

onstage, to get to that one day and then to go away from that one day took a long time. Being knocked right off my course for over a month was inconvenient for me. I selfishly didn't want to be inconvenienced by all the things I knew this would throw up. So [Live 8 organizer] Bob Geldof tried quite hard to persuade me. It's not that I didn't support what he was trying to do. I just thought he'd do just as well without us. It was very selfish of me. But then Bob got Roger involved and he persuaded Roger to call me and ask me.

GW Was it kind of surprising when Roger called you?

GILMOUR Yes, it was very surprising. And after Roger called, I thought about it and realized I really probably would kick myself afterward if I didn't do it. There were many good reasons for doing it. The proper, and best, reason was what the event hopefully did achieve on behalf of debt relief for Africa. And it put some of the bad blood between Roger and myself behind us.

GW How did you select which songs you were going to play?

GILMOUR We had a few arguments about it. But in the end it came down to the ones that represented Floyd in their heyday. And there were other considerations. "Money" was very appropriate to the issue at hand—trying to get the G8 world leaders to get rid of world debt. But Roger was quite keen to do "Another Brick in the Wall, Part II," and I dissuaded him from that, because I rather felt that disadvantaged people in Africa really didn't need to hear a song that says "We don't need no education." That was probably not the most appropriate message to be relaying to them. On the other hand, "Breathe" is always a great one to open a show with, particularly if you're outdoors.

GW How much rehearsal went into Live 8?

GILMOUR We did three days' rehearsing together, but I did over two weeks on my own. I made a CD of the set and had it at my home studio. I'd blast it out through speakers, play guitar and sing along to it three or four times a day every day for a good couple of weeks. I wanted to be very, very "on it." I knew it would be a nerve-wracking experience and I wanted to be able to do it like falling off a log. I didn't want to be nervous and tense about not being 100 percent certain that I knew exactly what I was doing every second.

GW When you did the guitar solo in "Money" at Live 8, the first chorus was pretty much a note-for-note duplication of the solo on the album.

GILMOUR Yes.

GW What is your philosophy regarding that? Do you feel you owe it to the people to give them a signature solo like that note for note? How does that balance against spontaneity?

GILMOUR Well, I think it is a balance. When I go to hear other bands and they

launch into a big pop hit of theirs, if the guitar player goes off in a completely different direction, I'm pissed off, frankly. I'm thinking, That ain't the way it is. That's not how it's supposed to go! And so my tendency is to start off pretty much like the record and then see how I'm feeling. If I move off it and it feels good, inspired and original, then I'll stay off the beaten track. But sometimes I realize, I'm off the beaten track but it's just dull. Then I'll go back into the safety net of playing pretty much the original solo, 'cause I know that will turn a lot of people on more. So, yeah, it is a balance.

GW You can always get back to the recorded version, though?

GILMOUR Well, I can't *always*. I'm not necessarily going to get back to exactly the same spot in the recorded version. But there's always a lick that you know you played in the original. So you play that and see how you fall back into it. It's not very planned out. I either play it or not play it. But in the beginning of the end solo of "Comfortably Numb" there's that note on the seventh fret of the G string—a big harmonic. I always try to start that solo with that sound and play that first line. It seems daft not to.

GW Which of your many Strats is that black one you played at Live 8?

GILMOUR That's my old one that I've been using since about 1970. It's the one on "Comfortably Numb" and all those. I bought it at Manny's in New York. I've always used it as a testing ground for trying all sorts of things out. It's had a few different necks on it. The original neck that came with it was one of those with the bullet thing for the truss rod and rather a larger headstock. I've still got that neck somewhere; my brother has it on a Telecaster or something. So there have been a few different necks on that Strat, and it has different pickups to what it originally had. Years and years ago, I met up with Seymour Duncan when he still lived over here in England and worked with the Fender company here. We picked three really nice-sounding pickups out of a box in which he had with tons and tons of Strat pickups. We rewound those three, and those are the ones that have stayed on it ever since. But I've always considered that to be my bodge-up guitar on which nothing is sacred. I've had holes drilled in it. It's still a good guitar.

