THE WHO
NEVER
SAY
NEVER
AGAIN
BY CHARLES M. YOUNG
WHO’S BACK

After seven years off the road, can last generation's heroes start making cents in a material world?

By Charles M. Young

My take on Pete Townshend is that he's extremely sensitive and chronically overwhelmed by his own emotions, so overwhelmed by anyone who is not overwhelmed by the same emotion at the same time makes no sense to him. And when a new emotion passes over him, his last emotion makes no sense to him either. Since he doesn't suffer fools lightly, and since no one in the world makes sense, most of all himself, the world is probably pretty lonely as well as overwhelming. No wonder he spent all that time practicing guitar drunk with the headphones on. He was going to shove those emotions right back down his ear canal, and made himself nearly deaf in the process.

Townshend has a new album out called The Iron Man, based on a fairy tale of the same name by England's poet laureate, Ted Hughes. It is the story of a little boy named Hogarth who encounters the Iron Man, a giant who wanders the countryside eating anything made of metal. Despite his instinct for proper ecology, the Iron Man is hated and feared until he defeats a destructive dragon the size of Australia. It's a delightful read, makes more sense than Tommy and has given Townshend a focus for his creativity. It has also cost him a lot of time and money. The songs are very strong work by a very talented guy. He wants The Iron Man to be successful, and he's doing a big tour to support it.

The band he's touring with is called the Who. Two of them, Roger Daltrey and John Entwistle, actually played in the original Who, whose twenty-fifth anniversary (counting from when Keith Moon joined the band) is this year. Announced at a press conference in New York's Radio City Music Hall, the Who tour promises to be highly lucrative: 30-40 football stadiums selling out with 60,80,000 people paying $23 and up to hear them. Figure in T-shirt and memorabilia sales, and it is difficult to see how the Who would gross less than a hundred million dollars. A few days after the last of these interviews, Budweiser was announced as sponsor of the band's New York shows, and several more stadium dates were added as tickets moved fast.

MUSICIAN: You said at your press conference the other day that you were still looking for a corporate sponsor for your tour?
TOWNSEND: I can't speak for everyone in the group. But I feel and my manager feels that sponsorship is at a watershed. Great things are happening because of sponsorship. You might not agree. But the topping off of money allows you to look very differently at the profitability of tours. It might be the thing that allows people in rock to get away from playing stadiums, although it's the number of people corporations can hit in stadiums that makes sponsorship a viable prospect.

MUSICIAN: If you got enough money from a sponsor, you would take this tour to smaller venues?
TOWNSEND: I think if you had enough money from a sponsor, you could afford to do some kind of show and reach the same number of people but not in stadiums. In other words, do high-quality, subsidized-price videos of a show or a series of paid previews. If people want a stadium show, it can be arranged. But anyone who wants to go to a stadium seems to me to have a problem. Sponsors can make it possible to avoid compromise by the fact that arenas are designed for sport, not acoustics. Music just helps these places stay in the black. The other possibility is using sponsorship as per the Madonna video to make a personal statement in a very artistic way about something that you passionately believe. I don't know if that video is a masterpiece or an aberration. I don't know. But I do know it was a very, very dangerous thing. Was it Pepsi or Coke that sponsored it?

MUSICIAN: It was Pepsi, and they withdrew their sponsorship.
TOWNSEND: Good. Doesn't matter as long as she made the video in her way.

MUSICIAN: Madonna has enough money to make that video on her own.
TOWNSEND: You don't know anything about Madonna's money! You haven't got a clue! I haven't, and I'm sure I know her better than you do. In any case, the American film and record industry is based on the premise that you don't ever spend your own money. Well, there are people who have.

MUSICIAN: Would you sell a song out of the Who catalogue for a commercial?
TOWNSEND: I've done it. Hundreds of times.

MUSICIAN: If someone came to you and wanted "My Generation" for a shoe commercial?
TOWNSEND: Shoes? Depends on the subject. It's my legal property, my right to do what I like with it. You might not like it. You might feel it's your property...

MUSICIAN: Not my legal property...

TOWNSEND: It's not your moral property either. It's just not your property. What's your property is your response. And the truth is, the advertisers have already made fortunes out of your response. They've used that response on a daily basis by advertising on radio and dictating what the playlist is going to
be. If you respond in a positive way to a song like “My Generation” or “Baba O’Reily” or “Won’t Get Fooled Again” because you listen to AOR and then go out like a turkey and buy fucking Ordonio, then they’ve got you. But most of all, they’ve got me, because it’s my career that’s suffering. Because the other 400 songs I’ve written don’t ever get heard. I can’t deal with it. I go to a sponsor and say, “Give me the money to do what I want to do.” The public are already in the vise-like grip of advertising agencies’ reductive demographic practices, reducing my career down to eight songs as AOR radio reproduces it. If somebody offers me the right price and I think it’s worth doing, I’ll sell the song. I’ve done it many times.

MUSICIAN: Aren’t you contributing to the vise-like grip Madison Avenue has?
TOWNSHEND: It’s already been done! What’s the difference? There’s further damage to be done? Why shouldn’t I benefit the same way that you do? It’s my fucking work!
MUSICIAN: How do I benefit from it?
TOWNSHEND: You benefit from it because it’s part of your society. If you want to change society, change it. It’s not my job. I’m a songwriter. It’s what I do for a living. Your article isn’t worth shit without the advertisers who advertise in Musician. It wouldn’t be here except for advertisers.
MUSICIAN: I don’t make much money. You’re in a privileged position in society. You’re expected to tell the truth.
TOWNSHEND: Bullshit! Bullshit! I’m not expected to do anything. Nobody is going to tell me what to do. Nobody doesn’t like it, that’s their problem. It’s my work. If someone doesn’t like it, I can’t help it.
MUSICIAN: I’m not saying I don’t like it. Your songs meant an enormous amount to me when I was growing up. Still do. Take it from another angle: When I listen to “I Heard It Through the Grapevine,” surely one of the great rock songs, I don’t want to think about the dancing raisins. I feel that’s Madison Avenue stepping on a part of my memory that I don’t want them having access to. The many associations I have with that song are violated and overpowered by a commercial image. I resent it.
TOWNSHEND: You obviously watch too much fucking television.
MUSICIAN: Actually, I don’t watch that much. But when I do, the dancing raisins are there.
TOWNSHEND: Your memory is violated by dancing raisins? Are you crazy? Is your perception of “I Heard It Through the Grapevine” so shallow that it’s violated by dancing raisins? I feel strongly about this, because I’ve had to consider every single song I’ve had a bid on. For a long time there were certain things I wouldn’t let go. Someone wanted “Magic Bus,” and I thought, “Okay, that’s a fun song. People won’t mind.” Then somebody comes along and wants “My Generation” to sell laxative pills. You know, “Dah dah dah, my constipation.” They seriously think you’re going to give them the song. And you think, “Well, let’s play with the motherfuckers.” And you say, “Okay, you can have the song for 16 million dollars, ‘cause that’s what the hatred of every Who fan in the world is worth to me.”

