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Peter Dennis Blandford "Pete" Townshend (born 19 May 1945) is an English rock musician, composer, multi-instrumentalist, vocalist, songwriter and author, known principally as the guitarist and songwriter for the rock group The Who, as well as for his own solo career. His career with The Who spans more than 40 years, during which time the band grew to be considered one of the most influential bands of the 1960s and 1970s.[2]

Townshend is the primary songwriter for The Who, having written well over 100 songs for the band's 11 studio albums, including concept albums and the rock operas Tommy and Quadrophenia, plus popular rock and roll radio staples such as Who's Next, and dozens more that appeared as non-album singles, bonus tracks on reissues, and tracks on rarities compilations such as Odds & Sods. He has also written over 100 songs that have appeared on his solo albums, as well as radio jingles and television theme songs. Although known primarily as a guitarist, he also plays other instruments such as keyboards, banjo, accordion, harmonica, ukulele, mandolin, violin, synthesiser, bass guitar and drums, on his own solo albums, several Who albums, and as a guest contributor to a wide array of other artists' recordings. He is self-taught on all of the instruments he plays and has never had any formal training.

Townshend has also been a contributor and author of newspaper and magazine articles, book reviews, essays, books, and scripts, as well as collaborating as a lyricist (and composer) for many other musical acts. Townshend was ranked No. 3 in Dave Marsh's list of Best Guitarists in The New Book of Rock Lists,[3] No. 10 in Gibson.com's list of the top 50 guitarists,[4] and No. 10 again in Rolling Stone magazine's updated 2011 list of the 100 greatest guitarists of all time.[5] Townshend was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a member of The Who in 1990.

Born in Chiswick, London into a musical family (his father Cliff Townshend was a professional saxophonist in The Squadronaires and his mother Betty (née Dennis) was a singer), Townshend exhibited a fascination with music at an early age. In the mid-1950s he was drawn to American rock and roll; his mother recounts that he repeatedly saw the 1956 film Rock Around the Clock. When he was 12, his grandmother gave him his first guitar, which he has described as a "cheap Spanish thing". Townshend's biggest guitar influences include Link Wray, John Lee Hooker, Bo Diddley and Hank Marvin of The Shadows.

Townshend's brother Simon (who also became a musician) was born in 1960. In 1961, Townshend enrolled at Ealing Art College, with the intention to become a graphic artist and a year later, he and his school friend from Acton County Grammar School John Entwistle founded their first band, The Confederates, a Dixieland duet featuring Townshend on banjo and Entwistle on horns. From this

beginning they moved on to The Detours, a skiffle/rock and roll band fronted by Roger Daltrey, another former schoolmate. With the encouragement and assistance of his old classmate Entwistle, Daltrey invited Townshend to join as well. In early 1964, because another band had the same name, The Detours renamed themselves The Who. Drummer Doug Sandom was replaced by Keith Moon not long afterwards. The band (now comprising Daltrey on lead vocals and harmonica, Townshend on guitar, Entwistle on bass guitar and french horn, and Moon on drums) were soon taken on by a mod publicist named Peter Meaden who convinced them to change their name to The High Numbers to give the band more of a mod feel. After bringing out one failed single ("I'm the Face/Zoot Suit"), they dropped Meaden and were signed on by two new managers, Chris Stamp and Kit Lambert, who had paired up with the intention of finding new talent and creating a documentary about them. The band anguished over a name that all felt represented the band best, and dropped The High Numbers name, reverting to The Who.

After The High Numbers once again became The Who, Townshend wrote several successful singles for the band, including "I Can't Explain", "Pictures of Lily", "Substitute", and "My Generation". Townshend became known for his eccentric stage style during the band's early days, often interrupting concerts with lengthy introductions of songs.[citation needed] He developed a signature move in which he would swing his right arm against the guitar strings in a style reminiscent of the vanes of a windmill. He became one of the first musicians known for smashing guitars on stage and would repeatedly throw them into his amplifiers and speaker cabinets. The first incident of guitar-smashing happened when Townshend accidentally broke the neck of his guitar on the low ceiling of an early concert venue at the Railway Tavern in Harrow. The stage, only about a foot high, nevertheless brought the ceiling to within 7 feet. After smashing the instrument to pieces, he carried on by grabbing another guitar and acting as if the broken guitar had been part of the act. Drummer Keith Moon was delighted; he loved attention and destruction on any level, and smashed his drum kit as well. The press sensationalised the incidents. The on-stage destruction of instruments soon became a regular part of The Who's performances. This was further dramatised with pyrotechnics, an idea which came from Moon, who incorporated it in his exploding drum kits. At a concert in Germany, a police officer walked up to Townshend, pointed his gun at him, and ordered him to stop smashing the guitar. Townshend, always a voluble interview subject, would later relate these antics to German/British artist Gustav Metzger's theories on auto-destructive art, to which he had been exposed at art school. However, on several occasions, he admitted that the destruction was a gimmick that set the band out apart from the others and gave them the publicity edge that they needed to be noticed.

