

'All movements are accomplished in six stages, and the seventh brings return. Thus the winter solstice, with which the decline of the year begins, comes in the seventh month after the summer solstice. So too sunrise comes in the seventh double hour after sunset. Seven is the number of the young light, and it arises when six, the number of the great darkness, is increased by one. In this way, the state of rest gives place to movement. In winter the life energy, symbolized by thunder, the Arousing, is still underground. Movement is just at its beginning.'

I Ching: Book of Changes

Chapter 24: Fû/Return – The Turning Point

Richard Wilhelm, translator, 1950

Thanks to Blackhill Enterprises, Pink Floyd started receiving significant mainstream media coverage. Jenner and King, for all their managerial inexperience, had an immediate knack for getting their boys into print. Music weekly spreads led to features in fashion and lifestyle magazines *Queen* and *Town*.

In London, Pink Floyd had built a cult following without releasing a single. On 5 January, at their Marquee mini-residency, Joe Boyd brought Chris Beard of underground jug band the Purple Gang to meet them in the tiny dressing room. As Syd wailed on 'Astronomy Dominé' Beard recalled the oil-wheel light show and the pilot lights on Binson units blinking in the dark. Under the candy-striped awning, they found mods stood stock-still in silence, getting their heads around this new music. *Record Mirror* reported: 'Excellent and extremely exciting, but I couldn't help thinking how dangerous this free-form thing could be in the hands of not such good musicians.'

The first British band to have an integral visual unit, Pink Floyd's underground following increased by bounds. The visuals often eclipsed Pink Floyd, blending sight and sound into a multimedia spectacle. Punters raved in the glowing lightshow, while journalists wrote enthusiastically from the side-lines, free publicity. Like Andy Warhol's *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, their stage show met with irritation and awe out on the road.

Nik Cohn wrote in *Queen*: 'Thumping, crashing and guitar screeching all signified intensity and musical explosion... After twenty minutes, I left. The Pink Floyd at this stage are too cerebral by half. I would like to see them produce a better-balanced, more varied act. I would like to see them project a bit more sex.'

Pete Sears of mod band *Les Fleur de Lys* was stood at the back. He told *Terrascopie*: 'This strange atmosphere with weird lights and surrealistic music swirling, with the first oil lightshow I'd ever seen. Willing to live dangerously and on the edge, the experience had profound effect. After seeing Pink Floyd, I became discontent with *Les Fleur de Lys*.'

Waters, ambitious to expand the scope of the band's shows, complained, 'We want complete audience participation. You just don't get it at the Marquee. Not just lights flashing on us but on the audience as well. We could get a theatre and all the proper equipment. We could go to pure abstraction with sound and light or complete illustration, pure evocation: like playing to a vase of flowers.'

Bands hustled to the venue a half-hour before show time with no sound checks, plugged into amplifiers with microphones going through the club's public-address system. Bands worked twice as hard to get half the impact, as PA systems constantly undermined them. Volume, at the expense of subtlety, became Pink Floyd's tool in saturating venues.

Syd now played through Selmer hundred-watt Stereomaster amplifier heads with saturated overdrive, and intense harmonic distortion. The pounding one-hundred-and twenty-decibel impact aside, Barrett was shouting and not getting through, one reason the band

improvised, rather than tackle set songs. Despite a thirst to become pop stars, their stubborn refusal to play three-minute songs was clear from the start. Pink Floyd made no effort to ingratiate with onstage banter. Audiences had to accept the group on their own terms.

Peter Whitehead was hard at work on a film travelogue of Swinging London. With sixteen millimetre Éclair camera, boom mike and Nagra tape recorder, his inspiration stemmed from Allen Ginsberg's poem 'Who Be Kind'.

'My inspirations were protest movements, life, and everything,' explains Whitehead. 'Everything was exciting; expanding and imploding in all directions.'

The film took on a life of its own, as all good works do. 'The film began as a documentary of Swinging London and instead focused on the underground. Hard to make two films at once but I tried. For me the underground was closer to my whole life. The wider scene I filmed tongue-in-cheek.' Aside from film and art icons Julie Christie, David Hockney and Michael Caine, Whitehead captured the psychedelic underground at UFO.

Whitehead's *Wholly Communion* boiled the momentous poetry-reading event to an incisive thirty-three-minute film. Impressed, Rolling Stones manager Andrew Loog Oldham offered Whitehead £2,000 to film the group's August 1965 Irish tour, resulting in *Charlie is My Darling*, the first rock-tour road documentary.

