

Laurent Barnard of Gallows

By Mary Borsellino (mizmary@gmail.com)

To say that UK punk band Gallows have had a hectic year is understating the point rather ridiculously -- they've done Reading, Leeds, and a song in the new Guitar Hero game. They're continuing their world domination with a stint on the Taste of Chaos tour, which will bring them to Australia for the first time. Mary Borsellino spoke to guitarist Laurent Barnard about the good and bad sides of life in the fast lane.

"We don't really get to see much of the countries we visit," Laurent admits. "We were on Warped for two months in America, but all we got to see was a lot of car parks. I'm hoping that Taste of Chaos will give us more time to take in sights.

"Being first on the bill for this tour is a challenge and a blessing. Nobody in Australia really knows who we are yet, so every show will be fresh -- we can just show up, with no pressure. The down side is that the audience won't all have arrived yet. It's hard when the kids you're playing to are all 200 metres away."

While they're yet to make an impression on these shores, the band has enjoyed a rapid rise to fame in the UK, a situation which has left them at odds with the DIY punk aesthetic they support.

"I'm not a fan of hype," says Laurent. "Kids are starting to not give us a chance, because they see us in the magazines and think we've sold out. We still handle our own merch and get our friends to design our t-shirts, but the difficulty is making sure kids know that we still believe in all that."

Connecting with their original audience may be becoming harder for the band, but they're not without their fans: "We played Rock Am Ring in Germany, and there was this kid going absolutely nuts on the side of the stage," recounts Laurent. "It turned out to be Frank, the guitarist from My Chemical Romance. I'd bought their first album years ago, and I used to talk to them online, and now here we were chatting -- things had come full circle.

"He came out and sang a Black Flag song with us onstage the next night, in front of about twenty kids, none of whom had any idea who he was. They thought we'd just got our friend to come on to sing for the song!"

The band recently became the record holders for being the loudest band in the world; a title previously held by heavy metal band Manowar.

"We set up 18 amps, I played a few riffs, turned it up a few decibels, played again. Manowar did 130 decibels; we got to 132. Now I'm just hoping Manowar don't try to get us back for it-- the last thing I need is a German dressed as He-Man coming after me."

Germans dressed as He-Man aside, are there any bands Laurent would like to hear mentioned in conjunction with his own?

"Right now, I love Murder City Devils, but I don't think we sound anything like them. The trouble with influences is that they can make a band sound like they're trying to sound like another band. We don't want to be that."

Orchestra of Wolves is out now through Warner Music