Interview with David Gilmour by Johnnie Walker BBC Radio 2 - 27th September 2002

Transcribed by the PinkMaster - http://www.pink-floyd.org

[Music: 'One Slip']

JW: Pink Floyd and "One Slip" from the album a "Momentary Lapse of Reason" ... A great pleasure to welcome David Gilmour to Radio 2. Good evening.

DG: Good evening, Johnnie.

JW: Great to see you. David is here to tie the release of a DVD and VHS called "David Gilmour In Concert", which is all sorts of things, but mainly performances from the Meltdown Festival at the Royal Festival Hall, and then some other tracks, from January 2002 when you repeated the exercise. "Chamber Rock" as it's been described.

DG: (he laughs) Yes, interesting.

JW: So it started with Robert Wyatt's invitation to be a part of the Meltdown Festival...

DG: It did; I mean... I guess that was in about April or May of 2001. He rang up if I'd take part, I said "yes, of course". And proceeded to go into a complete terror as soon as I put the phone down, thinking "Oh God, there are less than three months to go, what the hell am I going to do!" It's expected to be a slightly more...esoteric and different. One is not expected to go and do exactly the normal thing that one's expected, has been known to do in the past.

JW: But you had this idea of how it might sound, with what, a cello, a double bass, and a small gospel choir?

DG: That was the first thought that came into my head, when I was still on the phone, yeah. More or less acoustic: acoustic guitar for me, a cello and double bass with a gospel choir. We expanded it slightly, added percussion, that came in some of the time.

JW: Then intensive rehearsals at your Sussex farmhouse, which can be seen on the DVD.

DG: The very first day of rehearsals with the choir are on the DVD, to everyone's delight and pleasure.

JW: I mean it couldn't be more different, in a way. I mean, with Floyd there's an enormous power, fantastic visual effects, and this is as pared down as it could possibly be...

DG: That's right

JW: ...and a lot more pressure on you, I've thought?

DG: I was very very nervous, it has to be said, on the night, and for the two or three months preceding. But it's a much lighter weight to pick up and take out, to do something like this... It's...you can be practically spontaneous. Not completely, I mean. I could gather these people together, get it all up and running, and be on the road doing a few shows if I wanted to, in a month or something, which is just an impossibility within Pink Floyd.

JW: Well, It's wonderful that you are going to play for us tonight, and also here's Melvyn Duffy, on slide guitar. Somebody asked a question, Ian McKenzie - we had many emails: bearing in mind your recent concerts had you performing as a solo artist, why didn't you perform any songs from your two solo albums?

DG: Ehm. Good question. I can't answer that. I don't really know! There was nothing I immediately seemed to fit and that I wanted to do. There are a couple that I'm considering doing next time, and I do these things, but, just didn't quite get to them.

JW: Okay. What about for tonight?

DG: Well, I think we'll do "Fat Old Sun" which is the last...I think we recorded about 32 years ago, so I was a young 23 year old!

JW: Yeah, You had to listen to it again and write down the lyrics?

DG: I had to, yes! (he chuckles)

JW: So, what guitar are you using, for the sake of interest?

DG: A nice old Martin G35 guitar, that I bought off a guy in the street outside *Manny's* in New York, who was trying to sell it in 'bout 1972; it was quite old then. It's actually the guitar that I play on Wish You Were Here on the original record, and on dozens of other things too. It's an old favourite of mine.

JW: Okay. Here it is - David Gilmour and Melvyn Duffy, playing live on Radio 2.

[Music: 'Fat Old Sun']

JW: Beautifully done.

DG: Well, thank you. (chuckles)

JW: When you performed that at the Royal Festival Hall, David Cheal from the Daily Telegraph, said "rendered in stark fashion, *Atom Heart Mother's Fat Old Sun* is revealed as a fantastic song, rich with melody".

DG: Mmm. Fantastically overlooked. Tried very hard to push the others in Pink Floyd into allowing it to go on our *Echoes* Greatest... whatever, last year, but they weren't having it, so...

JW: A lot of people have emailed us; they seem to have accepted the fact that there might not be any new things from Pink Floyd - album or tour - I guess that's the case?

DG: Do you know, that's something I just.. I can't get my head round at the moment. It's not what I'm thinking about this. I'm concentrating on what I'm doing at the moment and I have to say it's so enjoyable to do what I'm doing, and to be doing this slightly lighter weight stuff. I mean not in it's content but in the way we present it. It's so easy for me to put together with these other great musicians, that the thought of a Pink Floyd project just hasn't really entered my head, so...who knows?

JW: It's a wonderful role you've achieved, it seems to suit you very well, an elder statesman of British rock, a mature statesman of British Rock! (both laugh)

DG: Oh yes. You have to get some place...we're not kids any more and you have to find a way for you to progress, gracefully with some semblance of dignity as you pass through this life... and this seems to suit me quite well.

JW: Yeah. There's some great extras on the DVD as well as performances at different concerts at the Royal Festival Hall: you've got the home movie, lyrics sheets, miscellaneous; there's three songs there, included you doing a live version of Elvis Presley's *Don't* at the Lieber and Stoller tribute.

DG: It's right, yes

JW: Why did you pick that one?

