

each album. So I booked Superbear studio in the South of France and knocked out a pile of stuff very quickly: two weeks including writing it. I suppose I felt, erm, unharnessed, freer to play more bluesy styles.

And write about mortality, of course, as in I Can't Breathe Any More – "In fact I'm flat on the floor/My direction is lost" it says. Where did that come from?

It comes up every time really. I dunno. I don't really want to discuss it. (*He's standing now, foot on coffee table, chumbush on knee, strumming again*) There, diverting you. Sorry I'm a bit reticent about it. I don't know why. (*Sits again*) We'd all agreed to take time off, though Roger was certainly sitting at home writing *The Wall* – after the difficulties he experienced playing some of the stadium shows, which affected us all to different degrees. None of us were happy with the changes in our audiences. But some of us were more... resigned.

What changes do you mean?

When we were playing smaller places – I mean even American arenas with 10-12,000 people – the audience would be absolutely silent. If we'd wanted to drop a pin on stage you'd have heard it through the PA (*laughs*). But after *Dark Side Of The Moon* we started to do some stadiums and people's reasons for being at our concerts seemed to change. A lot of them were not necessarily ardent, knowledgeable fans of our work, but they wanted to go along and be a part of the experience. They made their feelings known. They wanted more stuff to boogie to (*ironic wash-your-mouth-out-with-soap intonation*). That's one of the phrases that irritated the hell out of us.

All right, at this point, preparing for *The Wall*, Pink Floyd's financial crisis emerged. How did it hit you?

It was very tricky. The advisers never told us about their tax con, nothing at all. Then, when we were demoing *The Wall*, we were suddenly told we should leave the country and make a lot of money too so that we could pay the tax we owed here. So we upped sticks to France and then America and recorded *The Wall* en route.

Did all this contribute to the conflict in the band?

I wouldn't have thought it helped. What happened was they would say to us, "Put another chunk of money in and that will pull it round." Then if one of us – and it was often me – said, "No, I think I'll quit while I'm ahead", they'd say, "If you take your money out the company will definitely go down and then it will cost the other three band members their investment." Having to make decisions that affected the others was difficult and caused... strains.

***The Wall* was fraught, but you once described *The Final Cut* period as the "most awful time of my life".**

In terms of Pink Floyd, definitely.

Because you were at loggerheads with Roger.

Yes.

How did you cope – your marriage in trouble too – did you crack up?

It's hard to know what cracking up is... It was as close as I've ever been to cracking up I think, yes.

In such a low, what do you do? Lose your temper? Break down crying?

I lost my temper several times. There were no fisticuffs. But it was close on a couple of occasions. I may have had a little cry at one point. It's possible (*chuckles*). Not knowing what to do...

Did you turn to drink or drugs?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I've always been partial to a drink and I'm sure it did get more out of control at that time.

What about therapy, do you do that?

No. I did a little bit of that later.

And you were married with children. Did you bring all that hell home?

I guess so. I was in a marriage that seemed to be breaking up for rather a long time. It's not that I was actually away so much, but probably mentally absent. Although I didn't want to leave the children, I did want to leave the marriage. It wasn't going anywhere. My second marriage is not easy, but it's fantastic. The first one was a nightmare. I was young and stupid. The actual physical separation wasn't until '88. Should have done it a lot earlier.

Well, you did try – I mean, with no disrespect to your first wife.

Oh, but plenty on my part (*laughs quite heartily*).

Mm... Parts of your second solo album, *About Face* in 1984, seem to reflect all this turmoil.

When it was recorded it didn't look like Pink Floyd was going to continue the way it had been. Our relationships with Roger were just gone. History. We'd had a number of arguments of the sort where he'd say, "Well, I'll fucking leave then," and I'd say, "That's all right, we'll continue without you." Then he'd say if we recorded without him he'd come and sit at the back of the studio and glare at us. Strange pronouncements like that (*chuckles*).

But I presume your problems with Roger were on your mind when you wrote *You Know I'm Right for About Face* – "Why should you bother with the other side/When you know yours is right?"

It wasn't initially, but when I wrote the first verse people all assumed that was what it was about and that coloured the rest of the writing (*chuckles*). It's a daft area to get into. Good tune though.

So at that time were you thinking about going solo rather than continuing with Pink Floyd?

No, I'd always made it very clear to all of them, Roger included, that it was my intention to carry on. Roger said, "You'll never fucking get it together." Possibly not the sort of thing you say to me. I can get a bit determined and stubborn at times.

Determined he certainly is. Despite his in-built reticence, he's hanging in there, as the tape recorder rolls into its fifth hour. On occasion you get the sense that Gilmour wants you to chisel away and badger him into saying ➤

PUNK Floyd

How Gilmour's gang inspired the class of '76.
By Killing Joke's Jaz Coleman.

