

# GEAR



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# THE RETURN OF THE PARTS OF SOMETHING: **The Making Of** *The Endless River*

"Everyone who works in music tends to have a palette that is theirs and that they use and we're certainly not going to sound like anyone else. It's inevitable: the sum is greater than the parts."

**David Gilmour**





A previously unseen shot of David Gilmour during the sessions for *The Division Bell*.

Featuring music recorded by **Pink Floyd's** David Gilmour, Rick Wright and Nick Mason during *The Division Bell* sessions, *The Endless River* is the most eagerly awaited album of the last 20 years. This is the inside story of how - and why - it was created.

**Words:** Daryl Easlea

**Images:** Jeremy Young and Harry Borden

// It comes from all sorts of ideas," explains David Gilmour of Floyd's new album. "Some of it is improvised, quite a bit of it is just the two of us, Rick [Wright] and me, or the three of us, improvising together. Some of it is half-written ideas that one of us had come up with, rehearsed and considered as a start point for something."

Those ideas often happened on the *Astoria*, Gilmour's houseboat moored on the River Thames in Hampton, west London. It's also where many peculiar events have taken place. Engineer Andy Jackson, who has worked with Pink Floyd and Gilmour since 1980, recalls sitting in the control room there in 2005 while Gilmour was recording *On An Island*. That's when the call came through from Bob Geldof, asking if the long-dormant Floyd would play together again for the Live 8 concert. It was also there, seven years later, that Jackson learned there was to be a new Pink Floyd album, some 20 years after they had last released fresh material, and after years of Gilmour saying "absolutely, definitely not". Another surprise was that Jackson would be working on it. "I was as amazed as you are," he says, standing in the oak-panelled room on the boat, once owned by theatrical impresario Fred Karno.

It was no secret that there was a surplus of material from the sessions for what was to become *The Division Bell*. Due to the amount of available content, the album had at one point been envisaged as a double, with one disc of vocal tracks and the other built from the instrumental sessions that began at Floyd's Britannia Row studios and continued on the *Astoria* in early 1993. All featured Gilmour, drummer Nick Mason and keyboard player Rick Wright. The purpose of these sessions was to create ideas for songs. "After two weeks we had taped an extraordinary collection of riffs, patterns and musical doodles," Nick Mason noted in his book *Inside Out: A Personal History Of Pink Floyd*. "Some rather similar, some nearly identifiable as old songs of ours, some clearly subliminal reinventions of well-known songs."

From these, around 40 workable ideas emerged. As *The Division Bell* took shape, it became clear that there would be no time to fashion these instrumentals into an album. As a result, the recordings languished, but not before an artefact was created by Jackson that subsequently became another brick of Floydian mythology. *The Big Spliff* was an hour-long composite of the ambient end of this material, and Mason alerted those outside the inner circle to it in his 2004 autobiography. "There was no brief for it - I did it off my own bat," Jackson says. "As we had all this fantastic, psychedelic, noodly material, I did a mash-up of it over the school holidays. I wanted to make *Echoes* or *Wish You Were Here* again."

Lest we forget, when *The Big Spliff* was compiled in the early 90s, Pink Floyd were once again fashionable among the younger generation. In the wake of the acid house revolution of the late 80s, Floyd had been reinstated as the chill-out music of choice. Groups like The Orb made this connection explicit - the cover of their debut album, *The Orb's* 





On the endless river:  
Dave Gilmour and Nick  
Mason on Gilmour's  
houseboat, the Astoria.



Key man: the greatly missed Rick Wright at Olympic Studios.



*Adventures Beyond The Ultraworld*, contained an inverted *Animals*-esque Battersea power station in its artwork and a track entitled *Back Side Of The Moon*. Fellow traveller and sometime Orb collaborator, former Killing Joke bassist Martin 'Youth' Glover, was a huge fan as well, and was rumoured to have released some ambient mixes of Floyd's work to the underground at the time. Nick Mason was later to say that "unlike Gong's Steve Hillage – we never received any invitations to join this next generation on stage", but who on earth would have thought Pink Floyd would have been available to do such a thing?

*The Division Bell* was released in March 1994, and many thought that it marked the end for Pink Floyd. A much-loved record, it demonstrated that the group could stand on its own two feet, extricating itself from the war of words with former leader Roger Waters. It became the only Floyd album to top the charts on both sides of the Atlantic, and it went on to be one of the most successful releases in their history. After the resulting tour, while the band never officially disbanded, there was silence.

Through the intervening decades, amid that hush, there was tumult and loss. In 2005, there was rapprochement between Gilmour and Waters and the group played a four-song set at Live 8 in Hyde Park. Gilmour released *On An Island* and played a successful world tour with Rick Wright as his keyboard player, on which the two old friends bonded again ("It was like rediscovering an old love," muses Jackson). There was also a litany of loss. Floyd manager Steve O'Rourke and orchestrator Michael Kamen died in 2003; long-estranged founder Syd Barrett died in 2006; designer Storm Thorgerson in 2013; but the departure that came as the greatest surprise was that of Wright, who died of cancer in September 2008. "All were so sad, but Rick's passing was the big one. None of the others were in the band," Jackson says.

All surviving members, past and present, issued the most heartfelt statements. Gilmour encapsulated the work of this enigma when he said: "He was gentle, unassuming and private, but his soulful voice and playing were vital, magical components of our most recognised Pink Floyd sound. I have never played with anyone quite like him."

With Wright's passing, it felt that Floyd had been laid to rest forever.

While working on new material on the *Astoria* in 2012, Gilmour thought about the wealth of unreleased material that was recorded at the time of *The Division Bell* and wondered if anything could be done with it. He called up his old friend,

Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera, and asked him to have a listen. Gilmour and Manzanera had known each other since the 60s. They had co-written *One Slip* together on 1987's *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*, and Manzanera had co-produced *On An Island*.

"I went down to the *Astoria* and Andy mentioned *The Big Spliff*," Manzanera recalls. "I didn't want to listen to that. I wanted to go back to everything they recorded in its empirical source."

With this noble approach, the scale of the operation began to dawn on Manzanera. "I then realised there would be 20 hours to listen to.

"Although I only used Pink Floyd bits, Youth made it more obviously Pink Floyd."

