

AVENGED SEVENFOLD



Christ by name, but look, no stigmata...



"We're an oddball... we live in our own world and try to do things differently"

THE BIGGEST METAL BAND OF THE DECADE ADMIT THEY STILL FEEL LIKE OUTSIDERS

after *The Stage* was dropped on the world, it was revealed that it sold under half of what *Hail To The King* clocked up in its first seven days on sale. Undeterred, Shadows posted a lengthy blog mocking the idea that "76k records sold in the first week by a heavy metal band, on a surprise release, with zero promotion, and a single with a running time of 8:30" could be deemed anything other than a success. More importantly, he stressed once again that Avenged "did this for our fans, we did this for our sanity" and that "regardless of this, we will not change."

Such measured analytics are for another time, though. Tonight, it's pandemonium on the ground floor of Capitol Records, as 18 months of writing, recording, planning and trolling finally comes to fruition. Five hundred fans sporting Avenged t-shirts and Deathbat tattoos have been queueing outside since lunchtime,



Shadows and his little buddies discuss string theory



Deathbats... deathbats everywhere!

after winning a competition entered by more than 5,000 people. They'll not only watch the rooftop show on a big screen in a secluded area in the car park, but can strap on headsets to make them feel like they're 13 storeys up, in the first ever live virtual reality gig. Fancy, huh?

For the next half hour, it's Avengedfest 2016, as fans of all ages meet each other for the history-making moment. Deathbat projections adorn nearby buildings, a giant Deathbat flag flies on top of the building like a heavy metal Jolly Roger, and puppeteers are roaming around working the marionettes from the *Stage* video. Despite the news of the album leaking on the internet ("I don't give a fuck!" laughs Syn), there's still an air of confusion and excitement about what's actually going on. Could Avenged be trolling everyone?

Then the band steam through a four-song set, including newie *The Stage*, which is streamed to millions of fans around the world. Immediately after, the cosmic Deathbat from the album cover appears on the giant screen outside, with the words 'on sale now'. And just like that, a merch tent opens, and hordes of fans rush to pick up their copies like black-shirted locusts, before joining the much-longer queue to meet Shadows and co, who stick around for over an hour to take photos with everyone. Meanwhile, label representatives start shouting random numbers, which we realise correspond to the band's place on the iTunes album chart. Not that Avenged care.

"If it fails, the music industry is failing anyway," says Shadows candidly, almost

chuckling at the idea. "People have to try new things to break that mould and hopefully find a light at the end of the tunnel, because going out there and selling 40,000 records in your first week, and then dropping down to 2,000, and then 500 and no one cares, is just as bad as putting out a record by trying something fun and cool that goes over like a fart in the wind, ha ha ha! At least we tried something new. No one wants the dinosaur model because it just doesn't work."

Their plans for their upcoming tour, which hits the UK in January, sound nothing short of epic. The band have hired the production company behind Cirque Du Soleil, with Shadows contemplating restructuring entire venues to meet Avenged's brain-boggling blueprints. With the old model in flames and the vast, emptiness of space in front of them, Avenged Sevenfold are standing proudly at the edge of a new dawn, going boldy where no bands have gone before.

"We're an oddball," he says. "A lot of bands live, breathe and die the 2016 metal scene, but we just live in our own world and try to do things different than everyone else. I don't ever feel like we fit in. We're going to be whatever we feel is right, and if it changes the industry, then great."

The stage is set. The possibilities are limitless. What happens next is written in the stars. ✨

THE STAGE IS OUT NOW VIA CAPITOL. AVENGED SEVENFOLD TOUR THE UK IN JANUARY - SEE LIVE EVIL ON PAGE 107