



Sheer Black Skirt by Marmar Halim
Black Beaded Necklace by Fernando Rodriguez Design

Hey VIOLET



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Young and rebellious without taking any agenda too seriously, Hey Violet are a reflection of the Los Angeles culture that raised them. Just named “Next Big Thing” at the 2016 Teen Choice Awards, the band embodies a sound that is reminiscent of 90’s pop punk heroes Blink-182, with a dash of female empowerment and a vocal range that rivals Yeah Yeah Yeahs’ frontwoman Karen O’s.

Hey Violet is comprised of sisters Rena and Nia Lovelis, Miranda Miller, and Casey Moreta. The Lovelis sisters formed their first band Cheri Bomb in middle school with Miller and musician Julia Pierce, but when creative differences led to Pierce’s departure in 2013, Moreta was happy to fill in. In 2015, the group changed their name to Hey Violet and became the first act to sign to Australian rock band 5 Seconds to Summer’s Hi or Hey Records label.

Hey Violet’s sophomore EP boasts the title, *Brand New Moves*, and moves them definitively from adolescent pop-rock toward a more synth-heavy and emotionally-driven sound. Nearly the minute the EP was released, the band debuted as the #1 artist on iTunes in the US and the UK. Undoubtedly with no small help from their passionate social media fanbase.

The music video for their single by the same name is an ode to nostalgia with stop-motion animation and a pastel color palette and features lead singer Rena shimmying inside of a blue television that resembles an old school Gameboy.

Their music has always been a balance of light-hearted and edgy, but the imagery in their previous videos leaned more towards emo, with Rena sporting multicolored dreadlock extensions and all of the bandmembers usually outfitted in black. I asked what inspired the band to go in such a fun and colorful direction. “We all really love those pastel colors and the stop-motion aspect and we just thought that it fit the music perfectly,” she answers. “We worked with an amazing director Ruth Barnett and it was a really hands-on project for us. We were so thankful to work with her and are hoping to meet her next time we’re in her area while on tour.”

As for the maturation in their sound, Rena acknowledged that, “It’s quite different from our first EP. We started working with our producer Julian Bunetta and it’s been a really collaborative process. We had a lot of late nights in the studio and we’re really happy with the result. We all knew that we wanted to go in a more synth-driven direction. ‘Brand New Moves’ was actually one of the first songs we wrote.”

Hey Violet’s stage energy is infectious. Los Angeles crowds are notoriously cool, making performers earn their bobbing heads and shuffling feet, but several notes into their headlining set and fists were already punching the air, while Rena worked the stage with the gusto of a young Debbie Harry.

High-pitched screams flooded the building when the band strummed the opening chords to ‘Fuqboi’ which stands to be the next girl power anthem for the Gen Z set, poking fun at the way romance has evolved in the wake of dating apps like Tinder. When I asked the band to define this insult of the moment, Rena laughed.

“It’s funny because we’ve had to explain to a lot of older people what a ‘Fuqboi’ is, like Miranda’s dad didn’t know what one was. It was like the birds and the bees talk, but opposite,” she chuckles. “So we sat him down and we went into detail about what kind of things a fuck boy would do or say. He’s the guy who’s texting you and probably twenty other girls at the same time, he’s the guy who wants to Netflix and Chill, he’s the guy who’s asking ‘What would you do if I was there?’ and you’re rolling your eyes at the text message.”

I can’t help but wonder how lead guitarist Casey Moreta copes as Hey Violet’s lone male member. “It’s not so much the girl power aspect of the music that gets to him,” Rena told me. “It’s mostly just us girls overwhelming him (laughs), but he loves the music and he doesn’t think ‘Oh I’m a guy in a band with girls.’ Honestly, we’re all just best friends.”

Sass and sarcasm are front and center on *Brand New Moves*, but during their Echoplex performance Hey Violet teased the crowd with a bit of vulnerability in a new track entitled ‘Odd.’ Rena introduced the song, saying, “This is for if you’ve ever felt really weird or strange or out of place,” she paused for a beat. “You’re not.”

The as-yet unreleased track reveals the band’s soft edges and shows that their range extends beyond spunky pop influences. As Hey Violet looks forward to an extensive fall tour and a full-length album, I wondered which direction they’ll take their sound next.

“Another album is in the works and we have some stuff recorded, but there’s no exact release date yet. We definitely have enough songs for two or three albums, so now it’s just a matter of choosing the ones we connect with the most and that fans will love.”

Hey Violet is the opening act for 5 Seconds to Summer’s ‘Sounds Live Feels Live’ tour for the second year in a row, and plans to continue their tradition of playing spontaneous and acoustic solo sets on the road, a move that sent their fanbase skyrocketing last year.

With so many pop acts claiming the teen heartthrob image and lamenting about their premature love lives, it’s refreshing to see a band that embraces their youthful naivete and doesn’t take themselves too seriously. Sincere pop is almost an oxymoron, but if Hey Violet can hold fast to what sets them apart, I have no doubt that by this time next year they’ll be headlining their own tour.