



"Busking in St Tropez we got arrested. Then we bought these naughty books."

Looking back to your school days, what was your parents' approach to bringing up kids?

They enjoyed each other's company and I think they found us rather inconvenient. After I was 10, I never went on a family holiday with them. They went to France and I went to Scout camp – which was terrific.

But you sound as though you resented it.

Later. I resented it when I thought back on it... And in 1951, when my father got a job in America for a year, they didn't take us with them, they put us in boarding school. I was five – and my brother was four! Which is pretty strange, isn't it? Later you think, Hang on, that wasn't so nice.

Did you ever talk it all out with them?

No. My mother's now dead so I can't talk to her. And my father is... he doesn't really speak.

Syd Barrett was a boyhood friend of yours. When did you meet?

When I was 14 or 15. He was someone people pointed out in the street, he had that charisma and magnetism. He was funny. Witty. Nothing slipped by him. He was up to date on everything, well read, a very sharp cookie. I'd hang out with him, go round his place, and when I moved to Cambridge Tech we used to meet up in the art school most lunchtimes and play Bo Diddley and Come On by The Rolling Stones.

Pink Floyd's original co-manager Peter Jenner once said, "I think it all became disturbed when Syd's father died. That was the last time probably Syd felt really happy. He was always looking back at childhood." Did you know Syd at the time of his father's death in 1961?

I knew him then, but I wasn't aware of that happening. I was fairly busy at school. Doing 'O'-levels. I don't know why it didn't enter my consciousness... there was nothing to indicate... that this was going to happen... his descent into his... own personal hell.

Before that happened, you had a lot of proper teenage fun together.

Oh yeah. In the summer of '65 I think, while my parents were away in



Pink Floyd with Syd Barrett and Gilmour (left) and then as a four-piece (above). The Bentley was the touring vehicle they were driving when they 'forgot' to pick up Syd.

America again, I hitchhiked down to the South of France and Syd came down in a Land Rover with a friend and I joined them in a campsite near St Tropez. Bacon and eggs on the Primus for breakfast – fantastic! We went busking in St Tropez and got arrested. On the way back home we stopped off in Paris and bought all those naughty books that used to be banned in England. The Naked Lunch and the Story Of [The] Eye. What was that publisher called? (Wistfully) Green covers... I remember sitting in the campsite reading these things by torchlight.