Working from Soho with Anthony Stern as assistant director and soundman, they filmed music videos, or 'pop promos', for Oldham's Immediate Records. At the Marquee, Whitehead filmed the first promo for the Jimi Hendrix Experience ('Hey Joe'), and followed the Rolling Stones to New York. His film for 'Have You Seen Your Mother, Baby, Standing in the Shadow?' saw the group in drag, with Brian Jones outstanding as a particularly slutty stewardess.

Whitehead shared a flat with Stern, who got a grant to film *San Francisco*, a fifteen minute jump-cut collage, capturing the doomed momentum of Haight-Ashbury. Pink Floyd's October 1966 version of 'Interstellar Overdrive' served as soundtrack.

Whitehead recounted to documentary maker Paul Cronin that Stern said, 'Do you remember Syd Barrett and the boys?' Whitehead replied, 'Yeah, terrible music wafting through my door.'

'No, no, they're successful now, they're playing in London,' said Stern. 'Let's go and see them tomorrow, it'll be great.'

The pair caught Pink Floyd at the Royal College of Art on a double bill with AMM. 'So we went along. "Hey, I'm Peter Whitehead, I remember you." I went to UFO and I liked them. Not connected to pop music, a long improvisatory quality, ideal for what I wanted.'

I persuaded them to go into a recording studio. I wanted “Interstellar Overdrive”, perfect music for my film.’ At UFO, Whitehead met Jenny Spires. ‘I had an affair with Jenny,’ he reveals, ‘still with Syd, though already out of touch.’ Jenny insisted that Whitehead film the band, and he offered them £85, an important boost to their paltry funds.



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On 11 January, after a rare rehearsal, Pink Floyd drove to Sound Techniques Studio. Geoff Frost and John Wood, two brilliant engineers in their mid-twenties had launched the studio in frustration at the ‘twee and dull’ British facilities – acoustically dead rooms with zero spatial dynamics. In a converted dairy with high ceilings, the engineers installed a simple but efficient limiter, compressors and echo plate, with a self-built mixing desk.

Whitehead and Stern filmed as Joe Boyd and engineer John Wood worked the faders. On ‘Interstellar Overdrive’ Barrett played a Danelectro 3021 with curving black-and-white pick guard and rosewood fret board through a new silver Baby Binson unit. A cheap American Masonite guitar, the Danelectro shorthorn double-cutaway had a

twanging ring and brittle bite from pick-ups inside metal lipstick tubes. The new Binson still accessed twelve echoes for complex multi-tap effects. It had shorter echo, sustained swell, hard slap-back echo and echo repeats. Notching up the input for overdrive, Syd gingerly adjusted the unit.

Whitehead says, ‘I agreed to pay for the session so I could have music for my film. I decided to run off a roll of film and ended using five seconds in the film! They did “Interstellar Overdrive” in one take and did not want to do it a second time. As I had booked and paid for two hours, they agreed to do an improvisation just for fun they called “Nick’s Boogie”, as Mason led the music from the start, mood especially. “Nick’s Boogie” was a pure improvisation spontaneously, for me, to fill up time. I said I liked it so it was included in my contract.’

A rare glimpse into the Floyd's germinal music, this studio footage highlights the group chemistry. Syd sits on a stool, with his Danelectro and Baby Binson, Esquire propped along the wall like a silver axe, flanked by Rick Wright at Farfisa Combo-Compact Organ and Binson Echorec 2, and Waters and Mason on the right.

A fifth of whisky helped, they drank half during the recording. Barrett, for his part, got mightily stoned. Although the band's focal point, Barrett is deep inside his music, head bobbing in autistic rhythm. Mason, in purple turtleneck and pudding-bowl haircut, rode cymbals and kept time without fuss. Wright tweaked the Binson tone control for sharp, piercing tremolo notes far from the Farfisa in surf or garage rock. Playing clustered sustained chords in the lower register, with patent modal runs, Wright switched strings, flute and bass voice tabs with multi-tone booster on.



Pink Floyd's core sound stemmed from Wright as much as Barrett, often matching Syd note for sustained note. Jenner explained to author John Cavanagh: 'The Farfisa pedal notes and sustaining chords Rick used combined with echoes from Syd, who was much more sparkly.'

'Interstellar Overdrive' proved full of twists, subtle nuance, and order under illusory chaos. Mason and Waters locked into a driving one-chord groove while Wright played chords and arpeggios. At eight minutes in, they begin to meander, as Barrett and Wright head into the sonic ether, blasting into the firmament, Waters and Mason stay in the boiler room driving them on. Roger Waters's bass anchored the song, with blunt chords providing thumping

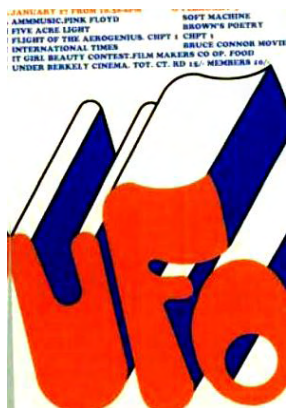
drama. Waters tuned the E on his Rickenbacker down to D, giving his chords a punishing bottom end. When Barrett floated adrift in improvisational space, or Wright's aerodyne modes wandered, Waters constantly pulled them back to the tonic.

