N A VILLAGE on the edge of commuter land, far enough away from London to be called home to ordinary people with ordinary incomes, a portly, almost elderly man called David Gilmour is a regular on the school run. This week, after dropping his son off at school, David went home to his spread on the Surrey-Sussex border and perhaps looked at his desk diary to see what he had on that day.

"Collect Mojo lifetime achievement award for contribution to rock music," is possibly what someone had scrawled on the page for June 5, 2006. Or it might just have said, "Night out with Phil" – Phil being neighbour Phil Manzanera, erstwhile Roxy Music guitarist and the man chosen to present Pink Floyd's legendary guitarist with one of the coolest awards in the business.

"He's a regular kind of bloke when he's here."

"He's a regular kind of bloke when he's here and he's here a lot - he's very much a family man; he doesn't disappear for months on end doing rock star stuff," says one of his less high-

by Cheryl Stonehouse

profile neighbours. "If one of his children has been to a party, he stops and has a cuppa when he calls to collect them.

"He's not a chatty man by any means but there's nothing about him that suggests wall-to-wall platinum albums or a life spent in limos. The only thing we do differently if we know he's likely to be popping round is to make sure the Dark Side Of The Moon CD isn't lying around."

This, it has to be said, is a strange corner of South-east England. The locals have, over the years, had plenty of practice at feigning insou-ciance when the likes of Eric Clapton, Phil Collins, Julie Walters and artist and conservationist David Shepherd have wandered into their everyday lives. When Chris Evans and Billie Piper were still together and looking for a life outside the goldfish bowl, this was the spot they chose.

In David Gilmour's case, however, there were

very few who ever had to make a conscious effort not to gawp when he first moved into the area 15 years ago. Though his publicity describes him as the voice of Pink Floyd, until

recently, his face remained a mystery to all but the most ardent fans of the band.

Gilmour, 60, has always liked it that way. When he sold his house in London's exclusive Little Venice three years ago and gave the £3.5million proceeds to a housing charity, he was unusually forthcoming about his philan-

was unusually forthcoming about his philan-thropy - but in a typically reticent sort of way. A month or so later, a horrible thought occurred to him - did people think he had done this to curry favour with those compiling Tony Blair's generous honours lists?
"I'm worried that people think I am just doing

this for some kind of personal reward," he said one evening at a charity event to a startled jour-nalist who had been expecting the

usual half-smile and a few muttered, non-committal words

"I don't want to seem like some sort of Jimmy Savile character. Jimmy has spent most of his life giving his time and effort to charity and all people could say was that he was after a knighthood. This is absolutely and totally wrong about me. I am not doing this for recognition or some

sort of decoration. So why was he being so open about deciding to act on second wife Polly's

deciding to act on second wife Polly's observation that, though the Gilmour family was large – he has four children with Polly and four with first wife Ginger – it didn't need four houses?

"The reason I am going public with this is to try to encourage fellow celebrities and those with similar wealth to start gatting involved with projects." start getting involved with projects

like this," he said. "There was a great tradition of philanthropy in this country that has fallen by the wayside. The problem is that the people I meet who could make massive donations aren't great triands. They usually expect factingly. friends. They usually appear fleetingly at showbiz parties. My friends tend to be normal people who live locally."

HIS IS no affectation. Ask around the music business who knows David Gilmour - really knows him - and the answer is that very few do.

ven when he was in his early 20s and had accidentally 'made it' when his old mates from Cambridge asked him to join Pink Floyd, he was never any kind of party animal," recalls one of Floyd's first roadies.

Musician Nick Laird-Clowes, cowriter of some of Floyd's later lyrics, confirms this from his memory of Gilmour backstage during the inter-

'I'm not doing this for recognition or decoration'

val of the spectacular The Wall show

in the early Eighties.
"The second half of the show began with David climbing up the 40ft wall that had been constructed on stage during the first half, and standing there playing the most spellbinding guitar solo. It would have been a tour de force if he'd been standing on the ground.

"Yet during the interval when I went backstage, he was sitting there eating sushi and playing with a Rubik's Cube. There was not a hint of nervousness about him.

"His overwhelming quality as human being is a capacity for total calm. He just doesn't do 'freaked out'.

"If he was on a boat that was going down, he would simply weigh up the situation and say, 'the wind's blowing in that direction so I suggest we all get on this life raft on this side of the boat'."

It is ironic that one of the most

influential members of the psychedelic music movement of the mid-Sixties should have been someone who wasn't tempted in the slightest to drop acid,

to tune in, turn on and drop out.

Like the rest of the band's founding members, he grew up in the heart of Cambridge's intellectual middle class. Father Doug was a doctor of genetics - he eventually joined the brain drain of the Seventies and went to America - and mother Sylvia a film editor.

E WAS sent to Cambridge's ferociously academic private school The Perse and, though he had no difficulty holding his own in his studies, his parents were alarmed by the amount of time he spent play ing the guitar.

