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The Syd-less Pink Floyd, lost in Amsterdam, March 1968: (from left) David Gilmour, Roger Waters, Nick Mason and Rick Wright.

CROSS ROAD BLUES



**FORTY-FIVE YEARS
AGO THIS MONTH,
PINK FLOYD CUT
ADrift SYD BARRETT
AND STRUCK OUT
FOR THE UNKNOWN,
WITH NO SONGS,
LESS MONEY, GIVEN
HARDLY ANY HOPE.**

**YET FOUR YEARS
OF MEANDERING,
COUNTERCULTURE
PEACOCKING AND
NUTTY FREE-FORM
ROCK WERE FATED TO
END IN THE EPIPHANY OF
ECHOES AND MEDDLE.**

**HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?
“WE DIDN’T KNOW WHAT
THE FUCK ELSE TO DO,”
LEARNS MARK BLAKE.**

**PHOTOGRAPHY BY
CLAUDE VANHEYE.**

Pie-eyed Piper: Syd Barrett (far right, in August 1967, and at rear in January 1968) disappears from view. "He was our friend, but most of the time we wanted to strangle him."



"WE COULD NEVER WRITE LYRICS LIKE SYD. WE NEVER HAD THE IMAGINATION." RICK WRIGHT

THE MUSIC FLOATING OUT OF the Pompeii amphitheatre this afternoon in October 1971 is slow and tranquil, and in contrast to the clamour of the arena's ancient past. In the 1st Century AD, locals gathered to cheer as gladiators fought to the death below. Today's 'sport' consists of Pink Floyd, four English rock musicians, hunched over their instruments on the same spot where blood was once spilt. Instead of baying locals, their audience consists of roadies, a film crew and a few inquisitive youths who have followed the electricity cables running from Pompeii's cathedral into the crumbling venue.

The Mediterranean sun casts shadows around Rick Wright's piano, the theatrical-looking gong suspended behind drummer Nick Mason's kit and a ragged line of amplifiers stencilled with the words 'Pink Floyd London'. Bassist Roger Waters, dressed from head to toe in forbidding black, taps out a slow rhythm with his foot, scuffing up tiny clouds of dust around his chi-chi King's Road boots.

Pink Floyd are playing a new composition

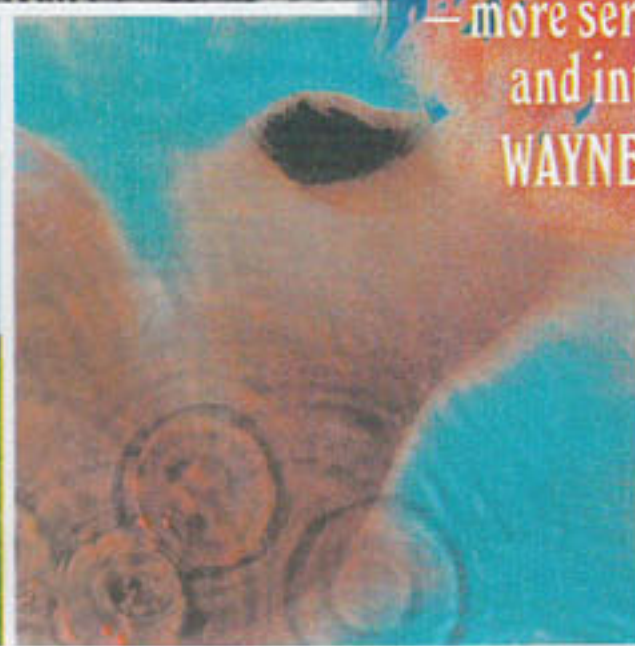
called Echoes. The song lasts over 24 minutes, building from a languorous introduction before disintegrating into a cacophony of spooked sound effects. As the song returns to its opening theme, an overhead camera pans back to show a bird's-eye view of these four 20th-century musicians transplanted amid the Roman ruins. As pivotal moments in dramatic, grandiose '70s rock go, Echoes from the film *Pink Floyd At Pompeii* takes the biscuit.

Between 1968 and '70, the group had defied the odds, skirting commercial disaster to conjure four UK Top 10 albums out of a quixotic mix of art-house movie scoring, saucer-eyed space rock and semi-classical doodling. It was a period rife with identity crises and artistic confusion.

A month after Pink Floyd's Pompeii jaunt, Echoes emerged on *Meddle*, an album destined to make sense of the group's probings since they'd left the path of pop in early 1968. It would light their way out of the underground and towards their mid-'70s status as one of biggest-selling bands in the world.

However, it would be wrong to suggest that the quartet's route was immediately clear, or that the existential crisis that had forced Pink Floyd into the role of rambling experimentalists was instantly dispersed. "Quo vadis?" Pompeii's ancient residents might reasonably have asked.

Where, exactly, did Pink Floyd think they were going?



"Meddle replaced flower-power with this Stanley Kubrick version – more serious, deeper and internal."
WAYNE COYNE

THE ROAD TO *MEDDLE* BEGAN 45 YEARS AGO IN west London's Ladbroke Grove, in the back of Pink Floyd's communal Bentley. Driving to that night's Southampton University show on January 26, 1968, they took the momentous decision not to pick up frontman, guitarist and songwriter Syd Barrett: the face, the sound and the soul of Pink Floyd. By early 1967, Floyd and Barrett had emerged as the unofficial house band at UFO, the Tottenham Court Road club that had become a Mecca for London's beautiful people: LSD trippers, beat poets, artists and off-duty rock stars. They signed to EMI, recorded their debut album, *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, and scored two hit singles, Arnold Layne and See Emily Play, after which Pink Floyd were no longer an exclusively cult act, and Barrett looked like a pop star. By the end of '67, though, his declining mental state, aggravated by LSD use, had made him a liability. "Syd had ceased to function," claimed Roger Waters. "He was our friend, but most of the time we wanted to strangle him."

In desperation, the band approached Barrett's friend from Cambridge, David Gilmour, who had been singing and playing guitar in a touring covers band, originally known as Jokers Wild. The group split up after a residency in France left them penniless and Gilmour suffering from malnutrition. Now living in London, he'd taken a day job driving a van for designer Ossie Clark's Quorum boutique. "I wanted to form another band," he told me in 2008. "But I had no firm idea of who I should be forming a band with." The offer to ➤

SET THE CONTROLS FOR THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON!

Pink Floyd's "wilderness years" on record, by some of MOJO's favourite musicians.

A Saucerful Of Secrets

(EMI, 1968)



Phil Manzanera (Roxy Music and beyond): "A *Saucerful Of Secrets* is a nostalgic album for me. In January '68 I turned 17, I was at boarding school, obsessed with The Beatles and

wanting to play in a group. My older brother knew David Gilmour from Cambridge. He arranged for us to have lunch with David to talk about how one becomes a professional musician! David was about to start recording *A Saucerful Of Secrets*. I was so impressed. *Saucerful...* ticked all the boxes for me. It has songs like See Saw and Remember A Day, which show off how important Rick

Wright's musicality was to the Pink Floyd sound. But you've also got these anarchic instrumental jams. I'd been turned on to that stuff by The Soft Machine and Mothers Of Invention, but Pink Floyd weren't coming at it from a jazz or classical angle. This was an extension of those psychedelic jams I'd seen them do at UFO and Middle Earth. It was very useful to me. My little school band learned to play the riff to Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun and could jam on that for half an hour."

