

Syd Barrett, who died on July 7 aged 60, came into my life and Pink Floyd in 1965. His reputation as a real talent was intimidating but he proved delightful. He introduced himself, a radical move given our determination to hide our shyness behind monosyllables and Ray-Ban sunglasses. He went on to front the band and was for his entire tenure its creative center, writing the songs and devising most of the music.

Thanks to Syd, by early 1967 we had a recording deal, two hit singles and had appeared on television. But that's when he began to disintegrate. On stage he was there physically but not musically. The rest of us were busy—and busy being in denial—so we didn't try to find out what the problem was: mental breakdown, overuse of LSD or finding himself in a commercial environment he never sought. To this day none of us knows. What we do know is that we lost a charismatic and inspiring leader.

David Gilmour had been brought in to fill the hole made by Syd's psychic withdrawal. In 1968 Syd left for real. He then worked with David and Rick Wright on two solo albums, which are chaotic but include great writing. He had this unique whimsical style—and at a time when songwriting demanded American pronunciation, he sang in the Queen's English.

I next saw Syd some six years after the split, when the band was recording *Wish You Were Here*. By coincidence we were working on *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*, a song about absence that somehow seemed to fit Syd's history. We played him a couple of tracks, he hung out for a bit, and then walked out of our lives again.

I never met him after that but he had been on our minds recently. David, Roger Waters and I were all moved by Tom Stoppard's new play *Rock 'n' Roll*, which in part deals with Syd as a fabulous young man and his transformation. It's the transformation people talk about now, but what I most remember is his brilliance. Shine on indeed.