★ HIGH HOPES

Dirty Honey

"We'd look around and go: 'Why isn't there a present-day AC/DC or Aerosmith?'"

The LA four-piece have topped a chart and played with A-listers – and are still unsigned.

Marc LaBelle remembers his first rock-star encounter. The Dirty Honey singer/frontman was nine years old when his favourite band, Aerosmith, played near his family's home in upstate New York. His stepdad heard them on the radio and insisted on driving him to the radio station. Marc didn't think they'd actually meet his heroes, but then…

"Sure enough, they walked out in their full rock-star regalia, and they were signing girls' boobs and getting into a limo," he recalls. "I watched them drive away and thought: 'That looks like a really cool occupation.'"

He's since made good on that early inspiration, playing "new-fashioned rock'n'roll" with Dirty Honey. If you're wondering what that sounds like, it's basically a mixture of the sweetest flavours cherry-picked from the 70s, 80s and 90s (think Aerosmith, Led Zeppelin, Guns N' Roses, The Black Crowes), shaken up with Dirty Honey's energised fairy dust and king-sized tunes.

It all began, on some level, when LaBelle found himself singing AC/DC songs at a karaoke night in Italy, where he was studying for a year. "This Italian guy was like: 'I'll pay you…'" he remembers. "So I started performing once a week in Florence."

Duly inspired, he flew home to the US and moved into a friend's place in LA, initially working as a location scout for shows like *Sons Of Anarchy*. Eventually he met guitarist John Notto through covers gigs. Completed by bassist Justin Smolian and drummer Corey Coverstone in 2017, the band started writing their own songs and playing to enthusiastic audiences across the West Coast.

"We'd go to a place called the Tavern in Ventura County," LaBelle says. "Ventura is a poor city, and on the weekends they wanna have a couple of beers and have a good time listening to some rock'n'roll. We'd all look around and go: 'People love these songs. Why isn't there a present-day AC/DC or Aerosmith?'"

In the past two years, Dirty Honey have generated the kind of buzz seldom experienced by new rock bands today. They've played with The Who and GN'R. Last year their single *When I'm Gone* topped *Billboard*'s mainstream rock chart, making them the first unsigned band to do so. They were in talks with Greta Van Fleet's production people for their self-titled EP, but ended up recording with Nick DiDia (Bruce Springsteen, Rage Against The Machine). Not that their lack of record-label muscle hasn't been without its obstacles.

"My apartment is full of merchandise," LaBelle laughs, "you can't walk around, I ship all the stuff myself. So we're trying to navigate these waters as best we can, there's been some problems but we're doing okay. We wanna keep this thing going." **PG**

Dirty Honey's self-titled EP is out now via www.dirtyhoney.com

FOR FANS OF...

"I would say if you like The Black Crowes' *Southern Harmony*, you'd be in the right direction for Dirty Honey," Marc says. "It's totally what I love. This is right down the middle of what speaks to me musically. The Black Crowes to me always stayed true to that bluesy rock thing that I just can't get enough of."

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