

MOJO

The Music Magazine


SYD

THE ULTIMATE
CELEBRATION

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THE BOY WHO NEVER GREW UP

SYD BARRETT WAS THE FRAGILE SEER WHO SET **PINK FLOYD** ON THEIR STELLAR PATH BEFORE STUMBLING INTO THE WILDERNESS. IN OUR 19-PAGE TRIBUTE, ON THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH, HIS SISTER **ROSEMARY BREEN** REVEALS THE MAN BEHIND THE MYTH: "HE WAS A CHILD OF 60 AND A CHILD OF THE '60s."

PLUS! MUSICIANS AND WRITERS SALUTE BRITISH PSYCHEDELIA'S VISIONARY GENIUS.

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Songs of innocence: Roger 'Syd' Barrett performing with early Cambridge band Those Without at the Blue Horizon, 1965; (opposite) with his sister Rosemary, 1961.



PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

FEW UNDERSTOOD **ROGER 'SYD' BARRETT** BETTER THAN HIS SISTER, **ROSEMARY**. IN A RARE, CANDID INTERVIEW, SHE DISCUSSES THEIR CHILDHOOD, HIS INFLUENCES, HIS FINAL YEARS, AND THE LEGACY OF "A UNIQUE AND LOVEABLE MAN."

WORDS: **MARK BLAKE**

IT'S SOMETIME IN THE EARLY 1950s IN THE Barrett family home at 183 Hills Road, Cambridge, and youngest son Roger is conducting an orchestra from his bed. The future Pink Floyd frontman and psychedelic poster boy is supposed to be asleep. Instead, he's staging an imaginary musical performance in the room he shares with his sister Rosemary.

Sketches and drawings sit alongside fairytale books, including Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland*, in the darkened bedroom. Meanwhile, sheets billow like ocean waves as the young Roger Barrett leaps from his bed, arms swiping the air around him, directing the symphony playing inside his head.

Is it make-believe or can he actually 'hear' music?

Nobody can be sure. Even as a child, Rosemary accepts that her brother has what she now describes as, "an original head", full of original thoughts.

THE YOUNG ROGER BARRETT HAD AN ORIGINAL view of the world almost from the day he arrived in January 1946. But there was nothing Roger liked more than to entertain.

"He was always conducting imaginary orchestras," says Rosemary now, "and just doing silly things to amuse us. He wanted to be a clown, and if nobody was laughing he would make people laugh."

Roger 'Syd' Barrett turned his back on a performing career while still in his twenties, and lived the last 25 years of his life in seclusion, with just family members for company. In October 2016, the Cambridge Corn Exchange will unveil a memorial and host a concert, Syd Barrett – A Celebration, in his honour. The Barrett family has endorsed the event. Which is why, on an overcast afternoon in March, his youngest sister Rosemary has agreed to meet MOJO in a gastro-pub in Whittlesford, a village just south of Cambridge.

Rosemary Barrett has been Rosemary Breen since 1974, and she remained close to her brother until his death from pancreatic cancer in July 2006. For many years, neither she nor the family spoke publicly about the man once known as Syd Barrett. "I will always call him Roger," says Rosemary at the outset of our conversation. "It's what we do in the family. We call him 'Syd' when talking about... the damaged person."

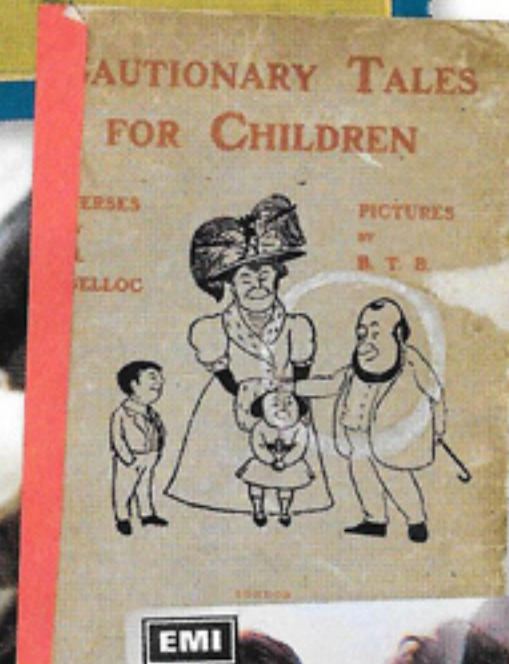
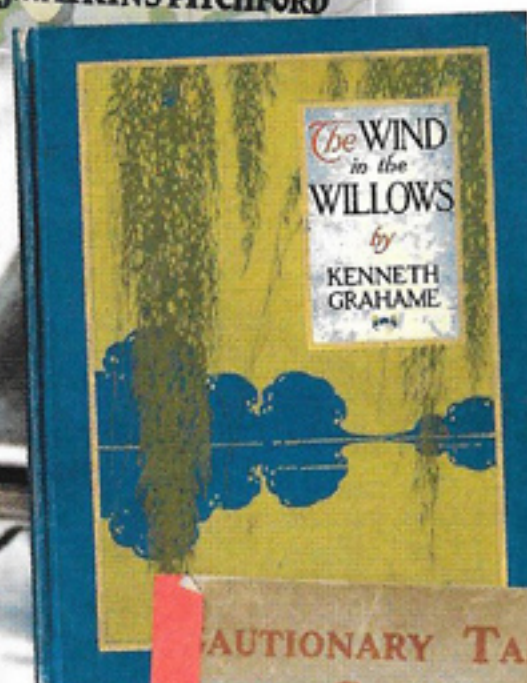
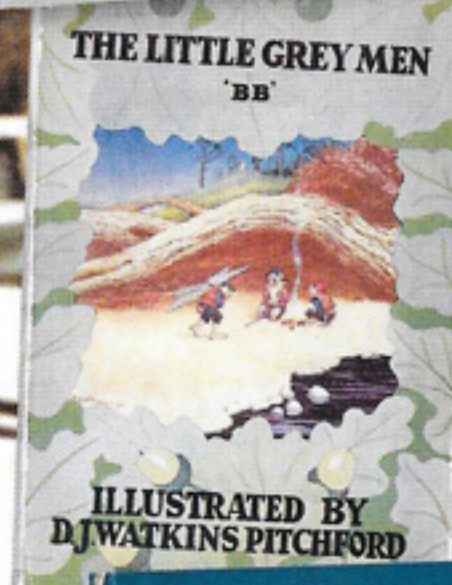
Rosemary is friendly, but understandably cautious; the aftermath of periodically fending off the journalists and Barrett obsessives who door-stepped her brother in later life. She's also bemused by the media's fascination with Syd Barrett. "I thought this concert might bring us closure... if you like." She laughs gently. "But my husband, who's very wise, said, 'Not likely'..."

There were five Barrett children. Older brothers Donald and Alan and sister Ruth came first. Then ➤





In Wonderland: Roger and Rosemary on holiday in Norfolk (below left), in fancy dress (below right). "There are no photos of me without him," she says.



◀ Roger and Rosemary. "As children there are no photos of me without him and him without me," she explains, before producing several faded photographs: there's the two of them as toddlers on holiday in Norfolk, in fancy dress at a primary school fete, as teenagers in 1961...

It is indeed difficult to equate this cheerful, grinning Roger with the haunted 'Syd' stretched out on the bonnet of his Pontiac in photographer Mick Rock's images of 1969.

According to Rosemary, her brother's childhood was a blissful time. "He had huge charisma almost from the day he was born," she recalls. "He had this incredible twinkle in his eye. Girls adored him. My mother's girlfriends were all in love with him."

His artistic talent was obvious long before he started playing music. "Roger could just look at something and be able to draw it immediately. Still lifes, figure drawings, pictures of people in the family... He had a natural artistic bent." If there was a theme to his taste in art, literature and, eventually, music it was escapism: a trait that endured long after he'd retreated from public life. "We used to read all the fantasy books," says Rosemary. "Alice In Wonderland was one of his favourites. Anything fantasy – not science fiction – and he'd be there."

The order of service at Barrett's funeral included an extract from The Little Grey Men, Denys Watkins-Pitchford's 1942 fairytale about the last gnomes in Britain. "The Little Grey Men was also about nature," points out Rosemary. "Roger liked anything with nature or children or the world of make-believe. Something like being able to walk through a wardrobe into another world [as in CS Lewis's The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe]. That appealed to his brain – the idea that you could make something magically happen. Roger was always imagining the next thing that could magically happen."

Copyright Rosemary Breen (4), Mark Hayward Archives, Rex

"IT WAS SO DANGEROUS WHEN A BRAIN LIKE HIS GOT IN TOUCH WITH LSD."

Cautionary tale: 'Syd' in 1969 on his Pontiac; (insets, above right) four books that influenced (right) The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn.



SYD A CELEBRATION

A PREVIEW OF THE HOMETOWN HAPPENING HONOURING FLOYD'S FIRST LEADER.

SYD BARRETT made his last known live appearance at the Cambridge Corn Exchange with the group Stars in February '72. Fittingly, the Corn Exchange will be the venue for a tribute concert, Syd Barrett – A Celebration, on October 27 this year.

The Celebration will feature a performance of Barrett's music by the Swedish group Men On The Border, backed by the Sandviken Symphony Orchestra, and a light show by Pink Floyd's former lighting engineer Peter Wynne-Willson.

The charity Cambridge Live also invited artists to pitch ideas for a memorial art installation, which will be unveiled at the Corn Exchange on the same day.

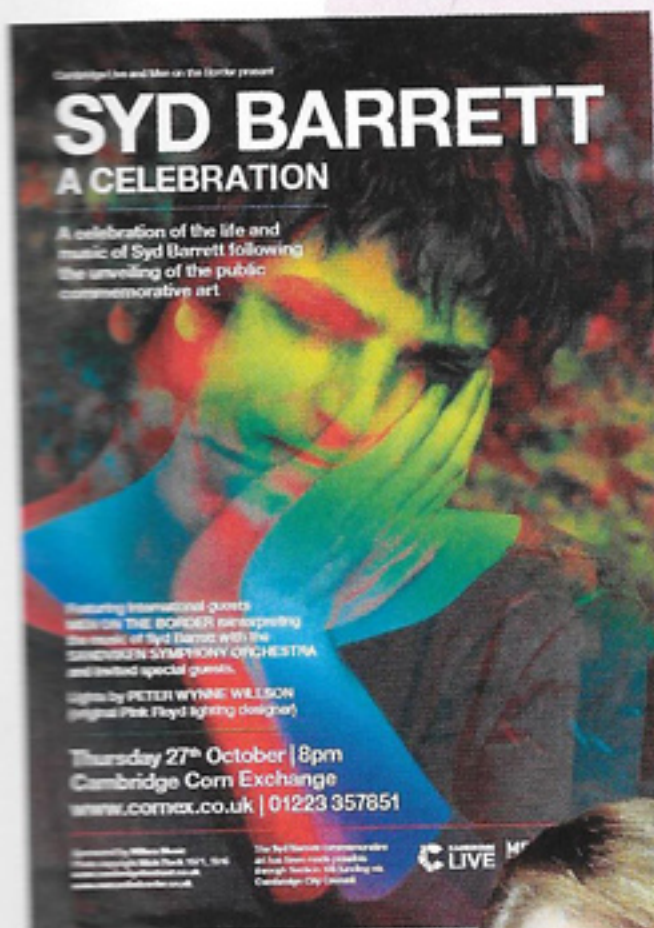
Rosemary Breen and her nephew, Ian Barrett, who runs the official Syd website, helped choose the winning entry, entitled CODA, which incorporates LED images and Barrett lyrics plus a spinning bicycle wheel in honour of the Floyd song Bike. "We got it down to four from about 17 artists," explains Rosemary, "and there were some very strange ideas I couldn't get my head around at all," she adds, laughing.

"But I have a feeling Roger would like this one, I really do." What would he think of the idea of a memorial and a tribute concert? "I think he'd laugh. One always knew he was going to do something unusual and big in his life. But not to this extent."

"He didn't make music for 40 years, didn't pick up a guitar for 20, and it's 10 years since he died. It's rather strange in anybody's book."