The Who thrived, and continue to thrive, despite the deaths of two of the original members. They are regarded by many rock critics as one of the best[7][8] live bands[9][10] from a period of time that stretched from the mid-1960s to the 2000s, the result of a unique combination of high volume, showmanship, a wide variety of rock beats, and a high-energy sound that alternated between tight and free-form. The Who continue to perform critically acclaimed sets in the 21st century, including highly regarded performances at The Concert For New York City in 2001, the 2004 Isle of Wight Festival, Live 8 in 2005 and the 2007 Glastonbury Festival.

Townshend remained the primary songwriter and leader of the group, writing over one hundred songs which appeared on the band's eleven studio albums. Among his most well-known accomplishments are the creation of Tommy, for which the term "rock opera" was coined,[11] and a second pioneering rock opera, Quadrophenia; his dramatic stage persona; his use of guitar feedback as sonic technique; and the introduction of the synthesiser as a rock instrument. Townshend revisited album-length storytelling throughout his career and remains the musician most associated with the rock opera form. Many studio recordings also feature Townshend on piano or keyboards, though keyboard-heavy tracks increasingly featured guest artists in the studio, such as Nicky Hopkins, John Bundrick or Chris Stainton.[12]

Townshend is one of the key figures in the development of feedback in rock guitar. When asked who first used feedback, Deep Purple guitarist Ritchie Blackmore said, "Pete Townshend was definitely the first. But not being that good a guitarist, he used to just sort of crash chords and let the guitar feedback. He didn't get into twiddling with the dials on the amplifier until much later. He's

overrated in England, but at the same time you find a lot of people like Jeff Beck and Hendrix getting credit for things he started. Townshend was the first to break his guitar, and he was the first to do a lot of things. He's very good at his chord scene, too." [13] Similarly, when Jimmy Page was asked about the development of guitar feedback, he said, "I don't know who really did feedback first; it just sort of happened. I don't think anybody consciously nicked it from anybody else. It was just going on. But Pete Townshend obviously was the one, through the music of his group, who made the use of feedback more his style, and so it's related to him. Whereas the other players like Jeff Beck and myself were playing more single note things than chords." [14]

Townshend has also recorded several concert albums, including one featuring a supergroup he assembled called Deep End, who performed just three concerts and a television show session for The Tube, to raise money for a charity supporting drug addicts. In 1993 he and Des McAnuff wrote and directed the Broadway adaptation of the Who album Tommy, as well as a less successful stage musical based on his solo album The Iron Man, based upon the book by Ted Hughes. McAnuff and Townshend later co-produced the animated film The Iron Giant, also based on the Hughes story.

In February 2006, a major world tour by The Who was announced to promote their first new album since 1982. Townshend published a semi-autobiographical story The Boy Who Heard Music as a serial on a blog beginning in September 2005. [19] The blog closed in October 2006, as noted on Townshend's website. It is now owned by a different user and does not relate to Townshend's work in any way. On 25 February 2006, he announced the issue of a mini-opera inspired by the novella for June 2006. In October 2006 The Who released their first album in 26 years, Endless Wire.

Townshend suffers from partial deafness and tinnitus believed to be the result of noise-induced hearing loss from his extensive exposure to loud music. Some such incidents include a Who concert at the Charlton Athletic Football Club, London, on 31 May 1976 that was listed as the "Loudest Concert Ever" by the Guinness Book of Records, where the volume level was measured at 126 decibels 32 metres from the stage. Townshend has also attributed the start of his hearing loss to Keith Moon's famous exploding drum set during The Who's 1967 appearance on The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour.