You have to realize there’s a price to what I’ve done in my life. The price has been established by what people have already given me by buying my work. The ethics are absolutely clear in my mind. It’s my decision. It’s my right. I’ve been outraged by certain ads that were absolutely despicable. And you are outraged by the dancing raisins. Maybe what we should do, the pair of us, is get a couple of machine guns and machine gun the lot of them. Is it really that serious?

MUSICIAN: I’m not willing to machine gun people.
TOWNSHEND: What are you willing to do? I’ll do it with you. I do think advertising has an enormous responsibility. And they’ve fucked a lot of things. I just think it’s better to have advertising at the front end of a project. So if there is any question about a song being associated with a product, it’s there from the beginning so the public can relate to it directly. The interesting thing about tour sponsorship is you have to deal with the promoters who have already sold the venue to a beer company. Often the deal is already done, and the promoter wants his sponsor, not yours. If you want to go to heaven saying, “It’s all right, because I didn’t get a dollar from it,” I say take it a step further. Would the event have happened at all without sponsorship? Would you be paying by a reduction in your performance fee? Better to know what you’re doing. Better to take the money. Better to let the artist deal with the moral issues. Better to let the artist influence the advertisers and agencies involved.

MUSICIAN: What are your feelings about tour sponsorship?
ENTWISTLE: I’ve got no objection to someone sponsoring us unless the product is something I don’t believe in. It definitely helps the tour, makes the show better. I don’t see why anyone should have a go at us for being sponsored when you’ve got football heroes sponsoring sportswear. Why shouldn’t we have a sponsor like Coke or beer or cigarettes? Especially if the company is willing to give money to charity on top of what we get, it’ll make someone else happy besides us. I haven’t got much of a conscience, I suppose. I can think up really good reasons for doing things wrong. I live much easier that way.

MUSICIAN: The Who meant so much to me growing up that I hate to see a product put in front of it. The meaning changes. The words lost that integrity.
ENTWISTLE: Our sponsoring goes way back. We were really hunting for money in the ’60s to finance our guitar smashing. We did ads for Great Shakes and Coke. “Coke after Coke after…” We did a lot of little commercials on Who Sell Out. We insisted that in the Schlitz commercial from the 1982 tour, at no point did it say we drank Schlitz beer. I’ve never drunk a glass of beer in my life. I had a sip once as a kid, and it was shit. But if someone wants me to sponsor Remy Martin, I’ll jump on it. I feel I still have my integrity. When I tour, it costs me money, and I don’t give a fuck if it comes from Schlitz. It enables me to play.

MUSICIAN: You’re looking for a new tour sponsor?
DALTREY: No, we’re not looking for one. We’re not doing this tour for the money.
MUSICIAN: John and Pete seemed pretty clear that they were doing it for the money.
DALTREY: I’m not. Which isn’t to say the money won’t be useful. I’m doing this for me, to put a lot of things to rest, because I thought the way the Who ended felt like unfinished business. It was a rotten way to end, that 1982 tour.
MUSICIAN: Why was it rotten?
DALTREY: The tour wasn’t rotten. The way the band ended was rotten. Just potted out, for want of a better word. [laughs] I want the experience of singing those old Who songs again. It’s my passion. I love those songs. I love the band—not socially, but the chemistry when we work. It’s the inside of the personality coming out, not all these electronic condiments. I just want to sing songs that I love with people that I love.
MUSICIAN: Not socially?

DALTREY: Our social lives are very separate. We only get together to work, so the chemistry isn’t wanted on anything else. That’s what made it great. It’s still unbelievable how great it is. The show will be very demanding, but it’s going to give me opportunity to sing because of the lowered stage volume. Before, all I could do was shout above the din. I’m singing better than ever now. No doubt about it. And I just sing. I’m not good at vocal tricks. You don’t need that with the Who. I heard the W.A.S.P. version of “Can You See the Real Me” and it was just like the Who except for the metal vibrato vocal. I can’t do that. If I’d been able to do that, the Who would not have had the same urgency, the same power.

MUSICIAN: How did you feel about the Schiltz sponsorship in ’82?

DALTREY: It was great. I enjoy a drink. Nothing wrong with a beer. It paid for our plane. We did very well out of it. When we start this tour and people are printing the gate money, they look at the top line and they forget the expenses. When you get down to what’s left after you cart around a stage and a 14-piece band, expenses are horrendous. Sponsorship is important. But I’m not doing this tour for the money, so I don’t care if we have one or not. I live my life very simply now. I don’t need all that money. I got another job to pay the rent. When the Who finished, it taught me a lesson. You can spend your whole life chasing that money, but it’s not important. It’s the freedom to do what you want to do. Aside from poor people who are fighting just to put food in their mouths, almost all of us have that freedom to do what we want.

I did go through a period where I regretted all that money we lost. “Cause we lost millions, and we lost the bloody lot of it because we were crazy. But who cares? I’m still alive. I worked in Hungary last year, and it really taught me a lesson. The people are very poor there, but they still have a wonderful quality of community that we’ve lost here because of our stupid materialism. So I’ve changed. I’m different now.

MUSICIAN: Could you describe that process of transformation?

DALTREY: I’m not through it yet. I went through a period of a few years where I questioned my whole being. It was getting my life in balance. The end of the Who was terrifying. Now there was going to be nothing! But it wasn’t true. A whole new life and career opened up for me. I’ve done so much living in the past seven years that I wasn’t allowed in the Who. I’m a working actor now. I don’t need this. The Threepenny Opera and The Beggar’s Opera—that’s the stuff I’ve been doing, and I love it. But if the Who want to do anything, I’m available because I’m a Who fan. I have my new life now, and I have this thing that I loved more than anything, and I can do it again. I’d do this tour for nothing! Better not tell John that. He’ll want my share. But John hasn’t got another career. He’s got the Who, and he’s got his own band that he takes on the road. His life is completely music.

The thing that made me think about touring was money. I’d never have to make records.

MUSICIAN: I’m a little mystified by what Pete will actually be doing onstage.

ENTWISTLE: I think everyone is mystified by what Pete will be doing, including Pete. We won’t know until we start rehearsing. There will be a loud side of the stage and a quiet side of the stage. The quiet side will be the vocalists, some percussion and Pete. The loud side will be keyboards, the other guitarist, the horns and me. As long as Pete is protected from that, it should be workable. The acoustic guitars will go straight through the monitors, but Pete will do some electric guitar toward the end. There are amplifiers now where you can get the sound of a stack and it’s almost inaudible. Gallien-Krueger
do one. The Yamaha SPX, you can turn the distortion up and the volume down and it sounds like a Marshall stack on the other side of New York. Through the P.A. it would sound exactly like a Marshall stack. We're going to keep all our options open.

**MUSICIAN:** His hearing loss is terrifying.

**ENTWISTLE:** Most of our hearing damage didn't come from guitar. It came from P.A.'s feeding back and headphones in the studio. I've got a slight whistle in this ear that goes off depending on how high I am in the world. I come down from where I live at 700 feet above sea level to Thames level for a business meeting, it starts whistling. For the first two hours I can't hear a damn word they're saying.

