

Guitar heroes

TENACIOUS D TAKE CHUB ROCK TO THE BIG SCREEN IN 'PICK OF DESTINY'

By **Benji Feldheim**
FOR REDEYE

When Jack Black and Kyle Gass formed Tenacious D, no one would have guessed the portly pair could even come close to becoming what they call the “greatest band ever”—or that Jack Black would become a huge movie star.

But rock is about attitude, not looks, they say. And now the unlikely rockers are playing fictionalized versions of themselves to tell the fictionalized history of their parody band in “Tenacious D in the Pick of Destiny,” which opens Wednesday.

The film chronicles the band's journey toward rock stardom.

In reality, Black, 37, and Gass, 46, first performed together in 1991 as a part of the Actor's Gang theatre troupe in L.A. They formed the D in 1994 and played a one-song gig at a dive bar. After being the subject of a short film and appearing on HBO's “Mr. Show with Bob and David,” the band released a CD in 2001—not too shabby for a joke band.

Black, meanwhile, has gone on to host awards shows, star in movies, and amass a huge fan base that loves his goofily intense humor.

Chicago gets a double dose of the pair beginning with the movie's opening Wednesday. On Friday, the D performs at the UIC Pavilion. And the film's soundtrack is in stores. In a phone interview with RedEye last week, the guys talked about love, metal's point of view—and Indiana Jones.

The film seems to have a brotherly love story to it ...

KG: Does that seem wimpy to you? [Yells] A brotherly love story? It feels like you're tryin' to say something.

JB: Don't reject me, Kyle. Maybe you're a little sensitive. Look inward, Kage.

KG: Oh, sorry!

JB: I got him, got him with the psychology. The psychology release ... [They both laugh.] So what's your point, that there's a lot of brotherly love?

Yeah, how did that work into the story?

KG: I think it's better without that brotherly love crap.

JB: Well, the story is about friendship. It's a journey that these two guys couldn't have made alone. They need each other.

When did you first feel like the greatest band ever?

JB: First gig we ever played. ... It was in a grimly little club in downtown L.A. for a bunch of jaded punk rockers, and we blew their brains out. They were freakin' out. Everyone in the room had an emotional catharsis.

KG: [Laughs] How do you know that?

JB: I felt it. You can't deny a ripple like that. It started a ripple. It was a sonic boom that created the ripple that ripped through the rock community.

KG: [In hillbilly voice] Ruffled my butterfly wings.

Walk us through the songwriting process.

KG: All right, Jack, we need a rockin' [bleepin'] tune! Right here about this car chase. I don't know what it is.

JB: That's not a good example. That one's just ... playin' a little tune. Other ones, like “The Metal,” Kyle comes up with a tasty riff. And I was like, “What's this song about?” It needs something funny, and I'm thinkin', you know what would be funny? Singing a song from the point of view of metal.

KG: That's impossible! How can you sing a song from the point of view of metal?

JB: Because it makes the metal into a character that thinks about himself.

KG: Oh! Like playing music by Barry Manilow.

JB: Exactly, about how powerful he is and how other music forms and genres that try to win by battling metal in hand-to-hand musical combat. But metal always wins because it's stronger.

With all the songs about [bleep], where's the sex in the movie?

KG: Good question, there's a scene that got cut out.

JB: Well, there's the laser deactivation scene. 'Cause if I didn't [bleep] my way out of a tight situation there, I don't know who did.

KG: Anytime I was on screen I found it to be very sexy.

JB: If you're looking for a sort of, “How did Tenacious D [bleep] their way to the top?” you're looking for the sequel. It's about a—

KG: It's a love story between Jack and me, and our music.

JB: It's a story about an epic quest. An epic quest with two friends against all odds.

What kind of reactions do you get?

KG: It was the entertainment trifecta burrito. You enjoy the rock, but you're also enjoying the comedy and ... storytelling.

JB: You could call it a rock musical. But I don't know of any rock musicals that are really funny. So we win! And you lose—[Kyle laughs.] Na, everyone wins. You win too.

What will you bring to Chicago on Friday?

KG: The thunder.

JB: What will we bring? Um, we're gonna bring the intensity, the intelligence and the Innnndiana Jones. [Laughs.] And rock.

Hopes for the future?

KG: Lining my pockets with cred.

JB: We never live that way. Just one day at a time.

KG & JB: One D at a T. [BENJI FELDHEIM IS A REDEYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR.]

D's bid for greatness

Los Angeles Times

The members of comedy-rock duo Tenacious D—whose movie hits theaters Wednesday—would be the first to admit that humility is not what made them rock stars.

So it was never a question of whether the group's cinematic debut, “Tenacious D in the Pick of Destiny,” would hold its own against celebrated rock flicks such as the Beatles' “A Hard Day's Night,” Pink Floyd the Wall,” the Who's “Tommy,” and Led Zeppelin's “The Song Remains the Same.”

“Where are we going to stack up against those movies? On top,” the D's Kyle Gass said. “Here's why: It's going to be funnier than any of them. We've taken what we think works and honed it into a sharp razor's edge that's going to cut through the demographics and leave people in pain.

“Or it could be a complete disaster.”

The D's more famous half, Jack Black, becomes serious when appraising the major shortcoming of rock's film canon.

“None of those movies were on a level of a ‘Road Warrior’ or ‘Empire Strikes Back’ or ‘Raiders of the Lost Ark,’” he said.

“Rock movies usually have a hard time capturing the essence of rock: the excitement and glory. When you hear Ozzy tell the story of how he and Geezer Butler wrote that song ‘Black Sabbath’ on their first album, that's like the essence of rock,” Black said.

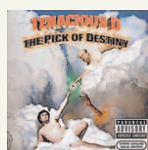
Just don't mention “Pick of Destiny” in the same breath as the most famous rockumentary.

“It's not like ‘Spinal Tap’ at all,” explains director Liam Lynch.

“For this generation, I want it to be somewhere between ‘Blazing Saddles’ and ‘Cad-dyshack,’ in that there are things that aren't punch lines you just want to repeat to your friends.”



SNAP JUDGMENT



Tenacious D

“TENACIOUS D IN THE PICK OF DESTINY”

★★

The D's second album is a full embrace of epic rock cliches. The instruments are stronger than past work, but the comedy is slightly harder to get to amid heavy drumming, electric guitar and Black's metal shrieks. Yet the cursing, bragging and pubescent sexual references shine through, reminding listeners that the guys appreciate what they mock. [BENJI FELDHEIM, REDEYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR]

QUICK PICK

“Tenacious D in the Pick of Destiny” (R)

Who's in it: Jack Black, Kyle Gass, Meat Loaf, Dave Grohl

What it's about: In their quest to become the greatest band ever, pals JB and KG search for a guitar pick they learn was made from a nugget of Satan's anatomy.

Worth watching? ★▶

“Only the most tenacious, die-hardest Tenacious D fans could love ‘Pick of Destiny,’ an inside joke that runs out of laughs five minutes in, yet lingers through an hour and a half of self-satisfied mugging that's irritating.” [DAVID GERMAIN, AP]