

## A few weeks in 2002

A smile, a hug and “I’ll see you in LA in a couple of weeks”.

The 2002 US tour was one full of promise. Rehearsals at Pete’s Oceanic Studios had gone really well with the band rehearsing songs they hadn’t attempted on stage for a long time, including the mini opera ‘A Quick One (while he’s away)’. We’d also filmed the entire sessions, and had around 180 hours (at a guess) of footage and streamed live performances on [petetownshend.com](http://petetownshend.com). All was good.

On the penultimate day of rehearsals we got the first copies of ‘Anyway Anyhow Anywhere’ delivered to Oceanic and I’d got permission to invite Andy Neill down to watch the ‘show’. We were really excited about the book and really pleased with the way it had turned out. The two of us had our copies signed by Pete, Roger and John with some nice dedications. In mine John wrote ‘Fiction is stranger than fact’ whilst Andy’s copy was signed, prophetically, ‘Hope it has a happy ending’. All three members had been really helpful with the book but I became closer to John I guess than Pete or Roger over the time we were writing it. I was welcomed to John’s house on many occasions and spent a lot of time talking about the band, past and present.

For much of the rehearsals John, uncharacteristically, stayed seated almost throughout, whilst the band played but was very much looking forward to the shows. As the final day of rehearsals was drawing to a close I remember sitting at the control desk in the video room with Pete, watching John on the monitors and commenting that I thought John looked unwell. Pete said that he hadn’t had a chance to really talk to John but would go and do so then as he was on his own. Just at that moment the crew from JBL walked in and the opportunity was gone. I don’t believe that Pete got the chance again.





So, it was on the last day of rehearsals that the smile and hug took place and the promise of meeting up in LA a couple of weeks later. Of course that didn't happen and that was the last time I saw John.

On June 27<sup>th</sup> I flew from London to Los Angeles full of excitement. The book was due to be released to coincide with the first date on the tour which was the following day in Las Vegas. When I arrived in LAX I was given a message from Eelpie's Nick Goderson asking me to ring him as soon as possible. As I switched on my phone I had two voicemail messages, one from Nick and one from Pete telling me that John had been found dead in Las Vegas. The news hadn't yet reached the press but in little time the story was out.

It's hard thinking back to exactly what I thought at that moment, it all seemed unreal, almost dreamlike. It all became stark fact, however, when I reached the Sunset Marquis hotel, where John was booked in during his LA stay and I met up

with some of the touring party. Details were still fairly sketchy but it was pretty obvious even then as to how things had happened. After settling in I decided to ask Pete and Roger if they wanted to put something out on the website. Roger rang me and together, in tears we put together the following statement:

*"I have lost one of my oldest friends in John Entwistle. We have been friends since we were 14 years old and I cannot even begin to measure the loss. My heart goes out to his wonderful family. Unfortunately, it is a fact of life that as we get older more and more of our friends disappear from our lives and death is like an ever encroaching shadow on us all.*

*What we have lost is a unique individual, both as a human being and a musician. He transformed the bass guitar into something way beyond anything that it was originally designed for. On his way he inspired many budding musicians to turn the bass into a lead instrument and though he was often copied, he was never equalled.*

*For us it's more than a friendship, it is a brotherhood. It is blood.*

*John made no compromises in the way he lived his life. He did it totally his way. Sad though it is, if he could have written an ending for himself it would have been very similar to the one he had. For those who knew him and his sense of humour they will raise a smile at that. He was a true rock and roll icon through and through and he was so proud that he was famous.*

*My feeling about where Pete and I are left now is my belief that our music goes beyond and before us, transcending everything we do. If John had it his way we would probably have been on the road 365 days a year - no, make that 351 as he would have still wanted to have his two weeks fishing! John lived his life for the road and to play live on stage and I'm sure he would want us to be doing this as I know his family does.*