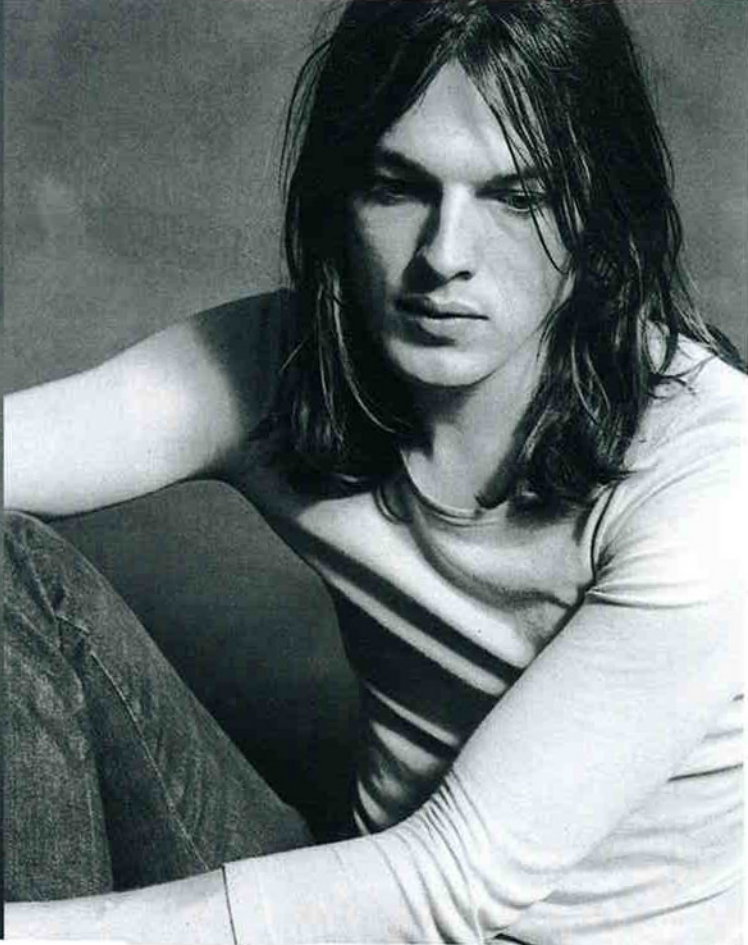
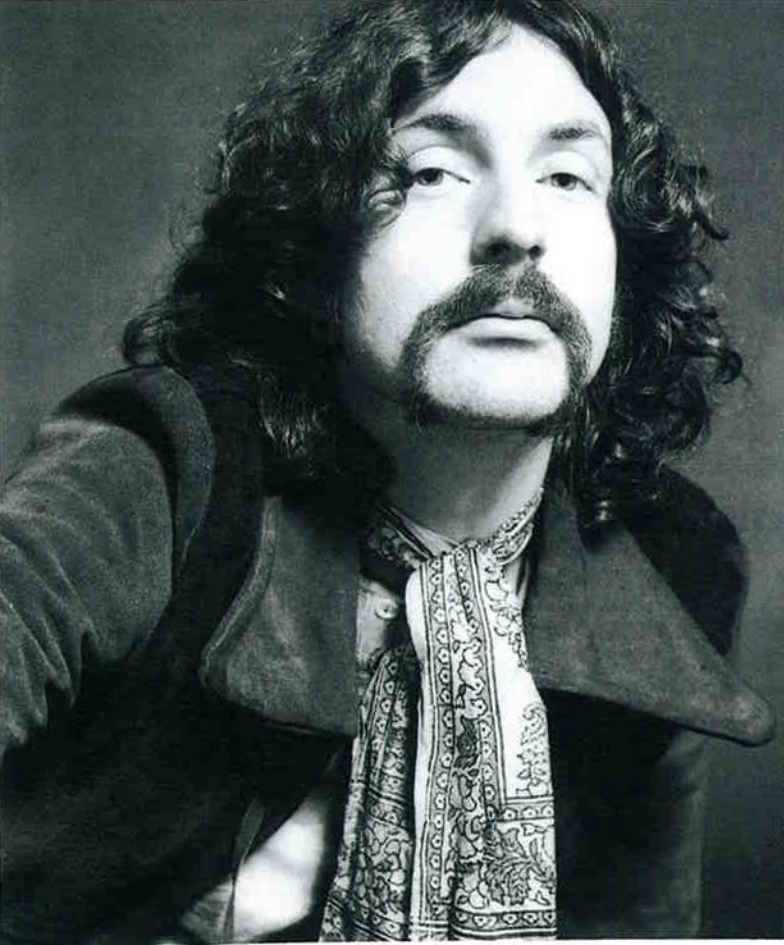
We had a great time. His father's demise never seemed to enter into anything. You know, we're all very good at covering these things up.

Back in Cambridge were you happy as the big fish in the local pond with Jokers Wild?

It was pretty good, but I was gradually getting bored. On nights off I'd hitchhike off to London, the Marquee, see Georgie Fame And The Blue Flames, The Who. Then in '66 I moved up to London. A guy wanted to manage me and he got me a gig in Marbella so I went down there with a couple of people from Jokers Wild. We called ourselves Bullitt, then Flowers, because the manager thought it was more in keeping with the times. Eventually, we got a residency in a Paris nightclub called the Bilboquet. We struggled to get by, living this nomadic existence in France on 50 francs a night each – three or four quid back then, and that only a couple of times a week. In Paris, we lived in cheap hotels on the Left Bank, two to a room. We often had to spend all night in a Paris bar nursing one glass of beer because we had nowhere to go and nothing to spend. We were in France for about a year.

