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Nick Mason,  
September 27,  
2009

# “I have got a false moustache, but I’m not putting it on”

## AN AUDIENCE WITH **NICK MASON**

“A LITTLE while ago, my daughter got me to do a Pink Floyd online quiz,” says Nick Mason. “I scored just over 50 per cent...” Nonetheless, the drummer, writer and motor-racing driver has consented to answer your questions on everything and anything Floyd-related and more. It’s an appropriate moment to speak with Mason – 2018 looks to be the busiest period in years for the de facto keeper of the Pink Floyd flame, as he prepares to head out on tour with his new project, Nick Mason’s Saucerful Of Secrets, performing the band’s more experimental, pre-*Dark Side* material. “I thought I’d quite like to go back to work,” he explains of this rush of activity, “but I hadn’t intended it to be this full-on. It’s a long time since I’ve been involved in the mechanics of going on the road, and what we were doing in ’93 isn’t relevant to what we’re doing now. But it’s still massive compared to what we used to do – in ’67 there were four of us in the back of a Transit van and two guys to load the stuff. But now it’s a minimum of about eight or nine crew, it has to be.”

Mason, looking very much the relaxed country gentleman in a smart shirt and chinos, has come to the Warner Music offices in Kensington to discuss the impending release of *Unattended Luggage*, a boxset of his three ’80s solo records. “Working with Robert Wyatt, Mike Mantler and Carla Bley was so different to working with Floyd,” he explains. “I was

**Pink Floyd’s genial drummer, currently exploring that band’s early history with *Saucerful Of Secrets*, talks cooking, Kubrick and a possible Floyd reunion**

Interview by TOM PINNOCK

having to think, ‘How do I learn this?!’ It was like going to the gym – not that I do, but I imagine that’s what it would be like.”

Other topics up for discussion include his relationships with Roger Waters and David Gilmour, his most treasured cars, his favourite Floyd show and why the band might have turned down Stanley Kubrick. However, even the group’s longest-running member doesn’t have the key to all their enigmas: “There are some Pink Floyd mysteries that even Pink Floyd are mystified by!”

**Do you have David and Roger’s numbers in your phone? And did you ask them to join in on *Saucerful Of Secrets*? *Fabrizio Busi, via email***

Yep. They’re probably the wrong numbers, of course... No, I didn’t ask them to join in, because that would be Pink Floyd. But I did tell them what I was proposing to do, as good manners, and I have to say both of them were supportive – which I found slightly disturbing! “Yeah, go ahead, make a fool of yourself...” I know David has looked at a lot of it online.

**Why did you think this particular era of Floyd needed to be revisited?**

***Jimmy Turner, Rutland***

It was more in discussion with [fellow bandmembers] Lee [Harris], Gary [Kemp] and Guy [Pratt]. Because they had this enthusiasm for that era particularly, and they pointed out to me what was available and why it would work so well. What I didn’t really want to do was go out as another version of Pink Floyd and play “Comfortably Numb”, the best of *Dark Side*, and so on. All this other material was there, lying dormant, and could be interpreted in a slightly different way. So we wouldn’t have to tackle it as a tribute band, we could allow ourselves to be a little bit freer. If you start going into the later material, you might have to start doing bigger places, and I don’t have ambition to be back in a stadium. I think we’ll bring it to the US, though, if there’s an appetite.

**Was anything deemed too out-there to perform with *Saucerful*?**

***Graham Flatt, via email***

“Scream Thy Last Scream” was considered, but I didn’t want to try and sing it and play. The other one discussed at great length was “Echoes” – it would be nice to do it, but it’s so much to do with Rick, and I think David felt that when Rick died he wouldn’t play it. So I sort of felt maybe we shouldn’t either.

**What’s been your favourite ever show or tour?**

***Marco Cardassi, Italy***  
It’s a difficult one. Over 50 years there’s been everything from the back of a Transit van to the private jet. And the interesting thing is it’s not like there’s a period that was better than another – every period had its own delights and problems. My favourites are the shows where we progressed, so I’d say the first *Dark Side* show at the Rainbow, where we finally got the movies working, ➤

**Have car, will travel: Mason and his 1935 Aston Martin Ulster, 1985**







Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets project, May 2018

and the aeroplane coming from the back of the auditorium.

**What Floyd archival releases are planned? And what's left in the vault?**  
**Malcolm Walker, via email**

Not much! With *The Early Years* there was a feeling of 'and the kitchen sink...'. I think there's a re-release of *Animals* planned – it's a record that would benefit from remastering. After many years of Abbey Road and Air Studios, this was done on a much more funky level, in our own studio. So it perhaps lacked a bit of that sharpness and sparkle you get from Abbey Road.