Waters stood impassive, playing with marked intensity, though his composure slipped towards the end of the seventeen-minute take. Bending to tell Barrett to wind it up, they raced to a finish, with Waters's bass bringing leaden resolution; he throttled his instrument as though yanking a punt oar from river mud, an aggression essential to the band dynamic. Some recoiled, one Floyd associate says, 'That film session was appalling. Roger was getting stars in his eyes, so it fell apart. Roger strangling his bass would have been performance rather than music making. Syd could be relaxed and uninhibited in a way none of the others could. To that extent, he was different. I don't remember seeing any of them moving in any situation, apart from Roger doing his funny thing, studied and not spirited.' Decades later, Waters admitted that he adopted a hard-man pose for fear of being exposed. At the time, his scowling left many cold.

For all their talk about how they improved as musicians in intervening decades, this was the raw Pink Floyd. Refined over the next few months, 'Interstellar Overdrive' emerged on the album in radically different form. Comparison with the tentative October 1966 version demonstrates the band's rapid progress, paring alternating melodic passages with clustered ambient noise into a sculpted whole.

Taking cues from Rowe, Barrett strove toward abstraction. He found that laying the guitar flat increased resonance. At high volume, Syd did not need to press strings for notes nor fret chords. Lightly touched strings vibrated in harmonic overtones. Altering tuning as he played, Barrett was fearless, leaping nimbly back as free-form improvisation reformed into final restatement. Sketching symbols across the fret board with his bevelled Zippo, Barrett painted in sound. Syd's effects processing veered toward the electronic experiments of John Cage. Save for Hendrix, no rock guitarist in London was doing anything remotely similar. 'I'd always credit Syd with the connection he made to his personal unconscious and collective, group conscious,' asserted Waters.

The band's improvisation on the Mason-led 'Nick's Boogie' turned Sound Techniques into a cathedral filled with echoes, extending AMM's spectral timbre into glacial minimalism. Switching to the Esquire, Barrett played with restraint, opening with his finest glissando, a sweep up the octaves with chiming metallic sonority, tapping strings to accentuate complementary harmonics. The sepulchral track is fascinating, not from any great technical musicianship (Nick Mason's star turn aside), rather for what Pink Floyd conjured from thin air. Mason learnt well from jazz drummer Chico Hamilton's propulsive touch. His delicate mallet fills place him as the least obtrusive drummer of the era. At the end of 'Nick's Boogie', Syd's head slumps as he rubs eyes in fatigue. In a relentless push toward a tantalising peak that is forever just out of reach, Barrett was reaching overdrive.



On 13 January, 'The Return of the Dreaded UFO' welcomed back 'the monstrous Pink Floyd' to the psychedelic ballroom. Their van screeched to the kerb, and the quartet descended to the basement dancehall. Hypnotic light spun in tiny slivers from a rotating iron drum punctured with holes over the entrance. Hoppy said, 'Halfway down wide entrance stairs we put a snow machine, a theatre light producing the effect of falling snow. Stand in it for a minute or two and you began to be disoriented – same as driving a car into a snowstorm.'

Mick Farren's 1974 novel *The Tale of Willy's Rats*, long out of print, contains vivid images of UFO: 'At first sight the whole thing looked weird. A huge sign that read Blarney Club was disorientating until I found out for the rest of the week the place was run as an Irish immigrant dance hall. A wide flight of stairs with vestigial remains of thirties opulence led down off the street to the basement club. At the bottom of the stairs, some heavy-looking freaks took tickets. We paid, and went inside. You stepped through the door; the assault on your senses was so intense as to be almost physical. An overpowering smell of incense, swirl of lights, direct and from projections that floated across screens in various corners of the room.'

Lightshow operators inaugurated a 'Technicolor strobe', blasting the ballroom with pulsing electric lights. Syd drew a hand-painted sign for Nick's drum kit, which read 'Pink Floyd NOW'. Their moment had come. UFO became Pink Floyd's home ground, where they found fame. They played UFO seven times, becoming synonymous with the venue. 'You could describe us as the movement's house orchestra, we were one of the first to play what they wanted to hear,' explained Waters. 'Not difficult to convert the audience to this presentation. Beautiful to watch, it takes them right away. So different, impossible for us to play the same thing twice.'

