

# DEATH VALLEY HIGH

Swerving between the sarcastic and the saccharine, horror obsessed provocateurs **DEATH VALLEY HIGH** deliver doom pop and death disco of the highest order.

Disruptive, delicious, and disobedient in equal measure, the Northern California group drips with urgent theatricality, romantic desolation, and high-energy hijinks. **DEATH VALLEY HIGH** draws as much from cinema as sound, soaking up atmosphere and inspiration from art-house noir, iconoclastic thrillers, and dystopian horror.

*Outburn Magazine* heralded them as the “New Face of Goth Rock,” while UK tastemaker *Kerrang!* advised fans of Marilyn Manson, Korn, and Nine Inch Nails to take note. But where most doom-and-gloom worshippers and macabre music-makers craft anthems for the grave, **DEATH VALLEY HIGH** make songs to wake the dead. These guys don’t dwell in melancholy; this is a funeral procession to dance to.

Universal monsters, Hammer films, and haunted houses collide within their sonic psyche, earning them coveted spots on tours with likeminded rabble-rousers Killing Joke, Combichrist, Crosses, Powerman 5000, and Orgy. In the tradition of Bay Area pioneers like Victims Family, Butthole Surfers, and early Faith No More, **DEATH VALLEY HIGH** turn convention on its head, with unapologetic distaste for conformity and a tongue-in-cheek whimsy to rival an old-timey dandy.

Astute heavy music connoisseurs will recognize **DEATH VALLEY HIGH** frontman Reykjavik Osburn Bigfeather’s voice from the Deftones track “Lucky You,” from the band’s 2003 self-titled album. Osburn led the major label alt-rock band Tinfed across three well-received albums then turned his attention to darker impulses. He enlisted his former bandmates in

DEATH VALLEY HIGH's first incarnation, before solidifying a definitive lineup that includes Adam Bannister, Huffy Hafera, and Sean Bivins.

DEATH VALLEY HIGH songs like "Play Dead," "Warm Bodies," "Multiply," "How2Kill," and "ICK SWITCH" have energized crowds around the world, as the group crisscrosses the globe on the strength of a string of albums, each one more striking than the next, smartly crystalizing their signature sound. *CVLT [AS FVK]* (2016), produced by veteran knob-twiddler Ulrich Wild (White Zombie, Static-X, Dethklok), adeptly delivers on the promise laid down by *Positive Euth* (2013), *Doom, In Full Bloom* (2010), and *The Similarities of the Loveless and the Undead* (2006).

DEATH VALLEY HIGH's *DUEL* serves as both a celebration of some of the group's most cherished music and a bit of reverse-engineering of the band's overall sound. Like David Bowie's *Pin Ups* or Metallica's *The \$5.98 EP: Garage Days Re-Revisited*, it's a collection that illustrates where they've come from and what they've become.

There's a bit of a rambunctious "versus" element in play, as well: DVH challenged handpicked collaborators to energize their takes on classic songs by Faith No More ("The Crab Song," featuring Rykarda Parasol); '80s pop stars The Eurythmics ("Here Comes the Rain," featuring Chris Connelly of Ministry, Revolting Cocks, and Pigface) and Bananarama ("Cruel Summer" with Hanin Elias of Atari Teenage Riot); seminal death rockers Christian Death ("Cavity," with Chino Moreno), and Metallica ("Jump in the Fire," with Dennis Sanders of Spirit in the Room). *DUEL* works as a modernized '80s mixtape, which makes sense, given how much DEATH VALLEY HIGH reveres Bauhaus, Samhain, Southern Death Cult, and Cocteau Twins.

The group tasked other comrades and allies with new takes on DVH tracks: "Sunshine Cleaners" (remixed by Paul Wiley of Marilyn Manson); "MERCI [FVKT]" (remixed by Matt McCord, aka sondóttir, formerly of Tinfed; his brother, Tim McCord of

Evanescence, plays bass); and “The Present,” remixed by The Hounds. *DUEL* marks the reunion of AN APPLIANCE/RE-ACT PRODUCTION, the producer team comprised of Eric Stenman and DEATH VALLEY HIGH’S Reykjavik Bigfeather.

It’s all further evidence demonstrating what DEATH VALLEY HIGH’s increasingly growing legion of fans already knows: this band can share the stage with Lady Gaga or Rob Zombie, with confidence and rightful artistic claim in either setting. Goth, dance-industrial, post-punk, however one describes them, DEATH VALLEY HIGH is unmistakably important, conjuring a New Romantic majesty for the modern age.

- Ryan Downey