

SPOTLIGHT



Jack Black, Kyle Gass

# TENACIOUS D

Playing their music for fun and the industry for laughs

HOW DOES A COMEDY DUO FOLLOW an album that won neither stellar reviews nor sales? Turn it into a joke, of course. Tenacious D's 2006 film *The Pick of Destiny* and its accompanying soundtrack garnered a lukewarm reception at best, but it has since gained a cult following. After six years, Jack Black and Kyle Gass have returned with their follow-up, *Rize of the Fenix*—rife with self-deprecating jokes about the struggles the band faced releasing the album. "Just because we're not working on it, doesn't mean we're not *working* on it," says Black. "It's six years in the making. It wouldn't be a good sales pitch to say, 'Uh, we just worked on it for a few months!'"

Joining Black and Gass is Foo Fighters' Dave Grohl, who has played drums on all of their albums, as well as guitarist John Konesky and multi-instrumentalist John Spiker, whom Gass met years earlier. "I said, 'You guys come out to Hollywood, and I'll make you stars,'" Gass remembers. "So far I haven't done that. There's a lot of talent there. It would cost us a lot more to hire Steve Vai or something. It's a good value. Konesky is probably one of the best guitarists in the world."

Konesky's rock-star solos and Spiker's

massive synths are a bright and shiny counter to Black and Gass's acoustic guitars and the ever-evolving Tenacious D myth. "We were conscious of the fact that there was no Satan on the album," says Black of the character that often cropped up in their earlier work. "We were like, 'What happened?' There were no druggie references, either. I feel like we really moved into a new phase of the D."

"Tenacious D grows up," agrees Gass.

But not too much. Around any suggestion of label strife is plenty of innuendo and potty-mouth language, along with thinly veiled Star Wars references and hard-rock guitar noodling. "I guess the thing that keeps on coming up for me is just these songs are better than sex," says Black. "But that's not for everyone. If you don't like things that are better than orgasms, don't get the album."

And as for the trouble releasing *Fenix*? "Every word is true," says Black.

"Did they really try to block our album, though?" asks Gass.

"Of course they did. I'm not going to say who 'they' are, I'm not at liberty to say," says Black. "That's for the next album. That's when we get really specific."

—Amanda Farah

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