

Little innovation, but still ready with the surprises

IF PINK Floyd's guitarist David Gilmour should bear more resemblance to a country GP considering retirement to his holiday home than a fantastically wealthy rock star, then it's hardly surprising. Quite wonderfully, Gilmour recently sold his rarely occupied London home for several million pounds (reportedly to Earl Spencer, no less), and is in the process of donating the whole whack to a charity for the homeless. But then, he is the man who, troubled by his good fortune, once admitted to rushing off a few cheques to good causes each day (which would have made a fine white blues song - "Woke up this morning, wrote a cheque to charity..." and so on.).

Unsurprisingly, he cuts a benign figure on stage, as he leads a large band, including a nine-piece choir, none of whom are likely to appear on *Pop Idol* anytime soon, through a crowd-pleasing collection of some of his best known works, and some more recent offerings from the late Floyd catalogue. If innovation is what you crave, this is not the place.

"Shine on You Crazy Diamond" bookends the set, the first acoustic version sounding like a man avoiding his dinner party guests by noodling on an

POP

DAVID GILMOUR
ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL
LONDON

acoustic in the kitchen until he finds what he's been struggling to place (cue whoops from the middle-aged crowd), but, overworn by familiarity, much of the performance, especially the numbers from the Floyd's final album *The Division Bell*, are almost parodies of a once innovative style, their one-time seamless soundscapes now reduced to a set of stylistic tics.

There are a few unexpected treats. Syd Barrett's "Dominoes", originally pieced together by Gilmour from some notoriously fragmented sessions, possesses more swing than the rest of the set put together, its lurching, simple changes still potent. And Gilmour's plaintive rendition of Bizet's "Je crois entendre encore" certainly pleases him.

But denuded of the extravagant stadium staging of the past, songs like "Comfortably Numb" - here graced with the presence of Sir Bob Geldof, a man of many talents but none of them musical - and the horrible "High Hopes" have to stand on their inconsiderable merits.



Diamond bloke: ex-Floyd man Gilmour Steve Gillett

"Wish You Were Here" remains as drably lovely as ever, enhanced by Gilmour's acoustic soloing, but too often his patented guitar style does little more than punctuate tunes which wouldn't even pass muster as soundtracks to tampon adverts these days.

Yet why should any of this matter? The audience get to see an aged Richard Wright join his old band

mate on organ, while enough of Gilmour's idiosyncratic approach remains to surprise occasionally - he coores sweetly with "Hushabye Mountain" from the soundtrack of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. Let the old folks have their fun. It's not as if the sizeable ticket price is going up anyone's hooters any time soon.

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