While Rosemary confesses to not understanding the ongoing fascination with her brother's music ("It's a mystery to the family"), she's happy to support the event. "I would like it to celebrate a unique

and lovable man who inspired many generations," she says. "And it's lovely that it's happening here in Cambridge."



What do you want?
"This isn't music" –
Barrett's verdict on
Adam Faith;

The line between these childhood books and Barrett's music is obvious. Pink Floyd's 1967 debut, *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, was named after chapter seven of Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind In The Willows*; *The Little Grey Men* reappeared as *The Gnome*, and there are shades of Alice's mystical adventures and Hilaire Belloc's *Cautionary Tales* in *Matilda Mother*. Roger's musical talent, however, came from his father. Dr Arthur Barrett, known to all as Max, was a pathologist, but also a keen musician, whose tastes included Debussy, Vaughan Williams and Beethoven. "My father was a very good pianist, and we all had piano lessons," says Rosemary, who played a piano duet with Roger at Cambridge Guildhall when they were 10 and 11.

But the future Syd Barrett's musical journey began with playing the jew's-harp as a seven-year-old, followed by the ukulele, before graduating to guitar as a teenager.

Inevitably, Max Barrett's death from cancer in December 1961 had a huge impact on the family. But Rosemary believes her father and his youngest son had a particular connection.

"Roger was 15 when he died and I think he was very affected. I think my father understood him. He was an academic, but still very in touch with humanity. I understood Roger as well, but I was still his little sister."

Perhaps Dr Barrett sensed something different about him. But asked whether she was aware of it as a child, Rosemary shakes her head: "No, when you grow up with it, you don't question it. But we knew he was completely different from our brothers."

Numerous theories have been floated about Barrett's condition. Among the more plausible is that he may have had Asperger's syndrome. "Oh, more than likely," concurs Rosemary. "We are all on the spectrum, but he was way over the other side," she adds, smiling. "Nowadays he would undoubtedly have been diagnosed. But we didn't know what that was in the '60s"

With the arrival of adolescence, Barrett's interests moved beyond art and books to jazz and blues. "I liked Adam Faith, and he was terribly rude about him," laughs Rosemary. "I came home with his LP, and Roger put it on. He played a second of one track, then put the needle on the next track, and did the same again – 'Oh, no, this isn't music.' But he liked [Charlie] Parker and [Thelonious] Monk, so it was hardly surprising."

The charismatic teenage Roger 'Syd' Barrett, with his Levi's, his guitar and his sunglasses at the height of winter ("He wore them once, and a week later everyone was doing the same") was soon a familiar figure in Cambridge.

In summer 1962, he enrolled at the Cambridge School Of Art. Gifted but rebellious, he infuriated his tutors, preferring to while away his

time playing guitar with fellow student David Gilmour. "This was a happy time for him," says Rosemary. "It was before he got into any real mischief. He would smoke the odd thing, but there wasn't that much around."

By now Roger had taken over their former playroom in the house, and filled it with canvases, paints, records and a stream of visitors. Among them was Roger Waters, a then rather imposing teenager with leather jacket and motorbike. "Roger [Waters] was older than me, and therefore always a bit dismissive," laughs Rosemary.

By now, Barrett's musical tastes encompassed Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and The Rolling Stones, whom he always favoured over The Beatles. "He loved the Stones. But he never liked The Beatles. I'd have thought he'd have liked what they did later on. But he never did."

Barrett was soon playing in a couple of local groups. But there was still no question of making music for a living: "Art was his first love. My mother angled him towards that, and she got him to go to Camberwell." Barrett moved to London to attend Camberwell art school in summer '64, and soon began playing in what became Pink Floyd. Rosemary moved to London soon after to train as a nurse at St George's Hospital in Tooting. "He got into a lot of other stuff very quickly," she sighs. "It was a strange time and I don't know if he was very happy."

Rosemary is not a great fan of Pink Floyd: "I never liked the music, to be honest. I don't understand it." That said, she sees a connection between her brother's unique way of experiencing the world and the early Floyd's psychedelic light show. Rosemary confirms the theory that her brother experienced the condition, synesthesia, in which he could, essentially, 'see' sounds and 'hear' colours. "When he talked about how he felt, he would call it a colour," she reveals. "Even as children, so I thought it was perfectly normal. It didn't have a label then. That psychedelic thing with the lights and the thump of the music was, I think, how he felt. Sound was colour, and colour was sound."

But another inspiration for Barrett's music was LSD. He was now moving in a social milieu where taking acid was actively encouraged. LSD enabled him to experience "a magical happening" but with

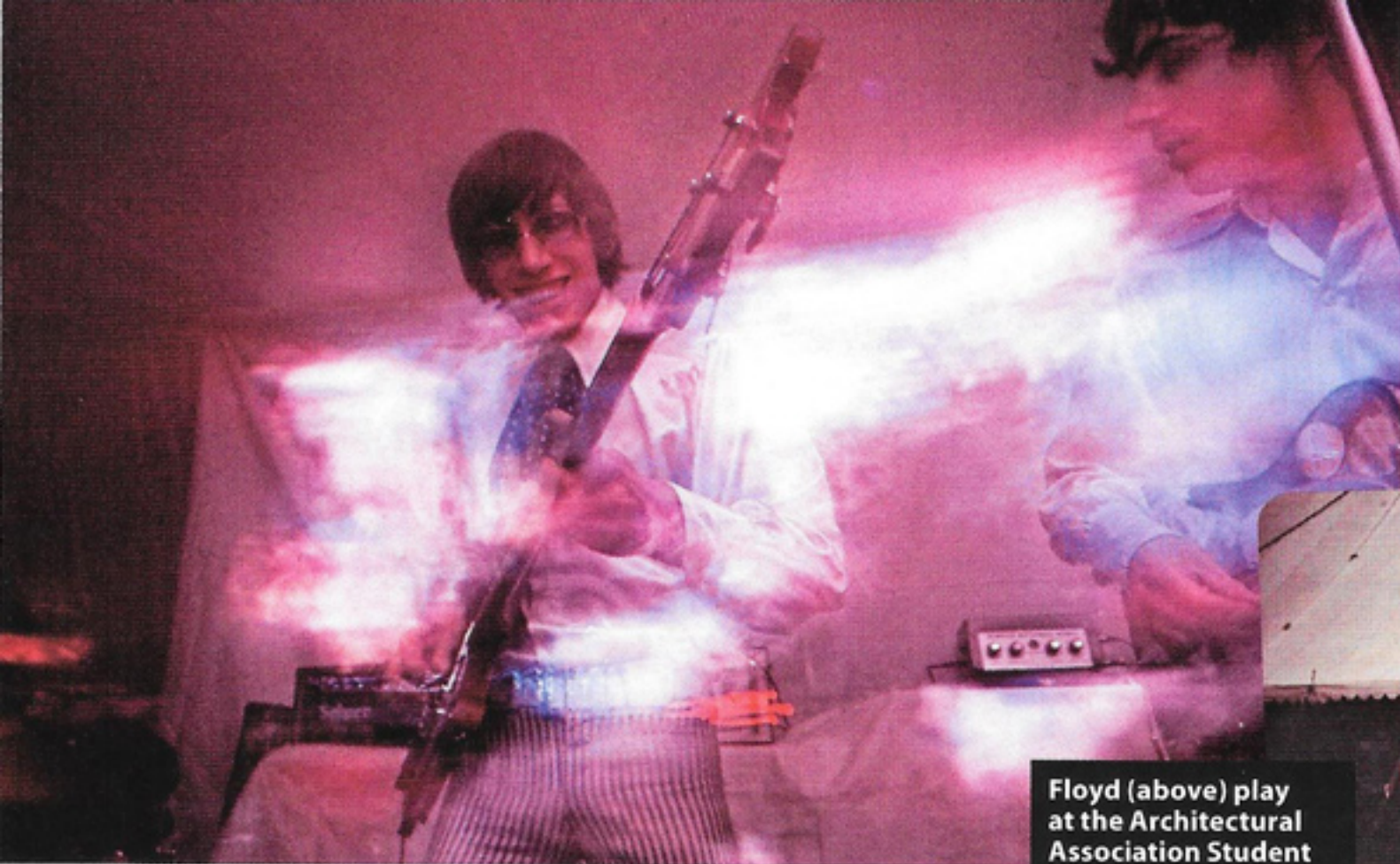
disastrous consequences. "I think it was so dangerous when a brain like his got in touch with LSD," she says. "There was already so much going on there. The other problem was, Roger was also always looking for the next thing – and that applied to drugs: 'Oh, if I take one of these and feel like this, what will I feel like when I take two?' We all have a bit of that in us, but most people know when to stop. Roger didn't."

Rosemary saw Pink Floyd play London's Roundhouse, most likely in autumn 1967. "It wasn't very nice," she says flatly. "He was away with the fairies." Barrett and Pink Floyd parted company the following year. Was she relieved? "Not relieved, no. I was worried there was nobody looking after him. It was a bad time," she adds, softly. "I don't really want to go there."

THE POPULAR LEGEND OF SYD BARRETT IS thrown into sharp relief by the reality of Roger Barrett, a very confused man adrift in early-'70s London. Rosemary has never listened to his solo albums, *The Madcap Laughs* and *Barrett*. "I suppose I should," she shrugs, "but they have nothing to do with me and him. I haven't any interest in it."

At some point around 1976, Roger left the ninth- ➤





ufo 31 tot. ct. rd.
 feb 27 pink floyd
 brothers grinn
 mar 3 soft machine
 mar 10 pink floyd

Floyd (above) play at the Architectural Association Student Party, 1966 with Syd (right); Rosemary, Roger and Winifred at Greenwoods, Essex.



◀ floor flat in Chelsea Cloisters near Sloane Square, where he'd been living for years. His money had seemingly run out. "He didn't open brown envelopes, basically, from the income tax people," says Rosemary. "The money was there, but it wasn't going to him from what he called 'the office'. He was very badly advised."

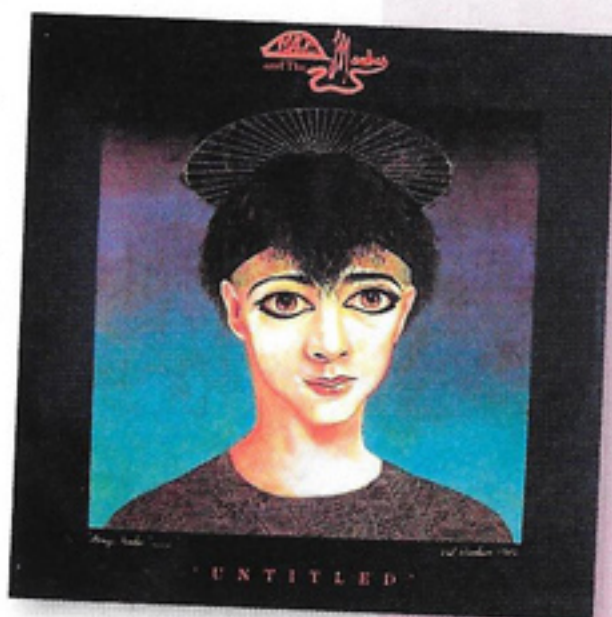
By the early 1980s, Roger was living at his mother Winifred's new house at 6 St Margaret's Square, Cambridge: "We tried to look after him within the family, but it was not easy. He was quite damaged. He also didn't understand the interest in who he'd been." Old Cambridge friends from the '60s still talk of seeing him around town but being reluctant to approach. "I turned anyone away who came to the house or asked him about Syd," admits Rosemary. "I probably was over-protective but he used to say, 'Don't speak to those people, will you' – and I respected that." "Those people" also included his former bandmates. That said, David Gilmour kept in touch with Rosemary ("He was the only one that cared, really") and is credited for ensuring Barrett was later paid his royalties, fully and on time.

Barrett apparently spent most of 1981 and '82 living at Greenwoods, an institution in Stock, Essex. Among Rosemary's photographs is one of the two of them and Winifred taken there in '81. "It was an open day," she recalls. "He was good when he was there. He made wastepaper baskets." She grins. "Then he just left."

