



Experiencing Guthrie Govan in DHAKA

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Without meaning to sound like a screechy and incoherent fanboy, I am honestly not sure how to start this article. Guthrie Govan isn't exactly as popular as many of the mainstream artists of today. But his guitar playing is definitely something to be experienced.

I'll start on a short introduction. Guthrie Govan is a guitar prodigy (playing since three years old) and relatively newer to the mainstream compared to guitarists like Joe Satriani, Steve Vai, John Petrucci, etc., starting off in just 1991. So it's understandable that most people would be unaware of this gem of gems (insert a few more "of gem"s). I admit, I myself was not aware of this monster until Steven Wilson brought him over for his third and fourth albums to play as the lead guitarist; and even the word "monster" is too tame for the guy. Watching him play live on February 26th and 27th was similar to watching a person go on a tightrope on a handstand and juggling three balls with his feet all the while casually dodging laser-wielding sharks. The difference is that you're more worried for yourself because you might go into cardiac arrest from the sheer audacity of his music. Often you'll find musicians forced to make a choice: technicality or soulfulness. This man dragged both those by their tail-ends, not only able to play extremely technical mind-bending (mostly string-bending) improvisations in various different styles, but he's able to make you feel things and keep it catchy, which is often lost when you go too technical. He's not afraid of keeping it simple either. His uniqueness has more or less caused him to have waves of fans, especially recently.

On day one, we have the concert, with Guthrie and his

accompanying tour members Mohini Dey (a 20-year-old bass prodigy) and Mumbai-based drummer Gino Banks (a member of the fusion band, Nexus) entering last. Quanta, G. Samir Hafiz (Powersurge/ Warfaze) and Wasiun Khan (Eclipse), Iqbal Asif Jewel (X-Factor, Miles), and finally, Ershad Zaman (Artcell) were the openers. Without going into excess details, every performer was absolutely brilliant, with tight performances, epic shredding and engaging and immersive music. However, without a doubt, the star of the show outshined them all (probably because the stage lights were flashiest at that point). After a song from Ershad Zaman, titled "Welcome to Dhaka" and dedicated to Guthrie, he stepped onto the stage to roars of appreciation and proceeded to basically woo us with his charisma and wit (because clearly, being a virtuoso wasn't enough). While expected to open the show with his hit song "Waves", he took a different approach and asked everyone to put their phones away and "have it be as though we're at a party". He opened with "Bad Asteroid", a groovy funk track from his first album with his band, The Aristocrats, before moving on to another track. In between each performance, he interacted with his audience amazingly, cracking jokes and relaxing the crowd before throwing us into another electrifying storm of tension in the form of music. The setlist included "Sevens", "Slidey Boy", "Fives", "Furtive Jack", "Ner Ner", "Wonderful Slippery Thing" and finally, "Waves", during which the crowd assisted him by imitating sounds of the sea and children as it is in the first few seconds of the record. Throughout the show, you'll notice that despite outclassing his peers, he never stole the spotlight 'til the last song. Twice, he gave over the stage to his

fellow members so they could do a solo portion of their own; gorgeous Mohini displaying her ferocious bass skills and Gino beating on the drums with all the heart-warming enthusiasm of a 5 year old child, revealing his eastern music roots. Both times after the solos, the trio seamlessly burst into one of Guthrie's songs in a jaw-dropping display of flawlessness. If your jaw hasn't dropped yet, just know that he improvises half of every song, both on record and live shows. If your jaw still hasn't dropped, you're clearly Guthrie himself reading this and I would like to take this moment to thank you for gracing us Bangladeshis with your wonderful presence.

The guitar clinic was held on January 27. This was less electrifying and exciting, but just as enjoyable. It was much more intimate, with only Guthrie himself playing a few songs here and there along with backing tracks. After a long introduction to himself, his upbringing with music and how he ended up standing there before us after all these long years, he played "Waves" first and one or two more songs from the setlist of the first day.

However, actual performance only took up a fraction of the show; the second day was mostly the crowd asking Guthrie questions revolving around guitar techniques, musical inspirations and such things and lasted for a good part of at least 2 hours, with songs being played in between.

All in all, experiencing Guthrie Govan was an epic, hopefully-not-once-in-a-lifetime experience. This event was truly history in the making and just might pave the way towards more similar events.

Now, I leave you with this last note: move your eyebrows along to Wonderful Slippery Thing. Have fun.

