



Undrcurrents' Favorites of 2021

I love the idea of year end lists, but their execution often leaves something to be desired. What should be an opportunity to learn about great music that you missed often turns into a coronation for the same ten or fifteen albums by every major music journalism outlet. My personal favorites of the genre always represent a very focused viewpoint (whether that comes from [a single person](#) or [a publication](#)) for the simple reason that I always learn the most from them. I always want to come away from any year end list discovering something new.

In that spirit, here are Undrcurrents' favorite albums of the year. The use of "favorite" and not "best" is intentional; the value of ranking art is dubious at best, not to mention the fact that it is impossible for any single person to have an authoritative view of the year. This list is shaped by personal listening habits, and in the end it is one thing and one thing only: a snapshot of one individual's perspective on the past twelve months in music.

In July, I published a list of my favorites of the year to date. If you read that, you'll notice both similarities and differences here. I still stand by and love all of the selections on that previous list, and the differences are merely a reflection of being a music fan: it's a process of constant discovery and exploration, and your relationships to different music will inevitably change over time. I didn't get a chance to cover some of the albums on this list before today, and I know there are still plenty of records I haven't heard that deserve a spot here. If I were to look back five or ten years down the line this list would undoubtedly look different, and that's to be expected. The story of music in 2021 may be written, but we'll still be trying to make sense of it for years to come.

Before we get to the albums, I'd also like to thank everyone who submitted music to the site in 2021. I wish I had the time to respond to every email and write about everything that gets sent my way, but please know that regardless of whether we covered it your music was greatly appreciated. We'll continue to listen to and cover as much music as possible in the coming year. Finally, for more year end coverage check out some of [our favorite labels of 2021](#).

As always, this list is unranked; albums are listed in roughly chronological order by release date.

Territorial – Tlaxihuiqui ([Die Jim Crow](#))

Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility, more commonly referred to as Territorial, is the oldest prison in the state of Colorado, and Tlaxihuiqui is the first recorded music from within its walls to be heard in the free world; perhaps paradoxically, it sounds boundary-less. Incorporating folk, country, blues rock, spoken word and more, the album centers around the life experiences of the incarcerated musicians who tell those stories using their own musical language. Touching on everything from prison life to meditations on regret and redemption, it's one of the most powerful listening experiences of the year.

