

THE WHO

The College of Marin

Week Four

Essential Listening:

1. *Live at Leeds* (Universal, 1970). The only live album issued while Keith Moon was in the Who, this was recorded in mid-February at the University of Leeds in England. In part because *Tommy* had made them huge superstars, and in part because it showed a harder and louder side of the Who than their studio records did, it was a huge hit. Consisting of just six songs in its original LP edition, it also gave them an opportunity to issue a few cover songs that had been popular staples of their live show: “Summertime Blues,” “Young Man Blues,” and “Shakin’ All Over.” There was also a version of “Substitute,” a seven-minute version of “Magic Bus,” and a l-o-n-g, fourteen-minute version of “My Generation.” Here the Who verged on crossing over from hard rock to heavy metal, a genre just starting to achieve mass popularity at the beginning of the 1970s, in part because of bands like Led Zeppelin that owed much to the Who’s singer-guitarist-bassist-drummer format.

Live at Leeds, like a bunch of other Who albums, has appeared in multiple expanded editions that have achieved their greatest success in getting fans to buy material they already own not just once, but twice. A 1995 CD added bonus tracks; a 2001 deluxe edition expanded it into a double CD; and a “40th anniversary collectors’ edition” expanded it to four CDs. The four-CD version radically expands the pool of Leeds material, adding their performance of much of *Tommy*, as well as non-*Tommy* songs like “Fortune Teller,” “I Can’t Explain,” “I’m a Boy,” “Happy Jack,” John Entwistle’s “Heaven and Hell,” “Tattoo,” and “A Quick One.” Somewhat stretching the original concept, it also has two CDs of a nearly identical set from the following night (in Hull, England, on February 15, 1970). And of course there’s a 12X12-inch book of liner notes, photos, and memorabilia for your reading pleasure.

Recommended additional recordings by the Who, 1969-70:

1. The Who probably recorded enough studio tracks in 1970 to fill up an album, and though an LP did not appear, some of them are, in typical fashion, spread out among a confusing plethora of compilations that’ll cost you plenty. The most important is the single “The Seeker,” exploring a similar lyrical thread to (and predating) John Lennon’s “God” in its questioning of icons and institutions; it’s on *Meaty Big and Bouncy* and other anthologies. Other tracks from 1970 singles included the folk-rockish B-side “Here for More” (one of the few Who songs written by Roger Daltrey) and another B-side, John Entwistle’s characteristically morbid “Heaven and Hell,” which was a popular song at Who concerts of the period. Some other fair tracks from the era (“Postcard,” “Now I’m a Farmer,” and “Naked Eye”) show up on *Odds and Sods*.

2. *Live at the Isle of Wight Festival 1970* (Columbia/Legacy, 1996). This two-CD recording of the band's performance at the Isle of Wight on August 29, 1970 is a little extraneous in view of its similarity to *Live at Leeds* and the visual availability of most of the concert on the identically titled *Live at the Isle of Wight Festival 1970* DVD (see review below). Still, it's available for those who want it, including not just their standard most-of-*Tommy* set of the era, but also some older favorites, along with a couple B-sides that wouldn't get released until later in the 1970s ("Water" and "I Don't Even Know Myself").

3. It wasn't a Who album, or even quite a Pete Townshend solo album. But the limited-edition 1970 LP *Happy Birthday* – intended primarily for Meher Baba followers, though it was purchased by some general Who fans and even bootlegged – did include the first Townshend solo recordings to be made officially available, even if the album wasn't widely distributed at the time. These were low-key, sometimes folky, and very affecting songs that gave voice to some of his spiritual concerns that might not have fit in well with the Who. A bit of the material came out on Townshend's first official solo album, 1972's *Who Came First*; the CD reissue added a few tracks from the *Happy Birthday* album, notably "Day of Silence" and Pete's own version of the Who single "The Seeker"; and the other tracks appeared again on subsequent limited-edition reissues like *Jai Baba*, which compiled everything from the three 1970s Meher Baba-oriented limited-edition LPs to which Townshend contributed. One of the tracks only available on *Happy Birthday* and these limited-edition reissues is his unexpected cover of Cole Porter's "Begin the Beguine," which he did because it was one of Meher Baba's favorite songs.