**MUSICIAN:** Did it take much convincing to get Pete to agree to tour?

**ENTWISTLE:** I believed in my heart he'd come around to thinking about touring again. He's inclined to change his mind quite a few times. Often in the same sentence. It was on and off, on and off. Maybe. Yes. No. Personally, I'm a much different person since the Who broke up. I'm more confident about my playing, my music, myself. I didn't want to get involved in the old Who power struggles again. The balance of power was always shifting backwards and forwards with me in the middle. When Keith died, I lost a lot of power because he and I always got together and agreed on things in advance. So that was what we wanted to do. When Kenny Jones joined he didn't voice opinions, so I'd have to sit there while Pete and Roger mulled and changed their minds a few hundred times. Eventually they always came around to what I wanted to do anyway. The power structure has been distorted by the media from day one. No way I could be as powerful as Pete. He was the one with the gift of gab. It was a bit depressing when people would come up and say, “You're the best bass player in the world,” and I was at the bottom of the pecking order in the band.

**MUSICIAN:** Pete said at the press conference he wouldn't be playing much guitar. What is he going to do?

**DALTREY:** He's just playing games. He'll be playing guitar. We're just trying to tell people it won't be the same. There will be elements that will be the same, but they will be getting more, not less, with this set. We'll still have the fire in “Won’t Get Fooled Again,” but on the other songs the color will be much greater. I intend to play acoustic guitar on some numbers with Pete playing the piano. We don't intend to generate that wall of sound from the stage anymore, mainly because of Pete's ears, but also because it's so self-defeating in the end. The music can't grow once you hit those noise levels. We'd be playing by rote instead of playing with what's left of our ears. We've all lost the top end of our hearing. It's part of the hazards of the job. But it's a nightmare for Pete. He's got tinnitus—not only is your hearing damaged, it's replaced by another noise. That's the worst part.

**MUSICIAN:** Hogarth's fascination and fear and admiration of the Iron Man reminded me of my own relationship to the Who when I was a boy. There you were, this anarchic force for liberation rumbling through the countryside, living proof it was possible to escape middle-class repression.

**TOWNSHEND:** I like that, but it didn't occur to me. I identify very much with Hogarth myself. I think it's quite simply a fairy story about the fear and deprivation of children. On a more polite note, it's about the moment when a child balances those symbols of fear and smashes them against one another and grows up. I have to remind myself sometimes that I'm a big, strong man. We're all big people with nothing to be afraid of. We're the masters of this planet and nothing should frighten us except our own actions and their consequences, our carelessness, the possibility that we are our own undoing.

**MUSICIAN:** Child abuse runs through the media in waves of hysteria here. Yet 75 percent of the American people believe it's fine to spank children in school. This country has a long history of assaulting smaller people to make them do our bidding.

**TOWNSHEND:** They're trying to pass an act of Parliament to stop spanking their children at home in Britain. Canada has been a leader in stopping domestic violence as well. But the thing about brutality is that it's valuable when we're united against a common enemy. We can drain ourselves of all emotion and kill. We should be mobilizing all this brutality we have to clean up all this shit we've created. As the sergeant said in Stanley Kubrick's Full Metal Jacket, “We are living in shit.” People of conscience on this planet have got to be prepared to be brutal. It does no good being nice about it: “Please don't do that crack. Please don't beat your kids. Please don't shoot another.” We're dealing with dogs—rabid, fighting dogs. I'm not suggesting brutal policing. The people who care have got to be prepared to die for the cause. We've had wars and expected young people to go off and die in some far-off country. I'm surprised people aren't prepared to expect some of their young men and young women to die for the cause right here and now. Pollution, addiction, poverty—all these things are political issues and have to be dealt with in a political way. If you vote, vote with a big cross. Make a nick in your hand and vote with your blood. I feel that passionate about the way the world is going at this moment. It's urgent, and there is too much waffle. That factory where they're planning to build 500 million fluorcarbon refrigerators for the Chinese population—let's make it. Or buy them 500 million refrigerators. LET'S DO SOMETHING! Let's do something about those guys cutting down the rain forest. THEY'RE KILLING US!

**MUSICIAN:** Are you working on a solo project these days?

**ENTWISTLE:** I have a band that's changed members three times. And the album has been recorded three times because we weren't satisfied with a lot of the songs. We tried to get a deal for the band, but the day we were scheduled to sign the contract, the people at the company were arrested by the FBI for fraud. So no deal. Start from scratch. Again. The four songs that I wrote for the group album I'm going to remix and put on my solo album. But I won't be working on it for another year, because I'm not going back to England right away after this tour. I'm going to write a book about all the funny things that happened to the Who. After reading all these books by different people who thought they knew the Who, I've come to
the conclusion that I never existed.

MUSICIAN: You feel the various band biographers missed the humor along with your contribution?

ENTWISTLE: Yeah. No humor in any of them. At all. All my fond memories of the Who are the silly things that happened. I haven’t got any fond memories of working on albums or photo sessions. My memories are the fun we had on the road. As far as I’m concerned, the thing that made The Who a legend is the road work we did. It certainly wasn’t the albums. They didn’t sell particularly well. We didn’t have hit singles. It was the way we performed those songs onstage. People grew to love them because of the show. None of the books talk about any performances, or why it ticked onstage. Why would 100,000 people turn to come and not buy the record?

MUSICIAN: Care to share a fond memory of a concert before your book comes out?

ENTWISTLE: I rarely lose my temper. I let things bottle up and then something small or silly will be the last straw and I’ll blow my top and everyone will run away and hide. Roger had been yelling at me all tour in 1974 to turn down. So I’d turn down and I’d be quite happy playing like that. And then Pete would scream from the other side of the stage, “I can’t hear you! Turn up!” So I’d turn up, thinking, “What the fuck is this.” For three weeks Roger would yell at me to turn down, and four seconds later Pete would yell at me to turn up. Finally we were in Houston, Texas, and Roger screamed in the microphone, “TURN DOWN!”

I thought, “I don’t mind you screaming at me to turn down, but I don’t need you to scream at me in front of the bloody audience.” So I smashed the head off the bass, threw it in front of him and said, “You play the fuckin’ thing!” He just stood there, with the song halfway through. I walked to the back of the amplifiers and they’d taken the fuckin’ stairs away. I was in a bad enough temper that I jumped off the back of the stage. And it was 12 feet high. It felt like my spine came out the top of my head. But it was Chinese water torture out there: “TURN DOWN!” “TURN UP!”

MUSICIAN: Do you approve of John’s literary project?

TOWNSEND: I’ll believe the book when I see it. I don’t think any of these people know how hard it is. Very easy to start a book, very hard to finish. But it would be great if he does it, a research job like that. I coached Dave Marsh through his book on The Who and I published it in the U.K. And I coached Richard Barnes through his book on the Who. The reason I was happy with even the bad stuff about me was I was involved. Roger and John were just not available at that level to those authors. If they want to tell the story their way, they’ll have to sit down and tell it. Very hard thing to do. I’ve contemplated a book on rock ‘n’ roll through my eyes. I can’t imagine it being less than 150,000 words. The great thing about John is his sense of humor. If he writes down all the interesting anecdotes, whether they’re true or not, it will be a wonderful story. What’s fun about history is often the distortions. John is good at that. He remembers the stories and lets them evolve.