Barrett walked from Essex to Cambridge, where he remained for the rest of his life. Returning was the catalyst for him going back to what he loved as a child: art. He adored the Roman and Byzantine periods – "It was the intricacy that appealed to him" – and thought Pablo Picasso's exaggerated heads and features were "very funny". Today Rosemary produces one of her brother's signed pictures: a framed watercolour containing a splash of swirling greens and blues – "a lovely little bit of sea".

It's one of the few artworks Barrett didn't destroy. Everything else was usually discarded, including the numerous gadgets acquired and then thrown away days later. "He didn't want to keep anything, because once it was done, it was done. It was the same with music. Why do the same thing twice? It had to be original." That statement alone explains why he walked away from Pink Floyd.

Instead, art became Barrett's therapy. "I remember him telling me that when he had an idea for a painting, he was really careful crossing the road," says Rose-



"A DARKNESS AND A BEAUTIFUL LIGHT."

MARK ALMOND
SWIMS IN THE MURKY
GOLDFISH BOWL OF
BARRETT'S TERRAPIN.



"TERRAPIN AND Late Night from *The Madcap Laughs* both have that sense of childhood innocence shot through with a touch of darkness and madness. That mood runs through most of his songs but his madness shone with a beautiful light. Terrapin floats lazily around in a goldfish bowl and Late Night reflects how a late night would be in Syd's world, an early morning, but through a haze. His songs sound as if they'll grind to a halt at any moment, a sleepy morning waking after a night of narcotics. It's amazing it got finished at all. Thank God for David Gilmour pulling it together and ending up with a strange masterpiece. Both of these songs I've sung, Terrapin on Marc & The Mambas' mini-album *Untitled* as it illustrated how my mind was at the time. There was a lot of Syd's spirit in that messy disc. I felt like that fish swimming around in the bowl. Syd was the perfect soundtrack to that phase of my life, falling apart, hazy, chaotic."

mary. "It made me realise how important it must be to him to get an idea out of his head, and how worried he was in case something happened to him. I always knew when he'd done a painting because he was much calmer."

Barrett spent his pop star afterlife painting, sculpting, drawing, occasionally travelling to London to visit Harrods or the Tate gallery, and doing DIY to what his family called "an interesting standard". The bathroom door was customised with a picture hook 'handle', and an occasional table was built with legs on one side and a sheet of chipboard on the other; impractical to everyone, except maybe him. Sadly, after being diagnosed with diabetes in the '90s, his health deteriorated, compounded by his reluctance to look after himself and remember to take his medicine.

"He had terrible health problems at the end," sighs Rosemary. "But we tried. I couldn't give him happiness because that was something he didn't know much about. But I strived to give him contentment. I think he was content."

"He got everything he needed," she adds. "But he was very reclusive. I'd have liked him to have had a friend or two."

Instead, Barrett saw out his final years living in the world inside his very 'original' head, escaping, perhaps, to a place only he fully understood. Shortly before his death, he went to London one last time to visit the Tate. At 4 o'clock that afternoon, he called Rosemary from a phone box, explaining that he'd spent all his money ("on absolute rubbish," she laughs) and couldn't get home. Rosemary sent a taxi from Cambridge to London to bring him back. The car picked him up from outside Chelsea Cloisters: "He'd been to have a look at the old place again."

It was one of the few times Barrett acknowledged his old life. And it's hard to shake the mental image of the latter-day Roger Barrett outside the flat in which he'd lived when he was still Syd Barrett, the so-called rock star, but now unrecognisable as the same man. Rosemary smiles at the memory, before asking MOJO a question.

"Has this helped you understand more about who he was?" she asks. It has. "He never had any responsibility, you see," she says. "He never had a job. He never had to grow up. He was a child, really. A child of 60 and a child of the '60s."

AN OPEN MIND

THE EARLIEST SONGS OF SYD BARRETT REVEAL A TALENT ALREADY ADEPT AT SPINNING UNSETTLING ENGLISH FAIRYTALES OF CLAUSTROPHOBIA AND DESPAIR. LOIS WILSON SORTS THROUGH THE OFFCUTS.

SYD BARRETT'S first attempts at writing placed The Pink Floyd in a contemporary British R&B setting aligning them with the mid-'60s sound of The Rolling Stones and The Yardbirds. Written in early 1965, Lucy Leave, also known as Lucy Lee In Blue Tights, was the first of his songs to be recorded in their first session at London's Regent Sound Studios, in that same spring, with a line-up that also comprised lead guitarist Rado 'Bob' Klose. Musically, it's rough edged and guitar driven, and pays a debt to Bo Diddley, whom Syd was a big fan of at this time. Barrett's meandering free-form guitar solo and rhythmically loose playing suggests a mind open to the possibilities of the progressive freakout and the avant-garde and the lyrics elevate it above simple R&B copy too. An English villanelle, it contains some of what would become Syd's compositional hallmarks, introducing a femininity and fancy proto-psychedelic whimsy in the first verse, "...been in love with you and your charms Lucy,"

he sings. There is also an ability to summon the claustrophobic grip of mental fracture: "You tear me apart, you just won't let me go, you hold on so tight, so tight I just can't breathe, now Lucy leave Lucy," which would become an *idée fixe* as he got deeper into the lysergic experience on *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*.

Also written in the spring of 1965, Butterfly is a Jimmy Reed blues played badly, but Barrett's lyrics take it somewhere else entirely. A beguiling paean with a sinister undercurrent, it's the first appearance of Syd's preoccupation with child-like fantasy, fairytale and the chimerical: "I'm gonna catch you soon in my butterfly net, you better watch out," he sings in a flat voice, that off key and unsettling, that helps emphasise the duality between childlike wonder associated with the pastime of catching butterflies and the suffocation of being caught in the net and the obsession of the adult collector. The influences are most likely the children's books and nursery rhymes that touched him when he was growing up; most pertinently Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind In The Willows* with its juxtaposition of the foreboding, hallucinatory nature of the wild wood and the sanctuary of the riverbank, the contrast becoming a metaphor for the LSD trip – *Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* takes its name from a chapter title in the book, of course – but also *Cautionary Tales For Children* by Hilaire Belloc. It also marks the beginnings of Syd's predilection for songs mentioning animals and sea creatures – Effervescing Elephant, Terrapin, Octopus – all featuring Belloc's imprint.

The group also recorded two other Barrett originals, Remember Me and Double O Bo, at that first recording session. The former is an anomaly. The only track in the Floyd and solo Syd canon not to feature Syd's clearly enunciated

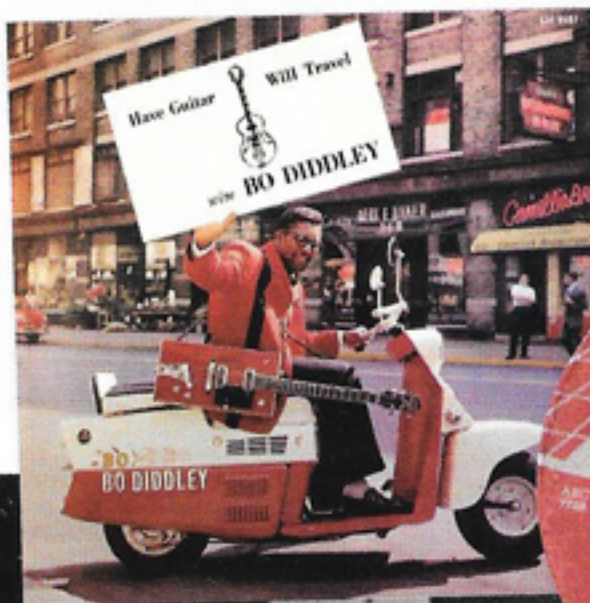
English-accented singing voice, Remember Me instead finds the singer adopting an American accent to sneer and snarl through an aggressive garage punk song. The latter, meanwhile, is a straightforward tribute to Bo Diddley with a topical reference to James Bond thrown in. The band play a convincing Bo Diddley beat and the lyrics cast the bluesman as secret agent Double O Bo. Syd owned Diddley's 1955 debut single Bo Diddley and his 1960 album, *Have Guitar, Will Travel* and the group covered Bo Diddley songs in their live sets up to the end of '66.

By the time of the group's second session, on October 31, 1966 at Thompson Private Recording Studios, Hemel Hempstead, Syd had written another song. I Get Stoned (Stone Alone) captures a solitary Syd singing, "Living alone I get stoned/Sitting here all alone I get stoned," over strummed acoustic guitar.

According to the Floyd's then co-manager Andrew King, I Get Stoned (Stone Alone) was the first song Syd wrote with the Floyd specifically in mind and it's the beginning of a thread – his allegiance to recreational drug use – that runs throughout his career. He revisited the song on February 27, 1970, demoing it under the title Living Alone for the *Barrett* album.

The closest any of the early songs got to issue was Let's Roll Another One. Intended for debut single Arnold Layne's B-side and recorded in January 1967, it's a simple anthem to smoking dope – "I'm high, don't try to spoil my fun, don't cry, we'll roll another one." EMI refused to release

it as the flip due to its drug reference, so Syd rewrote the lyric and it became Candy And A Currant Bun.



The Pink Floyd, 1965, (from left) Rick Wright, Roger Waters, Nick Mason, Rado 'Bob' Klose, Barrett; (inset) Bo Diddley, they owed him a debt.



"Don't try to spoil my fun": Pink Floyd in
Ruskin Park, Denmark Hill, south London,
1967 (from left) Rick Wright, Roger Waters,
Syd Barrett, Nick Mason; (insets opposite)
The Game's contentious 45;
Floyd get 'Projected'.



**"EVERYBODY LIKES JOKES.
THE PINK FLOYD LIKE JOKES."**

SYD BARRETT

LAUGHTER IN THE DARK



**POISED BETWEEN GENIUS AND JESTER, THE SYD BARRETT
ON PINK FLOYD'S *PIPER AT THE GATES OF DAWN* WAS PLAYING BIZARRE
GAMES WITH POP FORMS. JIM IRVIN ASKS WHAT'S SO FUNNY.**

IT'S SATURDAY TEATIME, JANUARY 7, 1967. YOU'RE eating cheese-on-crumpets and watching BBC1, waiting for the football results to finish so you can have your weekend blast of pop culture.

At 5.15pm, John Barry's twangy, plucky theme heralds Juke Box Jury, half an hour of hit-or-miss record reviewing featuring, this week, a formidable all DJ line-up of Simon Dee, Pete Murray, Alan Freeman and Jimmy Savile. Then it's Doctor Who with Patrick Troughton as the doctor, the hooting, haunting theme provided by the Radiophonic Workshop and Ron Grainer. After that: Hey hey, it's The Monkees, manufactured pop-flavoured mayhem with a laugh track, this week – a secret-agent caper called Monkee See, Monkee Die.

Meanwhile, The Pink Floyd – a young band whose sound is not dissimilar to all three of those themes playing simultaneously – have the evening off. They appeared last night at Freak Out Ethel, a happening in the Seymour Hall, Paddington. Tomorrow they're on at a pub in Forest Gate. There's a good chance they're also watching Juke Box Jury. Tonight's episode is shorter than usual. Just before transmission, the BBC remove seven minutes concerning a (subsequently withdrawn) Parlophone single by Mod band, The Game, entitled The Addicted Man. All four panellists object to the song's drug references, and the debate gets a little too heated. Pop stars on drugs is too hot a topic for teatime.

The Pink Floyd haven't cut their first 45 yet. They will record it on January 29 in – according to recording engineer John Wood – a haze of dope smoke, courtesy of singer Syd Barrett and manager Peter Jenner. They will officially turn professional three days later, finally signing to EMI on February 28. That single, Arnold Layne, will be on Juke Box Jury just two months from tonight's censored edition, when '50s hep-cat-turned-promising square Pete Murray will declare that the band is "hype" and that psychedelia is a "one-month wonder".

