

# 'Busted Circuits and Ringing Ears': The story of the mighty TAD

By Matthew Wolfe

There are loud bands. There are heavy bands. And then there's TAD.

"I remember seeing TAD at one of the clubs at Piner's Square," said author Charles Cross on a new feature-length DVD documentary on the history the Seattle grunge legends. "And the sound was literally so heavy I felt like I was having a heart attack or something because it made your chest cavity actually beat."

"Busted Circuits and Ringing Ears," to be released on February 19 with a special screening that same evening at Park Slope's Southpaw, follows the band through their loud, raucous existence with live performances that sound like demolition derbys, new backstage footage, and interviews with band members, colleagues and awed observers.

TAD was formed in 1987 when meatman Tad Doyle (born "Thomas") went into a Seattle studio with his \$500 tax return and recorded a two-song single on which he played all the instruments. The single was released on local zeitgeist label Sub Pop and Doyle, figuring he needed a real band, formed TAD with Kurt Danielson on bass, Gary Thorstensen on guitar and Josh Snider on drums.

And, as noted, they were loud and they were heavy and it took a toll.

"Over our dozen years, TAD blew circuits and punctured eardrums, herniated discs and damaged vertebrae, pinched nerves and triggered sciatica, incited lumbago here, caused concussions there, a catalog of ailments that we took in stride as occupational hazards—may tinnitus forever unite us," said Danielson. "And it was worth every thin dime of the always rising physical cost, an iconic barcode branded into our neural and muscular-skeletal tissues for all time."

While grunge as a style didn't have a terrific influence on today's prominent Brooklyn bands — who abhor sludge and flannel in equal measure — TAD is an exception. Prior to starting up TAD, Doyle played in a cover band of Gang of Four, called Red Set, and the music retains that same affection for litheness and definition. They had a angularity and precision that many of the other grunge bands lacked.

"If you listened to TAD and didn't have a visual image for them you would think this is the Seattle version of Sonic Youth in some ways," recalled Close. "Like, 'These are sophisticated hipsters creating this very deep and sophisticated sound.'"

In a way, TAD, being both heavy but with an attention to melody, is an excellent reconciliation of the two opposing influences — noise and pop — that Brooklyn bands must



**Heavy metal rockers TAD release their DVD February 19, with a screening at Southpaw**

constantly reconcile. Southpaw, where the film will be screened, is an incubator of small indie Brooklyn bands in the scene in the manner that the archipelago of Seattle clubs were for grunge.

Branded both by their heft and their goofy sense of humor, TAD, as the film notes, also had their share of minor controversies. Their

best-known single, "Jack Pepsi," produced by Butch Vig, became the target of a copyright lawsuit by cola-manufacturer Pepsi due to cover art with said "TAD" in the wavy font / crescent moon shape of the Pepsi logo.

The band was also sued over the cover of their 1991 album *8-Way Santa*, which featured a found photograph of a man squeezing a woman's breast. The couple, one of whom had since become a born-again Christian, sued the band and caused their label, Sub Pop, to change the artwork to a photo of the band.

In the wake of the hysteria and hype around grunge music, TAD was, rather incredibly, briefly signed to Warner Bros. records, which dropped them soon after the 1993 release of their album *Inhaler*. While no explanation for the booting was given (the band was given the news while on tour with enormous Seattle rock colleagues Soundgarden) Doyle and Danielson say on the DVD that they suspect it had to do with a poster for their new album, which featured a doctored photograph of a suited Bill Clinton smoking a joint, with a quotation reading "This is heavy s---."

For more information on the DVD, visit [www.mvdb2b.com](http://www.mvdb2b.com). The screening will be at Southpaw on 125 Fifth Ave in Brooklyn on Tuesday, February 19 at 9 p.m. It's free, but it's 21 and older only. For more information, call 718-230-0236.