In 1989, Townshend gave the initial funding to allow the formation of the non-profit hearing advocacy group H.E.A.R. (Hearing Education and Awareness for Rockers). After the Who performed at half-time at the Super Bowl XLIV, Townshend stated that he is concerned that his tinnitus has grown to such a point that he might be forced to discontinue performing with the band altogether. He told Rolling Stone, "If my hearing is going to be a problem, we're not delaying shows. We're finished. I can't really see any way around the issue." Neil Young introduced him to an audiologist who suggested he use an In-ear monitor, and although they cancelled their spring 2010 touring schedule, Townshend used the device at their one remaining London concert on 30 March 2010, to ascertain the feasibility of Townshend continuing to perform with The Who. [23]

Referring to that, in July 2011, Townshend wrote at his blog: "My hearing is actually better than ever because after a feedback scare at the indigo2 in December 2008 I am taking good care of it. I have computer systems in my studio that have helped me do my engineering work on the forthcoming Quadrophenia release. I have had assistance from younger forensic engineers and mastering engineers to help me clean up the high frequencies that are out of my range. The same computer systems work wonderfully well on stage, proving to be perfect for me when The Who performed at the Super Bowl and doing Quadrophenia for TCT at the Royal Albert Hall in 2010. I'm 66, I don't have perfect hearing, and if I listen to loud music or go to gigs I do tend to get tinnitus."

From The Who's emergence on the British musical landscape, Pete Townshend could always be counted upon for a good interview. By early 1966 he had become the band's spokesman, interviewed separately from the band for the BBC television series A Whole Scene Going admitting that the band used drugs and that he considered The Beatles' backing tracks "flippin' lousy". In a 1967 interview, however, Townshend complimented one of The Beatles' songs: "I think "Eleanor Rigby" was a very important musical move forward. It certainly inspired me to write and listen to things in that vein." [24] Throughout the 1960s Townshend made regular appearances in the pages

of British music magazines, but it was a very long interview he gave to Rolling Stone in 1968 that sealed his reputation as one of rock's leading intellectuals and theorists.[25]

Townshend gave increasing interviews to the newly risen underground press, firmly establishing his reputation as a commentator on the rock and roll scene. In addition, he wrote his own articles, starting a regular monthly column in Melody Maker, and contributing to Rolling Stone with an article on his guru Meher Baba and a review of The Who's album Meaty Beaty Big and Bouncy.[citation needed]

Townshend has withdrawn from the press on occasion. On his 30th birthday, Townshend discussed his feelings that The Who were failing to journalist Roy Carr, making unflattering comments on fellow Who member Roger Daltrey and other leading members of the British rock community. Carr printed his remarks in the NME causing strong friction within The Who and embarrassing Townshend. Feeling betrayed, he stopped interviews with the press for over two years.[citation needed]

Nevertheless, Townshend has maintained close relationships with many journalists, and sought them out in 1982 to describe his two-year battle with cocaine and heroin. Some of those press members turned on him in the 1980s as the punk rock revolution led to widespread dismissal of the old guard of rock, Townshend attacked two of them, Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons, in the song "Jools And Jim" on his album Empty Glass after they made some derogatory remarks about Who drummer Keith Moon. Meanwhile several journalists denounced Townshend for what they saw as a betrayal of the idealism about rock music he had espoused in his earlier interviews when The Who participated in a tour sponsored by Schlitz in 1982 and by Miller Brewing in 1989. Townshend's 1993 concept album Psychoderelict offers a scathing commentary on journalists in the character of Ruth Streeting, who attempts to scandalise the main character, Ray High.[citation needed]

On 25 October 2006, Townshend declined at the last minute to do a scheduled interview with Sirius Satellite Radio host Howard Stern after Stern's co-anchor Robin Quivers and sidekick Artie Lange made joking references to his 2003 arrest.[clarification needed] Stern conducted an interview instead with Roger Daltrey and repeatedly expressed regret about the utterances of his on-air colleagues, stating that they did not reflect his own feelings of respect for Townshend.[26]

Later in 2006, Townshend appeared on the Living Legends radio show in an exclusive interview with Opal Bonfante. The interview, broadcast worldwide on Radio London,[clarification needed] was his first live interview in 15 years. Townshend spoke about his forthcoming UK tour, his online novella and his memories of the old pirate radio stations.[citation needed]

Throughout his solo career and his career with The Who, Townshend has played (and destroyed) a large variety of guitars – mostly various Gibson and Fender models. He has also used Guild, Takamine and Gibson J-200 acoustic models, with the J-200 providing his signature recorded acoustic sound in such songs as "Pinball Wizard".

