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The Kids Are Alright

By Jeff Stein

- Over here?
- Yeah, there.
- Where do you want it?
- Right there.
We want to make sure...
They look after us on this show.
You know,
you guys are really too much,
and I want to introduce you to the guys
individually in the Who
because you never
get to know their names.
You know them as The Who.
Everybody says "Who?"
And you say, you know.
So what's your name?
Pete. Pete Townshend.
- And where are you from, Pete?
- London.
- From London?
- Yeah.
- London where?
- London, England.
Where did you learn to play?
You know, that's a wild style of play.
Where did you learn to play
the guitar like that?
That was bowling.
Bowling. Yeah, I could tell.
Now we move right along...
right over here.
- And you're...
- John.
You're John? And you're from?
- London, too.
- From London, too?
And you must be Roger.
I must be.
- Are you?
- Yeah.
- You're Roger?
- I'm Roger.
- And where you from?
- Oz.

Here's Roger from Oz.

And over here, the guy that plays
the sloppy drums.

Follow the yellow brick road.

- What's your name?

- Keith.

- Keith?

- My friends call me Keith.

- You can call me John.

- Okay, John.

I'd just as soon call you Roger.

Roger from Oz, what's the next song
you're going to play?

"My Generation."

- Your generation?

- Yeah.

I can really identify with that
because I can really
identify with these guys.

I dig them. And this is...

You got sloppy stage hands
around here.

Okay, that's enough!

They're going to sing "My Generation."

This song really goes--

And you're going to be surprised
what happens

because this is excitement.

And hit it.

"My Generation."

"THE WHO"

"THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT"

"A FILM BY JEFF STEIN"

' Hey, Dick!

' Yes?

I'd like to borrow your bass
for a minute.

And now here is
your Shindig host...

Jimmy O'Neil.

Thank you very much,
ladies and gentlemen.

How are you all, Shindiggers?

Tonight is our very last Shindig,

and were going out with a bang.
We got a bang-up cast for you,
starring Billy Jay Kramer
and the Dakotas,
The Who,
Dave Berry, Ian Watkins,
Sandy Shaw,
The Kinks, The Barren Knights, Twinkle,
and of course our own
Blossoms and Wellingtons.
What do you say
we get ready to live it up?
Because here we go
with our kick-off tune tonight,
called "I Can't Explain."
Here to sing it are The Who.
Terribly sorry, Russell.
Does this stuff belong to you?
Have a seat, old love.
You sit down, then.
Drake, this is all over the upholstery.
Who does that machinery belong to?
Does it belong to you or to us?
- I mean, who has to pay for it?
- It's mortgaged.
It's all right.
- It looks all right.
- Doesn't matter to them.
A lot of people like what were doing.
We've got 83...
- Stop interrupting!
- ...deposed Pakistanis to visit.
Do go on.
It's no good. I've lost my nerve now.
All right, let me take over now.
Now, you have been together
now as a group
for how many years? 10 years?
Yeah I'm leaving
Wait a minute, hold on, hold on.
Was it that long? Christ Almighty.
It's known as Decay of The Who.
- What's it, then?
- The Decline of The Who

The Decade of The Who.
Oh, the decade.
Who decayed?
Everybody, you will be all right.
Sure, sure.
Everybody, focus. You'll be all right.
Yeah, yeah, we know.
You'll be all...
yeah, you'll be all right.
Everybody, clap your hands!
I can't hear you!
It has to be loud!
Come on!
A little louder!
Shout!
That's good.
Let's bring our souls together.
You've been together for 10 years.
A decade. You haven't yet decayed.
Apart from the Rolling Stones,
You are the longest surviving
together group, are you not?
Well, not together.
What strains that you have suffered
together, if at all?
Seems it's just beginning.
It's such a long story.
Should I start...
Start at the beginning.
We started off as...
I must admit that the fantastic
thing about The Who
is that we are all incredibly nasty.
You are or were?
Were. I mean, we still were.
His feet are nasty as well.
Christ.
Don't mind me.
We were nasty...
God.
Carry on, Russell.
I don't want it.
You just carry on, Russell. Go on.
Be sure it's going to be worth seeing.