*My reason for doing what we are doing now, and it is going to take a lot of strength from everybody, is to celebrate John's life. It seems to me the best way is to play our music - the music he helped to create. The spirit of John Entwistle is intrinsically woven into every song we play. By playing our music I believe we can help ourselves and our fans grieve and begin to come to terms with our loss, huge as it is.*

*We have to accept that life has to go on. We are only a mirror image of our audience. They too lose people and try to move on with their lives and we have to do the same. It will never be the same, it will be different. But John is ingrained in those songs, and just as you can still hear Keith Moon in our live sound, you will still hear John. His spirit will be with us.*

*I take a leap into the unknown with a heavy heart but an open spirit and I thank the support and loyalty of all our friends, crew and fans.*

*Thinking back to the Concert for New York it proved to me once again what I have always believed - that music, of any kind, has the power to lift people out of their grief and earthly problems. I truly believe that.*

*I just hope that God has got his earplugs ready. Whatever happens he'll have to reinvent thunder as it simply won't be loud enough any more!*

*Roger Daltrey LA28 June 2002"*

I spoke to Pete to OK the statement and we talked long and frankly about what had happened and that he would decide whether the band continued or not. As the evening wore on things just seemed to get stranger and stranger. I received emails from some very well known bass players basically stating that they were ready to step in should they be required as well as requests from local radio stations for interviews to talk about John. With the book about to be released the publishers had put out press releases about it and people wanted to talk about Anyway Anyhow Anywhere and John but I just couldn't do it. I just left all that to Andy back home in London.

The next morning Nick Goderson and myself joined Pete and Nicola Joss (the EelPie contingent) for breakfast in Bel Air. Pete told us what he knew about events and that the tour would continue with Pino Palladino flying in to replace John on bass. At the time I was unsure personally about whether the band should continue, just as I was when Keith died but Pete had solid reasons for carrying on and I respected his strength in that situation. With hindsight I do believe that if Pete and Roger had decided to return home then that would have been the end of the band entirely.

Two days of rehearsals to get Pino up to speed were hastily arranged in a studio lot in Burbank for June 29 and 30<sup>th</sup>. I was asked not to film them, understandably, but did take some stills.





It was a very emotional weekend and everyone was drained, tired and deeply upset. In my website diary for June 29<sup>th</sup> I wrote the following:

*"Matt's Diary 29th June 2002*

*One of the things I wanted to do on this tour was to write a diary from my own perspective, which I feel is fairly unique. Obviously the first diary entry was planned for yesterday, when the band was due to open in Las Vegas. Events of 48 hours ago have changed all that. I'm still going to go ahead with writing about the tour though as best I can but it is a difficult time for everyone involved in the band from Pete and Roger, down to the guy who has tickets right in the very back row. So here's the first. I must point out that these diary entries are strictly my own opinion. They have not been pre-read, sanctioned or edited by anyone in The Who or their management.*

*Diary 1. Los Angeles June 29 2002.*

*I started out this piece by saying that I hope to provide a 'unique' insight into the machinery that goes into a tour like this. However, it's 5 am on Saturday morning and I'm typing in my hotel bed wondering what the hell to write - how very rock and roll (not!). That's not how it was planned. This was meant to be a joyous look at the band's opening night in Vegas. **'The Who a sure bet in Vegas'** the title would probably have read.*

*However, it's not joyous and it's not triumphant. If anything it'll probably be a story of a group of normal people united in grief at losing someone they love and just trying to get on with their jobs in the face of such pain.*

*This brings me neatly on to my own job and maybe I should start by explaining why I think I have a unique perspective here. Yeah, that's a good place to start (still don't know where it's going to finish though!). Over the past few years many Who fans have asked me directly (or via chatrooms) who*

*I am and how come I ended up with such a cushy number for a job (the term 'luckiest man in the world' is the latest one to be bandied about). Usually they are met with my stock reply - 'it doesn't really matter who I am, what matters is the band. I'm just doing a job.' And that really does sum up my view but, since I am setting myself up to be shot down here, perhaps it's time I nailed my colours to the mast and laid out my credentials. I am first and foremost a card carrying Who fan, have been since first seeing the band in 1971 at the age of 12. And at this moment in time I've never been prouder to be a Who fan.*