"I FIRST HEARD Pink Floyd as a teenager in 1975 or 1976. I was one of the few punks who was into them. Not all of their records, but then I don't like all of Beethoven's symphonies. I didn't care that they were unfashionable. I hate Pink Floyd? I don't agree with everything John Lydon says, though I do find he makes me laugh!

Pink Floyd were a relatively anonymous band: they made a sound, they didn't have an image. These are all things I admire. Youth [Killing Joke bassist] and I both had a deep appreciation of their contribution to music history. Geordie [KJ's guitarist] didn't like them because he hates guitar solos. But the thing about Gilmour's guitar solos is that they're melody lines. Melody is permitted. Widdly woo-ing is not permitted. That's wanking off.

Gilmour had melody. But he is a wanker because he didn't realise the



Jaz Coleman:
ex-Pink punk.

importance of chemistry between members of the band. I know Roger Waters is a difficult man, but sometimes you have the right chemistry with people you hate. You've just got to look at their great qualities and learn to get on. Pink Floyd to me is when Waters is in the band and they all play together.

I wrote the Pink Floyd symphony in 20 days at my home in New Zealand. [In 1995, Jaz and Youth released the hit classical album *Us And Them: Symphonic Music Of Pink Floyd*, which they recorded with the London Philharmonic Orchestra]. My management company managed Roger Waters and I know his daughter India – she was part of the Portobello scene. So I got Waters' consent and the rest of them couldn't stop it! I was told to focus on *Dark Side Of The Moon* and *The Wall*, because those are Pink Floyd's two biggest albums. But *Wish You Were Here* is my favourite, that's the one I'd have liked to have done. Someone from my old management company flogged the DAT tape to Philip Glass. That was played at a senators party in Washington DC. The senators really liked it so Philip, who remains a friend of mine, put it out on his label through Universal. *Us And Them* is probably the biggest selling album I've done. But I haven't been fucking paid! *Pus And Phlegm*, that's what I call it."

As told to Manish Agarwal

"I hate Pink Floyd? I don't agree with Lydon."



Gilmour's Meltdown

Robert Wyatt on how to make a guitar legend smile. By **Phil Sutcliffe**.

ON JUNE 22, 2001, David Gilmour stepped out of Floyd's shadow to appear at Meltdown, London's cross-cultural musical festival at the Royal Festival Hall. Despite the event being curated by Robert Wyatt (an ever-genial ex-Floyd touring pal from his days with Soft Machine), the equally hesitant Gilmour was unsure as to whether to accept the offer. "I asked him and he said, 'No', in his gentle way," recalls Wyatt. "But I asked again and then he said, 'Oh, I might be able to give it a go.'"

Wyatt's initial approach was not conducted through the usual channels. "There was no way I could go through that sewer system of managers and blockheads," says Wyatt. "So I went through Marinka – my sister-in-law who does interior design for David and makes dresses for Polly, his wife."

Despite Wyatt's unorthodox approach, he is keen to stress that his decision to invite Gilmour to the multi-night event, alongside everyone from Tricky to Terry Riley via Elvis Costello and The Residents, had nothing to do with the old pals' act.

"I got him because he was good, not because I remembered him from the old days," says Wyatt. "I'd seen him on TV playing with Mica Paris on the Jools Holland show. He played discreet blues guitar behind her and he was majestic. Pink Floyd wasn't a monument, it was just four people and one of them was David and this was him, the gentle player behind Mica Paris. I thought, Why is he a lot better than the famous British blues guitarists? It was because most of them thought, 'I like B.B. King so I'll play like him only faster and louder.'

But there was such discretion, such carefulness in David, that's what hit me and that's why I asked him to Meltdown."

Gilmour's performance of Screaming Jay Hawkins' I Put A Spell On You with Paris and Holland has since appeared on the David Gilmour In Concert DVD, along with his show at the Royal Festival Hall in 2002 and the parts of his Meltdown appearance. The latter performance, however, was not without incident. "Just before Meltdown I went to see The Eagles at Earl's Court and I was singing along at the top of my voice all evening,"

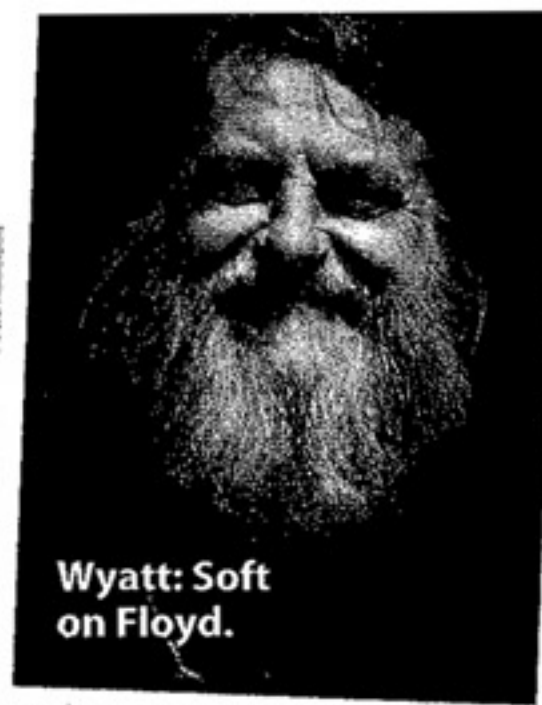
chuckles Gilmour. "I completely shot my throat and still hadn't recovered when I did the concert. I was distinctly out of order that night."

