet cable at the earliest chance so that the computer could connect to the network without losing contact all the time. Fuck you Apple! I am joyous that Jobs vanished; it is just too bad that similar morons

replaced him. Wonder if they will ever make Wi-Fi that works or graphics that doesn't look like shit which is the main reason I didn't want to "upgrade" from Mavericks that looks way better than the shit I am looking at right now.

Enough with that now though because Athorn's "Necropolis" is a good post-apocalyptic view that kind of tells you to never give up. It is a really strong melodic death metal view on a world in ruins, not unlike how some people describe our world today. I don't agree with that description but I think that Athorn made one of the most interesting albums of the past year and on the subject of melodeath we must also mention In Flames who made one of their finest efforts with the album Battles. Sure there are those who wouldn't agree and say In Flames were better in the past, but they weren't to my knowledge.

That much text in less than an hour is pretty impressive, but there are many

more things to write about the music year of 2016.

Like the story of the rereleases, because besides Scanner having the magnificent "Hypertrace" rereleased the same Scanner had their lacklustre "Terminal Earth" rereleased as well. But it was not only Scanner, Uriah Heep released some rerecorded material that was first recorded in 2001 and now rereleased under a different name - a very good album. The we saw Human Fortress having their excellent 2003 release "Defenders of the Crown" released again and we also saw Pain of Salvation having their greatest release "Remedy Lane" released again with a live disc as bonus. And there were more of these releases but the mentioned are the

ones worthy of attention.

Rereleases, is the music world becoming Hollywood who reissue and restyle everything? No, not really even though they are close but the original stuff being released are still more than in the movies. But was it really better in the past then? No, not really but it was often more original and it seems that it is more difficult to make something that makes you stop and think or stop and listen these days - but it is still some impressive stuff being done these days.

And speaking of the past, Ayreon's "Human Equation" was brought to live on the stage and released on video and record - not as good as the original and a disappointment for an Ayreon

album but good nevertheless. Another noteworthy live release from 2016 was Steve Hackett's "The Total Experience" that was also released on DVD and as a live album. Something that is true about Leprous as well, one of the most interesting new bands out there with some great albums in their baggage released their first live release where the music was great but the video recording was really bad. There were others as well, an old Rainbow concert was reviewed, it was not very good and none other caught my attention.

Attention catching was watching my first ever F1 race at Spa Francorchamps in Belgium, the insane speeds of an F1 car, the noises of the V8s in the Por-

sche Supercup and GP2 cars, are things that catches one's attention. And the uncivilised behaviour of Dutch F1 fans, or should we say fans of crashkid Verstappen as that is what they are. You know "he's a *censored*, that's what he is" - according to Vettel, and I agree with whatever foul he called that kid. He kind of ruined the experience of the F1 visit by crashing into the Ferrari guys at the start, and then the Dutch "fans" booed the winner - that is just unsporting.

More sporting was the experience of following my favourite hockey club who managed to make it back to the second highest level after their fiasco the season before. They were great that season winning more or less

everything, not as fun this season though. But at least the last three games before the end of the year were great, so lets hope they start next year as good as they ended the last - my dear SSK in Hockeyallsvenskan will have a good 2017, I hope.

Comebacks are a thing of the sport world, and also in the world of music and this year we saw some notable ones. Like Lucifer's Friend who suddenly found the urge to resurface with a forgettable live album and a decent studio album, Poverty's No Crime also made their first album in nearly a decade and that is a strong one. Kansas is another band with a strong comeback; their first al-

bum in nearly two decades is definitely very good. And of course there are more who have let us wait but not Arcade Messiah who seems to be releasing great stuff at a very rapid pace, I reviewed two Arcade Messiah albums in 2016.

And on the subject of noteworthy releases the band with the funny name öOoOoOoOoOo released a great avant-garde album - excellent stuff. Docker's Guild who covered sci-fi themes was also a great one. An Endless Sporadic and Adrian Weiss can be added to those great instrumental releases we saw this year. Visionatica, a great female fronted band should also be on the list along with Mad Hatter's Den, Trettioåriga Kriget and So-



nic Syndicate. Another really noteworthy release is *Coexistence's* "Everlasting Scars", which was surprisingly good; you will read an article about them early in 2017, as you will with *Midway* who also made a surprisingly good second album in the last months of 2016.

So what happens for *Hallowed* in 2017 then? Besides some early articles, like this monster text and the ones I just mentioned? Well, 2017 marks ten years on the web for *Hallowed.se* so perhaps we will see something to commemorate that. Otherwise it is all dependent on time, how much of it I can muster besides

writing reviews and listen to as much as possible of what I receive. And you should know that I nowadays receive several times as many promos as I can review. Perhaps I should be looking for more writers to give me more time to make better reviews while still keeping the pace of publishing up, writing 300 reviews in a year in two languages isn't easy to do on your own.

