

# THE WHO

With the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, the Who round out a triumvirate of British bands that revolutionized rock & roll, turning it into the preeminent pop-culture art form of the past quarter century. The members of the Who never simply played rock & roll; they attacked it (along with their instruments), making music that was physically liberating and disarmingly literate. In their early days they were masters of the single, articulating in explosive bursts less than three minutes in length the frustrations of their generation. In the last years of the Sixties they helped engineer the antithesis of the single – album-oriented rock – crafting conceptual works that were meant to be appreciated as a whole rather than as a discrete set of songs. In the Seventies they became one of the most exciting and popular live acts in the history of rock & roll.

It all began around 1962 in Shepherd's Bush, a working-class district of London, with a band called the Detours. Two of the members were Roger Daltrey – initially on lead guitar, he would later become the vocalist – and John Entwistle on bass. Pete Townshend was asked to join as rhythm guitarist. The band worked a regular circuit of clubs around Britain, "jiving and twisting" for a young rock & roll crowd one night and performing trad jazz for an older audience the next. All the while, Townshend was enrolled at Ealing Art College, learning about modernism and auto-destructive art in the classroom and receiving an education in American blues from enlightened classmates after hours.

Along the way, the Detours changed their name to the Who (which edged out the Hair, the only other moniker under serious consideration) and replaced their drummer with Keith Moon, then playing in a British surf-music band called the Beachcombers. Through the intervention of a publicist and scene maker named Pete Meaden, the members of the Who were persuaded that they should devote their energies to becoming accepted by the Mods – lower-class male teenagers who dedicated themselves to dressing well and going to clubs on weekends, usually in a state of amphetamine-fueled hyperactivity (see "Mod/ernism," on page 28). At the

urging of their management, the members of the band briefly renamed themselves the High Numbers – recording one single, "I'm the Face"/"Zoot Suit" – and then reverted to the Who.

Though targeting the Mods was a calculated move, the match was a natural for the Who – and it launched Townshend, the band's chief songwriter, on a series of brilliant singles on the subject of that tumultuous state of being known as adolescence. The band's first four singles as the Who – "I Can't Explain," "Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere," "My Generation" and "Substitute" – mixed youthful braggadocio with stuttering insecurity, giving voice to sentiments that were widely shared but theretofore unexpressed with such raw candor. "My Generation," in particular, qualified as a genuine rock & roll anthem, its oft-quoted taunt to the adult world – "Hope I die before I get old" – still a source of debate among those who ponder the ability of rock & roll to age gracefully.

Adapting art-school precepts to live performance enabled Townshend and the other members of the Who to connect with their audience in a way that few bands have done before or since. One night the volatile Townshend accidentally poked his guitar through the low ceiling of a club, breaking the neck. He finished the job in a fit of temper, smashing the guitar to kin-

## AMERICAN ALBUMS

**THE WHO SINGS MY GENERATION**  
Decca; 1966

**HAPPY JACK**  
Decca; Number 67, 1967

**THE WHO SELL OUT**  
Decca; Number 48, 1968

**MAGIC BUS/THE WHO ON TOUR**  
Decca; Number 39, 1968

**TOMMY**  
Decca; Number 4, 1969

**LIVE AT LEEDS**  
Decca; Number 4, 1970

**WHO'S NEXT**  
Decca; Number 4, 1971

**MEATY BEATY BIG AND BOUNCY**  
Decca; Number 11, 1971

**QUADROPHENIA**  
MCA; Number 2, 1973

**ODDS AND SODS**  
MCA; Number 15, 1974

**THE WHO BY NUMBERS**  
MCA; Number 8, 1975

**WHO ARE YOU**  
MCA; Number 2, 1978

**FACE DANCES**  
Warner Bros.; Number 4, 1981

**IT'S HARD**  
Warner Bros.; Number 8, 1982



**OPPOSITE** *This is Maximum R&B; Keith Moon, Roger Daltrey, John Entwistle and Pete Townshend (clockwise from top left).*



The Who's special chemistry: Entwistle anchored the band; Daltrey embodied the muscular power of the music; Moon and Townshend were electrifying.

dling against the stage floor. This heralded what became a set-closing ritual of auto-destruction, with Townshend splintering guitars while Moon laid waste to his drum kit. It was violent and cathartic, and it ignited the crowds, which were growing ever larger. Under the banner "Maximum R&B," the group took up a legendary extended residency at the Marquee Club, on Wardour Street in London.