DG: Why did I pick that song? Oh, well, it was a Lieber & Stoller tribute and they gave me a long list of Elvis Presley songs and I looked through them, I always loved *Don't* and I just thought I could do it slightly differently. And I thought the chances were that everyone else would be doing *Yakety Yak* and all these drrp-drrp-drrp great things that Lieber and Stoller were very good at writing, and I thought if I did something, that was a little bit different to everyone else. It would come over well, and it was really. I mean I enjoyed doing that and it doesn't seem to have been released, or shown, that whole concert. And so we rang the producers up and said: "any chance of nicking it back to pop it on my DVD?" and they said "fine - please do.". So...

JW: Yeah! Excellent. And there was another benefit show that you did for the White Lotus school in the Himalayas. How did you get attracted to that project?

DG: Well, I didn't go to the Himalayas!

JW: No, but you did (both laugh) the concert to benefit the school!

DG: My arm was twisted by the Cowdrays, who are very big followers of all things Tibetan.

JW: And another section of the DVD, under "Spare Digits"...

DG: Under "Spare Digits"?

JW: Yes. (laughs) You get six guitar solos from the main performance. That kind of beats Bert Weedon's guitar tutor doesn't it?

DG: Well, David Mallet (chuckles), who's the director of these things, film director, video director. He likes to make sure he guests the guitar solos to cut in when he's filming, and you often get the directors and the cameramen are all doing something, but they often miss things like that. So he dedicates a guy to pointing a camera at your fingers, basically, all night long. It's his job to sit there, and, ph!, point that camera at the fingers. So, we had that stuff in the can, and someone suggested that we should do that, and as we have lots of spare digits in that medium, the digital medium... you can see my little fat digits doing it.

JW: Yeah. The note bending techniques. (both chuckle). Good, ok so. Are there plans for more of these then, more of these motions next year?

DG: My plan, and I'm not promising anything, is to make a studio album. Something along these lines. Although, again, I'm not going to... if I change my mind about how it's going to be (he chuckle), so be it!

But I'll do intend to do some concerts in about a year's time, I think.

JW: It's wonderful that you are a man very busy, with four children, they take up a lot of your life. How many? Sorry!

DG: Eight!

JW: Eight! (he chuckles) Ok, but about four who are living with you, isn't it?

DG: That's right! Full time

JW: Full time, yes! But... you have this love still of flying and stuff like that? How is Intrepid Aviation? I love the name of that; I get this vision of you in a leather flying jacket: Biggles Gilmour is in the air!

DG: Intrepid Aviation was a way for me to make my hobby pay for itself a little bit, but gradually over a few years Intrepid Aviation became a business because you have to be businesslike about it. Suddenly I found instead of it being a hobby and me enjoying myself, it was a business and so I sold it. I don't have Intrepid Aviation any more. I just have a nice old biplane that I pop up, wander around the skies in sometimes.

JW: Do a bit of barnstorming in...

DG: Yes, that's right.

JW: Yeah! Okay, another song. Are you going to do a new one?

DG: This one's a new song, which I co-wrote with my wife Polly. This is called "Smile"; I wrote the music, and she wrote the words. Fine they are too...

JW: All said

DG: All said

[Music: 'Smile']

DG: Yeah, one little sigh when there should be a smile. But that's how life goes!

JW: Yeah, it's a smile when you get home, it's a sigh when you leave! (both chuckle). So, that's David Gilmour on guitar and vocals, Melvyn Duffy doing an excellent job on slide guitar, and the new song called "Smile" which will be on the new solo album which will be out next March.

DG: March? No, next year some time!! In about a year...

JW: I just thought I'd put a bit of pressure on you! (both laugh)

DG: Not you as well!

JW: So, you must have been enormously pleased by the reaction to the concert, both from the audience there and the critics.

DG: Well, it was nerve-wracking doing it, but it was very gratifying to get good reviews and for it to have seemed to have worked. Very good to build my confidence for doing something along those lines as a studio album next year.

JW: Yeah, did anybody have to push you on from the wings? Were you quaking a bit?

DG: I stood in the wings, and was announced, and I was actually shaking. There's a couple of places on the thing, there's a vibrato, close up on me doing a vibrato on the guitar and you can see my fingers are actually wobbling more than they're supposed to do. I was terribly nervous, but you just have to walk up those steps and march out and try and look confident.

JW: Because you are quite a shy man, you can see in a way that even at the end of the songs, taking your applause you are almost...

DG: Well, I like it.

JW: So, What was your motivation to push you into performing?

DG: When I was young? What made me want to do it? God knows. Mmh, exhibitionism? Mmh ... God, I don't know. I loved music; when Heartbreak Hotel came out, that's so really, did it for me. I vowed to get a guitar and learn it. But the first time I ever performed with a guitar was a scout thing when I strummed a guitar, open, with no chord at all, when I was about 12 or so... Got Heartbreak Hotel there on Elvis's Number 1's? It wasn't a number one here!

JW: Yeah, good excuse to whack that on. Listen, thanks very much indeed for coming in...

DG: ...That's quite minimalist, Heartbreak Hotel, double bass, little bit of guitar, piano - that's not an awful lot going on, tons of atmosphere...

JW: Yeah. Good! Well that was lovely. For those in jams on the various motorways, all jammed up on Friday night, that was very relaxing.

DG: Thank you very much indeed.

JW: Thank you very much. You can see *David Gilmour In Concert* with extras on the DVD and the VHS. It's being released very soon, October 5th or 6th and is called *David Gilmour in Concert*. Many many thanks.

DG: Thank you!