

LIVE and FALL - an album review



>>This album, 'LIVE and FALL,' is a story of that happening; it could be relationships with each other, it could be feelings inside of ourselves that happening in the real world. In the real world, you feel lots of emotions like happiness, anger, sadness, anxiety, or whatever it is. We wanted to convey those emotions and feelings into this album. And if there's one thing that we want our listeners to pick up from this album, it would be those emotions — the emotions that we put into this album.<< - Gunil

By E. Seela



Kpop as we know it today has its roots in the 1990s, though it wouldn't see global success until the 2010s with the so-called "korean wave". Artists like Wonder Girls and H.O.T. started gaining Fans overseas, but it wasn't until PSY's hit-song Gangnam Style hit the global radio stations that the Korean wave started to take shape and build up. The Wave has yet to crash and fade into seafoam, and in my opinion it hasn't even reached its peak. But more on that later.

KPOP, which is often mistaken as a music genre, actually refers to the KPOP industry. Agencies take in Boys and Girls at a very young age and have them undergo dance-, vocal- and media training, as well as in some cases make them undergo appearance changing operations and measurements.

These harsh preparations can take months, but normally more like years, in some cases even up to 10 years. All of that without even knowing if they are even going to debut.

Knowing all that and having maybe heard a few KPOP songs on the radio, one might notice that there seems to be only vocal groups. And to some extent that is true. There is an oversaturation of vocal groups, so let me introduce you to one of the very few instrumental Bands of the KPOP industry.

Xdinary Heroes



About them and band members

Xdinary Heroes, also known as Xdh or XD, which is a shortened version of Extraordinary Heroes and alludes to one of the bands slogan: anyone can be a hero.

Officially debuted on december 6 2021 with their debut single "happy death day" under studio J, a sub-label of JYP, one of the 4 major KPOP labels.

The band consists of 6 members, who are all involved in the creative process, songwriting and composing of their songs.

Goo Gun-il, also known as his stage name Gunil

Born on July 24 1998

He is Drummer, Leader and occasionally vocals

He actually majored drum at Berklee College of Music and had a fairly successful

youtube channel before joining the band

<https://youtu.be/v-MQDDrtbTA?si=gJPBiBFzW9wVzkDo>

Kim Jung-su, also known as his stage name Jungsu

Born on June 26 2001

He's the Keyboardist and main vocalist of the group.

<https://youtu.be/nL4TFS6s3d0?si=eCFIwVX-seZ1amJO>

Kwak Ji Seok, also known as his stage name Gaon

Born on January 14 2002

He has the position of rhythm guitarist, rapper and vocalist

He was actually a subscriber of Gunils Youtube channel before knowing they were going to join a band together

<https://youtu.be/ar3409iSi7E?si=JxnRFFSeo7Z0bmiY>

Oh Seung-Min, also known as his stage name O.de

Born on June 11 2002

He's the Synthesizer, Rapper and Vocalist

<https://youtu.be/kOMbGh9SBLY?si=zoME-8Rp8K9fDi2S>

Han Hyeong-jun, also known as his stage name Junhan

Born on August 18 2002

He is the Leadguitarist and does some occasionally vocals

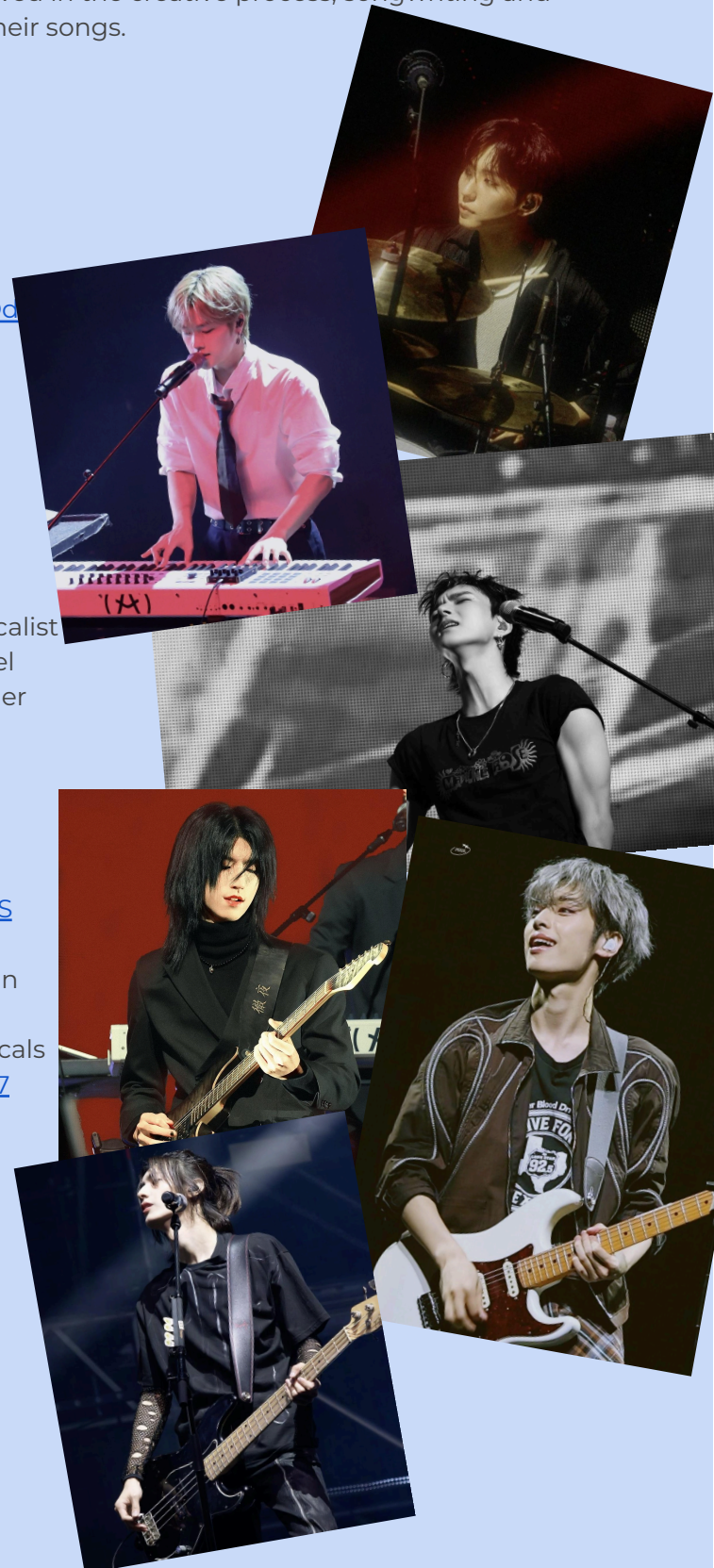
https://youtu.be/oPRGYcRx_PO?si=1n2NVbdoyRKLkcX7

