

Shine on you Pink diamond

Pop

DAVID GILMOUR

Le Grand Rex

PARIS ★★★★★

In 1966, David Gilmour was a struggling musician playing tiny Paris venues such as Le Bilboquet with his band, Flowers. Forty years on, the voice and guitar of Pink Floyd is playing the third date of his solo tour in the French capital to promote his No 1 album, *On an Island*. Fans are begging for tickets outside Le Grand Rex, a very plush equivalent of the Brixton Academy.

The guitar atmospherics of "Castellorizon" drift into the blissful title track, and set a relaxed mood as this most unassuming musician steps out from the shadows of one of the biggest bands in the world. "The Blue" continues the nautical metaphors, and features a solo by turns languid and soaring. Gilmour plays saxophone on "Red Sky at Night", another mood piece, and a reminder that Brian Eno might claim to have invented ambient music but

the Floyd got there first in the late Sixties.

With a crack band featuring the Floyd founder-member Rick Wright as well as Jon Carin on keyboards, the Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera, bassist Guy Pratt and drummer Steve DiStanislaio, even the lazy, bluesy shuffle of "This Heaven" works well in a live setting. Gilmour is playing all of his new album, more or less in sequence.

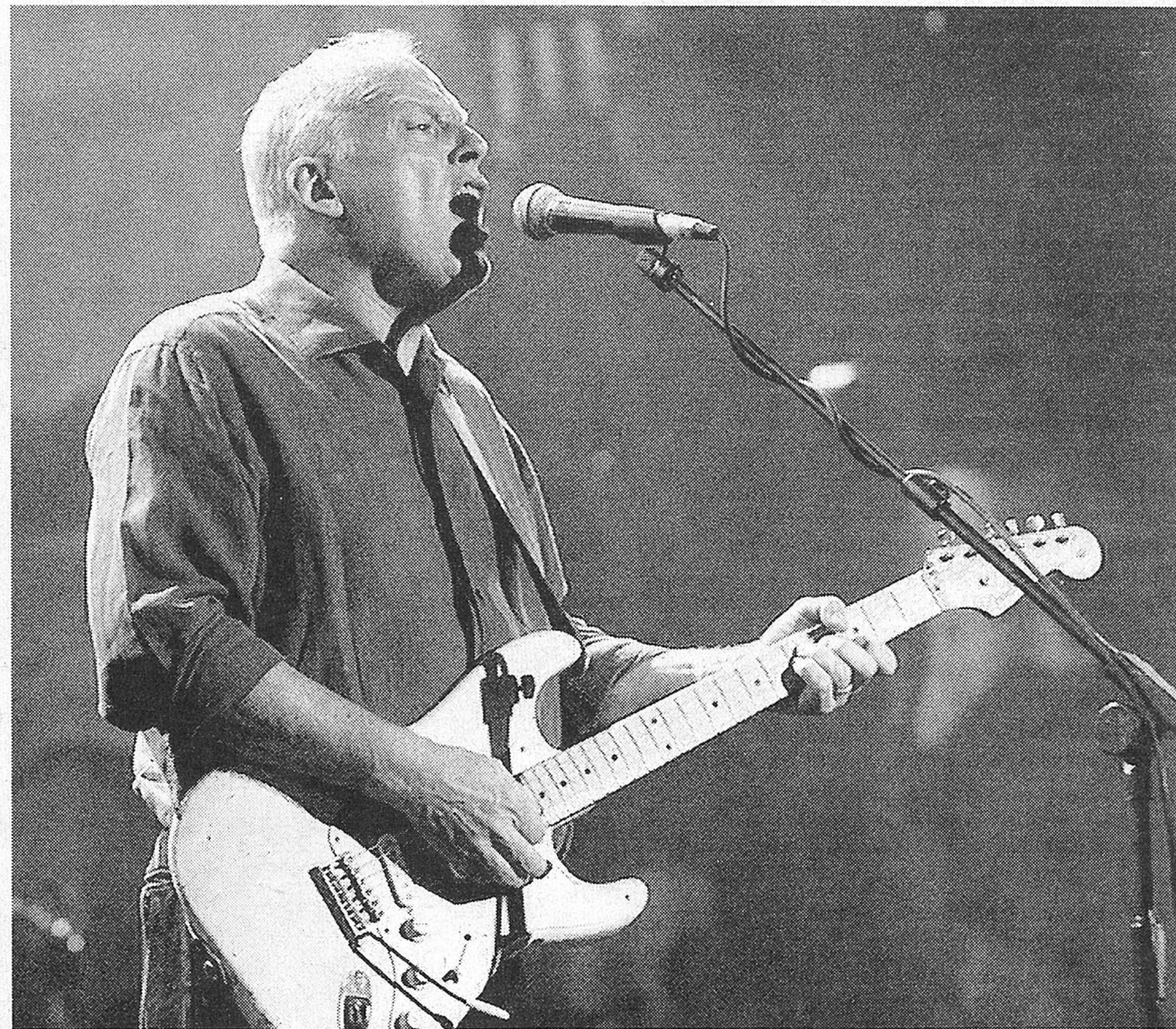
"Then I Close My Eyes" and "Smile" demonstrate that the musician and his lyricist wife, Polly Samson, have found a way to solve the conundrum with which Mick Jagger and Pete Townshend have been struggling for decades: what can a middle-aged musician write and sing about? Gilmour turned 60 last week and seems a contented man, happy to paint a picture of domestic bliss, punting on rivers in an idyllic Albion, a vision as valid as Pete Doherty's, and one that travels better.

Just when you think you're drifting into coffee-table wonderland, the guitarist jolts you with the

menacing "Take a Breath", whose majestic sweep recalls "One Slip" from *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*. The song features a blistering solo suggesting that Gilmour is the missing link between Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton and younger players such as Coldplay's Jonny Buckland.

Lines such as, "Out of touch, he'll live in wonder," bring to mind the Floyd's long-lost Syd Barrett, but the sentiment of "A Pocketful of Stones" is pure Paul McCartney's "The Fool on the Hill". Gilmour has barely whispered a "merci", but announces in perfect French that the band will take a short break after the elegiac "Where We Start".

When the musicians return, the intro to "Shine on You Crazy Diamond" sends the audience into raptures, Dick Parry's saxophone solos adding to the sense of occasion. Gilmour has a slight, endearing rasp in his voice that befits this homage to Barrett, and later sings his former bandmate's "Dominoes". The presence of Wright enables the band to tackle the pastoral



See David play: the former Pink Floyd man makes a rare solo outing

"Wot's... Uh the Deal" from *Obscured by Clouds*, the soundtrack to Barbet Schroeder's *La Vallée*, which the Floyd recorded in France in 1972.

With gentle interplay between Gilmour and Wright, we're into their dreamier, more psychedelic side, and away from the high concepts of Roger Waters. The Floyd bassist will be touring *Dark Side of the Moon* in the summer, but the guitarist

stakes first claim with a stunning medley of "Breathe" and "Time". As he switches from lap-steel to electric, Gilmour catches the guitar stand with his lead but still manages to hit the opening line perfectly.

"Echoes", from the *Meddle* album, is the unexpected, mesmerising closer, and easily on a par with the *Pink Floyd at Pompeii* version, which has long been a favourite on the

Radiohead tour bus. Gilmour and Wright are again in total harmony, staking their claim as sound-scapers extraordinaires.

Indeed, as he encores with "Wish You Were Here" and "Comfortably Numb", there's a feeling that the shy guitarist is finally at ease with himself and his considerable talent. Gilmour remains progressive rock's greatest ambassador.

Pierre Perrone