In a forty-five-minute set, they played numbers that ran for an average of six minutes, leaving longer pieces to the second spot. 'Some last twelve minutes, but you cannot play on and on,' Waters asserted. 'We could improvise for an hour and a half but that's not on. For us the most important thing is to be visual.' Unlike Waters, Barrett intended to improvise for an hour and a half if possible. Syd preferred abstract improvisations to set lists, a marked disparity between his and Waters's approach.

Nick Jones and Chris Welch of *Melody Maker* stood transfixed under the bubbling lights. Welch walked around noting: 'A boy danced about playing maracas, a fat girl wandered about spreading love and happiness by smiling cheerfully. Nobody swore, nobody sneered,

adopted threatening poses to bolster sagging egos.’ Joe Boyd told them: ‘UFO is home for groups doing experimental things in pop. The object of the club is to provide a place for experimental pop music, and for mixing media, lightshows and theatrical happenings. We also show New York avant-garde films.’

Hoppy and Moore screened *Cosmic Ray* by Bruce Conner, alongside films of female nudes, cartoons, and atomic bombs. Kenneth Anger’s *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*, with soundtrack by Janáček, depicted neon mythical creatures in a pleasure dome. Like Anger’s film, UFO was ‘dungeon and celebration’.

‘On a far wall a D.W. Griffiths epic ran silently with a group of freaks sitting watching it intently,’ recalled Mick Farren. ‘Others just lay in corners and against walls.’

American electronics whiz Jack Henry Moore stood behind the club’s record player, amplifiers, lighting equipment and generator. As DJ, Moore often played a whole side of an LP, complete with gaps between tracks. Hoppy noted: ‘This enabled conversations to happen without having to shout at one another.’ With Love’s eighteen-minute-long ‘Revelation’ from *Da Capo* on the turntable, the IT girl beauty contest packed up. Susie Gawler-Wright won and appeared on the cover of *IT* naked except for spidery body paint.



Four upright WEM speakers in each corner exaggerated the stereo image, and inspired Floyd’s *Azimuth Coordinator*. Farren said, ‘Continuous rock records, intercut with random sounds, disjointed conversation, and electronic music created the impression of John Cage let loose to run a discotheque.’

Juno Gemes directed multimedia performance works, experimental plays were performed, poets recited odes, and jugglers and acrobats performed. Music was a sideshow amid the hubbub. Like a Venetian Carnival, social distinctions blurred, with UFO groovers wearing their most inspired apparel and outrageous dress. The curious and confused among them, crowds sat on the floor, a new trend in London. Radiant women in gauzy dresses and long hair, many carrying flowers, drifted by like pre-Raphaelite maidens.

A strand of harder-edged nihilism matched the romanticism, with some wearing dresses made of reflective silver-backed plastic circles strung together. A 1930s gangster's moll look was also popular, with felt berets and twin sets in puce and magenta. Everywhere were long fringes and heavy makeup with false eyelashes on eyes drenched in exaggerated shadow. Gold painted fingernails and neon bangles adorned wrists as they whirled under showering lights. Men struck cool poses in satin shirts with mandarin collars, electrified Dylan/Hendrix hair and vibrant crushed velvets with flares. Illustrator Mike McInnerney hung about on the stairs doing sketches for macrobiotic teashop the Flying Dragon. McInnerney collaborated with Dudley Edwards from Binder, Edwards and Vaughn in OM Tentacle, amicable rivals to Hapshash.



'The audience milled around in constant procession, the weirdest people I'd ever seen,' Farren noted. 'The commercial flower-power thing hadn't struck then, a sprinkling of prototype

kaftans and King's Road avant-garde I had on. Most were thrown back on their own resources and originality to create whatever effects they could by combining army surplus, India craft and their grandmother's wardrobe. A girl came past, naked to the waist, in blue jeans, with heavy breasts painted in amateurishly enthusiastic swirls of Day-Glo paint that burst into phosphorescent life every time she passed black light strips on the wall.'



Hoppy and Boyd contracted Mark Boyle to provide lights for the club on a permanent basis. Boyle was paid £10 flat to do the lights at each UFO ('an offer we could not refuse', Boyle said). He launched his 'Earth, Air, Fire and Water' lightshow based on the four elements. Boyle described it, laboriously, as using 'the projection of various chemical and physical reactions occurring in special containers in projectors, with amplification of the sound of the reaction, or tapes of colossal reactions in the same medium or performed sound using the medium (i.e. rock movement, storm, fire or waves)'.

Often several lightshows ran at once. Peter says, 'At UFO, we both did lights. Mark Boyle was given free hand, a full-blown artist. He did lights in one part of UFO, always tasteful.'

'I knew Mark Boyle and his lightshow was very good,' recalls Brown. 'UFO was an artistic venture, and art-driven. UFO wasn't pop, it was experimental environments with light and sound. I don't think they were trying to create a movement. They were exploring.'

