



"The original owner wanted to have his own private home place, knocking shop [i.e. brothel], whatever," Gilmour says with a laugh. "It was never built to sail. It's strictly a houseboat. If you want to move it, you get a tug and tow it. Soundwise, my idea was make it as good in here as we can reasonably get it without fucking with the space too much."

Standing by the mixing desk, Gilmour fills the cramped control room with his presence. He is tall, generously proportioned and dressed in black, and his close-cropped white hair somehow seems part of the pewter-hued English winter landscape just outside the control room's big glass windows. His smile is gentle. He exudes an air of relaxed ease. This is David Gilmour's domain.

Not that he lives here. He has a much grander home farther outside London. Astoria is just where he comes to record. It was here that he recorded much of the last two Pink Floyd albums, *A Momentary Lapse of Reason* (1987) and *The Division Bell* (1994). Astoria was also the main site of sessions for Gilmour's new album, *On an Island* (Epic).

The disc is very much a reflection of the place where it was made—serene, unhurried. Gauzy layers of shimmering sound unfold at a stately pace, providing a lavish backdrop for Gilmour's soaring, lyrical lead guitar and that ethereally expressive vocal style well known and loved from Pink Floyd's deep catalog of classics. There are occasional excursions into the blues and other slightly rougher terrains, but mostly this is a record for gazing peacefully at the river.

"I was just letting it all flow out as naturally as I can," says Gilmour. "There are quite a lot of those melancholy major seventh chords and 3/4 waltz tempos. That must be the mood I'm in."

Gilmour had plenty of help from his rock star friends in creating *On an Island*. It was coproduced by fellow guitar legend and Roxy Music stalwart Phil Manzanera, an old friend and neighbor of Gilmour's. Floyd keyboardist Rick Wright pitched in on the album's title track and first single, as did David Crosby and Graham Nash. Occasional Gilmour collaborator and boogie-woogie piano man Jools Holland tickled the ivories, as did session ace Chris Stainton and British ska/jazz pioneer Georgie Fame. Guitarist Rado Klose and art rock multi-instrumentalist Robert Wyatt—old Floyd friends and cohorts both—are on the disc, along with cellist Caroline Dale and glass harmonica specialist Alasdair Malloy. The

latter three players backed Gilmour on his now legendary 2001 concert series at London's Festival Hall as part of the cutting edge Meltdown fest—gigs that helped gestate *On an Island*.

And so Gilmour's extended musical family—not to mention his wife and co-lyricist Polly Samson—all made the trek through that lovely garden, which once belonged to 18th century actor David Garrick, and onto Astoria's trim decks. British rock royalty kicked out riffs just downriver from Hampton Court Palace, Henry VIII's own riverside "home place, knocking shop, whatever." To see where *On an Island* was