*From the moment I saw the band they changed my life. They spoke to me. Not to anyone else but to me. How many Who fans feel the same way? All of you, I bet. That's why they are such a great band. When Quadrophenia came out I was 14. I thought then 'why is this band writing about me? How come they know so much about me when I've never ever met them!' Of course what I didn't know at the time was that they were writing about us all. They have an uncanny knack in touching us all as individuals. From there my story is little different to most of yours. An insatiable hunger to see the band perform and to buy everything I could that they released (and even more that they never!). In the 90's, fed up with the lack of any sort of activity from the band and spurred on mainly by the indifference of the record companies to the bands rich back catalogue, I helped put together a couple of fan conventions in London. The first one saw Roger and John playing a storming set of Who classics in a tiny pub in Shepherd's Bush. From there I, along with Mark Donovan, set up the fanzine (and at the time 'semi' official fan club) 'Naked Eye.' I guess that's how I happen to be here today. The job offer hit me as a surprise and I can remember it word for word to this day. October 1998 and the first call on my new mobile phone. 'Hello, can I speak to Matt please.' 'Who is it?' 'It's Pete Townshend.' 'Yes, of course it is, who is it?' 'No, it's Pete Townshend.' After my doubting it a few more times and, I also seem to remember, throwing in a few expletives, it began to dawn on me that maybe it was Pete. 'Oh, hi Pete, what can I do for you?' like it was an everyday occurrence, 'I'm thinking of opening a website and was wondering if you'd like to run it?' After probably wasting a couple of pico seconds thinking about it I accepted and that's what brings me here today. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time.*

*Yes, it is a fantastic job and I am lucky but in the end it is a job and I like to think that I work hard doing what I do. Because I'm a huge fan who's now on the inside that's why I feel can offer a unique insight.*

*At the moment though it feels neither lucky nor fantastic. I'm mourning John both as a fan and as someone I knew. I would like to say we were friends. We spent many a happy hour together and I visited him quite a few times at his home. I'm sure we were friends but John knew many people in that way. He was that sort of geezer. He was approachable and caring. He is a star. What I'm surrounded by now in LA are his 'real' friends. People that have known*

him near enough all their lives and others who have known him for most of their adult lives. I'm hurting bad about John dying but I can't even begin to guess how Pete and Roger and his close friends and colleagues such as Bill, Cy, Bobby, Mick and John's techie Andy Field must feel.

I know a lot of discussion has gone on about the bands decision to carry on. I spent the whole of Thursday night debating with myself whether I thought they should, like it was in any way any of my business (goes back to that reaching out to us as individuals guys, we feel empowered!) and managed to engage myself in quite a lively discussion (if room service had come in at that time they would have wondered what was going on in that head) as to the pros and cons of both sides. I went to bed believing that they shouldn't carry on and woke up believing they should. That's still my view. I think the decision to carry on is a brave one and one I know that both Pete and Roger would have agonised over it. I think Roger's message last night summed it up perfectly - their relationships transcend friendship, it is something much greater than friendship. There was a bond between the three of them that needed no words. You only had to see them together to realise that. I really do believe that their reasoning for carrying on is right too. John, I think, would have wanted it. His mum and son know that too which is why they too support the decision. As a fan I respect that and will offer any support I can. I also respect Pete, Roger, Rabbit and Zak (and also Pino Palladino who must be in such a difficult position) as human beings. Make no mistake about this. The fact that they are going on stage on Monday does not make them cold uncaring people, far from it; I believe it shows their humanity. They have a lot of responsibilities to a lot of people here, not least the fans and I think it's incredibly brave what they are doing.

