The Who in NYC: the kids were alright


As the music of the 1980's takes over, most of the great bands left from the 1960's are burned out. The Stones, Zeppelin, the Dead — all are clearly on the road to retirement. At Madison Square Garden Friday night, the Who showed that they still have a few good years left in them.

For two and a quarter hours, the Who hypnotized a full house of 19,500 as they presented twenty of their songs. Roger Daltrey still jumps like a monkey and occasionally gives a few windmill swings at his guitar, and watches. John Entwistle still stands quietly and watches.

The group's fans found no complaints with the band's new drummer, Kenny Jones, who has replaced Keith Moon, did an admirable job. His style is completely different from Moon's, concentrating on the rhythm rather than swapping spots with bassist John Entwistle.

At one point, Daltrey introduced Jones to the audience. Jones took the microphone and said, "I think it's very nice the way you've accepted me." He was answered with appreciative applause.

Before the show started, a ten-minute preview of the film Quadrophenia was shown. "To be released in November," it said.

To the relief of those worrying that the Who would instant Dev and break up their stage show with short movies, the house lights came back on after the film was shown.

For most of the film, most of the audience moved down from the cheap seats for a better look. At 8:30, the Who took the stage.

"They began the concert with ' Substitute.'" The sound system was unusually accurate and clear. The lighting was incredible — hundreds of individually-aimed lights in a half dozen colors were used masterfully, bathing the stage in color. As someone used to a sixty watt bug-lite illuminating the stage at Canton's (a new-wave club in Boston), I was fascinated.

The band continued with "I Can't Explain." Daltrey's vocals sounded great, and stayed that way through the show. Next, they showed off John Bundrick on keyboards with "Baba O'Reilly," a favorite with the crowd. They howled along gleefully as Daltrey sang the phrases "teenage wasteland" and "they're all wasted." Next was a selection from Quadrophenia: "The Punk Meets the Godfather."

Following the wonderful Entwistle composition, "Boris the Spider," Townsend complimented the bassist. "He's quite good, really. Say something, John.

"Thank you very much," replied Entwistle in his best Boris growl.

As the audience was stunned by both sides of the stage belched clouds of smoke. Three blue-green lasers produced dozens of beams of light which began behind the stage and fanned out into the stadium. The crowd was awed. Later, in the song, huge floodlights lit the entire audience.

The Who returned for an encore. Daltrey stumbled once singing an otherwise excellent rendition of "Young Man Blues," a tune which the audience had been yelling for all night. Finally, they bowed out with "The Real Me." After thanking the audience, the band walked out arm in arm. Townsend had been right. New York had been destroyed.

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