4. *BBC Sessions* has four tracks recorded in 1970, all of songs that were commonly available on studio and live releases of the time. Irritatingly, a bonus disc issued with *BBC Sessions* was only available at Best Buy, and contained some more BBC recordings from the era, including some songs from *Tommy* and more off-the-beaten track numbers like "Heaven and Hell," "Summertime Blues," and the 1971 B-side "I Don't Even Know Myself."

5. The Who's entire Woodstock set—a decent enough and at times thrilling performance, though the band never seemed very keen on it or the festival itself—was finally made available on the 38-CD *Back to the Garden 50th* anniversary set. This 2019 release compiled almost everything performed over the entire weekend of Woodstock. It sold for \$800 in a limited edition of 1,969 copies when first released, and copies are now going for several times as much money online. I know some of you reading this think this is a joke, but it most assuredly isn't. Your choice boils down to investing in a copy, or using the same money for a lifetime of future courses at the Fromm Institute. Which is more morally defensible?

Notable unreleased Who material, 1970:

1. A 95-minute concert from July 7, 1970 at Tanglewood, Massachusetts is available on Wolfgang's Vault's website; video of this show has been bootlegged, too. It's similar enough to the set they did at the Isle of Wight six weeks later – in fact, the songs and

even sequence are mostly the same – that it’s something non-completists can live without.

Recommended DVD/videos:

The Who at Kilburn 1977 (Image Entertainment, 2008). Has the instructor gone nuts, you’re thinking, listing a DVD from 1977 for a class devoted to the Who in 1969? Well no, ‘cause it turns out the bonus DVD in this package features footage from the Who’s performance at the London Coliseum on December 14, 1969, focusing on *Tommy* material. The film’s a little dark and lo-tech, and for much of “A Quick One While He’s Away,” unrelated visuals from a different performance play, as footage for the last half of the song seems unavailable, though the audio from the show is heard. The performance is good, though, and “A Quick One” has one of the longest spoken introductions (about five minutes, mostly by Townshend) ever filmed, making the supposedly wordy intros during their 1973 *Quadrophenia* tours sound positively terse and economical. The primary disc on this package presents the Who’s second-to-last show with Keith Moon, in London on December 15, 1977.

The Who, Live at the Isle of Wight Festival 1970 (Eagle Rock, 2004). The Who's entire set from this event, including much of the material from their then-recent rock opera *Tommy*. Other footage from this festival is in the *Message to Love: The Isle of Wight Festival* documentary, including clips of Jimi Hendrix, the Doors, Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell, Miles Davis, the Moody Blues, Free, and others; there have been other entire DVDs devoted to sets of specific artists from the event, including the Moody Blues, Jimi Hendrix, and Leonard Cohen.

Woodstock (Warner, 2009). Still the most famous rock festival *and* the most famous movie of a rock festival, with legendary performances by the Who (the most prominent of the British acts to appear), Sly & the Family Stone, Santana, Jimi Hendrix, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, Joe Cocker, Richie Havens, and numerous others. It's hard to keep track of all the expanded versions, which add footage by performers who didn't make the original cut, like Janis Joplin and Creedence Clearwater Revival.

Notable People:

Neil Boland: Keith Moon’s chauffeur. Died on January 4, 1970, when Moon accidentally ran him over when they were trying to escape a crowd. Although Moon was not implicated on any charges of wrongdoing, this tragedy has been cited as one of causes of his increasingly out-of-control behavior in the 1970s.