MUSICIAN: Did John smash his bass in Houston?

DALTREY: Yes, that’s right. That’s what I mean about the problem with volume. There was Pete, all the way up, only hearing himself. And there was John playing four times as loud as he needs to be to hear himself. It was a Catch-22 situation. With the singer in the middle. A complete nightmare. You can’t sing, you just shout. I’m a good shout, but it gets very boring.

MUSICIAN: I was quite moved by your chapter in The Courage to Change by Dennis Wholey, the harrowing description of your withdrawal from alcohol and other drugs.

TOWNSEND: He’s an old friend of mine and we did an interview. I was quite happy with the way it turned out. I was in psychotherapy and he got me the only week that I decided I was going to quit. I was very disillusioned that week—it was year three, or something. And then I went back and finished off. I never did AA or NA.

MUSICIAN: You’re still sober?

TOWNSEND: Oh sure. I just wish the consequences hadn’t been so fucking hard for the third parties involved.

MUSICIAN: But you kept your family together.

TOWNSEND: With... with... with... with help from them and a certain amount of loss. There are advantages and disadvantages to the life I’ve led. The kids have financial security but there was a time when they suffered a certain amount of fear and deprivation as a direct result of my behavior. We try to talk about it regularly. Awful, awful thing to contemplate. You don’t want to hurt anyone in your life but when you do... At least my old lady knew I was in a rock ‘n’ roll band when we got married. She knew I was an asshole. It’s not like that with kids. They’re born and they’re subjected to all this shit. I’ve never beaten them up, but I’ve sure as hell scared the shit out of them when I was arguing with my wife, or even with myself. I think when I was a kid and my parents would argue, it really scared me. Interestingly, it gave me a deeper love for them when they were together and it gave me a fantastic creative force. It brought forth a type of writing which everyone around the world loves and identifies with if they’re interested in rock ‘n’ roll. I suppose that every family has some element of fear and threat written into its constitution for the children. I’m not saying it has to stop. Maybe it should be that children have to be aware of discipline and power, because in life, however big and tough you are, there is some wall you can’t kick your way through. It’s good to know that. No harm in that wall being your parents or something they represent. But there should never be fear, not abstract fear.

MUSICIAN: Back on the subject of The Iron Man, if you’re putting out a solo album, why not do a solo tour?

TOWNSEND: Because the odds are different. As a solo artist I get fantastic fulfillment from my work in the studio and the writing. Maybe 25 years from 1979, which is when I consider I made my first solo album, I’ll decide to have a party and then I’ll be faced with all these issues again. The chemistry, the presence of John and Roger as performers and friends, has inspired me to take a chance.

The thing I’m most anxious about is having a solo album out. John and Roger appear on it, but it’s my album. I’ll be performing songs from it, I’ll be talking about it. We left no stone unturned in our discussions beforehand. They both said it doesn’t bother them. Whether it still won’t bother them after a few three- and-a-half-hour shows, I don’t know. Depends on
how much attention it gets, I suppose. I don’t think I could tour solo. This Who tour is great for me. I worked so long on Iron Man and I don’t want it to just slide into ignominy because the single isn’t a hit or the video doesn’t work on MTV. If the Who out there on the road lets people know I’m alive, it may be just the last little flipp to give me the hit I need.

MUSICIAN: How did Arthur Brown’s “Fire” get on the record?
TOWNSEND: When I first put the collection together, there seemed to be a hole in the fire scene. I said to my manager that the trouble with fire songs is that it’s all been said. As recently as Bruce Springsteen, “You can’t find a flame without a spark.” You go back in history and the fire clichés make you want to vomit. I said the best song is just “Fire, fire, fire, fire/You’re going to burn.” And Bill [Curbishley] said what a great idea. I said, “No, I didn’t mean the actual song.” But I sat down and thought that it wouldn’t hurt. I used “Eyesight to the Blind” by Sonny Boy Williamson on Tommy. Then I got a letter from Arthur in Texas. He’s running a small commune there and leading a very simple life and I thought let’s go for it. He wrote to me asking if I could help get him some money through publishing. I wrote back and said I’ve got a better idea. We’ll put “Fire” on the album and pray for a hit.

MUSICIAN: You want to do a theatrical production of The Iron Man?
TOWNSEND: That’s right. I’m keen to do it. I’ve written a whole musical—20 songs and a score. I want to see it tested in the theater, get it into workshop as soon as possible. And if it develops, get it funded and out there.

MUSICIAN: Twenty songs? Why a single album and not a double album? You can’t follow the plot by what’s on the album.
TOWNSEND: For financial reasons. I got a nice deal from Atlantic in the States and Virgin worldwide, but I had to contract all the different singers on the record and I spent two years in the studio. It cost me a lot of money. I couldn’t afford a double album because neither company was willing to pay me a double album rate. They would have put it out, but I wasn’t willing to risk my own money. It would have taken another six months and another $200,000. John Lee Hooker would have sung five or six songs as opposed to two, and there would have been an enormous amount of detail work. I was working with six singers at once, all of whom were getting $600 a day. The money was just disappearing.

My aim is to change the music we hear in musical theater, not to take musicals to stadiums. I’d like to produce music for people who don’t want to go to stadiums anymore. I enjoyed Les Misérables, and I enjoyed The Phantom of the Opera. Everything was great about them except the music was very old-fashioned. More than old-fashioned. Half of it was crap. The problem with Broadway is that no one in rock has paid any attention to it.

MUSICIAN: At the press conference the other day, you described Keith Moon as sad. Why?
TOWNSEND: He was sad in that way of people who are looking for love and don’t take the direct approach until it’s too late. He started by trying to make people laugh, and he ended by making them cry. He had the sadness of the comic.

MUSICIAN: He seemed to have the Sid Vicious disease of trying to live up to his legend.
TOWNSEND: He died fucking around with drugs and alcohol. Not in a nihilistic sense. He died fucking around. He’d lost perspective. He was not drinking at the time he died, he took an overdose of a drug to prevent seizures during alcoholic withdrawal. He took eight of the pills. He was thinking, “I’m a good boy, I’ve quit drinking, if one of these is good for me, eight will be better.” It was like a sick joke it should happen.

He once took eight elephant tranquilizers in San Francisco and survived. Couldn’t move, couldn’t play. He was in a wheelchair for two days. I have a Super-8 film of when we brought him off the plane in a wheelchair. The doctor from the Free Clinic says, “His heart is only beating once every 30 seconds! He’s clinically dead!” And Keith says [mumbles], “Fuck off.” That is not apocryphal. I have it on film.

