HE IS THE ACKNOWLEDGED MASTER OF ECHO, and can conjure up otherworldly wailing noises at the flick of a finger. His use of a volume pedal in conjunction with the Italian-made Binson Echocor unit (a wire-based rival to the ubiquitous Echoplex) and a slide helped create the ethereal swells and spacey noises that fans enjoy so much. At other times it happens by accident, such as when his leg was caught in a wah-wah pedal back to front to create the sound in the middle of Echoes.

HIS IDEAS ARE JUST AS GOOD – IF NOT BETTER THAN – HIS PLAYING. Nick Mason: After Syd, Dave was the difference between light and dark. He was absolutely into form and shape, and he introduced that into the wilder numbers we’d created. We became far less difficult to enjoy.” For Gilmour, ‘My role was to try to make it all a bit more musical, help create a balance between formlessness and structure, disharmony and harmony.’

HE PLAYS STEEL GUITAR ON STAGE, even if it looks like he’s ironing. He taught himself in a pawnshop in Seattle in 1968, its earliest use on record probably being Fat Old Sun from Atom Heart Mother.

His two Jenson lap steel guitars (‘cheap steels I had customised with Fender pickups for slide parts’) are kept in different tunings: the first is tuned (low to high) EBEGBE for One Of These Days and the other to (low to high) DCDGBE for The Great Gig In The Sky.

HE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST HIGH-PROFILE GUITARISTS TO GET A MULTI-FX UNIT and he has often used a pedal rig that would kill a normal human being. The 1977 tour for Animals saw Gilmour onstage with a Pete Cornish pedalboard for the first time, and he still swears by analogue effects today. Among the pedals to have featured in his armory are a Boss CS-2 Compression/Sustainer, a Pro Co Rat II distortion, a Cornish-modded Big Muff, a Boss GE-7 graphic equaliser, a Cornish Soft Sustain, a Sovtek Big Muff II, an MXR Dynacomp, an Ibenez CP-9 compressor, a Boss Metallizer and two Chandler Tube Drivers, plus three Boss GE-7 graphic equalisers.

GILMOUR’S SUSTAIN, surely more elongated and far more subtle than almost anyone else’s, gives even Carlos Santana a run for his money. He once tried using the newly-introduced Kahler locking vibrate system, but after a couple of weeks he decided it deadened the sound. Off it came.

DESPITE ALL THE GEAR HE USES, DAVID STILL THINKS ‘IT ALL COMES FROM THE FINGERS’ and is relatively fuss-free to produce. Wall producer Bob Ezrin agrees. ‘With Gilmour, equipment is secondary to touch,’ he points out. ‘You can give him a ukulele and he’ll make it sound like a Stradivarius. He’s truly got the best set of hands with which I have ever worked.’

Dark Side engineer Alan Parsons recalls that though Gilmour took hours to perfect the sounds he needed for each track, once that had been organised he recorded the actual takes very quickly with just one microphone – and at ‘wall-shaking’ volume. ‘I find it extraordinary when people think they can copy his sound [just by duplicating his gear],’ says Gilmour’s tech Phil Taylor.

HE SOLD HIS LONDON HOUSE AND GAVE THE MONEY TO CHARITY. In 2003, Gilmour heard about a project to develop a new kind of mixed community for homeless people and key workers – and decided to lend a hand via a £3.5 million donation, funded by the sale of his London townhouse to Princess Diana’s brother.

HE’S QUITE PARTIAL TO A FLOYD TRIBUTE BAND, and once reserved a box to see the ‘jolly entertaining’ Australian Pink Floyd at Craydon’s Fairfield Halls. He went on to book them for his 50th birthday party. ‘I’ve never seen Pink Floyd, you see. So it’s great to me to see that.’

HE CHOOSES HORSES FOR COURSES. Despite Gilmour’s long love affair with Fender, his solo on the Top 3 hit single Another Brick In The Wall was played on an early ’50s Les Paul goldtop with P90 pickups.

GILMOUR RESOLVED, AFTER THE SPLIT WITH ROGER WATERS, TO ONLY PLAY MUSIC HE LIKED – and among the ’no-go’ areas are certain Floyd classics that now strike him.