

DOWNTOWN

Music GALLERY

GROWLERS CHOIR - Live Au Fimav (Victo CD 135; Canada)

August 17, 2023 - Bruce Lee Gallanter, DMG

GROWLERS CHOIR



LIVE AU FIMAV

The Growlers Choir is a choir of a dozen plus heavy metals vocalists from Quebec. After being shut down for a year during the Great Pandemic of 2020, the FIMAV or Victo Fest reopened in May of 2021. Since the pandemic was still part of the precariousness of life a year later, FIMAV, which began in 1983, has continued annually every year except for two since the beginning. In 2021, the FIMAV audience was limited to only citizens of Canada plus all the musicians were Canadian as well. I, myself, have been attending every year since 1987, but had to miss this year which was a big disappointment to me & the friends I attend with. Although I was never a big metal fan, I have always tried to be open minded by giving things a chance. I have heard some metal (death, gloom, or speed) that I do dig. Even those cookie monster vocals that most either take or leave, I can enjoy as long the rest of the music is interesting. The thing that many of us (serious listeners) like about FIMAV is that it encompasses a wide variety of avant-garde or experimental musics.

The music here was recorded on May 22 of 2021 and was recorded live at the FIMAV Fest and doesn't quite sound like anything they've ever had before. The only other music besides the choir was pre-recorded electric guitar which was altered to sound like electronic music. Half of the program was composed just four weeks ahead of the concert. The lyrics were written by lyricist/poet Fortner Anderson and the choir was conducted by Pierre-Luc Senecal. All thirteen vocalists sang into mics which were mixed well for a live performance. Many of the vocals are not lyric based yet the growling and weird vocal sounds are well developed and fascinating to hear. There is someone who is mixing this music live hence giving this a dense all enveloping sound, stimulating, somewhat scary sound. His name is Larry O'Malley, and he does an amazing job of mixing this music seamlessly. Lyricist/poet Fortner Anderson narrates in English and is used sporadically. Since there are few if any metal bands with more than one or two singers, the sound of an entire vocal choir is something else. Different vocalists within the choir get a chance to solo or at least sing their own parts, adding layers to their collective cast of singers. Mr. Fortner's words/voice are dark yet consistently fascinating. It is however the overall sound of this sea of voices which is most compelling and musical. The sea of voices sound like a dark orchestra of strings, brass, or reeds. The year of the Great Pandemic was filled with confusion, loneliness, the lack of hope for the future since no one knew how long our/their ordeal would last. This music sounds like it is based on the internal fear that many of us felt often during this dark period. When I first heard about this disc from FIMAV founder Michel Levasseur, I wasn't so sure about how I felt or if any of the Victo regulars would enjoy this disc. I must admit that I was wrong and that this disc is one of the most powerful and riveting discs I have heard in recent memory. The Growlers Choir are/is something that no one was expecting, and the outcome is a monumental undertaking all the way around. An incredible effort!

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