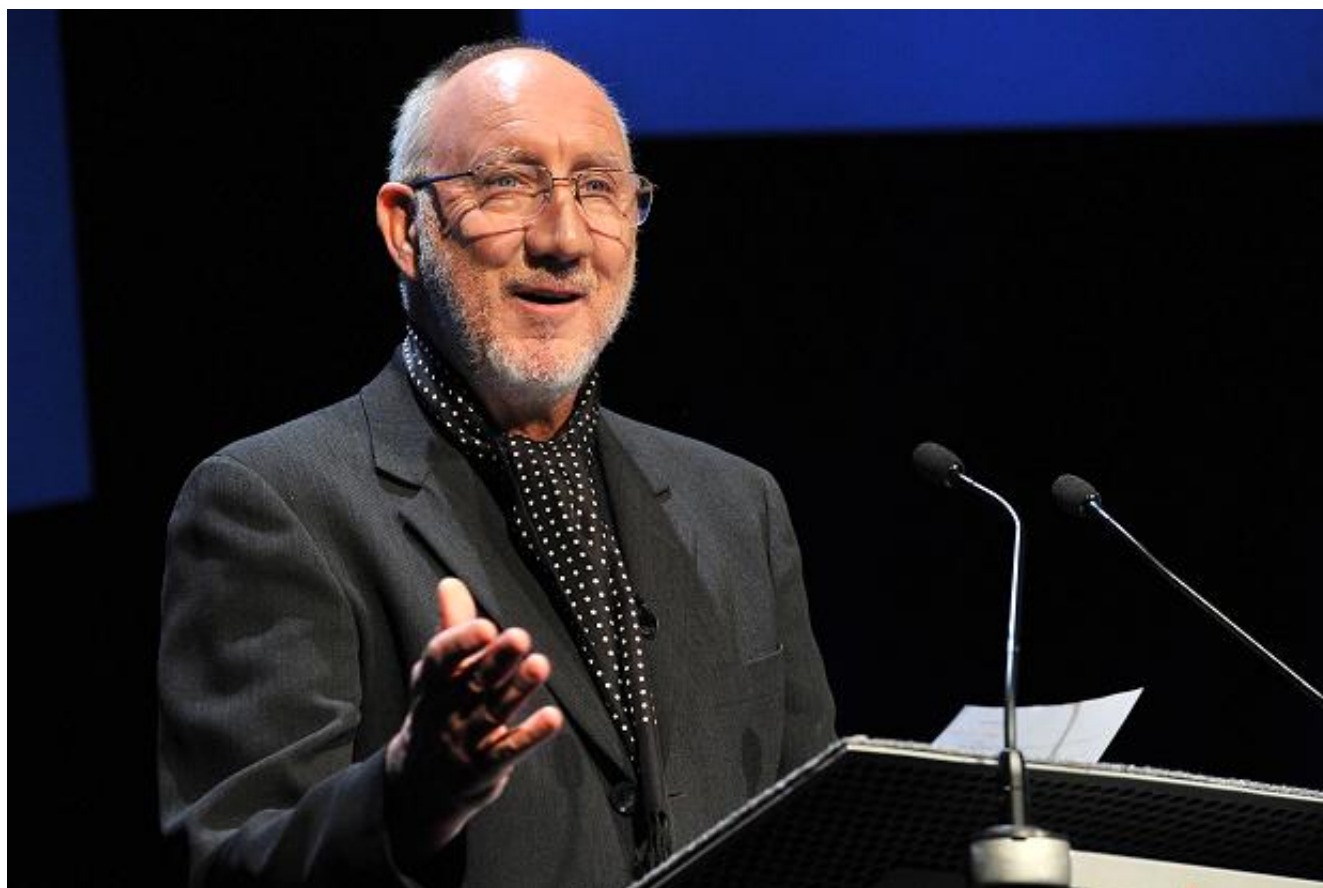


THE  TIMES

Townshend riffs on why 'digital vampire' iTunes needed a session with John Peel



Pete Townshend called on Apple to 'nurture' musicians rather than 'bleed them dry' Mark Allan/BBC

Russell Jenkins

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Even without his trademark Fender Stratocaster, it was never likely to be a quiet affair. Pete Townshend, one of rock's most opinionated men, used the inaugural John Peel Lecture to make a cry from the heart for musicians everywhere struggling in the internet age.

