I helped create the Pink Floyd sound... it’s the sound that I love.

David Gilmour
EXCLUSIVE: Pink Floyd legend David Gilmour on a great day for freedom and
drums, and his wife, singer Polly Samson, on lead vocals. The band's sound
reached its peak in the late 1970s and early 1980s with releases like "The
Dark Side of the Moon" and "Wish You Were Here." Gilmour's
musical telepathy with his bandmates was essential to their unique
sound and style.

Echoes brought Rick out of his shell... we had musical telepathy.

By SIMON COSYNS

Outside, the gentle wash of the Thames laps against his
fabulous old houseboat studio The Astoria.

Inside, the "voice and guitar" of Pink Floyd, David
Gilmour, is sitting beside me in the front window of this
floating testament to Edwardian splendour.

Built in 1911 and first owned by Charlie Chaplin's manager
Fred Karno, it's the boat where the band recorded their last
two studio albums and where David made his luminous solo album
On an Island.

David is reflecting on the momentous concert he
performed at Gdańsk shipyard in Poland on August 24, 2006,
to mark its part in the fall of the Iron Curtain.

He is also recalling the dazzling contribution to the show by his dear friend and
musical partner Richard Wright. Pink Floyd founder member and keyboard player.

Since our interview, Rick
sadly lost his battle with cancer but that's not in Poland;
left David with vivid, abiding memories of the man with whom he shared "musical
telepathy."

An epic 25-minute outing for
Floyd's sonic masterpiece
Echoes has come to represent
Rick's glorious last stand.

"As we played Echoes throughout the tour, it brought
Rick out of his shell more and more," believes David. "He was
stamping his personality and forthrightness on the whole thing
but Echoes was where it showed the most.

"Seeing Rick come to the fore was really great. We
did Echoes a few times on the Momentary Lapse Of Reason tour in the late
Eighties but it didn't work as well. It was quite well for some reason. On this
tour, it was the highlight of the show, such good fun to
play." In a statement from David
on the day Rick died (printed in
full on these pages), he says:

"The blend of his and my voices and
our musical telepathy reached their first major flowering in 1971 on Echoes (from the
Meddle album). In my view, all the greatest Pink Floyd moments are the ones where he
is in full flow."

The concert in Gdańsk was
held on the 30th anniversary of the
rise of the Solidarity trade union — the day has become a
Polish national holiday — and
David was invited to play by the
movement's leader Lech Walesa.

Musician met politician before
the show and saw first-hand the
characteristics that made him
such an effective leader in the
struggle. "I don't think diplomacy
is one of his strong points. He's still very
forthright, very blunt. He said something
about shaving being the only mas-
culine thing he could do... perhaps
we shouldn't go there." But
he adds: "It was a fantastic thrill
of being invited to celebrate something
that started a domino effect which changed the world. I'm not
what you'd call anti-communist particularly but I'm anti any sort
of regime that's not democratically chosen.

So, beneath monstrous cranes
in a harsh industrial landscape, a
stage was built for the last night of
David's tour in support of On
An Island.

Majestic

Rick was along for the ride as
a member of his band which also
included Roxy Music guitarist
Phil Manzanera and Pink Floyd
touring veterans Guy Pratt (bass),
John Carin (keyboards) and Dick
Parry (sax).

The show began with a seg-
ment of Pink Floyd's imperious
The Dark Side Of The Moon, con-
tinued with the songs from On
An Island (beautifully orchestrated
by Polish arranger/conduct-
or Zbigniew Preisner with the
Baltic Philharmonic Symphony
Orchestra), before a closing
Floydian odyssey. Rarely have
songs like Shine On You Crazy
Diamond and Comfortably Numb
sounded so clear and heartfelt,
bearing some of the most
magnificent Gilmour

There was also a one-off perfor-
mance of the suitably titled A
Great Day For Freedom, written
by David and his wife Polly
Samson for 1994's Pink
Floyd\'s swansong The Division Bell.

