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PINK FLOYD

SIGNS OF LIFE

Pink Floyd didn't end with the departure of Roger Waters. A new boxset, *The Later Years*, chronicles the music the band made from 1986's *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason* to 2014's *The Endless River*. So how does a 1970s giant embrace a new decade? As Tom Pinnock learns from band members and their creative associates, it was with new collaborators, old friends, even extensive "noodling". "They were in it, heart and soul," says one friend. "It wasn't just some money-making thing."

PETE STILL AND ROB VERHORST/REDFERNS



Pig night out:
Floyd play
Werchter,
Belgium, 1994



"It was a tricky old period: (l-r) David Gilmour, Nick Mason and Richard Wright

MOST drivers choking up the A308 near Hampton Court are probably unaware of the musical artefact moored on the Thames riverside just a few metres to their south. Hidden away near Tagg's Island, the *Astoria* houseboat was built for music-hall impresario and Chaplin mentor Fred Karno in 1911, with an interior bursting with prime Edwardiana and enough space on the roof for a full orchestra. Whether David Gilmour, who's owned the *Astoria* since the mid-'80s, has tried out that last feature is unclear; yet we do know he's used the boat, below decks, to develop much of his and Pink Floyd's work over the past 35 years. "The boat is moored at the bottom of a beautiful, sort of Capability Brown garden," explains Floyd collaborator Anthony Moore, "with a tunnel that goes under a busy road and comes up the other side of a beautiful brick wall that keeps the world at bay. It's all rather idyllic."

It was in these bucolic surroundings that Gilmour embarked on the recordings that would become 1987's *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*, the first new Pink Floyd album since 1983's *The Final Cut*, and first without Roger Waters.

"We decided [to continue]," Gilmour told *Uncut*, "at the moment Roger sent his letter to the record company saying that he forthwith was no longer a part of this thing. That was in December 1985. Pretty much right after that we felt we were released from anything, and we could start making a plan to look forward to making an album."

The obstacles in Gilmour's way, though, were numerous. For a start, he wasn't used to working on Floyd songs as the sole writer, and he struggled with lyrics. What's more, he and Nick Mason were the only remaining members of the band, and Mason was these days more into sampling than drumming. Perhaps most damagingly, the pair weren't even sure they

would be allowed to work under the Pink Floyd name after Waters instigated legal proceedings against them in 1986.

"[*Us and Roger*] are not at all friendly," Gilmour told an interviewer backstage at the band's Pearson Airport show in Toronto in August '87. "It's very difficult to remain on good terms when someone's trying to completely fuck your life up."

"DAVID WAS DETERMINED... TO CARRY ON AS A BAND"

ANDY JACKSON

"Roger was such a powerful force in the band," says the Floyd's long-time engineer Andy Jackson, "particularly in terms of lyrics, so there was a degree that the new album was a voyage of exploration at the time."

It was aboard the *Astoria*, incidentally, on December 23, 1987, that Waters and the Floyd

agreed a settlement, paving the way for Gilmour, Mason and Wright to continue with what would become an extraordinary final act. These post-Waters records – *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*, 1988's *Delicate Sound Of Thunder*, 1994's *The Division Bell* and 2014's *The Endless River* – have now been collected, remixed, remastered and even replayed on a new boxset, *The Later Years*, along with audio and visual extras. They reveal a group examining the existential themes of their '70s work with a new maturity, and a stately gait almost as pastoral and relaxed as the riverside surroundings of the *Astoria*.

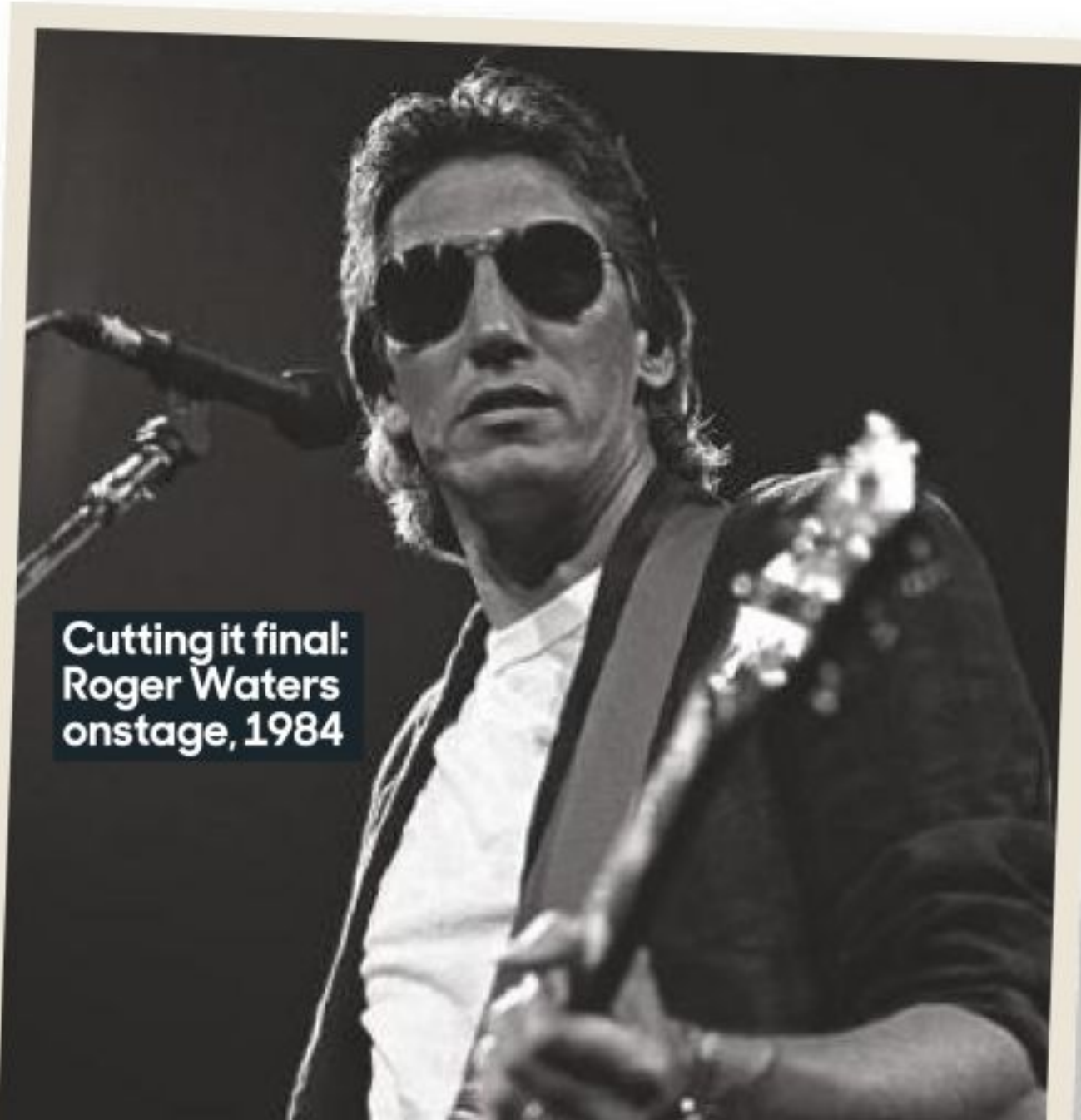
"That place has this atmosphere of peace and quiet about it," explains the Floyd's creative director, Aubrey Powell. "It's just what David needed, and it gave him a chance to contemplate and think about what he really wanted to do."