Soundtrack From The Film More

(EMI, 1969)



Andy Duvall (from MOJO CD stars Carlton Melton): "Hey maaaaan, your band should cover The Nile Song! my friend Mike Lenert said to me one Delaware afternoon. That

was it – my introduction to *More*. My band was Zen Guerrilla, which also included Carlton Melton's Rich Millman. That spring of '93 Rich and I listened to *More* religiously. The album is extremely heavy, yet it floats. On our first cross-country trip together we found ourselves completely lost in its haunting beauty. We were equally lost in Glacier National Park, Montana. I will never forget spiralling down a park road in Rich's van while Cirrus Minor played. The tune seemed to spiral down right along with us to some unknown destination – as if there was no beginning or end to the song or our journey. We returned home from that trip, went into the studio, and recorded The Nile Song. I still feel it is the best studio recording the band created. Thanks for turning me on to such a wonderful soundtrack, Mike – without *More*, I'm not sure there would have been a Carlton Melton."

Ummagumma

(Harvest, 1969)



Rhys Webb (The Horrors): "Ummagumma was one of the first albums I raided from my dad's record collection when I was 15. He had *A Nice Pair* and that one and I would always skip to the track Grantchester Meadows because it has that fantastic ability to transport you to the place it was written about. At that time I was obsessed with making mixtapes and it would always be the opening track on each one because it

has that most amazing atmospheric sound. It's so very English: you're lying down in the grass and looking up at the blue sky and hearing the bird call at the beginning. It's so very familiar and there is that real echo of Syd in the vocal, but it doesn't sound contrived. Roger grew up with Syd, played with Syd, of course he'd be there in his music. He'd step into Syd's world and it sounds like it could have been a B-side like The Scarecrow or Paintbox, if there had been another Syd single."

Atom Heart Mother

(Harvest, 1970)



Tim Elsenburg (Sweet Billy Pilgrim): "It's the sound of a band reaching further than their technique, or experience, or common sense would suggest was sensible. I love the

title track: that main horn riff sounds like a sci-fi film theme, and they find different ways to get back to the safety of it – a guitar direction, a spooky sound-collage – but it holds together. Side two has a backwards-looking, last days of summer feel – odd for such young men – and my favourite of those songs is Rick's Summer '68. It's truly psychedelic, does so much in five or six minutes, and pioneers that blend of his and Gilmour's voices you hear later on *Echoes*. Roger's song If has perhaps the best line he ever wrote: 'If I were a good man, I would understand the spaces between friends.' Which is kind of ironic given what happened within the band later on. And the way Gilmour sings Fat Old Sun, with that kind whisper, that's the best singing on any Pink Floyd record. Overall, it's like a journey: a journey that starts in this intense, complicated way but unwinds beautifully during side two. Sometimes they don't seem sure of where they're going, but I like that about it. It's like you're witnessing the act of creation as it unfolds."

Meddle

(Harvest, 1971)



Wayne Coyne (The Flaming Lips): "It's 1975, I'm in Oklahoma City, which is still pretty much a nowhere-nothing-fucking-happens-here town. My younger brother and

I were at this desolate old theatre, to see *A Boy And His Dog*, this campy, shitty, disappointing sci-fi movie, and the next movie, the midnight show, happened to be Pink Floyd's *Live At Pompeii*, which featured lots of *Meddle*. You could smoke pot in movie theatres back then, and we were blown away. I knew Floyd's mega-popular stuff, but I didn't know their story or their identity, and seeing this way of presenting music did to me what I was wanting music to do. It replaced '60s flower-power psychedelia with this Stanley Kubrick version – more serious, deeper, internal. The lyrics to *Echoes* were great to contemplate while that heavy music was playing. *Meddle* starts incredibly with One Of These Days, this weird, cool jam, but they'd become songwriters too, they're not just making soundscapes like on *Ummagumma*. Everyone thinks they can play Fearless when they start playing guitar, but it's full of little complexities, subtle, jazzy nuances you don't realise will have an effect on you until you hear music that doesn't open things up. And the segue into the football chant of You'll Never Walk Alone, what the fuck is that? It's not in the same key or cadence, it's pure sound. It frees you from the curse of being a songwriter, to be able to say, a song is whatever you say it is, and that's punk rock to me."

As told to Martin Aston, Mark Blake, Danny Eccleston and Lois Wilson

"WHAT WERE WE GOING TO DO? ONCE WE WERE IN A ROCK'N'ROLL BAND WE WEREN'T GOING TO STOP." ROGER WATERS

➤ join Pink Floyd on a £30-a-week wage couldn't have come at a better time. Initially, the idea was that Gilmour and Barrett would work together in a five-piece Floyd. But perpetually stoned, tripping on acid or suffering the after-effects of both, Barrett refused to play or looked baffled by his friend's presence on-stage. The five-piece managed a handful of gigs together.

In April 1968, Floyd co-managers Peter Jenner and Andrew King announced that Barrett had left the group. Neither believed Floyd would survive without their mercurial lead singer, and immediately cut them loose, retaining Barrett and adding a similarly doe-eyed young songwriter named Marc Bolan to their roster.

"Roger was always the 'organisation'," recalls Peter Jenner. "He would be the one you went to for sorting out practical issues. But the idea that Roger was going to write the songs would have made me collapse with laughter." Instead, Floyd's booking agent Bryan Morrison picked up the beleaguered band and passed them on to his employee, former pet food salesman Steve O'Rourke. He ended up managing Pink Floyd until his death in 2003.

Meanwhile, the group sustained themselves on a combination of naïve self-belief and the goodwill remaining from the previous year's hits. "By rights we should have been forced to start all over again," admitted Nick Mason. "But somehow we had clung on to our particular rung within the music industry."

NEVERTHELESS, THE BAND'S COMMITMENT TO THE so-called 'underground' seemed more tenuous with Barrett gone. The words 'Pink Finks' had appeared scrawled on a wall at UFO after Floyd signed to EMI. Now their alienation seemed even more apparent. "Syd was the really exciting one," said International Times' Barry Miles, "the one that was most attuned to the scene." Not that the rest of Pink Floyd saw it that way.

"The 'underground' was a creative melting pot, but I don't think that Syd was particularly involved," countered Mason. "But the buzz of being involved with that scene was enormously helpful to us. You supplied the music while people painted their faces or bathed in a giant jelly."

Aside from issues of counterculture credibility, the burning question was: who would write the songs now Syd was gone? David Gilmour's talent as a guitarist was never in question (Jenner: "He could do Syd better than Syd"). But Gilmour wasn't a songwriter yet, Roger Waters had contributed little, while Rick Wright had shown potential. Mindful of this, Jenner asked Wright to leave Pink Floyd and team up with Barrett. Instead, he stayed put, and wrote Floyd's next single, *It Would Be So Nice*. It was a gauche attempt to mimic Barrett's style and failed to trouble the charts. "We could never write like Syd," Rick Wright told me in 1996. "We never had the imagination to come out with the kind of lyrics he did." Instead, they were obliged to find a new sound entirely.

Assembling a follow-up album from Syd-era fragments augmented by new material, Waters turned himself into a writer by sheer effort of will. "I had no idea that I would write anything," he said. "I'd always been told at school that I was bloody hopeless at everything. I took responsibility in the Floyd because nobody else seemed to want to do it. What were we going to do? Once we were in a rock'n'roll band we weren't going to stop."