The Who guitarist, who once said that he would like to cut off Steve Jobs's balls, called on Apple to start nurturing the next generation of music artists rather than sucking them dry.

But while he has long complained that digital file-sharing is equivalent to theft, Townshend was in a more constructive mood as he spoke to an audience on the eve of the Radio Festival conference last night in Salford.

He invoked the spirit of the late BBC disc jockey as he called on iTunes, Apple's music-

publishing arm, to start investing in the kind of services once offered by the dying record business.

They could start, suggested Townshend, by employing 20 A&R people to identify and encourage raw talent. "Have them respond to tracks sent in from new artists," he said.

"If they feel the artists are bad, or aren't ready, say so. But have them tell the truth, kindly and constructively. Guide them to other helpful resources, don't just send them to the wolves of blogland, where it seems to me a lot of the vilest bile comes from people who could be drunk, or just nuts. Apple do already have backroom people assessing what is hot, but they don't have this kind of power. I'll bet they would love it — 20 John Peels inside Apple. Imagine it."

The songwriter, who helped to develop the rock opera with *Tommy* and *Quadrophenia*, harked back to a time when the traditional music-publishing industry offered new bands guidance, financial support and creative nurturing as well as simply publishing and marketing their records.

New bands today can look only to iTunes to guarantee the distribution of their music and the payment of royalties, he said. "Is there really any good reason why [iTunes] cannot provide some aspect of these services to the artists whose work it bleeds like a digital vampire?"

In addition to the small army of A&R men, Townshend said that Apple could provide free computers and music software to 500 artists each year and then offer training and back-up. They should also offer a place on iTunes where the artists could share their music, "like a local radio station", and help to protect copyright.

The guitarist suggested that iTunes could market a selected number of artists or go farther by licensing bestselling musicians to record companies, bookshops or retailers willing to create goods you can "hold in your hands and give for birthdays, Christmas or Diwali". Finally, he said, iTunes should pay even small artists directly".

"Musicians need to be heard, to be judged, if possible to be paid, but also allowed to believe they had more than a single chance to get a hit. Software systems that offer this model will survive and prevail," Townshend said.

He called on the BBC to rise to the challenge by setting aside resources to "sidestep editorial censorship and give the listeners the kind of licence they got when they tuned into John Peel".

Peel's discoveries

Pulp A very nervous teenage Jarvis Cocker built up the courage to thrust a copy of Pulp's demo tape into Peel's hand in 1981, when Peel was doing a DJ slot at Sheffield Polytechnic. He promised to "give it a listen on the drive home". A few weeks later Cocker and the rest of the band were in the studio for their first Peel session. Then they wallowed in obscurity

for the next decade.

The White Stripes John Peel famously attempted to listen to everything that was sent to him, but it was the cover of the Detroit duo's album, spotted in a record shop in the Netherlands, that intrigued him. "I just liked the look of it," said Peel, shortly before his death. "You develop an instinct."

Extreme Noise Terror After taking his wife and son to the Caribbean Club in Ipswich to see this anarchist/ militant vegetarian punk band with songs clocking in at about the 30-second mark, Peel offered them four sessions on his show. They later played on his lawn during an afternoon tea party at his Suffolk home.

The Fall "Always the same, always different," Peel said of Mark E. Smith's unclassifiable band, whose music he championed from 1978 until his death. Peel owned more records by The Fall than any other band, but he and Smith always kept a respectful distance. "We were never friends or anything like that," Smith said on Peel's death. "He was always objective."

The Undertones Famously, *Teenage Kicks* by the Belfast punk band was Peel's favourite song. "I think I want 'teenage dreams, so hard to beat' on my gravestone," Peel stated on his *Home Truths* radio show on Radio 4. In accordance with his wishes, his gravestone in Bury St Edmunds is engraved with the lyric.

The Smiths The series of sessions The Smiths recorded for John Peel proved even better than their first album, prompting the release of *Hatful of Hollow*, which, though a compilation of sorts, is now regarded as the classic Smiths album. "We would try out new songs on the Peel sessions," said Johnny Marr, the Manchester band's guitarist, "and these often were the definitive version."

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