"You'd have to be a bit mad to go on when you know that it's a difficult thing to do," Gilmour told *Uncut*. "Getting Rick back in and Nick back in were all things that I thought were important. It was a tricky old period... But it's a long time ago."

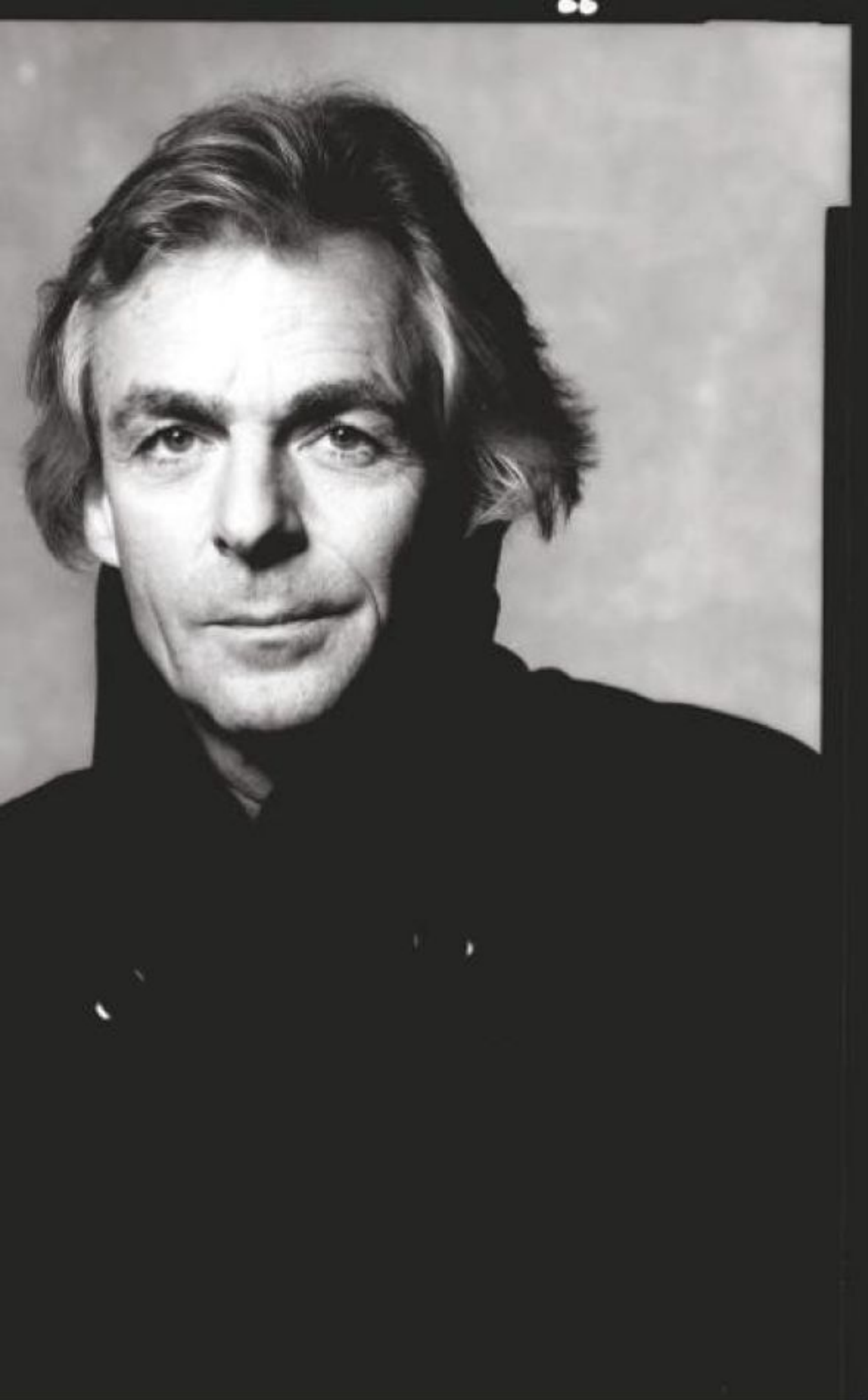
THE *Final Cut*, released in March 1983, had been a Roger Waters solo album in all but name, but it was followed by a brace of actual solo records the next year: David Gilmour's *About Face* and Waters' *The Pros And Cons Of Hitch-Hiking*. In the bassist's view, Floyd were over, but he had neglected to inform the others.

