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#### DVD & Blu-ray Video Reviews

### The Who, The Mods and The Quadrophenia Connection (2009)

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#### The Who, The Mods and The Quadrophenia Connection (2009)



**Studio: Sexy Intellectual SIDVD551 [Release date: 11/17/09]**

**Video: 1.33:1 color**

**Audio: Dolby Digital 5.1, PCM Stereo**

**Extras: Recording Quadrophenia: A Recollection with Richard Barnes; interviewee biographies; Sexy Intellectual print ad**

**Length: 94 minutes**

**Region coding: all regions**

**Rating: \*\*\***

*The Who, The Mods and The Quadrophenia Connection* is an unsuccessful documentary that relates the story of English rock band The Who, the 1960s Mod subculture, the revivalist Mod scene that began in the late 1970s and the link The Who's 1973 rock opera album and subsequent 1979 movie had to both Mod phenomenon's.

For those not familiar with the Mods, they were a British sub-cult of thrill-seeking, sharp-dressing, motorbike scooter-riding teens with an R'n'B and soul music fanaticism. The Who's early singles - such as "Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere," "The Kids Are Alright" and "My Generation" - captured or gave empathy to the mostly male Mods' angst, identity and disaffection.

The producers do not accomplish what they endeavored to create. There are no insights or new discoveries that The Who or Mod followers would not already probably know. There is a good story to be found but not here. The filmmakers don't achieve their intentions of explaining the themes (there is no critical analysis) and don't know how to communicate the important topics: the storytelling is confusing and labored. Mod/The Who aficionados are not likely to get much compensation from the well-trodden facts and newbies are not apt to get a deeper understanding of why and how either The Who's *Quadrophenia* album and film or the two Mod movements came about and how the three are linked. The Who's leader Pete Townshend - who was the architect for the *Quadrophenia* music and lyrics - is notably absent. There are also no interviews with The Jam's Paul Weller, who led the most significant Mod revivalist outfit and who would have added depth to the discussion. On the other hand, to be fairer, the movie does involve some Mod/The Who experts, most prominently Acid Jazz label cofounder Eddie Piller and The Who's confidant Richard Barnes. There are music clips by relevant groups such as The Who, The Small Faces and The Jam and the program is rounded out by conversations with Mod resurgence musicians who show their enthusiasm for the music subculture.

The enterprise is, more or less, a three act discourse. Initially, the early to mid-sixties history of the inaugural Mod movement along with the ascent of The Who is traced out. Here viewers are treated to talking-head interviews and voiceover narration, alongside archival news and performance footage, which clarify how the Mods rose from an English modern jazz fan base and how The Who appropriated the Mod iconography.



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The second act outlines The Who's prominence with their first rock opera, *Tommy*, and their rise as rock arena artists. And then the documentary segues into how *Quadrophenia* was conceived, the thematic concerns and the problems in trying to create the world's first quadraphonic rock album mixed for four speakers rather than the traditional two-speaker stereo output, an idea that ultimately was shelved. Here the film bogs down with repetitive and almost song-by-song interview segments and opinions regarding the *Quadrophenia* plot, characterization and subject-matter.

The third act provides basics on the Mod revivification that resounded with older music (soul, R'n'B, sixties rock) and fresher inspirations (punk, ska and new wave) and then proceeds to the *Quadrophenia* movie, which serendipitously got theatrically released just as the Mod rebirth peaked. Ironically, many second-wave Mods dismissed the movie as not being true to Mod conventions, but as the documentary points out, the film can now be seen as a timeless tale of coming-of-age and youth rebellion that transcends any specific subculture or era. It helped push the Mod following into the mainstream and to date there are still pockets of Mods spread throughout the world.

There are few extras. Recording studio fans may enjoy the 8:40 bonus conversation where Barnes reflects on how the *Quadrophenia* project was recorded and the complications that resulted from building a new studio at the same time the songs were put onto tape. He tells a humorous anecdote of when rain came through the roof during a keyboard overdub and the musicians kept playing, and also why the competing technology was the reason the actual quadraphonic reproduction plan was scrapped. There are also text-based profiles of the people interviewed for the DVD.

For the most part, the video and audio quality is satisfactory. The 4:3 video format is suitable for this kind of undertaking. Tolerable production values and some uneven coloring show up. There is unavoidable defects pertaining to deteriorating historical footage but there are no other overt audio or video technical issues to complain about.

From a content viewpoint this DVD may work best for those who are curious about the Mods, The Who and the *Quadrophenia* music or as a companion piece to the *Quadrophenia* movie. However, much of the information could easily be culled from online sources such as Wikipedia. All in all, a good candidate for a rental but perhaps not useful as an addition for someone's music DVD shelf.

-- Doug Simpson

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