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dynamic dilemma

By Penny Valentine

EVERY month of year the Who go through one of their "quiet" periods. This combination, improvisational, flexible collection of musicians who are possibly one of the very few really enjoyable and lasting bands around... surviving time and time and gaining a fervent, dedicated band of followers... sink into a kind of outward silence.

Their latest has gone on for just about a year. That they can manage to hold attention for that long with so few outside dynamics—except the odd Moon break-out—leaves witness to the strength of their position in the rock world. For them, maybe, their silence are dictated by the knowledge that sooner or later the Who will break-out with something more startling, colorful and important than any other band around.

What is what's going to happen in a few months' time when the film of "Tommy" comes out. Ken Keseloff's promotional, and hence correspondingly "child, official" trip around New Yorkland's dramatic beat, drum and tilted top.

All the Who have been involved in the 11 weeks grueling filming—taking them from coast to coast in England, but some of them is currently more "up" and more concerned that this is the band's most important step that they've taken since they started out as the High Numbers, then Roger Daltrey.

CONTRIBUTION

It is Daltrey, taking on the role of the child who survives every worldly horror to emerge like a contemporary Bill Budd for the third time in his career, who is concerned for this will prove a personal stride in the life of the Who.

In his typically modest way he almost brushes aside his own important contribution—the fact that he has become as much "Tommy" in the eyes of audiences everywhere that nobody could stomach the thought of anyone else taking on the role—to discuss what the film will mean to the Who collectively.

As he sees it, he says, during the current film set in London's Green where inside there are living doors under Keseloff's eagle eye—"Tommy" is exactly what the Who need right now.

"It's going to make us bloody important," he continues. "I don't know how the movie critics are going to take it at all, but that one never can be sure about them. What I am sure of is that it's going to give the Who another dimension and more status and that's exactly what we need right now to make us something really big to reckon with. And then the really important thing is to follow it up and get ourselves together on the road."

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Daltry is an iconographic sight today. He's sitting in a brown dressing gown, his hair curling wildly around his head. Exposed are a pair of dark brown lips, stained from the weeks kissing on the south coast, complete with heavy chips on his teeth. Very little else appears to amuse him - but then the next scene calls for a most rained Tommy close up inside the Acid Queen for the LSD sequence.

Parvously "Tommy" is already proving a triumph for the Who's lead singer.

He has emerged not only as a man with supernatural strength and courage (Pearl's fan, at times, pushed his lead actor to perform feats of courage that involve such innocuous postures as practically being burnt alive, knuckled out and forced to walk backward across broken glass) but has delighted the director so much that he now fills out - as the brilliant and complex composer Frank Latt - in filled up by January.

Daltry's own career thus is changing its way to natural light. For five and a half years now he's a singer with a soul and will to lead and, much as he's enjoying the novelty and discipline of filming, it's the rule that is his great love in life and that hand that has not always will be his main concern.

And as back to the Who - the first group to have the opportunity in film to do what the Beatles were authorized in the "Yes, Quintessential" - their last record - came and went and somehow never quite did either of the things everyone set as its door. It neither came up to meet the enormity of "Tommy" as a complete work nor give the Who a new musical folk in the past. Daltry agrees:

"I think we tried to do too much ourselves again and it just wasn't a good old Who type rock and roll album - which is

something we need and we've got to get on the next album. And we need to really dig it out on the next. One of the things that's been wrong with the Who lately is that we're not digging enough. So when we do go out to do concerts we just haven't got into it. It means we haven't been B.A.D. but then we're capable of being bloody brilliant, and it really gets me down when we're not."

Daltry's master plan for the Who has been the subject for discussion on practically every meeting. The group and the production in the band that the young Londoners grew up with really are like his family. There dips it's his constant frustration that occasionally they don't really appear on the surface to be more than just everyone's favorite band.

And, more than any words, his real sense of dedication to the band is displayed best in the fact that when he does his next film he's determined to have two nights a week live to gig with the Who.

It's hard to be so extreme in this day and age you may think him, but Kuper sees no reason why all appears of the Who shouldn't be encouraged on and combined to advance the whole band.

This, he says, means of the solo projects, all the live work and all the recording going full path. Even, you may think, but film and stage concerning. And a different achievement to combine the richest range examples of gigs with the sophistication of film and TV films. Still, if Kuper could wrap up all the talent and ideas in the right career with his own hands, you get the feeling he'd be selling his skin across up right now and get cracking.

As it is, the situation remains one of jagged promise. But with "Tommy" wanting to upgrade on the children and knowing the Who can come up with the goods when anyone least expects it, the situation will not remain unexcited for long. And, quite honestly, even if the Who go on just as they are they've still hardly missing.