"By 1984, Roger had very obviously decided that enough was enough for him," Gilmour said, "and I hadn't decided that enough was enough for me. So I imagine I thought, 'Yes, we'll go back to doing [Floyd].'"

In December 1985, Waters announced his departure, but Gilmour was keen to begin a new album. The legal wrangling escalated throughout 1986, until Waters took his fight to the High Court in October. As Mason recalls, "I think David led on the idea [of continuing]. It wasn't that I didn't want to carry on – I did – but I don't think I cared



Cutting it final: Roger Waters onstage, 1984



as much as David did. We'd be partly in the studios and partly in the lawyers' office – 'Was Roger going to injunct?' And the answer was, of course he couldn't, because he'd left the band, and the one thing clear in all our contractual arrangements was that if someone left, they left, and the band continued without them... That gave David and me the authority to carry on."

In the spirit of continuity, the duo had enlisted *The Wall* producer Bob Ezrin and begun work at the *Astoria* in early 1986. It was a risky move, for more than just legal reasons: Waters' solo tours, featuring a good helping of prime Floyd material, had performed much better than Gilmour's *About Face* shows.

"The whole thing was a bit of a gamble," says Aubrey Powell. "It was naturally daunting to have the responsibility of carrying on Pink Floyd. I think financially it was an anxious time, too... but David is a very confident person."

"David was very determined not to be told that he can't do it any more," explains Andy Jackson. "In some ways you could interpret Roger saying, 'There is no more Pink Floyd' as [from David's point of view], 'Well, you can't tell me that...' He had the desire to carry on as a band, so he had to make that work really."

Mason, however, was out of practice, and Wright couldn't be brought back into the band officially due to the ongoing legal issues – his contract of departure had included a clause preventing him from ever rejoining. "It probably wouldn't have mattered," says Mason, "but it was just one more possible avenue for litigation. So initially it was just David and myself."

There was no way the duo and their guest keyboardist were going to be able to ape the fire of Waters' contributions to *The Wall* and *Animals*, so they sensibly took a different tack, with Gilmour following his own muse; now the Floyd could fully explore his more tranquil yet muscular sound. What he did need, however, was a creative foil, especially when it came to lyrics, and a collaborator was found in Anthony Moore of Slapp Happy, who once featured on the Blackhill management roster alongside the Floyd.

"The initial contact was to do with talking about sound and production more than lyrics," remembers Moore. "I wasn't given a brief and told to hit the target or piss off – it was a much more friendly affair than that. Did David need to hook up with an 'eccentric' to compensate for his lack of eccentricity? No, that doesn't sound right. But to a certain extent his focus is on musicianship and melody, and I've always been more engaged by timbre and sonic textures. So it was probably brought to David's attention that there was this lunatic roaming around who'd come out of

working on underground movies and soundtracks and experimental work with Revoxes."

Moore began to visit the *Astoria* each day, either setting himself up under a pagoda on the riverbank or joining Gilmour in the studio. "I found myself sitting on this wonderful boat, eye-to-eye with the swans swimming past the windows. The lyric-writing seemed to grow out of our talks in a fairly natural way."

Of the words that Moore co-wrote, those for "On The Turning Away" were especially strong, hinting at the need for protest and vigilance against personal, political or social injustices; Gilmour handled the lyrics on some of the new tracks, though, with "Learning To Fly" tackling his and Mason's rock-star hobby but also alluding to his new role as the group's leader. As fluid as the working process on this floating haven sounds, though, legal worries had a habit of surfacing to disrupt the sessions.

"It was absolutely unpleasant for David," says Moore, "and probably equally so for Roger. There were phone calls in the same room on the *Astoria* that one couldn't help hearing, but David soaked it up in a very calm way. He's one of the most equilibrated people. But yes, I'm sure it was driving him mad."

THE main draw of *The Later Years* box is the new version of *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*, a subtle yet extensive reworking of this formerly very glossy record. Much of the programmed drums and mid-'80s synths have been removed, with Nick Mason recording new drum tracks and additional Rick Wright parts spun in from later live recordings for more of a classic Floyd sound.

"We were trying to make something that sounded very much of the time," says Andy Jackson, "which means of course that as time progresses it ends up sounding dated. As Bob Ezrin was prone to do, at the start of the album he came in with a stack of CDs and said, 'This is what's happening now.' In '86, digital was very much at the forefront. [*Dire Straits*] *Brothers In Arms* had just come out and that had a very particular sound, and that was one bar Bob said we should be aiming for."

