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KOSSOFF
Tremors are beginning to run through the rock world. The Who are rehearsing, recording an album, and making plans to hit the road sometime this summer. In preparation for the final explosion when it comes, Chris Simmonds talked exclusively to each member of The Who............
KEITH Moon was a little late. About an hour, in fact. Quite frankly, nobody looked as if they were expecting him to walk in bang on the stroke of twelve, as scheduled. For those rock converts who have been headhunting in darkest Ethiopia for the last fifteen years, it might be useful to introduce this colourful member of our community. He has been variously described as a human danger zone, a hotel room re-decorator, and by his sterner critics, a hoolligan with rather expensive tastes. He's also the Who's drummer. The various members of the entourage got to discussing Moony as they were awaiting his arrival, and by the time he did - eventually pitch up the legend had grown to be rather bigger than the man himself. He quietly walked in with a very polite handshake, and for the rest of the day was the perfect host apart from a few minor eruptions.

The interview with Mr. Moon had not been particularly easy to arrange, but once we had that we decided to stick out our necks and try to get hold of the rest
of the Who. We had been told that the Who were rehearsing later on, and faultless logic led us to believe that if we could follow Moony around for long enough he would lead us to his colleagues. Well, it more or less took place that way, but for want of a better system we might as well take it chronologically, which takes us back to Keith Moon.

We met at a photographer's place in the West End, and the various reporters outside were waiting until the photo session was finished. As we sat around in anticipation, one of the assembled shared a little anecdote about the eccentric drummer.

"Whenever Moony goes for a drink in a bar he always orders six glasses and two bottles of whisky, whether he's alone or with a lot of people. Anyway, on this particular occasion he was conducting an interview in one of his little haunts, and as usual ordered his six glasses and two bottles rather to the surprise of his companion. He filled up the glasses and they got talking. After a few minutes Moony had to go to the toilet, and half an hour later he hadn't come out yet. So the journalist went into the toilet, and cautiously began peering into each of the cubicles. No Moony, and the poor guy returned to his table. Fifteen minutes later he happened to notice Moony sitting at the other end of the bar; next to him on the table, six glasses and two bottles. By this time the guy was obviously pretty concerned, and he ran over to Moony to check if he was all right. 'Ah, I knew I came in with someone,' said Moony, looking up at the guy.

Enough of these rather strange tales. As mentioned earlier, Keith Moon is also drummer with the Who, and a very good one at that. However, when he takes it into his head to rearrange his surroundings people tend to forget that he is, after all, a musician. This coupled with the fact that the mighty Who have anything but a prolific recording output. The general idea, among the nationals at any rate, is "well, the Who haven't done anything for eighteen months, but they still can't be ignored, so run a story on Moon's latest public outrage." It makes good reading, to be sure, but just for a change we went for a serious interview during the journey to the rehearsal. Keith has for quite a time now been a resident of Los Angeles, and in fact recently completed his latest solo project there, an album, *Two Sides of the Moon*. "Let's listen to something while we talk," said Keith, selecting *Two Sides of the Moon* from the cartridge collection in his car. "I just find the whole L.A. atmosphere much easier to work in, much easier to have fun in as well. That album, for instance was not premeditated. I just had a bit of spare time and I thought I might as well book some studio time. It was not a matter of hiring various musicians, it was just seeing who was around and willing to drop in for a jam." Among those who dropped in were Joe Walsh, Jesse Ed Davis, Jim Keltner, Bobby Keys and Keith's old friend Harry Nilsson. "I like working that way. With a regular group you have to get them organised and work everything out beforehand."

Keith also has several projects lined up for the future. One is some kind of comedy album, and possibly a stage presentation involving Viv Stanshall, Peter Sellers and Keith's personality equivalent from the film world, Oliver Reed. Another is the possibility of doing a straight film abroad with Ringo Starr, to be directed by Sam Peckinpah.

Back to the Who, and the obvious place to start is with the much publicised film of Tommy. Keith reckons that director Ken Russell was the only man who could have undertaken the task of committing Tommy to the screen. He also admits that parts of the film bored him, and that he enjoyed himself as the lecherous Uncle Ernie. (Some uncharitable sods have suggested that Moony did not need all that much acting ability for the part. Tut tut.) "I take these acting and solo projects seriously, but they all take second place to the 'Oo. Some of my mates find out that I'm rehearsing for a new album and they ask me who I'm playing with. I tell them it's the 'Oo and they say 'yeah, of course.' But I suppose it's understandable."