Australian artist Juno Gemes says, 'UFO was a cool, friendly, easy collaborative place to be and contribute to. After the performance piece/happening, most Friday nights I would stay at UFO until dawn - a magic place to be. I can't remember money changing hands, it might have. Whatever you needed was easily given to you there. That was enough for me. UFO was a great creative scene.'

Mark Boyle's Sensual Laboratory and Jack Bracelin's Fiveacre Lights had separate lightshows rigged at each corner. Boyle wore plastic gloves and goggles, mixing mad chemicals in glass Petri dishes over the blazing projector, sweat dripping from his brow. Dermot Harvey (who Miles called 'an errant biochemist, discoverer of many immiscible liquids') projected three-dimensional liquid projections onto helium-filled balloons, which were forever drifting toward ceiling fans and lights.


'Tony Scott came to me wanting to put some of his exploding plastic inflatable penis sculptures into the mix at UFO,' Gemes says. 'They worked well with film projected onto them. This was the beginning of a new collaboration. Scotty also had a project going where he found discarded film in Wardour Street dustbins. He collected this film and joined it all together as a new Duchampian film collage. Sometimes the film was cut and discarded due to censorship laws or because a bit was too cheesy. Cut together it now became something totally new. We screened these film montages at UFO projecting them onto the ravers, people dancing. Sometimes we projected onto the ceiling. All clear surfaces were covered with film at some point during the evening with the assistance of David Curtis and his crew.'

'Mark Boyle created the most beautiful light shows at UFO. He used ink pigment poured onto oil in a glass dish over an epidiascope. I learnt quite a lot from him. There were casual preparation sessions. We trusted each other and worked easily together.'

Boyle's lightshow was dynamic, with bubbles in violent orange and pink streaming up slides, heated by open flames. Sitting still, one felt as if one was inside a bubbling cauldron. Sometimes Boyle would let a projected slide incinerate to the edges. In tandem with profuse LSD and cannabis, different dynamics prevailed – fast or slow, as suited the mood or moment. Organic bubbling contrasted with unnatural colours. Being immersed in the lightshow was timeless. 'The detail was ravishing to the tripping eye,' said Hoppy. 'The scaffolding projection tower was placed so projectors could be swung round, causing watchers to move round to continue watching – a subtle way to keep people moving.'

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‘UFO was quite big,’ recalled Boyle. ‘Also dark and dingy, apart from our projections. We were on a tower at the back – scaffolding with planks across. We had four projectors and got different reactions going in each one, mixing them with coloured filters. A lot of chance, as images were based on chemical reactions. Some created amazing effects. When we put acid on to perforated zinc, it would immediately attack zinc with ferocious action: pieces of zinc would fly off screen with bubbles exploding when Mike Ratledge, keyboard player for Soft Machine, was going mad on organ, or Robert Wyatt was doing his amazing drum solos. Fast-moving work, when chemicals were reaching the end of the cycle, you had to fade that and bring in something else. It was not synchronised with the music, though your brain forced the two together, making you think it was, which created something magical.’ Dudley Edwards says, ‘I am a great admirer of Mark Boyle and family, particularly what they have done with land art, but I did think their lightshows were boring.’

Peter Russell, of light crew for band 117, was another intermittent operator. He explains, ‘I developed a “light keyboard” connected to spots placed around the band, creating complex coloured shadow patterns on the screen. Modulated by a human being “playing along” with the group was the most synchronised music-lightshow ever.’

‘A typical evening at UFO began around 11:00pm with Vivaldi’s Four Seasons loud on the sound system and our light environment all around the room,’ recalled Boyle. ‘When the place was full, the first rock group appeared. You might get a theatre group from the Royal Court Theatre doing mime, followed by the Soft Machine or the Pink Floyd. I might be asked to make yellow projections while current hit “Mellow Yellow” played.

‘David Medalla and the Exploding Galaxy would fill an arena with yellow objects, yellow cloth, yellow confetti, and yellow paint. A folk group would follow, and then clowns, more rock, more Bach, theatre group the People Show. At 7:00am jazz group the Sun Trolley would play. Most people would be sleeping against pillars or piles on the floor. Just the Sun Trolley, Joan, and I were awake. Then we would go and get breakfast.’

Giant Sun Trolley played the final slot, taking the crowd to gates of dawn, and chasing them out. The trio linked straight to the Free School. With anarchic fun, the Trolley developed ‘Eternity in D’, one note or chord played as long as possible until UFO was empty. The

prankster in Barrett watched with perverse amusement as the last stragglers fled one D chord stretched to infinity and beyond. Drummer Glen Sweeney recalled, 'We went on at 3:00am and played two notes until 7:00am.' Syd incorporated this into his bag of tricks, much to despair of band mates and audiences. The Trolley performed once with a hound onstage, who mournfully howled along with Tomlin on saxophone. Pink Floyd later did a similar experiment, 'Seamus', on their album Meddle.