By the mid-Sixties it was obvious that a very special chemistry existed among the members of the Who. Townshend was brainy and brooding, an electrifying and theatrical guitarist with a brazenly rhythmic attack. Daltrey was the street-tough singer who physically embodied the muscular power of the band's music. Entwistle was the stoic bass player, anchoring the band both with his laconic stage presence and with the swooping, leadlike authority of his bass lines. And Moon was, quite simply, the greatest drummer in rock & roll history, as well as a lovable lunatic whose unbridled personality charged the Who with an element of anarchy. Though they had their share of rows and dissension, when it all came together, the Who was untouchable.

Despite a lengthy run of singles that are now recognized classics, the Who did not crack the American Top Forty until 1967, and the band entered the Top Ten only once, with "I Can See for Miles," from *The Who Sell Out*. The overdue breakthrough in the United States came not with easily digestible 45s but with a daunting double-album rock opera, *Tommy*. Townshend had been toying with the idea of a dramatic, extended musical narrative for some time, writing a twelve-minute "mini-opera" entitled "A Quick One (While He's Away)" for *Happy Jack*, released in 1966. *Tommy*, however, carried rock & roll to an ambitious new plateau.

The album was conceived and written by Townshend, with creative assistance from the Who's producers and managers, Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp. Entwistle and Moon also contributed a few songs. Townshend broadly outlined *Tommy* as "a series of songs that flashed between the point of view of reality and the point of view of illusion seen through the eyes of someone on the spiritual path, a young boy." He added that "the LP can be taken as one of three things — a spiritual symbol, the life of a pop star, or a rock and roll album." *Tommy* struck a chord with the emerging counterculture, which was on a spiritual path of its own, questing after new sensations and attempting to define an alternative, enlightened reality.

The Who performed *Tommy* both at opera houses and conventional arenas to rapturous response; the opera took on a life of its own, eventually being orchestrated, then adapted for the screen by the director Ken Russell. In its wake, however, the members of the Who decided to get back to their roots and remind the world that they were, above all, a rock & roll band with few peers. In contrast to the elaborate packaging and production of *Tommy*, the 1970 release *Live at Leeds* was an unedited document of the band in performance; the sleeve was designed to look like a bootleg, and the label bore the notation "Crackling Noises O.K. — Do Not Correct!"

Throughout the Seventies, Townshend and the Who veered between vaulting ambition and earthy accessibility. A grand but eventually unmanageable project entitled *Lifehouse* gave way to *Who's Next*, a collection of songs regarded by many as the band's finest hour. It opened with "Baba O'Riley" and a startling blast of synthesized keyboards and closed with Daltrey's blistering scream in "Won't Get Fooled Again." *Who's Next* was a flawless set of

tracks, most of which became AOR standards and defined the sound and sensibility of rock in the Seventies.

Onstage the Who had become a ferocious and finely tuned machine. After a concert in San Francisco, one tongue-tied reviewer gushed: "Writing about their music is something of an exercise in futility. It need not be explained to those who were there, it cannot be explained to those that were not. If a single word can sum it up, that word is *shattering*." A second rock opera by Townshend, *Quadrophenia*, reached fruition in 1973, re-creating the Mod experience through the eyes of a young disciple named Jimmy. Although it failed to translate to the stage with the same success as *Tommy*, it did become the Who's highest-charting album in America, reaching Number Two.

Internal dissension among the band members, principally between Townshend and Daltrey, during the middle Seventies was resolved in the forum of the rock press, via soul-baring interviews with both parties. Having settled their differences, the band recorded *The Who by Numbers* and *Who Are You*, both containing some of Townshend's most powerful and confessional songwriting, plus solid contributions from Entwistle. A chapter in the story of the Who came to a close in 1978 with the death of Keith

Moon. The seemingly indestructible drummer finally succumbed to an accidental overdose of medication prescribed for the treatment of his alcoholism. Saddened but determined to keep the Who alive, the surviving members tapped Kenney Jones, formerly of the Faces, as Moon's replacement and carried on until their "farewell" tour in 1982. Seven years later, of course, they reunited, dusting off *Tommy* and having one more go-round of arenas and stadiums, pleasing a younger generation of fans that had missed them the first time.

