

Blu-ray Review: Perfect Criterion Package for Essential 'Quadrophenia'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 12, 2012 - 1:37pm

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CHICAGO – Social history is often the seed for actual history. The simple story of two youth gangs in England in the early 1960s – The Mods and The Rockers – is grist for the incredible social history film, "Quadrophenia." The new Criterion Collection Blu-ray DVD release of this 1979 classic will satisfy any side of the ardent rock admirer, especially those of the magnificent rock group "The Who" – the film is based on their lesser known 1973 rock opera of the same name.



Blu-Ray Rating: **5.0/5.0**

This was originally produced by The Who Films, and The Criterion Collection creates a lavish package with background information and the history of the clash between the mid-1960s British youth of "The Mods" – a clean cut style associated with the music of "The Who, as well as soul, R&B and the Mersey Beat – and "The Rockers," who favored more of the direct, Marlon-Brando-in-"The-Wild-One" motorcycles and 1950s rock. Although the film is about that in the background, it actually focuses on the overall theme of disaffection in that transitional youth-to-adult period. That theme is so beautifully composed by director Franc Roddam that it ranks as one of the top disaffected youth movies of all time.



Jimmy (Phil Daniels, Left) and Dave (Mark Wingett) in 'Quadrophenia'
Photo credit: The Criterion Collection

The focus is on the character of Jimmy (Phil Daniels), who is a London Mod. He works in the mail room at an advertising company, and is at

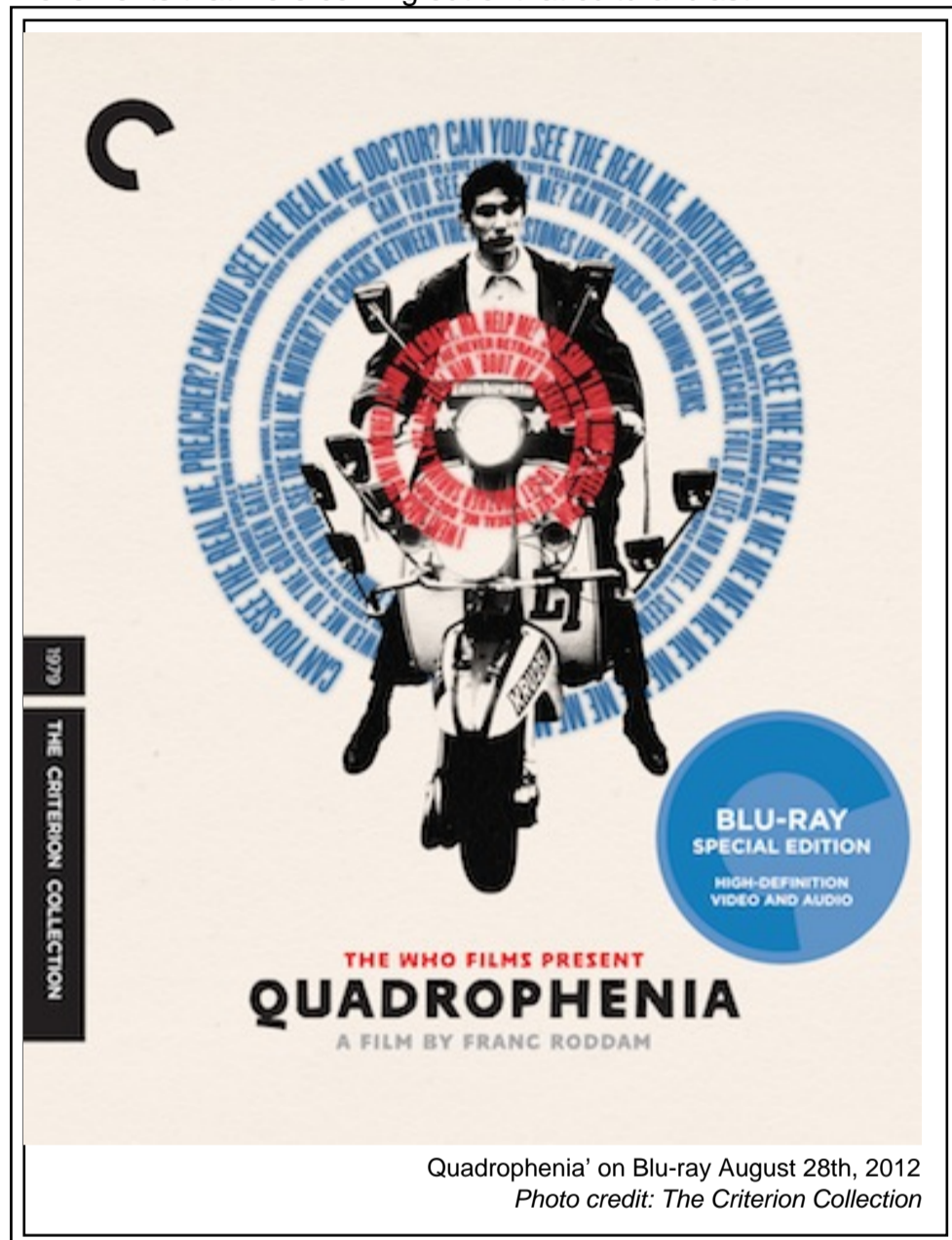
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odds with his parents in the small middle-class flat they live in. His escape is with his Mod friends, including Dave (Mark Wingett) and Chalky (Phillip Davis). They hang out, looking for carnal co-mingling, and fights with the rival Rockers. Jimmy also has his sights on Stephanie (Leslie Ash), a Mod bird who seems like his ideal.

