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# The Who, The Mods and the Quadrophenia Connection

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Review by [Jamie S. Rich](#) | posted November 5, 2009 | [E-mail the Author](#) | [Start a Discussion](#)

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I make no secret of my love of the Who and their album *Quadrophenia*. This site alone has multiple testaments to such, with my reviews of [various live shows](#) and of the outstanding documentary [Amazing Journey](#). The latter looms large whenever looking at something like the unauthorized *The Who, the Mods, and the Quadrophenia Connection*. What can you show me that I haven't seen before?

Very little, as it turns out. One would hope that the focus of a documentary like *The Who, the Mods, and the Quadrophenia Connection* would yield revelations and insights than a more comprehensive piece about the band's history would have time for. In this instance, the story practically has a three-act structure. Act I, the late 1950s emergence of Mod, a youth culture that favored tailored suits and jazz and R&B to the more rough-and-tumble early rock regalia, and how that lead to Mod-opportunists like the Who. Act II, the Who's transition into mega-rock gods and the summation of their early years in the backward-looking rock opera *Quadrophenia*, released in 1973. Act III, the influence of that album, the return of the Mods in the punk rock era, and the *Quadrophenia* film. It's a good story, and not without its interesting moments. *The Who, the Mods, and the Quadrophenia Connection* even illustrates it with music by the Who and other relevant bands, including the Kinks, the Small Faces, Booker T and the MG's, and the Jam--usually, this is muddy audio played over decayed video, often live television performances dubbed over by studio recordings.

It's an artistic thread ripe for study, and *The Who, the Mods, and the Quadrophenia Connection* does a fairly decent job of it, roping in experts on the subject, including authors Paolo Hewitt and Terry Rawlings and music fan/record label-owner Eddie Pillar. The closest they get to the band is Richard Barnes, photographer and friend of Who-leader Pete Townshend, and a very brief snippet from the engineer on *Quadrophenia*, Ron Nevison. The band does not participate, nor is there even archival interview footage with any of them. This makes for a rather outside point-

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of-view on the history of the music, encompassing these particular people's reactions and interpretations rather than down-and-dirty facts about the creation. In fact, we get better and more succinct stories about the making of the double-album on a nine-minute bonus feature that has some more of the interview with Barnes. Barnes also supplies the movie's one unintentionally hilarious moment, wherein he slags off *Quadrophenia* before immediately trying to backpedal out of it, only to have the narrator wryly throw him under the bus, essentially saying, "Nevertheless, everyone else liked it...."

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That clip of Barnes gives one the impression that the makers of *The Who, the Mods, and the Quadrophenia Connection* cobbled this together with whatever they could get, and chalked some of the less considered opinions up to presenting an honest critical analysis. This little cottage industry of these kinds of music-based films often suffers similar pitfalls, a warts-and-all style that seems more accident than design. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, and *The Who, the Mods, and the Quadrophenia Connection* certainly isn't a bad entry in the field. It's really about average. Its biggest problem is that it just offers nothing new or special. Fans of *Quadrophenia* will enjoy it as a diversion that essentially confirms what they already know; non-fans could consider it a good start into becoming one--though, let's be honest, nothing will ever replace simply buying the album and listening to it front to back. And then listening to it again. And again. And again.





## THE DVD

### Video:

The 4:3 fullscreen video presentation of *The Who, the Mods, and the Quadrophenia Connection* is decent and passable for what this is. There are definitely some low-level production values here, including a little digital combing and patchy colors. Still, this is not a film you would watch for the cinematography...

### Sound:

...though it is one you might watch for the music, and the stereo sound mix is not all that great. The music in the movie does not come from pristine sources, so I am assuming there is nothing more that could have been done. It is what it is.

### Extras:

*The Who, the Mods, and the Quadrophenia Connection* comes in a regular plastic case, housed inside a paper slipcover (which could have used a proofreader or two). The DVD-based extras include text-based bios of the commentators in the movie and also an ad for other Who-related products from the company distributing this disc. The only video extra is 8 minutes, 40 seconds with Richard Barnes discussing his recollections of the recording of *Quadrophenia*. A small portion of this is in the movie, but most of it is not.

## FINAL THOUGHTS:

**Rent It.** *The Who, the Mods, and the Quadrophenia Connection* is a pleasant viewing for fans of the Who, and a nice précis for anyone new to them and looking to delve further. A mini-history of the Mod movement as filtered through the career of the Who, this unauthorized documentary is good at what it does, though lacking in anything unique. There is nothing on here you can't find out elsewhere, so if you do start with this disc, don't stop here. Okay?


*Jamie S. Rich is a novelist and comic book writer. His most recent work is the forthcoming hardboiled crime comic book [You Have Killed Me](#), drawn by the incomparable Joëlle Jones. This follows his first original graphic novel with Jones,*

[12 Reasons Why I Love Her](#), and the 2007 prose novel [Have You Seen the Horizon Lately?](#), all published by Oni Press. His next project is the comedy series *Spell Checkers*, again with Jones and artist Nicolas Hitori de. Follow Rich's blog at [Confessions123.com](#).

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