GW When one owns quite a few Strats, as you do, how do you decide which one to use on a given track or live date?

GILMOUR For many years, one of the problems of touring was [radio-frequency] interference—especially if you're the sort of bastard, like me, who tends to use a huge pedal board. Those effect pedals really tended to pick up interference, as did the dimmers on the lighting rigs. And with Pink Floyd, we did have extensive lighting rigs, which buzzed horribly. But when I first heard of and got hold of those EMG pickups, they stopped that dead. They sounded great, with a very full and rich tone,

but they didn't sound quite as "Stratty" in some ways. There's something about a Strat's thin sound and tonal range that makes it a Strat. With EMG pickups, you tend to lose that a little bit. But nowadays, of course, everything is much better shielded and the lighting rigs operate on their own generator, separate from the band. Things are set up far better. So these days I can go back to using the older Strats live, and I've been using my black Strat again, as I did at Live 8.

GW So what was the actual experience like, being onstage at Live 8?

GILMOUR It was good. The songs that I had picked and the arrangements we had for them meant that I was on the lead instrument and voice pretty much all of the time. So it's a good thing I'd done all that rehearsing on my own. The whole time I was either playing lead or singing or moving to the lap steel. So I had very little time to look at the audience and enjoy what was going on. I mean, I did enjoy what was going on, but it was peripheral to concentrating very hard to make sure I got everything right.

GW Roger has been pretty vocal in the press about how positive the experience was for him. He seems to be saying he'd like to do more—to reconvene Pink Floyd on a more regular basis. What are your feelings toward that?

GILMOUR I have great pride and affection for most of my Pink Floyd career. I had a thoroughly good time. Musically and artistically, it was very satisfying. The good times far outweigh the moments that were not so great for me. But I have moved on. I have a different working partnership now. I'm playing with another group of musicians and writing with my wife. I'm finding that this is what I want to be doing. I'm satisfied with this. I don't have much nostalgia for that old thing. It's in the past for me. Done it. I don't have any desire to go back there. And anyway, doing a tour without making a record would just be doing it for the money. I'm not interested in going there. And thinking about making a new record with all of us, including Roger—I just don't think that would work. Roger and I have had too long being horrid little despots. I just don't think it would make me a happier human being. Sorry, I'll pass on it.

GW So for you Live 8 was more about closure than a new beginning. As you said, "healing."

GILMOUR Closure is what it was for me. I'm very glad that we had that chance. It's great to put some of that bitterness behind us. But that's as far as it goes.

GW As you mentioned, you have a new lyric writing partnership with your wife, Polly Samson. How does that work? Is it hard to switch out of couple mode and into collaborator mode?

GILMOUR It's not so tough. She's a professional writer—a pretty opinionated person. She's not a shrinking violet. She manages to get under my skin and work out what I'm thinking

before I even know what I'm thinking. We worked together on the lyrics for *The Division Bell*. And for *On an Island* she's written the lyrics for four of the tracks. We've cowritten two, and I've done one set of lyrics on my own.

GW Do you tend to write the music first and then do the lyrics later?

GILMOUR Yeah, the music pretty much always comes first. "Sorrow," from *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*, is the only one I can think of which was a kind of poem before I added music to it. I'm constantly doodling little musical ideas and recording them on a little MiniDisc recorder that I try and keep by my side most of the time. I jot down ideas and coach them to realization at some point. I had over 150 of these things and thought I ought to be getting on to doing something with them. I was talking about it one day to Phil Manzanera, who's a friend and a neighbor. He volunteered his services to come around, listen to all these demo ideas and help me sort through the maze. And that's where we started really.

GW Did the Festival Hall solo concerts you did in 2001 act as a catalyst in the making of *On an Island*?

