

Electronic Press Kit

Eleonore Pongratz (ALIÈNOR)

date: 10/24

Biography

Eleonore Pongratz was born 1953 in Marburg/Germany and is still living near her home town.

She's a classical piano player, starting her education at the age of 12.

1978 she got hired as a „substitution” keyboardist by a local Prog/Hardrock band.

Her substitution time ended only 1982, when she left the band to finish university and become a Special Education Teacher.

2019, after retiring, she started playing piano again and after some unsuccessful attempts to form a band she eventually started home recording.

After 2 years of learning about the technical aspects of recording, Eleonore started working on her 8 tracks album "The Raven" combining Progressive Rock, Hardrock and Folk elements.

2022 she finished a 12-weeks coaching program in Music Production at DRUMNOTE productions Augsburg (Roy Perez) and took part in the HOFA Song Contest 2022 , 2023 and 2024 (3rd, 2nd and 2nd in subcategory "Progressive").

2023 The Raven was released as an online project called ALIÈNOR, involving musicians from all over the world.

Influences:

Uriah Heep /Ken Hensley

Eloy

Deep Purple



Discography

1978

Album: The Colours Of A Rainbow

Band: SOFTEIS

1982

Album: Eiskalt

Band: SOFTEIS

1988

Album: Theatre

Band: ANABIS

(guest keyboardist)

2023

Album: The Raven

Project Name: ALIÈNOR

Composer, writer, producer

Upcoming Releases

Eleonore is currently working on a 5 tracks Folk Rock album. Expected release date:
December 2024

Furthermore she has just started working on another album in the Progressive/Psychedelic genre.

Music

For Promo CD or downloads (via WeTransfer), please drop me a message (contact below).

Listening:

Bandcamp:

<https://alienormusic.bandcamp.com/album/the-raven>

Soundcloud:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-651240754>

Website:

<http://www.alienor-music.de/discography/>

Reviews (see more on website)

Issue 24-021 Album Reviews

by Thomas Otten

dprp.net

"Better late than never" — this may have been the motto and the motivation for Marburg (Germany)-based Eleonore Pongratz. Born in 1953, she made her starting experience in prog/hard rock music between 1978 and 1982, when she was the keyboard player of the German band Softeis, which she released two albums with. Thereafter, she abandoned her music career and pursued other life plans. However, she couldn't seem to let go of music completely, so after her retirement she decided to continue her musical career and to form a band of like-minded people. That band project, however, turned out to be easier said than done. Having had no (or no satisfying) reactions to her requests, she opted for creating her own online project under the name of Aliènor in 2021. Her website gives an interesting and in-depth insight of the "making-of"-process of The Raven. Someone like me, who used to (and still sometimes does) play analogue keyboards but does not have the slightest clue of nowadays digital producing and composing possibilities, couldn't help but be amazed when going through the descriptions of the various stages of the project. Apparently, Eleonore started the entire process in a self-educated manner, something that I find even more astonishing and that has my full respect.

And the process proved to be lengthy and cumbersome. Once the framework was in place, Eleonore recruited musicians from all over the world via a freelance platform to have more vocals, guitars, bass, violin, and drums with the music. Altogether, 12 musicians from 11 countries, many of them assuming the vocals (did not find out who sings on which track, though), were involved. Mixing and mastering finally was done by a professional. Hence, it is fair to say that Aliènor is not a band, but the ambitious project of a single musician, maybe to fulfil a life-long dream. Eleonore wrote all the music, plays keyboards and is responsible for the lyrics. It's amazing what can be done to realise an album these days. I think I need to revise my idea that musicians often physically go into the studio together to record an album.

Given the aforesaid, one is inclined to come to the conclusion with respect to the music on The Raven that if an artist grew up with, played and was influenced by progressive rock from the seventies/eighties, then this must be reflected in her work. And indeed, some similarities with bands that were active and known during that period and thereafter notably in Germany can't be denied. I hear influences from Ramses, the rockier parts of Eloy, the bombast of Flaming Bess, the keyboards-drenched music by Choice, and Epidaurus, the melodic sound of Swiss bands such as Irrwisch, Deyss, and Clepsydra, the organ playing style of Dorothea Raukes from Streetmark - many (but not all) of them unfortunately having fallen into oblivion. But Aliènor's music doesn't just sound retro and like a stereotype of that time, no, it seems to have fallen out of time in the positive sense that it simply defies all current trends. It becomes evident that Eleonore Pongratz has realised the type of music that she wanted: hard rock sounding with symphonic prog elements, doses of art-rock, with keyboards which have found a good balance between

both being in the foreground and putting themselves at the service of guitars and the rhythm section.

Common to almost all the songs is a spacy and electronic music sounding intro (the one from the title track The Raven even reminds me of Jean-Michel Jarre), before either keyboards or heavy riffing guitars take the lead. The vocal parts in my opinion suffer a bit from the fact that various singers feature on this album. That slightly comes at the expense of coherence and homogeneity, but certainly provides for variety and flexibility. The songs are arranged in a way to come across dense and compact, but still offer some room for soloing both from guitar (more often according

to my impression) and keyboards. All in all, they are not unduly complex, but varied enough to keep the listeners' attention focussed.

The first two tracks are the strongest ones on this release to my ears. After its electronic music intro, The Raven offers melodic sounding organ accompanied by acoustic guitars, both dramatic, and melancholic female vocals, alternating punchy, and catchy synthesizer and guitar soloing, lots of variety and a sophisticated arrangement to highlight prog elements. Having listened to that track as a "teaser", it became clear that I wanted to review this album. The instrumental Circle Of Life thereafter scores with some catchy hooks, and especially its spacy, sad, and melodic sounding violin against a fierce rhythm section, a bit reminiscent of Eddie Jobson, and his band UK.