If any of the band are still watching BBC 1 at 9.15 they might catch the latest episode of Adam Adamant Lives!, a jokey drama about a cryogenically frozen Edwardian sleuth defrosted in Swinging London, starring the plummy Gerald Harper. The show's camp mixture of history, humour, hip and derring-do is perfect for this coming year of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band – also a cryogenically frozen Edwardian outfit, come to think of it. That mixture is also present in the songs of Syd Barrett. By this point, the Floyd's blues'n'Bo Diddley roots are barely audible. Syd, a nice boy from Cam-

bridge, is now transmitting from – and to – middle-class England and its pop culture, his songs a playful, trippy rippling of fairy tale, space race, junk-shop Edwardiana and hippy philosophy, his painter's eye recording the scenery.

Arnold Layne concerns a man who steals and wears ladies clothes and ends up in prison. That the life of a curious loner is a valid subject for a pop song was confirmed by Eleanor Rigby, about six months ago. Barrett's protagonist is a tragicomic unfortunate reminiscent of the subjects of Hilaire Belloc's Cautionary Tales, much loved by Syd: "Doors bang, chain gang... Arnold Layne don't do it again." Written as a pithy vignette, its only concession to the Floyd's current stage act – which features vivid improvisation at terrific volume – is Rick Wright's wandering solo on his Farfisa Duo, 90 seconds in.

The recording, produced by Joe Boyd at Sound Techniques 4-track studio in Chelsea (boasting a monitor for each track!), is mixed in mono and has never had a stereo version. Though subsequently used as the debut single, it's cut as a demo for Boyd's new Witchseason Productions to take to Polydor Records. His production follows the commercial focus of the time, with Syd's voice high in the

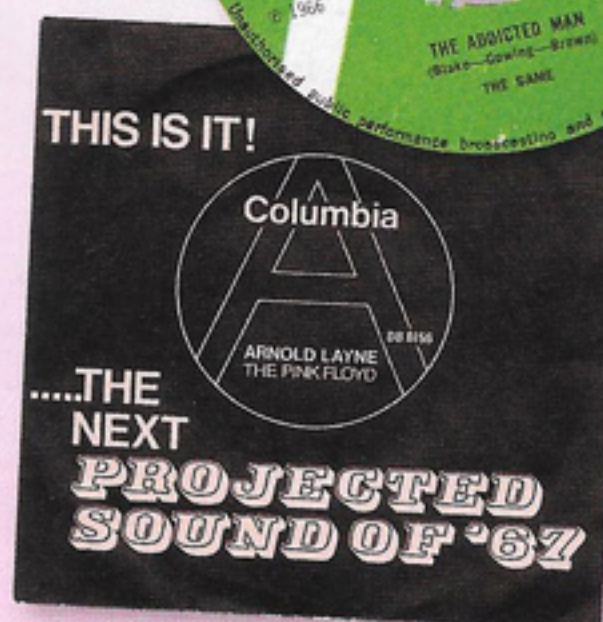
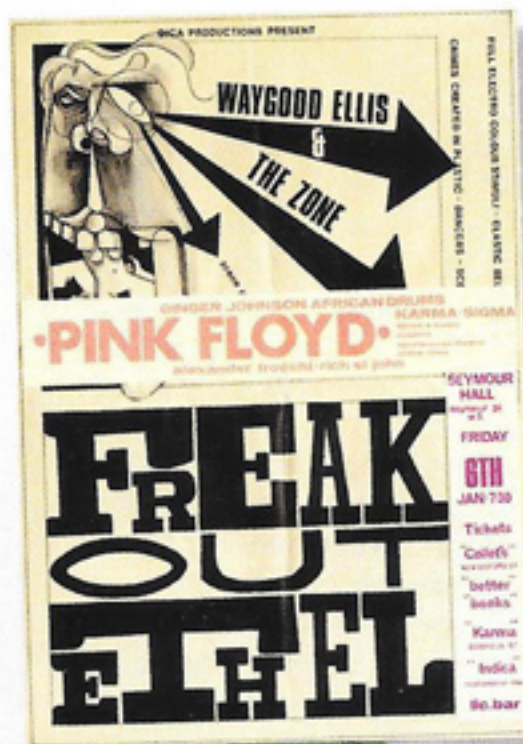
mix over a subdued version of the band's on-stage cacophony. One shouldn't underestimate the influence of Syd's vocal delivery, premiered here, that unusual, nasal, British sneer. The way he sings "Moonshine, washing line" will echo down through David Bowie, John Lydon, Damon Albarn, Liam Gallagher and beyond.

The other song in the session is B-side Candy And A Current Bun, which began life as Let's Roll Another One, a staple of the Floyd live show in 1966, written late in 1965 while Syd was attending Camberwell Art College. Aware the lyric "I'm high/Don't try to spoil my fun" might ring warning bells for courting record companies, Syd pre-session rewrites render it innocuous: "Oh my/Girl sitting in the sun." Over a driving riff, his vocal here marks a unique moment of sexy swagger, with a breathy spoken interlude, "Ooh, don't touch me child". After about a minute, the guitar dissolves into 30 seconds of restrained freaking out, a suggestion of how it might have sounded live.

When the demo's ready, managers Peter Jenner and Andrew King are approached by agent Bryan Morrison who uses it to broker a deal with EMI, attractive because it comes with Abbey Road on tap and, crucially, includes a firm commitment to an album. But signing to EMI with its in-house producers effectively cuts Boyd loose.

When work begins on that long-player – working title 'Projection' – with EMI's Norman Smith producing, the bulk of the material will be songs Syd had written the previous summer. The first to be recorded, on Tuesday, February 21, 1967, is Matilda Mother, another nod to Belloc. In fact, its original lyric was a straight lift from Cautionary Tales, which was still under copyright. The new version retains Belloc's rhythms ➤

Colin Prime



Floyd adamant: (from left) Mason, Wright, Barrett and Waters look apprehensive at the Beeb, 1967; (insets) Floyd and Bowie Gnome in; the Binson box; the hit 45.



◀ in the verses: “The chief defect of Henry King was chewing little bits of string...” sung by Rick Wright. In Floyd’s first press release for EMI, describing each member of the band, Syd likes “fairy tales” and dislikes “having no time for reading fairy tales”. He sings the section that concludes: “Fairy stories held me high... oh mother tell me more.”

Flaming is a stoned pastoral, “Watching buttercups cup the light/Sleeping on a dandelion”, which Syd treats almost as a parody of itself, singing the couplet “Yip-pee you can’t see me/But I can you” with a kind of mock sincerity, his voice cracking on “can”. As *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* unfolds, one notices Syd’s tongue-in-cheek attitude to his job as frontman. The vocal performances all seem to be winking at you, detached from reality, but aware of the silliness of the material or, indeed, the whole business of pop. He phrases pointedly, rolling his ‘R’s, and exploding his ‘T’s, and the songs that include borrowed lyrics or self-conscious asides show what Barrett’s biographer Rob Chapman calls “hidden layers of distraction and disengagement”. Syd won’t commit to a stance, vibrating between being childishly open and maddeningly opaque. One reason why this album, essentially filled with psychedelia’s clichés-to-be, remains fascinating.

To fairyland again for *The Gnome*, Syd’s slightest song on *Piper*, sung to acoustic guitar, celeste and temple blocks, Grumble Gromble is a small man in a scarlet cloak with a green hood (“it looked quite good”) who one day finds a new way to say “Ooooh my”. It was recorded mid-March, roughly the same time David Bowie was cutting *The Laughing Gnome* in Decca Studios nearby. It’s unknown whether Bowie, later a declared Barrett fan, was influenced by an earlier performance of this song or if it was pure coincidence, two like minds sensing something in the air. But Syd would be ambivalent about Bowie’s *Love You Till Tuesday* in Melody Maker’s *Blind Date* review column that August, initially dismissive – “Yeah, a joke number” – adding, “Everybody likes jokes. The Pink Floyd like jokes... Very chirpy, but I don’t think my toes were tapping.”

Scarecrow cut barely any deeper – “His head

“THERE’S A DARKER TWIST THERE.”

KALEIDOSCOPE’S PETER DALTRY PRAISES THE POP AND WEIRDNESS OF PINK FLOYD’S *SUMMER OF LOVE* 45, SEE EMILY PLAY.



“When *See Emily Play* came out in June 1967 we heard echoes of what we’d been doing on [Kaleidoscope debut LP] *Tangerine Dream*, which was recorded from February to May 1967, the same as *Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*. It’s a charming sound, but with these unusual undertones. The song itself is very basic. It’s in A minor. It’s got two lines, a chorus repeated three times and two brilliant little instrumental sections, one tiny one with the speeded up piano and then the more spacey one. There’s a darker twist we never went for. Lyrically, you can hear the influence of fairy tales, but there is one verse that jumps off the page, and that’s where Syd sings, “Put on a gown that touches the ground/Float on a river for ever and ever.” That immediately brings to mind Shakespeare’s Ophelia in *Hamlet* and Millais’ Ophelia drowned in the brook, that natural poetic detail of the Pre-Raphaelites feeding into British

psychedelia. See *Emily Play* still works: it was short and sweet, had a girl’s name in the title, you could remember the chorus because they repeated it three times, but then injected weird Pink Floyd stuff – speeded-up piano; larger instrumental section with organ and swirling guitars – which sends it in a slightly different direction from what anyone was doing at the time. Perfect.”



did no thinking, his arms didn’t move” – but has a more interesting arrangement than *The Gnome*, with Rick’s meandering keyboard and some late-entry guitar.

Only the line “The black and green scarecrow was sadder than me” lifts it out of the banal.

Chapter 24 simply recites chunks of that chapter of the *I Ching*. “None of us believed in the hippy philosophy,” Rick Wright told *MOJO* in 2007, which makes one wonder just how cynical Syd was being. Or perhaps he’d simply noted John Lennon quoting *The Tibetan Book Of The Dead* for *Tomorrow Never Knows*, as *Revolver* was released just as these songs were being written.

Astronomy Domine, which opens *Piper*, launches into outer-space, the lyric featuring notable celestial objects, “Jupiter and Saturn/Oberon, Miranda and Titania” (moons of Uranus), and references to ‘50s ‘Pilot of the Future’ Dan Dare, bookending a trippy, instrumental core. At 1:38, ushering in the breakdown, there’s the whooshing throb of tape-echo, pulses of feedback generated between the recording and playback heads of a tape machine, code for “space” to pop-pickers since Joe Meek’s *Telstar* of 1962. Echo, or delay, would remain a key element of the Floyd’s recordings. They already used it live too. Thanks to the Binson Echorec, an early portable unit, they could bring outer space into the basement of the UFO club in Tottenham Court Road. Perhaps pointedly, the song ends with Wright and Barrett leaning into the word “underground”.

Lucifer Sam – for some reason the one Floyd song that Syd played with his short-lived, post-Floyd band, *Stars* – begins like a scrappy spy movie theme, drums at full tilt, before Sam, a sinister, omnipresent ‘Siam cat’ is introduced. “That cat’s something I can’t explain” goes the refrain. The instrumental features a bowed guitar. Inspired by avant-grade musicians AMM, who shared management with Floyd. Syd had started to bring some of his art-school instincts on stage, attacking his guitar with various objects and rolling ball bearings along the strings, but such innovations are largely inaudible on *Piper*. Syd’s nursery-psych offerings, a snapshot of his psychedelic summer of ‘66, seem more commercially pragmatic than a true indication of where the group intended to go.

However, they finished the sessions and the album on May 27, 1967, with *Bike*; its lyric recalling the rhythms of AA Milne, its music bizarre, and a first clue to Syd’s chaotic solo future. Purposefully derailing the comic metre in the verse about his cloak – “It’s red and black, I’ve had it for months” – Syd again toys with his listener, the tempo stutters, the tuning wavers. “I know a room of musical tunes,” he keens, ushering us, by the sound of it, into Abbey Road’s percussion cupboard as, halfway along, the track dissolves into chaos. The rest is noise. The chorus of quacking at the fade-out is the band’s laughter, looped, sped-up and reversed: “The Pink Floyd like jokes.”