**Phil Manzanera**

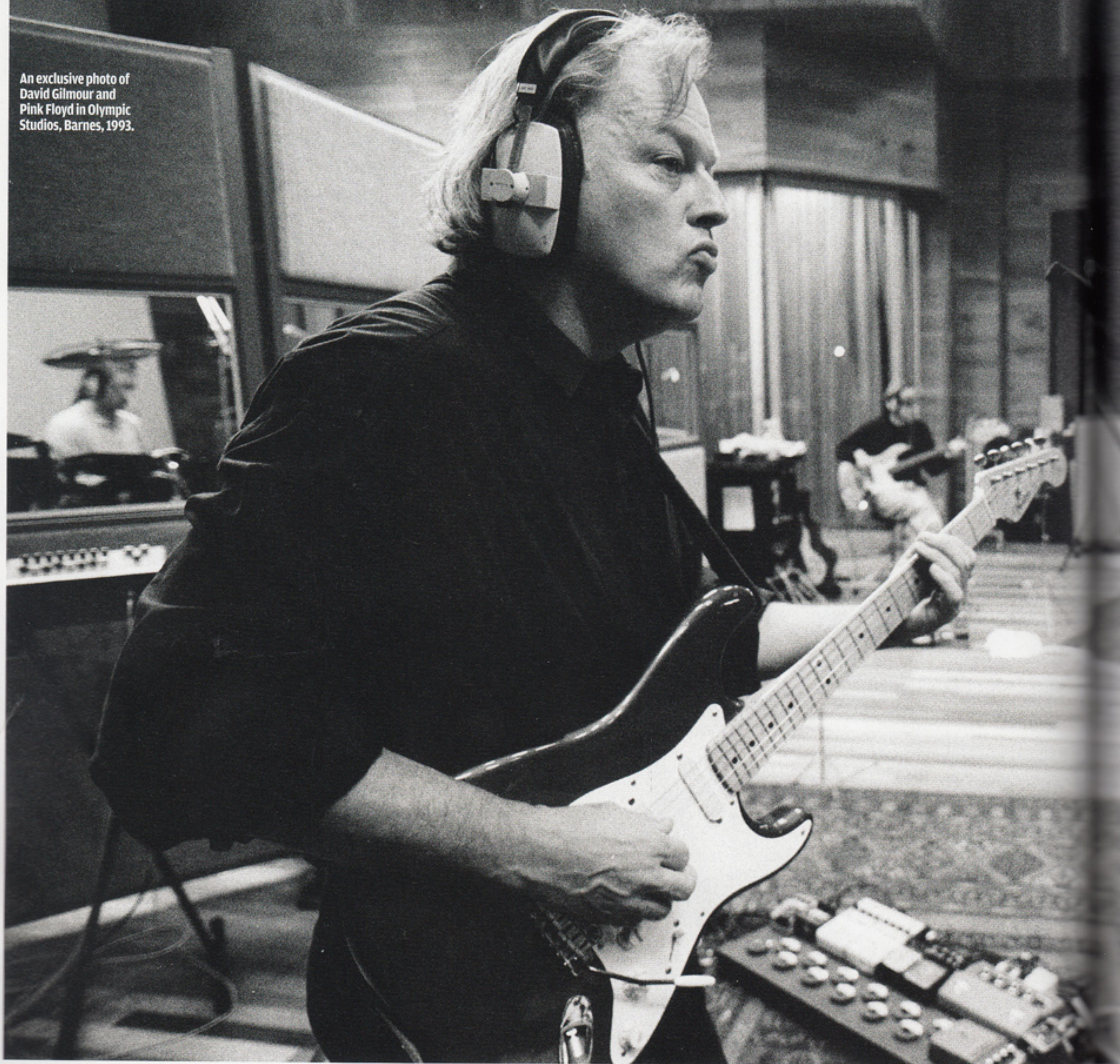
Before I started, I listened again to every Pink Floyd album, the whole catalogue. I'm very conscious of their legacy; very conscious of doing something that would not be considered appropriate for Pink Floyd."

In that first long listen, aided by Jackson, Manzanera made notes of the passages that he liked and, as a Floyd fan, thought of what he would like to hear. At some point during those first six weeks, Manzanera realised that although he had a lot of workable sections, he had little idea of how to convert them into something manageable, so he took a novel approach. "I wondered what they did in classical music. I Googled how long a movement was and saw that it was between eight and 12 minutes. I was brought up in the 60s listening to long pieces of music. With Roxy, all the time we would just jam away and then listen back to it and pick out the good bits and make something out of that."

With Jackson and long-serving engineer Damon Iddins, Manzanera divided the raw material into four sections, moving parts around. "In the back of my mind, I like to think conceptually and contextually, at the same time as picking the bits I like, weighing it all up – all those aspects of a big picture. There were things like Rick playing his



An exclusive photo of David Gilmour and Pink Floyd in Olympic Studios, Barnes, 1993.



Farfisa Compact Duo that he hadn't played since *Wish You Were Here*, and the sounds that he had used at Pompeii. I thought this sequence would be great with a bit of drums underneath it, so I took drums from somewhere else and put them under that, and I started to take diabolical liberties – I took a guitar solo from another track, changed the key and put it on another bit of instrumental.”

To assist him, he created a narrative thread for the work in his head: “Which, by the time I presented it to David, I'd actually written all out, with pictures,” Manzanera laughs. “I think he thought I was mad. It looked like some hippie, psychedelic trip.”

After six weeks, Manzanera had four 14 minute-sections, which he shared with Gilmour. “He asked me to play it to Nick, who also thought there was potential. And then... nothing happened for nine months.”

At the end of that hiatus, Gilmour still couldn't work out what should happen with these pieces of music. “He felt it needed a bit of a fresh input,” Manzanera says.

Gilmour rang up his old acquaintance, Youth. Youth and Gilmour primarily knew each other through Floyd backing vocalist Durga McBroom, the singer in Youth's dance ensemble, Blue Pearl.

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"There are ideas there that can be seen in some of the really early albums, in terms of assembly of music, that is not in terms of regular song format."

**Nick Mason**



Later, Gilmour and Youth had worked together with Alex Patterson on The Orb's *Metallic Spheres*, made in 2010. He'd also been a childhood friend of Guy Pratt, Floyd's post-Waters bassist, who also appears on *The Endless River*.

Youth vividly recalls his first listen. "David asked me to come down to his farmhouse as he wanted to play me something that he was a bit stuck with, to see what I thought. It was a glorious summer's day last June. The window was open and I was looking out over this beautiful Arcadian country landscape; swifts were darting in and out of the window, chirping away. David started playing what was the genesis of *The Endless River*. Three or four minutes in, I thought: 'That's Rick! This is Floyd.' I was so blown away that I thought, 'Whatever the gig is, even if I don't get it, I'll never forget this moment.' I really enjoyed it. At the same time, I could see why David may have felt that it wasn't right. When it finished, I said, 'That's Pink Floyd, isn't it?'"

Gilmour replied simply: "Yes."

Enthused and honoured to be consulted, Youth suggested he take the pieces away to his studios in Spain to rearrange them, to aid their flow. "My parting words to David were: 'What's your real vision on this?'" Youth recalls. "He replied: 'Make it sound like us.'"

Youth was a student of the group's work and history and, like Manzanera, wanted to create something that he, as a fan, would want

to listen to. Apart from this, he had an outsider's approach. "Phil was almost too respectful to the original sessions, which was probably the right and proper thing to do at that time," Youth suggests. "I had a really fresh perspective. I was a bit younger and cheekier – I went in and radically rearranged it. I might take four bars and turn it into a three-minute piece."

Youth put some ideas down on bass and guitar on the tracks to illustrate their potential. "It was very risky of me to do that, because I was worried that David might think I had gone too far. But what I've learned as a producer is that you have to be true to yourself. Luckily, David really liked it."

"David gave Youth what is now the first and second part, to see where he could go with that," Jackson recalls. "With the first section in particular, he made significant impact, saying it could be massively expanded. He extended it and put a rhythmic basis in it. Because he thought those two pieces should make an album, he made them enormously long, not realising there were another two. We ended up lobbing out whole chunks."

Youth was particularly taken with Manzanera's accompanying information: "It was true prog style – little flow charts and drawings to illustrate the concepts. I thought this was great. All the elements were juxtaposed to each other and it wasn't all ambient either – there were quite a few rocky and jazzy interludes."