Chris Charlesworth: *Melody Maker* reporter, one of numerous journalists who interviewed the Who on multiple occasions in the early 1970s, when they (and especially Pete Townshend) gave more interviews than any other rock superstars. Townshend himself wrote a monthly column for *Melody Maker* for a while in 1970 and 1971.

Ron Geesin: British avant-garde composer who, with Townshend and other friends of Pete's, was involved with trying to brainstorm a rock opera/concept album/movie shortly after *Tommy*. Later served as an opening act for some early-'70s Who performances. Most famous for collaborating with Pink Floyd as an orchestrator on their 1970 album *Atom Heart Mother*, and collaborating with Pink Floyd's Roger Waters on the 1970 soundtrack *Music from The Body*. A piece by Geesin also appears on the Meher Baba *Happy Birthday* LP to which Townshend contributed.

Maud Kennedy: Author of the poem "Content," which Pete Townshend set to music and performed on the *Happy Birthday* album.

Chris Morphet: Filmmaker who, along with fellow filmmaker Richard Stanley, brainstormed ideas for a film to be made as part of the Who's next concept album after *Tommy*, though this did not happen.

Denis Postle: Yet another filmmaker who tried to work on translating Townshend's ideas for a conceptual follow-up to *Tommy* into film, working with Mike Myers (not the same Mike Myers as the famous actor/comedian).

Herb Solow: MGM producer, most known as vice president of Desilu Studios (responsible for the original *Star Trek* series), who expressed interest in a film version of the post-*Tommy* album Pete Townshend was trying to formulate.

Richard Stanley: Filmmaker who, along with fellow filmmaker Chris Morphet, brainstormed ideas for a film to be made as part of the Who's next concept album after *Tommy*, though this did not happen. Townshend had written some music for, and appeared in, Stanley's 1968 short film *Lone Ranger*.

Viv Stanshall: Former frontman of the Bonzo Dog Band. Keith Moon produced and drummed on Stanshall's 1970 single "Suspicion," though he summarized his contributions to *Rolling Stone* as supplying the booze. Moon also took part in Stanshall's comedy series for BBC Radio One.

Universal Spiritual League: Meher Baba-affiliated organization that put out the *Happy Birthday* Baba tribute LP to which Pete Townshend contributed.

Michael Westlake: Lyricist for "Mary Jane," whose words Pete Townshend set to music and performed on the *Happy Birthday* album.

Frank Zappa: Keith Moon had a small part in Zappa's notoriously incomprehensible movie *200 Motels*, shot in London in February 1971.

Notable Landmarks:

Woodstock: The most famous rock festival of all time. The Who have constantly knocked it as overrated and unpleasant in interviews, but they played well there, and

benefited from the exposure the film and soundtrack albums gave some of their performances.

Isle of Wight Festival, 1969: At the end of August 1969, a couple weeks after Woodstock, the Who played its rough British equivalent here. They'd play here in 1970 too.

Concertgebouw: The group's performance of most of *Tommy* here on September 29, 1969 marked their first presentation of the material at a venue used for classical music and opera.

Eel Pie Studios: Studios on the outskirts of London, run by Pete Townshend, at which the Who recorded studio tracks in spring 1970, several of which found release, but not many of which appeared at the time, the single "The Seeker" being an exception.

Home Studio, Pete Townshend's Home, Twickenham: Actually his sixth home studio, but this facility in his home in Twickenham on the outskirts of London was probably where most or all of the demos for *Lifehouse* were recorded.

Hull City Hall: Venue at which the Who's performance was recorded on February 15, 1970, eventually getting released as bonus material to expanded editions of the *Live at Leeds* album.

Isle of Wight Festival, 1970: At the end of August 1970, a couple weeks after Woodstock, the Who played this festival (as they had a year earlier), attended by several hundred thousand people.

Melody Maker: One of the four major UK weekly music papers. Pete Townshend wrote a monthly column for it in late 1970 and early 1971.

Metropolitan Opera House: Prestigious New York venue in which the Who kicked off their American tour on June 7, 1970, at which point they were still making material from *Tommy* the core of their live sets.

