



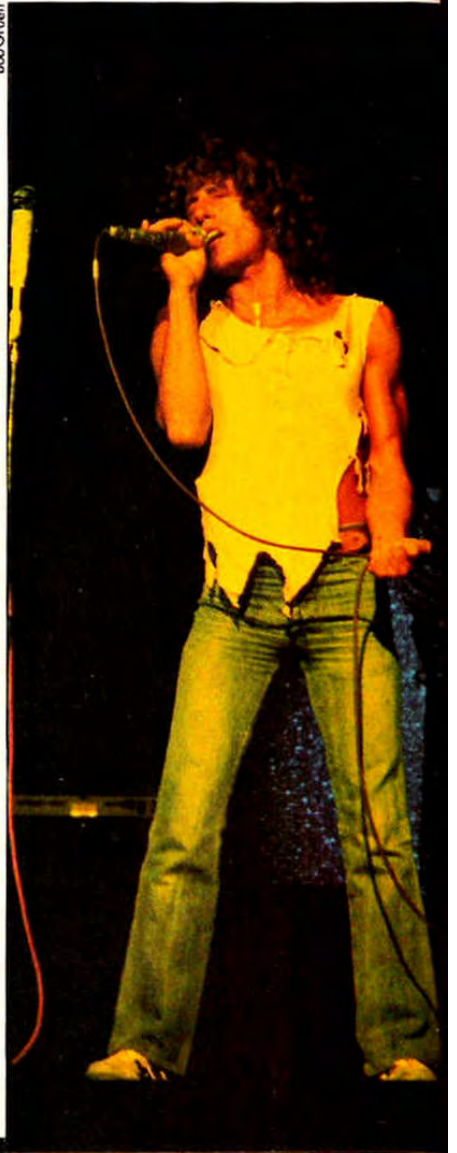
Michael N. Marks



Bob Gruen

WHO'S LAST?

Bob Gruen



CREEM

DALTREY FIGHTS BACK

BY TONY STEWART

"I don't really want to be a Pop Star, believe it or not. I'd like to have successful records, but that's it. And I'd very much like never to do any more interviews or anything," said Roger Daltrey.

"Well, you know, the occasional one. I suppose it's the price you have to pay."

Yes. But Roger also has an ulterior motive in talking to us, and that's to answer Pete Townshend's attack on the Who, carried in a recent CREEM article.

The interview, though, comes at an appropriate juncture. Sessions for the new Who album, *The Who By Numbers*, have just finished, and after our rap Daltrey will go off to hear the final mixes.

"I'm really pleased with it," he says. "One song particularly, called 'Imaginary Man' I think is the best song Pete's ever written. There's a few mysteries in there, but it'll be a good album."

"The shape and form of it is similar to *Who's Next* with a lot of varied material unlike *Quadrophenia* which was really one vein. But I don't know what it's



Neil Zlorower

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going to do, because I don't know what people are expecting. I think it's going to be surprising.

"There's not been a lot of style change at all. How can we? Moon still plays like Moon, John still plays like John, Pete still plays like Pete, and I still sing like me. The only time that we really change is after extensive touring,

never when we're in the studio."

Yet the conversation doesn't dwell on the album for long, as it's quite apparent Daltrey wishes to discuss another topic. Like the Townshend feature.

"I never read such a load of bullshit in all my life," he comments, angrily. "To be perfectly honest, it really took a lot of my Who energy out reading that. Because I don't feel that way about the Who, about our audiences or anything

in that way.

"It was an unbelievably down interview. And I still haven't come out of it properly yet.

"I've talked to fans," he continues, "and I think Townshend lost a lot of respect from that article. He's talked himself up his own ass. And there are quite a lot of disillusioned and disenchanted kids about now."

In fact the tone of Townshend's rap was itself disillusioned. He was highly



Neil Zlozower

more and more dominated by Pete. It's very hard to make a group contribution outside of what you actually do in the band. Outside of me just singing, for instance. John seems to do alright at it — but every suggestion I make I just get laughed at. But I can live with that. I don't care if I'm just the singer anyway."

On this point, though, it was Townshend who complained he had to bear too much responsibility for the Who. There was, he bemoaned, too much pressure on him.

"There's all sorts of problems going down at the moment that have got bugger all to do with the music side of it," counters Daltrey, "which is usually lumped on my bloody shoulders. But I don't ever complain about it. I agree that because he's been the mainstay songwriter of the band he's obviously going to be under that pressure. But I think he enjoys that. As far as going on the road goes I don't think he's under any more pressure than any of us, really."

Townshend's argument—just to refresh your memories—was also that because the other three guys heaved him into the studio any songs he'd written for a solo album would be snapped up by them. And inadvertently he seemed to be moaning about the fact that Daltrey, Entwistle and Moon could work solo — but that he never saw his own efforts come to fruition — because of the Who.

Daltrey does feel it would be a good thing for Townshend if he did record another solo album, but denies it was impossible because of the Who situation. "You see, I think if he made a solo album he would get some of the musical frustrations out which he can't accomplish with the Who. Because he can do fucking incredible stuff that the Who'll never do. They just haven't got that sort of scope.