"Although I only used Pink Floyd bits," Manzanera states, "Youth made it more obviously Pink Floyd."

After Youth's work, everybody listened to the new opus. "And it was then that David took control of the whole situation," Manzanera says. "David took the best from Youth's work and mine. He was then in charge."

It was this shift in gear that really got the process underway in November 2013. Gilmour only wanted an embellishment to enhance the material: "A lot of those moments are so lovely, so magic, as they are, that we have just used those and enhanced them a little bit," he explains.

Operations moved to Gilmour's studio in Hove. "We headed down there and got Nick to recreate drums and David to add guitar parts," Jackson says. "It became an interactive process after that."

"It was fun, but it was pretty tough," Youth adds. "Pink Floyd's criteria is way above the clouds. Attempting to scale that mountain is no quiet endeavour – it's a huge, epic undertaking."

"It was great," Manzanera continues. "There was a lot of new stuff added in to the old stuff. Because of the way technology has changed, it simply makes it something that couldn't have been done before. It is very much a modern album in that sense because it does have all the ingredients of analogue recording, of people playing together, but then with today's computer technology you can completely rearrange it, change the key of it and fashion something that's very cohesive."

"Modern technology is a wonderful thing in a recording studio," Gilmour adds, smiling.

"There are ideas there that can be seen in some of the really early albums, in terms of assembly of music, that is not in terms of regular song format," says Mason. "This record that is primarily instrumental, the obvious interpretation is that it is about music primarily, rather than lyrics."

Initially, all four producers were involved in the studio, Jackson engineering while Manzanera and Youth would be at the back, giving Gilmour and the other artists – sax player Gilad Atzmon and long-time cohort Guy Pratt both make cameos – feedback and encouragement. "It wasn't all plain sailing," Youth recalls. "We had serious disagreements at times about content, the validity of doing one part or not, but it was undertaken with a lot of integrity."



Youth talks of the sessions with childlike wonder. "*Wish You Were Here* is probably my favourite album, certainly the one I've bought the most and listened to the most. Actually being in the room with the same instruments and some of the same musicians... I thought would never have been possible, never considered it. Or that I'd be in a position to be considered to do anything like that – and then to be doing it is a remarkable, levelling experience. Pink Floyd's production criteria are still the highest yardstick out there – probably only George Martin comes near."

It was soon apparent – although according to all, unspoken – that the album was a tribute to Wright and how much his quiet presence was as much a shaper of Floyd's sound as any of the other parts. "As we know, lead guitarists can obliterate everybody else with their sound," laughs Manzanera. "And as we know, David has a unique, fantastic sound – the minute you hear it, you know it's Pink Floyd. But having that Rick organ underneath puts it in a wonderful musical context, and the three of them, when they are together, it sounds like Pink Floyd."

"If you were short of a great guitar or drum part, you could do something about that," Jackson says. "But if you were short of a keyboard part, there was nothing that could be done. Bits of Rick became really precious – we would grab them."

Between them, they isolated Wright's Hammond and VCS3 playing, giving his work prominence. Youth adds, "It was like an Indiana Jones adventure in a way, playing around with all these references."

One of the most precious sections can be found on *Autumn 68*, its title a lovely, poetic nod to Wright's *Summer 68* from *Atom Heart Mother*. A tape was located of Wright playing the legendary pipe organ at the Royal Albert Hall ahead of the band's June 1969 show there, after which they were banned for using a smoke bomb. "We've used a minute and a half of the 20 minutes there," Jackson says. "We gave it to Youth and selected a section."

Youth was delighted. "According to David, he was playing his Unfinished Symphony just after they had finished soundchecking. Maybe one day, Gala [Wright's daughter] may want to finish it, as it was a very beautiful piece. It

was amazing to discover that Rick had composed a symphony."

One of the most pleasant surprises of *The Endless River* is the rejuvenation of the other founder member, Nick Mason. "Nick has been playing a lot recently," Jackson states. "We came in to do the drum session and he was completely on it. People underestimate how important Nick is in Pink Floyd. You hear it when someone else plays it; it's just not right. Nick is so effective for this band. Ringo, Charlie Watts, there's a whole list of them – the bands that wouldn't be the same without the drummer nobody thinks about."

The piece that ties it all together is *Louder Than Words*, the sole vocal track on the album, with lyrics written by Gilmour's wife, novelist Polly Samson. "Polly came up with the idea for *Louder Than Words*," Gilmour says. "Neither Nick nor I are the most verbal people, so Polly was thinking it was very appropriate for us to express what we do through the music."

"It took David and Polly a long time to get the lyric on it and the vocal," Youth says. "It was only two minutes so we had to extend it and make it into a song. Nick did the drums again; David did all the guitars. I discussed with David bringing in some R&B backing vocals, with a view to making it appropriate in the context of what we were doing and that it would make the record sound more like Pink Floyd. David really didn't like the idea of that."

A couple of weeks later, Youth and Durga McBroom were writing some new material for Blue Pearl. Youth told her about the project and they decided to record some vocals for the track ("After she's picked up her chin from the floor!" laughs Youth), with Youth fully ready to

Floyd at the controls in 1993 at London's Olympic Studios.



The inimitable Nick Mason, whose drums are integral to Floyd's sound.



shoulder the blame if Gilmour wasn't happy with such insubordination. "I told Phil and Andy and they went [adopts fearful voice]: 'David's not going to like this – he said he didn't want backing vocals on it. You're going to hear some thunder!'"

