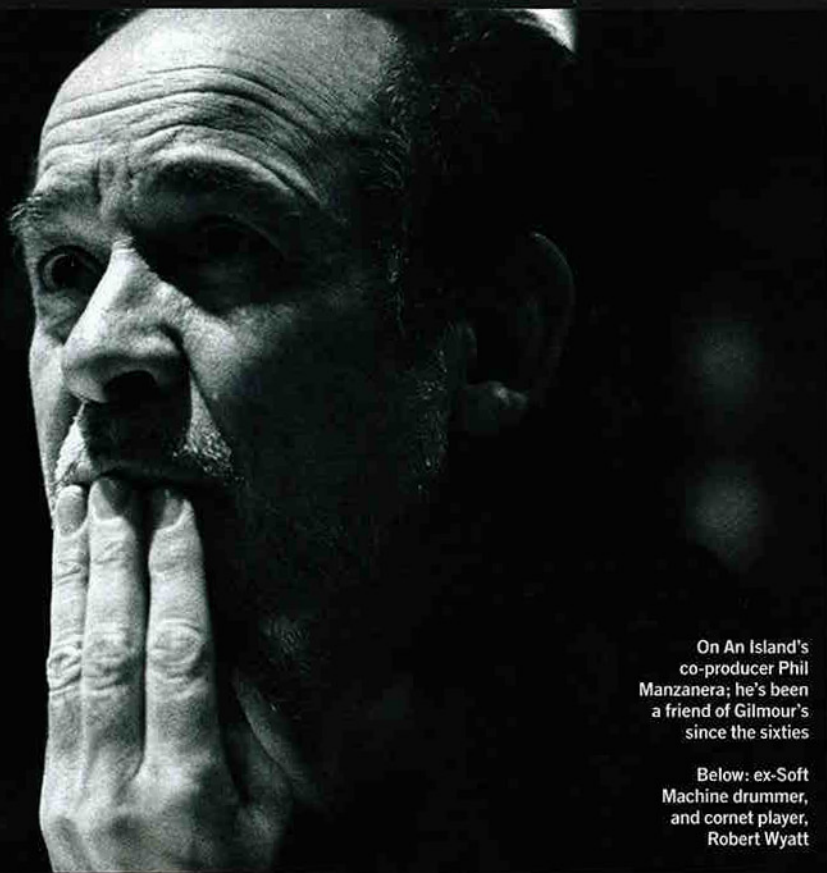




Time & Money

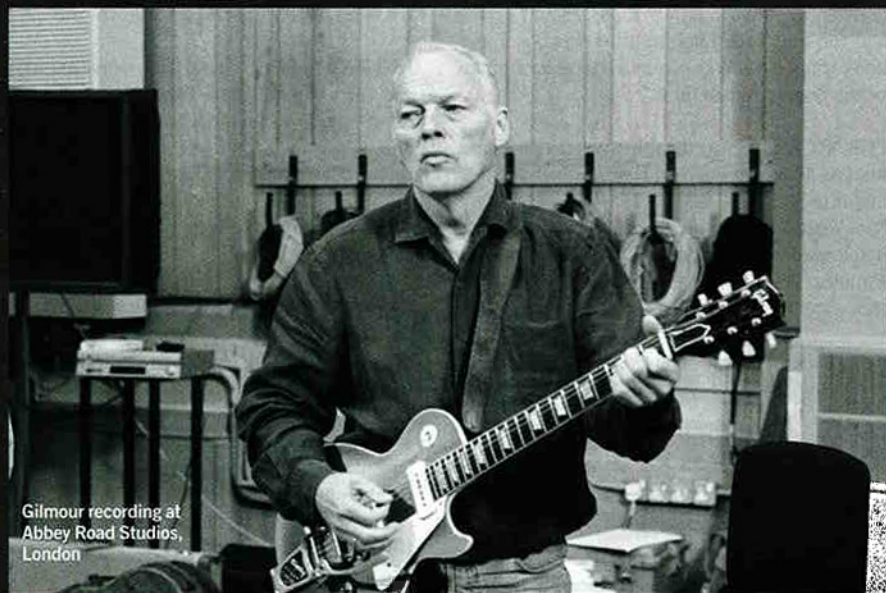
How to make an album the David Gilmour way; by his friend, co-producer and Roxy Music guitarist, Phil Manzanera...