THE DISROBING

THE SONGS **SYD BARRETT** WROTE DURING HIS FINAL SIX MONTHS WITH **PINK FLOYD** REVEAL A YOUNG MAN SWAPPING POP'S PAISLEY TRAPPINGS FOR A FAR DARKER RAIMENT. **MARK PAYTRESS** FEELS THE CHILL.

ON MAY 12, 1967, The Pink Floyd played London's Queen Elizabeth Hall. An evening of "space age relaxation for the climax of spring", Games For May was a new kind of pop experience incorporating psychedelic lighting, quadrasonic sound and plastic ducks.

Syd Barrett, an early advocate of rock theatre, had written a song for the event. Paradoxically, Games For May was so commercial that it was recorded, as See Emily Play, over the weekend of May 20/21, and released as the group's second single on June 16.

Emily was the song on which Barrett's life turned. According to his sister Rosemary, it "was him", the most complete realisation of fairy-tale Syd. The entire song hangs on his voice, playful, wistful and never more present on record. The perfect embodiment of Barrett's unique pop consciousness, Emily is simultaneously effervescent and melancholic, filled with hooks, glissando guitar innovation and seemingly the most charming invitation into wonderland, "You'll lose your mind and play..."

Freaked out by too many Top Of The Pops appearances, "Play Emily!" catcalls from provincial audiences and handfuls of hash and acid, Barrett briefly went AWOL in late July, with Emily peaking at Number 6 and *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* album imminent. On his return, Floyd's live sets began with Reaction In G, an aggressive new instrumental closer to Sabbath-era heaviness than the Floyd's abstract R&B.

The success of Emily had become burdensome. Syd's waltz-time (She Was A) Millionaire, recorded on April 18 and tipped as an A-side back in the spring, was passed up. Syd had a better idea for a single – Old Woman With A Casket.

Recorded in Abbey Road on August 7, and now known as *Scream Thy Last Scream*, the song was as uncompromising as its title. With its shackled, downbeat melody line and mixed-in crowd noises, the mood was one of doom and claustrophobia. Barrett has become a spectral-like presence, hiding behind Nick Mason, who declaims the malevolent lead vocal, and the Chipmunk-like voice that shadows it. When he finally emerges to whisper a forlorn "She'll be

scrubbing bubbles on all fours", he sounds like a tripped-out Cinderella, a prisoner in his own song. Pink Floyd's most courageous, gallant explorer had plunged into psychedelia's dark side.

Two further songs, taped between October 9 and 19, form a gateway into this new wilderness, where, by and large, he wandered for the rest of his life. Hastily thrown together before a session, Vegetable Man was a troglodyte stomper with Barrett shedding his pop star trappings line by line ("In my paisley shirt, I look a jerk"), riffing comically on the Batman theme and, contemplating deep, vacant-eyed alienation. "I've been looking all over



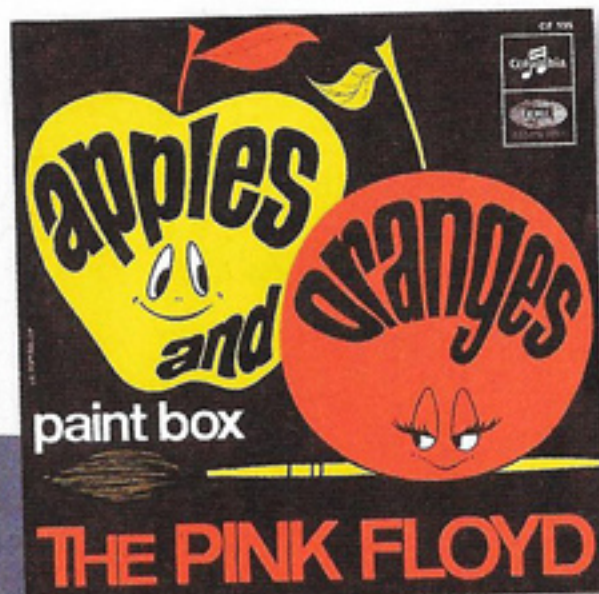
the place for a place for me," he deadpans. "And it ain't anywhere."

Having just stripped bare, Syd virtually checks out on Jugband Blues. Here, the mood is no longer manic but reflective, and painfully so. Barrett offers mocking thanks to persons unstated "for making it clear that I'm not here", doubts his authorship of the song, and, in a heartrending coda, questions even dreams and jokes – always the last refuge of the dispossessed. The Dadaist melee of Salvation Army brass and Floydian kazoo that divides the lyric in two acts is a mercifully daft but only temporary distraction.

Work began on another Barrett original, In The Beechwoods, on October 20. Unsurprisingly, given that the song evoked happier Boy Scout days in Cambridge, it was ditched before vocals were added. Instead, they returned to the studio on October 26 and 27 for what (overdubs aside) turned out to be Barrett's studio Floyd swansong.

With its fruity title, upbeat melody and floaty, sunshine pop chorus, Apples And Oranges was cloaked in commercial acceptability. But Syd's

voice is stilted and uninvolved, his guitar thin, bouncing off walls in a wah-wah wail of hysteria. It bows out with a howl of feedback. This was a new kind of pop, a divided-self Summer of Love come-down – and it bombed. Syd told reporters he "couldn't care less".



Ruffled by fame: Syd in a London club dressing room, 1967; (left below) Wright, Barrett and Waters enlighten Japanese reporter.



Right in the heart of the music: (from left) Barrett, Wright, Waters and Mason, September 1967; (insets from top) Floyd's Relics and A Nice Pair; influencers Hawkwind and Robert Wyatt; Julian Cope and "very Syd" Sunspots.





"THE SPEARHEAD OF PSYCHEDELIC POP"

JULIAN COPE ON THE ANOMALOUS GAME-PLAYING GENIUS OF LUCIFER SAM.

IN 1972 MY GIRLFRIEND AT THE TIME, JANE SMITH, GOT ME A copy of [Pink Floyd compilation] *Relics*. She was always going on about Syd. She was an art student, so she was in love with people like Syd and Kevin Ayers – people who came across as delicate. She got me *Relics* for £1.49, but I thought it was crap and I know why. They felt the need to put in rare stuff to sell it, but all this rare stuff was just the other guys trying to be Syd – like Paint Box, which is just like Syd doing [The Beatles'] *A Day In The Life*. But Lucifer Sam is one of my favourite songs of all time. I first heard it in 1972, on a copy of *A Nice Pair*, which my friend Max Eacock in Tamworth had. I just thought it was incredible. We were obsessed by *In Search Of Space* by Hawkwind – and I thought Lucifer Sam was space rock, like Hawkwind. My favourite two psychedelic songs are Lucifer Sam and The Best Way To Travel by The Moody Blues, which has these weird mellotron sounds and is catchy as a bastard. Fucking brilliant! To me, Lucifer Sam and The Best Way To Travel are the spearhead of psychedelic pop songs.

With Lucifer Sam, the riff sequence has a blues element to it, but he changes the riff by the second time he plays it – like an old really-early blues player. That's the reason it's so fucked up and good. He's right in the heart of the music – he's not by rote, ever. He's fucking with people's heads without telling them. But that riff is also quite spy-theme – you can imagine saxes in the background, a bit John Barry. Lucifer Sam has things like that which allow it to exist in the wider world. I knew Robert Wyatt's

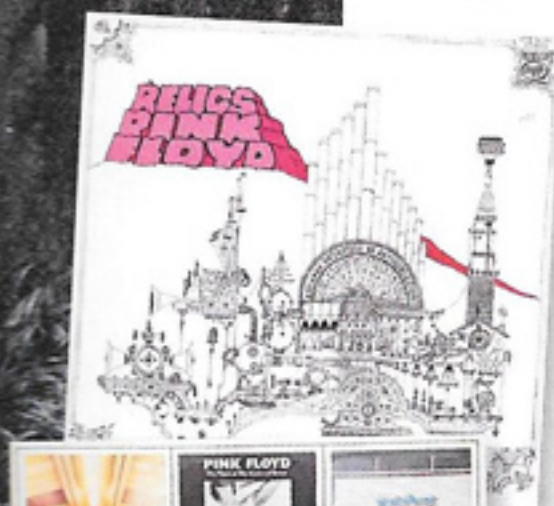
Rock Bottom album and that had a lot of what I call "wah-mouth" – interesting noises, maybe gargling, done with the mouth. Syd on guitar always has a kind of gargling guitar solo – which is good, because it's just succinct. Maybe he wasn't a technically impressive guitarist like David Gilmour, so he did these more interesting things instead.

When I got to Liverpool in 1976 all I had in common with the Liverpool punks was reggae and a dislike of Pink Floyd. During punk I found Barrett a really contentious figure – because he was the fat guy who Floyd paid homage to on *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*. And because Jane fancied him. I thought he was just this madman who had somehow written Lucifer Sam, like a freak anomaly. I was still suspicious of the Syd myth, but I became friendly with this older Irish guy called Dan Brennan, who completely modelled himself on the Syd of *The Madcap Laughs*. From that I began to understand Syd better and I got *The Madcap Laughs* and Barrett albums. With hindsight, [1985 Cope single] *Sunspots* is very Syd. That clanging riff is very Apples And Oranges.

When I first met [wife] Dorian she was 19 and she came over to London [from the USA], in the summer of '81. We lay in bed and we played Lucifer Sam over and over again, over and over all day. On the second day she was still jet-lagged, but I insisted we took acid and went out. We went to see Robyn Hitchcock, supported by The Television Personalities. We were feeling quite weird. Dorian was scared to be out in public, 'cos we were tripping and, because it wasn't that long after [Teardrop Explodes hit] *Reward*, I was getting semi-mobbed by people. Then The Television Personalities came on and played Lucifer Sam (laughs). I thought they'd stolen our brains. We were with my friend Droyd and I asked him, "Have they just played Lucifer Sam?" He said, "Yeah", but I asked him to ask someone else because I thought I was imagining the whole thing. He asked this girl and she said it was Lucifer Sam – at which point Dorian just ran off to the toilets.

As told to Roy Wilkinson

Urthona Plays Atlantis, a soundtrack to Julian Cope's novel *One Three One*, is out now headheritage.co.uk



Robert Wyatt
ROCK BOTTOM



THE ART OF FALLING APART



RECORDED BETWEEN MAY 1968 AND JULY 1970, THE SONGS ON *THE MADCAP LAUGHS* AND *BARRETT* WERE OBLIQUE, DIZZYING DISTRESS CALLS FROM A DECAYING NIGHT NURSERY OF TERROR AND SORROW. **WILL HODGKINSON STEPS OVER THE THRESHOLD.**

FROM ITS PLAINTIVE OPENING CHORDS, Terrapin introduces us to Syd Barrett's post-Floyd world in gently cracked fashion. Featuring little more than Barrett's reflective, somewhat weary tones over a rudimentary strum on what sounds like a weather-warped acoustic guitar, the song that begins *The Madcap Laughs* eschews the sonic experiments of early Floyd for a seemingly simple evocation of the innocence of love and nature. The song features one of the most tender lines in the history of 20th century song – “Well oh baby, my hair’s on end about you” – yet with its images of “fins a luminous” and “fangs all round the clown”, within its dreamlike, hazy tone, Terrapin hints at that pagan underworld glimpsed in *The Wind In The Willows* when Rat and Mole, in search of Otter’s lost child, are met by the Piper at the Gates of Dawn – also known, with more sinister connotations, as the Great God Pan.

The Madcap Laughs, and its darker twin, *Barrett*, offer glimpses of Pan’s dark globe, but from a middle-class, eccentric, terribly English perspective. They also reveal a complete change in Barrett’s songwriting approach, leaving behind the toy-town psychedelia of *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* for something far more primitive and unhinged. *Madcap*’s second track No Good Trying may rock along in a manner that’s not so dissimilar to Floyd’s debut, but its wayward tempo and all-round looseness make it clear we’re no longer flying high in the playful world of *Piper*-era Syd.

In late ’67, during his final months with Pink Floyd, Barrett moved with his girlfriend Lindsay Corner to 101 Cromwell Road, South Kensington, “a major burn-out joint” according to former resident Mick Rock. There he became something of a golden boy to a well-meaning but naive group for whom LSD was a portal to enlightenment. Whatever deep truths the drug unearthed, it didn’t help Barrett fulfil his commitments as the lead singer of an increasingly busy pop group.

