



DAVID GILMOUR

LIVE IN GDANSK

2008

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"I've known David Gilmour since I was sixteen. He was a friend of my brother, who was at Cambridge – I was still at school. I was brought up in Cuba and Venezuela and was later sent to boarding school in London. I started playing guitar at this point and I wanted to become a professional musician. My brother said, 'Well I know this guy who's just about to join a band. He'll soon be a professional musician, let's go and talk to him and ask him how you do it. That was David and he was just about to join Pink Floyd. Neither of us can remember what he said but, David later commented to me that, 'It must have been good advice because you ultimately joined Roxy Music!'"

So says Roxy Music guitarist and producer of this magnificent live album, Phil Manzanera, who kindly agreed to talk to *Hi-Fi World* and bravely spluttered through a bad cold. Manzanera in fact plays guitar on this live album, one of the most elaborate live releases there has ever been and a snapshot from David Gilmour's recent tour, his gig in the Polish town of Gdansk. Gilmour was invited to play there by the former Solidarity movement to celebrate their 26th anniversary.

Forget the concluding paragraph and let's cut to the chase, I would rate this live album – in its entirety, more details below – as the best live album there has ever been. Yes, you heard right. The best ever. I know that it is aided by fairly modern

additions such as video coverage and web access but David Gilmour has truly surpassed himself both in how he performed his work with some of the best guitar playing in many a year, imaginative arrangements of old standards and his support for true Pink Floyd fans. For example, the DVD and vinyl versions of the set feature highlights from the expected Pink Floyd covers including the much neglected 'Wots ... Uh The Deal?' from 'Obscured By Clouds' and the only recorded gig version of the superb track, 'Echoes'. You also get a complete live rendition of Gilmour's latest album, 'On An Island' and how miraculous it is too. Compared to the studio release, the live set of the album positively springs into life with far more verve and energy.

The album itself arrives in a dizzying array of formats. "David said, 'Who knows if we'll ever tour again. So let's give them everything we've got in one go and not dribs and drabs and in any form they want,'" said Manzanera. On CD, there are four versions available and packaged in a fold-out digipack. The standard 2CD version presents the footage of the last date on Gilmour's 2006 summer tour in front of 50,000 people at the Gdansk shipyards which was the only occasion on which David performed the tour material with an orchestra, using the forty-strong string section of the Polish Baltic Philharmonic Orchestra.

It was important too, because it was the only show of the tour to contain the song 'A Great Day For Freedom', from Pink Floyd's 1994 album, 'The Division Bell'. However, it was mostly important because it may be the final recorded performance of Floyd keyboard player Rick Wright, who recently died of cancer. During this gig Rick was unaware that his health was in danger.

The three disc version adds a DVD that features most of the Gdansk gig alongside a documentary whilst a four disc version adds a second DVD packed full of TV appearances plus the 'On An Island' album in 5.1 surround sound. Finally, a five disc version (i.e. three CDs and two DVDs) adds a CD of tour highlights. The vinyl version arrives in a large, pizza-type box featuring the complete concert on four LPs with an extra LP that features a selection of audio tracks from the DVD extras. You also get a web pass to download the LP's audio tracks as MP3.

Phil Manzanera should be congratulated for his production work on this album and his support for the exploration of sound quality before mastering for both vinyl and CD. "We recorded onto two inch tape and then onto digital via Pro Tools. We made sure that the music retains a full dynamic range. Everything David does is done properly – the old fashioned way," said Manzanera. And it shows, to be frank. **PR**