Nevertheless, Meltdown witnessed a well received pared down set by Gilmour that included a number of Floyd classics (Shine On You Crazy Diamond being the opener)

alongside a choral reworking of Bizet's Je Crois Entendre Encore and a new song titled Smile.

Co-written with Polly prior to Meltdown, it can easily be viewed as the start point of Gilmour's new solo set *On An Island*. With Gilmour a guest on Wyatt's *Cuckooland* (2003), Robert returned the favour, playing on Gilmour's album. "In the studio I felt like a rabbit in the headlights," says Wyatt, "but David was very graceful about it."

And indeed, while assembling *On An Island*, David Gilmour also took time out to present Robert Wyatt with his MOJO Award last year. "We were sitting at the table and I wondered why David was there," recalls Wyatt. "Nobody told me. It was a really great moment."



Wyatt: Soft on Floyd.

"Pink Floyd wasn't a monument. It was just four people."

what he believes deep down. At least some of the time. It's past school-run time. Someone else must be taking care of it. We return to the most fractious part of his career.

Gilmour made *About Face* in part because he felt Pink Floyd was "in limbo". That all ended, by his recollection, in December 1985 when Waters notified CBS, their label in the USA, that he was leaving. Gilmour started planning and writing and, by September '86, had called in Bob Ezrin, Canadian co-producer of *The Wall* and *About Face*, and moved operations to the Astoria.

Then, on October 31, Waters opened the previously obscure dispute to public gaze by filing a High Court suit intended to close Pink Floyd forever. He averred it was "a spent force creatively" and "should be allowed to retire gracefully". He lobbed in a few insults: "Dave doesn't have any ideas" and "Nick can't play drums".

Gilmour rose to the insults, calling *The Final Cut* "cheap filler", and, speaking to me at the time, declared with measured rage: "I'm going to fight him. I've earned the right to use the name Pink Floyd."

Floyd, led by Gilmour, carried on recording, trying to reassemble their collective confidence. As Ezrin told me, "Nobody was saying, 'We're scared.' But when a key member leaves a band it's like losing a limb. You don't die, but you have to compensate. Make sure the music is as deep and interesting as it's always been."

Returning to contemplation of these tough times, Gilmour sprawls back, feet up on the coffee table, looking comfortable, but feeling ambiguous as he recalls conflicts and tries to set old anger in the context of last summer's Live 8 rapprochement.

Did you ever feel you might fail and prove Roger right?

No, never.

Is it true that at the time you were looking for a concept for the album?

No, not at all. It was a bunch of songs and if a mood or a theme came along to tie it together so much the better, but it wasn't something I was looking for. There was a lot of rubbish talked about the making of that album, about the "vast teams" of support people I needed and so on.

But you've always freely admitted difficulties writing lyrics. Here you were without Roger for the first time in Pink Floyd. Weren't you looking for lyric-writer collaborators like Eric Stewart and Roger McGough?

I did indeed have a chat with Roger McGough and I wouldn't have been averse to working with him, but it was too late in the project. Eric I love, he's a friend, but we're too similar, he couldn't be a foil. Basically it was Anthony Moore and me who got stuck into it and wrote *On The Turning Away*, *Learning To Fly* and *The Dogs Of War*.

I wonder what your problem is with lyrics. At that time you must have had loads of emotions boiling inside you from the band and your marriage. What held you back?

I don't know what it is. Occasionally things come along and present themselves. Easily. And well. But it's few and far between. Polly thinks I'm just lazy, but I have sweated blood trying to force myself to... but forcing myself doesn't... I dunno...

What is the sticking point? Ideas? Imagination about, say, stories? Or a reluctance to reveal yourself?

It could easily be that – I am notably reluctant to reveal myself, as you've been finding out. I just feel that I've been given some gift in music and... in a way I ought to be happy with that. But I don't want to say I'm just crap at lyrics. There are quite a few things I've written that I do really like – *Sorrow (A Momentary Lapse Of Reason)*, *Out Of The Blue (About Face)*, I love *Where We Start* on this new album which I wrote as a birthday present for Polly a few years ago.

OK. Back to more practical matters. How did you resolve the legal dispute over Pink Floyd's name?

I met Roger at the Astoria on the 23rd of December 1987 to thrash out our... divorce. The two of us, one accountant, a computer and a printer. We hammered it out over a

Gilmour's appearance at the Royal Festival Hall marked the start of his resurrection.