Soft Machine opened and halfway through, Jimi Hendrix jumped onstage to jam. Hendrix stayed for Pink Floyd's set as well, soaking up Syd's style as he did with all the groups he was dashing from place to place to watch and jam with. The abstract, atonal coda on 'Third Stone from the Sun' attests to Syd Barrett's influence, not to mention Hendrix's Barrett-style glissandi on 'All Along the Watchtower'.

Hendrix had cut a demo for 'Third Stone from the Sun' four days before, though the version on his debut featured Barrett-esque glissandi and echo. Hendrix saw Pink Floyd at UFO several times, and gigged with them in a package tour around Britain.

Daavid Allen of Soft Machine said, 'We had a regular gig at UFO. Every Friday night a new world of multiple realities and expanding dimensions opened doors. The Magic Theatre of the Mind made manifest.

'Our first UFO gig was memorable. A wild figure appeared in the corridor with the entire top of his head on fire. Arthur Brown plunged onto the stage declaiming in an operatic bottomless voice, "I am the god of hellfire!" Security men bearing fire extinguishers were pinned against the wall by laughing hippies as flames licked the low ceiling, for at UFO the show had to go on.'

Arthur Brown, an oracular force at UFO, had just returned from Paris, where he experienced a revelation: 'I must shock.' He began wearing makeup and rushing around out of his head. Found by Joe Boyd working as a freak attraction at some bizarre Soho club, Brown came to All Saints Hall shows and began cobbling together his stage show. He combined tremendous theatrics with a five-octave operatic voice that terrified audiences as he leapt from guttural growls to piercing shrieks.

The Crazy World of Arthur Brown began as an improvisational trio, with Drachen Theaker on drums and Vincent Crane on organ, and extended into song cycles concerned with the battle between good and evil, powered by the indefatigable Crane pounding staccato measures on his Hammond organ. Brown's diabolical full-face makeup, shrieks, and untamed stage show, led the way for generations of horror-rockers from Alice Cooper to Slipknot.

Brown said of Pink Floyd, 'We're both based on audience involvement, but the Pink Floyd are impersonal and overpowering. We like to speak to, shock and attack the audience.'

Shock they did. Brown stage-dived into the audience, or insulted and baited them from the stage. The Exploding Galaxy experimental dance troupe performed with them, twirling around half-naked. Brown stalked the stage wearing metal masks, Arthurian robes or a loincloth. Although UFO is chiefly remembered as a hippy haven, combustible anarchy was never far from the surface.



Pete Townshend of the Who, on his third acid trip, realised he could not drive three hundred miles to a gig and went to see Pink Floyd instead. Townshend said, 'Syd Barrett was wonderful, and so were the rest of them. I fell in love with the group, and the club, especially Hoppy who ran the club and worked the door.'

At UFO, Irish Jack, ace face mod, recalled, 'Some geezer was leaning over me at the Coke bar. I could feel his body weight and turned around to say, "What the fuck!" Pete bloody Townshend, in a big afghan coat, wearing a necklace – a real hippy. His next words mortified me, he said, "Jack, you're still a mod!"'

Manfred, a heavy-bearded German drug dealer clad in caftan, gave away four hundred doses of 'White Lightning'. Not LSD, but potent analogue DOM, synthesised to evade the law. Others felt new drugs being given away free in such quantity was suspicious. At five micrograms, DOM was a powerful psychedelic, at ten micrograms, problematic.

'A guy with almost waist-length blonde hair and beard walked past in some kind of Middle Eastern robe that, apart from mirrored shades, made him look like the kind of Jesus figure so cherished by Victorian romantics,' recounted Farren. 'One of the key acid dealers, he took his religion very seriously.'

One ecstatic freak walked by with smouldering joss sticks, giving them out. A small concessionary corner at the back dispensed 'UFOOD'; macrobiotic rice rissoles and vine leaves stuffed with brown rice. Craig Sams introduced the notion of organic foods to Britain at UFO, going on to build a wholefoods empire. Chris Rowley tended a small stand selling International Times and silk-screened psychedelic posters by Hapshash and the Coloured Coat through Osiris Vision, another underground start-up run by Joe Boyd. Industriousness was as remarkable as dope being smoked.