A bank holiday allows for potential riots, as both the Mods and the Rockers converge on Brighton, a seaside resort. Jimmy begins a separation from the life he knows there, when he encounters the ultimate Mod, named Ace Face (Sting). It all starts to unravel as Jimmy is arrested during the inevitable street fighting that develops at Brighton, and his separation continues from his parents, his job and his sweetheart crush on Steph.

The film is authentic, and is not a musical like The Who's previous rock opera film adaptation, "Tommy." The songs from the original opera serve as commentary, rather brilliant commentary in the way director Roddam melds them in the narrative. The cast projects the image of the Mods and Rockers of 1965 London with an ease of effort, and although (for example) Sting has a rather one-note role, he plays it to the hilt, especially when his secret identity is revealed. There is a feeling of The Beatle-era London of the mid-1960s, and the various youth movements that were coming out of that cultural blast.



Buried beneath the rivalry between The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, The Who has a sensibility that endures as long, if not longer (if history will play them out). The songs of "Quadrophenia" are a mature set of emotions and thoughts, looking back only a mere eight years after the height of the Mod-and-Rocker era. Familiar songs include "5:15," "The Real Me" and the fantastic anthem, "Love, Reign o'er Me." This is a must-have for fans of "The Who," with the holidays fast approaching, go and grab it for them.

One of the most admirable uses of the narrative is the fact that it's really not about the Mods and Rockers, it's about Jimmy. English culture is so stiff upper lipped, that even the most punked-out young Brit of any era likes his/her teatime. Multiply that attitude by a million in the middle-class environs of the time – while The Beatles, Stones and The Who were breaking out – and it's a powder keg lit up by the generational divide between parents and youth. There is a great scene where Jimmy keeps turning up the volume on The Who's appearance on the British rock show, "Ready, Steady, Go!" While Dad makes fun of it, Jimmy has a red-hot blaze in his eyes. Phil Daniels was perfect in the role.

The immense and exceptional Blu-ray and DVD packages includes a 36-page companion booklet about the film, a perfectly restored film with a new 5.1 Surround Sound mix (get out your ya-ya's), an audio track featuring the director Roddam and a documentary package that includes interviews, a 1979 British TV show about the film and vintage newsreels of the actual point-in-time when The Mods and The Rockers were the real deal.

There is such an achingly poignant piece of symbolism at the end of the film, that it should be honored as one of the great cinematic conclusions of all time. "Quadrophenia" is a film that needs to be re-discovered, discovered and savored by all generations, and The Criterion Collection provides the Blu-ray and DVD package that is an honor and tribute to both The Who and the cinematic interpretation of their time-honored rock opera.

"Quadrophenia" was released on Blu-ray and DVD by The Criterion Collection on August 28th. Featuring Phil Daniels, Leslie Ash, Ray Winstone, Mark Wingett, Phillip Davis and Sting. Screenplay by Dave Humphries, Martin Stellman and Franc Roddam. Directed by Franc Roddam. Rated "R"



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By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [20]

Senior Staff Writer

HollywoodChicago.com

pat@hollywoodchicago.com [19]

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