10 years of 'Flygod'

Westside Gunn's impact on hip-hop can't be ignored

By REX NAYLOR
Staff Writer

It has been 10 years since Westside Gunn's breakout album 'Flygod,' and it's safe to say his footprint continues to grow.

Born Alvin Lamar Worthy in 1982, Gunn hails from Buffalo, N.Y., and started in the underground scene before becoming one of the biggest voices in east coast rap in the last decade. Gunn, along with Conway The Machine and Mach Hommy, founded Griselda Records in 2012, adding Benny The Butcher around 2014 and has functioned since then.

Additionally, Gunn runs and promotes 4th Rope, a wrestling company that incorporates hip-hop and lifestyle into one single product which he heavily features in his music.

Since "Flygod," Gunn has released over a dozen albums with countless hits adding to his amazing discography in which he refers to himself as "Flygod" as a nod to where he got started.

Much of his music, along with those in Griselda, uses the iconic 90s style of boom-bap that rappers Nas, Mobb Deep and The Notorious B.I.G. all used heavily in their music.

Gunn's lyricism revolves around the juxtaposition of his taste in luxurious wealth and fashion versus earning it through crime. Gunn is able to blend raw street narratives with the luxuries of life many dream of so vividly.

Songs like "Kitchen Lights," "Mr. T" and "Amira Kitchen" are some of the best in his discography, each being perfect examples of the luxury from the crime narrative he paints effortlessly.

Lyrics like "Drive-bys out of Teslas" from "Mr. T" and, "Dope in the tupperware, Chrome Heart tips in the showers/ Mustard Virgil Forces on the rec yard, CO threw up in the tower" from "Kitchen Lights" are two of my favorites.

Gunn's use of juxtaposition goes deeper than his lyrics, but his albums as well. His "Hitler wears Hermes" album series uses the German Dictator as the worst, or grimiest thing to come from this world, pairing with the greatest product or "flyest" thing in the world being Hermes.

The album series started in 2012 when he was still underground.

By now, the album has become a central piece to Gunn's legacy and discography. It is meant as a play on "The Devil Wears Prada," as he never promotes nor does he endorse the Nazi ideology.

It's evident that Gunn's music revolves around the luxuries he's earned himself, albeit through illegal and dangerous routes early on in his career.

Virgil Forces, Chrome Hearts, Hermes and countless other luxury clothing brands are referenced in Gunn's music as his taste in fashion is unmatched.

A simple Google search tells someone all they need to know about his sense of style and it is unmatched.

In 2020, Gunn attended Paris Fashion Week which inspired him to create "Pray for Paris," one of three albums he released in 2020. Then, in 2023 he released "And Then You Pray For Me" after attending the same event.

Gunn has become a fashion designer in many of the biggest fashion events in the world. He also sits front row for luxury brands like Louis Vuitton, Off-White and Casablanca.

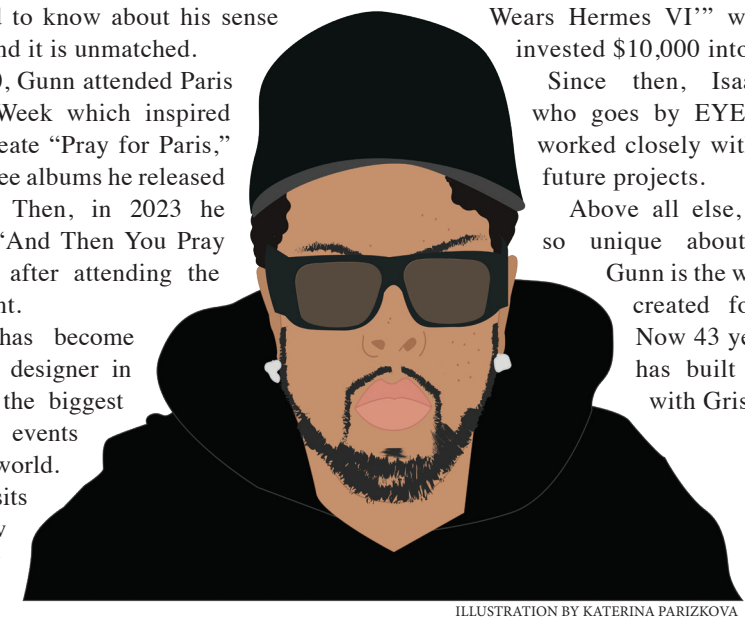

ILLUSTRATION BY KATERINA PARIZKOVA

In late 2025, Gunn released the three-song single, "My Sauconys Glowin" to promote his new partnership with the shoe company Saucony in which he released his own pair of shoes.