"That's why solo LPs are nice to do. They let your head run riot for a while.

"And I don't see why he couldn't have done his own album before this Who set, because I can't see this one getting released for ages because we've got so many problems, outside of just the music. Then the Who would have had second choice. And I don't see it would have hurt the Who."

"I think we needed this year break. We need to sort certain things out. Like, two months ago it looked as though we weren't ever going to record again—and now at least we've made another record. And I really want to get back on the road."

"I just don't feel I'm in a group unless we're playing on the road. It feels like you're just another session man."

In the Townshend feature, Peter

TURN TO PAGE 92.

Richard Creamer



critical of the band as a working unit, their audience and even of their future. In his introduction to the piece Roy Carr admirably precised the prevalent attitude the Axe man expressed:

"Pete Townshend didn't die before he got old. Yet death isn't his problem, it's the passing of the years and his current position in what he feels is a younger man's occupation."

But that's not 32-year-old Daltrey's chief beef about the article. "My main criticism," he elaborates, "was the generalization of saying the Who were bad. The Who weren't bad. I think we've had a few gigs where Townshend was bad...and I'll go on record as saying that.

"I think we had a few gigs where, under normal circumstances we could have waltzed it. We could have done Madison Square Garden with our eyes closed, only the group was running on three cylinders. Especially the last night."

Did Pete sound like a Rock And Roll Martyr to you?

"Yes. Very much.

"You're putting words in me mouth, ain't ya?" He laughs.

"Right. That's the impression I got. And it riles me when he generalizes it to say the Who weren't playing well. The Who can play as well as they ever did, if we can get down to it and take it for what it is. He's just trying to make the Who something it isn't.

"I can understand his musical frustration," he continues. "He must be so far ahead now with just writing songs for the Who. But surely if the Who isn't

“ The last thing I wanted to do was have a fist fight with Pete Townshend. Unfortunately, he hit me first with a guitar. ”

a vehicle to get those frustrations out he should find another vehicle. But use the Who for what it is. A good rock 'n' roll band, that's all. And one that was progressing."

Was?

"I say *was* because we haven't done anything for such a long time. Hopefully when we get back on the road we'll still progress. But if we have any more statements like that I don't see how we can. Cos I know it's taken a lot of steam out of me and I'm sure it did with the others.

"Also in the studio there's not a lot of room for a group because it's becoming

know each other well enough to let a tune loose and not know what the fuck is going on. On a song like '24 Hours At A Time,' the more we played the song, it got to where it busted loose into a jam. We got cues to come back into the song, but between them times nobody knows what anybody's gonna play. That's really more fun to do, too: we were gonna do 'Blue Ridge Mountain Sky' tonight"—it woulda been nice for the region they were in, yeh, I thought to myself—"but I can't remember the damn words, and I wrote the thing.

Lotta people think Tuck's so far into country that they'll never get out, but Toy sez this next album is going to be a bit of a break from that pattern, on account of "you can't really capture an audience with country, not the type of people we like to play to. If we do 'Can't You See' and 'In My Own Way' back-to-back, then it better be time to cook, because the noses are on their way into the popcorn boxes. Speaking of that, less get out of here." We did, and ran right into another beautiful Carolina kid who had been waiting thru the entire interview, long after everybody else had gone to their Blue Ridge Mountain homes, for the honor of shaking Toy's hand. He had bought a MTB poster and Toy glommed my pen to sign it. "This here feller's from the CREEM magazine," Toy told the boy. "And I have told him some shit, boy, this article's gonna look weird." Well, here it is, and not so weird after all, but it goes out to Toy and Tommy and Jerry and Doug and Charles and Paul and all the guys in Spartanburg. You boys is all right. 🍷

DALTREY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 38.

blamed Daltrey's involvement in *Lisztomania* for holding up the recording of the new album. Which he did.

"Obviously he doesn't want to talk about these other problems in the press," suggested Roger quite rationally. "I do it reluctantly, but I suppose it's got to come out at one time.

"I can see if it does happen then I'm gonna come out as The McCartney Of The Piece. But there again, what do you do? You can't live on lies forever. But the last thing in the world I want to do is break the Who up. Anything I can do to stop that happening...I'll do."

Roger, how important is the Who to you then?

"Obviously very important," he responds immediately. "I mean it's part of me life, and it's the last ten years of me life. I can accept the fact now it's not going to go on forever. That's for sure. You do start to see the boundaries. But I just don't ever want to give up.

"The Who comes before anything really. It didn't come before Liszt but it was a group thing. I said, 'What do I do?'"

"I think Liszt will do the Who good as well. That's one of the main things in my mind about it, because people—especially in the States—are gonna start thinking I'm Tommy. And I'm not Tommy. I don't think Tommy is—the Who's best piece of work. Liszt is a quick way of showing people that I ain't Tommy. Which is, at least, a start in destroying that whole Tommy stigma."

