



HE was with bandmate Syd Barrett in 1965 when the singer fused the names of bluesmen Pink Anderson and Floyd Council to create a new name for their fledgling outfit.

He was at Abbey Road Studios in 1972 to record *The Dark Side Of The Moon* (35million sales) with Roger Waters, David Gilmour and Richard Wright.

He was on Pink Floyd's last tour, minus Waters, in 1994 when a performance of their most famous album was filmed.

He was part of the full band's triumphant reunion at Live8 last July.

He joined Waters on stage in Hyde Park on Saturday, July 1, for a rousing return to the *Dark Side*.

He went with Gilmour and Wright to a West End cinema on Monday to promote their stunning new P.U.L.S.E. DVD of the '94 tour.

Drummer Nick Mason is the band's custodian, the man who keeps the Pink Floyd dream alive.

He looks back with dry humour about the band's ups and downs and but also with deep affection for all those who've played a part in their extraordinary story.

And despite Waters' acrimonious split and subsequent lawsuits that dogged the Eighties, Nick still harbours hopes that the Pink Floyd story isn't over just yet.

He chats to SIMON COSYNS about the DVD and why one of the most famous albums ever made is even more relevant today.

WHAT prompted this new P.U.L.S.E. extravaganza 12 years after the Division Bell tour?

When the show was recorded, DVDs had hardly been invented. We needed a whole bunch of new technology to improve the quality of the video footage we shot at Earls Court. The weird thing is that the film we made in 1972 of Pink Floyd in Pompeii (with flared trousers!) was fine to put to DVD straight away because it was shot on 35mm film.

How did you eventually achieve improvements in quality for P.U.L.S.E.?

Through extraordinary weird programmes that I couldn't even begin to explain. You definitely can't buy it and put it on your PC at home!

It does look fantastic now, though.

It does, and the other thing which is great is that we did have the digital recordings from Earl Court.

So it's a hugely enhanced product compared with original?

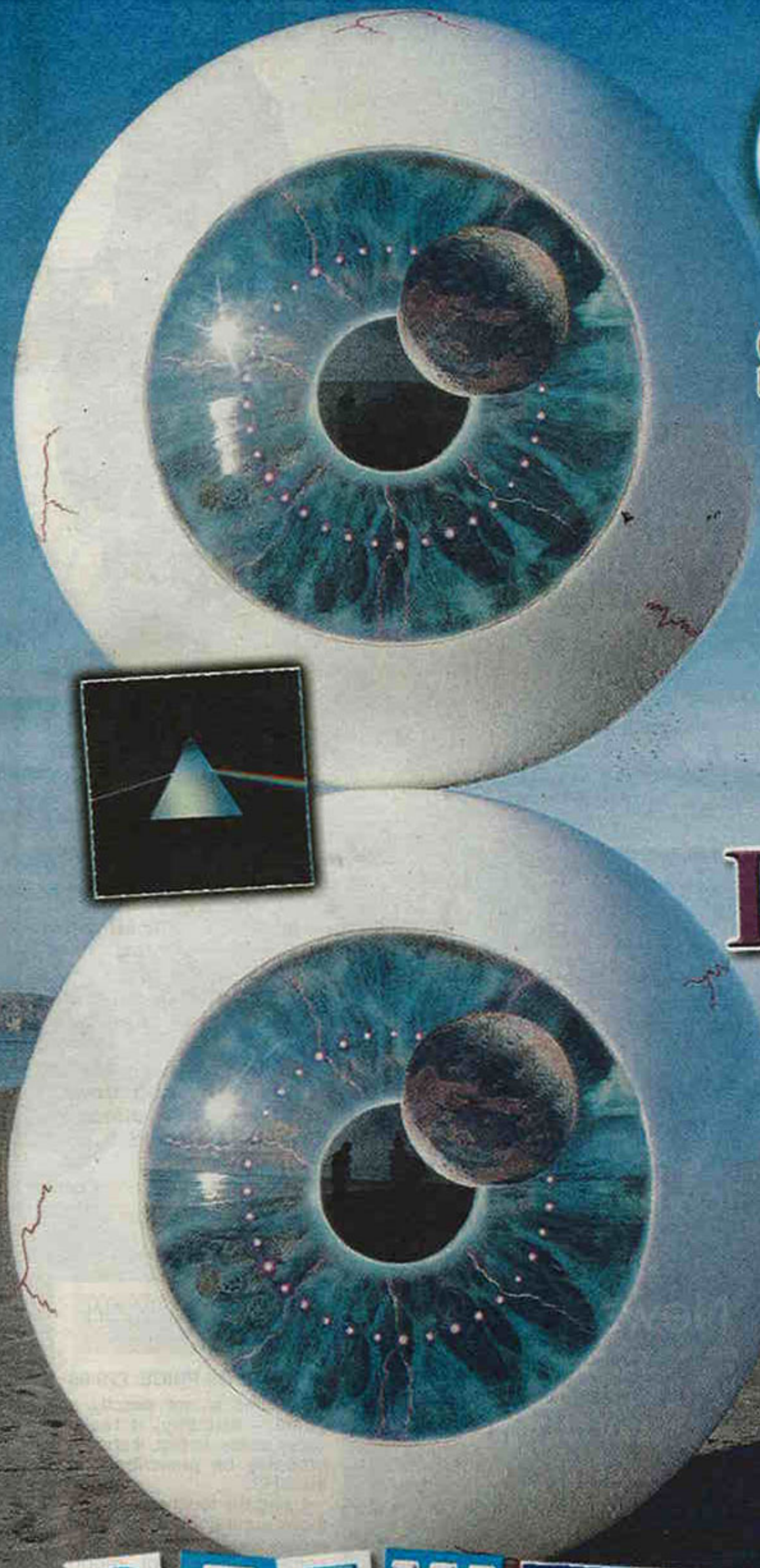
Yes, this one's had steroids.