I think that with that workload the quality can sometimes suffer and I believe I am often a bit too much on the positive side in my reviews even though I sometimes get critique for being too hard on many bands. But looking at aver-

ages I still remain rather close to an average of four points mainly thanks to more than half of the reviews being four points. This is not really something I think about when I write other than trying to weight the albums of a genre against one another to figure out if it is good, bad or just indifferent. Because if all the albums in a genre are really good, then the good have to be considered average otherwise a review system would be quite pointless - kind of like reading reviews on most Internet sites, a site or a reviewer just giving positive reviews cannot be seen as credible.

Before turning to a few more ideas on 2017 I should summarize 2016 in a top ten list where I start with album number ten and work my way to the winner - some of these have been mentioned in the text before but perhaps not enough for you to guess who fits my top list. I should point out that rereleases are skipped and it is possible that one was released in December 2015 and that the list cannot be said to be complete as I have not heard all the albums of 2016 and there are some that I suspect could make it into the list if I hear them. Also observe that the list is based on objective rating

and it is not a list of my favourite albums of the year because that would be slightly different. So here goes, ten to one:

10. **Coexistence - Everlasting Scars.** Second album by French-Swedish band *Coexistence* who have evolved quite a lot since their debut five years before. A Progressive album in the vein of the likes of *Dream Theater* with a relatively accessible sound and great depth with some excellent songs - It is a great album that no fan of progressive metal should overlook.

9. **Kansas - The Prelude Implicit.** *Kansas* returns after sixteen years of silence with a great

statement, it was forty years since the very successful "Leftoverture" and they are still relevant today with an album you can listen to for years, until they create a new one.

8. **öOoOoOoOoOo - Samen.** A recently reviewed album that made quite an impression, maybe Brits and Americans will be offended by the nudity on the cover and in the booklet but they can fuck off if they are. The music is brilliant, clever and interesting, unpredictable and joyous - an album that is clearly worthy of a high spot when summarising 2016.

7. **Ayreon - The Theater Equa-**



tion. They misspelled theatre, a nod towards Dream Theater perhaps? The worst sounding Ayreon release ever was something I wrote in the review of this one, but still good enough for top ten in 2016, says a lot about Ayreon that also happens to be the latest band I gave a rating of seven for a non-rerelease, which was over three years ago.

6. **Sharky Sharky - Super Awesome Mega Rock.** The name says it all.

5. **Helion Prime - s/t.** The catchiest and most entertaining, although not very original, power

metal album I have heard in a long time. I still can't stop listening even though I reviewed it in May.

4. **Sound Storm - Vertigo.** È grande, è bellissimo, è meraviglioso, says all you need to know about the brilliance of one of only four albums (discounting rereleases) to receive a rating of more than five this year.

3. **Frost* - Falling Satellites.** The bronze goes to the fantastic album with a white cover, Mitchell and Godfrey has made something brilliant here. I actually wrote that this may be the best

album that Mitchell has participated on, that is not small praise considering that he has a few six-pointers at Hallowed already.

2. **Fates Warning - Theories of Flight.** I have been following Fates Warning for a long time and this would actually be one of their best albums to date, not quite up to the level of "A Pleasant Shade of Gray" that will be 20 years next year but very close to it.

1. **Enbound - The Blackened Heart.** Swedish Enbound has in my view made the best album of 2016. Described (by me) as the holy grail of albums released in

2016 and one that you will regret if you don't buy. It is that good and though this year as the two before it does not contain any really timeless classics, I would say that this one is the closest.

Hallowed will also publish a special where you can hear songs from the albums on this list.

We are closing in on the end, the end of 2016 now and I think it has been a great New Years Eve and though 2016 wasn't the best year in music it was still a decent year for the world, no matter what

people try to think. There were some low points though, like Trump, not the snooker player Judd Trump but the soon-to-be worst president in US history. Then we have the Brexit thing that I am sure will prove to be rather bad for Britain and probably for the EU as well. Maybe that is proof enough that there should be a test of intelligence and understanding before one is allowed to vote on any issue. But I guess that would be bad to because dumb people must also be allowed to make choices that affect their lives even though they

don't understand what they vote for, like in the case with Trump. The world has been going in the right direction for a long time but it appears that many aren't pleased with that and perhaps 2016 will prove to be the year when that changed when people decided that Germany in the late thirties was the best place and time to live.

In the end though I cannot really understand why we can create probes that can take brilliant pictures of Pluto, and other amazing things and still cannot make a Wi-Fi that keeps losing connec-

tion, Apple? And why remove the Ethernet-port that you so clearly need on a MacBook Pro? Yeah, Apple sucks big time and if I had their leaders here I would kill them (as a late Christmas gift to myself) because of how bad they have made what was once a good operating system. And why hire a blind person to make the graphics? And still it is preferable to Windows, which is really the worst part of it.

How 2017 will look is anybody's guess but I hope for a better musical year than the one we leave behind. Otherwise I hope for a world where Trump is killed by his own arrogance and Putin dies from sever indigestion. I hope that the war in Syria ends and that better wealth leads to the end of fundamentalism - that will of course not happen in 2017 and the refugees from that war will still risk their life to come to Europe where we just say that they are not welcome because they threaten our extreme wealth. Yeah, it will probably be the same, and people will be as dumb as ever - lets just hope the soundtrack is something extraordinary.

**Thanks for reading
Happy New Year!**