GILMOUR That was probably what got me going again, yes. Although I didn't actually get started till around 2004, which was quite a bit later. But time moves slowly these days. And two of the songs, "Smile" and "Where We Start," were pretty much in the can earlier. I'd recorded a demo of "Smile," and the demo is what ended up on the album. And after I made that demo, I did perform "Smile" live at the Festival Hall shows. So that one was probably recorded in 2001.

GW How far do you and Phil Manzanera go back?

GILMOUR Strangely, his brother was a friend of mine when I was a teenager in Cambridge. He used to come to my first band's gigs in Cambridge. [*Before Pink Floyd, Gilmour was in an R&B cover band called Jokers Wild.*] I lost contact with him for a while, but then he rang me up when I was in Pink Floyd and asked if I'd consider having lunch with his kid brother to talk about how his kid brother could get into the music business. And Phil was the kid brother. That's how I met him. This was before he was in Roxy Music.

GW How did Graham Nash and David Crosby get involved with singing vocal harmonies on the title track?

GILMOUR I went to see a concert they were playing in June of '05. I went backstage afterward and started chatting to Graham. And I said, "Any chance of you guys coming and singing on a track?" They said, "Yeah, love to." They had a free day in London, and I jumped on it. I had to finish writing the lyrics very quickly and drag them down here.

GW Do you and Graham go back to his days in the Hollies?

GILMOUR Yes, but not as close friends. The Hollies recorded at Abbey Road studios in the

Sixties, as did Pink Floyd. Whenever we were at Abbey Road it was either the Hollies, the Beatles or someone else working in a different room from us. So I remember playing backgammon with the Hollies during breaks—things like that. But "On an Island" just seemed to be calling out for those guys. I said, "Please let it be Crosby, Gills and Mash [*sic*]."

GW Did you have the harmony parts already written out, or did you just let them go for it themselves?

GILMOUR No, I had the harmonies pretty much in my mind.

GW It's nice the way "On an Island" floats between an E minor feel and a G major feel.

GILMOUR G6. Yeah, it's funny how these

things come out. It sounded wrong in G and it sounded wrong in E minor. So I did it in E minor and used the G root note. Originally I just used the G root note, but something made me realize I should slide between the two keys. It creates its own sort of sound.

GW Does that kind of triple-meter time signature work well for you when you're soloing? You've used it a lot.

GILMOUR That's a funny thing, too. I write more in 3/4 time and 6/8 time than I do in 4/4. One of the things we were looking for in putting this album together was to try and balance out the 3/4s with a few more 4/4s. I guess I'm just a waltz time sort of guy.

GW What guitar and amp did you use for that solo?

GILMOUR That one was my old black Strat I mentioned earlier through a Hiwatt combo. I've got a very old Fender tweed Twin—a lovely-sounding amp that I do quite a bit of things on—but I couldn't make it work for that track, so I went to the Hiwatt instead. I have a Hiwatt combo and a Hiwatt 100-watt head and 4x12 cab in this room. It's a bit of a problem. A 100-watt Hiwatt doesn't really like being in a close space like this. So getting the right amp that really likes the room it's in is very tricky.

GW Did you track a lot of the guitars for the album in this room?

GILMOUR A lot of them, yes.

GW That's amazing, because it's quite a small room. Maybe 14 by 11 or 12.

GILMOUR Well, we made the whole of *The Division Bell* in this room. Drum kit in one corner, me standing around with a guitar, but with the amp stuck in the next bedroom. This boat has a number of small rooms, which we use as booths. We can stick a Leslie cabinet in the kitchen there. So we really got lots and lots of tracks from *The Division Bell* and *A Momentary Lapse of Reason* in this room.

GW It has quite a low ceiling.

GILMOUR Yeah, but you still can get a really good drum sound in here. When we started *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*, we were in Olympic Studios trying to get good tracks done in there. We found when we got here that we were getting a better drum sound

than we were getting in the big Olympic rooms. Sometimes things don't work the way the rule book says they should.

