

German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ) lead the following interview with Roger Waters in May 2003 due to the re-release of *Dark Side of the Moon* on SACD.

I quite like this interview because he was asked some personal questions of his young life and those answers were very very interesting. But the last part of it was pretty blunt and awkward.

SZ: Mr Waters, due to the re-release of the 1973 album Dark Side of the Moon, I would like to look back a couple of years into the past.

Roger Waters: OK, which year?

SZ: 1966, the year Pink Floyd signed their first record deal.

RW: That was 1967, not 1966.

SZ: Sorry.

RW: Alright.

SZ: A view back into the long gone past.

RW: Ask what you want. You ask, I answer. Those are the rules.

SZ: Rules you didn` t always follow. You once were renowned for being a journalists` scarer.

RW: I never scared journalists. I just didn` t talk to them. There`s a difference.

SZ: Why do you smile?

RW: I recall the Wish You Were Here tour in America, mid-70s, when the Pink Floyd hysteria was raging. They gave us the most expensive PR-manager that they could find in Los Angeles. He told us when and where we had to talk to whom, to achieve the optimal diversification. So we listened to him and then we said: "Hey Gary, stop it! See, you won` t have much work with us, because whoever calls you, be it TV radio or papers, your answer will always be: No! Always: No! Okay?"

SZ: Did he heed it?

RW: Of course he heeded it. He was paid for heeding it, pretty well paid.

SZ: Not a bad job.

RW: Indeed.

SZ: Why didn't you and the others want to talk to journalists?

RW: We wanted to have our peace to be able to concentrate on our work. Chatter distracts, especially when you're touring. Another reason why I didn't make this Faustian pact with the media was because I didn't want to be owned by the media. And basically you are owned by the media if you don't tell them "no!" quick enough. They just eat you up, they do whatever they want to do with you.

SZ: Naturally your behaviour was considered arrogant.

RW: Right, but in these case you've got to compile a calculation of what you pay and what you get: I paid with a couple of misinterpretations in the stupid media, regarding my person and my music. What I got was calmness and quietude. All in all that wasn't a bad deal for the 15 years in which Pink Floyd were such a successful band.

SZ: Do you doubt that the young Roger Waters was a complicated person?

RW: No, and admittedly this had less to do with other people but with problems that I had with myself. I wasn't exactly what one could characterize as easy-going, more the opposite. But what's up with 1967? We're still in the 70s.

SZ: OK! I recently saw a picture of you and the band in a Syd Barrett biography walking around in London in colourful clothes cheering. You had just signed a record deal. 1967.

RW: Swinging, wasn't it?

SZ: Yes swinging, even if you just meant this ironic.

RW: In 1967 I had a very romantic idea of the music business. You know, I had just studied architecture for 5 years and wanted to leave an impact in this world this way or another. It was a fine thing having a record deal. We were incredibly glad and thrilled.

SZ: Recalling that photo and now hearing your words it all sounds innocent and, well, child-like.

RW: Yes, that`s what it was, maybe also naïve. I was a hopeless romantic back then and I had quite some romantic years behind me. I see myself in 1959 in Paris with my guitar on the river seine playing some blues licks – playing them pretty badly. But good or not, in the end it was about the 15-year-old Roger Waters sitting at the Seine in Paris playing the blues.

SZ: When we talk about London in 1967, we talk about the so-called Swinging London, on said photo one can forebode some of that, it all looks so carefree.

RW: I want to be honest with you, regardless of the funny photo: there was no Swinging London! I mean, where was it?

SZ: I don`t know, I was very small back then. But you should definitely know! You were a young and colourful gun who played in the UFO club, the Beatles dropped by, great women, everything was very cool.

RW: I never saw Swinging London.

SZ: Mmh...

RW: Look: there were several events, there was this connection to the anti-nuclear weapons movement, there were calls for the legalization of cannabis, and as already mentioned, events, like UFO club, whatever. But don`t get fooled by that thinking there was swing in every street. In the streets a square society went after its usual businesses.

SZ: Myths?

RW: Yes, definitely. In hindsight we tend to insinuate a indisputable general attitude to life to a certain generation. But we forget that young people back then were just as different individually, with their own wishes, fears, problems and so on. I think this is true for my person as well.

SZ: What about the sexual revolution?

RW: Right, there you targeted the fitting subject. Excuse me that I laugh....

SZ: It once was denied that you were able even to smile!

RW: Yes, alright, let`s look at the laughter and the sex: you are talking to a man that was full of feelings of guilt whenever he even

thought about sex. I was ashamed to death. Even harmless sexual experiences had an incestuous vibe to me.

SZ: But that`s really sad! All others were happy having fun in their beds...

RW: no, no, no my young friend, not all! Not me!

SZ: ...there was no Aids, it must have been paradise...

