

Tommy - The Movie

Tommy - The Movie Tommy is the most recent rock opera that has been made into a movie. It was written and performed live in England by its creators, the Who, in 1969, and now it promises to be one of the biggest motion pictures of 1975.

The story begins when young Tommy goes deaf, dumb and blind from witnessing his widowed mother with another man. As Tommy grows older, despite his handicaps, he becomes amazingly good at pinball. The Pinball Wizard, who has never been beaten at the game by anyone, is defeated by Tommy, who challenged him.

Tommy becomes a star - a pinball messiah, who in the end, lets his followers down.

Tommy, the star of the show, is portrayed by the Who's own Roger Daltrey. Ann-Margret plays his mother Nora; and her lover, Frank Hobbs, is played by Oliver Reed. The Pinball Wizard is superstar Elton John, while guitar extraordinaire Eric Clapton plays the preacher. The renowned Tina Turner is the Acid Queen, who sends Tommy on an LSD trip.

The Who's drummer, Keith Moon, takes the role of Uncle Ernie and Paul Nicholas plays Cousin Kevin. Both mistreat Tommy because he is a freak and has no way to expose them. The Specialist, Jack Nicholson, is the doctor hired to cure Tommy, and the narrator is the Who's writer, Pete Townshend. With a cast like that, Tommy can be nothing but good.

Perhaps the most spectacular scene in the movie is the "beans and suds scene" featuring Ann-Margret. She is in a drunk stupor and becomes angry upon seeing Tommy on television. She hurls her champagne bottle through the huge TV screen. Soap bubbles pour from it and she is enveloped in them. The suds are soon replaced by a

surge of baked beans. She is covered by them. The soap and beans are meant to represent the waste of commercial products.

Another outstanding scene is when the Pinball Wizard accepts the challenge from Tommy. He appears on three-foot high shoes and competes with Tommy on pinball machines. In his only scene in the movie, Elton puts on an amazing performance. His song - "Pinball Wizard," of course.

Ever since I was a young boy
I've played the silver ball.
From Soho down to Brighton
I must have played them all.
I ain't seen nothin' like him
in any amusement hall.
That deaf, dumb and blind kid
sure plays a mean pinball.

- written by Pete Townshend

Which brings us to the soundtrack album. The soundtrack version of Tommy has four songs added to the originals from the stage version. "Champagne," the song which is sung during the "beans and suds scene" is a new one. "Mother and Son" is a duet between Tommy and Nora, his mother.

Two others are "Deceived" and "Bernie's Holiday Camp." Two of the best of the redone songs are "Acid Queen" sung by Tina Turner, and Elton John's version of "Pinball Wizard." No one can say the soundtrack is better than the original album done completely by the Who, for each person has his own opinion. It does, however, give the original some stiff competition.

Roger Daltry is planning to record a solo album and also is planning to be in another movie where he will portray a 19th century

musical renegade. He doesn't want people to typecast him as Tommy. He remarks, "...I don't want people to say I'm Tommy, 'cause I bloody well ain't." He has to admit, though, for someone who never acted before Tommy, he did a pretty good job with it.

The movie Tommy is different. It's psychedelic in places, it's animated in places, but the most significant difference is that not a single word is spoken during the entire movie. It's all song - all hard rock music. It's a rock opera and a very extraordinary one at that!