



The endless rumours of a **Pink Floyd** reunion came to an end with the tragic death of their keyboard player **Rick Wright**. "I'm unlikely to start polishing my drum sticks in the near future," says **Nick Mason**, leading MOJO's eight-page tribute to Floyd's "quiet one". Words: **Mark Blake**

THE 1972 MOVIE *LIVE AT POMPEII* IS the final snapshot of Pink Floyd before *The Dark Side Of The Moon* changed their world forever. Away from the crumbling amphitheatre, director Adrian Maben tries to conduct a band interview. Busy wolfing down beer and shellfish, Pink Floyd are in no mood for serious conversation. Roger Waters and David Gilmour bat away the questions, while swapping banter in the pedantic style of Peter Cook's comic creation E.L. Wisty: "Are these oysters French?" drones Waters. "I like to think that oysters transcend national barriers."

Maben persists, until Nick Mason intervenes: "Adrian," he cautions. "This attempt to elicit conversation out of the chaps is doomed to failure." Only one member of Pink Floyd tries to engage with the interviewer. "I don't understand what you mean by that," says Rick Wright politely, when asked if the band have any difficult moments. "Well then, you're *fucking* thick," quips Waters, amid much giggling. Later, Wright offers a baleful look to the camera and states hesitantly: "We have great understanding and tolerance of each other. But there are a lot of things left unsaid. I feel. Sometimes."







Roger Waters (left) and Rick Wright prepare to voyage to the Dark Side, circa 1974.

AS EVERY OBITUARY FOLLOWING HIS DEATH ON September 15 explained, Richard William Wright was “the quiet one” in Pink Floyd. The Times went further: “Had his profile been any lower, he would have been reported missing.” Sadly, the image of the put-upon Wright from *Live At Pompeii* would stick. Few interviews with him in recent years failed to mention his fractious relationship with Waters, his forced exit from Pink Floyd in 1979, and his rather sad demeanour.

Along with Nick Mason, Wright was the other Londoner in the Cambridge stronghold that was the original Floyd. Growing up in the suburbs, he learned to play guitar, piano, trumpet and trombone. In 1962, he enrolled at Regent Street Polytechnic to study architecture, and met Nick Mason and Roger Waters. Wright joined their ad hoc musical group (known by a string of names that included Sigma 6, The Abdabs and The Megadeaths), which occasionally included his future wife Juliette Gale. Tellingly, the band’s guitarist Clive Metcalfe recalled “the lovely Juliette... but Rick was so incredibly shy that he hardly spoke.”

Realising he had little interest in architecture, Wright quit the polytechnic and signed up at London’s Royal College of Music. The move paid off when he sold one of his songs, *You’re The Reason Why*, to a Liverpool vocal trio, Adam, Mike & Tim. “Rick wrote a proper pop song and sold it,” says Nick Mason. “He’d written a single before the rest of us were even properly operational.”

When Pink Floyd made their 1967 debut, *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, Wright’s formal training proved a blessing. “I remember Rick sorting out the harmonies and telling everyone what to sing,” recalls Floyd co-manager Peter Jenner. “I think everyone, including

me, underestimated Rick. It’s the classic management thing: he wasn’t any trouble, so you tended not to notice him. You were always more aware of the ones that were high maintenance.”

“Rick liked melody, but he wasn’t resistant to the others things we did,” adds Mason. “Listen to the start of *Astronomy Domine* or *Interstellar Overdrive*. He never had any preconceptions about how keyboards should be used. That attitude didn’t get knocked out of him at music college.” Experimental and structured in his playing,

Wright was an ideal collaborator for frontman Syd Barrett. Later, Wright said he even considered leaving the band to work with Barrett, before witnessing the singer’s rapid decline. Wright composed *See-Saw* and *Remember A Day* for Floyd’s second album, 1968’s *A Saucerful Of Secrets*. (Mason: “Wistful songs, very much in the Barrett tradition.”) Yet *See-Saw* was also nicknamed ‘The Most Boring Song I’ve Ever Heard Bar Two’ by the band, while Wright claimed he “now cringes at *Remember A Day*”. Self-effacing and unconfident, he was never destined to succeed as Pink Floyd’s frontman.

Singing guitar-prodigy David Gilmour’s arrival, coupled with the “high maintenance” Waters’ growing ambition, pushed Wright

further back. “I like to use the George Harrison example,” says Mason, “because, like George, Rick wrote, he sang, he did a lot of things, but he did become eclipsed by everyone else.” “We had to keep going,” Waters explained of his emergence as Floyd’s de facto leader. “And nobody else seemed to want to take charge, so I did.”

Waters’ natural brusqueness found an easy target in the keyboard player. A Floyd associate recalls a 1966 holiday, where “Roger kept putting Rick down the whole time. Using him as his punch bag.”

Wright would glumly admit to a “personality clash with Roger...

“Like George Harrison, Rick wrote and sang but became eclipsed by everyone else.”

NICK MASON

and constant niggling", dating back to student days. "I don't think Roger consciously wanted to do people down," says David Gilmour. "But he's very alpha-male, and he's not always sensitive to how much that can hurt other people."

"Rick could be very droll and very funny," adds Mason, "but he suffered from being quieter." It was always jokily suggested that Wright was tighter with money than his bandmates. Waters would mischievously tell interviewers of Rick padlocking his food cupboard when the two shared a house, or of a protracted dispute over a restaurant bill in Japan when, it transpired, Wright had failed to pay for his bandmates' extra portion of prawns.

"We never grew up, we just grew older," admits Mason. "Having given Rick this character, we then kept it up. And were quite happy to work on the same joke for 40-odd years. It never gets boring, especially when the person in question finds it irritating."

