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Andy Jackson on Gilmour, Floyd and DVDs

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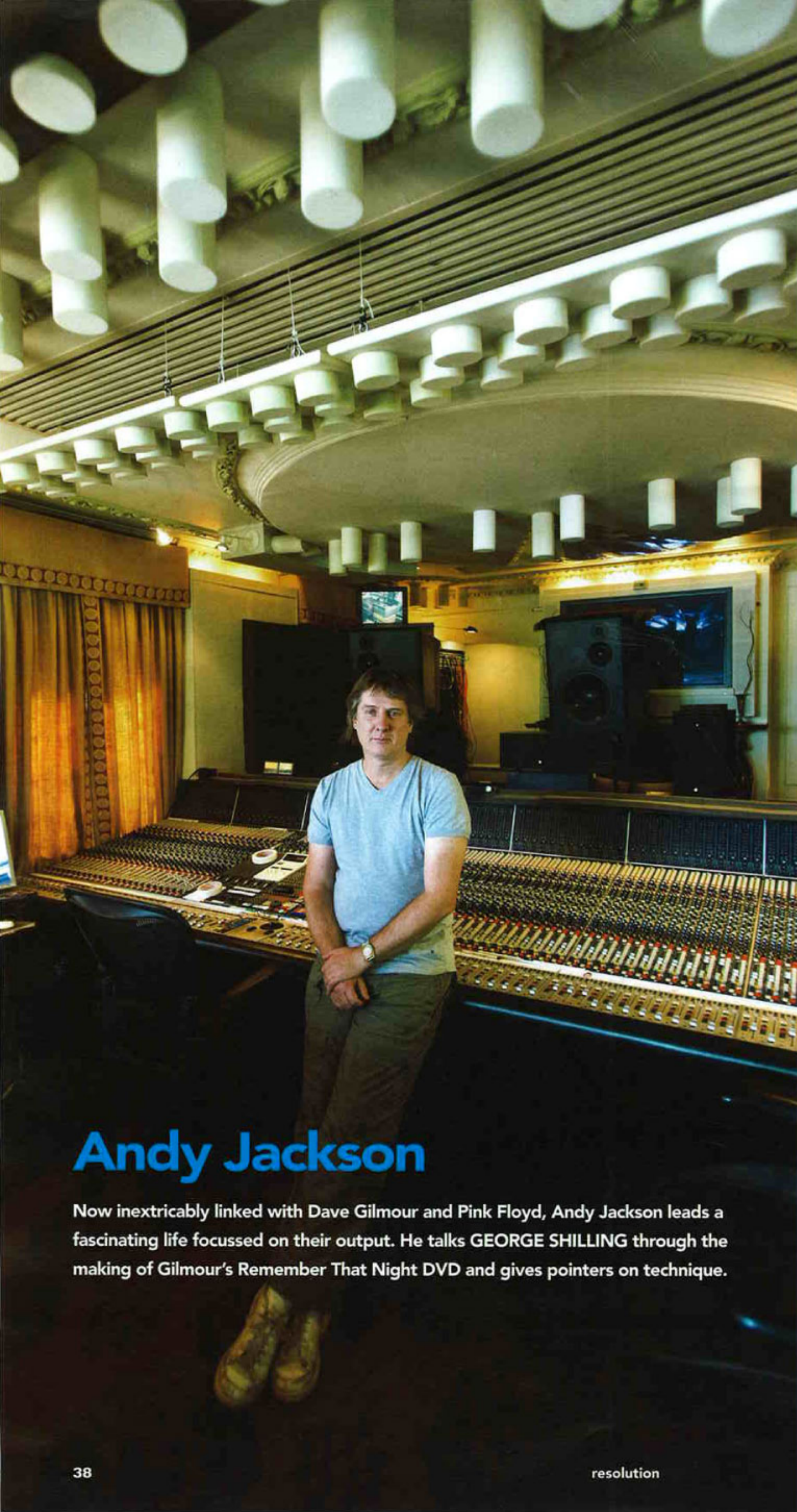
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## Andy Jackson

Now inextricably linked with Dave Gilmour and Pink Floyd, Andy Jackson leads a fascinating life focussed on their output. He talks **GEORGE SHILLING** through the making of Gilmour's *Remember That Night* DVD and gives pointers on technique.



**A**NDY JACKSON'S CAREER began at Utopia Studios — he says he wrote letters, working his way through a directory of studios, starting at the letter 'A'. However, it turns out he is being modest here, as the Utopia job came through a contact at Berwick Street Studios, so in fact he only got as far as 'B'. 'I remember my interview at Berwick Street, we sat around and got totally stoned!' Utopia was fairly new at the time, an Eastlake room with a Neve desk, and it was there that he paired off with James Guthrie, a relationship that eventually drew him into the world of Pink Floyd, with whom he became involved around the time of the making of *The Wall* feature film. As well as engineering *The Final Cut*, *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason* and *The Division Bell*, he has been employed for the band's live recordings, and band members' solo albums such as Roger Waters' *The Pros And Cons Of Hitchhiking*, and more recently David Gilmour's *On An Island*.

