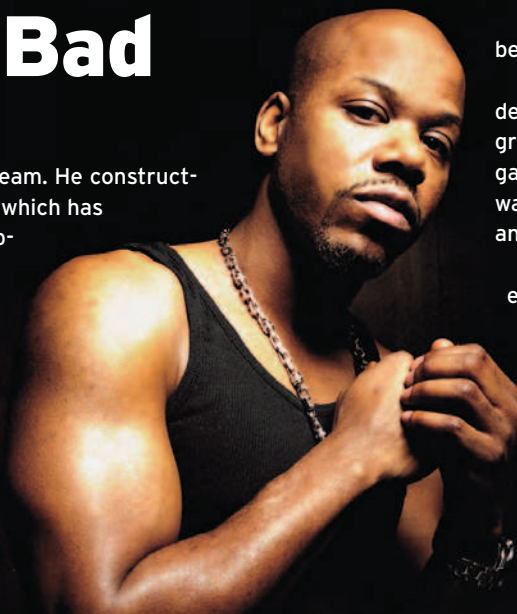


Too \$hort Not Too Bad

Shaw's persona on display

The Too \$hort story is the embodiment of the American capitalist dream. He constructed one of the earliest blueprints for success in the hip hop industry, which has since been emulated by countless mainstream and underground rappers both on the West Coast and also down South. In fact, this godfather of Bay Area hip hop trailblazed a distinct path for the dirty South's crunk music as well as the Bay Area's current zeitgeist, the hyphy movement.

But at the core of Too \$hort's success story is a library of 16 albums, all of which tell some of the most lewd and misogynistic tales ever committed to tape. To shed some light on this controversial oeuvre, and to begin to glean an understanding of the successes of Todd Shaw (aka Too \$hort) one must first differentiate between the two personalities. Shaw, now a month short of turning 41 years old, started his rap career in Oakland, Calif., where he nurtured the Too \$hort persona through through 20 years of diligent hustling and shrewd self-management. A consummate businessman, Shaw, with the help of his high school buddy Freddie B, jumpstarted his rap career by crafting customized raps for anyone who would pay a small fee. Eventually, Shaw drafted the Too \$hort character, a lascivious, no-nonsense pimp, and began recording his tawdry tales and peddling these mixtapes out of the trunk of his car. Through it all, according to Shaw, the \$hort Dog has always



Too \$hort, Luni Coleone and Cool Nutz, Maniac Lok and DJ Chill, Kane, Cousin Fik, Mr D.O.G., Chris Ray
7 pm Wednesday, 3/14 • Taboo
\$20 adv, \$25 door • 21+ show

been *just* a character.

"I don't think there's one popular rapper who describes grimy things and goes home and does grimy things," Shaw says. "It's just like watching a gangster movie – it's entertainment and people want to hear about it. It is *explicit* entertainment and we love it."

Looking back on his 16 albums, most of which ended up going either gold or platinum, Shaw feels that his career has tapped into an indomitable market for sex and violence which predates the birth of hip hop by thousands of years.

"It's all human nature. Back in the day, people wanted to go to the orgies, and in the Roman days, people would go to the coliseum to see lions eat people," he says with fervent conviction. "Sex and violence is really entertaining to people; you can't escape it. I just choose not to tap into the violence – that's not the world I want to portray."

And while he says he's made a living off the Too \$hort character, at the end of the business day, he says he's Todd Shaw again, and Too \$hort is laid to rest until resurrected on another album. **EW**

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