That song is really about the
aftermath (of the fall of the total-
tarian state). First, it was a joy
and a release for the people with
the freedom of democracy but
then it became horribly marred
by the ethnic cleansing and gene-
cide, particularly in Yugoslavia.

"We only rehearsed it that
afternoon. I did a run through of
the solo, quite tricky to get in
the right rhythm. It's a very,
very slow tempo and I was getting
ahead of it all but the perform-
ance turned out good.

"It's a song we could have done
more. I love it and it was just
great actually singing it because I
stood on that stage and could see

that whole audience and the Solidarity
memorial lit up over in the back-
ground. I really meant it when I
was singing it.

Next week, a comprehensive
CD and DVD document of the
show is being released in various
formats. It began as a celebration of Solidarity and has also become
a fitting memorial to Rick.

It's also strange to think that
another key person in the Pink
Floyd story was on David and
Rick's minds that day, original
singer Syd Barrett, who had died
seven weeks before the concert.

"I was very conscious of wanting to tip my hat to Syd,
particularly as he had died in the middle of all this," recalls David.

"Shine On You Crazy Diamond is always a bit poignantly but it
was even more so on this occasion.

Fittingly, the following song in the set is psychedelic classic
Astronomy Domine from the Syd era but that was more down to a
'borrowing, pragmatic decision to start rocking it up a little bit after
the extended piece of Shine On You Crazy Diamond."
RICHARD "Rick" Wright, who died on September 15 aged 65, was a founder member of Pink Floyd and played at Live 8, the band's last stand in 2005. Here is David Gilmour's tribute:

NO one can replace Richard Wright. He was my musical partner and my friend. In the welter of arguments about who or what was Pink Floyd, Rick's enormous input was frequently forgotten. He was gentle, unassuming and private but his soulful voice and playing were vital, magical components of our most recognised Pink Floyd sound.

I have never played with anyone quite like him. The blend of his and my voices and our musical telepathy reached their first major flowering in 1971 on Echoes. In my view, all the greatest Floyd moments are the ones where he is in full flow. After all, without Us And Them and The Great Gig In The Sky, both of which he wrote, what would The Dark Side Of The Moon have been? Without his quiet touch the album Wish You Were Here would not quite have worked.

In our middle years, for many reasons we lost his way for a while. But in the early Nineties, with The Division Bell, his vitality, spark and humour returned to him and their audience reaction to his appearances on our tour in 2006 was hugely uplifting.

It's a mark of his modesty that those standing ovations came as a huge surprise to him (though not to the rest of us). Like Rick, I don't find it easy to express my feelings in words, but I loved him and will miss him enormously.

Favourite

David says: "I've always liked the song, one of the first I ever wrote. I tried to persuade the rest of the Pink Floyd guys that it should go on Echoes. The Best Of Pink Floyd but they weren't having it. I played the drums on the original recording but the drums are so bad."

So how does he feel about Atom Heart Mother in 2008? "It's all part of our history and you can't reject your children, can you? It's still not my favourite thing but Fat Old Sun is one of my favourite songs."

The guitar solos, always such a memorable feature of the Gilmour repertoire, are truly spectacular in Gdansk on his trusty black Fender Stratocaster with Jimi Hendrix's old strap. They prompt me to inquire if he thinks he's got better over the years.

"I think I probably have, at least when I get into proper practice," he replies. "I can be the last person. I pick up a guitar and doodle every day but I don't practise proper scales and so on. I do get rusty and my fingers aren't as fluid as they should be but that is often balanced out by being more inventive."

I ask him which is his favourite guitar solo. "For a long time, I would have thought Comfortably Numb was the most fun but I've probably played that too many times. I've explored the chord sequence so fully that it's hard to start playing it and not fall into established patterns."

"Now I love playing the opening of Castellorizon over an orchestra. Not really a solo but lovely to play. And the solos on On An Island, particularly The Blue, are great to play."