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MUSIC

February 5, 2008

Interrogation: Tad Doyle

Heavy-rock god, tinnitus sufferer, and subject of the new documentary *Busted Circuits and Ringing Ears*

by [MEGAN SELING](#)



KYLE T. WEBSTER

Q: You were the singer/guitarist for the loudest fucking band in Seattle in the 1980s and '90s. How's your hearing? Did you wear earplugs? Did anybody?

A: I did toward the end, but there's definitely some hearing loss. I've got tinnitus, the ringing in the ears.

That's no fun.

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Band of the Week



Lonesome Rhodes & the Good Company

Yap with other Stranger readers.

No, it's not. Especially if you're out camping, and it's really quiet. It's like somebody should answer the phone or something.

This year, Sub Pop celebrates its 20th anniversary. You released your first 7-inch, which is heavy as fuck, on the label. What do you think of the folk-inspired, easy-listening stuff they're working with now? It's a far cry from TAD's ear-busting sound...

You know, I'm not really that familiar with what they're putting out these days. I know that the Shins are doing really well. They're on that iTunes commercial, which is really cool. [It's actually a Zune ad. —Eds] But I haven't listened to enough of them to draw a conclusion.

It's not what you would've expected from Sub Pop 20 years ago.

That's the truth. I think that's something that Sub Pop has always done well, though—throwing curve balls.

Before watching your new documentary, *Busted Circuits and Ringing Ears*, I had no idea that TAD's story was so bittersweet.

Almost every release was plagued with one issue or another—from legal troubles with cover art to getting dropped by your label (twice). Do you ever feel like TAD wasn't given a fair shot?

Yeah, that's true. All that stuff happened, but I think we made the best out of what we were dealt. We weren't alone; that stuff happened to a lot of bands.

There was a period where Warner Brothers was under a lot of pressure from the PMRC [Parents Music Resource Center], and they dropped a lot of bands and started doing that "clean your act up" thing and putting the warning labels on records.

So the TAD poster with Bill Clinton smoking a joint didn't go over well?

You know, it's still a mystery to me why that was such a big issue. There was a lack of communication between artist and supplier, shall we say. That's one of the things I always cherished about the Sub Pop relationship—there was a great rapport there. We knew what was happening, and they knew what to do with us. A lot of labels didn't know what to do with us.

What was the thinking in signing to a major label, then?

Well, bigger budget was one of them. We were artists who were looking to get to a wider audience, and we also wanted to share in a larger profit margin, you know? The thing is, every label signed us as the band TAD and then was always mystified that we weren't churning out songs that were like Pearl Jam or Nirvana. We were like, "Well, that's because we're not Pearl Jam or Nirvana." They're always looking for the next big thing. But we do what we do and some people got it and some people didn't. A lot of the major labels didn't.

How did it feel to relive that part of your life while putting together footage for the DVD?

It was a roller coaster, that's for sure. It definitely evoked a lot of emotions toward what happened in the past and uncovered a lot of things I had



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forgotten about. I spent almost the whole band's career carrying around a VHS camcorder, archiving what we did, and there's a lot more. There could be volumes. I don't know if you've seen the Who documentary, but it's like six hours long. We could've done something like that ourselves. I have 45 to 50 VHS tapes. A lot of it is just goofy stuff on the road, shenanigans.

Did you really once tear a urinal off the wall?

To my best recollection, that did happen. I was quite libated that night. It was kind of flimsy anyway, so I decided to finish it.

What are the chances of a TAD reunion?

Pretty slim. My heart's just not into that anymore. I've put that period of my life behind me. I'm working on a new project.

So you still play music?

Yeah, I play with drummer Eric Akre and bassist Peggy Tully. We're called Brothers of the Sonic Cloth and we're getting ready to play our first show in March. It's dark and heavy, with lush, quiet parts and then some raging parts, too. I'm doing a lot of electronic sampling and triggering, so it's a new direction. I'm really excited about it.

So it's not grunge?

I don't even know what grunge means.

Busted Circuits and Ringing Ears *shows Wed Feb 13, Varsity Theatre, 4329 University Way NE, 632-3131, 7 pm.*

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