The Axe Files

That Pink Floyd reunion will have to wait.

APART FROM THE shock reconciliation between guitarist David Gilmour and bassist Roger Waters, Pink Floyd's appearance at Live 8 also proved that the band really existed. Without lasers to distract the eye, a global audience squinted as one at its TV screen and declared, "So they are human." Humanity and warmth are traits rarely associated with Pink Floyd. But both qualities are in the music, even if they're buried under a lofty concept.

It may be an oversimplification to portray Waters as Floyd's brain with Gilmour as its beating heart, but On An Island plays up to that assumption. It is a very warm record. There's a loose concept linking the 10 songs, six co-written with Gilmour's wife Polly Samson. But is the titular island a metaphor for self-discovery, or just an apt title for music that sounds fantastic when lying prone on a foreign beach? Either way, you can wallow in songs that allow Gilmour to do what he does best: sing in that lullaby-ish high register and peel off another candidate for the mother of all guitar solos, repeatedly.

BY CORRA LLING HIS rock aristocrats - Roxy Music's Phil Manzanera, Floyd keyboard player Richard Wright and backing singers David Crosby and Graham Nash - Gilmour has sculpted a sumptuous record that leans heavily on familiar Floyd themes: sustained guitar notes, Wright's doleful organ, lots of waves lapping on a foreign beach, etc. Yet it works beautifully, with The Blue and the title track especially good on housing the Gilmour falsetto and those languid guitar flurries. He sounds like the happiest man alive on the charming Smile and does a great haunted croon on Take A Breath. But if a song ever wavers, there's always another tennis-racket moment just around the next bend.

Live 8 was the perfect trailer for On An Island, while also saddling it with impossible expectations. Gilmour has risen above all that and made an album which should keep those baying for a reunion record satisfied. MARK BLAKE

DOWNLOAD: On An Island → Take A Breath → A Pocketful Of Stones → Then I Close My Eyes → The Blue

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