Would he care to pass on any drumming tips? "Find out what area you are good in and concentrate on improving it. If you work on the good points your weaknesses naturally improve." Did he remember his old column in BI? "Yeah, I thought it was great," he candidly admits.

Saving the big question till last, we asked Keith what the new Who album was going to be like. "With these rehearsals we are not only practising the new songs but also working out a new stage routine. We're trying to get out of the heavy-heavy label and turn out songs that stand up as enjoyable songs rather than as parts of a larger overall concept. We feel a lot freer, Pete wrote most of the songs, and John did a couple." "A new stage routine" didn't mean that we were to see a substantially different Who, did it? Keith looks a little hurt. "I'll still be the bluddy 'Oo!"

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**John Entwistle**

JOHN Entwistle is the quiet member of the band. Just as well too, One gets the feeling that if he was halfway as wild as his colleagues the band would rocket cleanly through the roof over the stage. And when he talks his manner is as unobtrusive as his bass playing. Naturally his prime concern is playing bass with the Who, but this is by no means his sole occupation. Quite simply, he loves playing bass, and when the Who are taking a breather Entwistle usually makes sure that he's playing bass somewhere else. His latest venture before the Who started rehearsing was the much publicised *Flash Fearless* album. The idea was to find a flexible concept and to turn out a lighthearted rock album from it. Incredibly, the idea appealed to about twenty stars, and they all enjoyed themselves. To give the album continuity Entwistle played bass throughout, and in his noncommittal murmur he told me about it.

"The Flash album gave me the chance to play some 'funky' stuff and extend myself a little. If I like the material to begin with, I enjoy doing sessions like that. For *Flash* I had some free time, and it looked as if it could be a laugh." A wan half-smile flickers briefly across his doleful features. In the dead-pan stakes he would put Clement Freud to shame.

"I find it easier to do my own solo projects," he says half to himself without enlarging. He has recently disbanded his fine Ox band.

"We lost a bit of money there — I was the only one with any capital, and with a band like that it takes quite a time to break even again, or make any profits."
But Ox did me a lot of good, it gave me the confidence to get through to an audience. I had to sing, and I was forced to project myself more. But at the beginning I was introducing the next number before the last one had finished, and a one and a half hour set was lasting an hour." The same smile.

"Whatever we have been doing separately, the Who just click when they come together. We'll try and get the album finished quickly, and rehearse the stage act before we hit the road, early July perhaps. We may hit the States in August or September. I want to get back to working. I like playing with different people, I look upon myself as a bass player and a composer, and so long as I am working in some capacity or another I'm happy." He vanishes, and reappears a few moments later on the stage with the others.

**Pete Townshend**

**ONCE** Keith Moon had taken off his suit in readiness for the rehearsal, we stopped off at the BBC for a liquid lunch before completing the journey. There on the pavement outside the building was Pete Townshend, also there for a liquid lunch. He too had some friends with him, and the party was by now quite large.

Collaring him for an interview was plainly going to be as easy as waylaying the Pope outside the Vatican and collecting a few quotes on the pros of contraception. That rather lame analogy is by no means designed to imply that Townshend is the unfriendly and untouchable rock star. It is just that at this particular time he is bound to look on foraging journalists as a pain up the secondary orifice.

Although he doesn't plan it that way, a lot of pressure of getting the Who together for rehearsal falls on him. Moon only has a limited number of days in the country before he jet off to Spain in blue from the tax office start paying him visits. Roger Daltrey has his hands full with his latest film “Lisztomania”, and is available for rehearsals only at pretty irregular hours. By the very nature of his personality he does more than his fair share of worrying about these and the other innumerable problems of getting it all together in a limited amount of time. Another factor which is bound to turn these preoccupations into an understand-

able reticence is that over the years Pete Townshend has come to be looked upon as one of the premier interviews in rock music. He has always been the “articulate spokesman” of rock music, and, though it is not a logical sequitur, he has become one of the most often misquoted. So instead of a regular interview, we are to try and inconspicuously foist ourselves into his conversations, and not under any circumstances to let him see even the edge of a notebook.

"Have you seen this, Pete? someone asks him, handing over an old interview that he did for one of the weeklies. "I really can't believe I said all this," he says after a few moments. "I haven't been seriously misquoted, but I'm bloody sure he was asking long questions and doing all the talking." That's the irony of the whole situation. One imagines that not all his interviews are willingly given, and even when they are that, he is sometimes surprised that he has opened up so much. He gives very intelligent and perceptive interviews, almost despite himself. If he is ever reticent, it is when the band have a project underhand. He is talking about the problems to one of the band's publicists, and although he is not being entirely serious one senses an undertone of truth and feeling in his words.

