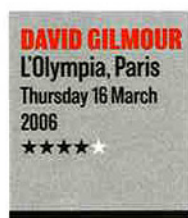


In The Pink

Guitarist lands first blow in **battle of the ex-Floyd men.**

IF PINK FLOYD'S Cold War thawed after Live 8, there's still some ice between David Gilmour and his former nemesis Roger Waters. After stern denials from the Gilmour camp of a Floyd reunion tour, fans can now enjoy a two-for-one deal. Days earlier, Waters announced that he would be performing The Dark Side Of The Moon in London's Hyde Park this summer, and that Floyd's Nick Mason would be playing drums on a date in Europe. At the regal L'Olympia, the rather harried-looking gentleman smoking backstage is Floyd's keyboard player Rick Wright, now in Gilmour's band. You couldn't make it up.

Right now, in the one-upmanship stakes, Gilmour is in the lead. His latest solo album, *On An Island*, has reached Number 1 in the UK. Not that he's bragging. "Marvellous, yes," he nods with an inscrutable smile. Outside, protesting Parisians are chanting anti-government slogans and waiting for the police to turn on the water cannons. Inside, everything is terribly English, terribly polite. Gilmour and Paris have history. Before Floyd, his previous band played a nightclub residency here and Gilmour ended up with malnutrition.



Later, Floyd wrote soundtracks for arty French director Barbet Schroeder, one of which Gilmour will dip into tonight. First, though, there is *On An Island*. The first of two sets focuses on the new album. Barely a week in the shops, it's a learning curve for most of the audience, but *Smile* and *Pocketful Of Stones*, especially, shine despite their unfamiliarity. Better still, most of the new songs have a moment in which Gilmour can purse his lips and do a textbook David Gilmour guitar solo.

AT TIMES, though, you *can* imagine some of this music accompanying a BBC holiday programme. "There have been reviews which seem to think that it's all about a holiday," Gilmour says, with a trace of irritation. "But it's actually about the joy and loss by death of some of the participants on a holiday. It's about mortality."

Aptly, then, Floyd's *The Great Gig In The Sky* is played early, with Sam Brown, moonlighting from Jools Holland's *Rhythm & Blues Orchestra*, sidling onstage to do the wailing. The audience respond with a similar passion and Gilmour thanks them in perfect French. With his black T-shirt and grey whiskers, he looks more like a master

craftsman than a rock star as he switches from guitar to lap steel to saxophone and back. It's a dignified way for a 60-year-old musician to go about his business.

For the second set, Gilmour balances Floyd favourites and obscurities. The vocals on a reworked *Shine On You Crazy Diamond* have a bluesy slant, with original *The Dark Side...* collaborator Dick Parry ambling out for the sax solo, while *Wot's... Uh The Deal*, from the soundtrack to Barbet Schroeder's *La Vallée*, is warm and folksy. Floyd's biggest hit, *Another Brick In The Wall Part 2*, goes unplayed. "Roger wanted to do it at Live 8," confides Gilmour. "But it was a thing for Africa, and I really didn't think African children should be singing, We don't need no education."

Later, Rick Wright takes a lead vocal on his own Floyd composition *Wearing The Inside Out*, a tale of mental anguish and recuperation. His tentative vocal is quite moving. "Rick went through a difficult period in the late '70s," says Gilmour. "But he plays beautifully and I like having him around."

Even more than *Time* from *The Dark Side Of The Moon* or *Comfortably Numb* and its hurricane guitar solo, the showstopper is *Echoes* from Floyd's 1971 album, *Meddle*. Face set in studied concentration, Gilmour takes the whip hand, steering the freewheeling 23-plus minutes to a dramatic conclusion. During the epic din the penny drops that you've just heard Pink Floyd inventing ambient music *and* Radiohead.

Backstage, Gilmour sips champagne and looks quietly relieved. "There's still that element of relief after a show," he ponders softly. "That thing of, Thank God I didn't cock that up." You can't help thinking that David Gilmour is still, unassumingly, throwing down the gauntlet. Now all he needs to do is book a gig at Hyde Park. With Nick Mason, perhaps. The old devil. MARK BLAKE

Gilmour and ex-Floyd keyboardist Rick Wright (white shirt) take their bow.



#1 FAN The view from the front.



CHRISTOPHE, 40, Paris
How was it for you?
 "Fantastic. I saw last night's show at Le Grand Rex. This was better."
The best bit? "Echoes. Also Wot's... Uh The Deal. I hadn't heard him play that before."

**'THANK GOD
I DIDN'T COCK
THAT UP.'**
DAVID GILMOUR

