ROUND JOHN

Entwistle's neck
 dangling a silver
 spider, which may or
 may not be called Boris.
 It might be his one
 concession to the
 macabre, silent
 stereotype that's hung
 around his neck like an
 albatross for years.

Right now, 'The Quiet
 One' -- which also happens
to be the title of a song he
wrote for The Who's new
'Face Dances' LP -- isn't
keeping such a low profile
anymore. On this occasion
he's even assumed the
mantle of spokesman,
taking time out to answer
the criticisms that have
come The Who's way in the
wake of 'Face Dances'
release . . . and to mention,
just in passing, the solo LP
that he's currently
embarked upon in the
Battersea studio where I
meet him.

Commercially speaking,
things look bright for the
group, with both the album
and the single 'You Better
You Bet' showing strongly
in their respective charts.
But at the outset of the
recent UK tour, The Who's
future was shrouded in
doubt: the Rainbow show,
for instance, was a
shambles, capped by lurid
stories of backstage
punch-ups. So are The Who,
as we suggested at the
time, falling apart?

"No. I mean, we argued at
the Rainbow," Entwistle shrugs
dismissively. "We always have.
But there just happened to be
reporters around that night
who heard it. We just brushed it
off as a normal day. I can
remember whole tours when I
didn't actually go in the
dressing room once, cos I knew
that if I went back in I'd hear the
same old fuckin' arguments. So
I used to stay out in the corridor
and talk to people.

"We always have teething
troubles when we go out on
tour. As far as I was concerned,
personally, we were asking for
trouble anyway, playing little
piss-hole places, with a shitty
sound, and playing four brand

The Who's JOHN ENTWISTLE — nicknamed The Mute
— has never been known to speak or smile in public
before. Until now . . .

PAUL DU NOYER records the historic words
YOU DON'T HAVE MANY CONTEMPORARIES LEFT NOW. DO YOU FEEL ISOLATED FROM TODAY'S MUSIC SCENE?

"Well, I've never felt part of the music scene. The way the whole business is run over here, the most important thing is the Top 30 records, whereas in reality they mean fuck-all financially to a musician. The Who's music is its albums. I'd hate to make records and compete with football teams and wrestlers and American DJs singing 'Shaddup Your Face'. That's not the business I wanna be in. So, in that way, the English music scene doesn't appeal to me, it sickens me. I feel a lot more comfortable in America, where you have radio stations that only play album tracks."

Entwistle says that he takes an interest in new music, citing Talking Heads as one modern group who've impressed him a lot. How does he feel about heavy metal, a lot of which sounds to me like hamfisted parodies of 'Live At Leeds'? "Well, heavy metal, it's just riffs, and there's only a certain amount of riffs around. It's very rarely that one comes out that's any better than any that's gone before. I like playing heavy metal: it's the only kind of music that I really like playing. But I can't stand listening to it."

The reviews have been pretty bad. Do they affect you at all?

"Not really. I stopped reading them a long time ago: it was so much like reading the newspapers, full of bad news. Keith Altham, our publicity man, kindly sent me all the shitty reviews though, so I still can't escape them."

Do you ever think they've got a point, when they say you're living on past glories or whatever, that it's time to knock it on the head?

"If I believed in the reviews, I'd have given up years ago.

"I'm on this English tour, about 50% of the audience hadn't even seen us before, and they wanted to hear old things. After 'Quadrophenia' — when we played that in its entirety it was a disaster — we decided we're never gonna change our stage act that much: we'll do it gradually. Kids still wanna hear ' Substitute' and 'My Generation' and all that stuff."

So you believe that The Who's following does renew itself, that it isn't just a nostalgia thing?

"Yeah. We get an audience of between 11 years old and forty. We actually did a tour a few years ago and when we went on stage these silly little chickens down in front started screaming. We glared at 'em and they shut up."

"I like playing heavy metal — I just can't stand listening to it. The same way some people like the smell of their own farts but don't like smelling anyone else's!

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