Lee Joo-yeon, also known as his stage name Jooyeon

Born on September 12 2002

He's the Bassist and Main Vocals together wit Jungsu

<https://youtu.be/l0PqZXRjB28?si=39EFl6pHkGSCrRR9>



Discography

Xdh entered the music scene with a bang on the 6th december of 2021, with their debut single "Happy Death Day. The MV has 27 million views as of today.

Their first comeback with their first mini album "Hello,world!" on 20th July 2022,

- second mini album "Overload" on the 11th november 2022
- third mini album "Deadlock" on the 26th april 2023
- Fourth mini album Livelock on the 11th october 2023
- Their first OST "Wego Wego" on 8th march 2024
- Their first studio album "Trouble Shooting" on 30th april 2024
- On April 21 2024 they launched their "Closed beta ver.6" also called "Xperiment 2024" project, which was a 5 month long project in which the band released one digital single together with an instrumental, and held multiple closed concerts all leading up to their latest mini album "LIVE and FALL"
- They have to this day won 4 awards: MAMA Best Band Performance 2022, MAMA Best new male artist 2022,Hanteo Music Awards Special Award-Band 2023, Seoul Music Awards Band Award 2024

Jungsu on the beta project:

"The concert title 'Closed beta' means a trial test of a new program for exclusive users, which implies that we will unveil new songs before the official release, only to those who are here for us."

>> At the core of their identity is the band's ability to write, compose and produce their own songs. But their charm has always been their skills in switching up their style dramatically.<<



Concept

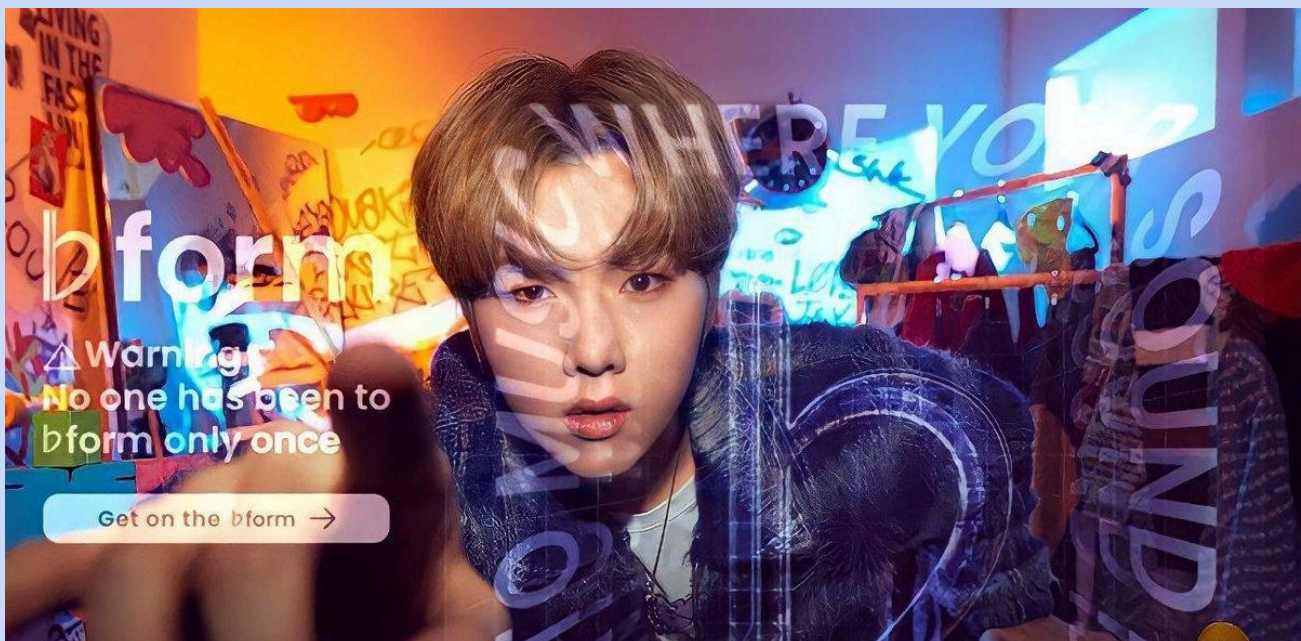
As previously implied when talking about the Beta project, Xdh has an overlying concept or "Lore".