The songs that follow do their best to live up to the high expectations that have been fuelled by the two inaugurating tracks. Inescapable for instance is a melodic hard rock/AOR song, where the keyboards take a step back to let the guitar do its duties. Pray For Silence perfectly translates, by alternating hard rock and spacy sequences, how information, emotions, expectations, and obligations beating down on us make someone pray for silence which is felt soothing and relieving. Evil Raising, musically very much sounding like Eloy, lyrically deals with the rising of the Third Reich, and displays a gloomy, distressing atmosphere, which builds up and intensifies as the song progresses - in keeping with the topic.

Given Eleonore's personal background and the circumstances under which this album was realised, the outcome definitely is worthwhile to be given a closer attention. Recommended not only to prog rock lovers having an affinity with those "relics from the past" mentioned above, but to everyone looking for varied, original, accessible, easy-to-digest prog rock with harder edges, symphonic and spacy elements. Was The Raven a flash in the pan or are we likely to hear more from Aliènor because her appetite has been whetted to keep on going? At least mine has. Time will tell...



Review

2023

by Dick Van Der Heijde

[Prog & Rock](#)

More and more, labels and bands are finding their way to my mailbox, and that delights me. Recently, I received an album from a German keyboardist, artist name: Aliènor. Her real name is Eleonore Pongratz, and an interesting story emerged from the Aliènor website. Because I enjoyed the music more than well enough, it was clear to me. This album, titled "The Raven," must be featured on Prog & Rock.

Born in 1953, Pongratz played from '78 to '82 with all her heart and soul in Soft Eis, a progressive hard rock band. After leaving this band to complete her university studies, there was a deafening silence for more than thirty years. Eventually, during her retirement, she decided to pick up the thread again. After several unsuccessful attempts to join a band again, Pongratz decided to create the online project Aliènor in 2021. She set out to make an album, recorded the material gradually,

and added guide vocals and other parts using various software. Through an online platform, she recruited a number of singers/musicians from around the world, and after a thorough period of mixing, producing, and mastering, the first Aliènor album, “The Raven,” went online on July 6, 2023.

The result of all her efforts is, in my opinion, an album she can be proud of. “The Raven” contains a lot of herself, both lyrically and musically. One could even argue that her philosophy is the concept of the album. All of this is evident in passionate progressive hard rock that sits somewhere between Ayreon and Camoora. The use of different male and female vocalists also gives the music a rock opera vibe.

The album opens strongly with the title track sung by Argentine Natalia Nekare. Her voice is a mix of Heather Findlay (ex-Mostly Autumn), Agnieszka Swita (Camoora), and Laura Piazzai (Imaginaerium) – clear, powerful, and enchanting. She serves as the lead vocalist frequently throughout the album, and that is no punishment. Musically, the craftsmanship is evident. Pongratz doesn’t like frills, and that attitude shines through the music consistently. Everything is to the point. In the case of this opening track, we hear a atmospheric intro reminiscent of Jean Michel Jarre, leading into the actual song. The keyboards are elegant, while the guitar sounds fiery. This interplay takes place on a gothic-light foundation, setting the blueprint for the rest of the tracks. This doesn’t mean that each track doesn’t have its own identity. For example, there is the instrumental Circle Of Life. It’s not a standard showcase piece, but a atmospheric composition where the violin sounds ominous, and the drums resonate deeply. In Inescapable, Chilean singer Lukas Sparke makes his entrance. His warm voice, combined with sparkling guitar play, gives the hard rock essence of the music a comfortable feel. In a way, “The Raven” sounds disarming and fresh. Even in the more theatrical numbers Back From Eternity and Pray For Silence, the charm offensive predominates. Think of the Cindy Oudshoorn years with Kayak for Back From Eternity. Evil Rising, on the other hand, is the most ominous track on the album, and understandably so, as the lyrics deal with the rise of the Third Reich. The track is somewhat in line with Circle Of Life, but with vocals. Sparke,

as in Inescapable, proves to be a great vocalist, and the many vocal background sounds, ranging from whispers to screams, make it distinctive. At that moment, there is a somewhat eerie atmosphere in the album. Salam also contributes to this atmosphere. The tension in the music is resolved by the closing track, Judgement Day, where sharp riffs and a playful rhythm create a certain musical euphoria.

All in all, “The Raven” is a remarkable album that is highly original. Most points, in my opinion, go to the creativity, which is boundless.



Review

December 2023

by Raphael Lukas Genovese

[Mangowave Magazine](#)

In 1982, German musician Eleonore Pongratz decided to leave the Hard Rock and Prog Rock band that she had been part of since 1978.

Not only did she leave the band, she furthermore hung up her instruments and let music sit for quite a while. Years and decades have passed, until something woke up underneath the ashes. But it was no phoenix that arose, it was The Raven.

The re-birth of Eleonore Pongratz as a musician has taken place in 2021, when the online project Aliènor came to life. Aliènor's first full-length release is called The Raven, and it features twelve international guest musicians on eight tracks written and performed by Aliènor. With the grace of a bird, Aliènor floats through Progressive Rock, Symphonic Rock and Hard Rock without ever touching the soil. It is a re-birth of timeless sound, a heavy score of freedom, peace and self-determination.



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