After Rick's death, Gilmour described the pair's working relationship as "telepathic". Echoes, the piece that occupied the second half of 1971's *Meddle* was a high watermark for both; Gilmour and Wright's voices complementing each other as they shared lead vocals on the opening verses. While experimenting in Abbey Road, Wright devised the distinctive eerie sound (the now famous *ping*) that was the start of Echoes. "There is this image, if you like, of Rick sat working something out on the keyboards while a war went on around him between the rest of us," says Mason. *Meddle*'s engineer John Leckie agreed: "Rick would sit at the back and not say anything for days, but his playing was the highlight of any session."

Wright's involvement with *The Dark Side Of The Moon* compounded his musical strengths. In 1973, the era of keyboard wizards Keith Emerson and Rick Wakeman, Wright preferred a subtler approach. It was all about texture and sound. "I don't want to be the fastest pianist on the planet," he said. "I'd like to be like Miles Davis, who can play one note a bar." Aptly, then, Wright borrowed a sequence from Davis's *Kind Of Blue* for the Floyd's *Breathe*. His playing was similarly measured on *The Great Gig In The Sky*, a piece for piano and female voice. Though, in 1990, to his bandmates' chagrin, Wright licensed the song for use in a TV ad for painkillers.

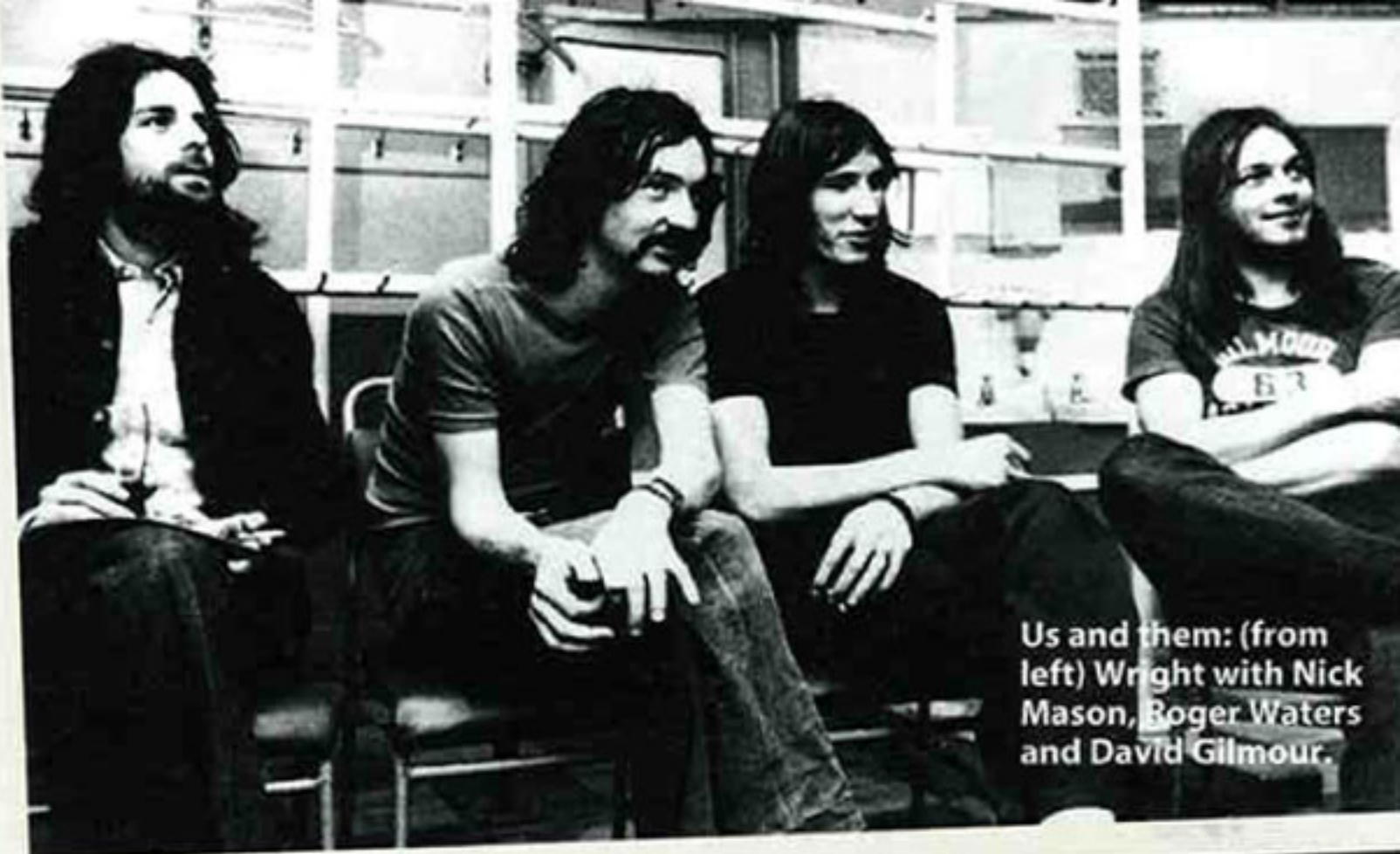
Working on the track *Us And Them* at Abbey Road, Rick chose to play the song's jazz-influenced chord progression on a grand piano instead of the Hammond he had used earlier. Engineer Alan Parsons taped him, while Wright played along to what he thought was the rest of the band in the next studio but was in fact a recording made earlier. What started as a prank at his expense became, as Parsons explains, "one of the best things Rick ever did".

A Waters/Wright composition, the bassist named *Us And Them* as one of his favourite Pink Floyd songs and, even at the height of their disagreements, always praised Wright's contribution.

AS FLOYD'S EARNINGS INCREASED, WRIGHT BOUGHT a five-acre country pile, The Old Rectory, in the village of Therfield, Cambridgeshire. Rick's parties were, recalled one visitor, "the stuff of legend". Guests remembered "racing around on miniature Bugattis and bikes... and drag queens getting pushed into the swimming pool."