GW What was your approach to the guitar solos on the album? Do you write them out in your head first, or do you just blast away and comp the best bits?

GILMOUR I try to live with the track for quite a long time before I even touch a guitar that's going to play a solo on it. When I'm working at home, it's very easy to just pick up a guitar, not work on a sound very much and just play a little bit. At first, I find myself loving what I do that way, but ultimately I think it's not too good and want to change some bits. But then I find myself not able to match the sound of the original solo, or sometimes wishing for a better sound. For that reason, when I go for a solo, I try to make sure the sound is really together and well thought out, because very often the first take is the best take. *Except* when you try to plan it that way. Then you're still struggling with the same damn solo three days later.

So, really, I have no method. You could say that after being a professional musician for 40 years I should know what I'm fucking doing. But I find it best to just hurl myself into it a different way each time.

GW How did you achieve the glissando effects in the guitar solo for "The Blue"? Is that a Whammy Pedal?

GILMOUR Yes. Press your foot down and it goes up an octave. I love it. You've guessed what it is, but I generally don't like to say how that's done. I love driving people crazy. They come and say, "How the fuck did you do that? I've been working for months trying to get that." And I say, "It's just a pedal."

GW You've been using that for a while now.

GILMOUR I used it on "Marooned," from *The Division Bell*. It's the same sort of thing—gives a whole extra dimension. It has a flavor of that old album *Songs of the Humpback Whales* from years ago, where they recorded a lot of whale noises. It's that floating thing. Both "Marooned" and "The Blue" are pieces of music that remind me of the sea.

GW "This Heaven" brings out some of your blues influences. Were those the ghosts you were exorcising in that piece?

GILMOUR That was just another little jam from my front room. Phil Manzanera took it away one day. He'd often do that 'cause he's got a studio in London. He took it there and cut a one bar loop out of what I'd done, sped it up slightly and changed the key. My original demo was in E minor; he took it up to F minor. We added drums to that loop and turned it into a track. And obviously the blues is a large part of the influence on there. It creeps out

once in a while. It's more obvious on that one than some others. But all my guitar playing is rooted in the blues. The guitar solo at the end of "On an Island" is steeped in blues influence, too, but "This Heaven" is overtly a blues. I got Georgie Fame in to play the Hammond on it.

GW What a legend—the Blue Beat Boy! Do you go back a way with him?

GILMOUR No. Never really met him before. But when I was 17 and 18 I used to hitchhike from Cambridge to London to go to the Flamingo Club on Wardour Street to see Georgie Fame and the Blue Flames. They were great. [Former Jimi Hendrix Experience drummer] Mitch Mitchell was the drummer as I recall.

GW You make your saxophone debut on "Red Sky at Night." How long have you been playing sax?

GILMOUR My son Charlie started learning sax at school about four years ago. I asked his sax teacher if he'd come to the house and teach me too. I thought I'd try to keep Charlie on the straight and narrow by doing it as well. So the two of us learned saxophone together and took our grade exams in sax at the same time. We both passed up to Grade Four on the saxophone.

GW Is it an instrument you always wanted to learn how to play?

GILMOUR I'd always fancied it a little bit. I always wondered if my melodic sense would transfer from the guitar to the saxophone. You can't transfer it by recording the guitar, transcribing it and then having a sax player play it. I've tried that and it doesn't work, 'cause it's a different instrument, obviously. So I thought I'd have a crack at playing the saxophone myself. Now we'll see if I'm brave enough to attempt it live. Haven't done that yet.

GW As a lap and pedal steel player, are you particularly fond of the Weissenborn acoustic lap steel that BJ Coles plays on "Then I Close My Eyes" [from *On an Island*]?

