

REVIEWS



et al.

The DJ was launched by Studio One, who bundled up 10 of his cuts onto 1981's *On the Other Side of Dub*. Heartbeat released that set on CD a decade later, adding the Jamaican chart topping "Barnabus Collins" and the instrumental "Graveyard Skank" to it.

This reissue features previously unavailable on CD stereo mixes, and although two of the album's original tracks are omitted, seven numbers are added, including the wildly popular "The Answer." Several are instrumental dubs, oddly not appended to their DJ versions, but who is complaining considering the quality of music within. www.rounder.com

— Jo-Ann Greene

Ray Davies

Workingman's Café

Ammal/New West (NWA3030)

Grade: ★★★★★

Though still in the early stages of his much belated solo career, Ray Davies continues to distant himself from any Kinks connections. Adopting a mantle that finds him championing everyman causes, Davies surveys a wide range of topical issues infused by a modern malaise — from shopping malls dotted with homogenized chain stores ("Working Man's Café") to a third-world populace seduced by western values ("Vietnam Cowboys").

That's not to say Ray's lost his way with whimsy or the pointed satire that made his '60s compositions some of the most articulate offerings of the British rock invasion. Indeed, several songs echo his earlier work, i.e. the astute observation of "You're Asking Me" (today's take on "A Well Respected Man") and the forlorn reflection of "The Real World" (which effectively replicates the elegiac nostalgia of "Celluloid Heroes"). Still, fans may be jarred by the darker edges and more pessimistic perspective, the result perhaps of his shooting in New Orleans three years ago (inspiration for "Morphine Song") or, more likely, his reaction to the unsettled state of the current millennium.

While talk of a Kinks reunion still steals the headlines, *Workingman's Café* marks an important milestone in terms of Davies' artistic ambitions. Whether bemoaning the loss of English innocence on the *Village Green* or simply the erosion of ideals in general, he's never been a follower of fashion. www.newwestrecords.com

— Lee Zimmerman



DVD REVIEW

Tad

Busted Circuits And Ringing Ears

MVD Visual (DR-4544)

Grade: ★★★★★

Before *Nevermind* blew up, Tad, and not Nirvana, was the biggest thing in Seattle's nascent grunge scene. Way louder and heavier than any of its peers, Tad was led by a psychotic, 300-pound woodsman who wrote dark lyrics and was an evil wizard with a bag full of mean, bone-crushing guitar riffs at his command. Or, at least that's how Sub Pop marketed Tad. The truth was something altogether different.

Clothed in flannel and brandishing a chain saw in the early video "Wood Goblins," Tad Doyle, his face contorted with rage, played the part to the hilt. And yet, the new documentary "Busted Circuits And Ringing Ears" portrays Doyle, the band's namesake, as warm, intelligent, witty and willing to do just about anything to further the cause of Tad — see the frightening, but hilarious, opening sequence of Doyle being filmed sitting atop a moving car rolling down the streets of Seattle. Unfortunately, for Tad, it's also a hard-luck tale of major-label deceit, inner turmoil, massive substance abuse and career sabotage.

A full and complete history of the band, "Busted Circuits And Ringing Ears" seamlessly weaves ferocious live footage together with testimonials from journalists, fans, Sub Pop label executives and Seattle music giants (Soundgarden's Kim Thayil, Mudhoney's Mark Arm and Nirvana's Krist Novoselic) to tell the story of Tad in rich detail. Priceless between-song banter and images of the mountain man Doyle stage diving will have you rolling on the floor, but what sucks you in is the sad narrative of how misguided intentions — however humorous — and corporate neglect torpedoed

Tad's rise.

Always looking for a laugh, Tad ticked off the wrong people along the way, and this film relates, in an excruciating manner, just how things went horribly wrong for the band. Pepsi was not amused when Tad used the Pepsi logo for the single "Jack Pepsi." Another lawsuit stemmed from Tad slapping a racy photo of a scantily clad couple locked in an embrace on the cover of the *8-Way Santa* LP — the woman, who became a born-again Christian, apparently stumbled across it by chance while in a record store. And then, there was the infamous promo poster for the album *Inhaler* — perhaps Tad's most powerful statement of purpose — that showed President Clinton smoking a joint with the caption "This is heavy shit." Apparently, not everyone got the joke, and that's too bad.

Far from being a novelty act, Tad had the musical chops to compete with anyone, and on the *Bleach* tour with Nirvana, Tad more than held its own, as the film demonstrates. Influenced more by the '70s proto-metal of Black Sabbath and Blue Cheer than punk, Tad, in its original incarnation, was powered by the bulldozing bass of Kurt Danielson, the drum bashing of Steve Wied — and later, Josh Sinder, formerly of

The Accused — and the guitar fury of Gary Thorstensen. Tad caused earthquakes. Tad destroyed cities. Tad, as writer Charles Cross, author of "Heavier Than Heaven," put it, had a sound that "... was literally so heavy that I felt like I was having a heart attack" and, at the same time, its sonic architecture was as sophisticated as Sonic Youth.

The fascinating legend of Tad aside, "Busted Circuits And Ringing Ears" also wistfully documents the rise and fall of Seattle's grunge scene. The story moves along at an easy, but never turgid, pace, and it is dense with material, from thoughtful, funny interviews with a variety of sources to the handful of music videos that make up the bonus features. While Tad deserved a better fate, at least it has this as a tribute. www.mvdb2b.com

— Peter Lindblad