On tour in 1974, Floyd refused to give interviews, but a Melody Maker journalist bought his own ticket to an Edinburgh Usher Hall gig, and secured an interview with Wright. When the rest of the group complained, Rick said that he'd "felt sorry for the chap". His portrayal suggested a man inside a bubble: "I don't listen to the radio, I don't watch Top Of The Pops, I don't watch the Old Grey Whistle Test. I don't even know how the rock business is going."

If Rick was, as a Floyd roadie remembers, "a lovely chap, but a bit away with the fairies", his work on 1975's *Wish You Were Here* was very grounded. The album still plays like a Rick Wright showcase, with the space-age sound of the VCS3 synthesizer splashed across *Welcome To The Machine* and *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*. Wright's playing on 1977's *Animals* was also impeccable, but his songwriting had stalled: "I was not functioning well and not coming up with any ideas." 1978's solo LP *Wet Dream* swung between dreamy paeans to the island of Rhodes, where Wright had a second ➤



Us and them: (from left) Wright with Nick Mason, Roger Waters and David Gilmour.

Rolling Waves

A font of melancholy and craft, **Rick Wright's** contribution to Floyd was immense. **Mark Blake** catalogues his finest recorded moments.



Matilda Mother

FROM THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON, 1973
Wright's meticulous vocals convey all the charm and oddness of Barrett's lyrics – "Across the stream with wooden shoes/With bells to tell the king the news" – on this eerie psychedelic waltz.

Remember A Day

FROM A CONCEPT OF SYD BARRETT, 1967
Despite Syd's exit, Pink Floyd went on trying to write in his style. This dreamy evocation of childhood ("Climb your favourite apple tree/Try to catch the sun") outshines the paler imitations.

Summer '68

FROM UMM KUMM, 1968
Wright sings of a groupie encounter while on a US tour ("We said goodbye before we said hello/I hardly even like you..."). Sgt. Pepper-style brass arrangements explode around the gentlest of piano melodies.

Echoes

FROM MEDDLE, 1971
Wright and Gilmour swap lead vocals on the opening verses with such ease it's hard to tell where one voice ends and the other begins. A highlight on Gilmour's 2006 solo tour, where fans waited expectantly for Rick's 'ping' at the beginning of the piece.

Stay

FROM THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON, 1973
Buried away on the Floyd's soundtrack to *La Vallée*, Wright's soft ballad has him again singing about a casual encounter ("Surprised to find you by my side/Rack my brain to try to remember your name"), while Gilmour plays sleepy-sounding slide guitar.

The Great Gig In The Sky

FROM THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON, 1973
Session vocalist Clare Torry improvised her vocal wails over Wright's lilting piano melody. A later lawsuit resulted in Torry receiving royalties and a writing credit for the track.

Us And Them

FROM THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON, 1973
This mournful melody was rejected for the soundtrack to the 1970 movie *Zabriskie Point* by director Michelangelo Antonioni. His loss, Wright's understated piano fill at 4:37, just as the spoken word segment begins, re-defines the expression, 'less is more'.

Shine On You Crazy Diamond, Part VIII-IX

FROM WISH YOU WERE HERE, 1975
Wright's synthesizer outshines even Gilmour's guitar on these achingly sad instrumental passages. Sounds like a funeral march in outer space.

Wearing The Inside Out

FROM THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON, 1973
"From morning to night I stayed out of sight/Didn't recognise what I'd become." Wright's candid, autobiographical composition was revived for the *On An Island* tour.

Breakthrough

FROM WISH YOU WERE HERE, 1975
Sinéad O'Connor sang the original, but Gilmour liked the song so much he performed it himself in 2002. Waters once complained that Rick squirreled away good ideas on his solo albums. This proves him right.





The three-man Floyd sans Waters, circa 1992; (inset) during the fractured performances of 1979's *The Wall*.

◀ home, and the parlous state of his relationship with wife Juliette. The album failed to sell, proving Floyd's cultivated anonymity had a downside.

The ongoing friction between Wright and Waters became critical during the making of their next album, *The Wall*. When it was discovered that the group's financial advisers had made some unwise investments with their money, Floyd became tax exiles. The *Wall* sessions began in France, with producer Bob Ezrin. Wright contributed little, and spoke later of "feeling frozen, unable to play". The more Waters pushed, the worse Wright became. "Rick is not a guy who performs well under pressure," explains Ezrin. "He's an intuitive player, Roger was very unforgiving, and every time he saw someone giving what he thought was less, he was very vocal about it, and sometimes quite cutting." Even Gilmour was forced to admit: "Rick just sat there and it was driving us mad."

Under Waters' pressure, Wright quit the band, but agreed to play the *Wall* shows as a salaried session. "I utterly failed to stick up for Rick and instead I aligned myself with the forces of safety," said Mason. "I think it's a shame and I did feel guilty." Recalling the shows, Wright admitted, "I fooled myself into thinking that maybe, if I play as well as I can, Roger will admit that he was wrong." Waters didn't, but, as a hired hand, Wright made money from the tour while his estranged bandmates covered the excessive costs.

WRIGHT'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH GREECE BEGAN IN the '60s, but by the end of the next decade he and Gilmour owned villas in Lindos. Summer holidays found the party expanding beyond spouses to include a coterie of friends and hangers-on. There was a lot of temptation for a monied rock star: drink, drugs, full-moon parties, sometimes *too* much fun. "There was an awful lot of cocaine around," one observer recalls. "And that didn't help." Out of Pink Floyd, his marriage on the skids, Wright just seemed to retreat. "He just stopped communicating," said one associate. "It was like he got gazumped by the others."

