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DVD Review: The Who, The Mods and the Quadrophenia Connection (MVD)

Finally, an unauthorized peek at a crucial period of a classic band that doesn't suck! You've surely seen the recent Dylan and Beatles videos that feature still photos, lame background music in keys that suggest the artists' music but can't use it because of copyright. *The Who, The Mods and the Quadrophenia Connection* is actually a welcome addition for Who freaks.

It covers the recording of the 1973 classic double album *Quadrophenia*, and reflects on the band's (ie Pete Townsend's) attempt in writing it to make some sense of his youthful flirtation with Mod.

Mod was a uniquely British fad/lifestyle revolving around American soul music, amphetamines, motor scooters, and fighting the Teddy Boys, another uniquely British fad/lifestyle revolving around American rock and rockabilly music. Because of their violence, daring fashion sense, poverty and love of James Brown, the early Who (and in their prior incarnations, The Detours and The High Numbers) were considered a Mod band, and Mods sure did love them. But as with everything, including his own genius, Townsend was conflicted and frustrated by the pigeonholing.

This doc provides a thumbnail sketch of those years and those movements, and includes interviews with Mod historians Paolo Hewitt and Terry Rawlins, DJ Eddie Pilar and, most essentially, Richard Barnes, lifelong friend of Townshend and Who historian, who provides context and salt to the story. His brutal assessment of *Quadrophenia*—brilliant, arrogant, the record as Townsend's attempt to recover from the failed epic *Lifehouse* project and to provide another epic similar to *Tommy* that would form the center of the band's live set—fits in nicely with the violently honest self-mythologizing The Who themselves were known for.

It is the unearthed archival footage of the band, performing in clubs as the High Numbers and the Who, news reports, clips from the 1979 *Quadrophenia* film that makes this essential viewing. Also included are samples of songs such as "My Generation," "Anyway Anyhow Anywhere" and cuts from *Quadrophenia*.

Less essential are more recent interviews with mod revivalist bands like The Chords and Purple Hearts. For a documentary on a band that was fiercely authentic, even to the point of self-parody, those carving identities from the lives of those of 50 years ago seems morbid.

The Who, The Mods and the Quadrophenia Connection, oddly enough, adds to the mythos of The Who as it further exposes just how fragile that mythos has always been.



POSTED BY MIKE WOOD AT 11/11/2009 06:51:00 AM

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