In place of Barrett's childlike whimsy, Waters offered a bleaker worldview, one fundamentally shaped by the loss of his father in World War II. Moreover, his writing had structure, as Gilmour discovered when he walked into the studio and found him sketching out *A Saucerful Of Secrets*' war-themed title track as an architectural diagram, with dynamic peaks and troughs. The first section of the song related to the build-up to a conflict, the second was the conflict itself, and the third was a requiem for the dead. To achieve this sound of conflict, Gilmour had to aim for what he called ➤



Canal dreams: Posing for Dutch rock mag *Musiek Express*, Amsterdam, 1968. "Somehow we had clung on to our rung within the music industry."



CRUSHED VELVET UNDERGROUND

10 more albums revealing prog in flux at the turn of the '70s

Tomorrow

Tomorrow
(Parlophone, 1968)



Tomorrow's debut LP came too late for the Summer of Love stamp of psychedelic authenticity. But its timing was apt as they were already looking towards progressive rock. Featuring a pre-Yes Steve Howe, this London four-piece were unusually tight and restless, gearshifting through sharp time changes and shifts of mood, even on such apparently generic psych fare as Auntie Mary's Dress Shop. *MBa*

Jethro Tull

Stand Up
(Island, 1969)



Emerging on the back of the 1968 blues boom, Tull were also partial to jazz, as heard in Ian Anderson's flutey flourishes and a Roland Kirk cover on debut LP *This Was*. By comparison, chart-topping follow-up *Stand Up* was kaleidoscopic, with nods towards classical (*Bourée*), folk (*Fat Man*), hard rock (*A New Day Yesterday*), even proto-Hotel California rock balladry (*We Used To Know*). *MP*

The Nice

Five Bridges Suite
(Charisma, 1970)



The Nice weren't the only band to decide that the musical future might have strings attached (*Deep Purple*, *Moody Blues*...) but Keith Emerson's celebration of Newcastle, with symphony orchestra and jazz horns, is the most convincing rock-classical mash-up. His orchestral writing is basic and Lee Jackson isn't much of a singer but the band's energy and a smart riff push this monster over the finishing line with some style. *JB*

Soft Machine

Third
(CBS, 1970)



The brown-wrap sleeve effect said it all: progressive rock would be about music, not personality. Gone, too, was the psychedelic silliness of the first two albums, replaced by a quartet of side-long epics. Slightly *All The Time* and *Out-Bloody-Rageous* pioneered the jazz-rock love-in, while the hair-raising *Facelift* nudged into Zappa territory. Most remarkable was Robert Wyatt's *Moon In June*, a prog-pop masterpiece. *MP*

King Crimson

Lizard
(Island, 1970)



If prog was going to be "the classical music of the future", as zealots claimed, then Crimson's third album was surely Exhibit A. Few opuses have had so many fine musicians – rock, jazz, classical – and so many baroque lyrics and sheer *thought* flung at them. But all this self-conscious complexity rarely gelled. It took guitarist Robert Fripp two years to get the Crimson project back on track. *JB*

Van Der Graaf Generator

The Least We Can Do Is Wave To Each Other
(Charisma, 1970)



Even on 1968's *The Aerosol Grey Machine* – ostensibly a Peter Hammill solo album – Van Der Graaf had something of the night about them. On their first album proper, lengthy songs like *White Hammer* showcased the dark alchemy of David Jackson's skronking sax – part Stax soul, part free jazz – and the malevolent gothic crunch of Hugh Banton's organ lines, a unique combination. *MBa*

Hawkwind

In Search Of Space
(United Artists, 1971)



After a trippily directionless debut, the Ladbroke Grove stoners hit their stride by reigniting early Floyd's thirst for interstellar improvisation with hard-rock fuel. The resulting fusion of idiot dance groove (*You Shouldn't Do That*), cosmic balladry (*We Took The Wrong Step Years Ago*) and sci-fi gimmickry (*Adjust Me*) was tailor-made for speed guzzling freaks raised on guitars and Doctor Who. *MP*

Yes

The Yes Album
(Atlantic, 1971)



On their first two albums, Yes dabbled in orchestral settings and elongated instrumental jams around Beatles songs. But *The Yes Album's* mix of all-original, intricately structured material and dazzling playing showed that in progressive rock there were to be no rules on how far you could extend songform. It was knowing when to stop that would become the difficult bit, both for Yes and for others. *MBa*

Kevin Ayers

Whatevershebringswesing
(Harvest, 1971)



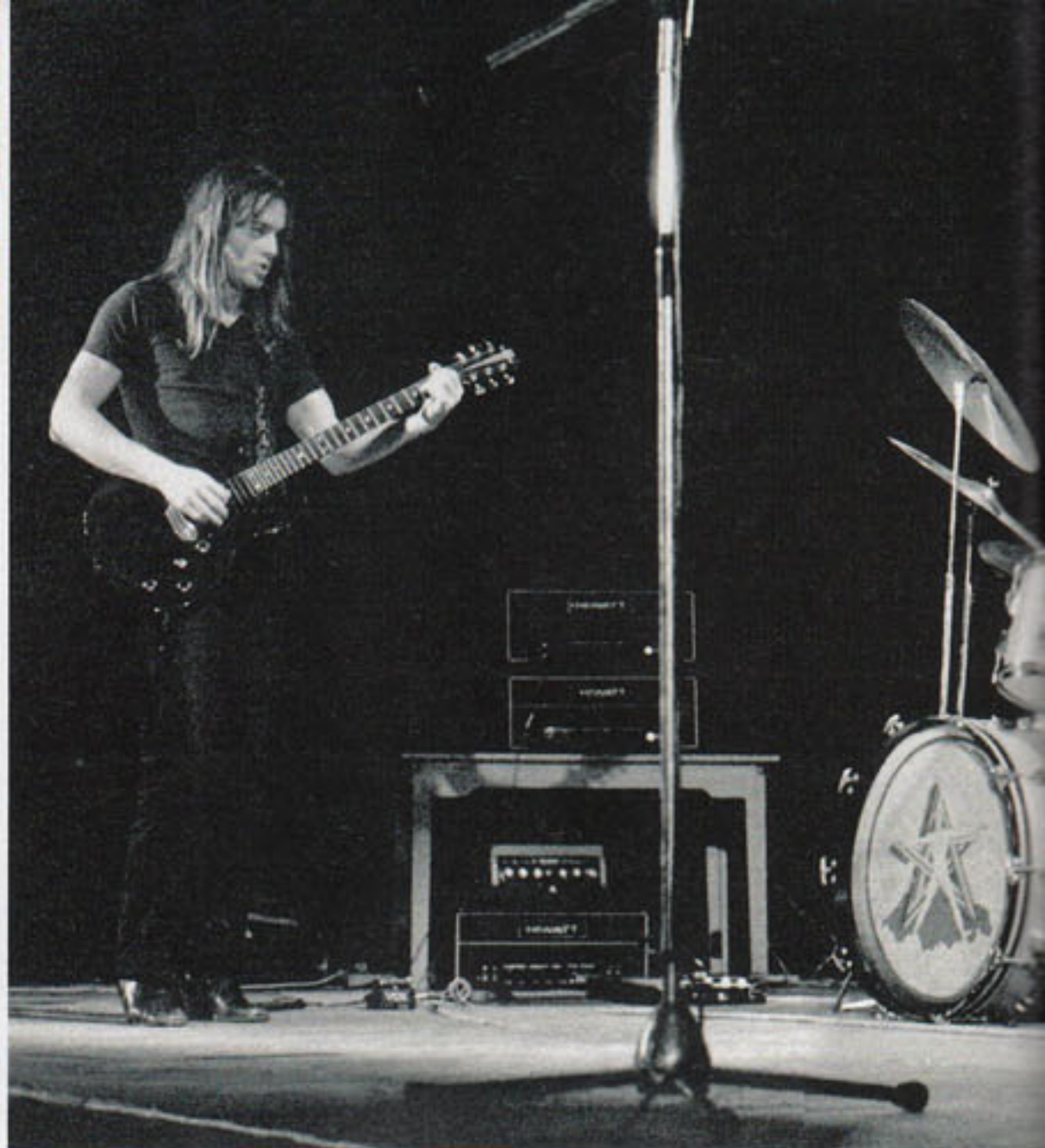
No other songwriter on the underground scene had a gift for pop melody like the former Soft Machine bassist, who sang his skewed nursery rhymes in a languorous baritone. But it was the company he kept that made this LP such a compelling mix of sweet and strange. Avant-classical composer David Bedford's spiky tones offset the liquid guitar of teen prodigy Mike Oldfield. *JB*

