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2007 Year End Thoughts

How odd that winter begins and ends a year. At a year's end, the slow diminution of botanic life, from the proverbial descent of autumn's leaves to the death of all the grass around us, seems to contradict the frenetic nature of the holiday season. While consumerism reaches yearly heights in November and December, our surroundings suggest that everyone should take a step back, relax, and reflect upon eleven months of undoubtedly eventful change and growth. In fact, it seems to be the only way I can write this reflection. School just let out early, and I have nothing better to do for the next few hours other than watch the ice pellets fall and think.

I hardly remember the beginning of 2007 musically. Of course, I remember my own performances- various jazz band performances on bass guitar while scrapping away at acoustic guitar in an indoor drumline. Yet none of those events stick out as definitive; they feel more like a blur. Winter begins each year as well, where nature seems to hibernate, letting whatever precipitation the sky rains down upon us bury nature's dead. The environment never notices the change of a year; after all, the calendar is an inexact science made by man. Fittingly, the music industry laid dormant through the beginning of the year. Aside from a few notable releases (including Eluvium's *Copia*, my favorite album of the year), the world had to wait until spring for the industry to pick up in activity. From March until November, the music world remained incredibly active, with the ascent and descent in activity paralleling the change of seasons. From the end of the year through the beginning of the next, however, the record industry lies in wait.

Looking back in recent history, this seems to be the normal wave of activity throughout the year. An unusual constant, however, was the consistently good material released in 2007. I lack the hindsight to truly look back on other years with experience, but I can say this: I truly enjoyed the music of 2007. Currently, I rate six albums from this year a 4.5/5, where at the end of 2006, I had three (note: I do not believe in rating albums a full 5/5 upon their release). Undoubtedly, I will discover more gems from the year as time moves on, and hopefully, I can look back in later years and remember 2007 as a fantastic year for music.

Regardless, the year had its drawbacks. The issue of music piracy exploded in later months, beginning with the shutdown of OiNK.cd, the most popular site for advance releases on the Internet. From there, Albumbase and Demonoid were taken down. While these sites encouraged illegal activity, the authorities had little legal ground to stand on when arresting the site owners. The sites had no central servers where they held these albums. They provided links to the albums instead. It seems more like arresting a school principal for a student possessing illegal drugs in his locker rather than arresting the student. And, as OiNK argues, Google provides many of those links with a simple search. Type "Frank Sinatra.rar" and many links to torrent downloads appear on the first page of Google's results. While I am not taking sides to this argument, I contend that the record labels putting a bounty on these sites only infuriates the labels' consumers, therefore moving them further to piracy. Something must be done.

Once again paralleling the progress of nature's seasons, too many musicians have died in the last few months. Ike Turner, Casey Calvert of Hawthorne Heights, and Kevin DuBrow of Quiet Riot have made the most headlines, but many others have perished within the last month. András Szöllősy, the Hungarian classical composer and contemporary of Béla Bartók, died on December 6th. Pimp C, who recently appeared on the new Chamillionaire album and part of the hip-hop duo UGK, died on December 4th. And of course, we lost Luciano Pavarotti on September 4th. The list goes on...

Personally, the year means something much more than a collection of great albums or a year to remember great musicians. 2007 marks my first full year as an active writer and reviewer, and, looking upon my first review of that year, I feel confident in my improvement as a writer. I worked to break my formulaic style, and I feel that I have succeeded in that effort, although I still use fallbacks and cliché statements here and there. Through consistent writing and listening, I attempted to make keener musical insight. With various different genres, I continued to broaden my horizons, delving into more mainstream music at points (James Blunt, Yellowcard) and working on writing negative reviews of higher quality. As Sputnikmusic gained popularity on the Internet, I gathered more contacts with record labels as a means to establish a reputation not only for myself but also for the website.

Most importantly, however, I discovered a purpose to my writing. I do not review to gain attention or inflate my self esteem but rather as a means to express my views on art and music as a whole. I try to promote innovation and originality over the refined borrowing of ideas and repeating the same process over and over again. I love when artists grow and change, when they experiment, when they forget what their record labels want and express their own creative motives above all. While my opinion may be small and ineffective to the music world as a whole, I feel a need to express these opinions. Jaga Jazzist titled their 2005 landmark album *What We Must*. This is what I must, and shall continue, for years to come.

2007 Best Albums:

15. Ken Andrews- *Secrets of the Lost Satellite*
14. The Pax Cecilia- *Blessed are the Bonds*
13. Ghastly City Sleep- *Ghastly City Sleep*
12. Telescreen- *The Solar Sea EP*
11. Caspian- *The Four Trees*
10. Burial- *Untrue*
9. Oceansize- *Frames*
8. Terence Blanchard- *A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina)*
7. Radiohead- *In Rainbows*
6. Between the Buried and Me- *Colors*
5. Paul Marshall- *Vultures*
4. Lindsey Boult- *Composition*
3. Minus the Bear- *Planet of Ice*
2. Thrice- *The Alchemy Index Vol. I and II: Fire and Water*
1. Eluvium- *Copia*

Worst Albums of 2007:

5. Architecture in Helsinki- *Places Like This*
4. The Nightwatchman- *One Man Revolution*
3. Daughtry- *Daughtry*
2. James Blunt- *All the Lost Souls*
1. Soulja Boy- *Souljaboytellem.com*

Posted by Tyler Fisher at [3:03 PM](#)