The Red Lion: Pub in Hatfield, about twenty miles from London, where Keith Moon accidentally ran over chauffeur Neil Boland on January 4, 1970.

University Refectory, Leeds: Venue at which *Live at Leeds* was recorded on February 14, 1970.

Albums by Artists Who Were Influential on and/or influenced by the Who in 1969-70:

The Faces, *The Definitive Rock Collection* (Rhino, 2007). Two-CD best of for the band that the Small Faces evolved into, which like the Who were more hard rock-oriented than they were in the '60s, but about as similar to the Who as any other major British bands

around. Note that their singer, Rod Stewart, also (a little confusingly) did solo records at the same time using the Faces, which is why this doesn't include hits like "Maggie May" and "You Wear It Well." There's also a single-disc best-of on Rhino, *The Best of Faces: Good Boys When They're Asleep*.

Ron Geesin, *As He Stands* (Headscope, 1973). The whimsically experimental sounds of Geesin are heard here from around the time (1970-72) he was involved in discussions with Pete Townshend and others regarding a *Tommy* follow-up project, and opened for a few Who shows (in 1971). Townshend is thanked on the album "for encouragement and financial backing to make the presentation of the LP possible." Rare in its original edition, it's easier to find on a 1995 CD reissue on See For Miles that also includes his 1967 album *A Raise of the Eyebrows*. Rock fans might find his work more accessible as heard via his orchestrations on Pink Floyd's 1970 album *Atom Heart Mother*, and his soundtrack collaboration with Pink Floyd's Roger Waters, *Music from the Body* (also from 1970).

John Lennon, *Plastic Ono Band* (EMI, 1970). Not as tuneful or elaborately arranged as the Beatles had been, this nonetheless attracted tons of critical praise for its uncompromisingly cathartic exorcism of Lennon's anger, disillusionment, and personal demons (with occasional romanticism). There were no hits, but "God" made it clear he was turning his back on the Beatles, and considered the utopian dreams the band and the '60s had often championed to be over. Its list of heroes he was disillusioned with bore clear similarities with the list the Who had sung earlier in 1970 on "The Seeker," though there's no evidence Lennon was directly influenced by this.

The Rolling Stones, *Get Yer Ya Ya's Out* (ABKCO, 1970). There had been live albums by the Yardbirds, Jefferson Airplane, Kinks, and some other top rock acts before 1970, and Jimi Hendrix put out a live one recorded about six weeks before *Live at Leeds*. But *Live at Leeds* was arguably the first one to be a major part of a top band's canon, and some other artists soon followed suit with concert albums of their own, like the Doors and, with this record, the Rolling Stones. Although this live album was released in 1970, it was recorded at concerts during their a US tour in late November 1969. It draws mostly on the their late-'60s recordings, with a rougher feel than the studio versions. There's no indication the decision to release this was influenced by the success of *Live at Leeds*, but their appearance within months of each other reinforced how the Stones and the Who were by 1970 considered the top live rock bands. A 2009 reissue expands it in size considerably, adding five previously unreleased tracks; recordings made on the same tour by support acts B.B. King and Ike & Tina Turner; and a DVD of performances of five songs from their shows at New York's Madison Square Garden in late November 1969.

Thunderclap Newman, *Hollywood Dream* (Universal, 1970). Townshend-produced album features quirky pop-rock songs by Speedy Keen, with high-pitched vocals and Andy "Thunderclap" Newman's idiosyncratic jazzy piano. The hit "Something in the Air," though, is by far the best song.

Jesus Christ Superstar (soundtrack) (Verve, 1970). Savaged by rock critics who found it contrived and bombastic, *Jesus Christ Superstar* was nonetheless a huge hit, and a rock opera – albeit featuring a theatrical cast, not a rock group – for which *Tommy*'s success had obviously paved the way. This was actually not the first rock opera written by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, having been preceded by *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.