There's a thing here,
an account of one week
exactly ten years ago,
when you had played in that week
in the Social Club In Goldhawk Road
and the California Ballroom
In Dunstable
And the Railway Arms Neasden.
And what you had made
that week was 370.
And what you had spent was 1946.17.6,
and including 785
on replacement of guitars,
drum kits, and microphones.
Who covered that gap in money,
that 400 gap
which left 1,300 to find every week?
It's hard to say.
I used to rush
into Marshall's Music Shop
and steal guitars off the wall.
I'd say, "Just taking a guitar.
Pay you Tuesday," and rush out.
"ENTERTAINMENT-- THE WHO--
RICHEST VANDALS IN THE WORLD!"
Kit Lampert, our manager...
It frustrates me.
"Photographer from the Daily Mail
in the audience.
Smash your guitar."
So I smashed the guitar
around the stage.
He'd come back
"Pete, Pete. Sorry. He missed it.
Smash another one.
I'll give you the money."
And as soon as I started...
"A BEAST INVADES
THE HIGH SCHOOL HOP"
smashing something up,
Keith, who is a great joiner-inner,
used to smash up his drum kit.
Well, I suppose all his friends
have been on here

because, you know,
I'm only one of several.
I've told you about all
the mad things he's done in life,
such as, you know, breaking up rooms,
driving his car into swimming pools,
driving his car into foyers.
Well, I'm not going to tell you
about any of that.
You know, I'm just here to tell you
about the Keith I know and love,
you know?
Keith, what's your opinion
of your public image?
I think it sort of varies
with every record I put out.
I think sometimes...
Could you get on with it?
Will you keep it together?
No, I think I'm very reliant
on my management
and my public relations people.
This country is in a weird, feeble,
grotesque state,
and it's about time it got out of it,
And the on... the reason
it could get out of it is rock music.
And I think The Towns...
and The Who, Roger Daltrey,
Entwistle, Moon,
could rise this country
out of its decadent, ambient state
more than Wilson
and those crappy people
could ever hope to achieve!
What about the little singer?
What's your opinion of him?
Well, I think
he does a damn good job out there.
Personally, I mean,
I wouldn't go out there
up front with nothing to protect me
but a small microphone,
but he manages to revolve it so fast

that when people do throw things,
he gets sort of desiccated eggs
and sliced tomato.

I turn my cymbals up this way
So that at the end of the night
I have a salad mixed.
I just sprinkle some salt
and some Italian seasoning on it,'
and that sort of ends up
my evening here.

There are some elements
in the story line...
the image in the mirror,
the pinball,
and the sensibility in general.

See me, feel me,
touch me, heal me.

Which reflect in a certain sense
the phenomenon of youth subculture.

There is narcissism.

There is a kind of new sensibility
as a strong tendency
for playing up things
and no more putting it into
aggressive forms of counter-action.

- It's. ..

- Yeah.

Thank you

Good.

Thank you.

Because that was the end of the '60s.

That seemed to sum up
an awful lot about rock.

It was the time when you were
a great star of Woodstock.

Woodstock itself was one of the
biggest pop events in world terms
because of the film that masses
and millions of people have seen.
And it was a marvelous thing
in its way.

But just as a matter of interest,
what do you think it changed?

What was different after it?

What did that generation,
all those people,
given the same high by the same thing,
yourself in turn...
what did it change?
I'm just interested to know.
Well, it changed me. I hated it.
Ladies and gentlemen...
The Who.
You have to resign yourself to the fact
that a large part of the audience
is sort of thick, you know,
and don't appreciate quality,
however much
you try and put it over.
The fact is that our group isn't...
hasn't got any quality.
It's just musical sensationalism.
You do something big on the stage,
and a thousand geezers
sort of go "Ahh."
It's just basic Shepherd's Bush
enjoyment.
Our sound appeals to mods
in the case for aggression.
For example, for a brief period,
I stopped smashing guitars.
Kids started shouting out
"Smash your guitar, Pete.
Smash your guitar"
and getting quite annoyed
that I wasn't
because to a large percentage
of geezers that come to see the group,
they paid their money to see me
re-amplify with the guitar
or see a guitar break, you know?
A lot of girls come to see the group
because of various things
which people in the group wear
such as John's jacket of medals
and my jacket made out of flags
and Keith who wears sort of fab gear,
pop art T-shirts

made out of targets and hearts
and things like this

Because the group is a fairly
simple form of pop art,
we get a lot of audience this way.
Off stage, the group get on
terribly badly.

