



Perfect host: Gilmour BRIAN RASIC/REX FEATURES

## DAVID GILMOUR

Royal Albert Hall

LONDON ★★★★★

"David Gilmour: the voice and guitar of Pink Floyd", says my ticket. It is not a billing you can imagine Roger Waters sanctioning, but for the rest of us this was a near-perfect gig. It began at 7.30pm and finally ended at about 11pm, Gilmour encoring with a very special guest. When David Bowie showed up to sing the verses of "Comfortably Numb",

he broke a long hiatus from performing. The Thin White Duke also fronted a take on Pink Floyd's debut single, "Arnold Layne". He looked effortlessly suave in a dark-brown suit, the crowd joyously flabbergasted at the kind of stellar collaboration normally reserved for Live8 and the like.

The evening's set-list was meticulously constructed. Gilmour had first treated us to "Breathe" and "Time" from *Dark Side of the Moon*, the latter's mention of "the quiet English way" underlining that, while you won't find a more emotive instrumentalist than Gilmour,

he always comports himself with great dignity. Were his lead-guitar sound a food-stuff, it would be Beluga caviar: rich, classy and expensive-sounding, it is truly something to be savoured.

Gilmour's latest album, *On an Island*, was performed in its entirety. It is predominately a record of Zen-like calm, and tonight it acted as a balm for the senses. When David Crosby and Graham Nash came on to sing the title track's backing vocals, Nash was barefoot and slow-danced like a drunken uncle, while Crosby looked like Santa Claus in civvies. When they har-

monised with Gilmour, however, something beautiful and timeless happened.

The magic kept coming, as did the surprises. The esteemed Robert Wyatt made his first on-stage appearance in many years. Seated in his wheelchair, he added a blissful, thoughtful cornet to the tranquil instrumental "Then I Close My Eyes."

The *Dark Side of the Moon* saxophonist Dick Parry proved he could still toot a bit, too, and, not to be outdone, Gilmour briefly moonlighted on the sax himself, blowing more than competently on the instrumental "Red Sky at Night".

After a short interval, it was then classic Pink Floyd all the way home, Crosby and Nash soon returning to make "Shine on You Crazy Diamond" sound even more sublime than usual.

The performance was being filmed for a forthcoming DVD, and our host hadn't scrimped on the trimmings. Seeing David Gilmour perform "Wish You Were Here" while huge yellow laser beams describe a triangle around him may not be why some folk fought the punk wars, but that closet Floyd fan Johnny Rotten would have loved it.

James McNair