Anthony Moore also brought in a host of cutting-edge technology, from Akai samplers to MIDI sequencers, but the group still utilised the classic VCS3 that had been so central to *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. "We sort of laid everything on it," says Mason. "There was a sense of trepidation over what it would be like without ➤



Gilmour recording in London, 1989

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES; JEFF SPICER/GETTY IMAGES

PINK FLOYD
THE LATER YEARS
1987–2019

PINK FLOYD
THE LATER YEARS
1987–2019

2 LP HIGHLIGHTS OF
THE LATER YEARS
1987–2019
12 TRACKS: 78 MIN
INC. UNRELEASED STUDIO AND
LIVE PERFORMANCES
PLUS WITH 2019 REMIXES
INC. 24 PAGE BOOKLET
ALL TRACKS TAKEN FROM
THE LATER YEARS 1987–2019
(18-0001 LTD. EDITION BOX SET)

WISH YOU WERE THERE

Aubrey Powell on his rediscovered 1975 artwork

“WHEN we were submitting ideas for *Wish You Were Here*, I happened to be in Iceland shooting something else – I'd got an idea of two men looking at a map, with their shadows reflected on the map. So I shot this in black and white, and it had a really great atmosphere to it. But no-one even saw it, because the idea of two men shaking hands and one of them's on fire was so

strong that it got pushed to one side. About 18 months ago I thought, 'I've always loved this picture, but I've never blown it up.' And it looked bloody incredible! I thought, 'This is classic Hipgnosis.' So that's the front cover of the highlights album. It sums it all up: two men looking at a map wondering where to go next, and that's exactly what happened to Nick and David after they split with Roger."



PINK FLOYD

Roger, so we slightly over-egged the pudding in terms of lots of session players. Some of it's overproduced, far too much stuff on it..."

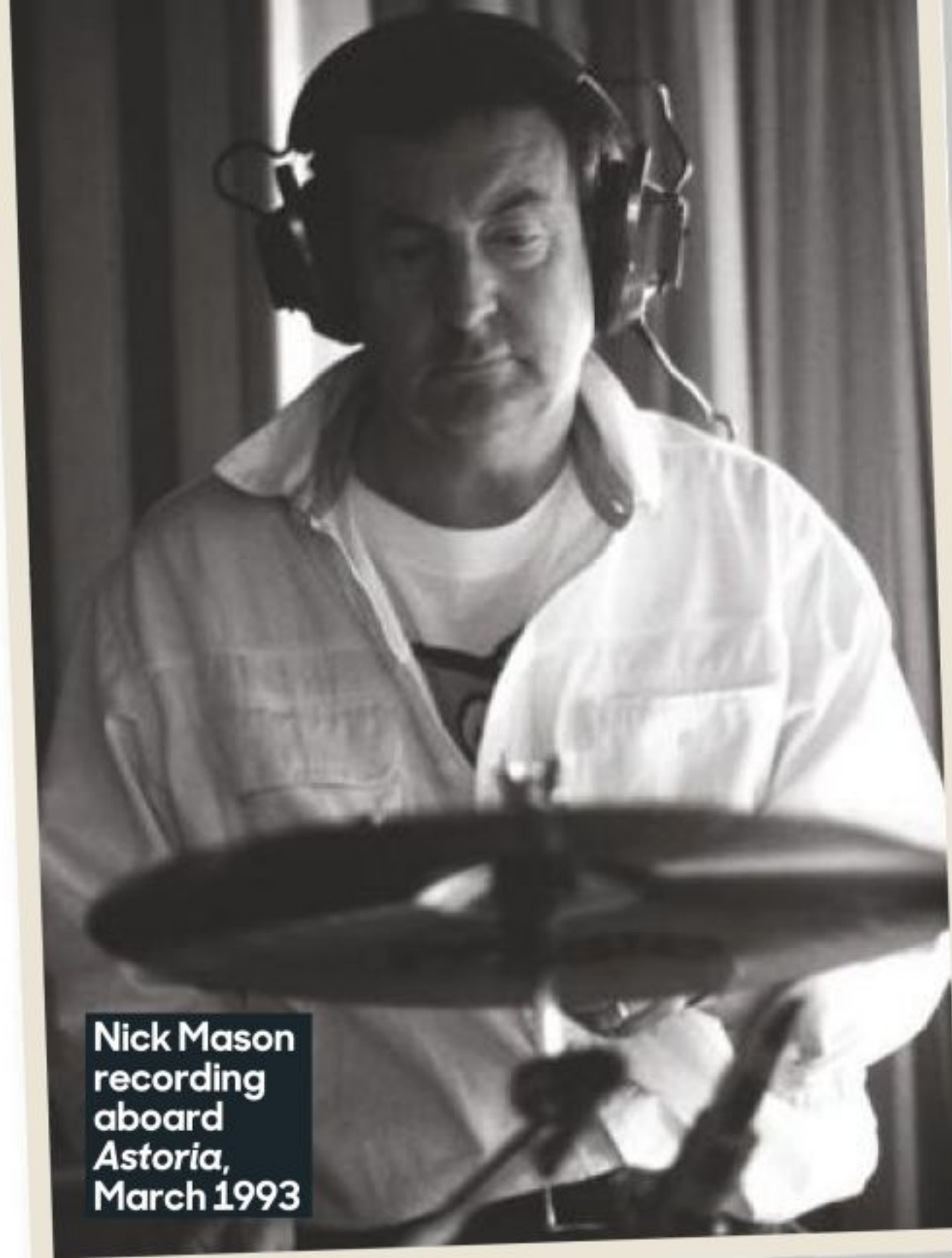
"I thought it didn't really sound like a Pink Floyd record," says bassist Guy Pratt, who joined the band in 1987 for their live work, "but it was a very good record. It's very of its time – Floyd were suited to '80s bombast."