It would be a couple of years before Wright returned to making music, distracted by Lindos, his yacht and new girlfriend Franka, a Greek fashion model-turned-designer. While Waters and Gilmour, would make their next solo albums with help from Eric Clapton and Pete Townshend respectively, Wright teamed up with Dave 'Dee' Harris, several years his junior, the ex-vocalist with electro-pop band Fashion. They began working at Wright's home studio in Cambridgeshire. A Floyd fan, Harris was desperate for Wright to play the Hammond "but getting him to do it was a nightmare". Rick

wanted an electronic sound; something that reflected his love of Talking Heads, Peter Gabriel and Eno. "We had a Fairlight, the toy of the moment," laughs Harris. "But everything we did sounded like a robot."

Wright was in mid divorce, and the sessions were beset by "psychological ups and downs". Harris was often left alone in the studio, fussed over by "a wonderful guy called Pink, who looked after Rick's house. He was this fantastic Canadian queen who was forever on the phone to the wives of the other band members. I'd hear these stories and think, Christ, it's exactly like being in a semi-pro band, but with millionaires – the bitching and wives calling each other this and that."

Harris and Wright released the album, *Identity*, under the band name Zee in 1984, but it stiffed, and Harris bailed out for a production job. "My career was in a very different place to Rick's. It's a shame, as I loved him dearly."

With Waters now out of Pink Floyd, Gilmour and Mason wanted to keep the band name. In the ensuing legal tussle, having Wright back in the fold made sense. Gilmour recalled Wright's new wife, Franka, approaching him on Rick's behalf and asking whether there was a vacancy. Wright had a lunch meeting with Gilmour and the Floyd's manager Steve O'Rourke, in which he was vetted before being allowed back in ("They wanted to see if I was OK"). 1987's *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason* had Wright's name listed among its other session musicians. But on tour, like Mason, who was now accompanied by a second percussion-

ist, Wright was supported by additional keyboard player, Jon Carin.

Gilmour defended the use of extra manpower, while insisting both Mason and Wright were "back up to scratch" a few dates into the tour. By 1994's *The Division Bell*, Wright had been fully reinstated. His second marriage had floundered, but he had a new girlfriend, American model Millie Hobbs. Fans and critics who asked "What happened to Rick Wright?" listened closely to *The Division Bell*'s *Wearing The Inside Out*. The lyrics conveyed the thoughts of a man bruised by life, but finally re-connecting with the world around him.

Frustrated by the snail's-pace at which Pink Floyd worked, Wright followed the *Division Bell* tour with a haunted-sounding solo album, *Broken China*, in 1996. Its central theme concerned the stages of depression experienced by a close friend, which Wright later revealed was actually his new wife, Millie. The album's buried treasure was its closing track, *Breakthrough*, beautifully sung by Sinéad O'Connor.

Broken China came and went, but however keen Wright may have been to get back to making Pink Floyd albums, it was not to be. Floyd's reunion with Roger Waters for Live 8 in 2005 failed to lead to any longer-term collaboration. Wright was a natural choice to play on David Gilmour's next solo album, 2006's *On An Island*, even if, as the guitarist recalls, "it was a struggle to get him to come down the studio and actually play". On the subsequent tour, Wright came back into his own, revisiting *Echoes*, *Time*, even *The Great Gig In The Sky*. On almost every date, he received a standing ovation, and grew ever more confident as the tour wore on. Wright described it "the happiest tour I have ever been on".

"During the '70s and early '80s, it was easy to forget Rick's abilities, because he forgot them," said Gilmour. "He went through a difficult time but came out of it. He came right back out of his shell."

Wright had been diagnosed with cancer at the end of 2007, but his death came as shock to all around him. Nick Mason, the band member who always seemed the most optimistic for a Pink Floyd reunion, now drolly concedes: "I'm unlikely to start polishing my drum sticks any time in the near future." David Gilmour, who played tribute to Wright after his death with a TV performance of *Remember A Day*, honoured Floyd's self-effacing keyboard player with a few carefully chosen words: "No one can replace Richard Wright."





So said **Rick Wright**. Conducting his final interview with **MOJO**, he also reflected on Floyd's early days, the band's inner tension and his own role in their enduring legend... **Words:** Mark Paytress

RICK WRIGHT WAS Pink Floyd's forgotten man. In July 2007, while researching a MOJO cover piece on *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* [MOJO 167], I found out why.