“He’d definitely turned a corner into mad-

ness,” said David Gilmour, who saw the changes in his childhood friend on returning to London in mid-1967 after a year in France. You can hear that change in *No Man’s Land*. Its heavily distorted guitar, lines like “we awful, awful crawl” and final collapse into near unintelligibility, with Barrett mumbling “tell me, tell me, tell me”, could well be the sound of a man falling apart. Even the music hall romp of *Love You*, in which Barrett throws at his paramour a frantic jumble of voices from the Cockney of “I seen you looking good the other evening” to the hip talk of “oh, you dig it” has a false jollity, a manic quality that’s unnerving.

When the split came, Floyd’s managers Peter Jenner and Andrew King chose to follow erratic Syd rather than his straighter, more career-conscious band members, and on May 6, 1968, the first of a handful of solo sessions produced by Jenner took place at Abbey Road. Incredibly, given his parlous mental state, the Jenner sessions captured the most sophisticated song Barrett ever wrote: *Clowns And Jugglers*, released on *The Madcap Laughs* as *Octopus*.

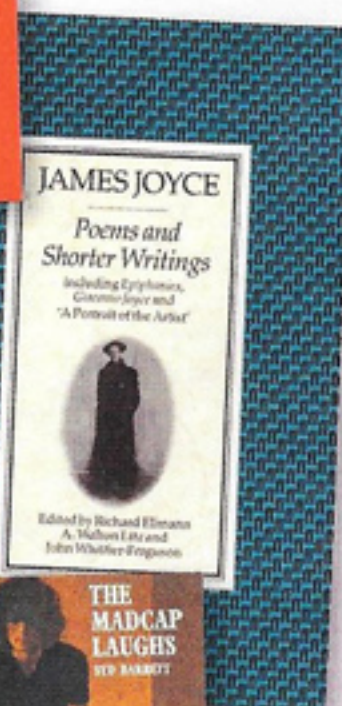
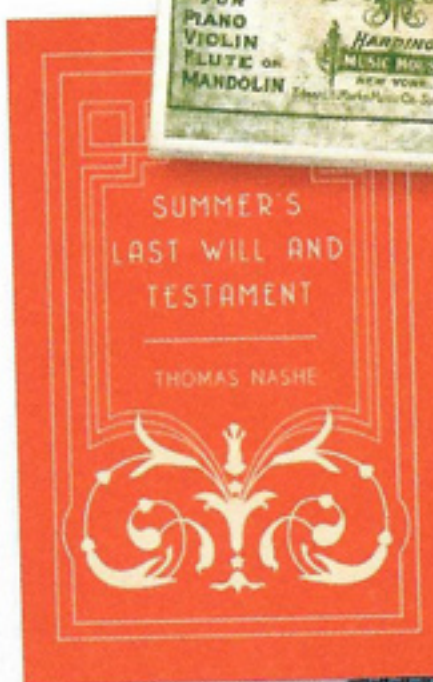
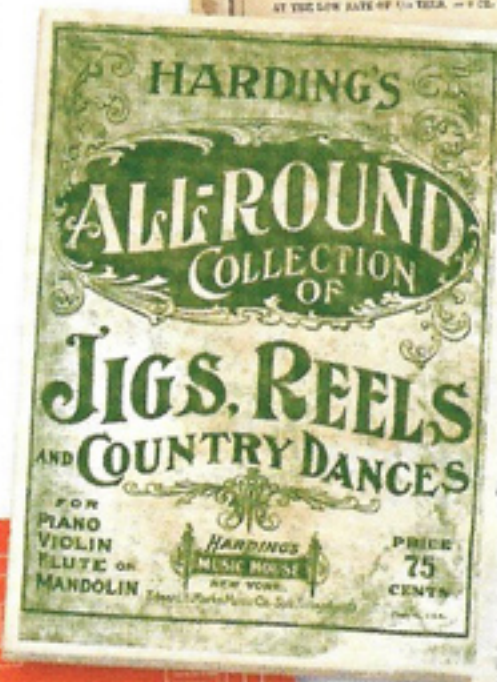
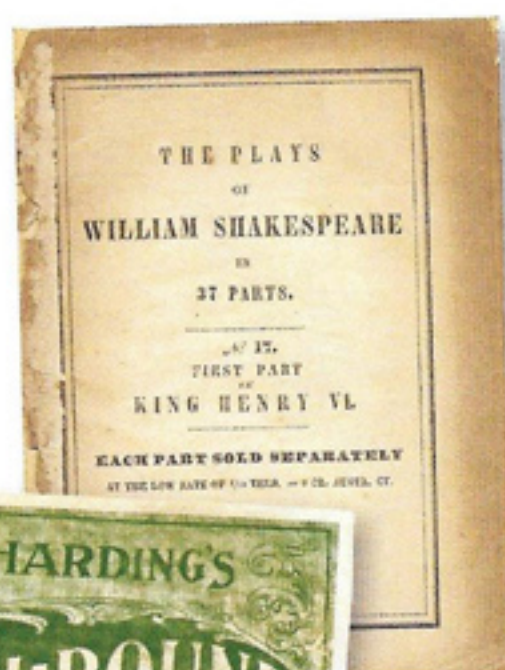
Set to a dampened Bo Diddley strum, *Octopus* pieces together lines culled from 16th century verse, Shakespeare’s *Henry VI, Part I* and *The Wind In The Willows* to create a surrealist poem that cannot make any sense but evokes a febrile atmosphere nonetheless. “The

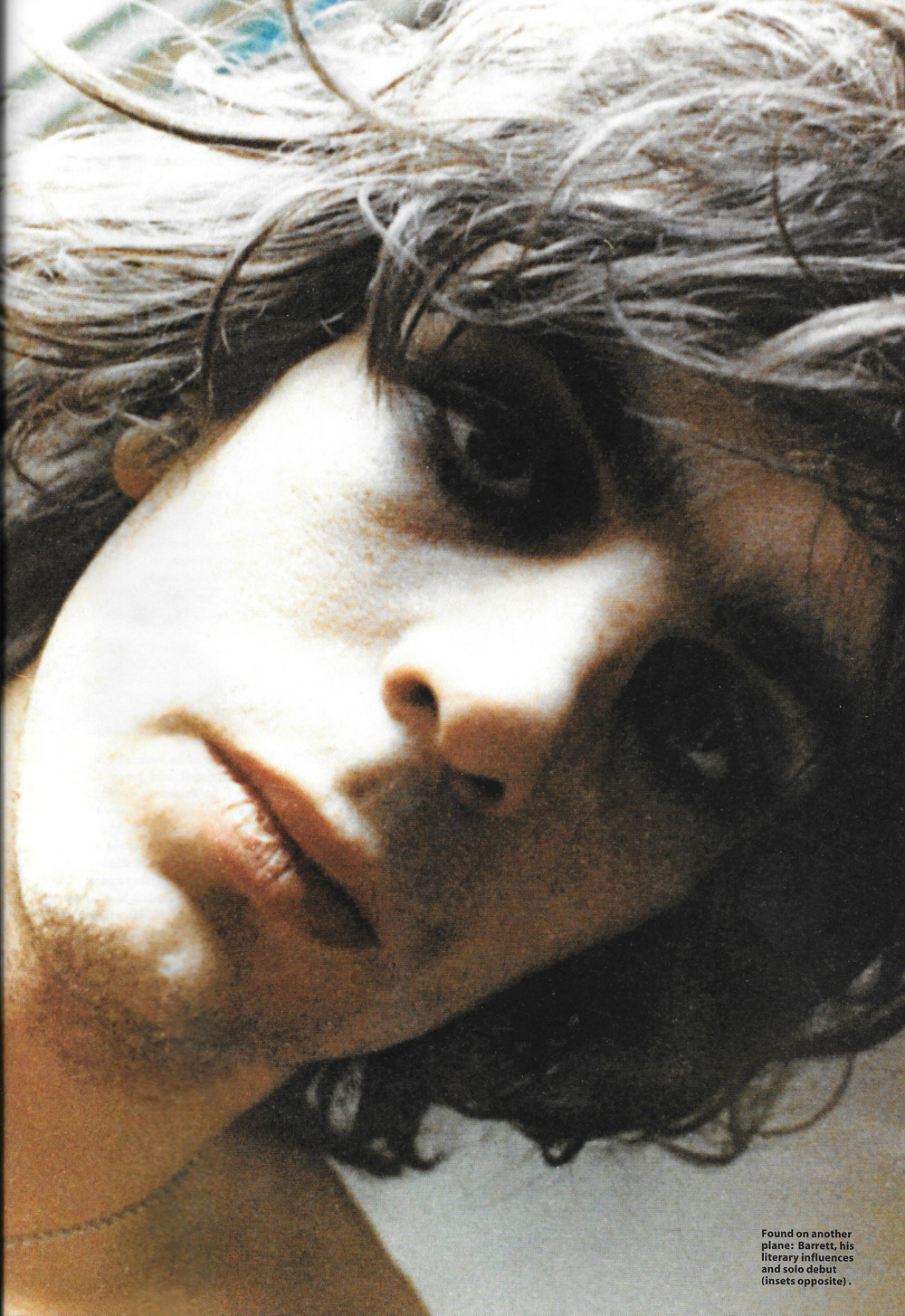
idea was like those number songs like *Green Grow The Rushes, Ho*, where you have, say, 12 lines each related to the next and an overall theme,” Barrett told *Sounds*’ Giovanni Daddomo in 1970, proving he retained the ability to form order out of his own chaos, even as confusion took hold. “Trip and go, heave and ho,” sung with boy-scout vigour, comes from *Summer’s Last Will And Testament* by the Elizabethan poet Thomas Nashe. Mole’s journey through the *Wild Wood* pops up in the chorus as “isn’t it good to be lost in the wood”, while the line “they’ll never put

me in their bag” is adapted from the nursery rhyme *The Winds They Did Blow* and turned into a statement of affirmation. Those sessions also produced early versions of *Late Night*, one of Barrett’s many songs of loneliness and lost love; and *Golden Hair*, an adaptation of a James Joyce poem that captures the courtly romance of the words with a mystery and elegance. Yet whatever diligence Barrett summoned to record those magical songs emerged from the most dissolute period of his life.

FOR EVERY COMIC TALE ABOUT BARRETT, LIKE the one broadcaster Jonathan Meades tells about arriving at his South Kensington pad to be told the banging upstairs was a result of the residents locking the singer in a cupboard, only to discover Syd was actually in the bathroom trying to work out how to open the door – there is a darker one. Artist Duggie Fields, who from late ’68 shared with Barrett the Earls Court flat immortalised on the cover of *The Madcap Laughs*, remembers him stubbing a cigarette out on his girlfriend Gayla Pinion. “He only did it once,” said Fields. “But once was too much.”

Cut loose from Pink Floyd, their former frontman became directionless. After the Jenner sessions ground to a halt, Barrett spent his days numbing himself with Mandrax while Fields painted away in the next room. Nonetheless, by March 1969 he was ready to go into the studio once more. He called Abbey Road to book a session, leading to Malcolm Jones, youthful boss of EMI’s progressive wing Harvest Records, deciding Barrett had enough material to work up a solo album. Jerry Shirley of *Humble Pie* played ➤





Found on another plane: Barrett, his literary influences and solo debut (insets opposite).