The meat of the songs was a little more timeless, though, painstakingly developed over their year at the *Astoria*. Gilmour was very much at the tiller, creatively – one story has it that he recorded much of "Sorrow" on his own over the course of a weekend, even the programmed drums.

"David can do everything himself," Phil Manzanera, who co-wrote *Momentary Lapse*'s propulsive "One Slip" told *Uncut*, "but it's pretty boring to do that. Also you do need somebody to say, 'Is this any good? Or am I just heading up the complete wrong path?' David came over to my studio, and we spent a couple of days doing two tracks. One of them became 'One Slip'. The original demo is nothing like how it ended up, because the sequencer part was actually done on a guitar, with some echoes. I've never been able to repeat it."

"*Momentary Lapse* started as bits of music that I was working on," says Gilmour. "There was no stated intention in my mind for where they were going to go. I think it's a good album. There are one or two moments that I would now not put on, but hindsight is a wonderful thing."

A *Momentary Lapse Of Reason* was completed and mixed in Los Angeles – where the doomy guitar intro to "Sorrow" was recorded at high volume in the city's Memorial Sports Arena – and released on September 7, 1987, by which time the Floyd were deep into their first large-scale tour for years. The *Wall* spectacular, despite looming large in legend, was only performed 31 times due to its high-concept unwieldiness, but here Mason, Gilmour and the returned Wright were strapped in for almost 200 shows. The success of the tour was hardly assured: with no sponsors forthcoming, Gilmour and Mason had to fund production themselves, one sacrifice being the drummer's treasured 1962 Ferrari GTO. Yet despite



Nick Mason recording aboard *Astoria*, March 1993

his automotive loss, Mason admits: "David carried most of that tour on his shoulders."

The shows were a huge success, with the group, joined by an army of auxiliary musicians and backing singers, selling out stadiums across the globe. "[*The fans*] are just so relieved that Roger's gone," joked Gilmour in the backstage Toronto interview, before adding in mock-solemnity, "I didn't mean to say that..."

Across these 198 dates, Pink Floyd seemed to become a band again, buoyed by the return of their natural musical interplay, the acceptance from their fans and the sheer joy of playing their older songs: among others, "Shine On You Crazy Diamond", "Comfortably Numb", "Time" and "One Of These Days".

"As always with Pink Floyd," says Anthony Moore, "they throw themselves heartily into the putting on of very spectacular shows. They were in it, heart and soul. It wasn't just some money-making thing."

"When I was putting stuff together for *The Later Years* with David recently," says Aubrey Powell, "we were watching the new *Delicate*

Sound Of Thunder film. He said, 'Boy, was I playing well...' He was so relaxed. He was absolutely at the top of his game. You know how to do it, but will you be accepted? And they were, big time."

FOR their next trick, the Floyd went back to the kind of free-form jamming they hadn't attempted since at least 1977's *Animals*. Holed up in London's Britannia Row in January 1993, they generated stacks of improvisations, the plan being that these could then be combined to create songs for their new album.

"It was definitely more recognisably Floyd," says Guy Pratt. "David had relaxed into his role. We did two weeks of noodling, just the four of us."

"We ended up with this big pile of 60 or 70 pieces," says Andy Jackson, "and separated them into Bob Ezrin's somewhat arbitrary categories of 'acoustic', 'blues' and 'cosmic' – A, B and C. So we had things called 'Acoustic 14' and 'Cosmic 7'... 'Marooned' was originally 'Cosmic 13'. And we glued the ideas together in clusters, which is where the 'Cluster One' title came from."

With the songs outlined, recording proper began, mostly at the *Astoria*. Mason was looking after the drums on his own this time, and there was a renewed sense of Floyd's history at play – the group even tried bringing back the unmistakable tones of Wright's Farfisa Compact Duo, not heard for decades, and recorded on analogue tape rather than the digital format that had captured *Momentary Lapse*. Among the tracks they were working on, there was gorgeous new-age drift ("Cluster One", "Marooned"), punchy blues-rock ("What Do You Want From