It was sad, because he had alienated so many people around him by his obstinate clinging to his image. That was a good analogy to Sid Vicious. About halfway through the recording of Who Are You, he was showing up late and not playing very well and I got into this mood: “I’m not taking any more of his shit.” So I rang him up and told him to get the fuck down here. He came running down, babbling excuses. I got him behind the drums and he could not keep the song together. He couldn’t play. He’d obviously been out the night before to some club. He’d put his work second. Again. But before I could say anything, he went [imitates chaotic drum solo]. “See?” he said. “I’m still the best Keith Moon-type drummer in the world.”

There was nobody to top him doing that. But unless you wanted that, you were fucked. It happened that on that song, we didn’t want that. Keith wresting himself. He was funny, but he was capable of so much more. He was such a wonderful drummer, not just an apex-shit drummer. But he had reduced himself to that in the eyes of the world and in his own eyes. A couple of days after that, he started to call me up just to say good night and I love you. He did that about 10 times, and you could tell he was crying a little bit. He’d say, “You do believe me, don’t you?” I’d say, “Yes, but you’re still an asshole.”

I helped him get a flat in London because he was broke after his stay in California. Nobody would buy his house in California, so I helped him get back on his feet by getting this flat. And a couple of days later he died in it. He couldn’t live with the new character he was.

MUSICIAN: Moving to a different part of the world and taking your problem with you is a classic alcoholic behavior pattern.
TOWNSEND: For a long time he wasn’t treated as an alcoholic. A friend from AA came in to talk to Keith once, worked with him for two or three weeks. He said Keith was a heavy drinker with a strange emotional makeup. Then he said I was an alcoholic.

I wondered how he’d worked that out, because I hadn’t had a drink in three or four weeks. I went back in the studio and I said to Glyn Johns, “Do you believe it? Keith’s been coming in here every morning for weeks vomiting on the mixing desk, taking pills for this and that, and I’m supporting Keith by not drinking, and I could use a drink, but I haven’t had a drink, and this guy thinks I’m alcoholic.” Glyn kind of looked at me. Keith’s driver was there, and I took him outside, and I asked, “I haven’t had anything to drink, have I?” He said, “No, no.” I said, “Listen, you don’t have to defend my position. Have I had anything to drink?” “Not apart from when you go home.” “What do you mean?” “Well, every night after work you go off
to the bar and drink a bottle of vodka. Everyone thought you were just not drinking while you were working. At the end of the session, you drink a bottle of vodka like water." And I suddenly remembered what I'd been doing. I was drinking alcoholically, but I didn't deal with it until several years later.

**MUSICIAN:** How would the history of the Who be different if after Who's Next you'd all just quit drinking?

**TOWNSEND:** If I'd quit drinking, I would have quit the band.

**MUSICIAN:** The only way you could tolerate being in the Who was by drinking too much?

**TOWNSEND:** Yeah... Ultimately... Might be unfair to the band... When I was in psychotherapy, the thing I talked about mostly was the two years or 18 months that I spent away from my parents when I was about five to seven years old. I lived with my grandmother. My parents were probably splitting up. I don't know. I'm afraid to bring up the subject with my mother, for fear I'll strangle her.

**MUSICIAN:** Was there a similar incident in Keith's background?

**TOWNSEND:** Probably, but we'll never know. His father was an extremely nice man. My father was a wonderful man. The marriage looked normal. But who knows? My young parents were probably having difficulty staying married. My father was a touring musician, my mother had to stop being a singer to bring me up. They wanted to protect me from their arguments, so they sent me to live with my grandmother, who adored me. That's quite a normal situation. Doesn't amount to child abuse. My reaction was very repressive, I suppose. My grandmother was very strict and old-fashioned. It might be that Keith had a similar thing. The most interesting aspect about Keith was the excellence of his mind, the rapidity of his memory. You often find this with drummers, that they have the most extraordinary memories. It's an extension of their work. Maybe their memories are centered in a different part of the brain, because they have to remember long musical phrases as pure data. It's almost binary. They must know exactly where they are in a song at any given time. The best drummers have the best memories.

**MUSICIAN:** Would you mind telling the story about the waterbed?

**TOWNSEND:** Keith heard this Danish hotel had one suite with a waterbed, and he kept ringing them to make sure he got that particular suite: "I want to try some sexual experiments. Naughty Copenhagen, here I come. It will hold the weight of five or six female bodies, won't it?" So we were having coffee in his room, and I said how great it would be if we could get the mattress—it was 4000 gallons—in the lift and send it down to flood the lobby. Of course it wouldn't move, but Keith tried to lever it out of the frame, and it burst. The water was a foot high, flooding out into the hallway and down several floors. At first it was "Ha! Ha! Ha!" Then, "Ha... ha... ha... ooohh, this is going to cost hundreds of thousands of pounds! What are we going to do?" The destruction was unbelievable.

"Don't worry, Pete. I'll handle this," Keith says, and he rings the desk. "Hello, I want to talk to the manager. I have a suitcase here full of the most expensive stage clothes, designed by Hardy Amis, tailor to the Queen. Yes, yes, and they have just been engulfed by 4000 gallons of water from this leaking waterbed. Not only do I demand immediate replacement of my clothing, but also a room on the top floor, straight away!" And the manager came running upstairs, "Oh my God!

I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" Keith claimed it had burst when we all sat on the bed, and he had called several times beforehand to make sure it would hold a large number of bodies. The guy bought it, and we never had to pay.

**MUSICIAN:** You agree with Pete's assessment that Keith was basically sad?

**ENTWISTLE:** Yeah, I did a drawing of Keith from a photograph once. I was just trying to transfer the photograph but somehow in the process I changed his eyes, so now I've got this portrait of Keith and when you look in his eyes, they're almost in tears. Really weird, I've only just hung it up in my house, because I couldn't face looking at it.

I had the closest relationship with Keith. I hid a lot of my emotions when he died. It just didn't sink in, or I stopped myself from thinking about it, so it was like it never happened. I feel really bad about it because I haven't even spoken to his mother for a long time. Now it's so late in the day I'm ashamed to even talk to her about it. My protection for myself was to forget about it. It worked for a while but... it's weird, weird. I would have been a lot more devastated had he not spent those three years in California. I got used to him not being around. Had he died before he went to California, I don't know what I would have done.

He never seemed to be able to get offstage. He always had to be Keith Moon. He was playing the part of Keith Moon, because he couldn't remember what it was like to be normal. The only time he was normal was before two in the afternoon. After two, he became the alter ego.

**MUSICIAN:** When did Keith start to drink?

**ENTWISTLE:** At some point he must have realized he was an alcoholic. He only needed one beer and he was gone. The alcohol seemed to stay in his body and all he needed was to top it off. But he didn't get falling-down drunk. He got obnoxious drunk. I wrote that song "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" about him. He was Dr. Jekyll until two in the afternoon and then Mr. Hyde for the rest of the day. He'd say something to really hurt you, and then he wouldn't remember having said it the next day. That was the sad part about Keith.