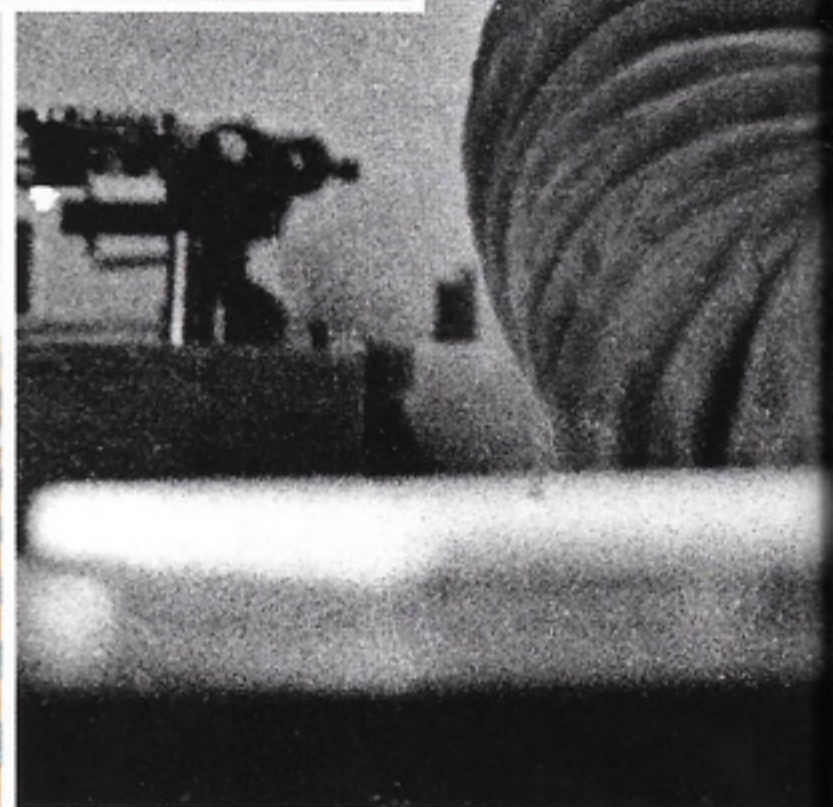
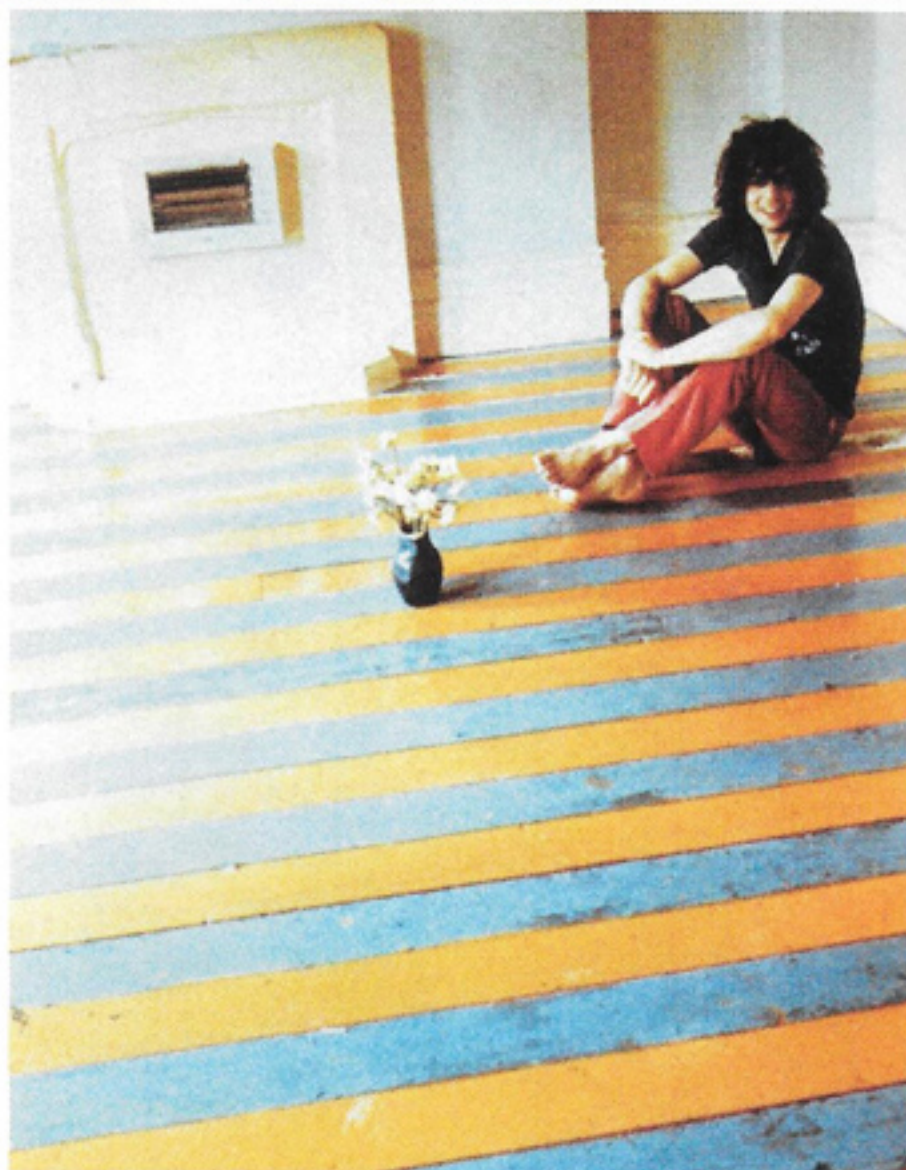


◀ drums, and members of Soft Machine provided overdubs on a handful of tracks. “We just clattered along amiably,” remembered Soft Machine’s Robert Wyatt. Among the songs Jones produced was the elegant but despairing *Opel*, not included on the album but released eventually in 1988, on the compilation of the same name. In June, David Gilmour and Roger Waters came on board to knock the album into shape. Acting as producer, Gilmour remembers the sessions as “murder, murder trying to get him to do anything”, and you only have to listen to a howl of hopelessness like *Dark Globe*, which features Barrett screaming “wouldn’t you miss me at all?” against a rudimentary acoustic bash in G, to see what he meant. Rick Wright added keyboards to *Long Gone*, one of the saddest of all *Madcap* songs, with Barrett singing “I stood very still by the window sill, and I wondered for those I love still” in tones suggesting profound isolation.

With Pink Floyd in the ascendant, Gilmour had little time to give the album cohesion. That led to contentious decisions like leaving out *Opel* but including Barrett singing hopelessly out of tune and abandoning a take during the three-song sequence *She Took A Long Cold Look, Feel and If It’s In You*, which Malcolm Jones later described as a case of airing a troubled artist’s dirty linen in public. Gilmour defended the decision, saying, “Roger and I both thought that it was important that some of Syd’s state of mind should be present in the record.”

Amid all this came flashes of Barrett’s gift for a perfect pop gem. *Here I Go*, dating to early ’67 and intended originally for paisley ravers *The Purple Gang*, is a charmingly old-fashioned tune in which the singer writes a song to win over his big band-loving girlfriend – but then he meets her sister. They stroll off into the sunset, happily wed, as if the sexual revolution never happened.

On its release in January 1970 *The Madcap Laughs* was welcomed by an underground scene emerging from the wreckage of the ’60s adventure. The cover design by Hipgnosis helped: crouched on the front amid painted floorboards and joined on the back by a naked girl, scenester Iggy The Eskimo, Barrett was a vision of doomed youth, wild and poetic. Later that year Gilmour went back in the



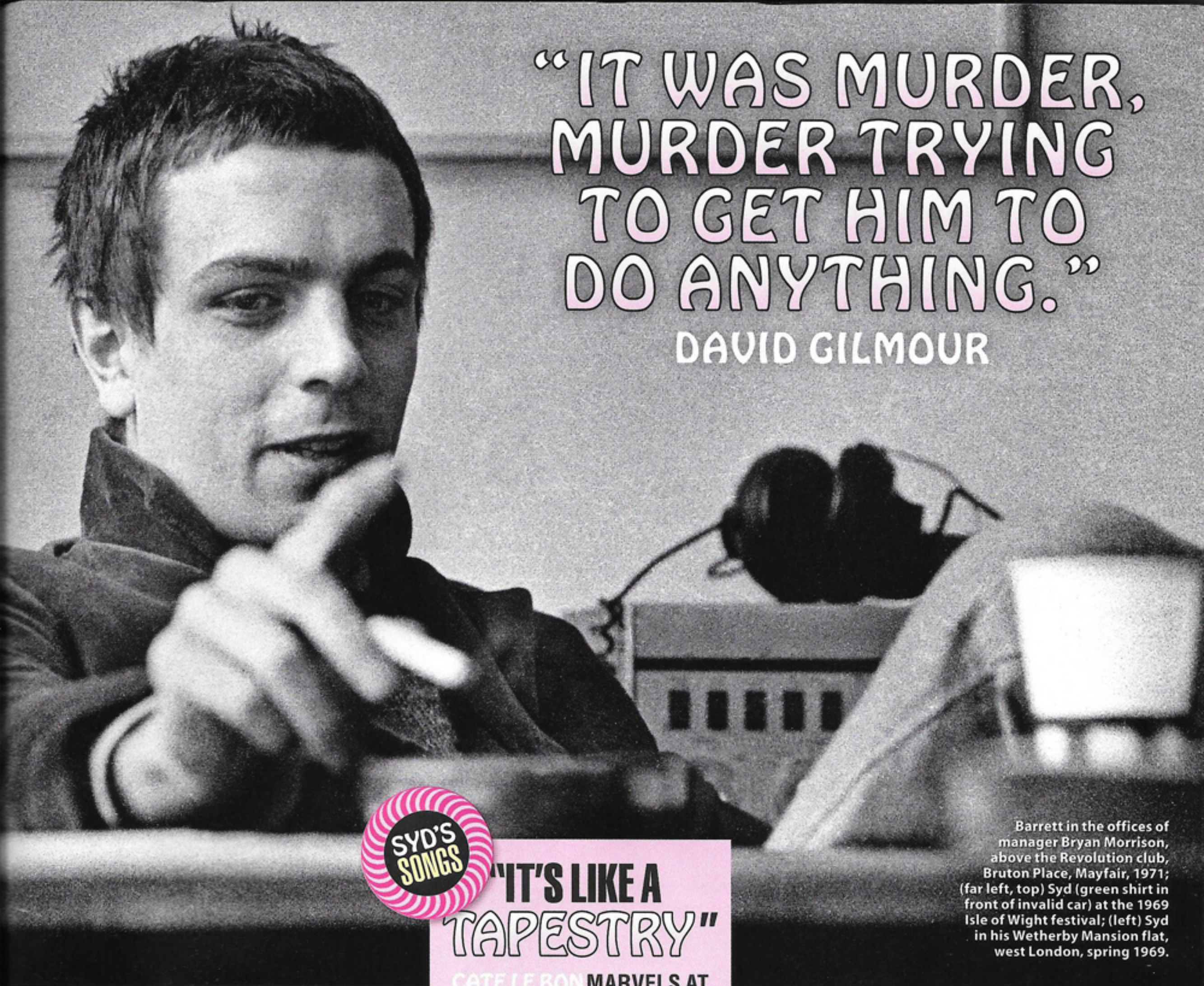
studio, joined once more by Rick Wright on keyboards and Jerry Shirley on drums, for *Barrett*. It would be the last album Syd would ever make. He was 24.

With Gilmour at the controls throughout, *Barrett* became a more cohesive album than *The Madcap Laughs*, but it’s also more disturbing. *Gigolo Aunt* describes a groovy trip to the beach with wry detachment, and the funfair-like *Love Song*, with Rick Wright’s harmonium wheezing back and forth, is a whimsical ode to an old flame, but *Waving My Arms In The Air/I Never Lied To You* begins as infantile and ends as anguished while *Wolfpack* and *Rats* are nothing less than visions of despair. *Wolfpack* features Barrett lamenting how “this life that was ours grew sharper and stronger away and beyond”, while *Rats* – Barrett chanting “rats, rats, lay down flat, we don’t need you we act like that” against jagged, pre-punk guitar – is positively psychotic. Then there’s *Maisie*, a slow-crawl of a blues influenced by Howlin’ Wolf’s *Spoonful*, yet with a crepuscular, malevolent vibe, suggesting dark forces at work.

