

**This interview with
ROGER DALTREY
was conducted by the Library of Congress
on May 17, 2023**



Roger Daltrey

Library of Congress: A lot of people can sing and a lot of people can get up on a stage but very few can front a massive rock band for well over 50 years. What do you think it takes to front a band like that?

Roger Daltrey: Complete desperation, I think!

Also, when we started, when we were young, England in such bad shape. So much of London was leveled, was still leveled. And all we had was dreaming of making it in America and being like Elvis. So a lot of desperation, that's what you had to have, this belief that you were going to make it big.

But there's also a discipline that I think a lot of people don't take into account. There's a dedication, too, not just a rebellion. It demands a focus that you have to have.

LC: Along with Elvis, you and your bandmates seemed to have been heavily influenced by various Black American soul singers like Bo Diddley and James Brown. Why do you think you connected with them so strongly?

RD: Oh, because they were just like us! They were coming from a place of desperation and being at the bottom, underneath, and so were we.

LC: Is there a moment when you knew you made it?

RD: The funny thing is is that you never really know when you've made it, I don't think. Even now, when I sing any song no matter how many times I have sung it before, I like to sing it like I'm singing it for the very first time. Like I've never sung it before. I have to bring a freshness to it. I have to... Music is all we had back then. It was so much more important to us back then, it was our lives, much more important than it is to kids today.

LC: You think so?

RD: I do. We didn't have all the other stuff that kids do today. We just had the music.

We had all these blank walls to write our names on and make our marks but now there's no more "blank walls."

LC: Difficult though it might be to choose, do you have a favorite track from the "My Generation" album?

RD: It's been so long, I don't even remember what's on that album...

LC: "Out in the Street," "I Don't Mind," "My Generation"—

RD: Oh! I like "Out in the Street." Oh, yes, it's all coming back to me now.

Well, the one I like the best is the one that I didn't sing the lead on! That's "A Legal Matter"—which Pete sings and which I think is about me as I was going through a divorce at the time and I think Pete wrote it about that.

LC: Is it about you?

RD: You'll have to ask Pete!

LC: Many albums by the Who have endured among rock fans and Who fans. Why do you think this one—"The Who Sings My Generation"—occupies such a special place with people and within the culture?

RD: We were so new. And it's who we were. And we brought all that it but, also, again, discipline to it.

And being VERY LOUD—I think we were the first band to really bring up the need for volume to rock and let people know that we weren't an end of the pier band, not a typical pub band....

You know, to be added to the Library of Congress. It is a great honor. Now, actually, I feel like I've made it!