Other drummers would try to work out what he did, but the problem with Keith was, he didn't know. All he knew was that he played differently from everyone else. All his tom-toms were tuned to the same note, probably because if he missed one, he ended up hitting one that sounded the same. And they all sounded like rattling biscuit tins. Instead of starting a drum break with his left hand, he'd always start it with his right, and he always played fast, so no one would notice he was slightly out of beat. It always sounded like a kit falling downstairs.

**MUSICIAN:** Was it fun for you as a bass player?

**ENTWISTLE:** It was fun if I was on top of it. If I was having problems with my sound, it'd be a nightmare. That was one problem too many, because I always had a problem with Keith. A lot of the time I'd just carry on playing with my left hand and sort of pull the cymbal to one side to see what his bass drum foot was doing, so I could get back to the beat. He would often come out of his drum break on a different beat than I had. But it helped me in my playing style a lot. And I helped him, 'cause he knew no matter how crazy his drums got, my bass would still be there. I could always hold the band together while...
playing some flashy licks myself. If I went off on a tangent, he'd suddenly get the message and take off with me. When we came out of it together, we sounded like a couple of geniuses, but if we came out separately—oooooh!

I think the thing that really screwed him up was when his chauffeur died. He was attacked outside this club by a bunch of guys and the chauffeur got out to have a go at them. They knocked him down and they were kicking him and he crawled under the car to escape. All Keith saw was that they were hammering at the car, so he drove off. They got down the road and the chauffeur was still under the car, dead. It had a much deeper effect on him than he ever let on.

DALTREY: Keith had the comedian's disease of trying to make people laugh all the time. But inside he was incredibly unhappy. It was inevitable that we lost Keith along the way, if you'd known the way he lived. He had nine lives in the short time he was here.

MUSICIAN: Was his unhappiness a result of his alcoholism?
DALTREY: No, the alcoholism was a result of the unhappiness. I never met anyone like Keith Moon. He had so much energy, so much drive. And if he wasn't channeling it through his drums he had no place to put it. And he had this desperation to be loved, really loved by the people he cared about. If he didn't get it all the time, if he wasn't shown it all the time, he would do more and more things to get it. A lot of the serious self-destruction happened after his marriage split up in '73 or '74. There was a definite change for the worse at that point.

MUSICIAN: Do you have a favorite Keith Moon prank?
DALTREY: It was a joke Keith and I played on John in Seattle.

We turned Keith into John Entwistle—gave him a Fu Manchu moustache, dyed his hair, got the clothes just right. And Keith spent the whole evening walking one pace behind John. He mimicked him perfectly.

MUSICIAN: You seem to be aging pretty well. Got any secrets?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 121

WHO M I?

JOHN ENTWISTLE on the bass: "Since the last time I played with the Who, I've changed absolutely everything, except the basic idea of sound splitting. All I have to do is press a footswitch and the whole thing changes. I couldn't find one amplifier manufacturer who made all I wanted, so it starts with a t.c. electronics digital delay that controls all the outboard stuff. The Yamaha SPX1000 gives me a lot more effects and splits into a stereo chorus. I've got a Gallien-Krueger 2000 CPL preamp, which I use to get a beefy overdrive. I've got the top sound, the distorted trebly guitar sound, coming out of four 12s and 16 fives in stereo. That goes into two Trace Elliot 500W power amps. I've got a Trace Elliot computer preamp for the bottom end, or I can use a t.c. graphic EQ, whichever I favor at the time, going through four 15s. All the speakers are Fane's A.S.S. English cabinets.

"I've designed a new bass guitar for Warwick called a Buzzard, a big, weird-shaped bass, similar in dimensions to the Explorer basses I was using. But now it's shaped like a flying buzzard. It reminds me of the Queen of Hearts in Alice in Wonderland playing croquet with a flamingo. Pete Townshend was not definitive, but expected to play Takamine semi-acoustics and Fender's Eric Clapton model Stratocaster. "Because they're good all-around guitars." No Marshall stacks this time—to save his hearing, Townshend will play direct through the P.A."
DEMO DEALS from page 91
the studio. Otherwise McLean would ask for points (ideally two to three) out of the artist’s royalty percentage paid under the record deal. (Artist record royalties can range from a low of five percent for new artists to 20 percent for major players.)

An established producer will often work on a demo on a per-cut fee basis or, if the producer really believes in an artist, for nothing up front against a percentage of sales. However, “most up-and-coming acts won’t attract the attention of a hot producer,” says Cheryl Hodgson. “Instead you should go out and find a producer that’s as hungry as you are, maybe someone out to make a name, looking for talented new groups. Perhaps a producer who owns a recording studio or already works out of one. This is what we did when I managed the Dan Reed Network out of Portland, Oregon, and we decided to do a regional record.”

A producer who works on the demo recordings could ask to serve as producer on any album released by a record label, but this too would be subject to negotiations between the artist and the label. Or the demo producer could ask the artist to use “best efforts” to get the demo producer a slot to work on the label release. He (or she) may also try to obtain a pre-production credit when the songs on the demos are re-recorded by the label before public release.

As for recording tape costs, in a spec deal an artist should pay for the recording tape up front so there is no question as to who owns the physical masters (as separate from the copyright in the sound recordings) once the agreement expires. The spec agreement should also state whether during the contract term the artist has access to the demo masters for remixing or only for first-generation copies. This issue goes to the heart of creative control of the demo tapes.

An artist in a spec deal should always try to retain ownership of the copyrights of the demo recordings. By contrast, a party, such as a production company, which pays for demo sessions will most likely want to retain ownership of the recording copyrights. This could present problems down the road if a record company releases an album containing some of the same songs. The production company could then release the earlier demo recordings, which would compete with the more polished product. So you could try to have language limiting the production company’s ability to do this written into the original demo contract. A record company that finances demo sessions will want copyright ownership of the sound recordings initially, but may allow the artist to purchase the copyrights after a specified period has elapsed and the artist pays the record company back the cost of recording the demos. In any case, if a record company ends up signing you to a recording agreement, the demo costs will be recouped by the label out of any royalties you may be owed.

Most demo deals give record labels between 60 to 180 days from delivery of the completed demo tapes, plus an option to exercise an extension period, in which to decide whether to sign an artist to a recording agreement. The artist would be prohibited from playing the tape for any other label during that time or from negotiating other agreements for his or her services.

The selection of the producer, material and recording dates for the demos may be decided by mutual agreement of the artist and the label, or perhaps by choice of either. An essential element of the record label demo deal is the right of first refusal. This allows the label to match any offer made by another label for what may be up to one year after the initial time for deciding to offer the artist a record deal under the demo agreement has expired.

But no matter what type of demo deal you may enter into, its value must be determined by balancing the short-term nature of your project against your long-range career goals. Certainly demo deals gone wrong—when musicians enter into them on blind faith, with little understanding of the legal implications of what they are doing—can leave artists bitter and disillusioned at a time when confidence in the recording process is crucial.  

