'Momma's got a squeeze box
she wears on her chest
And when Daddy comes home
he never gets no rest
Because she's playing all night
And the music's alright
Momma's got a squeeze box
Daddy never sleeps at night
She goes in and out and in and
out and in and out and in
and out
She's playing all night
And the music's all right
Momma's got a squeeze box
Daddy never sleeps at night'
'Squeeze Box'

Is this the right man for Mayor of Acton?

John Entwistle holds court with Jonh Ingham

JOHN ENTWISTLE: "the other three can do Top Of The Pops, I wouldn't"

The News Of The World would have you believe those lyrics are as indelicate as R. and J. Stone and Donna Summer. Double-entendre that should be banned from the airwaves. They don't seem to realise that it's tame fare for a band whose previous singles have discoursed upon transvestites and masturbation. But why take my word for it? Hit it, John.

"I dunno. Most songs have double meanings or no meaning at all. It's stupid — people trying to find hidden meanings in Beatles lyrics are long gone. 'Squeeze Box' isn't that dirty. It doesn't say" — he pauses to get the right leer in his voice — "tits."

Not to mention interpretation in America, where "box" means something else entirely.

But for those of you hoping, with 'Squeeze Box' a hit, for a new flow of Who singles, John has some words. "I'd leave. I just don't like the singles market. I'm used to concerts and albums. The record company says the album's going down in the charts and we need a single to revive interest. So we release a single and the album goes out of the chart. I wouldn't mind if we never released another single, ever."

And if this is a surprise, he hasn't finished yet.

"It's kind of pot luck, that side of the business. You don't have to be that talented to have a hit single, whereas you do to have a hit album. It's just a matter of pride. I hate releasing a poor little song to compete against football teams, comedians, wrestlers, one hit wonders. It's degrading. In fact, having a hit is extremely embarrasing!" He smiles. "I've heard your single on the radio.' Why aren't they playing the rest of the bloody album?"

And later; "I hate singles. I hate the whole thing about Top Of The Pops." So there's no chance of us seeing the Who on the show? "The other three can, I wouldn't."

Hmm. Doesn't like singles. What do you think of the album then?

"The best we've done since the last one." Another smile escapes. Entwistle's demeanour is humourous and wry, but he rarely smiles. "I like the cover. That's pretty good."

The cover is an example of Entwistle's cartooning ability; the band and surrounding personnel has been the source of most of his work the past eight years. He first started when six or seven, on a class trip to Dartmouth where they were meant to sketch the regatta, but John caricatured the teachers.

His best friend stole one, showed it to the teacher, and John was ushered before the headmaster, who instead of caning him gave him a sheaf of papers and said to perfect it and enter the exhibition. "Which I won."

There are no plans for anything like a book, though the better examples will find wall space in John's new manse. He's also been working on an adult fairy story, with his illustrations, though this is currently shelved.

"The cover drawing only took an hour, but the dots took about three hours! I took it down to the studio while we were mixing and got the worst artist in the room to fill it in. Discovered I'd left two inside legs out."

With the Who an operational unit again, Entwistle's solo enterprises are in abeyance. Ox came to a halt due to expense and other reasons, and he wouldn't organise a band again unless they were *name* musicians. The last two years he's been writing "a concept — I won't say opera, because it isn't, it's a musical story".

That has now been shelved in favour of a straight rock album. (He is careful to differentiate between this and rock and roll.) "My writing's changed considerably since the Rigor Mortis days. It's more like 'Squeeze Box' and 'Heaven And Hell'."

But as I say, the Who are an operational unit. Next week they start rehearsing for a tour through Paris, Munich and Zurich, then 14 dates in the States, and then a month holiday before recording the next album. They are trying to organise some gigs in British football grounds in late May, the proceeds going to charity. "Better than the Inland Revenue — at least we know where it's going.

"We're at a stage now where we enjoy working again. All we really require is time for rehearsing and writing, and school holidays. Because we've all got kids who we only see at that time. So as long as we have the same time off as teachers . . ." He smiles again.

John used to work in the Inland Revenue. "I was a hopeless tax officer." Thoughts of tax and business occupy him. He points out that one needs to work five times as hard to double one's money in the current structure. He presents the old 50% tax and we'd stay chestnut, but he does anyway, for his family mostly. And patriotism.

"And the way I'd want to live in America is a house in Los Angeles, a house in New York and a boat in Miami." Hearing this whilst propping up the pub-like bar in a stately home in the middle of Ealing's suburban glory was a bit incongruous.

From John's point of view one also gets an interesting impression of the Who as a business. Reinvesting profits back into equipment and music oriented companies, hiring a staff of 50 for a tour — "Which is a hefty cocktail bill' — having four of every piece of equipment.

The lasers were acquired via the interest of studio manager John Wolf. They're as long as a bar billiards table and water cooled. At Hammersmith the Ministry of Defence looked them over and declared the Who more advanced than they were.

And all that stuff gets shipped to America, where the gross are, how you say, *huge*. There, 'The Who By Numbers' is doing "reasonably well. It's heading for a platinum. We have gold for everything since 'Tommy', actually. I have about 35 of the things, most of them under the billiards table because I haven't any room. We've started getting silver and gold here as well."

On the subject of records, the concept album is not to be discounted from rearing its head again, but Entwistle would like to see another live album. "We sell a lot of records, but compared to some people they're very few. But as far as stage shows are concerned, we're more or less the biggest draw there is." Which you may take as an indication or quality.

At Pontiac, Michigan, where Elvis' New Year's concert drew 60,000, the Who packed 76,000 in, which John contends should be in the Guinness Book Of Records.

In the end, it all comes down to "the kids". "We may not like the town or the hall, but the kids are always the same. It's worth playing for the kids. If we could fly in and out the same night it would be great, but you can't fly to Australia overnight." The land of Oz is invoked mainly due to memories. "If you're a foreigner and lose your temper, there's no sympathy . . . As I found out in Houston."

Here it was, at the start of their last American tour, that John wanted to know why the police who were hired to protect them at a party were restraining Laser Man, alias John Wolf, replete with foot on neck. As John was being escorted away from the scene by security men also hired to protect them, he broke free, lost his temper and kicked over a large wooden menu stand. At which moment the hotel detective, also protecting the group, walked out of the lift and slapped 'cuffs on John.

Sitting in a cell, feeling a flea bite him, he was questioned by three police women who had been at the concert and were now after inside info. Then he was ushered ustairs for a mug shot. A mug shot, fer chrissakes! Standing on the foot prints, he waited. A woman stepped up with an Instamatic — *flash!* — and said, "It's for my daughter".

It is not known whether this incident will hinder his lifelong ambition to be Mayor of Acton.

And that next Who album. It will just be another bunch of songs?

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