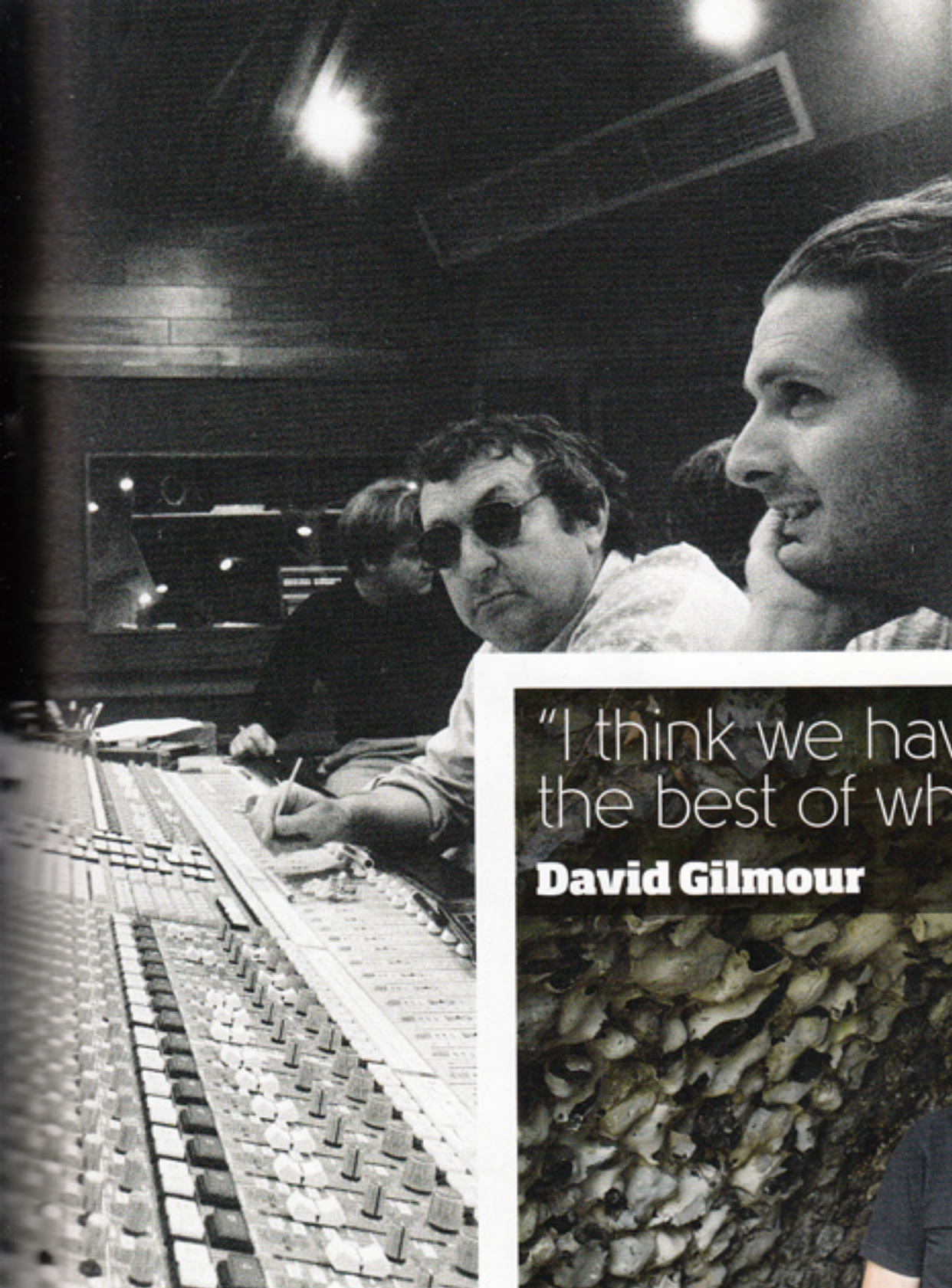
Youth sent the tape and then heard nothing from Gilmour for a week or so. "He phoned up about something else and I eventually asked him what he thought about Durga's backing vocals," Youth says. "He replied, 'Oh yes, I think they're great – I've already sung some other things over them. [On the record, McBroom is joined by Sarah Brown and Louise Clare Marshall.] It's funny with David, you think he's going to be one way and then he goes completely the other. He's unpredictable like that, and that's good."

The song is a beautiful reminder of the power of the band and the brand, and that is what unites them, given that they were, as Gilmour said in 1994, "never a jolly bunch of friends. Things between the four of us were always pretty rocky." And with its meaningful lyrics, as general or as specific as you want them to be, it preserves Floyd's mystery.

There was a great deal of deliberation about where the song should go. At one point it was at the end of the third section, but all agreed it made little sense to go back to instrumentals after that. In the end, the back sections of parts three and four were swapped over. "Conceptually, the one song at the end is pretty neat," Manzanera laughs, "pretty good."

Tinkering with the final mixes went on, but the actual recording has taken less than a year. "It wasn't actually that long, from beginning to end, for a Floyd album," Jackson says. "For any other group, it would have been a long process, but for a Floyd album, it wasn't that bad!"





Everyone was delighted. Youth views the project as “a restoration of their sovereignty”.

The news of the existence of *The Endless River* — its title the penultimate lyric from

*High Hopes*, the final song on *The Division Bell* — went public on July 5 this year when Polly Samson matter-of-factly announced it on Twitter, pre-empting a tabloid threat to spill the beans. Youth followed it up the following day on Facebook, with his message “OK... peak experience number one, producing Pink Floyd.”

The announcement of the tracklisting and 18-year-old Egyptian artist Ahmed Emad Eldin’s poignant artwork on September 22 brought Floyd again to the forefront of the world’s media. Gilmour offered his explanation of the project: “When we finished *The Division Bell* sessions, we had many pieces of music, only nine of which had become songs on the album. Now with Rick gone, and with him the chance of ever doing it again, it feels right that these revisited tracks should be made available as part of our repertoire.”

The result is an old-fashioned album that demands your attention and repeated listening. “*The Endless River* is a continuous flow of music that builds gradually over four separate pieces over the 55-odd minutes... You have to get into the right mood to listen to this,” Gilmour says. “There are lots of people who love to still listen to music that way. Listen to the whole thing, the whole piece, all the way through and get really into the mood of the whole thing, rather than listening to shorter pieces, and this is for them, really.”

It’s something that demands your attention in this relentlessly soundbite-driven world. “It’s like classical music,” Manzanera says. “If you put the effort in, you get it back.”

“Music has got so disposable and functional,” says Jackson. “People put their iPhone on shuffle and it’s something to kill a tube journey, and people are craving depth. It does demand to be listened to that way.”

As a result, it owes much to the Floyd of between 1968 and 1975, referring often to the majesty of *A Saucerful Of Secrets*, *Ummagumma*, *Meddle* and *Wish You Were Here* (see page 46). It certainly touches again on their experimental side, which Youth was keen to exploit. “Even though Floyd were much more blues based, they still had a very strong

affiliation with Krautrock, and it was through Rick that they had this European aesthetic with Moogs and VCS3, something that Eno was to do to a greater extent around the same time. Floyd touched upon it with *Welcome To The Machine*.”

What you’re left with is something that, despite its sterile, studio-created way, seems bristling with inspiration. “Pink Floyd have never patronised their audience,” Youth says. “Being true to yourself is more successful than being someone you think you should be. Those cats have got the confidence to do that and they pull it off very well, I think.”

“Everyone who works in music tends to have a palette that is theirs and that they use and they’re never gonna sound like someone else,” Gilmour says.

“David was shrewd enough to realise that Pink Floyd is larger than the people involved,” Youth adds. “With a band like Floyd, the collective

“I think we have successfully commandeered the best of what there is. I suspect this is it.”

**David Gilmour**



High hopes: Gilmour and Mason relax in the Capability Brown-designed garden next to Astoria.

energy and spirit is so powerful, you can’t mess with it. It’s got its own magic and power, and so, of course, it continues, and David has managed to ride through all those ups and downs.”


“We’re certainly not going to sound like anyone else. It’s inevitable: the sum is greater than the parts,” the guitarist surmises.

So, as the river flows, the question that will undoubtedly be on everyone’s mind is: will *The Endless River* really be the last word from Pink Floyd? Andy Jackson thinks so, but as he says: “I would have said that a couple of years ago. I never thought we would do Live 8. Rick going has made such a big difference. David is working now — he’s writing and working on a solo album.”

Manzanera’s opinion? “I would have thought so as Rick’s not there any more. You can never say never, but I would have thought their job is done. This would bookend the thing very neatly, as a tribute to Rick. I’d like to think if any of us Roxy people ever pegged it, somebody would do a tribute like this for us!”

Youth, on the other hand, doesn’t necessarily see it that way. “I don’t give up on the idea that they will tour again in some way or another. I’d love to see it — but I doubt it.”

The final word, of course, has to be Gilmour’s, and he is unequivocal. “I think we have successfully commandeered the best of what there is. I suspect this is it,” he says of *The Endless River*.