I was intrigued by the section titled "bootlegging the bootleggers". Is this like one in the eye back?

Quite a lot of extra footage was taken by family members and crew and so on. But Dave (Gilmour) has mentioned that we actually also used some confiscated bootleg tapes. I'm not sure what the lawyers are going to make of that one.

And we get songs from the Division Bell album which not in the original film?

The show actually ran a whole lot longer than the VHS. So it's quite nice to put more stuff on. It's also



SFTW MEETS NICK MASON

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been great to put some of the films and animations (used as backdrops to the shows) on so that people can see them in more detail, particularly the one for Time.

Was that last full Floyd tour a sad time and did you feel like things were coming to an end?

No, not at all. I was rather surprised that we didn't go back on the road again. Funnily enough it was something quite new to us because until we did the year-long tour in 1987/88 we had always just done three or four weeks.

One of the great things about long tours is you can get it right. You can afford to put great production values into the staging, the films and all the extras. And, of course at my age, it is great to be treated as 7-year-old again. As long as you are in the lobby at 4 o'clock, there is someone to feed you, make sure you have clothes and carry anything difficult.

By the time you got to Earls Court for

the P.U.L.S.E recordings everyone was firing on all cylinders?

Absolutely. I think we'd actually got to the point on that tour where we had moved beyond getting it precise to the point where we could get a bit more loose with it.

So you were able to take a show in a different direction?

Absolutely. We would play different songs on different nights. It is very easy to get locked into a set list that works. But we got quite sophisticated and we could warn everyone we were going to do a different number and all the lighting cues could be re-jigged.

And did you rehearse different tracks as you went along?

Yeah, in fact we only started doing *Dark Side* towards the end of one of the American legs. We had to get hold of all the direct tapes and film and so on for it. It sounds quite "Cliff Richard" to say let's do the show right here but it was really quite moving to put it

together and to play it as a single piece.

If ever an album deserves to be treated as one piece live, surely *Dark Side* is it?

It's actually a good length for an audience because something like *The Wall* tends not leave much room for anything else.

How important is the visual side of Pink Floyd?

You have to strike a balance. You have to avoid doing a "Fantasia" where a particular piece of music just makes you think of brooms or mops. For us, it's also historical. We've got a reputation for enhanced images.

A BBC poll voted *Dark Side* the piece of music that was most likely to change your life. How did it change yours back in the early Seventies?

We had been a successful underground band but *Dark Side* transported us. It wasn't overnight but it moved us from being a band playing theatres into a band

playing stadiums. That is hell of a lurch forward.

Do you think it to some extent it hindered your progress afterwards?

I think it was part of the journey. Procol Harum perhaps had *A Whiter Shade Of Pale* hung around their necks. For us, we lurched to a new level. Otherwise, we would have been stuck doing it on a small scale - a bit Spinal Tap-ish.

In your book, you describe the scene where the band were putting the concept of *Dark Side* together in your kitchen in Camden but you had already tested it on the road?

Yes, it was a pre-bootlegging era when you could practise the thing on the road without releasing it. Addressing your doubts well ahead of your record company.

Were you were aware that *Dark Side* was going to be a big one?

Speaking for myself, not really. The first time that we probably had any realisation would have been the final listen-throughs - we



knew we had done the best piece of work so far. But it doesn't mean that it will do well because you have made a good record.

The success of *Dark Side* is quite interesting because I don't think it is due to any one thing. It may be to do with the fact that it became a sort of test for stereo records. Or is it to do with Storm's (Thorge-son) graphics, with Roger's writing or Dave's guitars?

But it is also to do with Bhaskar Menon (then chairman of Capitol Records) because the record could have died in America. It needed Baz to make it work.

Do you believe that it stands as the band's finest achievement?

Yes, in some ways, it is the most complete thing we've done. It has stood the test of time.

Why do you think it has such enduring appeal?

I've got two possible theories. One is the construction of it, the way everything segues together, the way it drifts from track to track is still quite fresh. It tends to hold your attention.

More seriously, is re-evaluating Roger's lyrics. They were written by a 27/28-year-old guy but seem more relevant to a 50-year-old.

They talk a lot about time passing. Where have I gone and where have I got to? In the early Seventies we were terribly worried about what to do with our leisure time - whether we should get another pair of snakeskin boots or not!

Can you elaborate on the drum sound on the album particularly the beginning sequence of Time?

When we were recording Time, I don't think we had worked out at all what should happen or what would happen. It was more or less put together on the spur of the moment in Abbey Road. But because someone had rented in this set of drums called roto-toms, I had a go. I still play them now. I played them in Hyde Park (at the weekend). They are just a skin and a frame.

You also played a big part in the sound effects on the album, the beginning sequence for instance?

Well I did a kind of overture (Speak To Me) using all the elements we actually used on the whole piece. Roger and myself ended up doing lot of the effects.

There's a lightness of touch about the recording...

Interestingly, when we did play it live in 1994 in America. The first attempt was pretty bad because everyone overplayed it like mad because of 30 years of learning how to play the guitars, keyboards or drums better.

So you had pare it down?

Yes, we had to strip it back. It only took one play through to realise what was going wrong.

Do you hang on to the hope that it is not necessarily the end of Pink Floyd as a creative force?

I personally hope that at some point we could do something else. I live in hope, I'm an optimist.

*Dark Side Of The Moon 2* - how about that?

Oh god no! *Son Of Dark Side*. Now that really would be something.