This in itself is nothing uncommon for the KPOP industry. Many KPOP groups have one or multiple storylines which stretch through lyrics, music videos, promotional videos and teasers. But Xdh is one of the first KPOP Bands to implement such a storyline, especially one that is so thought through and comprehensive.

To explain Xdh's whole lore as it is now would be far too detailed for this text, at large, it's about a fictional world where the band members want to play music but for some reason can't do it out in the real world, so they join a forum where they can play music together online. Though because they have to overcome multiple obstacles and eventually get "trapped" they have to "breakout" or find back to the real world. This explains the overlying theme for their whole discography.



In their latest Mini Album they have found back to the real world and broken off that storyline, Although it is not clear if they have now completed their story and are focussing on music unrelated to their concept or if their last Mini Album is still connected to their lore.



>>Main vocalist, bassist, and maknae (the Korean term for youngest member) Jooyeon explains the shift in their music, citing the incorporation of "bform" (pronounced: "flat form"), the band's so-called metaverse-esque experience that invites fans to explore interactive online spaces to learn more about the lore behind Xdinary Heroes' music. "When we started off, it was a lot based on the bform...But then as time went on, our music changed to kind of reflect how we were feeling in that moment, during that season of our life."<<

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqZMqrPLr-k> 13:50 - 17:00



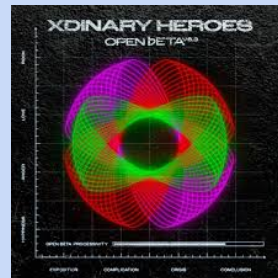
XH_WORLD_75

,takes the instrumental teasers that were released each month through the “Beta Project” and combines them to a breathtaking, instrumental, opening track.

It is, in my Opinion, the perfect opening for this album, as it is both as energetic and as melancholic as the rest of the songs.

Overall “XH_WORLD_75” beautifully captures the mood of the EP and prepares the Listener to what's about to come.

Combining the overall sound of the song together with the experimental way of releasing it and the whole experience for the Fans being able to piece the teasers together, I would rate the Opening track a solid 9/10 Waffles



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvnXQ0gb_kw → winds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvVckk-I9o> → sand

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8w4VaSatfVY> → waves

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNptotJs2uw> → stone

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-akMNNavbLQ> → world



Night before the end



Are you alive or
just ~~existing~~?

The title track "night before the end" is a traditionally structured emo pop-rock ballad. They set the mood of the song with a heartbreaking, melodic and melancholic bassline, which blurs the lines between bass-line and straight up chords.

The song and MV are a visual, musical and lyrical representation of falling or failing to fly. The lyrics capture the feelings of someone right before figuratively, the end of time, the last hour of love, the moment right before falling.

They repeatedly use fire moths in their MV which could stem from the saying "Moth to fire", which stands both for a passionate person and a person flying towards their own imminent death.

The overlying theme of the song

seems to be "Fall and Destruction caused by an overflowing passion", which could be applied both to a relationship (like its hinted at in the lyrics) and to everyday life, which would fall in line with the overall idea/concept of the album, Living, falling and getting up again to continue living.



>>The night before falling
Out of what we thought love is
A tangled story that no words can untangle
Hoping to leave behind the ending that will be too painful
Let's just leave it tonight
It's the time, the last hour of love<<



While being a solid song with beautiful meaning, lyrics, instrumental and vocals, I'd say that it just doesn't truly stand out on this EP, being overshadowed by the other masterpieces. But still it's a super solid, emotional song that I'd rate a solid

8/10 Waffles

Though I have to say that I, as a bassist, am absolutely in love with the bassline and would rate it separately a 10/10 Waffles

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B93haFHobpg> → MV

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umxmlKUrPwk> → Lyrics

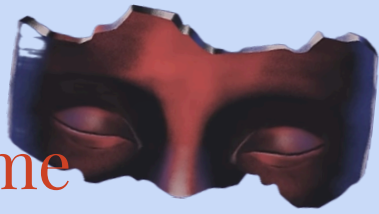
[Xdinary Heroes "Night before the end" LIVE CLIP](#) → live clip

[새벽 베이스 | Xdinary Heroes \(엑스디너리 히어로즈\) 'Night before the end'](#)