The album is a final statement from Pink Floyd that resists all temptation to reflect too heavily on the troubled frontmen of its past, just its present leader and largely unsung lieutenants. It is not in any way, as Alan Smith wrote of The Beatles’ *Let It Be*, “a cheap skate epitaph, a cardboard tombstone”, nor is it the new *Dark Side Of The Moon*. Like everything Pink Floyd have ever done, regardless of personnel, it is simply unique. 

*The Endless River* is out on November 10 via Parlophone. For more information, see [www.pinkfloyd.com](http://www.pinkfloyd.com).



# SUITE: Soul Music

Subtle echoes of **Pink Floyd's** past works can be heard throughout *The Endless River*. We reveal some of the band's key songs that have influenced the new album.

**Words:** Daryl Easlea **Image:** Sam Chivers/Magictorch

**T**he *Endless River* is a wonderfully thoughtful patchwork of Pink Floyd's work. It manages to evoke so many glorious memories of their history while locating the group firmly in the 21st century. As Nick Mason states, "There are ideas there that... can be seen in some of the really early albums."

He's absolutely right. It nods generously to various moments from their past. It's the Floyd from *A Saucerful Of Secrets* through *Echoes To Shine On You Crazy Diamond*. Although the original four movements have now been subdivided into 18 tracks, *The Endless River* marks the return of the suite, the portentous piece of grandeur that offers a glimpse of the 'other Floyd' – the Wright/Gilmour axis rather than Barrett/Waters; light instead of darkness. It's one for the 'big spliff' crowd who frankly get terrified by *Dogs* or *The Wall*.

What is often overlooked is the variety of styles and improvisations the group were more than willing to approach during this period. "When I was sifting through Rick's keyboard bits and finding a home for them," Youth says, "I thought, 'Wow, we could go Krautrock on this album!'" Also Robert Wyatt, free jazz influences... that's always been part of Floyd's mandate, but got eclipsed by their experimental rock things or spacey things."

It will be interesting to assess where *The Endless River* will sit ultimately in Pink Floyd's canon, but its scope, and loving assemblage by its fan-musician-producers and a couple of those who were there, make it an irresistible tribute to their music. "It's inevitably and justifiably self-referential," Andy Jackson says. "It's appropriate to do so. I don't think they are trying to be cute about it – they are just making a good record."

With this in mind, we look at eight other 'good records' by Pink Floyd that have informed *The Endless River*.



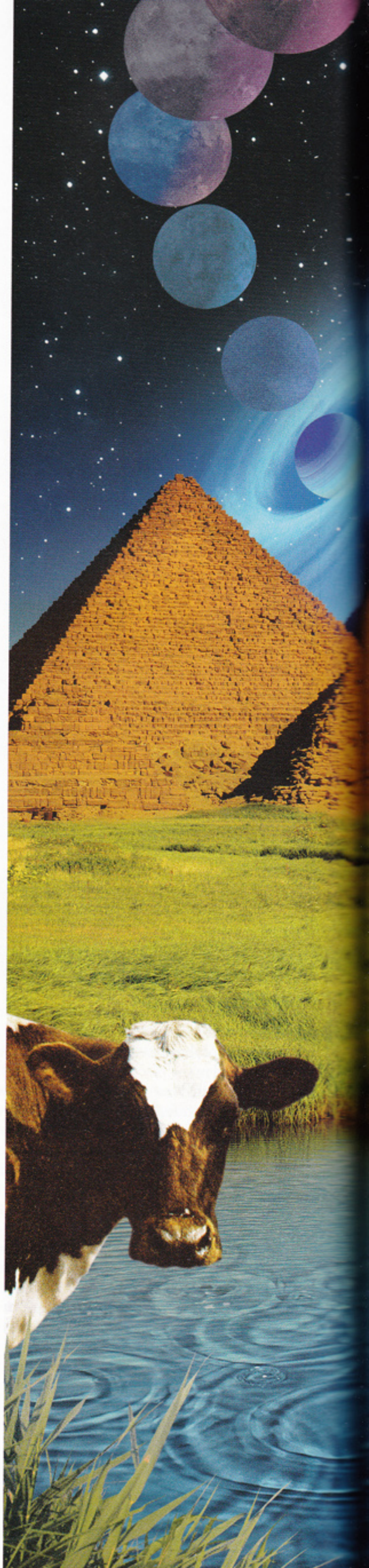
## **A SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS** (1968)

The title track of their 1968 album demonstrated that the Floyd would be able to move on comfortably from their psychedelic phase. David Gilmour recalls Nick Mason and Roger Waters drawing out the title track as an architectural diagram, complete with peaks and troughs, which is not dissimilar to Phil Manzanera's charts

for *The Endless River*. Producer Norman Smith was aghast that they would play so flagrantly beyond the three-minute single format. *Skins* from the new album is an obvious reference to this track.

## **THE GRAND VIZIER'S GARDEN PARTY** (1969)

Nick Mason said about *Ummagumma* in 1994: "We were looking for new ways of constructing an album, although I think what this demonstrates is that our sum is always better than the parts," a phrase which is indeed used on the new album. Although flawed, the four solo works on the second disc of *Ummagumma* show a band willing to experiment, and parts of the new album have the feel, if not the sound, of Mason's often overlooked three-part solo suite.





**UNKNOWN SONG AKA  
RAIN IN THE COUNTRY**  
(1969)

This outtake, recorded in 1969, was often bootlegged until it appeared on the deluxe edition of the *Zabriskie Point* soundtrack in 1997. The bass line was to reappear in *Atom Heart Mother*, and the gentle mood and acoustic playing by Gilmour was to become a Floyd staple. It's echoed in passages of *The Endless River*, and the mood of *Surfacing* can trace its origins back to this placid groove.

**ATOM HEART  
MOTHER**  
(1970)

Pink Floyd's flawed and often undervalued *Atom Heart Mother* suite marks arguably the most experimental thing they ever committed to vinyl. After touring their extended, avant-garde pieces such as *The Man* and *The Journey*, they worked on this 20-minute piece, which was originally entitled *The Amazing Pudding*. While working on it, they were introduced to Ron Geesin, who helped focus their experimentation, taught them more about recording techniques and helped them to be self-reliant in the studio. Being outside the inner circle, it could be said that Youth is *The Endless River*'s Geesin.

**ONE OF THESE DAYS**  
(1971)

Credited to all four Floyd members, and one of Nick Mason's only lead 'vocals', *One Of These Days* largely instrumental space-rock stomp informs *Sum* on the new album. Youth suggested that Gilmour needed to play his guitar through a Leslie speaker to recreate that unique, searing sound heard on this original. Older heads will have images of Ian Emes' short film *French Windows*, with its animated dancers, which was shown on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*.

**ECHOES** (1971)  
*The drizzle of Ebb And*



*Flow* evokes the mood of *Echoes*, the 23-and-a-half-minute centerpiece of *Meddle*. Beginning life as *Nothings 1-24*, before morphing into *The Son Of Nothing* and then *The Return Of The Son Of Nothing*, *Echoes* captured the high-water mark and the closure of space-rock era Floyd. Buoyed up by the practical experimentation that Geesin had showed them on *Atom Heart Mother*, here Gilmour was happy to turn the accidental wiring of a wah-wah pedal into the screeching noise of gulls, a sound which makes a brief appearance at the end of *Skins* on the second part of *The Endless River*.