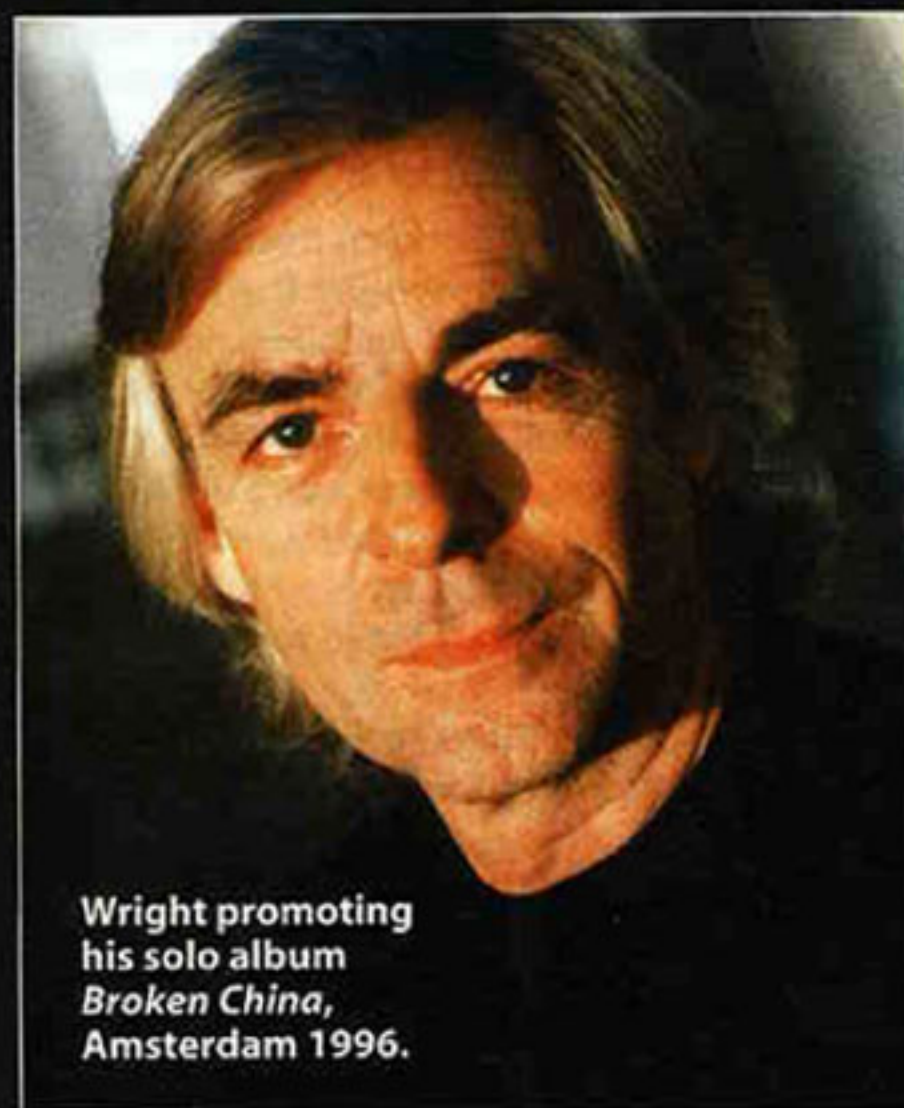
Arriving at Wright's modest mews cottage in a quiet corner of west London, I already had a strong suspicion that he held the key to the story. Two days earlier, David Gilmour had praised his colleague as "an important part of the [band's] heart and soul".

The slim, still handsome man who opened the door to his surprisingly bare residence – no coffee, half a handshake, two large white sofas and a framed photo of himself circa 1973 – cut a lonely figure. He had agreed to the interview – which would tragically turn out to be his last – because *Piper* was "special". He wanted to talk about Syd, too. "The whole story of Syd has been so sad and painful," he said. "I don't know if he was in pain, but it was pretty painful for all of us."

Despite the occasional memory lapse, Wright was in warm, generous form. He was about to return to Formentera, where his yacht was moored, and it wasn't difficult to imagine him alone and at peace floating across the Med. For days, *Echoes*, that oceanic, sorrowful soundscape set in motion by Rick's watery keyboard, played in my head. Now he's gone, it plays louder still.

We're basically here to talk about *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*...

It's a special one. It's our first album, it's the one



Wright promoting his solo album *Broken China*, Amsterdam 1996.

with Syd, and it's a celebration of 40 years in the business. I played it earlier, I hadn't really listened to it since its release. It took me by surprise. It was much better than I thought. That's because there's this fascinating mix of Syd's wonderful songs and lyrics, plus these – avant-garde is not really the right word – very experimental sounds we were doing at the time. There's a big contrast between *Astronomy Domine*, which is kind of structured, and *Pow R Toc H*, which I'd completely forgotten about. I didn't like the silly voices at the beginning, but the playing was interesting. I loved making that record. But when Syd left, or had to leave because of his illness, we had to change direction. He was a unique songwriter. No one else on the planet was writing or thinking like he was.

Did you appreciate that at the time?

Yeah, you could see he had this unique talent. His songs are whimsical, like wonderful nursery

rhymes, and the way he wrote them was also interesting. The first thing that came into his head was the lyric. Then he'd put a melody to the words without thinking of any particular signature. He was only concerned with how the words rhymed with each other. That made it difficult for us because nothing was in time. But that was one of the things that made his songwriting so special.

Was Syd difficult to work with?

No. From Powis Gardens, where we basically first started, and including the whole of the first album, it wasn't difficult at all.

***Piper* producer Norman Smith disagrees...**

It was hard for him. In those days, it was literally, "You're a pop band, here's your producer, he's gonna tell you what to do." And, of course, we didn't think like that at all. We weren't making the album to have a hit single.

That iconoclastic attitude came from where?

It came from all of us.

You all had ambitions beyond the three-minute pop song?

At the UFO club, we were playing pretty extraordinary sounds that people had never heard before, that had nothing to do with a catchy tune. It was all about improvisation. Jazz, which is the first love of my life, is about improvisation, though we were improvising not from a jazz influence but from rock. I mean, Syd was a huge fan of Bo Diddley. Listen carefully and you'll hear it in his guitar playing, little snatches of Diddley songs... I remember doing the title track on *A Saucerful Of Secrets*, when Norman said, "You can't do that. It's 20 minutes long." We said, "Why not?" We weren't there to make three-minute songs for the radio. We wanted to do something different. Eventually, he said, "OK, I can't produce this." We said, "Fine, we'll do it ourselves." But on *Piper*, he was ➤

◀ helpful. We'd hardly been in a 4-track studio before, and we had all these sounds we wanted to produce. A lot of it we did live.

I'm seriously thinking of going back to a 4-track studio for my next project, which'll probably be an instrumental solo album. The fun of recording is putting it down on tape. Using Pro Tools to move notes by an eighth of a beat might make great-sounding records, but it's laborious and tiresome.

Wasn't that Pink Floyd's way? Weren't you partly responsible for the band's legendary procrastination and perfectionism?

Hmm... No, I don't think so. You mean in the beginning? *Piper*?

No, after that.

OK, because I'd studied composition and arranging, I had a thing about how chords could progress from one to the other. I also hated things being out of tune. That would happen a lot in the early days. For quite a while, I had to tune Roger's bass guitar on-stage.