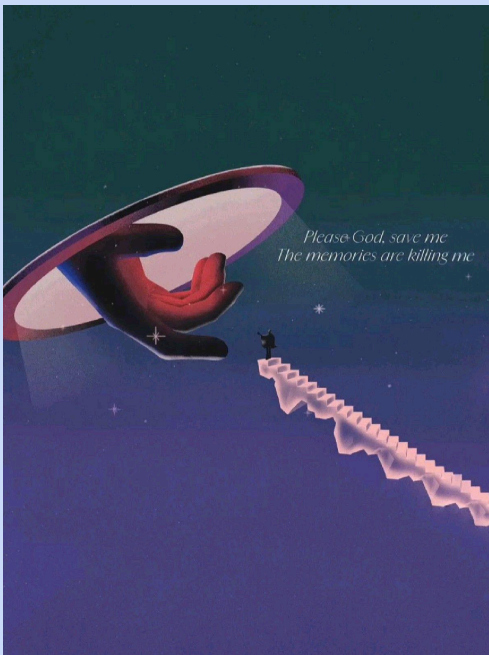
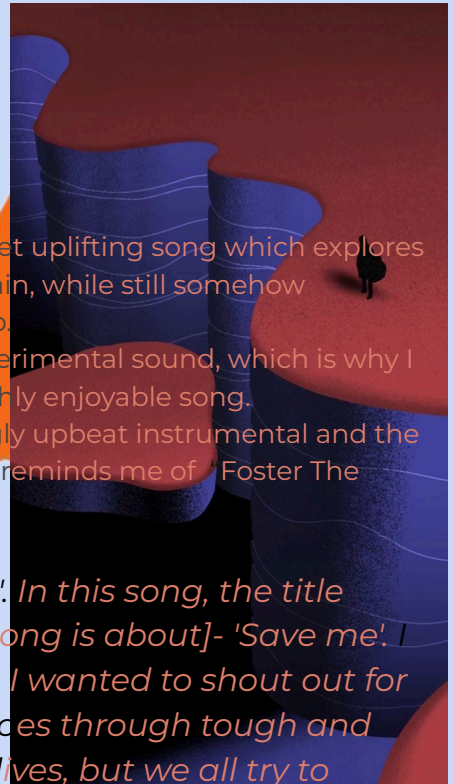
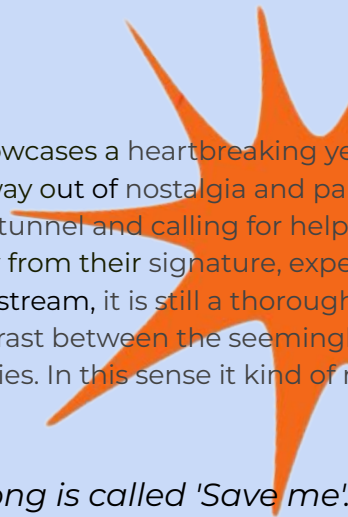
[베이스커버\(+BASSTAB, 베이스악보, 쉬움ver\)](#) → bass cover



Save me



Is the third track on the mini album and showcases a heartbreaking yet uplifting song which explores the feelings of being lost and not seeing a way out of nostalgia and pain, while still somehow managing to see the light at the end of the tunnel and calling for help. Even though "Save me" slightly moves away from their signature, experimental sound, which is why I first started listening to them, into the mainstream, it is still a thoroughly enjoyable song. What stands out to me the most is the contrast between the seemingly upbeat instrumental and the absolute heartbreaking, melancholic melodies. In this sense it kind of reminds me of "Foster The Peoples": "Pumped up Kids".



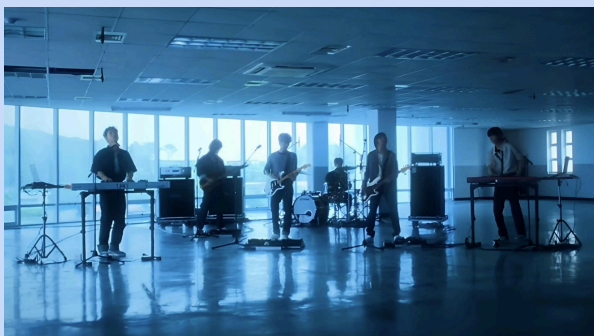
>>This song is called 'Save me'. In this song, the title [represents exactly what the song is about]- 'Save me! I wrote the lyrics when I felt like I wanted to shout out for help. I believe that everyone goes through tough and exhausting times once in our lives, but we all try to endure it. So, I thought, 'Can't anyone save me, just for today?' I wrote the lyrics with that feeling in mind... Somehow, the lyrics may seem really sad and heartbreaking, but the overall song's vibe is not like that at all! Since it's also a song about hope, I [also] wanted to convey that sense of hope to all of you." -Jungsu



- [Xdinary Heroes "Save me" M/V](#) → MV
- [Xdinary Heroes - 'Save me' Lyrics \[Color Coded_Han_Rom_Eng\]](#) lyrics
- [Xdinary Heroes\(엑스디너리 히어로즈\) - Save me | LIVE PERFORMANCE](#)

[\(4K\) | ISSUE CLUB](#) → live clip

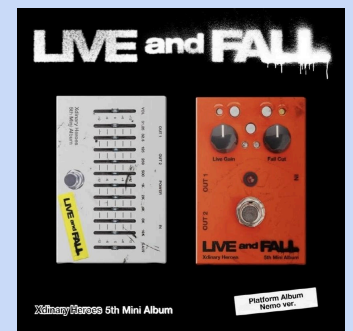
This time, to portray their song the best, Xdinary Heroes opted for an animation lyric video as the official music video for 'Save me.' And it's gorgeous. As Xdh showcases their beautiful vocals and their talent as musicians through the song, the music video leads us through the journey of a lost hero as he tries to find himself through ruins. The stunning animations portray loneliness and the essence of 'Save me' in the most gorgeous way.