In the early days with The Who, Townshend played an Emile Grimshaw SS De Luxe and 6-string and 12-string Rickenbacker semi-hollow electric guitars primarily (particularly the Rose-Morris UK-imported models with special f-holes). However, as instrument-smashing became increasingly integrated into The Who's concert sets, he switched to more durable and resilient (and sometimes cheaper) guitars for smashing, such as the Fender Stratocaster, Fender Telecaster and various Danelectro models. On The Who's famous The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour appearance in 1967, Townshend used a Vox Cheetah guitar, which he only used for that performance; and the guitar was smashed to smithereens by Townshend and Moon's drum explosion. In the late 1960s, Townshend began playing Gibson SG models almost exclusively, specifically the Special models. He used this guitar at the Woodstock and Isle of Wight shows in 1969 and 1970, as well as the Live at Leeds performance in 1970.

By 1970, Gibson changed the design of the SG Special which Townshend had been using previously, and thus he began using other guitars. For much of the 1970s, he used a Gibson Les Paul DeLuxe, some with only two mini-humbucker pick-ups and others modified with a third pick-up

in the "middle position" (a DiMarzio Superdistortion / Dual Sound). He can be seen using several of these guitars in the documentary *The Kids Are Alright*, although in the studio he often played a '59 Gretsch 6120 guitar (given to him by Joe Walsh), most notably on the albums *Who's Next* and *Quadrophenia*.

During the 1980s, Townshend mainly used Fenders, Rickenbackers and Telecaster-style models built for him by Schecter and various other luthiers. Since the late-1980s, Townshend has used the Fender Eric Clapton Signature Stratocaster, with Lace Sensor pick-ups, both in the studio and on tour. Some of his Stratocaster guitars feature a Fishman PowerBridge piezo pick-up system to simulate acoustic guitar tones. This piezo system is controlled by an extra volume control behind the guitar's bridge.

During The Who's 1989 Tour Townshend played a Rickenbacker guitar that was ironically smashed accidentally when he tripped over it. Instead of throwing the smashed parts away, Townshend reassembled the pieces as a sculpture. The sculpture was featured at the Rock Stars, Cars And Guitars 2 exhibit during the summer of 2009 at The Henry Ford museum.

There are several Gibson Pete Townshend signature guitars, such as the Pete Townshend SG, the Pete Townshend J-200, and three different Pete Townshend Les Paul Deluxes. The SG was clearly marked as a Pete Townshend limited edition model and came with a special case and certificate of authenticity, signed by Townshend himself. There has also been a Pete Townshend signature Rickenbacker limited edition guitar of the model 1998, which was his main 6-string guitar in the Who's early days. The run featured 250 guitars which were made between July 1987 – March 1988, and according to Rickenbacker CEO John Hall, the entire run sold out before serious advertising could be done.

He also used the Gibson ES-335, one of which he donated to the Hard Rock Cafe. Townshend also used a Gibson EDS-1275 double neck very briefly circa late 1967, and both a Harmony Sovereign H1270[29] and a Fender Electric XII for the studio sessions for *Tommy* for the 12-string guitar parts. He also occasionally used Fender Jazzmasters on stage in 1967 and 1968 and in the studio for *Tommy*.

Over the years, Pete Townshend has used many types of amplifiers, including Vox, Fender, Marshall, Hiwatt etc., sticking to using Hiwatt amps for most of four decades. Around the time of *Who's Next*, he used a tweed Fender Bandmaster amp, which he also used for *Quadrophenia* and *The Who by Numbers*. While recording *Face Dances* and the collaborative album *Rough Mix*, Townshend made use of a Peavey Vintage 4X10 amplifier in the studio. Since 1989, his rig consisted of four Fender Vibro-King stacks and a Hiwatt head driving two custom made 2x12" Hiwatt/Mesa Boogie speaker cabinets. However, since 2006, he has only three Vibro-King stacks, one of which is a backup.

Jim Marshall then cut the massive speaker cabinet into two separate speaker cabinets, at the suggestion of Townshend, with each cabinet containing four 12-inch speakers. One of the cabinets had half of the speaker baffle slanted upwards and Marshall made these two cabinets stackable. The Marshall stack was born, and Townshend used these as well as Hiwatt stacks.

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