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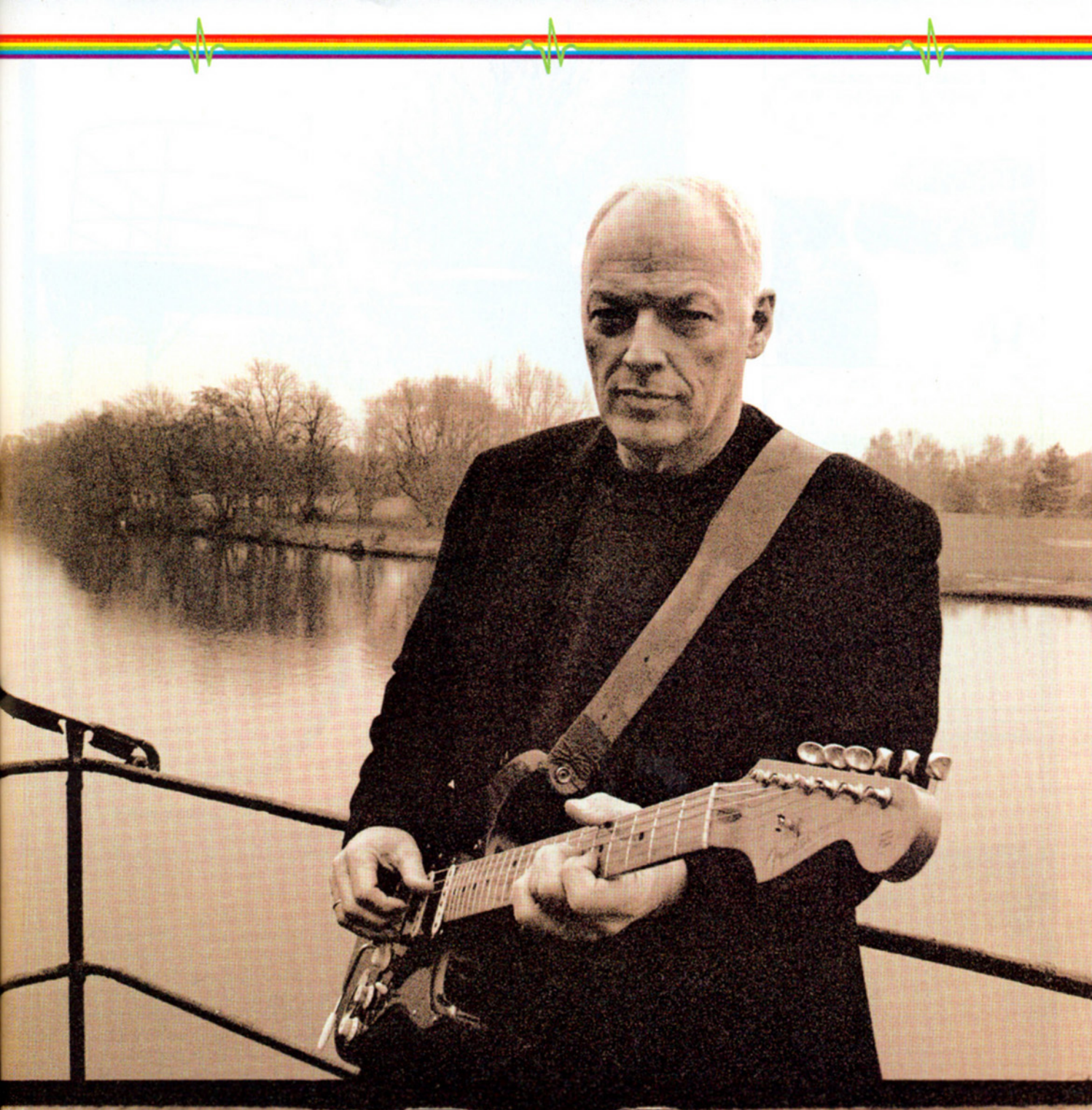
made is to understand why Gilmour had to be almost forcibly pried from the floating studio to take part in Pink Floyd's historic reunion at the star studded Live 8 benefit concert in London's Hyde Park on July 2, 2005.

Nobody thought David Gilmour would ever get on a stage again with Pink Floyd bassist Roger Waters after the many bitter public quarrels and legal battles that have alienated the two men. They did, however, and now Waters says he wants to rejoin the band. This would reunite the classic Floyd lineup for the first time in some 23 years. But Gilmour just isn't interested.

These days, the guitarist seems quite content just being David Gilmour. He's a household name among the classic rock crowd and feels he really has nothing left to prove. And

for many younger guitar fans, he's the only Seventies guitarist that matters. Or, in some cases, the only one of which they're aware. For many he's the missing link between Hendrix and Van Halen.

"I'm thrilled if that's the case," he says, laughing. "It's taken me a long time to achieve that. I didn't start figuring in guitar playing polls for a lot of years. I think one thing about the fingers and the brain that I have been given is that the fingers make a distinctive sound. The fingers aren't very fast, but I think



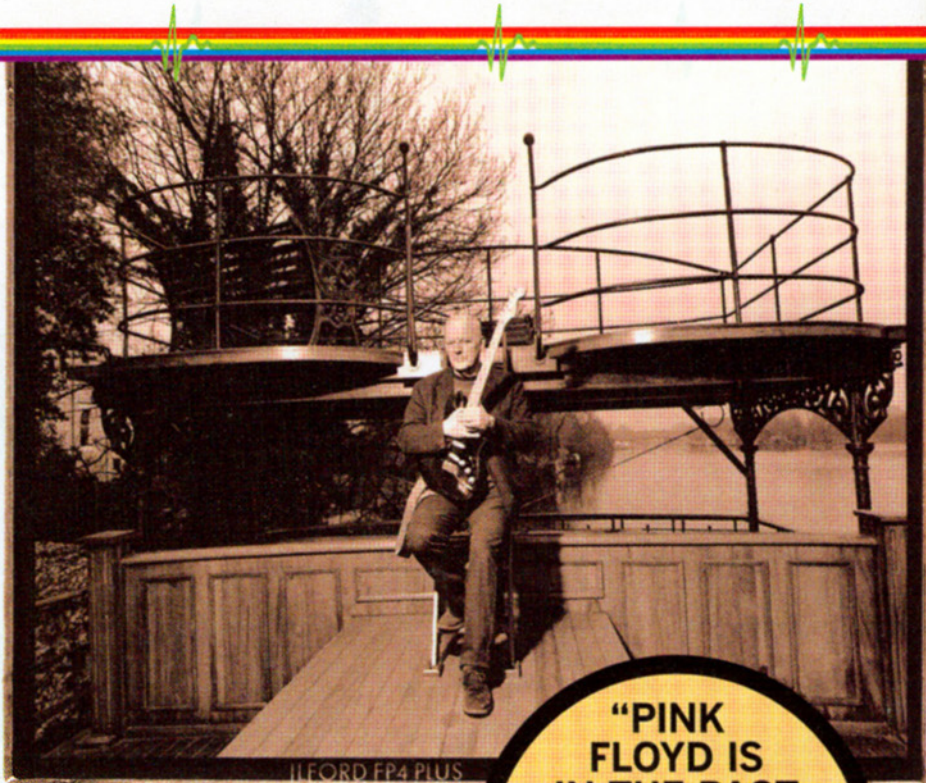
I am instantly recognizable. I can hear myself and just know that's me. And other people do, too. The way I play melodies is connected to things like Hank Marvin and the Shadows—that style of guitar playing where people can recognize a melody with some beef to it.”