By the time he was 14, most of his spare time was spent playing in bands with friends around the city.

By the time he was 20 - having told his mother not to worry, it would all ns mother not to worry, it would all turn out OK- he was a formidable professional guitarist playing with a band called Jokers Wild who were getting regular work and had attracted a devoted following.

"But that was only in Cambridge and there was no circu that the head

and there was no sign that the band, or any of the guys in it, were going anywhere," remembers Hugh Fielder, who booked 20-year-old Gilmour to stand in for his own band's guitarist in 1966 - they had a hot gig at the Cambridge Girls' High School, and

'He is thorough, focused and a perfectionist'

though Gilmour, being a professional player, would have to be paid the whole fee, they didn't want to miss the chance of being screamed at by a hall full of teenage girls.

"What struck me about him was that he didn't seem to have any great ambition. He wasn't one of those types who walked around talking about the day they would make it big. He was a superb guitarist but he didn't give you the impression that he

had plans to go anywhere much beyond Cambridge.

"He was an accidental rock star, really, called in when Syd Barrett was starting to be really strange and seemed likely to mess up the chances the others could see were just about to come their way.

"Pink Floyd always recruited their friends – even the album cover designer was someone they had known since their school days – and David was the person who had taught

Syd to play the guitar.
"So they asked David to come in to play lead guitar and more or less cover up for Syd's increasingly pecu-liar behaviour on stage. It was only a few months later that Syd was gone for good and David was simply there." The reluctant rock star, however,

has proved again and again in the past 38 years to be the stabilising ingredient that ensured Pink Floyd would be one of the most enduring legends to come out of the extraordi-

nary music scene of the Sixties.

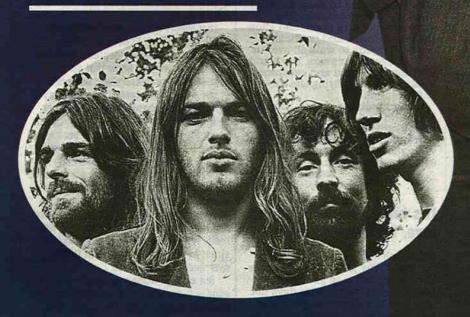
Nick Laird-Clowes describes him as someone who has a gifted musical mind with a formidable scientific bent that makes him a thorough, focused

The mercurial Roger Waters, the bassist who took over as the band's inspiration and driving force after Syd's mental breakdown ensured that he would never be able to return, always came up with the concepts but fans agree it was Gilmour's patient, calm handling of Waters' excesses

that kept the band on the rails.

"Even now you can give him any of the machines or gadgets that are used in music-making today and he understands perfectly how they work and can make the most of their

I'm not a rock god - just an ordinary bloke



PINK FLOYD'S DAVID GILMOUR, THIS **WEEK REWARDED FOR HIS MUSICAL GENIUS, IS THAT RARE THING - A RELUCTANT HERO WHO'D RATHER GIVE HIS MILLIONS AWAY THAN LEAD** A LIFE OF ROCK 'N' ROLL EXCESS

musical potential. Roger Waters had the ideas but I am convinced that David was the one who knew how to turn them into reality," says Laird-Clowes.

From Floyd's earliest, idealistic hippy days, there was an ethos of sharing the good fortune the imme-diate band members had almost stumbled across, and Gilmour was an enthusiastic supporter of policies that meant many members of the road crew were considered full members of the band and got a fair

share of the rewards.
"They are the only band
I've ever heard of who insisted on contracts that contained detailed provisions about how the road crew would be dealt with. There was almost

nothing about what the band expected for themselves but there was always a clause insisting the crew should get a full, sit-down meal served to them after the show,

for instance," says Hugh Fielder. That ethos, say friends, remains part of Gilmour's day-today life. His charity gigs are necessarily public events - several with old pal Paul
McCartney in support of animal
welfare and the Floyd reunion everyone thought could never happen at Live 8 last

He remains more comfortably wealthy but quietly supports an enormous number of charities. He has told friends he firmly believes it will do his eight children no good at all if they were to become multi-million-aires when he dies; they

'It's nice to be able to sit back and relax a bit'

will not be left penniless but they can expect his will to share a good deal of his personal fortune between various charities.

N THE rare occasions when he tours - never too far from home because he doesn't want to be away from his wife and children - he rehearses in the local ex-servicemen's club, even though the swanky rehearsal rooms of Soho are only a 40-minute train ride away.

How did he get through it all

without for a moment losing the plot? His own verdict is that he is just a lazy kind of guy, always has been - though some would just call

"I don't think any of us ever became fully-fledged rock and roll people," he said recently. We were sort of part-time at it, doing a little three-week tour and then taking a month off and then doing another three-week tour.

"I tend towards not really bothering sometimes but, then again, I think sometimes it's nice not to be too hung up on stuff. To be laid back. It's not unreasonable to sit around and want to enjoy yourself quite a bit. Have a relaxed existence.