WHO from page 76

ENTWISTLE: If I restricted myself to England, I'd feel 15 years older than I am. I like the rock 'n' roll lifestyle because I've got the constitution to do it, which is why I was nicknamed the Ox. I can drink or leave it alone. I can stay out late as long as I pay back the sleep. As long as I feel okay. I plan to play into my 50s and 60s. If people want to hear me, I'll play. I don't care if it's fun or not. I can't do anything else. I'm a bass player. My biggest kick is playing and fighting to stay ahead of all the other bass players. I don't lead the same life as Pete and Roger. I've got a girlfriend who's 11 years younger. I still go to clubs and get drunk. I enjoy doing naughty things. I enjoy living in hotels.

I look in the mirror and think, "Oh shit, I used to look better than this." But when I look at old photographs I think, "No, I didn't." I was a 210-pound Raspustin imitation at one point. The rock 'n' roll fluffy. I look better and I feel better than I ever did. I want to live to be an eccentric old man.

MUSICIAN: Why is Kenny Jones no longer your drummer?

ENTWISTLE: It got to the point that there wouldn't have been a Who with Kenny Jones. That was around the time of Live Aid. Roger would not have come back to the Who if Kenny were here. I guess I was his closest friend in the band, but the fact is, you can only take friendship so far.

MUSICIAN: The differences were personal or artistic?

ENTWISTLE: Artistic. Kenny had already been working with other musicians—Paul Rodgers, specifically. And he got tired of waiting to get back together. We just separated. The oldest contingent of the Who was me, Roger and Pete. So we remain the Who.

MUSICIAN: You feel Kenny Jones didn't fit in?

DALTREY: I just never thought he was the right drummer for the Who. From Day One. I thought it totally unbalanced the way John plays bass. His bass playing evolved out of the chaotic way that Keith played the drums, while Kenny was simplicity itself. I never said that Kenny was a bad drummer or that we didn't get on socially.

MUSICIAN: Your new drummer, Simon Phillips, can get that chaotic feel?

DALTREY: Well, especially the imagination. That's the root of it. Being capable. Kenny was not capable of doing anything more than he did. What he did was very good. But when you put him with a bass player of John's stature, who can play so much, who can move rhythms so fast, the drummer has to do more than boom chi chi boom. At first John couldn't see it. He finally saw it at a concert where Kenny was playing with another band. Then he got what I'd been trying to tell him. Kenny's simplicity was stifling. It was the same every night. Night after night. I'd be thinking, "ARGGGHHH!!!" But I'm not saying Kenny's a shit. It has nothing to do with that.

MUSICIAN: John and Roger both seem to feel that Kenny was not the right drummer for the Who.
TOWNSEND: I think John and Roger are full of shit on that issue. What were they talking about?

MUSICIAN: They both said they liked him personally but…

TOWNSEND: He wasn’t Keith Moon?

MUSICIAN: He was too simple and unimaginative. Keith could pick up a song in ways that Kenny couldn’t.

TOWNSEND: The Who post-Keith was a different band. Kenny was very important in that band. And if you reduce Kenny’s role to simply not responding to the spaces that Keith would have filled up, it’s a kind of nonsense argument. I don’t accept it as a valid basis to criticize Kenny. “Kenny was a nice guy but…” is not the right way to go about a subject as sensitive as that. Kenny was brought into the band probably more at my behest, so I’m quite defensive about it. I felt we should not try to replace Keith, not go down the same dynamic road. If they’re still thinking that way, maybe I’m going to have some trouble down the road this trip.

The problem I’ve always had is that different people have different preconceptions about what the Who is. To me the Who is a headline act. If you called the Who “Rock Will Define Itself,” I think that would be what we’re trying to do. It isn’t the name of a familiar group of musicians, because once Keith died, that was dead. It’s become a kind of ideology—a sense of personal emancipation as opposed to political or economic emancipation. We who are in the Who should know that it’s impossible to invoke that kind of music without Keith.

So I felt the band without Keith was a new band. Kenny was a drummer I’d worked with in the past. I liked him for his simplicity and directness and for the similarity of our backgrounds. He came up at the same time and had had a similar success. He was one of the few British drummers who could fill Keith’s shoes, and it was courageous of him to do so. Roger really resisted Kenny being brought in as a quarter member—that was the other thing. He wanted Kenny on salary. I said, “I’m not ready for that. It means we’re still running the Who. It’s like we’re on a pilgrimage to find Keith. To be really unpleasant about it, I’m kind of glad Keith is gone. He was a pain in the ass. The band wasn’t functioning. This is a chance to do something new.” I tried to get them thinking that way.

But Kenny doesn’t actually deserve my solidarity here, because he’s given me an extremely hard time lately. Firstly about our not going on the road for so long. And he said I denied him the opportunity to make a good Who album. When I broke the deal with Warner Bros., he felt we were just revving up to make a great album. And he became mesmerized by the Who in a worse way than anyone I’ve come across. I said to him that I wanted to work with Roger and I think there will be difficulties, but it’s not my battle. You’ve got to sort yourself out with Roger. Got to convince him you can do the job. Nothing seemed to get done. One day Kenny’s wife, or girlfriend, or whatever she was, rang me up and she said, “Listen, he’s not going to wait while you fuck around anymore. He’s going to get this band together with Paul Rodgers,” and he went ahead and did it. And lots of other stuff that isn’t fit to print.

I feel very sad about it because I think Kenny would be capable of performing well on this tour. But what we can do with Simon is probably a lot more ambitious than anything we could do with Kenny. I don’t want to dwell on it too much.

Kenny enabled me to get through an important period in my musical life, and if John and Roger don’t feel the same way, there’s nothing I can do to change that. I feel greatly indebted to Kenny. I think Kenny should understand that. I think Roger and John should understand that, too.

MUSICIAN: You said before that if you had quit drinking in the early ’70s, you would have quit the band. What’s different now that you’re not drinking? There’s obviously still conflict.

TOWNSEND: What conflict?

MUSICIAN: Over Kenny.

TOWNSEND: That’s not a conflict. Kenny isn’t here. I chose the new drummer. You could go down the rest of the band and I think you’ll find that I chose most of them. In fact, I chose the whole fucking lot of them. There’s no conflict. This is my band.

The only potential conflict is based on how John and Roger feel about working in that environment and calling it the Who. Maybe they would prefer going out as a four-piece and I had a stack and we thrash away like we did in the ‘60s. I don’t know what’s on their minds. They’re not entirely honest with me all the time. They treat me like a lunatic sometimes.

My reasons for wanting a larger band are technical, really. With a larger number of musicians you can keep the stage sound level a lot lower. When playing with a club-size band, it needs to be loud to be rich harmonically. That’s how the sound began, how heavy metal began, and was refined by bands like Led Zeppelin and went downhill from there.

But there are no conflicts today. I told John and Roger that I can’t make their dream come true. It would be like making Nureyev dance at his eightieth birthday party. John and Roger accept it. You can’t make a conflict out of their regret. They’ve been fantastically supportive. I know the show won’t be what old Who fans want, but it’s all they’re going to get, and it might be very, very good if we do it in the right way.

MUSICIAN: On the subject of metal, Jimi Hendrix is usually given most of the credit for popularizing the Marshall stack, but the Who first used one. Correct?