**US AND THEM**  
(1973)

Although primarily a vocal piece, one cannot deny that for many, the 10-track *The Dark Side Of The Moon* is the epitome of the mellow Floyd suite. It started life as *Eclipse*, and even the caustic nature of Waters' *Money* is rendered sweet by Gilmour's vocal. *Anisina*

takes the template of *Us And Them*, one of Wright's most cherished Floyd melodies and a crucial part of the *Eclipse* suite, and brings it into the 21st century.

**SHINE ON YOU  
CRAZY DIAMOND**  
(1975)

*It's What We Do*, possibly the most pointed and obvious homage on *Endless River*, could almost be a composite of the second and ninth part of *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*, the group's legendary tribute to former leader Syd Barrett. Released in 1975, the 27-minute suite was split in two and bookended their *Wish You Were Here* album, arguably their greatest rumination on loss. The sense of absence and longing permeates *The Endless River*. **DE**





# RICK WRIGHT

# Remembered

The *Endless River* is a tribute to departed Pink Floyd keyboard player Rick Wright as much as it is the band's swansong. *Prog* editor Jerry Ewing offers a brief insight into why...

**Words:** Jerry Ewing **Portrait:** Karl Grant/Retna

*'From morning to night, I stayed out of sight, Didn't recognise I'd become, No more than alive I'd barely survived, In a word... overrun...'*

These are the words that Rick Wright sings on the song *Wearing The Inside Out*, the one track on 1994's *The Division Bell* that features Wright's vocals (the first time he'd even sung a lead Pink Floyd vocal since *Time* in 1973), a song many immediately associated with the mental travails of assimilating himself back into both public life and the Pink Floyd fold following years of discourse with Roger Waters. Even if the lyrics were penned by ex-Slapp Happy keyboard player Anthony Moore, who would later work with Wright on his 1996 album *Broken China*, most suspected they remained at heart, semi-autobiographical in nature for Wright, who alone wrote the music for the sombre tune. In Mark Blake's *Pigs Might Fly* book, he claims that one Pink Floyd insider had noted that Moore "had to climb inside Rick's head and get the words out", whilst *The Division Bell* producer Bob Ezrin noted, "There's a lot of emotional honesty there. Fans pick up on the sad, vulnerable side to Rick."

For a band so reticent in wearing their heart on their sleeve, the song itself is almost searing in its openness. And yet for Wright, a man whose dextrous keyboard sounds really had informed the Pink Floyd sound since 1967's *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, and who had more to gain in personal terms, it is an act of catharsis.

I interviewed Wright in early 2000, being summoned to his Kensington mews flat for an audience on the back of a Pink Floyd cover story I'd written for *Classic Rock* surrounding the release of that year's *Is There Anybody Out There* Wall live double set. Interviews had duly been set up with Roger Waters (honest, slightly paranoid), David Gilmour (gruff, tetchy) and Nick Mason (cheery, avuncular), but the request to speak to Wright, who of course had been famously sacked from the band during the making of *The Wall* (albeit sacked very much behind public closed doors until fans picked up on credits on that and the subsequent *The Final Cut* album), were met with a reluctant "he's somewhere in France".

This clearly angered the keyboard player, who was determined to have his say. "Rick wants to talk to you," I was told when

I received the initial phone call, and duly set forth to speak to the man. I found an initially angry, but quietly intense, seemingly private and passionate musician eager to have his say and at least set the record straight over some issues that had arisen in the feature. Most of it, of course, centred around the fact that Waters had been the band member to instigate the firing of Wright. Rick Wright then performed with Pink Floyd as a hired hand on *The Wall* tour prompting Nick Mason to note "As a salaried performer he was the only one of us to make money from the shows. The remaining three of us shared our losses".

Agreeing that Waters would come up with "the big idea" in later years, Wright maintained it was largely he and Gilmour who would come up with much of the music. "There has always been friction between me and Roger, right from the beginning," he told me, possibly referring to a time when the band members were at Regents Street Polytechnic and he'd refused to give Waters a cigarette – the pedantic Wright not liking how Waters would rip off the pack's cellophane wrapping. "Personality wise, we just didn't get on." As Waters' own role within Pink Floyd became more dictatorial in the late 70s, the "quiet and introverted" Wright (as Mason has referred to him) became more and more the whipping boy. Even his gradual rehabilitation back into the Floyd fold in the late 80s and early 90s (shrouded as it was in legal wrangles that sadly overshadowed his musical input – at least on 1987's *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*) saw Wright agitated by the continued sniping asides of his former tormentor. In retaliation to Waters' suggestion in that *Classic Rock* piece that Wright had talked to him backstage at a Waters solo show in 1999 after he'd "had a couple" and then bad-mouthed the bassist, Wright was quite indignant: "I think, 'Why do you have to say these things, Roger?'. It was difficult for both of us backstage. I hadn't seen him for 18, 19 years. I went backstage, I shook his hand and said, 'How are you?' And we both felt awkward. And that was it. There was no great meaningful conversation. I'm at the point where all this bullshit should stop."

On the outside looking in: Mason described Wright as "quiet and introverted".





