Many cultures, religions, and ideologies believe death is not the end, but merely a new beginning…

By that token, Will Haven’s sixth full-length album and first for minus HEAD Records, the aptly titled *Muerte* (Spanish for *“death”*), feels like the beginning for the Sacramento quartet—Grady Avenell [singer], Jeff Irwin [guitar], Adrien Contreras [bass], and Mitch Wheeler [drums]. However, the band’s origins can be traced back to 1995 when they first emerged as a staple in their hometown’s storied underground. For the past two decades-plus, they’ve existed on the fringe of extreme music championing an apocalyptic amalgam of metal, noise, hardcore, and alternative all their own. Along the way, they unleashed a string of seminal and influential albums kicked off by 1997’s *El Diablo* and *WHVN* two years later. Between tours with everyone from Slipknot to Deftones, *Carpe Diem* proved an influential milestone in 2001, while avowed fans and scene compatriots Chino Moreno and Far’s Shaun Lopez co-produced *The Hierophant* during 2007. Slipknot percussionist Chris Fehn assumed bass duties on the 2011 opus *Voir Dire*, which landed among *Metal Hammer*’s “Top 50 Albums of the Year.”

The 2015 EP *Open Mind to Discomfort* seemed like the last time we’d hear from the group until Jeff approached Grady with a handful of jams he wrote alongside Adrien and Mitch in 2016…

“Grady said, *‘This is my last one’*, so we went into the whole thing with no expectations,” recalls the guitarist. “As soon as we started finishing everything and he put his lyrics down, we got really excited. I can’t say this is our final album, because I don’t think we’ve ever been this motivated to play music in twenty years. It felt like a rebirth. It sounds like a whole new band. There’s a chemistry that only the four of us can achieve. Who knows what’s next, but this is everything we were always meant to be on a record.”

Throughout 2017, the boys secretly recorded at Pus Cavern Studios in Sacramento, CA with Joe Johnston engineering and co-producing alongside Jeff. They pieced together a corrosive, chaotic, and cohesive vision that never relents over its 11 tracks.

“All said and done, we spent two years on this record,” says Jeff. “We had more time than ever to fine tune the music. We really benefitted from that. We’re also more in tune with who we are. It’s the first time I walked away going, *‘There’s nothing else I could’ve done to make this better.’*”

Will Haven introduce *Muerte* with an ominous hum on “Hewed With The Brand.” A scream from Grady quickly snaps into grating rhythms and a barrage of guitars before a seesawing, sharp, and striking chant.

“It’s old school,” he smiles. “We wanted to come out with guns blazing and kill people on the first track. That’s perfect for our day one fans.”

The trudging psychedelic sludge of “No Escape” comes complete with a haunting and hypnotic vocal cameo courtesy of YOB frontman Mike Scheidt. “We’ve toured YOB on a few occasions,” he goes on. “We’re good friends with those guys. Since we’ve never really collaborated with anybody, we thought it would be a cool experiment. We come from a similar mindset. This part felt perfect for him. I love what he did.”

Everything culminates on the six minute-plus epic “El Sol” co-written by Deftones guitarist Stephen Carpenter. Two singular styles entwine in one brilliantly bludgeoning send-off.

**“**If Will Haven and Deftones had a kid, that’s what it would sound like,” he continues. “I was in my first band with Stephen. This was really a family thing. While we were in the studio, he sent us an email with an eight-minute song of all riffs. I added the spacey elements. Grady is reciting this famous poem about being kind to your fellow man and taking care of each other. Lyrically, it fits the times.”

In the end, *Muerte* represents a milestone for Will Haven as their most poignant, passionate, and powerful body of work to date.

“If lifelong fans love it, that’s who we wrote it for,” he leaves off. “If this is it for us, I couldn’t be more proud of what we created. However, everyone is in such a good place, you can never say never. I’ll just say this, *‘Muerte is a gift to anyone who’s enjoyed our music.’*”