At UFO, everyone, in theory, was a participant at a perpetual happening. Elsewhere, John Pearce from Granny Takes a Trip and Michael Rainey from Hung on You took fittings for custom psychedelic clothes. Small groups sat talking, and some very young indeed. The more fearless danced, eyes closed, bobbing in oblivious bliss or blissful oblivion. A head shop in the corner sold what Miles termed, '...strange things! Little sparklers, sparking wheels, diffraction gradings.' Not to forget Peter Wynne-Willson's cosmonocles, with prisms welded into goggles for a lightshow all of one's own. 'If a time warp transported a man from the 14th century into this dark cave of light and sound, it would have fulfilled his expectations of hell,' observed Farren. 'But as I drifted around the bizarre throng I found it a paradise, crammed with seeds of so many ideas.'

There was constant traffic, as people edged past one another on stairs painted Day-Glo colours. Some went to catch a breather from the dungeon-like basement, where perspiration coiled down the walls. Others marched in a tinkling bell and caftan posse to

Jack Bracelin's club, Happening 44, in Soho, where the Deviants and Soft Machine held sway alongside Fairport Convention. UFO members, admitted free, heaved and hoed until dawn. High priest of a London coven of witches, Bracelin's acid lightshow had a dark occult feel. Mick Farren called the club 'one of the weirdest hippy dungeons anywhere', where acidheads rubbed shoulders with Wiccan nudists, strippers on break, or Maltese gangsters.

'Hoppy and I ran UFO together, partners from the beginning,' explains Joe Boyd. 'My attitude was the same as it had always been. I was sympathetic to the socio-political mood but my real interest was in music. There was not a big philosophical divide, but Hoppy's interest in the club was atmosphere, spirit, political connection, and centre of the underground. One of few arguments we ever had was over the Social Deviants. Hoppy had gone to Middle Earth, seen this anarchic underground group, and thought they were great. We drove in a blizzard to the East End to hear them rehearse. They were terrible. I said, "They're going into the club over my dead body."

'Hoppy felt they represented something we should encourage. An anarchic spirit of working class kids from across the tracks. After so much pressure from Hoppy, we booked them at 5:00am. We always had a band on at 5:00am and paid them £5. Mick Farren always hung around the club, looking for something to do. Sometimes he'd be paid a couple of quid to work on the door.'

Farren soon inveigled his way into the role of front-door attendant. With a swagger straight from the seamier end of Ladbroke Grove, Farren cooled potential violence by turning away hard-case skinheads and mods. The scene was small and cosy. Mods at Oxford Street club Tiles were just cottoning on to the psychedelic basement up the road. A trendy club with coffee, a boutique, and excellent sound – Tiles was one-stop nightlife. Tiles' DJ, Jeff Dexter, ran all-nighters that witnessed speed- and alcohol-fuelled dancing to storming ravers like 'Boogaloo Party' by the Flamingos. Dexter first saw Pink Floyd at Spontaneous Underground, and soon began darting over to UFO on breaks.

'When they re-opened as Tiles, they had taken better advice, and employed better people,' recalls Dexter. 'There was Tiles Street inside, with a record store, boutique, and a café, no alcohol. I played mainly R&B, as that was the best dance music, Atlantic, Tamla, Chess, Sue, and smattering of blue beat/ska, not much British mod. Some straight pop, if it was good to dance to.'

Boyd says, 'I was standing at the door and this little mod kid in a three-piece suit with flares and big eyes ran down stairs and said he was DJ at Tiles, Jeff Dexter. Dexter thought the place was great and demanded I come back and visit his club. We went and he showed me around and offered me a black bomber [amphetamine pill].'

Jeff Dexter laughs, 'Complete bollocks, although quite funny. We had met long before that with Jac Holzman. I had taken them to see the Move. Joe would not have seen me in a pair of flares either, now that's where he adds insult to injury!'

When Dexter booked Pink Floyd at Tiles, the transition proved rough for soul fans and any last sharpies clinging to suits and flash miniskirts, gaping bemused at Pink Floyd. The music was far from the twelve-bar blues, for many their closest reference point. One black mod clasped his hands over his ears in pain.



Colin Turner was a young mod who frequented Tiles as Swinging London waned. His mates somehow or other got wind of strange goings-on up the road. Deciding to chance it and venture on up to UFO, Turner recalled, 'As we approached the club we saw a longhaired guy dressed in only his underpants and strings of tiny bells. As though this wasn't strange by itself, he was spinning around and around in the middle of the road. He and many others had taken a cocktail of LSD and speed.' Turner and his mates were speechless as the wiggled-out groover spun, with mirrored disc pasted to his forehead, eyes circling like Catherine wheels. Police from Tottenham Court Road station arrived and threw the hapless freak in a cell. Prepared to beat him senseless, the man's blissful demeanour so unnerved them, not knowing what else to do, they frogmarched the acidhead back to UFO. 'One of yours, then?' police asked Mick Farren, at the door in his customary black leather jacket. 'We'll have 'im,' Farren replied.

