

Deathrock fashion

Deathrock fashion is the distinctive style of dress usually associated with the deathrock music scene.

Origins and influences

The playfully spooky Deathrock look was first popularized by Siouxsie Sioux of Siouxsie & the Banshees for females, and Rozz Williams of Christian Death for males. However, a careful look at horror movies, TV shows, certain 1950s novelty music acts (such as Bobby "Boris" Pickett and the Monster Mash), and Gothic Literature reveal earlier influences.

Musical influences

The Deathrock look has been most strongly shaped by musicians from the first generation of Gothic Rock bands in Europe. In addition to Siouxsie Sioux and Robert Smith, the look was also influenced by the Virgin Prunes, Specimen, Alien Sex Fiend, etc.; the early Californian Deathrock bands Christian Death, 45 Grave, Voodoo Church, etc.; Glam rockers David Bowie, Alice Cooper, and to some extent Marc Bolan; and to a lesser (and more monochromatic) extent the fashion conscious New Wave/New Romantic acts Adam Ant, Madonna (early in her career), Deborah Harry, Cindy Lauper, etc.

Horror movie influences

The Deathrock look has also been strongly influenced by non-musical sources, primarily horror movies and TV horror movie hosts. Deathrock fashion is often centred around a very tongue-in-cheek, horror movie and gore sense of style.

The most influential of the horror movies have been the underground cult movies such as Night of the Living Dead, Hellraiser, Return of the Living Dead, Universal Horror movies, especially the ones starring Bela Lugosi, Boris Karloff and Lon Chaney, Jr.; Hammer Horror movies, especially the ones starring Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing; as well as some of the silent film classics including The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Nosferatu, The Phantom of the Opera and Metropolis. These movies are still played on TV monitors or projected in the background at Death Rock clubs.

Some of the horror movie hosts who have influenced Deathrock fashion include Vampira in Los Angeles, John Zacherle in Philadelphia and New York, Elvira initially in Los Angeles and later nationally, and Ghoulardi in Cleveland.

TV Show influences

No description of the Deathrock subculture and Deathrock fashion would be complete without mentioning the influence of the Addams Family and the Munsters. Virtually all cast members (except for normal looking Marilyn Munster) would have no trouble fitting in at a Deathrock club, and are considered an early influence on the scene by influencing the musicians who developed the Death Rock look. The pencil thin eyebrows and low cut dresses and tops of Morticia Addams, and the differently colored streaks in Lilly Munster's hair are mimicked by many Deathrockers.

Gothic Influences

Gothic fiction, especially the works of Edgar Allan Poe, and Anne Rice's Vampire series are influential. Gothic artwork has also influenced the Deathrock look, mainly by providing a rich and dark imagery common to Death Rock fashion accessories: graveyards, tombstones, coffins, churches, celtic crosses, ghosts, vampires, skulls, bats, and human skeletons.

Contemporary Deathrock Fashion

Modern Deathrock fashion occupies the middle ground between Punk fashion and Gothic fashion. Whereas a Punk would have a hard time blending in a Goth club, and a Goth would look out of place at a Punk concert, a Deathrocker would have relatively little trouble blending in at either venue. However, Deathrock fashion incorporates a darker, more androgynous, and far sexier look than Punk fashion; and a more tattered, pieced together and DIY look than Gothic fashion. Also, the influence of horror movies as well as a lack of BDSM fashion elements helps to differentiate Deathrock fashion from Gothic fashion.

Deathrock Clothing

Death Rock fashion is characterized by layering black and white clothing. The clothing more often than not comes from thrift stores and frequently includes older designer clothing which has been altered in some way and extensively accessorized. Occasionally, vibrant reds, greens, blues and purples will be used as accent colors, especially for dresses, jackets, tights, and when dyeing one's hair. Clothing items with black and white, black and red, or black and green stripes

are also extremely common. Much of the clothing, particularly t-shirts and fishnets are often ripped or torn.

One of the staples of the deathrock look is the excessive use of torn fishnets and tights, varying in colours, worn on the arms, body and legs.

The most common colours in the deathrock scene are arguably black, white, and bright, neon, horror-movie style green.

Common Deathrock clothing items include black jeans, tight black or colored plaid bondage pants, short black or colored plaid bondage mini-skirts, black lycra mini-skirts, black or white lace skirts, etc.; black or white deathrock band or horror movie t-shirts, black, white or colored corsets, black or white dress shirts or polo shirts (both normally worn with a narrow tie), black or white camisoles, black or white lace tops; black, white or red fishnet tops (normally worn under other band t-shirts or corsets); black or white sport coats with band patches sewn onto the back; black denim, cotton, or leather waistcoats with band patches sewn onto the back; black leather motorcycle jackets with death rock album covers painted onto their backs; black or white tights, black and white striped tights; black fishnet stockings; and near-mandatory Dr. Martens boots.

Deathrock Fashion Accessories

Whereas Goths tend to go for more understated accessories, Deathrockers tend to love excess. It's not uncommon to see a Deathrocker wearing three heavily studded belts at the same time as well as dozens of badges and multiple band patches sewn into their clothing.

Basic Deathrock accessories include Deathrock band patches of various sizes sewn onto clothing; safety pins worn as jewelry; rosary beads worn as necklaces; numerous Death Rock band or horror movies badges over shirts, tops and even leather biker jackets; silver toned jewelry (frequently with human skulls, skeletons, bats, etc.); fingerless gloves, fishnet gloves and lace mitts; multiple pyramid studded belts and/or bondage belts with chains dangling through the hoops; pyramid studded bracelets and chokers; lunch box or coffin purses; and a Deathrock patch - the initials "D" and "R" along with two initials indicating the wearer's geographic location, such as "C" and "A" for California, "N" and "Y" for New York, or "D" and "E" for Germany.

Death rock Makeup

Deathrock fashion makeup (for both males and females) has strong horror movie influences, especially zombie movies. This makeup deliberately emphasizes unnaturally pale and death-like complexions (with some death rockers taking the look so far as to use "whiteface" make-up); either black, blood or dark red lipstick; dark eyeshadow applied both over the upper eyelid and underneath to create a sunken or sickly look; and heavy black eyeliner. Fingernail polish is usually black though it may occasionally be white or red, green, blue, purple or a combination of these colors.

Deathrock Hairstyles

Deathrocker hairstyles have a decidedly '80s big hair or punk influence. Bettie Page style bangs, often coming to a point in the middle of the forehead, are very popular for females, especially when combined with a shoulder length or chin length bob. Short and spikey hair (especially when bleached or dyed) is popular with both sexes. Deathrockers who do not keep their natural hair color either bleach their hair to platinum blonde or near white; or use Manic Panic or another semi-permanent hair color to produce vibrant reds, blues, greens, purples, etc. hair colors; while others prefer an unnatural black hair color.

One favorite Deathrock hairstyle for both males and females is the deathhawk, which is a wider version of the punk mohawk hairstyle. Deathhawks are teased or backcombed to produce a very full, soft look. Another variation of the mohawk is the bihawk, which is a double (split) mohawk. Other variations of mohawk are accepted though less common.