Does that mean you missed the "underground" events that were evolving around Pink Floyd – Friday nights at UFO, Sunday afternoons at the Spontaneous Underground?

Yes, I was away for all of that. But when I came over to buy some



"I left Floyd after a few days. Probably

◀ microphones in May, 1967, I called Syd and he said, "We're doing a session, come down." It was at Sound Techniques in Chelsea and they were recording *See Emily Play*.

What did you make of that?

Syd was very strange. Glassy-eyed. Not really seeming to recognise me. Not terribly friendly.

Did you know what was going on?

No. I mean, I knew about LSD, I'd done it myself, but I had no idea it could cause that. It was pretty worrying. Although I didn't know whether he'd just taken something so it was temporary.

What was your own experience of LSD?

In '64/'65 in Cambridge there were quite a lot of people experimenting with it as a way of hopefully finding a greater consciousness for themselves. It was a rather quasi-religious cum scientific experience.

Quasi-religious? As an atheist, that doesn't sound like you.

Well, it didn't suddenly start me believing in God. But it was a very *deep* experience I would still say. I don't know that I've ever really talked about it because I'd hate to think I would encourage other people to start mucking about with it because there's quite a lot of evidence that some people are more susceptible than others.

And you've seen it.

Yes, I've seen it...

Well, not that you knew it, but it was getting close to time for you to join Pink Floyd.

I heard *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* in Paris that summer, it sounded terrific and I was sick with jealousy (*laughs heartily*). I'd been ill. Malnutrition, strangely enough, the hospital gave me sugar to suck on. We only had gigs at weekends so we'd pay the hotel bill then, but that would only leave enough to buy food for a day or so, then we'd run out. There were times we didn't have anything at all. Extreme pigheadedness and stubbornness can be both great qualities and character faults. I hung on too long in France. But in September '67 I thought, I've had enough, I'm going home. So we went to one or two people that hadn't paid us and threatened them.

Were you in the frontline doing the threatening?

Yeah (*very firm*). We went to an agency in a tower block in Paris and

threatened to thump this guy. I remember feeling this great sense of injustice and frustration. He made excuses. Eventually we just took some stuff we thought we could sell. We were heading for Calais and we didn't have enough money for petrol. We actually stopped at a building site and siphoned diesel out of a tank into our old Ford Thames van. Willie Wilson, our drummer, said with this mixture of diesel and petrol we had to keep the engine running. We got to Calais around 3am, waited in the car park with the motor running and drove on to the first ferry in the morning. Of course, the guys on the ferry made us switch our engine off. And at Dover it wouldn't start again so we had to push the van off the ferry. I felt a bit defeated at that point.

At this sombre moment, the smell of defeat fills MOJO's nostrils too. It's time to go because Gilmour's managers, Paul Loadby and Andy Murray, have arrived to officiate at the album's first 'playback' to dignitaries from his lifelong label, EMI. Chairman/CEO Tony Wadsworth, plus two lieutenants, appear on the pathway and are piped aboard – or at least greeted with handshakes all round and a nice pot of tea. Wadsworth is an EMI lifer too, but Gilmour's been away so long this group of people have rarely met before. MOJO leaves them to get reacquainted.

OUR INTERVIEW RECONVENES FOUR DAYS LATER AT Gilmour's Sussex home, a long, low, wood-beamed old place with not a rock-star suit of armour in sight. Instead you notice plenty of cosy familial impedimenta: kids' dauby paintings, gymkhana rosettes (mostly for coming third, which is nice), milling dogs – including a muzzled mutt who bit a rambler on the footpath which passes through Gilmour's land. Polly Samson jokes about a recent evening at the Whitbread Prize-giving where, among her literary peers, she was for once the invited guest and Gilmour merely "plus one". You lunch convivially in the kitchen where an Aga's eternal flame keeps the bleak day at bay. After clearing a plate of rice, peas and chicken stew, Gilmour potters about making complicated coffee, then leads MOJO to his music room to resume.

Naturally, Gilmour's den is cluttered with sound desk, key-