"Right now all I want to do is get the band together, and Christ knows there is little enough time to do it. I want to get Nicky to relax, and how can I do it if everyone wants pictures and interviews." (That's Nicky Hopkins, who will be playing piano during the rehearsals and the recording.)

Oh dear, it's getting quite embarrassing. I've already been introduced as a journalist, and it's too late to pretend that you couldn't agree more.

The main problem is that Pete Townshend is not always a pop star. He is an artist, and even though the Who are one of our most potent bands, still retaining nearly all their original fierce charisma, Pete will just never allow himself to fall below his very high standards. You might have to wait a couple of years for a Who album, but when it does come out it is a bomber. If people think that the album is not superb, it is because their standards of judgment are out of proportion. If the album doesn't completely eclipse Tommy it seems by contrast to be a flop. Unfair, to be sure.

It is interesting to see how the band have survived their own durability. The Who started out as the Mod band. None of them were Mods to the last degree, but they were still the Mod band.

Now, over 10 years later, the real Mods have married and moved into suburbia. Now and again in the pub they might think of the old days, but on the
whole they are the guys who are buying K-Tel soul records now. So while the group is fundamentally the same, the image has had to change with a new audience.

There is more mediocrity in the pop world now than there ever was — when Townshend surveys the scene around him he must see something very different from what he used to see. And in the final analysis it doesn't matter what — the Who are still burning, keeping the cinders glowing from days gone by. Whether one likes such a band or not, one has to admire uncompromising survival. Pete, as usual, hits the nail on the head as the entourage troops out of the building. "I've been banned from here twice, and now it's come to the ludicrous state of affairs when no-one notices when I walk in, and I can leave without doing something outrageous."

Roger Daltrey

"The film's nearly finished, thank God," sighed Roger Daltrey as he sank into his seat. "Now I can get on to work with the 'Oo.'"

A quote which captures the high work-rate, enthusiasm and devotion of the Who's lead singer. He has vastly enjoyed renewing his acquaintance with Tommy director Ken Russell for "Lisztomania," their latest film together, and his task has been as gruelling as the one before, a situation which he genuinely seems to relish. However, his main concern is with the present: he neither dwells on past successes nor future plans, and, on the way to Ramport Studios to meet Pete Townshend, the main topic of conversation is the band.

"Once we have prepared all the material we will be recording the album in Los Angeles. That's because our stupid government will murder us if we stay here. We save 25 percent on tax by doing it abroad, but we dislike being forced to do that."

His bitterness is easy to understand. The taxman is gaining no little notoriety among the members of our top rock bands. Still, taxman or no taxman, the Who have been ploughing on for a fair old time, and we wondered if, perhaps, Daltrey had detected any changes in the attitude of the band over the years?

"I think our audiences have been get-

ting bigger all the time, but that does create its problems. You become more restricted in what you can do, because you know there is no way you can satisfy them all. That may be one of the reasons why, in my opinion, we haven't been so good on stage lately. I mean, I still think the 'Oo's a fucking good band — it's just that I feel we've seen better days. We'll put that right, though."

If he is not entirely satisfied with the stage act, he is of the opinion that the band have been improving their studio technique.

"Pete is the father of the concept album. Anyway, we never know how things are going to turn out until the mixing has been completed."

With the film in the can, and the album finished, the next step is to hit the road. Did he look forward to that? "Yeah, it's a live band, the best when it's going right. We're all looking forward to it." A sentiment shared, no doubt, by thousands of diehards who are sure to emerge in force when the Who once more trundle into action.

φ-CODA

Watching the Who rehearse in an empty hall is an eerie feeling. Daltrey is still filming and hasn't turned up yet. Nicky Hopkins is half hidden behind a grand piano. If you look carefully you can see Entwistle's foot tapping. Townshend is starting to warm up. Moon, a bit more subdued than usual, is quietly going bananas behind the drums. For a rehearsal, with stoppages every now and again, there is no need for the music to be excessively loud; it's still the kind of stuff that mutilates the senses, that flattens your eyeballs against the back of your head. One of Moon's drumsticks slips and bounces high off one of the drums, in the middle of a homicidal attack on the kit. He snatches the errant stick, tosses it up again, and starts murdering the drums once more. It is vintage rock music, savage, violent and unkempt, and it's going to go on for another six hours, getting tighter and better all the time. One just does not think of such a band having to rehearse — one only thinks in terms of huge concerts and heavy albums, as if a work is born complete. When it's all over the Who will emerge either as brilliant or simply as very, very good. Britain might not have an over-abundance of top-class bands, but those we do have are really world beaters. Look out!