There's a lot of just spite
and things which flash around.

The singer is
a Shepherd's Bush geezer
who wants everything
to be a big laugh,
and when it isn't,
he thinks something is going wrong,
Terribly wrong

The drummer is a sort of
completely different person
to anyone else other than me.

The bass player
just doesn't seem to be
interested in anything, you know,
which makes it all very difficult.
You've been together 10 years.
You must have been subject
to a great deal of strain
and inner tension.

I now cannot ask that...

- Actually...

- We do try to ignore each other.

We've always been very close,
you and I.

No.

Most of the thing
is that I loathe Pete Townshend.

- Keith and I...

- The group has had no history,
and I've hated him
ever since we began.

Since I've been doing the bulk of the..

The thing is that he does no writing.

I do most of it.

I end up doing most of the lyric work.

He keeps taking the tapes.

He thinks he does the lyrics.
What about musical quality, though?
You said that you don't think
your group have got any.
Why don't you try and give it some?
If you don't...
If you steer clear of quality,
you're all right, you know.
No, really.
This is the truth, you know.
But wouldn't you say
The Beatles and people like that
have a certain musical quality?
You know, that's a tough question.
I... actually this afternoon,
we, John and I were listening
to a stereo of The Beatles
in which the voices
come out of one side
And the backing track
comes out of the other.
And when you actually hear
the backing track to The Beatles
without their voices,
They're flipping nails.
The first major American tour
was by bus.
We traveled from coast to coast,
and from Miami we'd go up to Canada.
It was pretty awful.
We used New York as a springboard.
We used to play for Murray the K.
We used to do five shows a day there,
and we had three minutes
to do our show.
First you'd have one and a half minutes
of kind of explaining
and one and a half minutes
Of "My Generation,"
smash your guitar, and run off,
you know.
Five times a day, seven days a week.
In those days,
your performances used to end up

with you smashing all your equipment.
There were stories about you
smashing hotel rooms on every tour.
All lies. Not a word of truth.
Well, according to people at the time,
it certainly was true.
Why was there all that violence
surrounding you?
Well, this was only last week, wasn't it?
What made us first want to go
to America and conquer it
was being English.
Not because we cared monkeys
about the American Dream
or about the American drug situation
or about the dollars or anything.
It's because we were
English kids, right?
And we wanted to go to America
and beat it.
Pop music is crucial to today's art,
and it's crucial that it should remain art,
And it is crucial
that it should progress as art.
I saw you.
Girls came to see you mainly
to look at the clothes you wear.
Don't you think that most of them
come for a certain sexual thrill
they get out of your performance?
Our group is probably one of the most
unglamorous on the stage today.
I mean...
No, really, I mean, this is one of our
big problems, you know,
and probably still is, you know,
is that the group
didn't have enough glamour.
It was all these clothes
and smashing things up
it was all mechanical things.
It was bricks and stones and things
and not enough of, sort of,
normal group things, you know.

We made our second album,
which he produced,
and it was during that album,
which, as I said, Kit Lampert produced,
that we really realized
what making albums was all about.
You know, we had great fun,
and it was very creative.
And Kit was learning
about record production
and doing crazy things
like recording the group
from a microphone down the corridor
and all these things which are
very commonplace nowadays.
Using incredible amounts
of compression
and squeezing the sound up,
squeezing cymbal sounds up
to make them sound
like steam engines
and various, sort of,
twiddling knobs
as the recording was going.
The engineers
throwing their hands in the air.
"It... coated knobs, mate.
You can't do that."
And all this was going on
in the studio,
but unfortunately we had
ten minutes on the album to fill
when we'd finished,
and so Kit turned around to me
and said "I think you should
write something linear,
something with continuity,
perhaps a ten-minute song."
So I said, "You can't
write a ten minute song."
I mean, rock songs
are two minutes 50, by tradition.
It's one of the traditions, you know.
They only allowed you one modulation.

