

WHEN Pete Townshend goes on stage at Brixton Academy tonight he'll be playing with his new band (though it's possible they'll never get together again after the second show tomorrow), and performing songs from his forthcoming album that feature in his forthcoming film. And the main purpose of the concerts is to raise money for his Double O Anti-Heroin Campaign.

The shows, in which Pete will be joined by a horn section and the Pink Floyd guitarist Dave Gilmour, will be financial success — they are being taped and sold to America for nearly half-a-million dollars. "So it's a bitter irony," said Townshend, "that I'm having great difficulty selling the tickets. The hard truth is that I've greatly neglected playing in this country, as did The Who, so it's a bit tricky to just show up and do a charity."

Townshend promises "an extremely anarchic programme, a strange mixture, and a reflection of how frustrated I've been on stage for a long time." He will be playing acoustic "and the one brief I've set myself is that I won't play one power chord!"

There will be a few Who songs, from Won't Get Fooled Again to the more obscure Mary Anne With The Shakey Hand, songs from the forthcoming film and album such as the pending, bluesy Second-Hand Love, and a batch of jazzy material. So there will be "a Mingus tune, a Miles Davis song, and a Sun Ra song, Down In The Ghetto You Ain't Got A Pot To Piss In." He feels that his voice has "improved massively" and so promises to include I Put A Spell On You "that will put it under a microscope."

Playing jazz material has, he said, been an exercise in "delicious nostalgia. I was trying to work out what I was getting out of it, why I exploded into life whenever the band started to do a swinging back-beat, and I realised it's in my blood. It goes back to when I was three or four. Pete's father Cliff played alto sax with the



Pete Townshend: "effective use of power"

**Pete Townshend tells Robin Denslow
about his own live aid**

For Pete's sake

Forties dance band, The Squadronaires.

There is more nostalgia in Townshend's 40-minute film *White City*, which will be on sale as a video in a fortnight. Directed by Australian Richard Lowenstein, it's about life on the bleak West London estate involving Townshend visiting an old friend there.

The idea came from "my nostalgia for that particular

place. I used to go to the dog-track with my father. In the story, I go back and find that what's happening there now is very different."

He intended the film to be a "24-hour walk around the area, set to music. It was to be a set of visual-poetic cameos and I hoped the music and images would say everything. I had a script, but it was very surreal. I saw it as a Nighthawks, Mean Streets kind of thing."

He spent a day walking around the area and videotaping things that happened and people he met, and from this evolved his idea of the central character, Jim, and Townshend's view of the estate. It is, he said, "a model fortress, with everything that's currently wrong with Britain, but at the same time an illustration of the potential, ambitions and aspirations which ordinary people have."

Lowenstein added much of the narrative and the result has odd similarities with *Quadrophenia* and *Tommy*. Townshend said it was intended to be *Quadrophenia* Part Two — looking at what happened to Jim, who had stayed in West London while he had escaped through his music.

The money from the Brixton shows will go to Double O, his heroin charity that aims to build a 40-bed clinic on the outskirts of London. He hopes it will combine the detoxification programmes of Dr Meg Patterson (who helped Townshend and other singers get off heroin) with rehabilitation programmes "for that's the difficulty, getting former addicts back into

The clinic would cost around £1 million a year to run, and Townshend would like to get Government funding and involve the Youth Training Scheme, using young volunteers to help the rehabilitation. Eventually, he hopes, the clinic might be abandoned and small units set up attached to major hospitals.

Townshend said that he spends a third of his life on the telephone. It's a more effective use of the power that a nose have than writing a song, particularly about something like heroin.

Townshend sees the new wave of pop idealism as reminiscent of the Sixties. "But it's better organised and better pursued. Where we vested our power before was in our ability to touch people's hearts and I think you look back and realise that none of it created any political or social change. Pop music uplifts and focuses attention, but it's a light art form that's there to keep people happy. When it gets down to doing things, you have to get on the phone and actually do it."

So had Live Aid helped him with Double O? "Definitely. There was this feeling after Live Aid that we can influence people and if we can't influence them then we can do it ourselves."