Turner and his mates stood outside, debating, chewing gum, tweaked on speed, in tailored three-button suits with side vents. 'I remember thinking, should we go in? People milling around were very different to people I associated with. Certainly, they were friendly. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. So down a steep flight of steps we went.' Farren took one look at their French haircuts, and sneered, 'You can't come in here, your hair's too short.' Colin and friends protested: 'But you're supposed to be all for freedom and things.' Farren retorted, 'Yeah, but we know your sort.' The mods conferred, and then brandished a five-pound note, 'How about a fiver?' Farren thought for a split second, 'Right, you're in!'

Colin described the scene that greeted him: 'Double doors on the left and into a new world! Noise from the crowd was deafening, incense overpowering, and the heat! A cold night but heat generated by sweaty bodies was awesome. Just about everyone was wearing tiny bells and either sitting staring into space (stoned) or prancing around (also stoned) or just plain stoned.'

The mods stood in an uptight phalanx, taking in the scene. Sensing trouble, Suzy Creamcheese, Hoppy's consort and West Coast ambassador-to-London, gathered friends in diaphanous silks and crushed velvets and 'love-bombed' the mods with smiles, spun around them like dyads, got them to smoke dope. The mods relaxed and sat on the floor. Turner said, 'In the early hours, in walked another group of long-haired musicians, all carrying their own equipment. Across the floor they walked, stepping up on to the stage. No curtains or wings, a plain stage three foot high.'

Farren said, 'The focal point of UFO was a small stage, more suited to Irish jig bands than rock'n'roll. A screen was drawn across the front. An underground movie was being shown, but couldn't disguise roadies going to and fro, and electronic grunts of amps being tested.'

Pip Carter stacked Selmer cabinets and plugged them into the rat's nest of wiring behind the stage, poised to explode should another extension be attached. Wynne-Willson and Russell Page set up lighting on a scaffold overlooking the stage. Mixing inks, oils, water and chemicals, they projected through crepuscular darkness onto a canvas sheet running up the back of the small stage. Turner says, 'The rudimentary lightshow consisted of a slide projector, with printer's ink placed between slides. As the ink heated it "popped", projecting bubbles of colour on the group. A ripple went round the club [that] Pink Floyd were about to come on. The audience gravitated toward the stage, packing themselves cross-legged while those farther back stood and watched intently. Flashes of light illuminated the back of the screen, and then the movie was halted.'



Pink Floyd stepped onstage as the lightshow swirled above them, refracting through haze of smoke and heat. Turner recalls, 'They started to tune up, playing some weird chords. "This could be good," someone said. "Hello, we're the Pink Floyd," one of them said. And away they went.'

Farren wrote: 'Without any announcement, a stagehand whipped back the curtain. This amazing roar hit us. Red and green lights flashed with nervous speed on the band, destroying and distorting features. They played unique music, which seemed to have taken Chuck Berry on a round trip through deep space and brought it back changed almost beyond recognition. Organ and feedback guitar soared and dipped like unfolding spiral nebula, while bass and drums reminded us the music was still rooted in rock'n'roll, even though intertwined with the pulse of a quasar.'

'Caught in the lights, Pink Floyd seemed aloof, remote, like sinister emissaries from a distant and powerful galactic empire. So far into their thing for a band without any records and with minority following, impressive. Their trip, with its coldness and austerity, had little to do with our band. Something about their cosmic roar fitted us well. In some half-formed way I could see myself riding it like a demented Silver Surfer screaming abuse at 20th-century civilization.'



Turner was unimpressed at first. 'Although different, the music had a "jazzy" feel and I have never been a great lover of jazz. A strange combination of rock and jazz. As they went along, I realised this band had something. "Interstellar Overdrive" must have lasted forty minutes. Everyone around had the same thought: brilliant in parts, mainly boring. The Floyd were pounding away, when out of the doors came this whacking great balloon. Imagine a condom, four feet in circumference and half a mile long, inflated from within the club. A crowd pulled it out along Tottenham Court Road.' Australian artist Jeffrey Shaw of the 26 Kingly Street group, an 'environmental co-operative', introduced inflatable art to the club.

'The Floyd's session lasted two hours, very long by other bands' standards,' adds Turner. 'One hour was considered good, two hours unheard of. They left the stage with little fuss, again carrying their own gear. They may have had just one roadie. I do remember them packing their own stuff. I had seen my first Pink Floyd gig. Unique, jazzy, boring and brilliant - I had to see them again. I saw them many times after, not love at first sight, but they certainly teased me into coming back for more.'

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Syd-Barrett-Pink-Floyd-Globe/dp/0859654311>