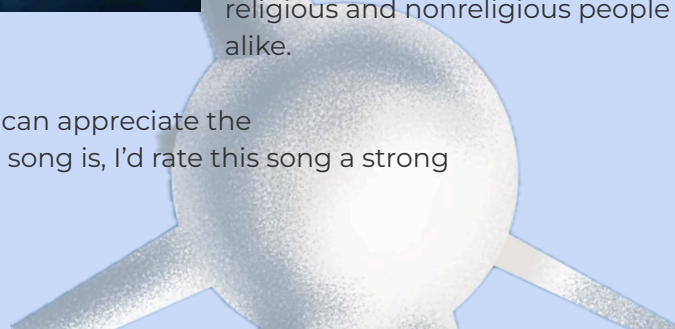
Even though the main reference in the song is religious, it is so well written that it connects with religious and nonreligious people alike.

I still prefer their more experimental songs, but I can appreciate the absolute masterpiece this song is, I'd rate this song a strong

9/10 Waffles



They actually have effect pedals for merchandise which I find pretty neat



Boy Comics



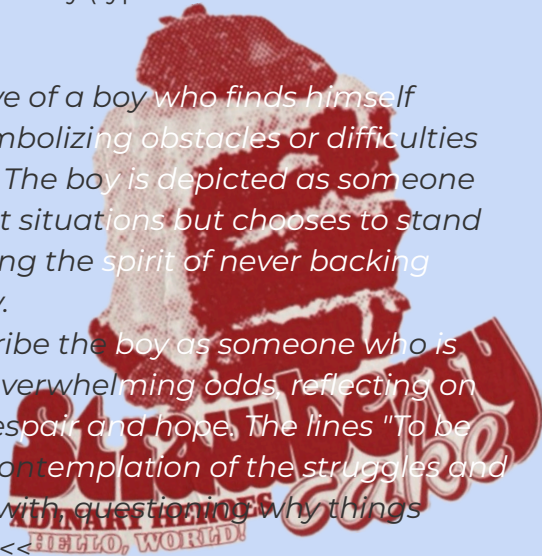
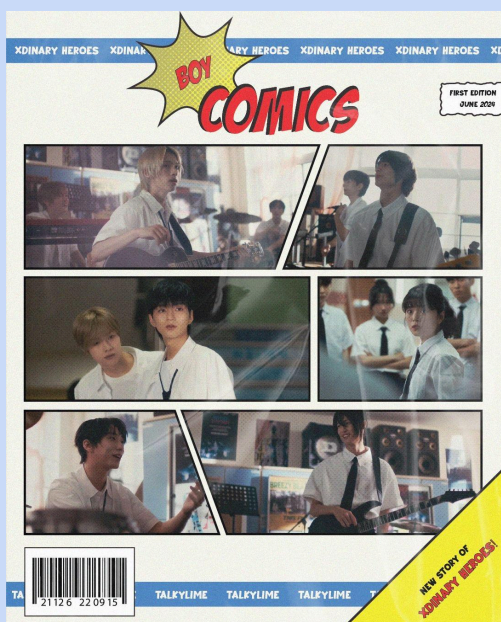
“Boy Comics” clearly takes inspiration from the JRock genre, a rock genre that is a bit more fun and “crazy” or “quirky” than our classic western rock. Besides that it also has a lot of elements that can be traced back to 80’s hair rock, especially the energy and intensity, alt-rock, as well as classical elements such as strings, giving the song a soundtrack-like feel.

Due to the anthem-like or Soundtrack-like feeling of The song, it sounds like it could be straight out of a videogame bossfight, or an anime opening, having the typical JRock sound.

Lyrically the song touches upon themes of resilience, perseverance and being the hero in one’s own story (typical themes in Video Game and Anime culture)

>>The lyrics reflect a narrative of a boy who finds himself surrounded by monsters, symbolizing obstacles or difficulties in life, but refuses to give up. The boy is depicted as someone who constantly faces difficult situations but chooses to stand tall and fight back, embodying the spirit of never backing down in the face of adversity.

In the verses, the lyrics describe the boy as someone who is constantly battling against overwhelming odds reflecting on his situation with a mix of despair and hope. The lines “To be or not to be” [...] suggests a contemplation of the struggles and challenges he is confronted with, questioning why things turned out the way they did.<<



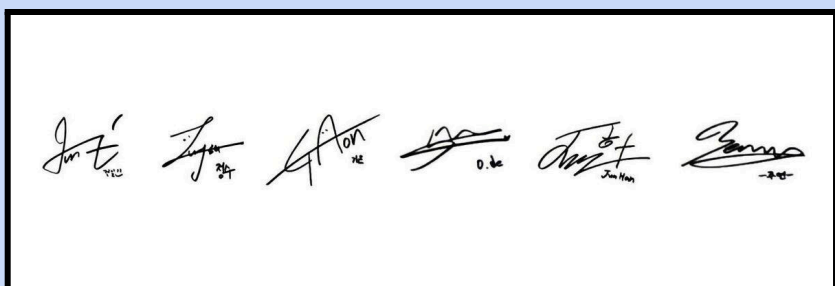
- <https://youtu.be/F8bv1BwZgbk?si=xVpkTORlqDxwwFCq> → MV
- <https://youtu.be/amiHLAf8CIU?si=rX1OA5rCIJrwzPlt> → lyrics
- <https://youtu.be/-ng5T6bBnCE?si=CIBYBRld8RBR8DM3> → live clip

The MV to Boycomics is a playful take on an alternate reality concept, taking place in a highschool setting with similarities to Japanese culture and media, further solidifying the Japanese influence on their music. For longtime Fans this Video is certainly a masterpiece as the main focus is on a piece of strawberry cake, a nod to one of their most iconic and popular songs, “Strawberry cake”.