*RW: yes, but sadly enough, not for me! When you feel immediately guilty after any sexual feeling, a sexual revolution in your environment is the plain horror. That a sexual revolution in a more object view is something wonderful, is obvious. But I didn`t perceive it like that. (*pauses shortly*). Which is of course regrettable. I fear I missed out on something.*

SZ: Excuse me if I now begin a little tabloid-like to ...

RW: ...You are doing quite well as a tabloid journalist...

SZ: Why did you feel guilty? Did it have to do with your close attachment to your mother?

RW: Not only to my mother, the house was full of women, no man apart from me, my father had died in the war...

SZ: The whole trauma you later put to music in The Wall...

RW: Exactly. I don`t want to turn this interview into a Freudian session, but of course due to the loss of my father I had the notorious feeling that I had to replace my father and to look after everything. Then there was the society out there: For the people in England sex was basically a devilish and dirty thing, you know? Over every sexual contact loomed the terrible, frightening, destroying consequence of a possible pregnancy! Now you laugh, but...

SZ: You laugh yourself...

RW: ...yes, but seriously: if you happened to get a woman pregnant back then, a woman that you hadn`t given all possible "Yes" words before, then this meant nothing else but the untimely and sad end of your life. You were being outlawed. So much for the carefree sexual life in the year of 1967, at least my carefree sexual life.

SZ: So your personal sexual liberation only came later, but fine...

RW: yes, definitely! Possibly it`s happening now in my old days. I`m not sure about that. No forget it! But one thing: this whole Kafka-esque misery was lying over the complete English middle-class of the late-60s. Middle class was sheer horror. I think that in the working class, which really was a working class back then, they shagged really unconcerned about things, because they didn`t give a fvck, you know, they didn`t have anything to lose. But in the middle class the puritan misery of the Victorian age was blooming like in a greenhouse.

SZ: Mr Waters, yesterday I listened to The Dark Side of the Moon again. Regardless of the many bad reviews by critics, it is undeniable that this record which is now 30 years old still sounds very modern.

RW: ...which does have a bit to do with the late-60s.

SZ: Why?

RW: Because, despite my sober views on it, the 60s were a time in which some of us began to ask fundamental questions, about live, death, society, about "the sense" of it all. As we started to go on tour in the early-70s trying to work out the material it was only consequential that this would become a cohesive and fundamental record with which we`d trace after these essential questions. And these questions will never become unfashionable, they were always there and they will always be there.

SZ: The record still sells 500,000 copies annually in America alone. That is incredible.

RW: Yes and no, because, as I already stated, it asks essential questions, and surely we succeeded in creating a kind of soundtrack to life by melting traditional blues and jazz elements with an everyday sound landscape, which still touches people today. And which, by the way, possesses a rather funny side, too. The humour in Pink Floyd, my ability to laugh, too, were always underrated. Not by the fans, but of course by the critics.

SZ: There`s a part in the record where it says laconically "hanging on in quiet desperation is the English way." Do you still make the same diagnosis today?

RW: What I diagnose in England is pure pragmatism and this pragmatism will ruin us. Out of pragmatism all social acquisitions are being risked, acquisitions which we fought for for many years

after the war. Out of pragmatism Blair marched along this insane war, it is about cold and materialistic things, nothing else.

SZ: Yet Blair and Bush are known to be very religious.

RW: Which makes it even worse, but that`s not the decisive point. This war was a huge mistake, regardless. We will see that in the future.

SZ: You are very disappointed in Labour.

RW: There`s no Labour Party anymore. There are the Tories and there are the other Tories. The one Tories are called Tories, the others are called New Labour. What ever that is about.

SZ: Mr Waters, almost 20 years ago you separated from your old combatants, what followed was one of the most bizarre battles in recent entertainment history. You are again cultivating contact with keyboard Rick Wright and drummer Nick Mason. How is your relationship to your sporadic chief-successor, guitaris Davied Gilmour?

RW: There`s no relationship. We haven`t talked since 1985, except recently indirectly in a strange telephone conference.

SZ: Which part did David Gilmour play in Pink Floyd?

RW: A big one. He`s an excellent guitarist for example.

SZ: Well, sorry then, but why don`t you and Gilmour get together after all these years over a pint of beer and ...

RW: Why should I?

SZ: Because Pink Floyd would get paid astronomical amounts of money in the case of a reunion, for example.

RW: I`m not interested in that. I am currently working on an opera as well as a regular studio album. Why should I spent my time talking to David Gilmour?

SZ: Because...

RW: You know what?

SZ: What?

RW: I don` t like him.

SZ: You don` t like him.

*RW: Exactly, I simply don` t like him. Very simple. David and I have always been two very different people with very different views on things. That was the case in 1968, when he came into the band. It never changed. Sometime you got to face the truth. And the truth is: I don` t like him (*smiles*).*

SZ: Very simple.

RW: That`s what I say. Very simple.