David Gilmour had to catch Barrett when he could. Only *Gigolo Aunt* featured the singer and the musicians playing alongside each other; elsewhere Gilmour either built on rough recordings of Barrett’s voice and guitar or got him to play over tracks the band had worked on already. The Roger McGuinn-like solo at the beginning of *Baby Lemonade* was Barrett warming up; Gilmour tacked it onto a song that evokes both rain-soaked melancholy and something more nightmarish, in its opening line: “In the sad town, cold iron hands clap the party of clowns outside.” Barrett wrote the wistful *Wined And Dined* in late ’69 in Formentera, Ibiza during a break

"IT WAS MURDER,
MURDER TRYING
TO GET HIM TO
DO ANYTHING."

DAVID GILMOUR



IT'S LIKE A TAPESTRY"

CATE LE BON MARVELS AT
THE FREEFORM SADNESS
OF SYD BARRETT'S RATS.



"There was a period when I was driving from the south of Wales to the north of Wales, in a Vauxhall Astra that only had a cassette player. Amongst my tapes was Barrett. So I had

space to fall in love with it, battling it out with these anti-songs, deconstructed landscapes you had to put together yourself. One of the first moments of wanting to listen again was to hear the reprise, "Rats, rats..."

It felt like a moment you could cling onto. The song has so many different sections, it's freeform, like stream of consciousness. There's no definitive chord change... it's more like a tapestry. There's a sense it's a cathartic exercise, that all these words are just coming out of him. As with all of his songs, there's a battle within himself, and a battle within love and the

inside and the outside of a being, and he brings that down to something so familiar and common and mucky as rats. There's an integral sadness lurking throughout his music, but it's joyful as well, there's always moments, a word or a phrase. Maybe that is from knowing, 'I don't know what I feel like.' He was a genius, whether he's mad or not."



from *Madcap* sessions, while Gilmour and other members of Floyd worked on *Ummagumma*. It's a reverie on a summer fling, recalling how a "girl was so kind, kind of love I'd never seen." As Rick Wright's organ hums along encouragingly, you can imagine a Barrett with some awareness of his own tragedy.

The saddest song on *Barrett* is its quietest. *Dominoes* is an ode to inactivity, with the singer murmuring in defeated tones about passing the day away by playing dominoes and lamenting lost love against Rick Wright's mournful organ. It captures the bleakness of an old people's home – or possibly a psychiatric institute. You cannot help but picture Barrett slipping into inertia as his flatmate Duggie Fields works away in the room next door; as his old band mates become superstars.

The final song recorded for *Barrett*, on July 21, 1970, was *It Is Obvious*. "It is obvious, may I say oh baby, that it is found on another plane," it begins, outlining Barrett's quest for what lies beyond in typically vernacular fashion, before going on a lyrical ramble that references the

Gog Magog hills of his Cambridge childhood, a bloody encounter with brambles, and creeping into cupboards and sleeping in halls. David Gilmour constructed the song from a series of disordered takes, working with what little he had to do justice to his old friend's dissipating talent.

Barrett played a short set at the Kensington Olympia in June 1970 – it would have been longer but he walked off after four songs – and two with doomed boogie band Stars in Cambridge, in early 1972. There was an abortive Abbey Road session in August 1974 [see over] and then he retreated into a narrow life in Cambridge, painting, pottering about, fending off unwanted intrusions from fans and press, and living on the money Gilmour ensured he received for his Pink Floyd recordings until his death in 2006.

Perhaps fittingly, *Barrett* ends, not with *It Is Obvious*, but the jaunty *Effervescing Elephant*. A sophisticated pastiche of a Hilaire Belloc cautionary tale, in which an elephant falls prey to a cunning tiger, it is the sound of Syd Barrett retreating into the sanctity of childhood. Yet for all its outward naive whimsy, there's a distinct sadness in Barrett's voice. It is the sound of a man who journeyed to the Piper at the Gates of Dawn, yet, unlike Rat and Mole, never really came back.

Barrett in the offices of manager Bryan Morrison, above the Revolution club, Bruton Place, Mayfair, 1971; (far left, top) Syd (green shirt in front of invalid car) at the 1969 Isle of Wight festival; (left) Syd in his Wetherby Mansion flat, west London, spring 1969.

NO LEFT TURN

SYD'S
SONGS

SYD BARRETT'S 1974 ABBEY ROAD SESSIONS WERE A TRIUMPH OF HOPE OVER EXPERIENCE. WITHOUT THE TRIUMPH, LEARNS DANNY ECCLESTON.

AFTER THE misfiring 1968 sessions that began *The Madcap Laughs*' travails, Peter Jenner had seen little to nothing of Syd Barrett ("I think he did come into our office once to get a passport signed"). But in the wake of the rump Floyd's extraordinary success with *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, the repackaging of *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* and *A Saucerful Of Secrets* as *A Nice Pair*, plus related interest in *Madcap* and Barrett, there was appetite at EMI for Syd material. Bryan Morrison, Floyd's perma-tanned manager, now handling Barrett too, booked Abbey Road Studio 3 for the week beginning August 12, 1974, and asked Jenner to produce.

"We did know that Syd had songs that had never been recorded – his juvenilia," says Jenner. "He had a binder with lyrics in. And there were songs from the EMI period, like *She's A Millionaire*. It had a hook, had potential."

Barrett arrived promptly at Abbey Road at 2pm on Monday 12, wearing scruffy clothes and longish hair, along with four or five guitars, a bass and a drum kit. "It was all new," says John Leckie, who was engineering. "Still with the labels on and some still in cardboard boxes. Not rented."

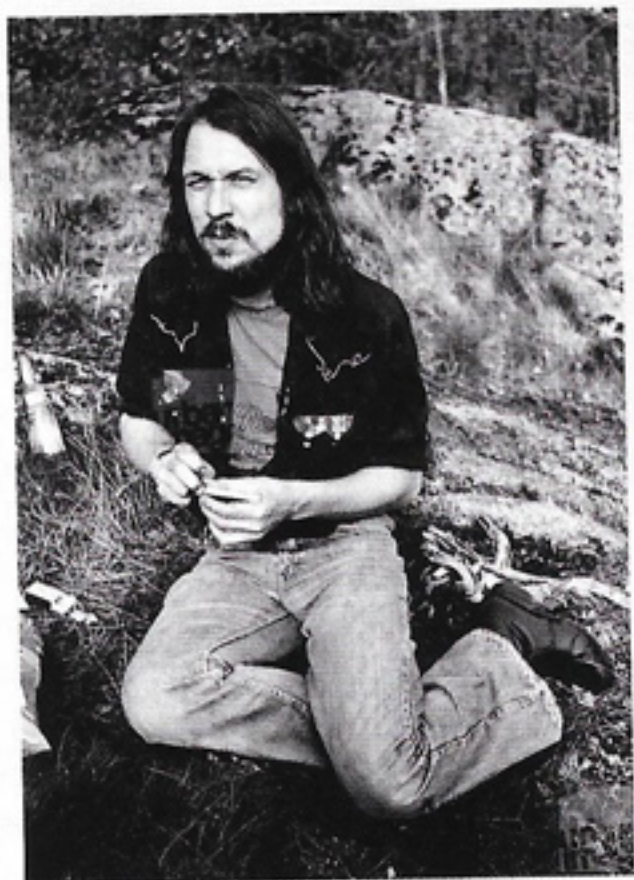
If he brought a guitar with no strings on – an enduring Syd legend – no one remembers it. Barrett's manner, however, boded less well: "Syd had this vacant, scared look," recalls Leckie. "A bit like he'd just got up. It was like... shock."

Encouraged by Jenner or Leckie, Barrett would pick up a guitar and strum, then lose track, unplug, wander off. "There was obviously something still in there saying to him, 'Ah! Guitar! I play guitar, don't I?'" says Jenner. "Then confusion would descend. He'd play a line but couldn't move on to the next line. It was like occupational therapy. We were trying to see if the muscle memory would come back."

Leckie's tape-op observed that if Barrett left Studio 3 and turned left, he would return after a while; if he turned right, he would be gone for the day. "In the old Studio 3 at Abbey Road you could see the famous crossing from a side window," says Leckie. "That was the only view of the outside world. We'd watch him cross the crossing. Then we'd all fall around laughing. That's how it was."

Nothing like an Effervescing Elephant, or even a Maisie, was forthcoming, as Barrett essayed aimless blues strums and desultory overdubs (you can hear bootlegs of 11 of them

"The odd glimpses of Syd were there, then they would disappear into the fog": Barrett circa 1974 strums the blues; (below) producer Peter Jenner; (bottom) engineer John Leckie.



on YouTube, entitled *If You Go, Don't Be Slow* takes 1 and 2), *Boogie #1*, *Boogie #2*, *Boogie #3*, *Chook-Chooka Chug Chug*, *Slow Boogie*, *Fast Boogie*, *John Lee Hooker*, *Ballad* and *Untitled*). Every evening Morrison would stop by to check on the non-progress.

"Then Bryan would give Syd a talking to," Leckie recalls. "Shout at him, really. And Pete would sit there staring at the mixer."

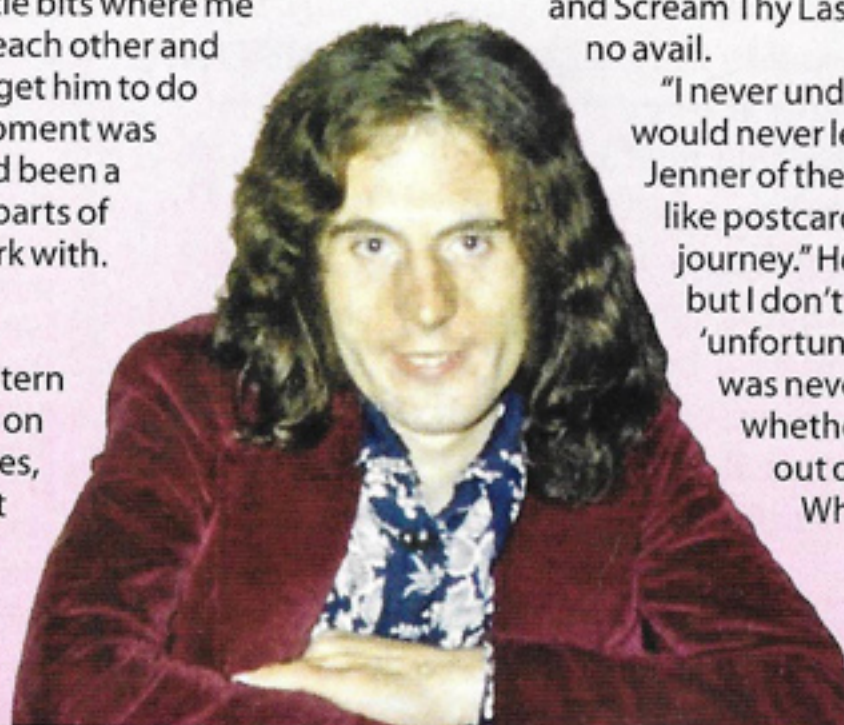
"The worst thing was that you felt that there was something there," says Jenner. "Because there would be hints, little bits where me and John would look at each other and go, I wonder if we could get him to do that again? But every moment was a new start. In 1968 it had been a challenge but we'd had parts of songs, something to work with. This was more chaotic, more fogged."

For four days, the pattern repeated. Syd turned up on time, refused headphones, barely played ("He didn't

want us to hear, I think," says Leckie). On the Thursday, he departed for good, leaving Jenner crestfallen: "I was very upset. Very upset. Because he was the most creative person I've ever met, before or since. For him to end up a shadow... that was the frustration. The odd glimpses of Syd were there, then they would disappear into the fog."

Could Jenner and Leckie have done anything differently? They doubt it. "Probably what he really wanted was someone to play with," says Leckie. During Syd's absences, he and Jenner would call up tapes of unused *Madcap* and *Barrett* material to see what could be mixed back to life, including the Floyd-era *Vegetable Man* and *Scream Thy Last Scream*. But also to no avail.

"I never understood why the Floyd would never let them out," says Jenner of the latter tracks. "They're like postcards from this ghastly journey." He pauses. "I say 'ghastly' but I don't really know. Perhaps 'unfortunate', certainly for us. I was never really sure with Syd whether he was glad to be out of it. Was he unhappy? Who knows?"



Urbanimage, Mark Hayward Archives, courtesy of John Leckie