Caravan

In The Land Of Grey And Pink
(Deram, 1971)



Caravan started out in 1968 as a post-psychedelic pop group, but soon began expanding their instrumental and compositional horizons. By this their third album, their whimsical, stoned humour and sunny disposition brimmed over on *Golf Girl*, while the side-long suite *Nine Feet Underground*, with Dave Sinclair's jazzy, reedy organ to the fore, epitomised the Canterbury Scene subdivision of prog. *MBa*



“organised noise”. “Most of the time my guitar was lying on the studio floor,” he told MOJO’s Phil Sutcliffe. “So I unscrewed one of the legs from a mikestand, and just whizzed it up and down the neck – not very subtly.”

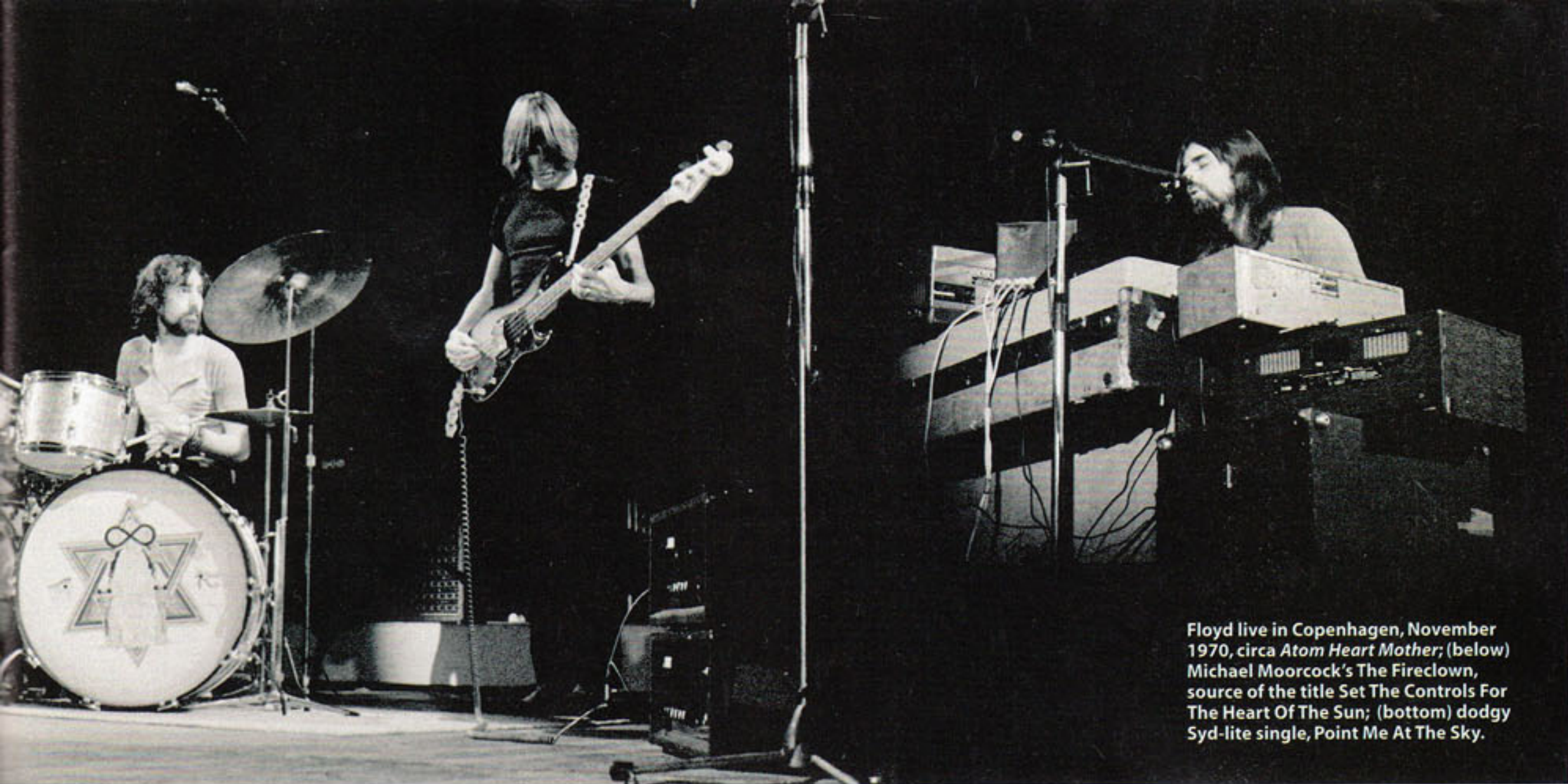
It was a departure for Gilmour, a musician who’d spent the past few years performing pop covers. But Pink Floyd’s newest member was still finding his feet. “In one of the first rehearsals we did, Roger got so unbearably awful that I stomped out of the rehearsal room for a few hours,” he recalled. “I was just trying to be a part of what was going on – I was playing a bit of Hendrix, a bit of Syd. I don’t think the band had fixed ideas about what I should do or how I should do it.”

A SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS WAS RELEASED IN JUNE 1968. It mixed charming psych-pop, such as Wright’s *Remember A Day*, with the improvisational title track and similarly free-form *Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun*, the title discovered in underground author Michael Moorcock’s futuristic novel *The Fireclown*. Realising that they couldn’t create another *See Emily Play*, Floyd had taken a different path – one that was neither Syd-lite or a pastiche of Clapton or Hendrix. “*A Saucerful Of Secrets* helped us sort out a direction,” said Mason at the time. “We’re not competing for who can play the guitar fastest. It’s actually about finding that you can provoke the most extraordinary sounds from a piano by scratching around inside it.”

The album meandered to Number 9, only three places below *Piper*... It seemed that, even with their source of singles gone, Pink Floyd could sell albums. EMI still had reservations. “Their attitude was, ‘Yes, that’s very nice, but now you have to get back to making proper records,’” recalled Waters.

But the group were already investigating further alternatives to “proper records”. That summer, Waters told Melody Maker that Floyd had applied for a £5,000 arts council grant to stage a live production of a new piece, which he compared to Homer’s *The Iliad*. Meanwhile, there was film work: an abstract soundtrack for *The Committee*, a surreal-noir drama starring Manfred Mann singer Paul Jones, and an offer from Franco-Swiss director Barbet Schroeder to score his youth culture-inspired, drugs-and-nudity flick, *More*. In a hectic nine days at Pye Studios in London’s West End, Waters composed five of the soundtrack’s 12 songs singlehandedly. “I was sitting at the side of the studio writing lyrics while we were putting down the backing tracks,” he recalled.