The newspapers, Internet and TV have been full of tributes to John. The best description I read was in yesterdays USA Today where he was described as 'The Temple of Anchored Watts'. So clever but also so true. Roger said that the band will be different. Of course it will. In my mind John will be missed even more so than Keith, but what greater tribute to John can there be than hearing his friends play the music he loved and contributed so greatly to? None. It will be strange on Monday, very strange. It will be emotional but I think (hope) cathartic also. I'm sure as the days pass Pete and Roger will say more about their friend. But I'm sure it's difficult and nobody should rush them for comments. I thought Roger was particularly brave when he rang me last night to talk about putting something on the site. Both of us were choked trying to put it together on the phone. Andy Neill and myself had a book published on The Who virtually the day John died. On Friday morning, in the wake of John's death, I was contacted and asked whether I would appear on a few radio and TV spots to talk about John. I couldn't. I hadn't been gagged or anything, I just couldn't do it. Maybe in a few days I could but not at that moment.

*Both Andy and Myself got our first copies of the book while the band were in rehearsals in London. We were of course eager to show it off to the band and get our copies signed. Both were duly signed and in Andy's copy John prophetically wrote 'I hope it has an happy ending.' Like Roger said yesterday I can begin to look back on that now and start to smile. I'm sure John would be smiling at that too. Rock and roll is about the music and not the lifestyle but I'd like to think that given the choice he went as he would have wanted to. My own thoughts go out to Queenie, Christopher and Lisa. All of them have been very kind to me and they have my best wishes.*

*Pete, Roger, John and Keith have always been my heroes. I first 'met' Roger, Pete and John in 1975, not that they would remember anything about it, and I was lucky enough to have met Keith a month or so before he died. During those 30 or so years as a fan I've had both good and bad times with the band. I'm 43 now and probably too old to have heroes but for some reason I don't feel that way. John and Keith will always be my heroes now, never to be taken away. Pete and Roger have gone way past that stage for me now. I can't begin to express the respect I have for what they are doing.*

*I wish Pino all the best. He's been called in at the last minute to help the tour continue. Can you imagine being in such an unenviable position? I can't. I think Monday night will see a new chapter begin but I don't for one second think it will be an attempt to close an old one. John, like Keith, will not be forgotten. He lived for music and I for one will be at the Bowl on Monday (albeit in my 'rarefied' position at the front of stage) celebrating the music he lived for. Roger said yesterday about his belief that music can help lift people's spirits. In Lifehouse Pete wrote about the power of music to unite. For a group that can touch us all so individually there is also this underlying call for us to unite in congregation. Now is the time.*

*Matt"*

I can remember every second of the 4 days before the band hit the stage on July 1<sup>st</sup>. They are painfully etched into my subconscious and writing this now brings back some very strong emotions. My diary after the second day of rehearsals on June 30<sup>th</sup> shows that I think:

*Matt's Diary 30th June 2002 Updated.....again*

*Diary 2. LA 30th June 2002*

*Even though I was only at rehearsals to photograph the proceedings I really feel drained. God knows how it must have felt to those in the band. Yesterday in particular was difficult, today things eased a bit.*

*Pino, being the guy he is, slipped into his groove early on and is undoubtedly a good choice. It felt strange early on but the magic in the songs is still there. Pete and Roger are still there. Zak and Rabbit are still there.*

*It's difficult to describe my feelings but photos speak better at this point in time and here's a few snaps I took over the past couple of days. There's some better quality ones coming along, which I'll post when I can. Hopefully there'll be some up of the show either during or quite soon afterwards.*

*Have had loads of emails from people. Thanks. Sorry if they don't get answered but it's been an incredibly busy couple of days leading up to tomorrow night's show.*

*I'll try and get some shots up in the morning before I leave for the gig.*

*If you're going along tomorrow I hope you're able to enjoy it. It IS good to hear the music played. I've heard it over the past two days and it has helped me, particularly today.*

*Matt*

Over the weekend of rehearsals I had asked Pete if we could put together a video tribute to John which would play out to his version of 'Mr Bassman'. Pete didn't think it was a good idea but during soundcheck at the Hollywood Bowl on showday he said to go ahead if there was time to get a video together, without the soundtrack. Together with the video editor at the Bowl we worked, scanning images of John from Anyway Anyhow Anywhere and anywhere else we could get photos to put together a short tribute which was to be shown at the end of the show.



