

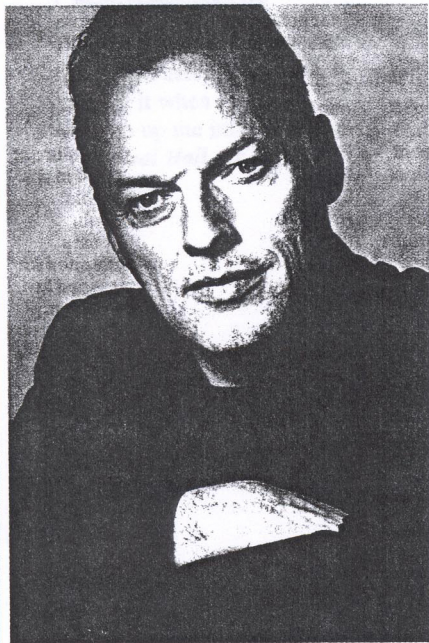
Live previews

David Gilmour

Royal Festival Hall Wed 16 to Fri 18

Pink Floyd is dead. Or at least heavily sedated. 'When's the next Pink Floyd album, David?' a fan cried out at Gilmour's gig at the Meltdown festival last summer. The Floyd king, grey-haired and soft-voiced, paused a second before replying: 'Who gives a fuck?'

Suffering fools gladly may not be one of



his greatest skills, but there's always the singing and guitar-playing to fall back on. And the intimate nature of these gigs – well, the venue has a roof on it – offers a rare chance to really listen to both, freed from the distraction of an inflatable pig hovering overhead, or the guy in the seat behind spilling his pail of Hauslager down your back.

Some of the set list won't be too far from the last Pink Floyd tour seven years ago – 'Wish You Were Here', 'High Hopes', 'Shine On You Crazy Diamond'. But the Meltdown gig also boasted songs by Richard Thompson and Syd Barrett; the electric guitar was hardly touched all night; and the acoustic band and backing choir trod softly, caressing where Floyd's superamplified approach would bludgeon. Not that there's anything wrong with a bit of mutually consenting bludgeoning, of course. Some times stripping back the arrangements feels wrong, almost like rewriting the words. But mostly the new acoustic Gilmour is a chance to hear some wonderful songs without too much big-budget bogusness. Highlights last time: Robert Wyatt singing the verses on 'Comfortably Numb' (he'll be doing it again on Wednesday), 'Hushabye Mountain' from 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang', and best of all, a beautiful reading of Bizet's 'Je Crois Entendre Encore'. No, it's not very rock 'n' roll. But who gives a fuck?
Dominic Maxwell