Even he might admit he was the least technically proficient band member in the early days...

None of us were technically proficient. I've always wished I had the technique to become a concert pianist but I haven't. We were all self-taught. I taught myself to play piano when I was four years old. I didn't have a teacher, so my technique is completely wrong. I can't play a scale in the way that you're meant to play it. That limited my technique and ability to play fast. But I didn't have a problem with that because one of the greatest things I've ever heard a musician say was from Miles Davis. He said, "It's not the notes that matter, it's the spaces in between." I've always felt that, and that's how I always play. Blues guitarists understand that, too, that a single note can mean more than a thousand.

Why had you gravitated towards piano by the age of four?

We had a piano in the house, an upright, which my mother played and I was fascinated by it. I would hit notes and work out chords. I guess I had an ear for it.

Was the piano an early friend?

My piano is my best friend.

And always has been?

Well, not my best friend. My piano has more significance than just making music with the Floyd. It's been a therapy for me. If I get really angry or frustrated, whereas some people go and scream into a pillow or see a psychiatrist, I sit at my piano and release whatever emotions I'm feeling.

Your piano and Syd's guitar brought texture to the band's early sound...

It was, at our best, a question and answer thing between Syd's guitar and my keyboard. I'd listen to everything he was doing and respond to it. That, both live and on those instrumental tracks on *Piper*..., was the dominant early Floyd sound.

Did you share an understanding with Syd?

I certainly think we had a musical understanding. When Syd joined the band, he was a big influence on me, because he started playing this weird guitar stuff. I thought it was great. I didn't want to go out and play covers of R&B hits. It was wonderful when he joined. It changed everything completely.

Was he the leader?

In terms of musical input, you would call him the leader, definitely. But he wasn't a leader at all. Basically, we'd sit around until his incredibly creative brain would come up with another



Floyd's first official photo session, Ruskin Park, Denmark Hill, London, circa 1967: (from left) Rick Wright, Nick Mason, Roger Waters, Syd Barrett.

song, and we'd say, "Right, we'll do that." But he didn't push us to go in any particular direction.

Who was band's driving force?

I don't think there was a driving force. We all had our roles to play. Syd was writing these extraordinary songs. Roger definitely had a lot of push in him and always has done. I guess my role was to musically hook up with Syd. There wasn't a leader at that time. But there was a definite force within the band that didn't want to play the game. I mean, Arnold Layne, a hit single, wasn't on the album. We wanted to do it our way.

Was that because you were all intelligent middle-class boys?

'Cos we're all geniuses! I suspect it was, yeah. And the fact that none of us were desperate to be pop stars. When we first started performing, we all hid behind our lighting...

Wasn't that because you were all shy?

I don't think it was all shyness. We wanted to paint a picture with lights to complement the sound.

But Syd was a perfect psychedelic pop star...

Oh, he was, whether he liked it or not.

Was he a reluctant star?

I don't think he rejected it. He was so excited about going on Top Of The Pops. We all were. But he did want to be a pop star in some ways. He worshipped John Lennon, loved The Beatles.

And then came his lost weekend shortly after the success of See Emily Play in summer '67...

I have a memory that we were doing a radio show, quite possibly a John Peel session. We turned up but Syd didn't. Our managers finally found him and said he was in a state. When I next saw him, he'd changed completely. His eyes were dead; he was just staring straight ahead. It was such a huge change, which is why I suspect it was an awful overdose. I don't know if that's

true or not. Everyone has a different theory about Syd's collapse into mental illness.

Did you talk to him about his troubles?

No, I don't think so. Every day it was getting more and more weird. When it was decided to see if Syd could be the Brian Wilson of Pink Floyd, it was my job to encourage him to write music and I lived with him in a flat in Richmond. But it got very difficult, especially when it was decided there was no point in him playing live with us. I couldn't say, "I'm going off for a gig. Sorry Syd, but you can't come and play with us tonight." So I'd say something ridiculous like, "I'm just popping out to get a packet of cigarettes," and go off and do the gig. I'd come back eight hours later, and Syd would say, "Have you got the cigarettes yet?" It was very scary and very sad.

His departure left a large hole in the band.

It did. What do we do now? We knew we wanted to continue because while we'd lost an incredible songwriter, we now had David [Gilmour], an incredible guitarist. That was inspiration enough for me to keep going, but we had to change direction. While Dave was finding his feet, Roger and I started writing. We both realised we couldn't continue writing like Syd.

But you did! Roger's Set The Controls... was Syd-like.