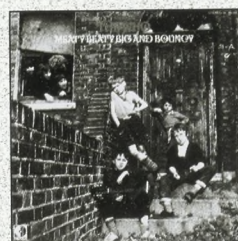
Ultimately, what the members of the Who have given to rock & roll is a unique marriage of electricity and intellect. They cared passionately about the music and its power to uplift, among its greatest fans, they once titled a song "Long Live Rock." Townshend became one of the most eloquent rock spokesmen and theoreticians. His convictions sprang from an appreciation that the music could move us to dance and collectively shake off our inhibitions, offering transcendence in return for a simple act of faith. As he told Jann Wenner of *Rolling Stone* in a 1968 interview: "Rock & roll is one of the keys, one of the many, many keys, to a very complex life. Don't get fucked up with all the many keys. Groove to rock & roll, and then you'll probably find one of the best keys of all." — PARKE PUTERBAUGH



Unbridled, anarchic, seemingly indestructible, Moon was, quite simply, the greatest drummer in rock & roll history.

#### TOP 40 SINGLES

- "HAPPY JACK"  
Decca; Number 24, 1967
- "I CAN SEE FOR MILES"  
Decca; Number 9, 1967
- "CALL ME LIGHTNING"  
Decca; Number 40, 1968
- "MAGIC BUS"  
Decca; Number 25, 1968
- "PINBALL WIZARD"  
Decca; Number 19, 1969
- "I'M FREE"  
Decca; Number 37, 1969
- "SUMMERTIME BLUES"  
Decca; Number 27, 1970
- "SEE ME, FEEL ME"  
Decca; Number 12, 1970
- "WON'T GET FOOLED AGAIN"  
Decca; Number 15, 1971
- "BEHIND BLUE EYES"  
Decca; Number 34, 1971
- "JOIN TOGETHER"  
Decca; Number 17, 1972
- "THE RELAY"  
Track; Number 39, 1972
- "SQUEEZE BOX"  
MCA; Number 17, 1975
- "WHO ARE YOU"  
MCA; Number 14, 1978
- "YOU BETTER YOU BET"  
Warner Bros.; Number 18, 1981
- "ATHENA"  
Warner Bros.; Number 28, 1982





# MOD·ERNISM

Thrilling times awaited the British teenager at the dawn of the Sixties. The coming decade would be one of unprecedented social change and opportunity for young people. London – the bleak, gray city of the Forties and early Fifties, which still bore the scars of the great air raids of World War II – would soon emerge as the fast-paced popular-style center of the English-speaking world.

The rationing and hard times of the war were over, so was compulsory military service for young men. The economy was on the upswing, and a new system of “hire purchase” enabled Britons to obtain once undreamed-of luxuries on credit. A relatively new group of consumers – teenagers – could indulge in trendy, “disposable” commodities, like record players, 45-rpm singles and clothes.

British teenagers had made a trial run at a subculture of their own during the early-to-mid-Fifties, a period that saw the rise of the Teddy Boys – working-class youths wearing sideburns and drape jackets – who jived to the sounds of Bill Haley and His Comets, Elvis Presley and Little Richard. But in London circa 1958-59, a distinctively new fashion-obsessed youth cult began to develop: Mod.

Observers in the United States were never able to see the Mod movement very clearly. The fab-gear-luv-crazed American media made *mod* into a catchall term suitable for describing – and marketing – everything from avant-garde films to false eyelashes. In Britain, Mod was a far more specific phenomenon, a rigidly codified lifestyle for a relatively small group of young people living in and around metropolitan London.

Mod's earliest roots reached back to the late Fifties and a small group of would-be bohos-about-town who copped the styles they saw on French and Italian tourists and in foreign films. Continental shoes and hairstyles were coveted by later Mods; it became snobbishly hip to attend French films, smoke French cigarettes and drink frothy Italian coffees. The new streamlined Italian scooters, the Vespa and the Lambretta, became a fashionable mode of transportation.

These “modernists” revered the music of black America. Streetwise, soulful and danceable, it was a blessed alternative to the pallid British chart fodder of the pre-Beatles era. Mods went to great lengths to collect hard-to-get blues and R&B singles, as well as jazz discs by Miles Davis, Charles Mingus, Gerry Mulligan and the Modern Jazz Quartet. For the first time in British history, teenagers had pocket money to spare on fads and adventures – and the hippest among them were setting down the commandments of a new fashion religion.