The song itself is less memorable than the sheer intensity of its presentation, especially when compared to the group’s strongest material, but the chorus has an anthemic quality that will likely grow more addictive with each listen. It’s a solid, fun track and If you’re looking for a burst of rabble-rousing energy, *Boy Comics* definitely has you covered.

So I’d rate this song a
8/10 Waffles





iNSTEAD!

With "iNSTEAD!", xdh surprises not only with their first ever feature, more shockingly by the absolute KRock Legend Yoon Do Hyun from the renowned KRock Band YB, but also them finally fully crossing over to metal songs. The band is known for their often experimental and sometimes harder sound, but has mostly ventured in punk-rock and rock territories. On "iNSTEAD" though, the beautiful, clear vocals of Jungsu, Jooyeon, O.de and Gaon create a stark contrast to raw drums, frantic riffs and most importantly, Yoon Do Hyun's screams.

The lyrics are marked with themes of suffocation, deep turmoil and a desire for revenge, resentment and betrayal.

>>You stare at me like I'm brain dead
 "Dr. Bad News" came with meds<<

>>To whom you wrote
 I hope they choke on words that broke me
 And when they ghost, keep playing dead<<



>>The melodies and vocals are infectious and unforgettable. The perfect mixture of hard-rock instrumentation, impactful melodies, and irreplaceable energy from Xdinary Heroes goes flawlessly with the moments of screamo given by YB's Yoon Do Hyun. This is Xdinary Heroes like we've never seen them before, yet how they were always meant to be. For a first collaboration, they raised the bar so incredibly high!<<

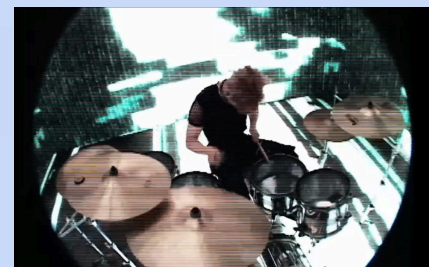
>>Post-hardcore is not only unprecedented in Xdinary Heroes' discography but in K-Pop in general. And they didn't embody this style only in their sound, but also in the aesthetic and styling. It is impossible to look away from the music video with the flawless makeup, the incredible clothes, and the incorporation of different animated elements. 'iNSTEAD!' feels like the epitome of Xdinary Heroes' art and the perfect step to take with these digital singles they've been giving us [...]<<

Speaking of the MV, it is in my opinion a true masterpiece, not only the sound but also the visuals are reminiscent of the likes of Muse, Green Day and My Chemical Romance, or just in general 90-2010 metal, emo and punk.

I'd rate iNSTEAD! a straight
 10/10 Waffles

Shout out to gunil's
 immaculate triplets

<https://youtu.be/ZCXkOGH6azI?si=ZE0glt58jql795na> mv
<https://youtu.be/4WMd8ZTwwKk?si=xUzMBvi1HR9bqMd8> live clip
<https://youtu.be/T-dNOgWAO1O?si=AK5OjG-XirHr7LZ5> lyrics



Feeling nice



One of the lesser talked about songs from this ep, "Feeling Nice". A pretty straightforward alt-rock or rock song. I really appreciate it for the surprising BPM-, the tempo of the song, change, in the middle of the song:

>>For the first time among released songs, the BPM changes in the middle of the song. There is a section in the middle where it slows down for a moment and then suddenly speeds up, which makes it a lot of fun to listen to.<<

The Song builds upon a strong, rhythmic and continuous bass with clear vocals and interesting, sometimes minimal, synths, going back to a recipe that seems to always work for Xdh.

Even though the BPM change combined with the eerie synths makes it almost feel like everything is in slow motion, stopping you mid track, the lyrics portray the exact opposite.

A straight ~~fuck you~~ to everyone that try's to slow them down and hold them back.

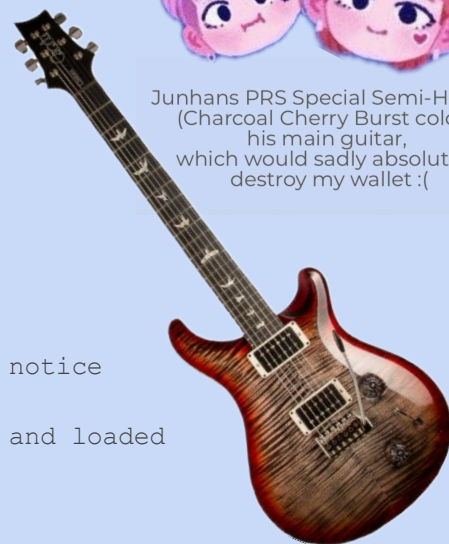


>>Hey, what you talkin' 'bout?
You tryin' to kill my vibe?
You always cross my line
All the time
You see, I'm on the rise
There already ain't no doubt about it
You're just a witness
Just go, "Oh, my God"<<