For a band later renowned for wasting days at Abbey Road nibbling at half-formed ideas, this was fast work. The results



Floyd live in Copenhagen, November 1970, circa *Atom Heart Mother*; (below) Michael Moorcock's *The Fireclown*, source of the title *Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun*; (bottom) dodgy Syd-lite single, *Point Me At The Sky*.

"THE IDEA THAT ROGER WAS GOING TO WRITE THE SONGS WOULD HAVE MADE ME COLLAPSE WITH LAUGHTER." PETER JENNER

were impressive. The ethereal *Cymbaline*, sung by Gilmour (still sharing lead vocals with Waters and Wright), had a focus absent from much of *A Saucerful Of Secrets*. Better still, Floyd's *More* soundtrack hit the UK Top 10.

LIVE, FLOYD TROD THE COLLEGE CIRCUIT and played fundraisers for the Glasgow Arts Lab and the Camden Fringe Festival, their increasingly unconventional approach continuing to curry favour with Afghan-coated 'heads'.

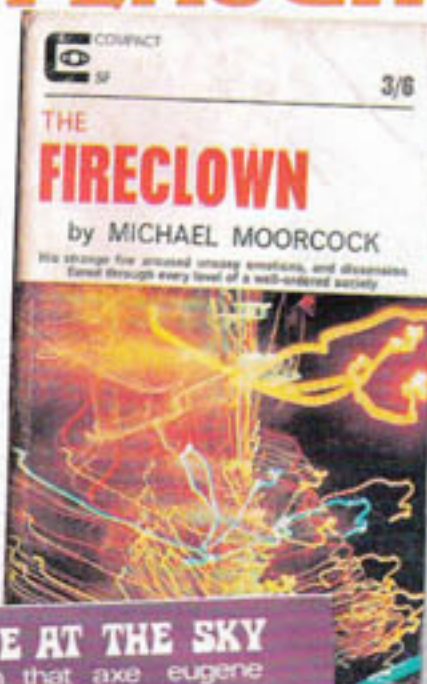
"Floyd were very trippy, very druggy," remembers UFO regular Caroline Coon, "but very 'white rock'."

But the degree to which Floyd and the underground were attuned was still moot. Wright and Gilmour smoked weed, but Waters and Mason preferred Scotch, and Waters had sworn off LSD after his second trip in New York in 1968 found him "stuck halfway across Eighth Avenue while trying to buy a sandwich and a bottle of milk... frozen and unable to move."

In July 1969 the BBC asked Pink Floyd to play live as they broadcast footage of the Apollo 11 moon landing. The group utilised material from *The Man*, one of two compositions they'd been working on since before *More*. Both marked Pink Floyd's inaugural trip into what Waters called "inner, not outer, space".

"The Man and The Journey was the story of a day in the life of Everyman," Waters explained. "Sleep, Work, Play, Start Again..." At a concert at the Royal Festival Hall in April, the band sawed wood and hammered nails on-stage to dramatise the "Work" theme, before being served tea by their road crew. As well as growing in confidence as a writer, Waters wanted to make Floyd gigs an event. "It was all part of Roger's desire to make a bigger show," said Wright.

Neither *The Man* or *The Journey* were deemed suitable when Floyd next prepared to make an album, in January 1969. "Everybody assembled on the first day at Abbey Road," recalls engineer Peter Mew. "[Producer] Norman Smith asked, 'Have you got any songs?' To which they replied, 'No.'"



It was decided that each band member would have a quarter of the album each to pilot a separate song, but not everyone was sold on the idea. "I experienced abject terror," admitted Gilmour. "We didn't know what the fuck else to do." In desperation, he begged Waters to write lyrics for him, but the bassist refused. In the end, Gilmour fashioned part of *The Journey into The Narrow Way*, one of the more inviting of the finished album's five solo tracks.

Ummagumma (a slang term for sex coined by a Floyd roadie/familiar nicknamed Emo) appeared in November '69 – a double album containing two sides of live material. But to hear the band thundering through their UFO signature tune *Interstellar Overdrive*, next to Waters' *musique concrète*-meets-BBC Radiophonic Workshop experiment, *Several Species Of Small Furry Animals Gathered Together In A Cave And Grooving With A Pict*, illustrated how much Pink Floyd had changed in just over 12 months – and not entirely for the better.

"*Saucerful...* had pointed the way ahead, and we studiously ignored the signposts and headed off making *Ummagumma*," said Mason. "It proves that we did better when everyone worked together rather than as individuals."

FLOYD'S AUDIENCE, HOWEVER, SEEMED HAPPY enough. *Ummagumma* reached Number 3, making it the group's highest charting album so far – a boost for EMI's new Harvest imprint, which was being pitched as 'the home of progressive music'. On a roster that included psychedelic folkies *East Of Eden* and counterculture heavies *Edgar Broughton Band*, Pink Floyd led the field not only in terms of profile and sales but also sound.

Their status as the intellectuals' house rock'n'roll band was underlined when *Blow-Up* director Michelangelo Antonioni hired them to write the music for *Zabriskie Point*, his formless eulogy to sexy student radicals confronting *The Man*. But the work ethic that had borne fruit on the *More* project was abandoned. Instead, the band checked into an up-market hotel in Rome and proceeded to work their way through the wine list on Antonioni's dollar. Harder to please than Barbet Schroeder, the Italian included only three of Floyd's compositions on the soundtrack.

MEANWHILE... IN SYDWORLD

Floyd's sacked frontman comes to terms with solo status, soup, 1968-71.

January 20, 1968

Syd Barrett plays his final gig with Pink Floyd at Hastings' Pavilion Ballroom.

March 16, 1968

Barrett turns up uninvited at Pink Floyd's gig at Middle Earth in Covent Garden. "Syd stood in front of the stage and stared at me all night long. Horrible!" recalled David Gilmour.

May 6, 1968



Syd makes his solo recording debut at Abbey Road. Further sessions take place during the month before being abandoned. "It was all

a bit of a mess," says manager/producer Peter Jenner (above).

April 10, 1969



Barrett starts recording again at Abbey Road. Peter Jenner refuses to produce and is replaced by EMI's Harvest label manager Malcolm Jones (left).

June 12, 1969

At EMI's request, Roger Waters and David Gilmour join Barrett at Abbey Road to try and salvage his new material. Gilmour: "Syd was in a very poor state."

July 15, 1969

Barrett unexpectedly joins friends on holiday in Ibiza. He arrives at the airport carrying two bags: one stuffed with unwashed clothes, the other with £5,000 in banknotes.

July 20, 1969



Syd watches TV coverage of the moon landings, soundtracked by Pink Floyd, at his flat in Earls Court. "Syd never said a word," recalls friend Susan Kingsford. "But we all thought the moon landings were a conspiracy by the Americans."

November 14, 1969

Barrett releases his debut single, Octopus.

January 3, 1970



Syd Barrett's debut album, *The Madcap Laughs*, is finally released in the UK and charts at Number 40.

January 12, 1970

Barrett plays guitar on the ex-Soft Machine frontman Kevin Ayers' solo single, *Singing A Song In The Morning*.

February 24, 1970



Syd records a session for DJ John Peel's Top Gear BBC radio show. The session's producers have to communicate with Syd via David Gilmour.