Portraits Polly Samson



On An Island's co-producer Phil Manzanera; he's been a friend of Gilmour's since the sixties

Below: ex-Soft Machine drummer, and cornet player, Robert Wyatt



Gilmour recording at Abbey Road Studios, London



"I'm David's neighbour, but I didn't realise he'd been recording music for the last 10 years. He needed a hand to sort these pieces of music out, and I'm quite methodical so I volunteered to help. We'd meet on a Monday and sift through all his MiniDiscs, then I'd take stuff away and spend another day at my studio developing the ideas. We continued like this for ages and, beginning to end, this album took 21 months of work. At one stage I seriously thought it would be a triple album.

"As we went on, I knew we had to get out into the real world, as it were, and book a studio. So we went to Abbey Road, we worked at my studio, we worked on his boat [Astoria]. It took time because David's demos are often just tiny

fragments. It could be just 30 seconds of a guitar riff... there's some with him playing in the kitchen with all the kids screaming round and you can hear David going, Go away, I'm trying to do some bloody work!

"Is David a good judge of his work? Well, this is not the album I would have put together. But my job was to give alternatives. Ultimately the record had to reflect how David was feeling – and in that sense, job done. It's not just by him in truth; he really is a duo now, with his wife [and co-lyric writer] Polly. It's a laid-back record, yes, but Robert Wyatt [who plays trumpet on Then I Close My Eyes – Ed] coined this phrase; it's Floyd time. There's rock time, and there's Floyd time. And David operates on Floyd time.

"One of the opinions I gave was on his guitar playing. I remember saying, There'll be a lot of players listening to this and they expect high standards. David laughed, No pressure then! He knew stakes were high. But the solo on the title track is one of his best ever, no question. That's why he spent four days just recording that.

"David's sound is a very natural thing. He has great quality guitars, great leads, great amps. His use of compression, and just the right amount of distortion, is superb. There are not many other effects, no matter what people think. And he has very strong hands, he's able to pull and bend strings in a very controlled way. He's a craftsman, he really is. I love his use of a Whammy pedal on The Blue too. He's made that his own now, the way he uses it really slowly unlike the metal guys. And his slide playing all over this album is really impressive. Listen to Breathe, Great Gig In The Sky, High Hopes... I don't think there's any other guitarist, in the rock genre, who plays slide like David.

"Did I play guitar on this album? No! I played keyboards, I played cello, anything else... (laughs). It would be stupid for me to play guitar on a David Gilmour album."