Gunn's album covers are a world of their own as well. Chris Gagnon created the album cover for "Flygod" while Isaac Pelayo created the artwork for "'Hitler Wears Hermes VI'" which Gunn invested $10,000 into.

Since then, Isaac Pelayo who goes by EYESAAC has worked closely with Gunn for future projects.

Above all else, something so unique about Westside Gunn is the world he has created for himself. Now 43 years old, he has built an empire with Griselda.

When your body speaks before your mind does

How somatic symptoms gave a name to the silent pain I carried for years

By ANTHONY ANGELILLO
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Trigger warning: topic of suicide

For most of my life, I did not know why my body reacted before I could even explain what I was feeling. My chest would tighten. My stomach would flip. My body would feel wrong before my brain could put together a full sentence on why.

A lot of people know that feeling, even if they do not have a name for it. The name, however, is somatic symptoms, which are physical symptoms tied to mental or emotional distress.

Somatic symptom disorder is the clinical term for when those symptoms cause significant distress and begin to take over your daily life.

That does not mean the pain is fake, exaggerated or made up. The symptoms are real, but the problem is how deeply they disrupt your life and how much fear, energy and attention they demand.

I had no words for any of that. I just figured that was how my body worked, that I was wired incorrectly. I assumed everyone else had it figured out, and I was the one who couldn't keep up.

That assumption stayed with me for years.

A lot of people experience somatic symptoms and never connect them to their mental health at first. They just think something is wrong, or worse, that they are weak for not being able to handle what everyone else seems to brush off.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, between 30% and 60% of people with somatic symptom disorder also have anxiety or depression. That overlap matters because many people, myself included, spend years believing they're different when they're not.

Before I ever heard the word "somatic," my mental health had already shaped my life. I have lived with anxiety, depression, PTSD and the kind of overthinking that can turn one uncomfortable feeling into a full circle.



ILLUSTRATION BY KATERINA PARIZKOVA

Your body keeps sounding the alarm, not knowing why and shame quickly fills the silence. You start questioning whether you are overreacting, if people believe you and begin to think you are losing control.

I finally got answers when my life reached its lowest point. After I nearly took my own life, I went into full-time treatment. That period was the most painful, exhausting and transformative stretch of my life.

It was also the first time somebody helped me understand that the physical distress I had suffered for years was not random. There was a name for it. There was a pattern. There was an explanation that did not treat me like I was broken beyond repair.

Hearing that changed me more than I expected. A label can sound limiting from the outside, but for me, it did the opposite. The hardest part, for so many years, was that I felt things I couldn't explain, and finally I had answers.

It gave shape to something that had followed me for years without a clear identity. Once I knew what I was dealing with, I stopped feeling like I was the only person whose body could turn fear into pain and panic into physical shutdown.

What mattered next was treatment. I started taking medication that targeted both the anxiety and the physical fallout it caused. I learned coping strategies that exceeded simple "just breathe" techniques. Most importantly, I started cognitive-behavioral therapy, which helped me recognize when my body was reacting to something my mind had not yet processed. I learned to tolerate discomfort without drowning in fear, so it didn't turn into something disastrous.

That does not mean every symptom should be ruled as "somatic." One of the most important things I learned is that physical symptoms still need to be taken seriously, but once that happens, mental health has to be part of the conversation too. Too many people live in the void between those two realities. They know their body hurts, but they do not yet know that their mind may be part of the reason.

I think that is why this topic stayed personal for me. For years, I had the experience but not the vocabulary. I had the fear but not the direction. Once I got both, I was finally able to move toward the right medications, the right treatment and the right kind of understanding. I did not feel cured overnight, but I felt seen and that was the real beginning.

Treatment is slow and frustrating. Some days are still hard and my body still reacts before my thoughts catch up.

The difference now is that I know what is happening and have a system for responding to it, rather than being consumed by it.

There are people who feel what I felt and have no idea there is a word for it. They sit through lectures with a knot in their stomach, cancel plans because their energy disappears without warning, and lie awake, wondering why they are so tired all the time.

If any of that sounds familiar, it's no weakness and isn't something you should fight through alone. Your body is trying to tell you something, and once you understand, it will be the first sign that healing can actually happen and that you can finally fight back.