The tour was recorded by Damon Iddins, Jackson's regular assistant at Gilmour's Astoria houseboat studio, and three nights at the Royal Albert Hall in London were recorded and mixed by Jackson for the recently released DVD and forthcoming Blu-Ray release *Remember That Night*. So ensconced is he in the world of Floyd and Gilmour, that Andy claims not to be interested in mixing other artists, but instead pursues a parallel career as a mastering engineer. *Resolution* met up with Andy at the Astoria studio shortly before the DVD release and in between complex cinema presentations featuring Gilmour in person. *Photos: www.recordproduction.com*



bring the delays out, so we just timed them up, not quite to point blank, but close, so you just get a sense of it moving backwards, and use the ones at the back and spread them round — you tend to end up with the four corners otherwise, it's good to fill in the holes.

#### You brought the files here to mix?

Yes. The mix is pretty much a static setup, there would be slight tweaks song to song, depending on the register he's singing and stuff like that, but it made it a lot easier. It was an iterative process. I'd mix the whole show, glue it together, listen to the whole thing. We'd sit there and make notes, initially without David, so it was me, Damon and Devin Workman who's been working on the project as well. And this was everything from: 'We ought to fix the pitch on that vocal,' to, 'The drums are a bit quiet on that song' — anything, just the

contextual thing. And we'd do another layer of mixing. So we got to the point where we were happy and said to David, come and have a listen, and he came in and we did the same process. He just wanted to get his hand on his fader. He's got things about his guitar solo, his dynamics, that he'll want to get his hands on, he knows what he's doing. We just mixed to automation, then when he'd gone we sat here to print them all, which was quite a grind. There's three hours of material, printed four times. And then check them back. So actually it took the best part of a week to print them!

#### Was it tracked at 96kHz?


Yes, 96kHz 24-bit. For the Albert Hall we brought in some of Ian Sylvester's Euphonix convertors, which was a definite improvement, in fact we've now changed over to using them here. The rest of the tour

#### How and why did the tour get recorded?

Because of Pro Tools it became viable to carry a recording rig, so a couple of flightcases were built with Pro Tools, we got Mick Hinton of DAV — he'd just come out with his mic amps, we'd tried them and thought they were rather good, so he custom built us a bunch of eight in 1U boxes, stripped down, so we got 64 channels, so they were straight off the stage box, straight into Tools. Because I'd been involved in specing mics and things like that, we ended up with something pretty good. Stuff had been coming back to me from the tour, on and off, so I knew it was working, we felt confident to just carry on like that, and recorded the entire tour. Damon was out on the road, playing out sound effects and things like that, so he was wearing two hats, recording it as well. So it wasn't done with a mobile, but decent mic amps going down flat off the splitter boxes, which was fairly good, and consistent — nothing would really change from gig to gig. You can play any night of the tour — audience mics are different, but apart from that it matches up pretty well.

#### How were the audience mics done?


That would vary hugely, for the tour we'd just have four up, which would be onstage looking out, and two by front-of-house. For the Albert Hall, the video people said: 'We've done this before, and we know a good way to mic this.' They put a SoundField at front-of-house, then three or four pairs running backwards through the venue, it was pretty good. There were 16 channels of audience or something, but because it's on Tools you can





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it was 192s, but they're not dusty really, I think it's a bit of swings and roundabouts, 192s are punchy, the Euphonix sound very sweet.

#### Were there any balance changes for the stereo versions?

Just how much rear, centre and sub really, it's just a fold-down. On the last one we'd done I essentially didn't use the centre, I did it in Quad. But I like using the centre if you can because it is that thing — hence why it exists in cinemas — that you can go and sit over one side and it doesn't all follow you over, the centre does rather stay there. But I was concerned that there was the realistic possibility of end users in domestic situations playing the 5.1 mix on left-right only speakers, and the centre is missing, the surrounds are missing, the sub's missing. So we did a lot of experiments of how to deal with that so that the centre's still there, but if you turned it off you didn't lose the vocal, so I ended up with a very divergent centre mix, with the centre recessed very slightly, which is a compromise solution. But because it means that everything in the centre is also in the left-right, when you sum it by the normal maths, the drums, bass and vocal get too loud. It didn't work out right, so I had to do an odd summing that didn't fit the maths. It was entirely empirical, I just switched backwards and forwards between them until they matched, which ended up about 9 or 10 down on the centre. Same with the surrounds, you've got a theoretical level but because they are behind you don't hear them so clearly, so if you put them at unity they get too loud.

