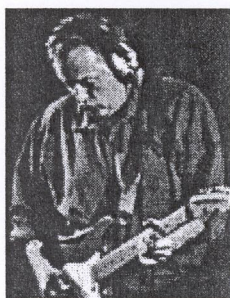


David Gilmour / Jan. 16, 2002 / London (Royal Festival Hall)

Despite Royal Festival Hall almost being shrouded in the shadow of Battersea Power Station (the London landmark that appeared on the cover of Pink Floyd's "Animals" album), there was thankfully no sign of inflatable pigs prior to Pink Floyd guitarist David Gilmour's solo performance in the city last night (Jan. 16). Indeed, with the usual distracting paraphernalia synonymous with Pink Floyd gigs entirely absent, it left nothing but Gilmour's distinctive vocal and guitar talents in the spotlight.



DAVID GILMOUR

His decision to play three nights at the Royal Festival Hall was less than surprising. Gilmour obviously enjoyed the intimacy of his gig at the venue last June, when he headlined the Meltdown festival as a guest of Robert Wyatt, the event's curator and former drummer/vocalist with seminal psychedelic rockers Soft Machine.

Gilmour looked every inch the relaxed family man (not too many miles from his West Sussex home) as he took to the stage, but the reception that met his arrival was one only a world renowned rock star could dream of expecting. Amongst some overzealous yells that included "You are God," Gilmour maintained his relaxed demeanor, calmly playing the opening notes of "Shine on You Crazy Diamond" on acoustic guitar.

The concert closely mirrored the Meltdown gig, with Gilmour being joined by a progressively larger support band that included a choir, cello and double bass, and guests such as Pink Floyd's Rick Wright. Beautifully performed and extremely diverse, the set was based on personal choice rather than any desire to quench the audiences thirst for Pink Floyd's back catalog.

Alongside tracks by early Pink Floyd leader Syd Barrett and Richard Thompson, there were some remarkable additions, including a beautiful reading of Bizet's "Je Crois Entendre Encore" and an extremely bizarre last encore of "Hushabye Mountain" from the 1970's British film musical "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang."

Arguably the best, but certainly the most popular moments, included a new track "Smile," and old Floyd favorites "Wish You Were Here," "High Hopes," and "Comfortably Numb" (on which Wyatt provided the vocals to the verses despite not making it on to the stage).

But the evening's definitive peak came as the main set closed just as it had begun, with "Shine On You Crazy Diamond" reprised by the full band and Gilmour on electric guitar. It offered a powerful juxtaposition and a reminder of just how unique Pink Floyd were. Gilmour may be uncomfortable with the rock star tag, but he's going to have to try a lot harder than this to remove it.