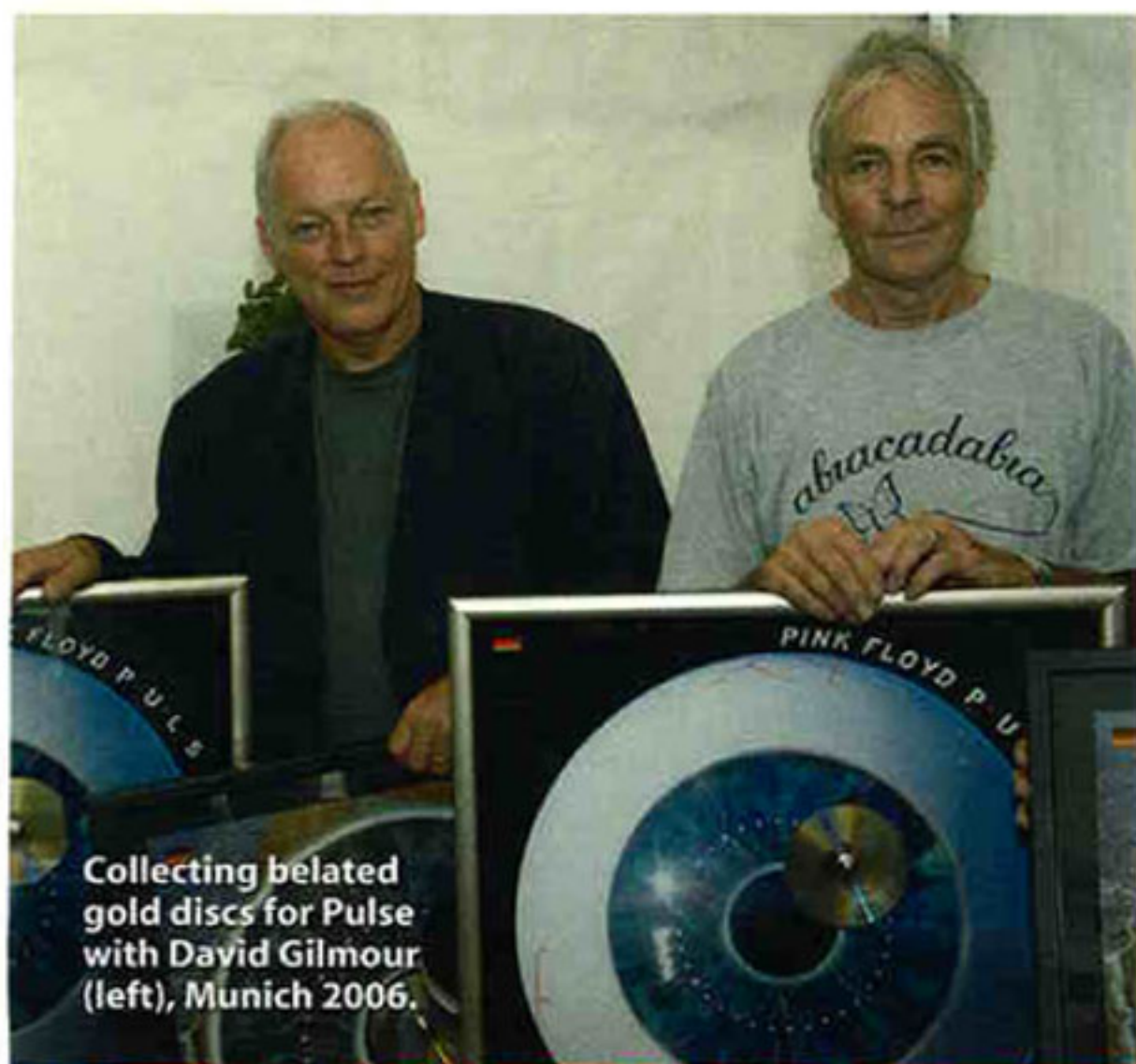
And [my] Paintbox. I say we had to change direction, but maybe Roger and I did try to continue with that style of writing. But we clearly couldn't compete lyrically (*laughs*).

And your own Remember A Day, all glorified childhood stuff...

Yeah, and See Saw, too. I think Roger and I tried to replace the kind of songs Syd would write but soon found out that we couldn't quite manage it.

You were nowhere near as prolific as Roger.

Well, not as prolific. One of the reasons for that is



Collecting belated gold discs for *Pulse* with David Gilmour (left), Munich 2006.



On-stage with Floyd at Live 8, July 2005.

was the high-light. I'd hit that one note on piano and the whole place would erupt.

Just what is it about that song?

It's the way it just rolls. From the intro, it rolls into this incredible wind section, which was actually Roger with a slide on his bass. Then there's David's famous seagull sound, which was a mistake. One of the roadies had plugged his wah wah pedal in back to front, which created this huge wall of feedback. He played around with that and created this beautiful sound. It was a glorious song to make in the studio, and it's fantastic to play live. I love playing it.

Don't you think it's rather melancholy?

Yes, it is.

People associate melancholy with Pink Floyd. Why?

Well, I am! I'm definitely, definitely melancholy! (laughs)

Have you always been like that?

I guess so. I mean, I sit at my piano and play all this rather sad sounding stuff, so that obviously finds its way into a lot of the Floyd's music. I think Roger, despite his anger about the war, is that way, too. Even David is.

When I spoke to David two days ago, he said, "Rick's the soul of Pink Floyd"...

The soul? I mean, I can't speak for myself but... I couldn't believe it when Roger said that he was the genius of Pink Floyd. I thought, "How can anyone actually say that and not feel embar-

rassed by it?" Absolute bullshit! He was part of Pink Floyd, and he played a large part. When someone wrote that Roger was the engine and David was the heartbeat, I thought that made a bit more sense. I don't want to blow my own trumpet, but I do believe, certainly all the way up to *Wish You Were Here*, that what David is saying... Well, I'm very happy to hear he said that. But then I would say exactly the same

about David. He's been the soul of the Floyd since Syd left.

Didn't Roger once say that you, David and Nick didn't have much to say for yourselves?

He did, but on the other hand, he didn't allow us to say anything. He wasn't interested.

What he said was more important?

Yes. In my case, that probably was true for *Animals*. I was going through a pretty bad time in my private life and I didn't have any material to offer – though I'm totally happy with my playing on the record. But at the same time, I think Roger was deciding, "I'm gonna be the writer of Pink Floyd. I'm gonna write everything, and these guys are gonna be the musicians to play my stuff." If you're thinking like that, you're gonna reject things. It's very sad that's the way it happened.

Was that the moment when it all changed?

Roger and me were falling out, having disagreements about all sorts of things. He was on his ego trip. And then he came out with the incredible *The Wall*, which was, literally, Roger sitting down and writing this whole piece. David wrote Comfortably Numb and Run Like Hell with him, but otherwise it was totally Roger. Obviously that confirmed to him that he could do it all by himself and get the band to play it. I'm not putting him down for it at all, but personality-wise, we just couldn't work together.

And you'd completely lost interest.