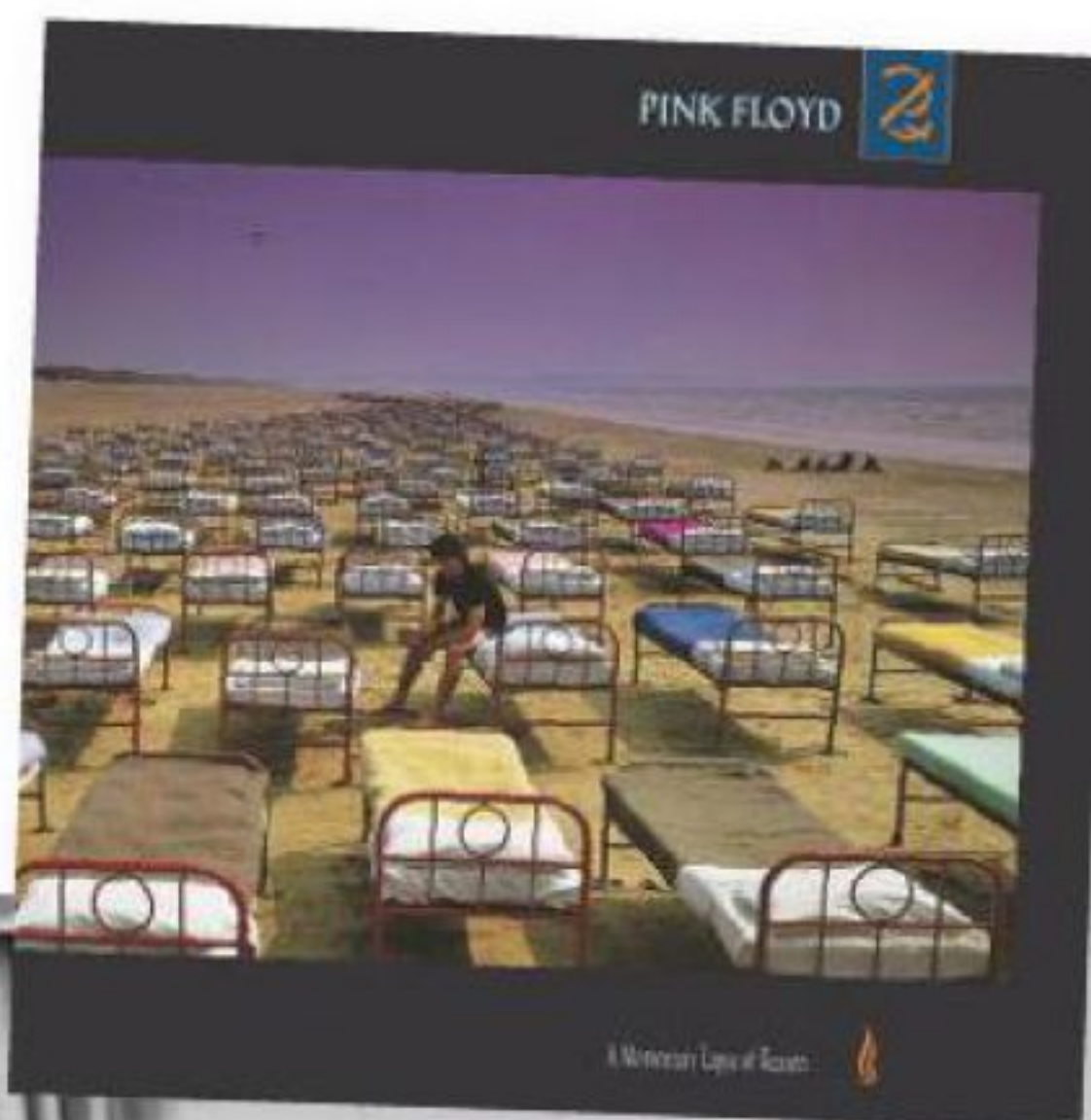
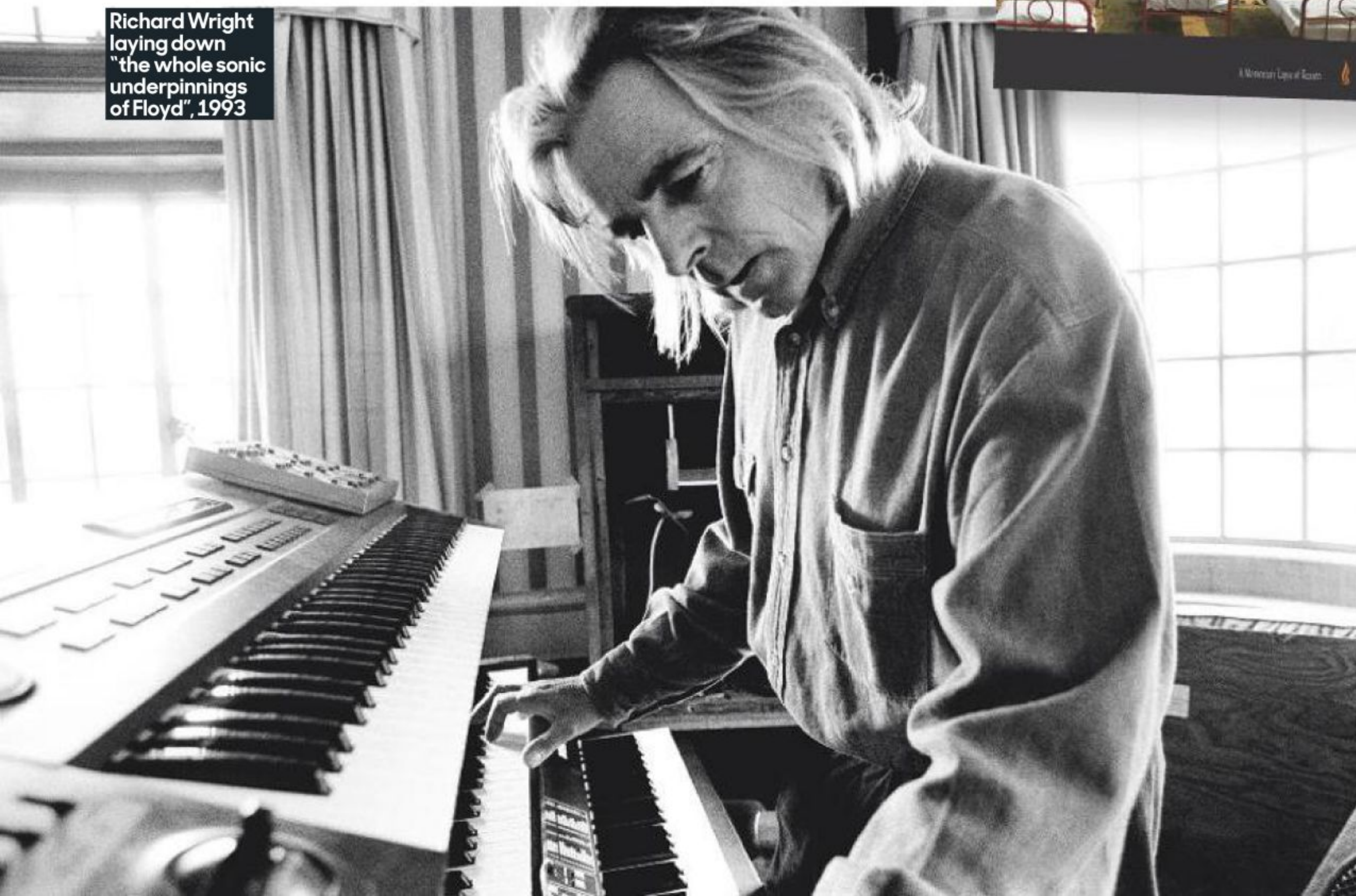
Me?") and propulsive, cosmic pop ("Take It Back"). Gilmour, meanwhile, had found the perfect songwriting partner in his new girlfriend, Polly Samson.