Four chords or five, you know.
Five chords, you might be
up before the committee.
Ten minutes is ridiculous.
So he said "Well, listen, if you can't
write a ten-minute song,
write a ten-minute story
made up of two-minutes-50 songs,"
which I did.

And that was the Mini Opera,
it was called.
And now, ladies and gentlemen,
dig The Who.

2, 3.

Here comes Ivor
the dirty old city engine driver
to make you feel all right.
What we have to do is we have to--
we have to decide whether or not
we are going to remain
this circus act, right?
Or whether we're going to,
in other words,
doing what everybody knows we can do
and what we know we can do.
Right? Until the band eventually
turns into a cabaret act,
- which is inevitable.
- No. That's ridiculous to say that.
I mean...

Well, let's just...

Okay, Keith, let's go.

Bragging and drums.

I've heard a lot about you
and the rest of the group
taking drugs, Pete.

Does this mean
you're usually blocked up
when you're actually on stage?
No, but it means we're blocked up
all the time, you know.

Well, kid, we've heard you drink a lot,
but that's beside the point.

If you could tell us, you know,

how did you happen to join The Who
and if in fact that's what they
were called when you joined.
Well, I've just been sitting in
for the past 15 years.
You know, they never actually told me
that I was part of the band.
I knew it by instinct.
Keith Moon rolled up one day
all ginger all over--
ginger shoes,
ginger corduroy trousers, ginger jacket,
and his hair dyed ginger,
holding a glass of brown ale.
So this complete ginger sort of vision
came up and said,
"I can play better than him."
And this horrible impudent
with his hair down like this.
And... got up on the drummer's
drum kit
and practically smashed it to pieces.
And we thought
this is the man for us.
Hi. I'm Ralph Baines speaking to you
for the Hewitt House Hotels,
the rock stars' home away from home.
Don't be alarmed
I think I know what's going on.
Let's get some information across
before the fun breaks loose again.
What were you before you kicked
off with as a group
He was almost as interesting as...
Inland revenue income tax.
I thought you said land rover.
I guess it's some time in the back.
Inland revenue.
So what what did you do?
Me?
All sort of things.
Like what?
Be more specific. He wants...
I want one thing that you did

before you joined as a group.
I mean, were you
digging a garden or what?
He was born in a bunk.
I was a sheet metal worker
Sheet metal worker'?
Yeah, I was a rust repairer.
I was a rust repairer
and full-time survivor.
I survived all the major earthquakes.
And the Titanic
and several air crashes.
I think you'll have to give me
a few lessons in survival
because if I'm gonna stay and survive
this interview, I'll need a few lessons.
Well, there is more brandy--
I mean lemonade.
That's right.
And you were doing what?
Oh, we didn't work.
Arty-farty he was.
You leave me out of this.
We were talking about me.
Hey, get out! Oh, no!
Oh, no, Keith.
It's a ripper.
That's what he was doing,
developing his muscles.
Keith, leave me alone.
- Well, they have to ask you this.
- I know.
You know, what do you think
about Pete?
I love the man.
He's one of my dearest friends.
But I couldn't say that about Ringo.
If Pete said "What do you think
about Ringo?"
"You know, we have our moments,
and when we get together,
there are certain times that you just...
Something happens,
and I really don't know what it is."

- But there's that magic there.
- It's probably we're drunk
It could be that.
Oh, not drunk, teeny-boppers.
No, absolutely not, you Don Henry fans.
Keith and Henry had a lot of medicine
- Absolutely.
- You know, just a lot of medicine
We're getting on.
We're getting on now,
and we need our medicine, so...
Let's see the age of this suit.
When I'm on the stage...
Let me try and explain.
When I'm on the stage,
I'm not in control of myself at all.
I don't even know who I am
You know,
I'm not this rational person
that can sit here now and talk to you.
If you walked on the stage
with a microphone
in the middle of a concert,
I'd probably come close to killing you.
I have come close to killing people
who have walked on stage.
Abbie Hoffman
walked on the stage at Woodstock,
and I nearly killed him with my guitar.
A cameraman walked on the stage.
A policeman came on
when the bloody building
at the Fillmore In New York
was burning down,
and I kicked him in the balls
and sent him off
because I...you know,
I'm just not there, really.
It's not like being possessed.
It's just I do my job,
and I know I have to get
into a certain state of mind to do it.
We'd realized the end of our tether.
We'd reached it. We'd come upon