#### How do you record David's guitar in studio and on stage?

Well oddly enough we went through lots of experiments

on the last album, and mostly ended up using a 57, rammed right up the speaker, traditional style. I did put an STC 4040, which is the updated 4038, and snuck it quite a long way behind, but it just pushed up the 57, but it was mostly the 57.

#### And you put them next to each other?

Yes, right together. Every time I try splitting it across speakers, it never sounds phase coherent.

#### And on stage?

Oddly enough I ended up adding a 57, it was Colin Norfield who did FOH, traditionally uses the Shure KSM32s which are nice, but just because of the experience on the album, at the Albert Hall I put up the same thing, the 57 and the STC as well, and then the rest of the tour it was just a 57, which was really helpful; there's something about combining the mics that gives you something you can't make out of any one of them, it covers all the bases.

#### And for vocals?

When we did Live 8 I mixed FOH helped by Jon Lemon, and he said: 'Check these out, they're the new Neumann live mic, the condenser that looks like a dynamic.' They're pretty good, and reasonably tight directionality, that was good, so that was what went out on the road.

#### And in the studio?

Well David's very easy, he sounds good on anything, he sounds pretty good on a 58, but it's the Sony C800G with the heat sink, horribly expensive, but they're fantastic. I've tried lots of things, and it's really good, it has an openness and a size. We've done all sorts of things over the years, 67, 47, I had him on a Brauner for a while — they all work,

he's got a good voice and good technique, so it's not that difficult.

#### Tell me about the Enhanced Audio M600 mount ...

That's another one of the witchcraft things, it's not quite as much snake oil as some of the other things we're into here. Rather than something elastic, it's holding it very, very solidly, aluminium with screw thread grips, and it holds it very rigidly. And it does sound better, it just seems to firm up the bottom. It's almost like going from 16 to 24-bit, it's that kind of difference, you're getting more information. I don't even know if David Browne who makes them knows entirely how they work! It's just one of those empirical things. It's a good product. It's a great big lump of stuff, I'm aware of that with vocalists — David's OK, but they can be a bit intimidating.

#### How was the DVD mastered?

The main DVD is Dolby Digital, two streams, we did our own encoding here, because it seems like it's just a preset, but it's not, once you get into that. There are all sorts of little check boxes — DC Filters on or off, things like that, and it all makes a difference. It was another laborious tedious process, because there's vast amounts of it, again, you've got to do it all twice, surround and stereo. And the Blu-Ray has five times the capacity, so the pictures are much less compressed, although they still are, and audio, we could put 48kHz 24-bit stereo and what's now called Dolby True Digital, which is Meridian Lossless Packaging which they bought, although it doesn't seem to be entirely lossless. We could basically up the bandwidth enormously, which made things straightforward because we could just deliver files.

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**What's new here?**

Well it's all stood still for about a year, we bought more EAR stuff from Tim de Paravicini. David wanted to do some playing with the nucleus of the tour band down at his house, in the barn — the barn with no power! It was all a bit jerry-rigged, we worked out from the rig we had from the tour. So we had this rack of mic amps, cabled it into Pro Tools, so I had no control over anything, I just had to keep running back and forwards to tweak mic amps. It was crazy because David would have half a dozen combos, I'd have mics on them all, and he could turn them all on at once, or any combination, so you'd end up recording on six tracks, it's like, this is daft, all I want is a mixer so I can get a balance! So we got Tim to build us one, and it's just fantastic, about the size of a synth, and it's 24 into 12, faders, panpot, route — that's it. It sounds great, transparent but very slightly better, because it's going through some nice transformers.

**Apart from David and Pink Floyd, what else have you been doing?**

Well, I had my mastering room at Phoenix, which rather inconveniently got demolished to make way for Wembley. I put it up in my house as a temporary measure, but I keep getting odd bits of mastering work. I'm moving, so I'm going to build a room in the garden. I really like it, it's an interesting juxtaposition to this, where I can spend a year on a project, attending to every detail, doing something in the most profound depth. And doing this at the bottom end of the market — it's the home recordists who are releasing it themselves that I'm doing, they send me the files and I send them back. I have a relationship with their record for a couple of hours, and it can be



nonsense, or great, and it doesn't matter. In some ways, if you get something that's pretty average you can bring it up to 'not bad at all', fairly easily. When you get stuff that's not bad at all, to get it up

to excellent is quite difficult, so you're giving them a value added product, and you can spend half a day working and that's it, you've done it, back it up, go for a walk, go to the café... ■

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