Something For the Weekend

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David Gilmour's stunning solo album

EXCLUSIVE Q&A

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DAVID GILMOUR
Pink Floyd legend's dazzling solo album
EXCLUSIVE Q&A
DAVID GILMOUR will be forever linked to the colour pink - as in Pink Floyd, of course.

Immerse yourself in his transcendent solo album and you'll find an entirely different colour keeps springing to mind. Blue.

Hearing the 31-minute On An Island is like taking a long, luxuriant dip in clear blue waters. There's even a song called The Blue, a blues guitar-led number called This Heaven and the album cover is mostly - you've guessed it - blue.

Here is extraordinary music that occupies a hazy space between dreams and reality, comfortably the nearest thing we'll get to a new Pink Floyd offering. It's also one of THE music events of 2006, released on David's 60th birthday this coming Monday.

It's also his first new solo record since 1984's About Face and his first studio recording of any kind since 1994's Floyd swansong The Division Bell. It comes just a few months after that triumphal reunion at Live 8.

Strong comparisons can be made with Kate Bush's glorious comeback album Aerial, all the more significant because it was David who brought her to the attention of EMI way back when

Wuthering Heights was a mere twinkle in her eye.

Richly orchestrated by Polish composer Zbigniew Preisner, On An Island features a host of stellar pals, including Pink Floyd's Rick Wright, West Coast harmony kings David Crosby and Graham Nash and piano man Jools Holland.

Roxus Music's Phil Manzanera was on hand to help give the production a bright, organic feel and David's partner Polly Samson penned most of the poetic lyrics.

This week, I managed to catch David for a brief chat about the latest chapter in a recording career that spans four decades and includes such towering albums as Dark Side Of The Moon, Wish You Were Here and The Wall.

What prompted you to make On An Island? I've been casually recording odds and ends of music over the past ten years or so but it was beginning to become too hard to ignore.

I started waking early with pieces of music and ideas buzzing around in my head and found I was keeping myself awake at night too.

We weren't getting much sleep - it became obvious that this was the moment to let rip.

And how does it feel to see the name Pink Floyd on a finished product after all this time? I never really feel anything very much about the package once it's out there - it's what's in the grooves that matters.

Why did you choose to release it on your 60th birthday? It takes the pressure off the birthday!

The track you call the song 'The Blue', the whole atmosphere of other songs - what was it that you were conscious of? I was thinking of the big blue sea throughout.

Some of the music wouldn't be out of place on a Pink Floyd album but how do you feel this work differs? It doesn't.

That moment at 2:16 on Castellorizon when a wonderful guitar solo begins is a spine-tingling moment. Inspired it?

I can never pinpoint these things - on the whole it just happens.

You called on some very special friends to help make the album. How did they affect the recording process and will some be joining you on tour?

I am delighted that Phil Manzanera is joining me on tour because he has been holding my hand throughout the making of the album. And Rick Wright and the other musicians from Floyd tours give me a great feeling. I love playing with them.

The lyrics are beautiful. What's it like working with Polly? Polly knows how to look at the world through someone else's eyes. She has an uncanny ability to know what the music means before I do.

You play sax for the first time on a recording on Red Sky At Night. What encouraged you to pick up the instrument?

Polly gave me a saxophone for my 50th birthday and I set around until my son Charlie started learning the sax a few years ago and I asked his sax teacher to take me on as well.

There's a sense of wonder at nature here that draws comparisons with your "protection" Kate Bush's Aerial. Is that a fair comparison? I played that album the other day and it's great so I'm glad if there's common feeling. I admire her.

And finally, sorry to ask: Is it safe to assume there will be no Pink Floyd reunion?

YES!

THE TRACKS

CASTELLORIZON: Ambient sounds drift in and out, then a languid but breathtaking guitar solo. Gilmour's inimitable style has rarely sounded better. Notes pour out like liquid gold.

ON AN ISLAND: Gentle Crosby and Nash harmonies and unhurried lead vocals on a song that ebbs and flows before another big guitar finale.

THE BLUE: Perhaps the album's most evocative track. Spacey, dreamy and filled with wonder. "Still, marooned, silence drifting through, nowhere to choose, just blue."

TAKE A BREATH: The pace quickens for the most muscular song. Chanted vocals and a full rock sound provide necessary extra texture to proceedings.

RED DRY AT NIGHT: This is a heavily orchestrated instru-

mental notable for David's debut as a saxophonist. It gives you a chance to catch your breath before...