>>No matter who barks at me
No matter what you say, I'll never notice
The more you try to scratch me up
I kinda love it, 'cause I'm locked and loaded
Carving out my way
Upon the fastest lane
So keep on calling me insane
That's how I like it, feeling nice, feeling nice<<



Junhans PRS Special Semi-Hollow (Charcoal Cherry Burst color), his main guitar, which would sadly absolutely destroy my wallet :(



"Feeling nice" is an energetic, "you against the world" kind of song that achieves exactly what it aims for. It definitely has its place and time, but similarly to Night before the end, it gets overshadowed by the other tracks on this ep, so I'd rate this song a solid

7/10

https://youtu.be/dBre_x6-8Mw?si=aDpkiuZl36zsUeSt live clip

<https://youtu.be/yre9QHn1lWA?si=koit26g2Aavp09s9> lyrics

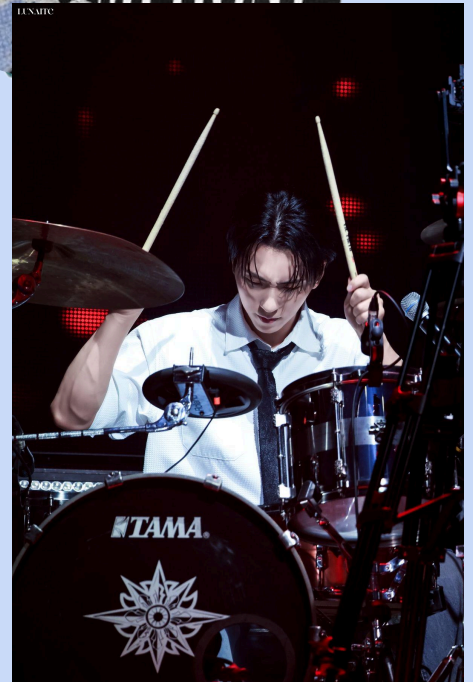
Xymphony



Where do I even start?

This masterpiece honors the Title by actually having a symphony-like structure, with multiple movements and concerto-like solos. Sure this piece, and let's be honest, it is a piece and not a song, can not by definition be a symphony, due to there not being an orchestra, but I'd say it comes as close as possible with a 6 member rock band.

<https://youtu.be/ynPayD7bgLE?si=IHBmh5iTBKO4xatu> → a small analysis
5:38



The song obviously plays to the strengths of Jungsu, having a beautiful, complex and haunting piano

melody that carries the whole piece. The piano opening suddenly gets disrupted by chilling screams, officially introducing the second movement and slowly building up to a chorus that includes the whole band.

What I personally find very interesting is that instead of choosing strings or a more orchestral sound for the synth, which would have been the obvious choice to try to allude even more to the symphony theme, they went with distorted, almost guitar like synths. This combined with the musical dissonance(I'll come back to that later), leads to a bone chilling, haunting, eerie mood and sound.

>>Nothing can get anyone ready for how amazing this song is. 'XYMPHONY' is the perfect song to be the soundtrack to your Halloween with its mixture of classical piano, eccentric and unique vocals, and rock vibes. This track is pure genius. It is intense, yet creepy, and the embodiment in music form of a haunted house.<<

Speaking of the dissonance, it is created by multiple semitone movements which is a very unstable harmony, directly linking it to the lyrics. Not only are the lyrics about dissonance and harmonies, but also at some places the vocals sound like their in dissonance with the instrumental due to inversions of the cords, singing the 5th as the root. IS THAT NOT INSANE?

>>A song that expresses a confused inner self through powerful classical piano and dissonant sounds. The lyrics depict a journey to find harmony, even if it is imperfect, and express the earnest desire to be saved through music from chaos.<<



>>The sweetest melody
that will save me
My chaotic mind
The world that was only
noisy
Now makes sense
Imperfection made for a perfect symphony
A life that was pressed randomly
A hopeless time that I thought was dead
Revives one by one
A symphony that will never be extinguished<<

>>It lingers in my ears, oh, my gosh
I fell into an unfamiliar world
If you pity me
Please allow an end
I'm not in my right mind, as if incomplete
Even the silence and stillness sound different
I am unstable and imperfect
We must embrace each other, surely, with or without<<



This song is one of the cleverest songs, not only in Xdh's discography, but in the K-pop industry in general.

Suffice to say that I, as a small music nerd that loves to analyse this kind of stuff, I AM OBSESSED!

Sure there is practically not a single song in Xdh's discography that is bad or even simple, but this is a step up for them. I have been trying to cut myself short while writing this review but to just visualise how incredible and overall, besides all the music theory Nerdy-stuff, just beautiful I'd rate this song an above perfect

11/10 Waffles

<https://youtu.be/ittWjMW6E7w?si=US0xQ1sCJd-3CBiP> - live clip

https://youtu.be/q60NMVXFXHo?si=A88ZSmdb4B_xPLHR - lyrics

LOVE and FEAR



LOVE and FEAR is personally one of my favourite songs of Xdh's discography, so this review might be a bit subjective, as I know a lot of fans were disappointed by this song.