February 26, 1970



Barrett starts work on his second album, *Barrett*, at Abbey Road, with David Gilmour producing.

March 25, 1970

Syd turns up at Abbey Road's Studio 2 where Pink Floyd are recording *Atom Heart Mother*. "He spun out again as quickly as he spun in," recalls AHM co-writer Ron Geesin.

June 6, 1970

Barrett performs five songs at the Extravaganza '70, Music & Fashion Festival, Kensington Olympia. His band features David Gilmour playing bass, and Jerry Shirley on drums.

October 1, 1970



Barrett, now living back at his family home in Cambridge, gets engaged to girlfriend Gayla Pinion (left). During an engagement dinner he throws a bowl of soup at his fiancée, before going

to the bath-room and cutting off his long hair.

November 14, 1970

Barrett is released in the UK, but fails to chart. "Syd Barrett is capable of much greater things than this," complains Disc & Music Echo.

December 23, 1971



Syd Barrett's final press interview with photographer/writer Mick Rock is published in

Rolling Stone. "I don't think I'm easy to talk about," he tells Rock. "I've got a very irregular head."

1 the committee



2



3



4



◀ "You'd change whatever was wrong and he'd still be unhappy," recalled Waters. "It was hell."

Meanwhile, with their bank accounts looking healthier since the success of *Ummagumma*, Pink Floyd had been slowly clearing their debts from the Jenner/King era and making money. Mason and Waters had wed their childhood sweethearts, Lindy Rutter and Judy Trim, and bought townhouses in Camden and Islington respectively. Wright had married long-term girlfriend Juliette Gale, and had just become a father. Only Gilmour was still enjoying a rock star-about-town lifestyle. His Earls Court pad overlooked Syd Barrett's flat, and featured a handy grass verge beneath the balcony, allowing a soft landing for any house guest who might accidentally topple over while out of their mind on Mandrax. Soon, though, Gilmour would move out to the country, purchasing a farmhouse in Roydon, Essex, where he would later live with his American girlfriend, Ginger Hasenbein.

A regular at Rick Wright's Bayswater dinner parties was Scottish poet and jazz musician Ron Geesin. Geesin had seen Pink Floyd at UFO, but had never been impressed by what he calls "their astral wanderings". He was happy to hang out with them now, however, listening to jazz and arguing about politics, albeit with one caveat: "Whenever any pot smoking started, I stayed out of it. I was a pint-of-beer man."

With Waters, Geesin co-wrote the soundtrack to TV director Roy Battersby's eccentric documentary introduction to human biology, *The Body*, and soon signed up to help out on Pink Floyd's next album, *Atom Heart Mother*. "Pink Floyd were all essentially 'very nice boys' – sensitive, well educated and considerate," Geesin told me in 2006. "But by the time I appeared, they had also hit creative exhaustion. They needed an outside view."

Among the *Zabriskie Point* leftovers was a guitar theme that would become the catalyst for a 20-minute composition – provisionally titled *The Amazing Pudding* – to which

Syd Barrett photographed for Melody Maker in March 1971: "I've got a very irregular head."



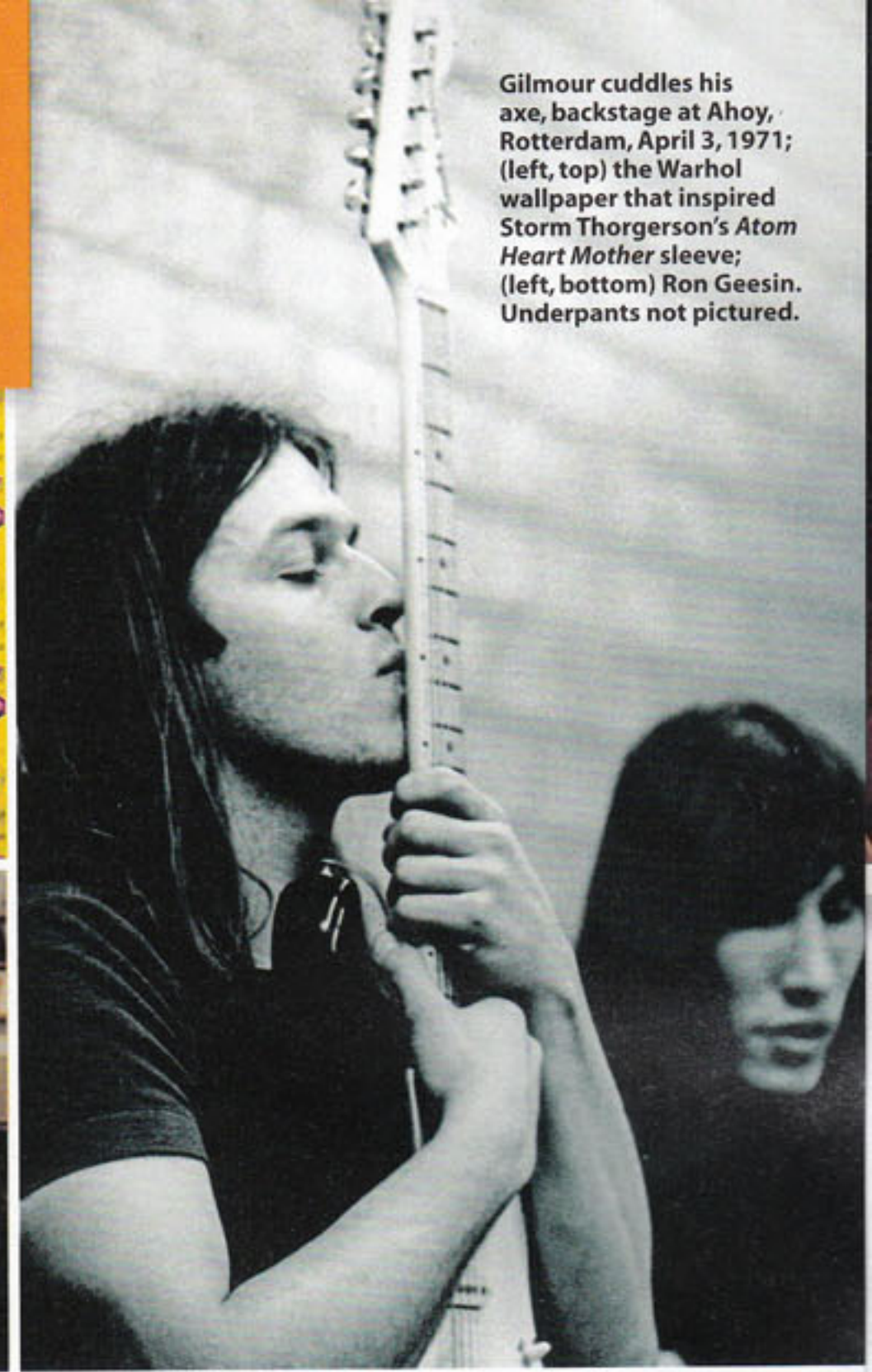
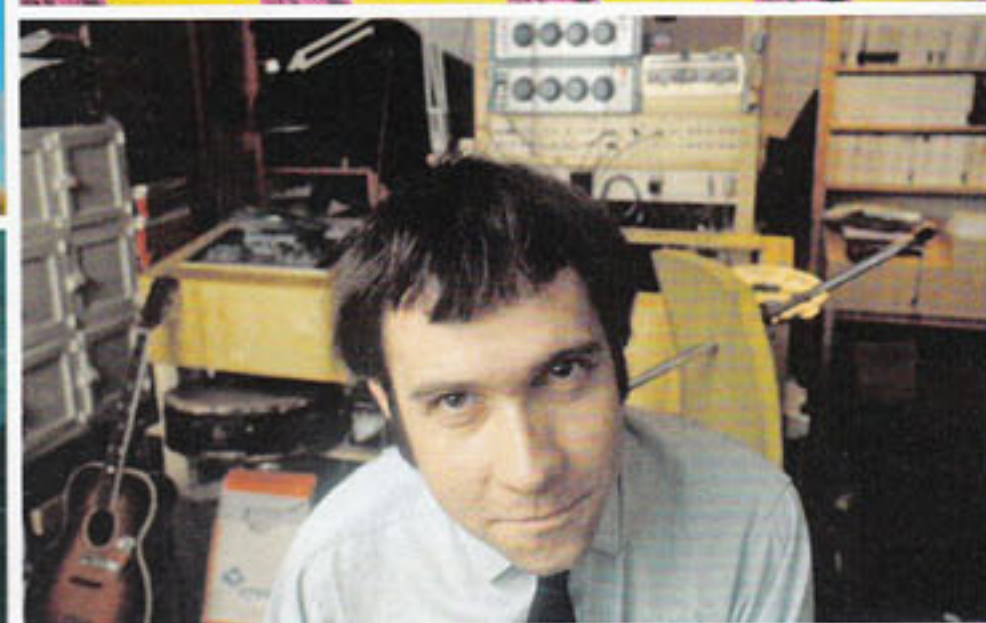
CELLULOID FLOYD