TOWNSEND: I don’t give a shit.

MUSICIAN: Well, didn’t Hendrix take a lot of your act?

TOWNSEND: He was a fucking genius. He could have stolen my wife and I would have been happy about it. I had a very reverent attitude toward him. He could make you see what he was playing. Without acid. He was a cosmic player. But I don’t think he took us very seriously. If anyone copied the Who, it was Noel Redding. He was a stone John Entwistle freak. Noel Redding was also a complete nonentity. Compared to Hendrix, so am I. Maybe not John, though. He’s quite an extraordinary rock virtuoso. Do we really care about the Marshall stack? John should be remembered for his innovations in the upper frequencies of the bass, the way he worked in a three-piece with essentially a rhythm guitarist—which is what I am—to replace lead licks. And working with a drummer as volatile and crazy as Keith. And all the technical things he’s done with the bass and bass strings.

MUSICIAN: What should you be remembered for?

TOWNSEND: I don’t know. I suppose I don’t really give a shit.

MUSICIAN: Well, thanks for your time. I know you’re flying back to England tonight.

TOWNSEND: No, I’m staying over one more night. I’m meeting with Coca Cola tomorrow.
Moonstruck: Remembering Keith

“We can’t change this particular relationship,” Pete Townshend announced at the reunited Who’s New York press conference on April 24: “This is the one which always begs the presence of Keith Moon.”

Other bands have suffered deaths in the family and soldiered on. Moon was no mere drummer, however; his triple-foe, steamroller attack on that instrument was the perfect compliment to Townshend’s on guitar. The style went with the man. In public, Moon lived his life as one long, grandstanding drum solo: a series of hilarious/outrageous events, seemingly without end.

There was an end. In September 1978 Moon, 31, succumbed to an overdose of pills he was taking to help him cut down on his drinking. Whatever his sins, moderation was not one of them.

A few years before his death, Moon was in Los Angeles hugging out with singing Harry Nilsson and two other drummers of no little repute, Jim Keltner and Ringo Starr. Danny Kortchmar was one of several guitarists employed on Moon’s solo album, Two Sides of the Moon; producer Glyn Johns didn’t handle that one, but he’d done Who’s Next and The Who by Numbers—and would also produce Who Are You, Moon’s last studio album.

“Every time we get together,” Townshend continued in New York, “particularly if we tell stories, or remember things about him, he’s very much present.” For all the above Moon associates, Keith is still here. Here are their words. — Scott Isler

Danny Kortchmar—When we started playing with him, everybody counted a tune off and I’d never heard anything like it in my life when he came in. Because he doesn’t play like most drummers: quarter-notes on drums and basic snare with a couple of fills. He plays full-out as soon as he starts: eighth-notes on bass drums and fills all over the place. It was intense. He was a really sweet guy.

Harry Nilsson—It’s hard to give impressions of Keith Moon because there were so many Keith Moons. I miss him dearly, terribly. He was extremely bright, funny, charismatic—just a great friend.

Instead of being a drummer, he was more a guy who hit targets. He didn’t have the sophistication of Jim Keltner or Ringo but he certainly could hit ’em. He was a dancer on the drums.

About a year before he died we were rooming together in London. We tried to sober up for a day; this is when I used to drink. We went to a movie. Then we went to another movie. After the second movie some madman in a car almost ran us down, so we decided to go to a pub. We only had a couple of pounds but somebody recognized Keith—I think it was the barcoat—and the drinks were on the house.

After the pub closed we went to a hotel. It happened to be the first night of their disco attempt; the music was horrible. Of course, they were buying drinks for us. Halfway through the second bottle Keith snapped. He picked up a bottle and threw it at the disc jockey. It hit the wall behind him, bounced back and wiped out the turntables. The room came to a sudden stop. The next thing I know, the table is upside-down, there are security people and I was on the floor. I looked up and saw Keith being carried out over the heads of six waiters, his arms and legs flailing, screaming, “Charge this to Neil Sedar!” He was at the hotel at the time.

Jim Keltner—He had flash, he had charisma—more charisma than any drummer aside from Gene Krupa. You couldn’t take your eyes off of him. Everything he did that was clownlike was so musical. He just knew how to make the energy translate into good music.

The very last time I saw him was at a playback party for his album. He was dressed in an immaculate white jump suit. After a couple of hours my wife said to me, “Okay, it’s time to go,” and we went out. As I walked around the back of my van, I saw Keith lying on the ground in his white outfit, right by my door. I’m laughing, “You crazy fool!” and he’s just lying there, taking this all the way. So I bend down and slap him on the face gently; he stays there. I panicked: “My god, he’s out!”

My wife got out of the car, we’re both pouncing on him, and finally I started hitting his chest. I said, “Go get somebody quick.” By the time somebody had come out, he bolted up, stood straight in front of me, and said, “Jimmy, c’mon, let’s have a drink.”

To this day I still don’t know what that was. I saw a movie about severe alcoholics: They’ll black out and fall, wherever they are, and when they come to, not know what happened.

As a drummer, obviously he was phenomenal in his early days. He should serve as a good example to younger players who emulate him that a great talent on such a physical instrument as drums could only sustain itself with really good health. He abused himself to the point where he lost it. I remember thinking, “What kind of guy is this? He’s such an animal one moment, and the next moment he can be one of the greatest gentlemen you’d ever want to meet.” The image was far away from the man, it seemed to me.

Glyn Johns—He was a very odd guy and I was very fond of him. He wasn’t the greatest drummer in the world, but at the time he was the only drummer for the Who.

No one really knew him that well. He had this front that he deliberately presented to everybody in order to keep everybody at bay.

Ringo Starr—he was brilliant as a drummer. It was hard for me to think of any other drummer for the Who; he was such an integral part of the madness and musicianship of the Who. They needed a four-armed madman to play with the band in those days ‘cause their energy level was so high. And his personal energy level was higher than most people I’ve ever known.

In the end I had to stop Keith buying me presents because I’d always get the bill! “I don’t want anything else from you, Keith, because I’m tired of paying it!” But he’d go, “Now, I’ve got you this, dear boy, hah, you need this?” “Great, thanks a lot.” And the next week I’d get the bloody bill!

One time, after the Who had been on the road, this huge Rolls pulls up in the middle of Berkeley Street in London, Keith comes out dressed as an American policeman, and he’s carrying this huge stuffed panda bear up to my office. He’d gotten a full Chicago policeman’s uniform from some policeman; he was very good at that sort of stuff.

We found it hard to play drum tracks with each other [on Two Sides of the Moon] because his timing was a little erratic. In the end I put my drums on tape, then he put his drums on.

I was in America when he died. We were all doing the same thing to our health; that seemed to be the course we were all on in those years. Some of us stopped and some of us didn’t. I think it was pure accident with Keith ’cause he had the constitution of a horse.

He was a wonderful human being. The image of Keith is purely as a madman but he had a real big soul, and he was really kind to people. He wasn’t always crazy. A lovely guy.