"I always want to write my own songs, my own lyrics and everything. It just doesn't happen very quickly," the guitarist told *Uncut*. "I have yet to find the key to open that particular door which would allow me to get a little more busy in that."

For the first time in decades, too, there was a Rick Wright song on a Floyd album, "Wearing The Inside Out", co-written with *Momentary Lapse* collaborator Anthony Moore. "The whole sonic underpinnings of Floyd to me," Moore says, "seem to be all to do with Rick. He had a way of inverting the chords and emphasising certain notes that wouldn't normally be emphasised. I can't imagine a Pink Floyd with an absent Rick, whether in physical presence or in spirit."

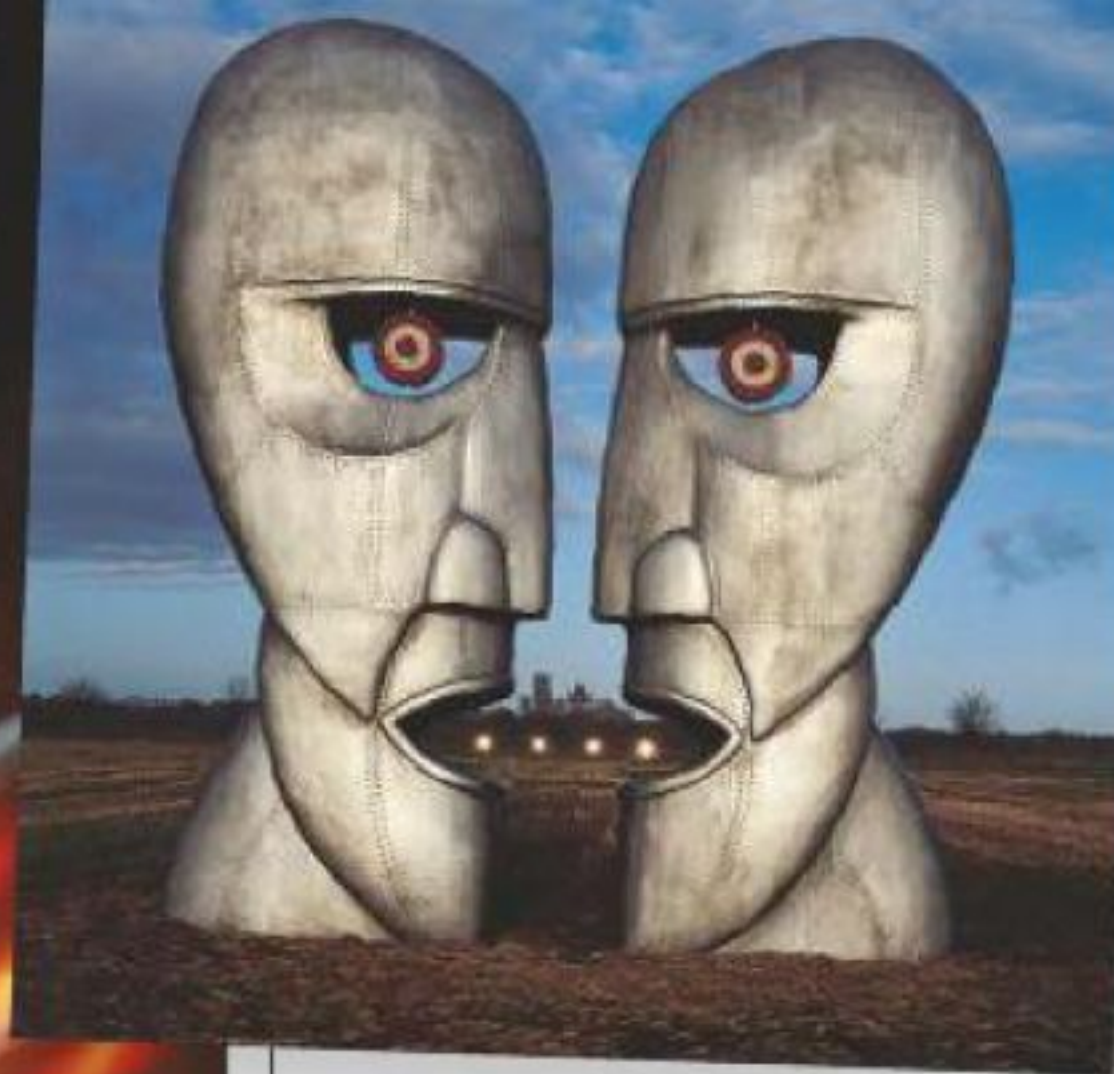
By January 1994, the album was complete but had no name; enter writer Douglas Adams, a

Richard Wright laying down "the whole sonic underpinnings of Floyd", 1993





A ringing endorsement: Pink Floyd at Earl's Court on their gargantuan *Division Bell* tour, October 1994



PINK FLOYD

The band – as a fully operating entity anyway – came to an end as “Run Like Hell” clattered to a close at London’s Earl’s Court on

October 29, 1994. The work they created for *The Division Bell* sparked another album, *The Endless River*, 20 years later, of course; this set of loose collages was a fitting encore for this strangely self-conscious, retiring incarnation of Pink Floyd.