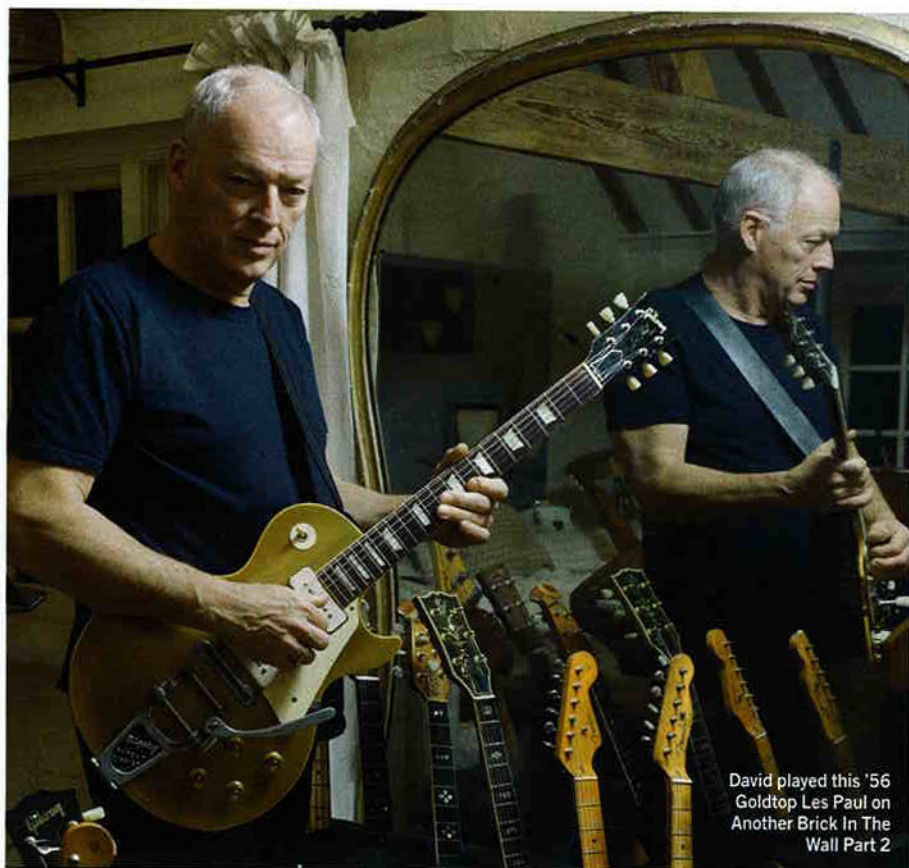
→ that nothing is sacred on. I've had holes drilled in it. It's still a good guitar."

YOU HAVE MANY Strats; how do you decide what to use on a track or live date?

"For many years one of the problems of touring was [RF] interference – especially if, like me, you're the sort of bastard who tends to use a huge pedalboard. Those effects 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 – a very full and rich tone – but they didn't sound quite as 'Stratty' in some ways. There's something in the thinness and particular range a Strat has 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 from a completely different generator. 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 Live8."

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 towards that?

"I have great pride and affection for most of my Pink Floyd career. Musically and artistically it was very satisfying. But it's the past for me. Done it. I don't have any desire to go back there. Doing a tour without making a record would just be doing it for the money. And thinking about making



David played this '56 Goldtop Les Paul on Another Brick In The Wall Part 2

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."

IT'S NICE THE way the title track On An Island kind of floats between an E minor feel and a G major feel?

"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 realise I should slide between the two. It creates its own sound."

IS THAT TRIPLE-meter time signature a good one for soloing? You've used it a lot...

"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."

WHAT GUITAR AND amp did you use for that On An Island solo?

"That one was the old black Strat I mentioned earlier, through a HiWatt combo. I've got a very old Fender tweed Twin – a lovely sounding amp – 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 4 x 12 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 is tricky."

FOR SOLOS, DO you write them out in your head first, or do you just blast away and comp the best bits?

"I try to live with the track 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. So I try to make it so that when I go for a solo, 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.

"I JUST DON'T THINK IT WOULD MAKE ME A HAPPIER HUMAN BEING. SORRY, I'LL PASS ON IT" ON THOSE PINK FLOYD REUNION RUMOURS



Pink Floyd reunited at Live8: for the last time ever?

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JEORDI ELLIOTT PLUS



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."

IS THE GLISSANDO effect in the guitar solo for *The Blue* a [DigiTech] Whammy pedal?

"Yes. 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! I used it on *Marooned* from *The Division Bell* [see David play that on the *Guitarist 264* DVD]. It's the same sort of thing – gives a whole extra dimension. It has a flavour of that old album, *Songs Of The Humpback Whale*, where they recorded whale noises. It's that floating thing. Both *Marooned* and *The Blue* are pieces of music that remind me of the sea..."

THIS HEAVEN BRINGS out some of your blues influences, doesn't it?

"That was just another little jam from my front

room. Phil Manzanera took it away one day. He'd often do that because 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 influence on there. 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."