To see the beefy, graying, dignified figure Gilmour has become, it's hard to fathom that he was once the principal chick magnet in London's hottest buzz band. But so it was in 1968, when Gilmour took over from the brilliant but deranged Syd Barrett. The son

of a prominent Cambridge geneticist and gifted film editor, Gilmour has always been an unlikely rock star. But he had the looks, and once he settled into his role in Pink Floyd he proved he had talent to spare. While Waters was Floyd's lyricist and conceptualist, Gilmour was the band's voice and its main instrumental focus. Classic rock masterpieces like “Money,” “Comfortably Numb” and “Shine On You Crazy Diamond” would be inconceivable without the yearning sound of Gilmour's Stratocaster soaring to touch the heavens.

Gilmour kept Pink Floyd going once Waters left the band in 1983, much to the bassist's chagrin. This Waters-free incarnation of the band last toured in 1994, at which time they performed Floyd's 1974 classic *Dark Side of the Moon* in its entirety. Musical highlights from that tour will be re-released on a DVD, *Pulse*, later this fall. Between this and *Live 8*, Pink Floyd is very much on people's minds these days. So, naturally, Gilmour goes and releases a solo album.

On an Island is only his third solo disc



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ever. The previous two were recorded during troubled periods in Pink Floyd's career. *David Gilmour* was done in 1978 as a way of blowing off steam after the difficult recording of Pink Floyd's *Animals*; 1983's *About Face* was a full-scale effort on Gilmour's part to launch himself as a rock star in his own right after Waters left Pink Floyd and the band all but fell apart following the release of their album *The Final Cut*. So *On an Island* is coming from a very different place than the guitarist's prior solo discs. Life is good for David Gilmour right now.

Cloud-filtered afternoon sunlight falls on the worn oriental carpet in Astoria's sitting room—cum—tracking room, glancing across a few well-chosen pieces of antique furniture. A couple of vintage Martin acoustic guitars rest on a velour window seat, with the calm waves of the Thames and hushed winter foliage visible outside like some Dutch master canvases. Seated in an upholstered armchair, David Gilmour is ready to talk.

GUITAR WORLD What motivates you these days? Your place in rock history is assured. You seem to be very comfortably off. So what is it that drives you into the studio to make a record?

DAVID GILMOUR That's what I do. I'm a musician; I make music. It's in my blood. The difference is that these days I'm not driven to do it all the time. I'm in my second marriage. I have young children and I'm determined to see them grow up, and to be there for them more than I was with my first set of kids. When one is younger and more ambitious, other people's needs tend to get rather ignored in one's quest to do as well as one can. Now my ambition is a little less than

it was. Honestly, music isn't my first priority anymore. My family is.

Now, I can see where someone could think that, when a person says music isn't his first priority anymore, the quality of the music might therefore suffer; that the desire to get it right may diminish. But once I get going and I'm in the mood, my obsessiveness for the project does kick in and I do become something of a perfectionist. And I certainly think that the work I'm doing now is as good as anything I've ever done. I think *On an Island* is a really good album. I'm very proud of it.

GW Part of the album's appeal is its sense of tranquility and contentedness. One can sense that you're coming from a good place.

GILMOUR Yeah, I think so. Older... hopefully wiser. I don't think my muse has deserted me completely yet.

GW Was your new album a bigger priority for you than doing Live 8? You declined initially.

GILMOUR I did decline initially, yes. And I declined because I was in the middle of making this album. Also, I thought—correctly, as it turned out—that it would open a can of worms: Pink Floyd reformation stories. And I knew it would take my concentration off what I was working on. Although it was just one day of appearing (continued on page 84)