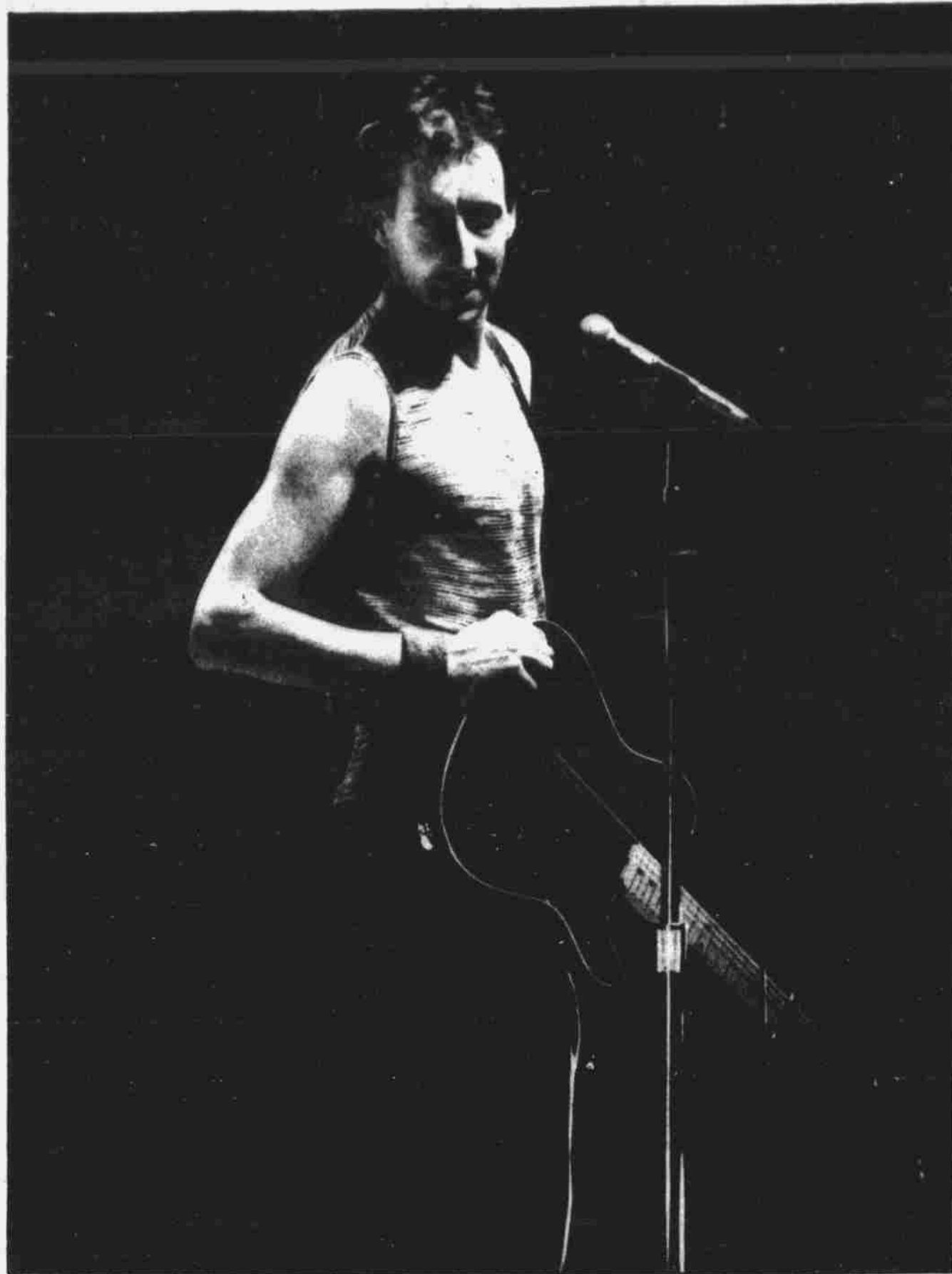


arts/entertainment

The Who



There was no attempted rescue mission. The captives wouldn't have gone anyway, they didn't want to be rescued. Saturday night in Kemper Arena in Kansas City, The Who took the stage like an assault team, handpicked from the finest in rock, and refused to let up until two pounding, intense, eye-and-ear shattering hours later.

The concert started late. The warm-up group was not on stage until 8 p.m., half an hour after the show was supposed to begin—but the crowd didn't seem to mind that it was almost 9:30 before The Who roared on stage and slammed into "Substitute," the sneeringly hip answer to anyone who thinks they know what's going on—and doesn't.

Lead singer Roger Daltrey stamped and pranced and twirled his microphone through "Can't Explain," and "Baba O'Riley," accompanied by lead guitarist Pete Townshend's impossibly high leaps and kicks. Townshend, unofficial spokesman and leader of The Who, is known for the intensity of his performances—and he did not disappoint.

Throughout the night, he kept the audience entertained by jumping, sliding, twirling his arm like a propeller

warming up, and generally seemed to enjoy himself as much as the audience did.

Disco lights

The Who made imaginative use of lights, turning on three revolving groups of them for a satiric look at disco, flashing blue-green and red to the beat of several songs, and switching on powerful spotlights for "My Generation," "Won't Get Fooled Again," and the encore, which included "Shaking All Over," "Magic Bus," and "The Real Me," the last from the album *Quadrophenia*.

The songs were mostly well-known pegs that have been used to identify The Who as the articulators of the generation they no longer are a part of. That the youngest member of the band—Daltrey—was at least 10 years older than most of the audience didn't seem to matter. "My Generation" still snarls and kicks as it did when it was written 15 years ago.

Intense energy

The intensity never let up. Even the slower songs were shot through with an undercurrent of musical tension

which drove audience and performers alike. Daltrey, looking athletic and fesh, stood at the front of the stage inviting the crowd to see-and feel the music.

Townshend's explosions of energy were complemented by the relative calm of bassist John Entwistle, who stood by, playing quietly as he is known—and expected—to do. He took the spotlight early on, introduced as, "He moves! He speaks! He writes songs! He sings!" Entwistle sang "My Wife" with feeling, and then moved back to stand by the speakers, as calmly as he came.

Drummer Kenney Jones, who replaced Keith Moon, who died of a drug overdose last year, fit in well with the rest of the band, providing skillful drumming. Although he does not have Moon's driven, possessed range of feeling—very few do—he maintained a tight edge all night.

Controlled show

The show itself was well paced, threatening to blast out of control at times, but never doing so. The enthusiasm was a strong positive force that drove the audience to their feet early on, and ignited held-high cigarettes and matches. It did not spill over into flared tempers and rowdiness, as has happened at Who concerts before.

Few police officers were in evidence. There were no arrests and no incidents of violence. The only jarring moment of the evening was while the audience was waiting for the encore, when a young man ran across the stage and dived into the crowd with two security men in pursuit.

Admission to the concert flowed smoothly, but leaving was a minor problem. T-shirt booths obstructed the flow trying to get out the doors. One man, referring to The Who Cincinnati concert in which 11 fans were killed trying to get in, remarked, "I wouldn't mind getting hurt trying to get into a Who concert, but it would be really embarrassing to get hurt trying to get out."

The kids were all right.

Review by

Kim Wilt

Photos by

Mark Billingsley