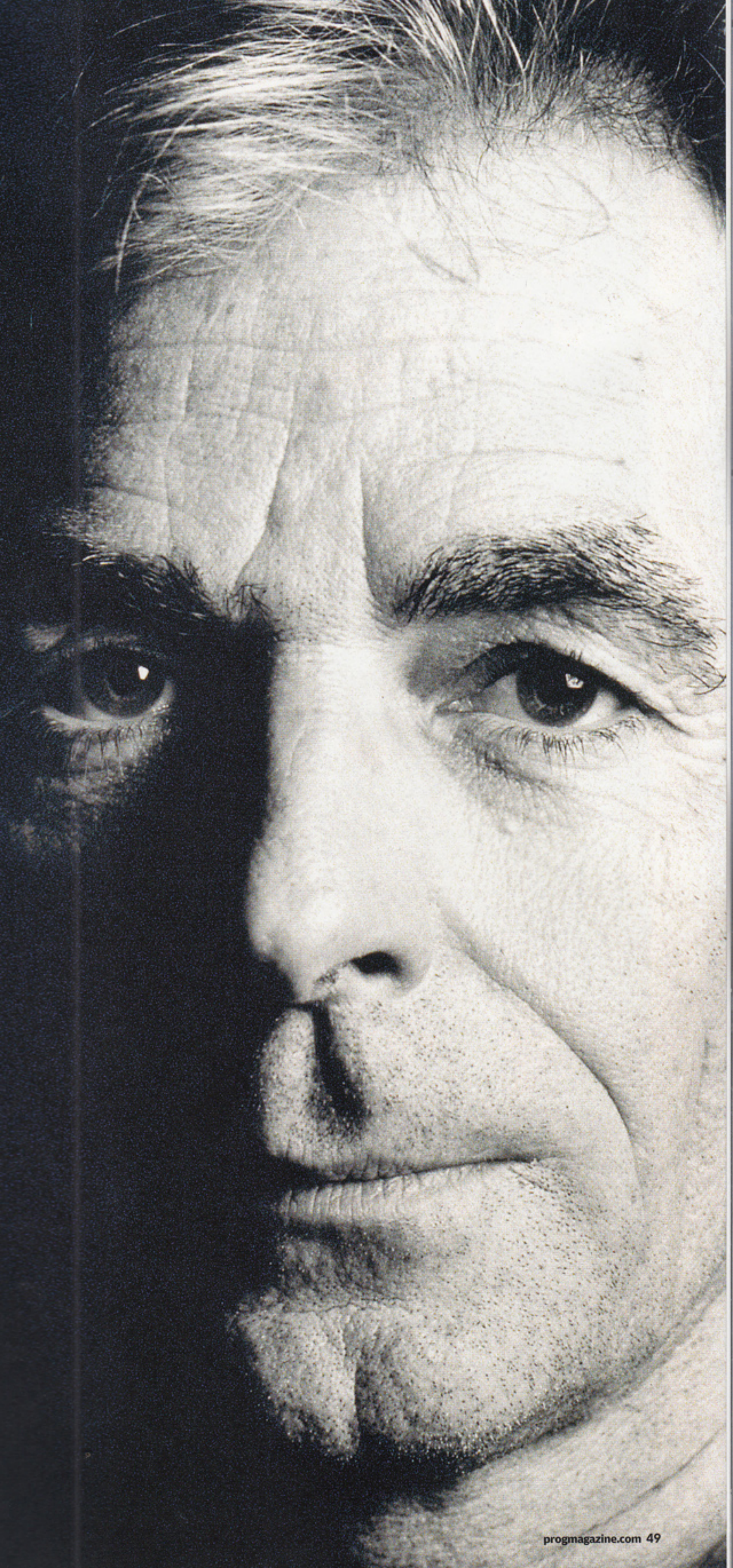
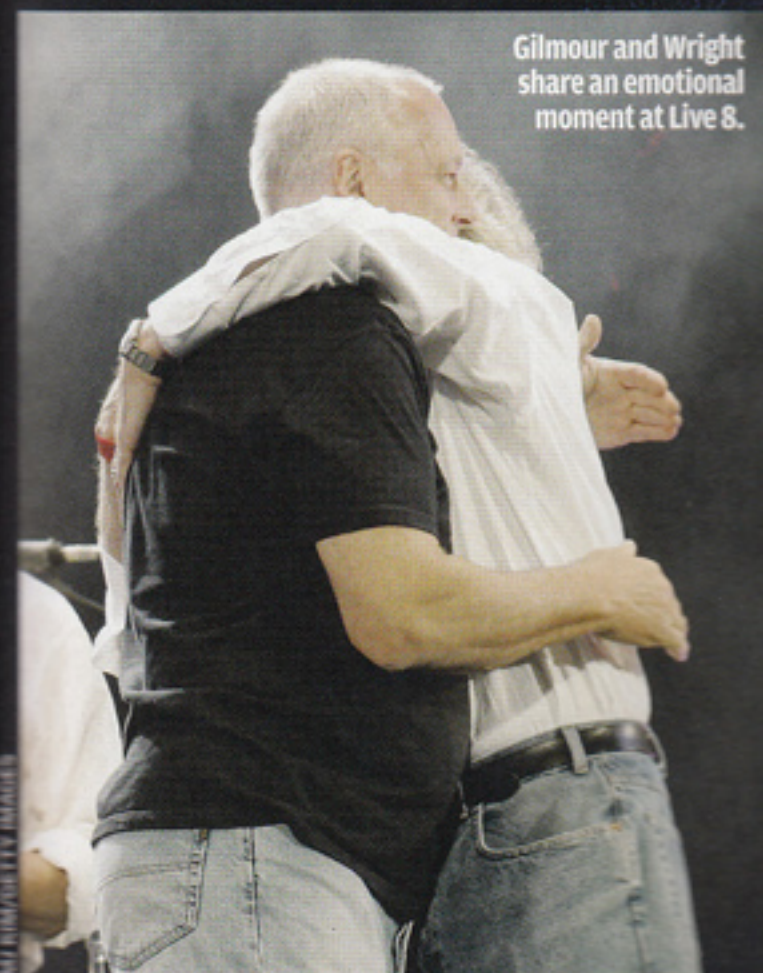
The bullshit stopped when Pink Floyd with Roger Waters appeared at 2005's Live 8 show in London's Hyde Park, although by this time, the main sticking point was Waters' soured relationship with Floyd's current leader Gilmour. Although no more new Pink Floyd music would be forthcoming until the release of *The Endless River*, Wright would work on Gilmour's 2006 solo album *On An Island* and tour with his old band mate. Even Roger Waters offered the hand of friendship, asking Wright to join him and Mason on his *Dark Side Of The Moon Live Tour*, although Wright turned it down to work on his own music. Wright last performed with Mason and Gilmour in 2007 at the Syd Barrett tribute *The Madcap's Last Laugh* at London's Barbican, where he sang lead vocals on *Arnold Layne*, fittingly, the song that had started it all for the band.

Rick Wright died of cancer on 15 September 2008, aged 65. Naturally, his fellow band members spoke movingly of him. "Rick was the sound that knitted it all together," noted Mason. "I wish there had been more," added Waters of the chance to perform with Wright one more time at Live 8, adding, "It's hard to overstate his musical voice in Pink Floyd."

Perhaps fittingly, the final voice should be David Gilmour's. For it is he who has reactivated what he once told me was the "big old beast" Pink Floyd for one final fling. *The Endless River* might be deemed their swansong, but at its heart everyone knows it is the band's tribute to their fallen comrade. "I wish we could have all been great buddies and carried on," Wright told me back in 2000. Eight years later, Gilmour would say, "He was my partner and friend", adding perhaps more succinctly: "Like Rick I don't find it easy to express my feelings in words, but I loved him and will miss him enormously."

"We shout and argue like everyone else," are the words you hear from Gilmour at the start of *The Endless River*, highlighting the fact that maybe, like many bands, Pink Floyd were not always the best of friends. But *The Endless River* itself is proof enough that at the end of the day, Gilmour's final words of love and friendship do ring true. ♪

Gilmour and Wright share an emotional moment at Live 8.





New spins...

## PINK FLOYD

Sailing into the sunset in fine style...

**Words:** Jerry Ewing **Illustration:** Stuart Briers

**T**here's certainly an unspoken understanding... The opening words you hear on *The Endless River* are slightly hesitant. Clipped. Terribly English.

Even if you didn't know this was the voice of late Pink Floyd keyboard player Rick Wright, such is the aura of the man and his sound that pervades this album, you'd probably guess.

'There's a lot of things unsaid,' adds a more abrupt David Gilmour. 'We shout and argue like everyone else.' The ever-avuncular Nick Mason offers some mitigating words, and then we're off into the music.

And what music it is. The internet's been awash with rumour and conjecture since the announcement that there would be one last Pink Floyd album: 'It'll be *The Big Spliff!*' 'It'll just be another variant on 90s Floyd, with extra musicians brought in to mask the inadequacies.' 'Maybe it'll just be *Soundscape*, the bonus track that came with 1995's *Pulse* live cassette', et cetera ad nauseam...

*The Endless River* is none of these. It is so much more. It is a tribute to the departed Wright and the swansong of one of the greatest progressive acts of our time. It is also an album that goes some way to recapturing the pioneering, exploratory spirit that made Floyd such a potent force to begin with.