NUMBER 1: *The Committee* (1968), directed by Peter Sykes. Paul Jones decapitates man with a car bonnet; Arthur Brown cameos.

NUMBER 2: Barbet Schroeder's *More* (1969). Euro-trash go drug-ape in Ibiza. Schroeder went on to make *La Vallée* and *Barfly*.

NUMBER 3: Michelangelo Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point* (1970). Student radicals escape to the desert, have orgy, blow things up; real-life Black Panther Kathleen Cleaver cameos.

NUMBER 4: *The Body* by Roy Battersby (1970). Experimental bio-documentary soundtracked by Roger Waters and Ron Geesin.



Gilmour cuddles his axe, backstage at Ahoy, Rotterdam, April 3, 1971; (left, top) the Warhol wallpaper that inspired Storm Thorgerson's *Atom Heart Mother* sleeve; (left, bottom) Ron Geesin. Underpants not pictured.

"PINK FLOYD WERE ALL ESSENTIALLY VERY NICE, SENSITIVE BOYS. BUT THEY HAD ALSO HIT CREATIVE EXHAUSTION." RON GEESIN

Geesin would write a score for brass musicians and a choir. First, Waters and Mason were tasked with recording the backing track. Unfortunately, EMI had imposed a new rule rationing tape at Abbey Road meaning the rhythm section were restricted to one erratic take before disappearing on a US tour.

"They handed me this track and left me to get on with it," says Geesin. "I sat in my studio stripped to my underpants in the unbelievably hot summer of 1970 and wrote out a score for a choir and brass players. It was incredibly hard work."

But the backing track's wavering tempo and Geesin's inexperience as a conductor led to problems as soon as he and the band reconvened at Abbey Road with EMI's top session players. "One horn player was especially mouthy," Geesin recalls. When the Scot threatened to punch the recalcitrant musician "they had me removed". The more emollient conductor John Aldiss replaced him, and the Floyd's new suite was completed without fisticuffs.

The six-part piece, destined to become *Atom Heart Mother's* title track, fused brass, strings and a choir with some distinctively sleepy guitar and organ fills. The album's second half comprised four individual songs, including Gilmour's melodious *Fat Old Sun*, and concluded with the comical Alan's *Psychedelic Breakfast*, which incorporated the sound of sizzling bacon, crackling cereal and mumbling roadie Alan Styles reproduced in glorious quadraphonic. *Fat Old Sun* would be a turning point for David Gilmour. A year on from *The Narrow Way*, his confidence as a writer had grown immeasurably. "I still think it's a fantastic song," he said of a tune he still rolls out at solo shows. "It felt like I was giving something properly of myself." So certain was Gilmour of what he wanted that he, not Mason, played drums on the song. The dynamic within the group was changing.

"My report card for *Atom Heart Mother* would be: good idea, could try harder," said the drummer. Waters would later condemn the whole album as "horrible", yet it presaged the future with the ambition and seriousness of *Side 1* and the accessible melancholy of *Side 2's* pithier songs. And if the music was variable, there was still

the sleeve to enjoy. According to Floyd art director Storm Thorgerson, design company Hipgnosis had chosen an image "as uncosmic as we could find". Inspired by Andy Warhol's bovine-themed wallpaper, they'd stuck a photo of a cow on the cover. To EMI's horror, they insisted that the image remained free of any wording, even the band's name. Objections were forgotten when *Atom Heart Mother* – "Pink Floyd's most human LP," according to *Sounds* magazine – went to Number 1 in October 1970.

Within the group it seemed like a hollow victory. Roger Waters was soon telling interviewers that he was "bored with most of the stuff we play" – shortly to become a familiar mantra. And when French choreographer Roland Petit asked Floyd to compose the score for a ballet based on Marcel Proust's epic novel *À La Recherche Du Temps Perdu*, they jumped at the chance, although the project never came to fruition. But the art-house movie scores, the ballets and the experimentation couldn't hide the fact that Floyd's greatest strength was now more conventional songwriting. The classically trained Wright may have listened to Stockhausen, but Floyd were also Beatles and Dylan fans, whose guitarist/vocalist used to sing Sam & Dave and 4 Seasons covers.

Unlike their friendly rivals at UFO, the wilfully experimental Soft Machine, Floyd's approach to experimentation came from rock, not jazz or the European avant-garde, and had been partly dictated by their inability to write pop songs. Three years on, that had all changed. "In a few months you will probably be hearing an entirely different side to the group," forewarned Gilmour in *Melody Maker*. "*Atom Heart Mother* was the beginning of an end."

IN JANUARY 1971, PINK FLOYD BEGAN WORK ON WHAT would become *Meddle* in Abbey Road, later moving to George Martin's Air Studios. For the first time, the band were producing themselves, without any input from Norman Smith, and the early indications were inauspicious.

"They spent days and days working on what people now call ➤

UNDER THE VOLCANO

French director Adrian Maben introduced *Meddle* to the world with his groundbreaking concert film, *Pink Floyd: Live At Pompeii*. But if he hadn't lost his passport, it might never have happened.

“Anyone been to Pompeii? I want to know if I can wander around the amphitheatre where Pink Floyd played?’ was a question recently posted on the Net. Interestingly, it would seem that some people visit the historical site, not for the ruins, but to see the place where Pink Floyd played, and I filmed them, in 1971.

By 1970 I'd had the idea that concert films with audiences jumping around were becoming a cliché. Woodstock was the best or worst example, depending on your point of view. Pink Floyd: Live At Pompeii was conceived as an anti-Woodstock film, where there would be zero audience, except for cameramen, their assistants and one script girl. It would make visible everything that is normally kept hidden. And Pompeii was an integral part of the film. The amphitheatre, the streets, the ruined temples and mosaics play a role that is directly linked to Pink Floyd's music.