That religion was exclusive by definition – all or nothing, to borrow the title of a hit single recorded by one of the Mod bands, the Small Faces. True Mods had a rather severe set of ins and outs to adhere to; these could and did change in incremental detail at any time. The depth of a jacket's side vents, the

number of buttons on that jacket, how far below the hips one's trousers rode – all were important criteria. There was a Mod walk, a Mod lingo and Mod dances (such as the block). For years, Mod grew as a self-contained street style, never successfully captured or packaged by adult industry. No one could dictate the in thing to these kids but the kids themselves. Though there was no single leader and no Mod thought police, there were many small pockets of stylists, each with its own pooh-bah. A top trendsetter was called a “face.” A face dictated rules by example, tried his best never to be “topped up” and stayed alert for other boys with subtly outrageous new looks to copy.

Casual clothes were not yet readily available to British teenagers – their choice was limited to styles of clothing intended for children or adults. Suits were still made to order, and if one found the right tailor (perhaps down a gloomy lane in Soho called Carnaby Street), one's dream threads could be realized. Acceptable alternatives to suits included cycling jackets, turned-up “parallel” Levi's, T-shirts, Fred Perry knit shirts, shirts with button-down collars and two-tone shoes. A Mod's parka was more than decorative – this outerwear was roomy enough to fit over the clothing beneath it, keeping the wearer clean and dry as he zoomed through the streets of London aboard his scooter.

Mods may have been prissy about their appearance, but in music they demanded true grit and maximum danceability. The Ealing Club, the Crawdaddy, the Flamingo, the Marquee and, most crucially, the Scene Club were all Mod hotspots between 1960 and 1965. An essential figure in the history of Mod was the DJ at the Scene, Guy Stevens, who plied his trade with a vast collection of imported blues and soul discs. “All he ever did



The Small Faces: Steve Marriott, Jimmy Winston, Kenney Jones, Ronnie Lane

was listen to records," recalled Gary Brooker in the liner notes for *Whiter Shades of R&B*, a reissue of the recordings of Brooker's band the Paramounts. "We'd go 'round his place once a week, and by the end of the evening we'd come out with ten new songs!" The Paramounts would later become Procul Harum; Guy Stevens would go on to produce Mott the Hoople's first record, released in 1969, and the Clash's album *London Calling* ten years later. Stevens died of a heart attack in 1988.

#### SHAPES OF THINGS

The Mods' musical universe revolved almost entirely around records until 1962, when live rhythm & blues emerged on the London club scene in the form of Cyril Davies's All-Stars and Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated. The sight of fellow Englishmen performing America's black music with any degree of sincerity and

feeling encouraged a new crop of young musicians, including the nascent Rolling Stones.

The Stones enjoyed a sizable Mod following at the outset of their career, but ultimately they were too untidy and nonconformist to be truly Mod. The Kinks were a little too odd and therefore in a league of their own. The Yardbirds were more fashion-conscious, and their teenaged lead guitarist Eric Clapton even sported the preferred Mod hairstyle, half parted and back combed.

Yet it was the Who that became the premier Mod band – through the machinations of a dedicated Mod named Pete Meaden. Meaden encouraged the members of the band to change their name to the High Numbers; taught them the essentials of Mod fashion; booked their first residency at the Scene Club; wrote the lyrics for their first single, "I'm the Face"; and set the mood for Pete Townshend classics like "Out in the Street," "The Kids Are Alright" and "My Generation."

"The early Who singles, although coming at the end of Mod, all perfectly illustrate the period," wrote Richard Barnes in his definitive book *Mod*, published in 1979. "Pete Meaden said soon after that he turned up to a gig at the Aquarium ballroom in Brighton one weekend to see the Who, and couldn't get in because it was too packed with his beloved Mods."

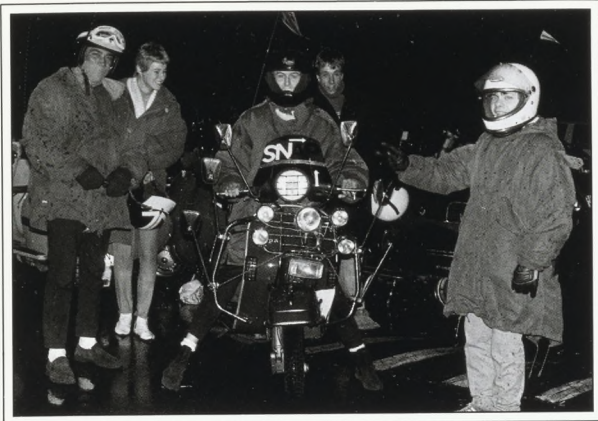
By 1965 an astonishing number of Mod and neo-Mod bands had made their first recordings. In addition to the Who, the Yardbirds and the mini but mighty Small Faces, their ranks included the



The fashion-conscious Yardbirds in 1965



The riots that shook Brighton and Margate in May 1964, and the subsequent sensational press coverage, may have marked the end of Mod's little world.