If you're a prog rock fan who likes Pink Floyd, then *The Endless River* is to a certain extent the Floyd album you've been waiting for, the one you never thought you'd hear the likes of again.

It comprises four lengthy instrumental pieces, created largely by just David Gilmour, Nick Mason and Rick Wright (Guy Pratt has added some bass and Gilad Atzmon some tenor sax) as they jammed at Britannia Row Studios throughout '93, preparing what would become *The Division Bell*.

Those jams saw the band seeking to reconnect with what had made them such a powerhouse, and wiggling out as only they

### The Endless River

PARLOPHONE



**The wonderful, moving culmination of this all-time great rock band's career.**

could. The results have been reworked in the studio (take a bow producers Andy Jackson, Phil Manzanera and Youth) into something aurally sensational. This album evokes treasured moments in the band's history as *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*, *Echoes*, *The Wall* and even *A Saucerful Of Secrets*, yet with the sonic impact today's technology can bring.

Although sub-sections of the four suites have been named, the four main movements have not. It's a largely redundant gesture anyway, because as Gilmour enjoins elsewhere in this issue: "Listen to the whole thing, the whole piece, all the way through."

Once past the soundclips of the main protagonists, Wright's keyboards float in, building momentarily before Gilmour's guitar drifts in, followed by Mason's heavy-set, loose drums. It's a languid, carefree

groove that slowly develops into something akin to a bluesier *Shine On...* as the three lock together. And then it suddenly lurches, twisting away in a manner that sonically seems to reflect Scarfe's *Wall* animations, toying with familiar motifs before drifting off into an ambient space.

Likewise, Side Two opens with Wright's throbbing keys, yet here an opening more akin to modern Floyd soon evolves into an altogether heavier vibe. The spirit of *Echoes* rises up as Gilmour's guitar builds, yet this is altogether more urgent with more tribal beats from Mason, with Wright acting almost like some kind of washer between the two, before Atzmon's sax brings things to Side Three.

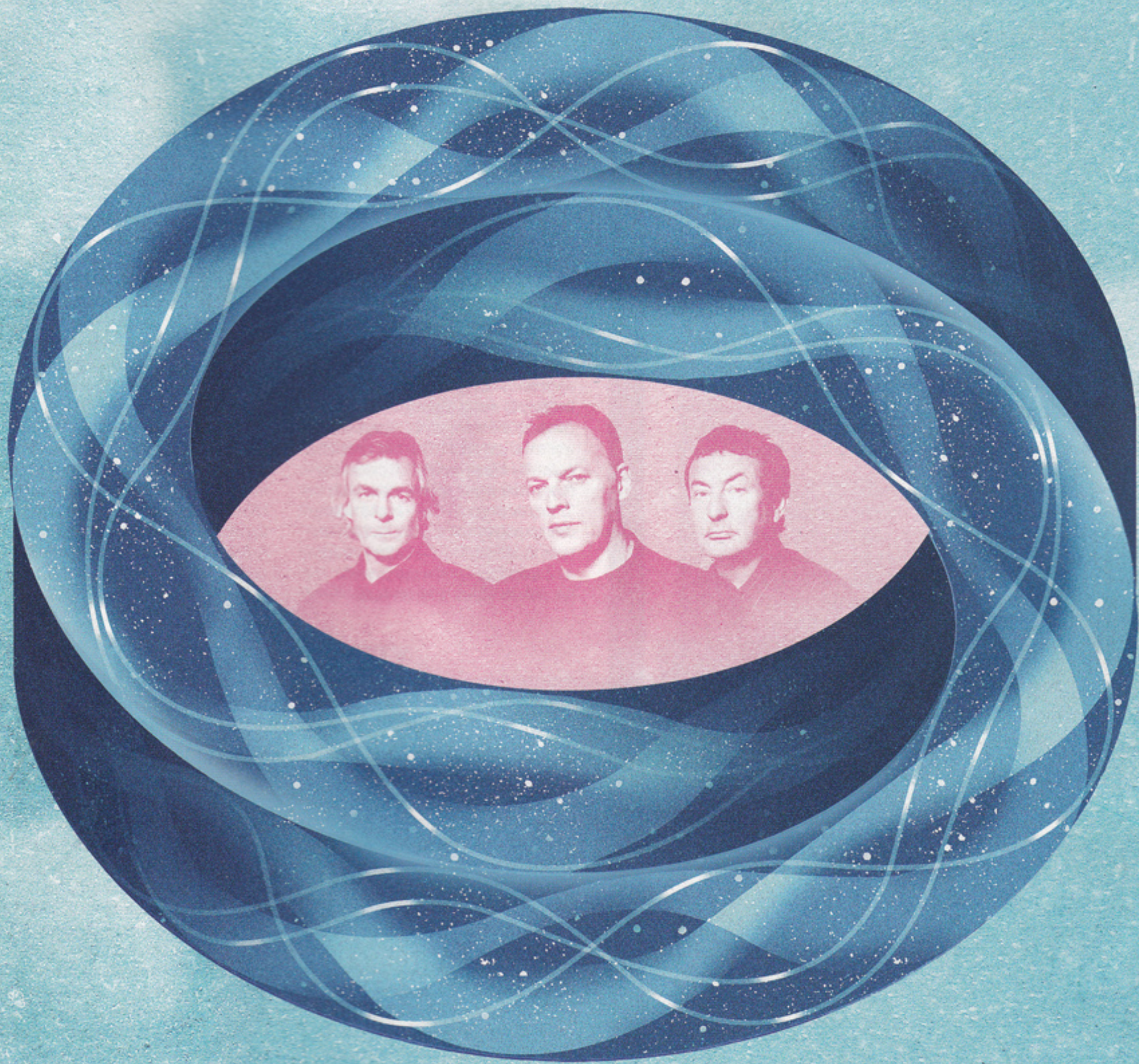
This is truly the centre point of the work. Jazzy Wright keys and Gilmour's building guitar lines explode into a *Wall*-esque groove that then allows Wright's sensational 1968 Albert Hall organ to rise triumphant, before all three unite in the heaviest music on offer (instrumental maybe, but never ambient) before again the mood changes, easing down, the familiar voice of Stephen Hawking intoning: 'Speech has allowed us the communication of ideas.' The sweet irony of the band who communicated through their music, but couldn't talk to each other, and barely anyone else for that matter.

Side Four opens with spacious and spacey sounds, drums and guitar interlocking as Wright floats over them. Yet this time something feels familiar, as the most obvious latter-day epic Floyd sound builds. And then, a recognisable tolling of church bells, some acoustic guitar, and we're there – the song.

'We bitch and we fight/Diss each other on sight/This thing we do,' Gilmour sings, later noting, 'With world weary grace/we've taken our place,' before ending with: 'The sum of our parts/The beat of our hearts/It's louder than words.' And the three musicians lock together, upwards, soaring and heartfelt. And then... they're gone.

This isn't just Pink Floyd honouring their fallen comrade. They're also taking stock of their career, looking back fondly and admitting both triumphs and mistakes. It is a quite wonderful, strangely moving culmination of the career of one of rock music's all-time great bands. Celebrating together for one final time before walking through the studio door and, maybe with one glance over their shoulders, closing that door tightly shut.







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