

## Still throwing guts around, but listening with their ears

After two decades of costumed shock-rock and 20-foot prop dinosaurs, Gwar are finally putting some effort into their music

### musicpreview

#### Gwar

Sounds of the Underground tour  
Saturday, 28 July at 1pm  
Shaw Conference Centre

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For the past 20 years, Gwar has been drenching the world in fake blood, guts, and urine. It's almost frightening to think about, but in an era when most bands put out maybe two albums and get a few years the lime-light tops, the aging shock-metal band has yet to throw in the blood-soaked towel. According to vocalist Oderus Urungus, there simply isn't any other job description he could fill.

"I am Gwar," he announces over the phone. "I have to be Gwar. No-one else can do Gwar ... We've set the standard for theatrical shock-rock. A lot of bands are doing it and have done it, but nobody has ever taken it to the extreme that Gwar does."

For the uninitiated, Gwar uphold monster personas onstage, wearing extravagant, ghoulish costumes and boasting names like "Beefcake the Mighty" and "Balsac the Jaws of Death." They claim to have come from the planet Scumdogia to "fillet our genitals," and, at any given show, they will gleefully spray fake bodily fluids all over the crowds. Of course, the fans love every minute of it, which Oderus understands as a supply-demand relationship between audiences and the band.

"I would've expected [Gwar] to have



died a long time ago," Urungus says before switching into character to correct himself. "Actually, we expected to escape the planet Earth years and years ago, but probably the bottom line is that we give people something that no other band does. People of all ages love to go see Gwar."

"Recently, I was introduced to some fans; it was a dad who brought his kid and also his mom to the show," he continues. "So we had three generations of Gwar fans at one show, all covered in splooge."

Things haven't all been sunshine

and bodily fluids for the band, however—they've gone through multiple line-up shuffles, and the band's just pulling themselves out of the nosedive they experienced in the '90s, when they were widely seen as a joke. With the world's attention slipping and the band on the rocks, Gwar committed perhaps their most shocking move yet: taking their detractors seriously.

"Critics were always ragging on Gwar, saying 'Oh, [the band]'s a big joke; they don't take the music seriously, and they can't play their instruments,'" Urungus explained.

"That really always used to piss us off, because I defy anyone to jam as hard as [Gwar] does, especially when being attacked by a 20-foot Tyrannosaurus Rex. What we did was decide to really listen to the critics, and challenge ourselves—as intergalactic rock stars—to start writing some records that were a little more musically ambitious."

By taking a stab at improving their music, Gwar received renewed interest, scoring a co-headlining spot on this year's Sounds of the Underground tour, and releasing a

retrospective DVD, *Blood Bath and Beyond*, and new album, *Beyond Hell*, in 2006. With a revived sense of relevance, the band's existence remains safe. Not that Urungus can see any other future for himself.

"It's Gwar or nothing at this point," he states in a rare slip of character. "When I was younger, I thought bands would be born, have a few records and then they'd die, but the older [Motorhead's] Lemmy gets, the more I realize that we can keep doing this for as long as the body will obey."

## Smooth Segway from coast to coast

### filmreview

#### 10 MPH

Written and Directed by Hunter Weeks and Josh Caldwell  
Now on DVD

COLIN KEIGHER  
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Normally, when you watch a movie about travelling cross-country, you just get to see the big monuments and destinations, and little of the travelled path itself. But in the case of the documentary *10 MPH*, the usual done-to-death hot spots are skipped in favour of the journey itself, and despite the (very) slow pace of their transportation, it was far from a boring trip.

Stars and creators Hunter Weeks and Josh Caldwell decided to go coast to coast across the US, but chose a far more unique—and slow—vehicle than most. Running at only ten miles per hour—16km per hour for us metric folk—they traveled across the country on a Segway, the device that was all the rage and mystery half a decade ago.

If you're unfamiliar with the Segway, it's a two-wheeled, self-balancing electric transportation device that looks similar to a golf bag caddy. Just before American entrepreneur, Dean Kamen released the

device in 2001, Apple CEO Steve Jobs had claimed that it would change how we think about transportation and that entire cities would be built around it.

Unfortunately for the laziest among us, such cities have not appeared. However, Segways are still around, and make for a surprisingly entertaining travel movie. There were several underlying themes that gave the simple story of taking the two-wheeled contraption across the country a little extra gas.

**There was a sense of humanism and relaxation in *10 MPH* that you don't see very often in travel flicks.**

For one thing, the path chosen was not the logical route of taking Interstate 90—which starts in Seattle and ends in Boston—but instead the lesser traveled routes. This allowed them to visit small-town America and give audiences a better feel for what it is to be a modern American. There was a sense of humanism and relaxation in *10 MPH* that you don't see very often in travel flicks.

This was shown when one of the

cast members accidentally rode a tractor into a Winnebago. The primary reaction from the owner was concern, with none of the anger that you'd expect after someone crashed into your vehicle.

Another theme that cropped up was that you don't necessarily have to work within the confines of corporate America in order to get what you want out of life. Before their trip began, Weeks and Caldwell both worked as software engineers and hated it. Even with the problems they faced throughout the movie—financial, mechanical, and even legal issues all arose—they managed to persevere and complete their journey.

The interviews with small-town folk that Weeks and Caldwell conduct will likely have you rethinking the pros and cons of living in a large city when instead of a small rural town. In one such interview, a young man pointed out that everything he needs in life is possible in the small place that he lives in and that he also feels sorry for those who have to commute hours per day to get to their jobs in the larger cities.

Overall, *10 MPH* gives not only a great view of rural America, but it also tells a bit of a tale about what modern life is like today and what could be done by anyone to reclaim what gets lost in the big city lifestyle.