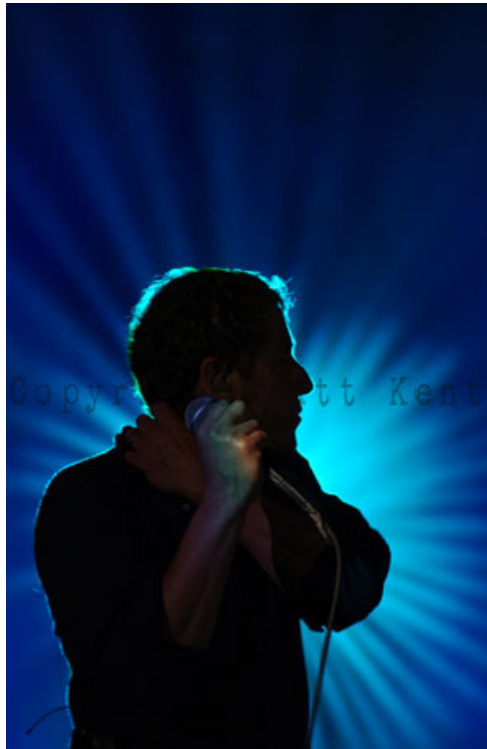


The soundcheck went well and show time just seemed to come and go in no time at all. I think everyone was just relieved to get it out of the way. The audience reaction was just amazing. Looking back on the video that was posted on Pete's website where the crowd perform a mass singalong to the 'Listening To You' finale is really emotional. At the end of the show, when Pete and Roger embraced you could see

the bond of blood and brotherhood that Roger had spoken about in his statement a few days earlier.

As the band left the stage the audience, every one of them I'm sure, stayed and paid tribute to John as the video screens played the images of him that had been put together earlier that day. Roger summed up the feeling by announcing 'Live every moment of your lives' before being dragged off by Pete.





I can remember having a surreal moment soon after the gig finished where I just sat down in exhaustion in one of the many corridors that tunnel under the Hollywood Bowl to see a shuffling figure come towards me, almost ethereally. "Hello, how are you?" asked a strange, almost puppet like, Brian Wilson. "'I'm very well Brian" I replied, "You?". "Yes, thank you" he responded and without ever stopping he just went on his shuffling way past me. Might not seem that surreal now but at that stage, with no one else around it was! Back at the hotel I intended to post a review and photos onto Pete's website but to be honest I remember just crashing out. The following morning I managed to put something on the site:

*Matt's Diary 2nd July 2002*

*Diary 4 LA 2nd July 2002*

*The morning after the night before.*

*I know that I said that I would try and post something straight after the show but to be honest a combination of tiredness and the need to reflect properly sunk in. As I said in my first diary, I thought the decision by the band to carry on was a correct one. For me last night further backed that up.*

*It was an emotional night - lots of JAE t shirts in evidence in the crowd - from the very beginning when the JBL promo film started showing scenes from the London rehearsals with John. Interviewing John. It was strange, because I was there when the filming took place and it took me into a different place again. I didn't feel sad though, and I don't mean that I didn't feel sad that John wasn't with us, of course I did, but I didn't feel sad that we were all together doing this. It felt the only thing that we could have done.*

*As for the set I've posted some fan reviews under the news pages. It was a good show. The band were charged and considering that they had only rehearsed with Pino for two days they were sharp. On the subject of Pino I've only one thing to say. At one point Pete pointed to the ceiling of the Hollywood Bowl and remarked on the size of the balls. Pino's must be bigger! The guy was just a massive display of professionalism.*

*The tour goes on now and we move up to the Shoreline tomorrow.*

*Matt*

TBC. Edited excerpts taken from a much, much longer piece.

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