But again, when discussing his career in the movies, Daltrey is prone to relate it to his musical pursuits and his role with the Who. For instance, working with Russell, he says, has given him a better understanding of PT's song writing. "Ken is very similar to Pete," he explains. "He's very visual and thinks all the time. But unlike Pete I can talk to Ken. And he'll explain how he sees a situation to me, and I've got a terrific rapport with him.

"Unfortunately me and Pete have never actually got on, on that level. But I find now it's not so important, because just working with Ken so much has taught me a lot about getting into things in the way I think you should. It's given me a lot more confidence.

"If you can't communicate on a talking level with someone, and you just go on feelings, and he's given you a sheet of lyrics and you've got a demo to work with, then you need quite a lot of confidence."

At this point, however, Daltrey is understating his turbulent relationship with Townshend because, as our conversation unfolds—covering the Who's music and the sheer aggression and frustration it incorporates—it's necessary for Roger to explain why this should be such an overt facet. And in doing so he reveals considerably more about the personality structure of the band.

"It's probably because we're so different," he says, "and don't particularly get on that well outside the band. I don't want to be in a group with anybody else, although if I could choose three friends to go about with it wouldn't be those three.

"It's a very weird situation, but it does lead to frustration. But it's always worked because it's led to creating something."

And also led, it should be noted, to fights. On occasion.

"I've only ever had one fight with Pete and that was during *Quadrophenia*. It was a bit of a shame because it was a non-argument, and the last thing I wanted to do in the world was to have a fist fight with Pete Townshend.

"Unfortunately," he adds petulantly, "he hit me first with a guitar. I really

felt terrible about it afterwards. What can you say? Pete should never have been a fighter.

"But when he was being held back, two roadies and he's spitting at me, calling me a dirty little cunt and hitting me with his guitar I become quite angry. And I was forced to lay down on him. But it was only one."

That was sufficient?

"Well," he roars with laughter, "when he came out of hospital."

But according to Daltrey there has always been a clash between him and Townshend—with Entwistle and Moon as mediators. And perhaps for this reason Daltrey is able to contend with being laughed at in the studio when he makes suggestions.

"Like I say," he explains, "I can get up with being just the singer. It doesn't really bother me that much. It's just one of those things that make you feel what's the word?—makes you feel like a misfit. But I've always felt a bit of a misfit in the Who. That's another reason why solo things are good for me."

But according to Townshend (in That Feature) Daltrey would like to believe rock and roll was "making records, pullin' birds, getting pissed and having a good time."

"That" retorts Daltrey disgustedly, "just shows he doesn't understand me at all. Because that proportion of my life which is devoted to that kind of living is such a minimal proportion. If he thinks that's what rock and roll is to me he must be kidding. Just cos I don't live in a studio like he does doesn't mean to say I don't like rock and roll much." He pauses. "There's a terrible battle going on between me and him, ain't there?"

In fact you could say this last comment of Townshend's proves to weigh heavily on Daltrey's mind. It isn't until near the end of the interview when he decides to elaborate on the point.

"I'm just thinking about what he said," he said. "That I'd like to believe that rock and roll was birds, booze and fun. The naivete of that is that the last few bad gigs the Who did were, in my opinion—apart from his head trip—bad because they were physically out boozing and balling all night. And by the time it got to the show at night they were physically incapable of doing a good show. So... put that in your pipe and smoke it.

Was that all of you?

"No. That was Townshend. Moon does it, but he can control it. On a few of the last gigs Townshend was pissed and incapable."

Now Daltrey's anger is rising.

"So don't talk to me about booze, because I've never been onstage drunk in the last seven years, Mr. Townshend!"

don't know if you've ever noticed, maybe he hasn't but I have. I remember every show we've ever done! I'm just getting a bit fed up with these left-handed attacks.

And now he's retaliating.

"One of the sad things is that Pete and I aren't probably ever gonna be able to communicate," he explains coolly. "I think I'll have to sit down and write a letter to the band, because there's no way of ever speaking to them about it."

What's the future going to bring then?

Maybe Daltrey is outspoken, vitriolic and often enraged by the circumstances surrounding the Who, and yet underneath it all runs a deep devotion for the band. He may criticize Townshend for what he describes as "pathetic" guitar playing on one gig, and yet he'll get back up on stage and work with him again.

"The only other way is to give up, isn't it? From my point of view... I think I've got better on stage in the last six years... and it really frustrates me that the people who were heads, hands and feet above me before are starting to fall by the wayside. I think it's unnecessary.

"That's why I want to get back on the road and do it. Because I know they can do it. And if they don't, then the Who breaks up. We're not a government. It's only a rock and roll band, after all.

"It'll be a terrible shame and a lot of people will be disgusted with us for letting it break up. But what can you do?

"In a way," he continues, "I don't mind if the Who do finish, because I think we've done a helluva lot and I'd hate to see anything mediocre come out by the Who."

And in a more dis-spirited moment he comments: "If I feel I've come to the stage where I can't give anymore into rock, and I can't do the things I like, then I might as well take up acting.

"I might as well." 🐼

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