The last track on this Ep is a great rock/emo anthem that is very reminiscent of the likes of Linkin Park while still having a very distinctive Korean sound due to the CRAZY chord progression (Cm, Am7b5, Ab, Bb7/Ab, Gm, Cm, C Major, Am7b5, Ab, Bb7/Ab, Gm, Cm)

<https://youtu.be/RYqEFzQOR3Q?si=rttbtCVSUB58HURj> - a small analysis

3:58

Right of the bat the song had me hooked with the chant opening, transitioning to a familiar, Linkin Park, sound while having, for me, a weird unheard chord progression, due to it being very popular in Korean rock music, while not gaining much attention in the western rock scene.



While seemingly a simple song, it is an insanely intricate and complex song that just can't decide whether it wants to be Dorian or Lydian

Besides the musical intricacy and sound, what got me hooked was the MV. Having a song that has big chunks of Korean lyrics, while still wanting to promote internationally, means that the MV has to represent not only the sound and vibe of the music, but also the meaning and lyrics visually.

Later on I learned that the song is about the pushes and pulls of a toxic relationship, though a lot of people have pointed out that this could also be applied to a lot of other situations such as fame or "being consumed by music". Coming back around to the theme of LIVE and FALL's title track "Night before the end": Fall and Destruction by overflowing passion



>>Xdinary Heroes' song 'LOVE and FEAR' delves into the complex and often contradictory emotions that come with intense relationships. The lyrics paint a vivid picture of a love that is both exhilarating and terrifying, capturing the essence of being deeply entangled with someone who has the power to uplift and destroy you simultaneously.<<

>>The moment that I feel like you're a devil
You turn into an angel and comfort me
After pushing me off the cliff
You save me by stretching out your hand<<

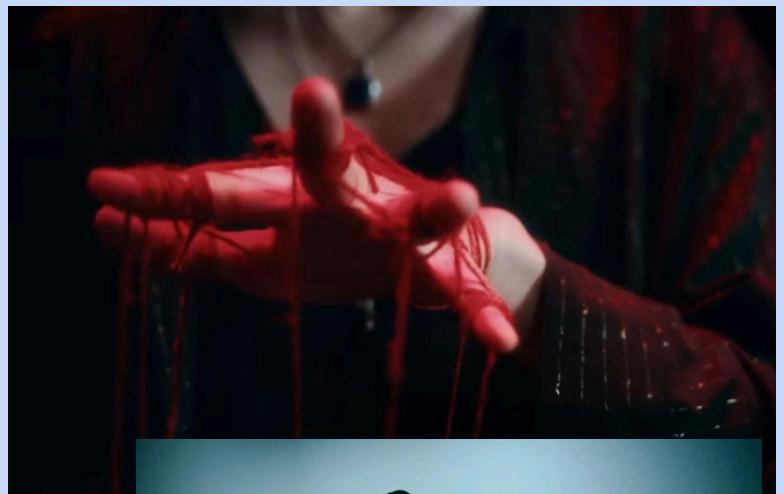
>>Addictive so that I keep on asking for you<<

The MV manages to achieve that exact feeling, while still somehow looking beautiful and reminiscent of 2000s emo and rock MVs

https://youtu.be/kvjShHIG-nc?si=q_K_tKwgygoB8iH - MV

https://youtu.be/YD_KixAviis?si=Oj9I08O_ljk5DJ5 - live clip

<https://youtu.be/z2WxB5dnFx4?si=hEtYWXQEd7cLBHn5> - lyrics



>>'LOVE and FEAR' explores the duality of falling in love and being attached to someone. They sing about a toxic relationship that gives them comfort yet hurts them. 'LOVE and FEAR' perfectly demonstrates a back-and-forth between love and hate, which the music video expresses beautifully, alternating between an aesthetic in white and another in red. The emotions are raw, unfiltered, and angsty. They mix it with a heavy instrumental, unique melodies, and striking vocals. It gives way to a perfect combination of an emo song and a J-Rock song<<

Something else that stood out to me was Junhans absolute banger of a guitar solo, though I have to admit that there is not a single guitar solo of Junhans that is not good. But in this specific one he just makes his Ibanez Gio SCREAM. A lot less cleaner sounding than his other solos as he doesn't use the wah wah pedal all too often.

Though very subjective, I'd rate this song a perfect 10/10 Waffles



The Final Waffle scale

XH_world_75	9/10 Waffles
Night Before the end	8/10 Waffles
Save me	9/10 Waffles
Boy comics	8/10 Waffles
iNSTEAD!	10/10 Waffles
Feeling nice	7/10 Waffles
Xymphony	11/10 Waffles
LOVE and FEAR	10/10 Waffles



In conclusion I'd rate this album a 72/80

Sure they didn't reinvent the wheel with their music, none of the song from this ep are something we haven't heard before. But they are, to some extent, part of the K-pop industry and there, it's a totally different story. Sure the kpop industry's music has been taking strides towards less "safe" music, but it is by far not there yet. Xdh though has been breaking all the "safety-laws" the industry has bound to them. They are, in my opinion, the first band of the second Korean wave, introducing K-bands into the global music scene. Some other K-bands that are right up there are Day6(Xdh's

older brother band), Lucy, The Rose and Onewe. Some other K-indie bands/musicians to look out for in my opinion are the like of Wave2Earth, Se So Neon(So!YoON!) and Silica Gel.