the point when the...
nose bleeds and all that
were no good.
We can't go on doing that.
It's no good.
It's beyond the beyond.
Bob. Barbara.
Barbara Ann?
Well, that's...
We did that bit, though.
Does it come in twice?
Look what happened?
I mean, one main ambition now
was to get back on the road
with the horrible Who,
the worst rock and roll group
in the world.
- The worst?
- Yes.
You couldn't pick
four more horrible geezers
that make more, like, the worst noise
that you've ever heard in your life.
You want one of the reasons
for having music and things
fantastically loud
is because you get so many people
that turn deaf ears to what you do.
You know what I mean?
They just won't listen to what you do,
and it doesn't matter
how good or bad it is.
In fact, The bigger it is, normally,
the more they'll close their ears to it.
And so the louder you got to work,
you know.
Volume is fantastic thing.
Power and volume and power and volume.
When I went to get my ears tested,
I thought I was really encouraged,
apart from the fact
you said I have terrible ears.
He said Bill said,
"What advice would you give him?"

Would you tell him to stop playing
entirely and leave the group?"
Throw his career out the window.
Become a pauper, starve.
Would you tell him that?
"Well, actually, no, but I would
advise him to learn to lip read."
It's true. That's what he said.
Get off.
Have all of you made enough money
to stop work this afternoon, tonight?
Well, I'm certain you'd like that.
Yes, I have.
You have? Why don't you stop, then?
He's got to support me
and the rest of the boys.
You mean you've made more money
than they have?
Well, I write all the songs.
No, I write the songs.
So if you write songs,
you get a bit on the side.
You see, the thing is, as songwriter,
I do have something, you know...
- Going for you.
- Going for me.
We go for him.
Scab.
Carry on, Russell.
I'm transfixed by John.
I don't know why I'm here.
In "My Generation," you wrote
"I hope I die before I get old."
- Do you in fact mean this?
- Yes
Guitar up here,
including big-mouthed little kid
who wants to come
and fucking take it off me.
Rock and roll has got no future.
It don't matter.
We became rich
a lot later than I expected.
Now I'm too old to enjoy my money.

Excuse me. You know, we just shot a lot of film for the interview, and talking about all that. I was wondering now if you can really tell us the truth and stuff. Oh, no. It's... I mean, the truth as you want to hear it? I can't do that. You couldn't afford me. But you're a very different person now to the desperate young man of the early '60s, aren't you? Yeah, I'm a desperate old fart now. Not boring, though. So there. I've been saving that. You've all been behaving this crazy way well all the time. You're all married, aren't you? No. I wouldn't marry this lot. That's a great sleeve, that is. - If you touch my bleeding sleeve... - See? He's getting stroppy now. You leave his sleeves alone. Personal, them. Can't touch the interviewer, can we? No, he's in command, isn't he? He can make everybody else look a right twit, as long as you don't have a go at him. How long have you been happily married, then? You really do have a lovely life line. Have I a long life line? - Here about the warts. - No, not too long. I should say about half a fortnight. Ladies and gentlemen, before my life line, according to him is two minutes long, which means we've got

to the end of the program.
We will be back, God willing,
same time, same place, next week.
- See you then. Good night.
- He's so smooth.

"RUSSELL HARTY PLUS"

This is where it all ends.
I can't think of anything to say.
Rock and roll's never ever stood
dissecting and inspecting it
at close range.
It just doesn't stand up.
So shut up.

There is a place for us.
I am accused of letting
the side down, as it were,
often by our fans, you know.

Like, for example,
you can't stop doing this.

You can't stop doing
what you're doing
because you'd let down
all these people.

It's not people just saying
"Listen, you'll disappoint your fans
if you don't go on. The show must go on.

You must go on, otherwise
all those people will be so upset."

It's "You've got to go on, man.

Otherwise, all those kids,
they'll be finished.

They'll have nothing to live for.

That's rock and roll.

Thank you, Thank you.