**What's the current situation with the *Momentary Lapse Of Reason* remake?**  
**Josip Radic, via email**

Ah, memo: ask David Gilmour. It's a bit unfinished. The plan was always to get Rick to do some more, but that didn't happen. So it's shelved for the moment.

**What does it feel like to have your solo albums out again?**  
**Gaetano Saviano, via email**

I'm thrilled. I'd sort of forgotten them – that's part of the *Unattended Luggage* title. The Rick Fenn stuff is extraordinary, so dated it's almost quaint! Even worse is the fact I thought I had to master the drum machine. So that's fascinating, and then the Carla Bley stuff has lasted – the brass arrangements are fabulous. And I'd forgotten how funny the record is! But they're not solo records at all, they're collaborations with people I wanted to work with. I'm still in touch with Robert Wyatt – I'm still proud of [producing] *Rock Bottom*. I'd never listen to old Floyd material unless I had to learn something, but *Rock Bottom* I'd put on and enjoy.

**What do you recall from producing *The Damned's* second album?**  
**Patrick Knaue, via email**

I probably got more out of it than they did. They were right in the middle of musical differences, but I loved it. It took about as long to make the album as it would have taken us to set up the drum sound for a Pink Floyd record. I remember saying

**“We thought *2001: A Space Odyssey* was exactly the sort of thing we should be doing the soundtrack for”**

to The Captain after he'd put down a bass part: “That was pretty good, shall we do another just to be safe?” He went, “Noooo!” They were hoping to get Syd to come in and produce, which might have been fairly radical.

**In 1968, David Gilmour said Floyd were moving into soundtracks because you wanted to have the chance to score something like *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Amazingly, Kubrick then asked to use some of “Atom Heart Mother” in *A Clockwork Orange*. And you guys say no! Why?**  
**Jason Pyke, via email**

Probably because he wouldn't let us do anything for *2001*. It sounds a bit petulant! I don't remember whether he did ask for something from *Atom Heart Mother*. We'd have loved to have got involved with *2001* – we thought it was exactly the sort of thing we should be doing the soundtrack for.

**Any chance of a release for *Life Could Be A Dream*, a film you made in 1986 featuring unused footage from Pompeii?**  
**Joe Christ, Portland**

There's nothing unseen in it. It was a 25-minute doc made about me, primarily with Rothmans money, because it was about motor racing! I got to drive

Below: The Damned's *Music For Pleasure*, Floyd's *A Saucerful Of Secrets*, and Mason with impressive (real) moustache, 1971



three of the endurance championship races with the Rothmans team, so it was real big-boy motor racing. I still have some great cars, but I'm doing less racing now. I'm more fond of finishing restorations. Favourite cars? I have three – the first car I ever raced, a pre-war Aston Martin, a birdcage Maserati that I won the support race at the British Grand Prix in, in 1993, and the Ferrari 250 GTO – I've raced it, I've done rallies, took my daughters to church for their weddings, and it makes me look so fucking clever as I bought it for 30k and one sold last week for £70m. What do I pop to the shops in? My BMW motorbike.

**Who do you miss more on stage? Syd, Rick, Roger or David?**

**Jose Duarte, via email**

It would be Roger, because I think a drummer's musical relationship with the bass player is the one.

**Would you don the Pompeii hair and moustache for one Saucerful song?**  
**Philip Waters, via email**

No. I have got a false moustache, but I'm not putting it on, and nor am I wearing the cowboy hat.

**Have you thought about writing another book?**

**Flynn Becton, via email**

I have, but the problem is it's quite hard work. As soon as you get beyond about 7,000 words you start repeating yourself. I had an idea for a cookbook, but someone stole the title – ‘Dark Side Of The Spoon’ – so that rather set me back. I thought it would be based on the recipes that tour caterers do for different bands, so you'd have Keith Richards' shepherd's pie and so on. It would make a good charity book. I like cooking, yeah – sharp knives and alcohol, what's not to like?

**Has anyone come close to solving the Publius Enigma [a mysterious cryptic puzzle reportedly begun during touring for *The Division Bell* in 1994]?**  
**Phil Graves, via email**

It's now so long ago I can't even remember what the basis of it all was. When Steve O'Rourke died, the enigma died with him. We've never really resolved where it got to. It was a nice idea. One element of it was there would be a message sent via the periactoid lights on stage, but we were never party to the whole thing. I must ask David if he knows.

**What are the chances of Pink Floyd getting back together?**  
**Patrick Sarries, via email**

You're asking the wrong person! I saw a quote where someone said, “On my tombstone it'll say, ‘I'm still not sure it's quite over...’”

*Unattended Luggage* is out August 31 on Warner Music; *Saucerful Of Secrets* UK tour starts September 23 at Portsmouth Guildhall