Parkas and scooters were icons of the Mods' religion of style.

Action, the Birds (with Ron Wood), the Artwoods (with Ron's brother Art) and Georgie Fame's Blue Flames, as well as the Mannish Boys and David Jones and the Lower Third, both of which featured David Bowie, who soon shed the nondescript surname Jones.

"There were some people in the crowd who looked better than the blokes on-stage," recalls Eddie Phillips, a former guitarist for the Creation – one of the most dynamic of all Mod bands, whose visionary singles like "Making Time" and "Painter Man" were barely released in the United States. "I used to have a red jacket with black and white checkered tape down the back of it, like you'd stick on your car. . . . From a fashion point of view, it was a bit of an explosion."

Music also determined the Mods' television-viewing decisions. After *Ready Steady Go!* made its BBC debut in August 1963 and won immediate acceptance by this most fickle of audiences, six o'clock on Friday night became the holy Mod TV hour. The program featured both live and lip-synched performances by British and American stars – including virtually everyone on the Motown roster – and in its dancing studio audience could be found some of the club scene's top-ranking faces.

The Mods' self-image was that of a leisure class of their own making, but many held regular jobs. Between a day's work and a night's raving, sleep was hard to come by. Enter the Purple Hearts, an amphetamine better known to its manufacturers as Drynamil. Clean, neat and compact, these pills could keep a young Mod intensely "blocked" all night, filled with energy for



The Creation, circa 1967, had been one of the most dynamic Mod bands.

the dance floor and feeling physically and mentally superior.

Eddie Phillips: "If you took one, you felt a little bit up. If you took two, you felt a little more up. But when you got up the next day, you felt twenty paces behind everyone else. So you fancied taking up another couple just to catch up with them. It was the Catch-22 circle of drug taking. I think most people sussed that out after a while and stuck to their beer or scotch and Coke."

The Mods, however, had more potent enemies than chemicals. The senseless style wars between the Mods and their rival the Rockers became the stuff of legend. The scope and frequency of these clashes were limited by geography: Mod was always a movement based in London; the Rockers dominated the more rural North. Still, the riots that shook the seaside resorts of Brighton and Margate in May 1964, and the subsequent sensational press coverage, may have marked the end of Mod as a private, self-invented club closed to the outside world.

### THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

Flash forward a dozen years to the punk-rock detonation of 1977 – and the rebirth of Mod. A band as talented and soulful as



By 1965 an astonishing number of Mod and neo-Mod bands, such as the Action, had made it onto vinyl.

the Jam would have been a force to reckon with no matter what style Paul Weller, Bruce Foxton and Rick Buckler had chosen. The style they *did* choose was pure Mod, from their razor-cut hair to their two-tone shoes, and the Jam's best singles – "In the City," "Strange Town," "This Is the Modern World" – were nearly the equal of earlier explosions set off by the Who. Once again, the acknowledged leaders inspired a host of followers – Back to Zero, the Chords and Secret Affair among them. In 1979, Franc Roddam's film *Quadrophenia*, based on the Who's 1973 concept album about their erstwhile followers, perfectly captured the naiveté and excitement of the original Mod era – and helped ignite a new one in pockets of pop fashion throughout the Western world.

On a visit to Brighton in 1987, I took the requisite *Quadrophenia* tour with someone who had spent his school years there. Even for a former resident, it wasn't easy to find the very alley where Jimmy and Stephanie screwed breathlessly while hiding from a stampede of pill-crazed Mods and angry policemen. But we turned a corner, and there was the same alley, looking just as it had in the film – save for the wall-to-wall graffiti left by Mod pilgrims from outposts as distant as Australia and Germany and more than a few cities in the United States.

Truly, this is one pop movement that refuses to die – anyway, anyhow, anywhere.

– KAREN MCBURNIE