During the summer holidays of 1971 I was munching sandwiches at lunchtime with my girlfriend on the stone seats of the amphitheatre in Pompeii. When I realised in the early evening that I had lost my passport, I persuaded the guards at the

entrance to let me back in. It must have been nearly 8pm, and the light was dying fast. Bats were flitting around and you could hear millions of insect noises reverberating from one wall to the other. Instinctively I knew that this was the place for the film. I returned to the hotel and wrote a letter to [Pink Floyd manager] Steve O'Rourke in London. Pompeii, I suggested, had everything for a concert film. It would be unprecedented for a rock group to choose this historical site destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79AD.

Pink Floyd agreed, but problems played havoc with our planned six-day schedule. On day one, we could not get the electricity to work. It would come on for a minute and then go dead. On day two, the same thing, in spite of help from the Italian electricity board.

Since we couldn't film anything in the amphitheatre we went to Pozzuoli and nearby Solfatara to try and film the Floyd walking round the pools of bubbling mud. But alas, this was the first Sunday in October, the day of the procession of the Madonna, the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary, between the Cathedral of Pompeii and the Piazza Garibaldi in Naples. Thousands of pilgrims block the streets leading to Naples. So Pink Floyd and the camera crew just sat in their car and waited for three hours.

I began to think that the film had been cursed and that we would never be able to shoot anything. But we stuck it out and finally arrived at Solfatara and managed to get some images.

Upon our return to the amphitheatre we finally heard some good news: the electricity was working! A long cable had been connected from the Cathedral of Pompeii to the amphitheatre.

“On day one, we could not get the electricity to work. I began to think that the film had been cursed.”

But on the evening before the shoot was finally due to begin, Steve O'Rourke came to see me with a vinyl demo of *Meddle* on which, for the first time, I heard Echoes. “That's what we want to do,” he said. I pointed out that all my detailed script work and timings had been planned for their earlier pieces, and that it would be impossible to redo everything the night before the first day of shooting.

After a certain amount of discussion we agreed that we would film Echoes first and then do at least two older Pink Floyd numbers. I borrowed a portable plastic gramophone from the hotel concierge and worked all night with a stopwatch, a ruler and an exercise book, trying to calculate the camera positions and movements.

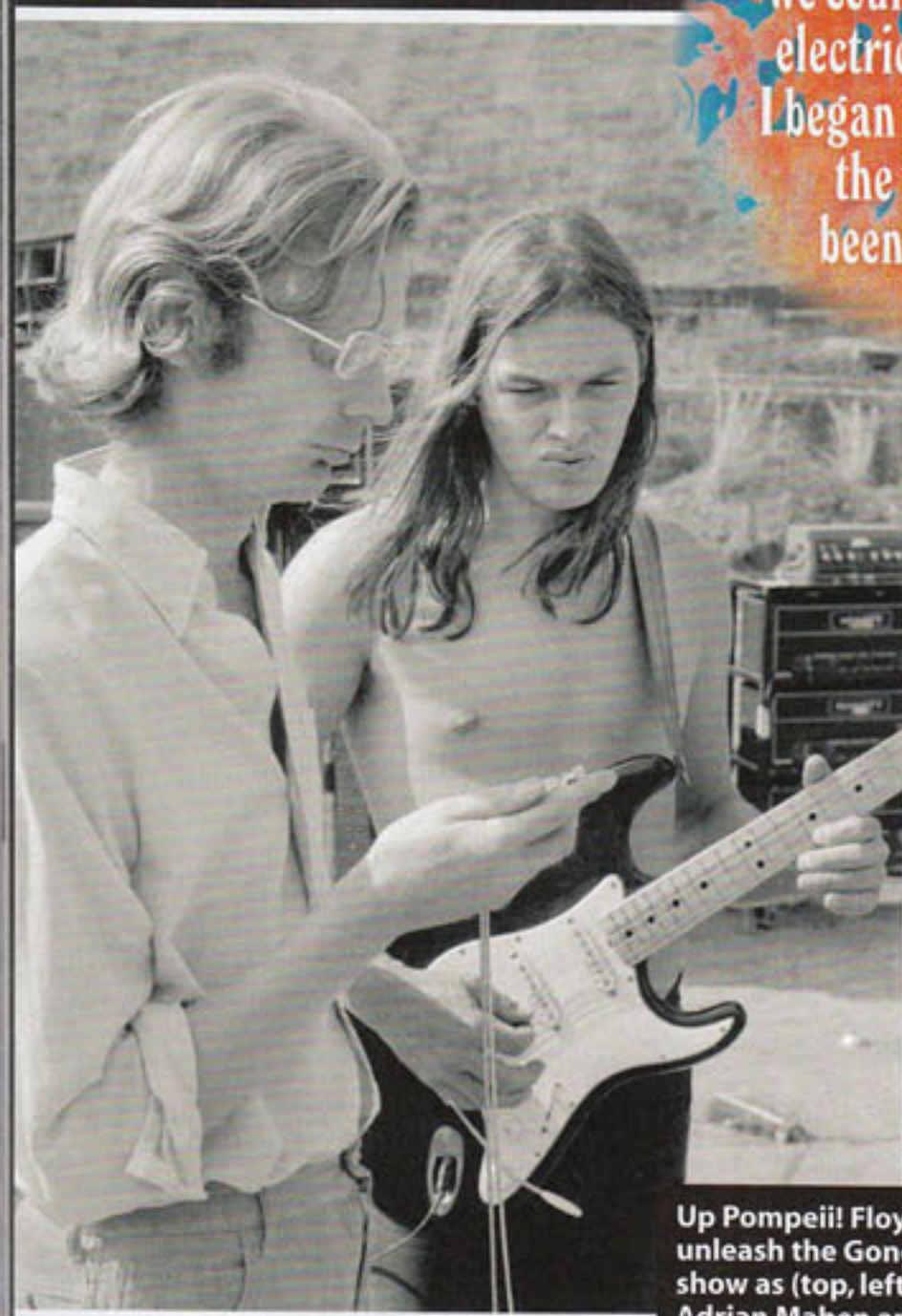
The film was shot in 35mm on four cameras, and the recording was done on an 8-track machine. After each shot, the band would stop playing and listen. I distinctly remember seeing them huddled around the recorder checking very carefully what they had just played. If they found mistakes then they would do it again until they were satisfied.

But, above all, there was the problem of expensive 35mm film. It was clear that we would never finish the shoot with the stock we had, so I came up with the idea of leaving gaps in the film that could be filled in when the band came to Paris later in the year.

This second shoot at the Studios de Boulogne went surprisingly smoothly, and we filmed three additional numbers: Careful With That Axe Eugene, Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun and Mademoiselle Nobs [a reworked version of *Meddle's* Seamus]. While in Paris, the group visited the Europa-Sonor Wagram studio, and spent the day improving what had already been recorded and eating oysters. Fortunately I had brought with me a 16mm camera, some film and a cameraman. The laughter, the cutting remarks and the jokes about oysters somehow summed up the Floyd as they were at the end of 1971.

One year later, I timidly asked Roger Waters about doing a third shoot. He replied, “I will think about it. I must ask the others, of course.” Two months later, I got a call: “Come over to Abbey Road next week. One camera only and no interference with the recording.”

It turned out that I had been asked to film the band making *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. Good luck, I suppose. But as Pasteur once remarked: “Chance favours those who are well prepared” – or words to that effect.



Up Pompeii! Floyd unleash the Gong show as (top, left) Adrian Maben and David Gilmour check the timings, October 1971.