GILMOUR Definitely. That's my Weissenborn he's playing. I played it on "Smile." But he was over my house one day and I had him play it on "Then I Close My Eyes." The Weissenborn's a lovely thing. I always felt pretty good and comfortable on slide instruments. There are places between the notes where I like to go. And you can really go there on slide instruments.

GW That's become another signature thing for you. It's a defining element on many classic Floyd tracks.

GILMOUR When I started doing pedal steel and lap steel on shows, the first track I can remember using it on consistently was "One of These Days," where it's tuned to an open E minor chord. When we got to *Dark Side of the Moon* and we were playing "The Great Gig in the Sky," I invented a different tuning for that. Because it's hard to know

exactly what is the best tuning on slide. Open tunings are by definition rather restrictive, so I found a tuning which is kind of an open G6. The first four strings are the same as a regular guitar—E, B, G, D—and if you tune the bottom A down to G and the E down to D, you get a five-string open G chord; but you've got a three-string E minor chord at the top, so you can do quite effective majors and minors. And that's the tuning I tend to use quite a bit, and that's the one I originally laid down for "The Great Gig in the Sky."

By that time, I needed to have two steel guitars onstage. But the pedal steel was a bit cumbersome; it had more strings than I could actually deal with—eight strings on each neck. So I ended up buying two cheap Fender copies called Jensens. They cost nothing in England in the early Seventies. I got a red one and a yellow one and eventually put Fender pickups in them. That's what I used for a long time: one tuned to the open E minor and one tuned to the open G6.

GW What kind of acoustic guitars came into play on your new album?

GILMOUR I have two or three Martins that I use for most things. There's a D-35 I have had for a very long time, which I played on "Wish You Were Here." That's the same guitar I'm using on some of these tracks. It's great for strumming. I also have a 1945 D-18 that projects a little more, so it's a little better for picking and playing single note stuff. And the acoustic guitar on "This Heaven" is a nice, cheap baby Taylor that's great for taking on airplanes. It fits in the overhead locker even in its case. I have a couple of those that I take with me. One of them just happened to be lying around when I was recording that track.

GW You played a Gibson acoustic on Live 8. Any story behind that one?

GILMOUR I believe that's a J-200 Celebrity Model. It came out a few years ago. I was in AIR Studios and that guitar was lying around. I tried it and liked it. I contacted Gibson and asked if they had any left, and they said they only made 99 of them and none were left. I said, "Oh, never mind." They rung back about a month later and said they were looking in their storeroom and they found one that had somehow never reached its destination. And they let me have it.

GW Speaking of live shows, why is the *Pulse* DVD coming out later this year, some 12 years after the *Division Bell* tour?

GILMOUR It was out on VHS long ago. We had a lot of technical problems converting it to DVD. It was shot on video rather than film, which I now think was a mistake: it doesn't look very good when you enlarge it on a big-screen television, which everyone seems to have these days. We'd been investigating all

sorts of ways to digitally enhance the footage. By the time we'd surmounted all the problems, it was way too late to make our November or December ['05] deadline. I didn't see any point in putting it out at the same time as my album, so I asked that we put the release back until September.

GW It was a significant tour because it was the first time you'd performed *Dark Side of the Moon* all the way through in quite a few years. So how did the experience of doing those classic Floyd songs on that tour, without Roger, differ from doing it with him more recently at Live 8?

GILMOUR Lyrically, *Dark Side of the Moon* is Roger's baby. Sometimes I'd get a slight feeling of minor discomfort doing it without him, but not sufficient to make me think we shouldn't do it. It's part of our oeuvre. I spent a lot of time and sweated blood making that record. And doing it again live was always my ambition.

GW It's nice that fans will get more of a chance to see and hear that with this new DVD.

GILMOUR Yeah. Some people may already have it on VHS, but the DVD has a good 5.1 surround mix, and hopefully it'll look pretty good with the picture enhanced. But it's old stuff. And as I've said, old stuff doesn't interest me too much these days. New stuff is more important. ■