Yet, in the ’90s, the success of *The Division Bell* sowed the seeds for the end of the band: how could anything else top that for scale and grandeur? It’s little wonder Gilmour has retreated to his solo albums – 2006’s *On An Island*, particularly, could almost have been Pink Floyd – and Mason and Guy Pratt have recently rediscovered the joys of the pre-*Dark Side* era with their Saucerful Of Secrets group.

“Pink Floyd is very, very big,” Gilmour reflected to *Uncut*. “There are an awful lot of people who want to... buy tickets to those shows. You can’t help thinking that some of the people just want to be part of the party. I find it hard to quite imagine how many of them actually really love everything about it. I don’t know. Maybe that’s fatuous. But that huge scale is intoxicating – it fuels... your ego and all that sort of stuff. But it’s never quite ideal.”

“Although Roger is very dismissive of it all, I think some of the songs on the post-Roger stuff are as good as anything,” says Mason, looking back on their final act. “But it really wore David down, this thing of having to lead. It was the rebirth of Syd, of [one] guy doing the writing, being the frontman, being the guitar player – and that means you end up doing it all.”

The Later Years is released on November 29 on Pink Floyd Records

MICK HUTSON/REDFERNS

friend of the group, who combed through the lyrics and came up with the perfect Floyd-ian title: *The Division Bell*. “The reward for that was that he would play at Earl’s Court as third or fourth guitar, which he did,” laughs Mason.

The ensuing tour, comprising just over 100 shows and since immortalised on the *Pulse* live album and film, was the highest-grossing tour ever up to that point. There was no trouble finding a sponsor this time, with Volkswagen eagerly signing on for the European leg and giving away a special Golf Pink Floyd at each concert. As with the *Momentary Lapse* tour, they performed mostly new songs during the first half and classics in the second. The night usually ended with “Comfortably Numb” and “Run Like Hell”, the ultimate showcases for Gilmour’s guitar skills.

“David’s one of the most naturally musical people I’ve ever known,” says Andy Jackson. “He really has a phenomenal music ability, the muse flows through him. Him and Roger are very different people, and function in very different ways – Roger’s very ideas-driven and diligent, and David’s a much more free-flowing person.”

“PINK FLOYD IS VERY, VERY BIG... THE SCALE IS INTOXICATING”

DAVID GILMOUR

THE final Pink Floyd tour went almost completely to plan. Only at Houston’s Rice Stadium on April 5, 1994 did they have to stop early, their equipment damaged by a torrential rainstorm.

“That *Pulse* tour particularly was unbelievable,” says Aubrey Powell. “The lighting, the effects, the two-and-a-half-tonne mirror ball. No-one had ever seen anything like that. On a technical level it was way beyond anything the Floyd had achieved in the 1970s.”

“AH, THAT SOUNDS MORE LIKE FLOYD...”

Andy Jackson and Aubrey Powell unpack some of *The Later Years*’ audio and visual treasures

A MOMENTARY LAPSE OF REASON

ANDY JACKSON: “*Momentary Lapse* was an oddity. It was just approached in a very different way that removed a lot of the organic stuff that happened between them. A lot of that has returned now, with us putting Rick’s playing back on. On tour he’d play a lot of Hammond, which isn’t on the record, and we’d put it back on and think, ‘Ah, that sounds a lot more like Floyd.’ Most of the drums have been done again with Nick, and we used a more classic Pink

Floyd approach to the drum sound and to the playing. ‘Sorrow’ was a weird hybrid – the drums were electronic pads, so it has a sort of machine feel to it. We changed the sounds to be more organic, but David liked it played on the pads. Rick’s been put on there, though, and we changed the bass, so it is a rather different beast to the original.”

UNRELEASED JAMS

JACKSON: “There are a handful of leftovers, which all came from the

Division Bell sessions. It’s just a selection of them knocking around some ideas and demos. There’s no thought of, ‘Oh, let’s try and get a master out of this.’ They’re just trying something out and I’m recording so we can listen to it. So it’s got a relaxed looseness to it at times that’s really fun. The early demo of ‘High Hopes’ is a bit different, there’s a jam of what turned into ‘Marooned’, and ‘Nervana’, which turned up as an extra on *The Endless River*.”

DELICATE SOUND OF THUNDER

AUBREY POWELL: “We discovered 310 film cans of 35mm film, the original *Delicate Sound* footage. As I realised later, it was a very ramshackle shoot. Very few of the cameras had time-code slates, so they were all out of

sync, none of them were shooting at the same speed. Out of that came the original laserdisc and VHS, which didn’t do the concert justice in any way at all. It wasn’t the director’s fault. It was just that, 30 years ago, trying to shoot a live concert on 35mm film was incredibly difficult, because the communication system wasn’t there like it is now. So we digitised all the rushes and started a 14-month process of editing the film together from scratch.”

“ARNOLD LAYNE”, LIVE AT THE BARBICAN, LONDON, MAY 10, 2007

JACKSON: “This is the last time they ever played together, the three of them. It’s a perfect bookend, being the first Pink Floyd single, the beginning and end contained in one song. So it’s got a romantic significance, if you like.”