No. When I left the Floyd I was extremely upset, angry, all sorts of things that I've had to deal with subsequently because I thought it was totally unfair the way it was done. I was angry about it, but on the other hand I was saying, "I can't work with this guy any more. He's becoming too much of an egomaniac." And I suppose you could say I was proved right, because in the end he couldn't work with David. He said, "I wanna stop the band." And David said, "You can leave but we're not stopping the band," which was the right response.

Were you happy to be invited back in 1987?

Of course. The person I missed most was David. When he asked me to do his solo tour, I thought, "I dunno if I should do this because if I do, it'll be like a Pink Floyd tour." Then I realised that was ridiculous. Forget about Pink Floyd. Just go and play with him because he's a wonderful guitarist.

Were you surprised by Roger's behaviour at the Syd memorial show at the Barbican?

It was very strange, because everyone who performed did a song of Syd's, and Roger did one of his own. I think he was very nervous.

It wasn't an act of bloodymindedness?

I'm not going to get into that! I'll let people judge that their own way.

Syd's ghost has lingered long in Floyd's music...

Roger said there's a bit of Syd still around him. I think there's a little bit of Syd in me, in the way I approach sounds and the piano. I felt very close to Syd. I wasn't close to David when he joined but I am now. He may not feel that, but it's what I feel!

What about Nick and his band biography, *Inside Out*? Was he able to adopt a neutral standpoint because he had less creative input?

No, I don't think that at all. He wasn't an outsider, but he wasn't involved in the creative process either. He was there to play drums. Don't get me wrong. I think Nick's role in the Floyd was fantastic. Wonderful drummer. Like Keith Moon, he played differently to anybody else. But when the book says, We did this and we did that. I'd think, "Hang on a minute. It wasn't 'we'. It was David and Rick and Roger, while you were in the back of the studio writing notes on car parts!" It doesn't tell the whole story of how the band operated, how they created, how they worked. He's also very kind to everyone.

Isn't that Nick to a T?

Absolutely. He's the first to say, "I was the polite guy that sat on the fence." But that doesn't come across in the book.

And finally, how did it feel to be part of a cultural phenomenon?

The wonderful thing about the Floyd is that *Dark Side* was a huge success, and we were selling out stadiums around the world. We touched a lot of people yet we were still able to walk around without being recognised. That album became a huge cult. People would hold *Dark Side* parties that would last all night long. You can't say that about many LPs. But I prefer *Wish You Were Here*. The playing's much better... It's poignant, too, 'cos Shine On is about Syd. It goes back to your earlier question: Is there a ghost? There clearly was.



I'm a lazy bastard. Roger had – and probably still has – a huge amount of energy. He'd say, "I'm gonna sit down and write this." I was the kind of musician who'd say, "I'll wait for the inspiration to come." But I would think we were pretty equal in our share of the writing up to *Animals*.

Who wrote Echoes?

Me?!

It was your idea?

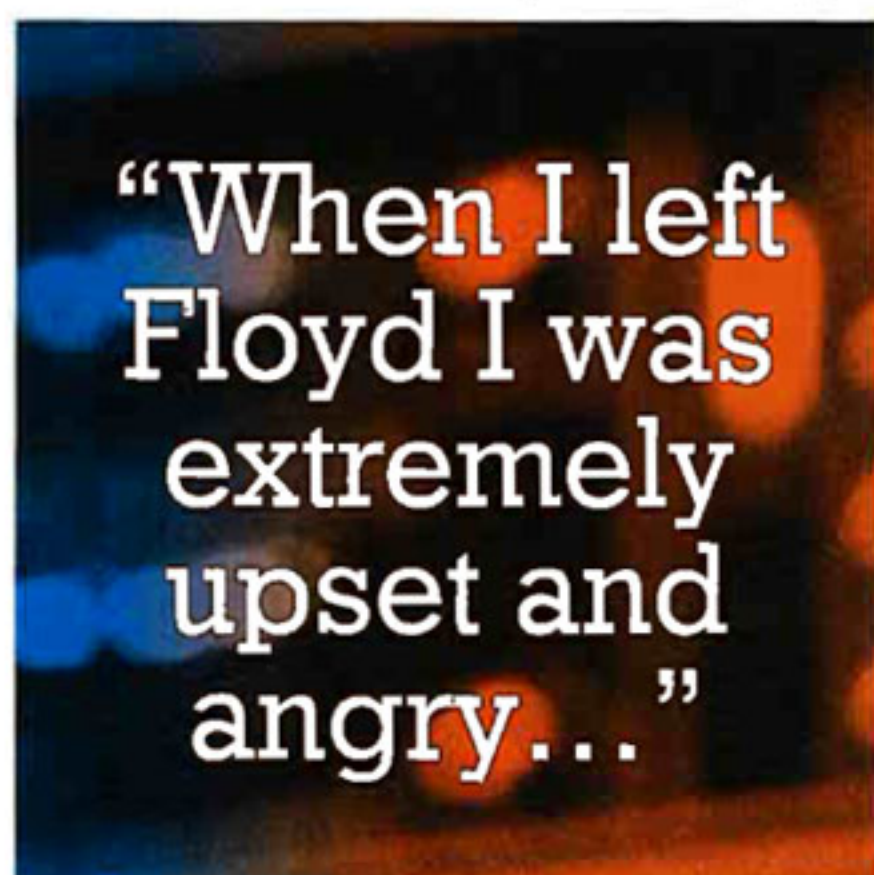
Yes, the whole piano thing at the beginning and the chord structure for the song is mine, so I had a large part in writing that. But it's credited to other people of course. Roger obviously wrote the lyrics. For a lot of the songs, Roger would write the lyrics and David and I would write the music. Not all of them, but a lot. [Roger] would come up with his own songs, too. Money was something he came into the studio with.

Who was the driving force behind the band's move deeper into the high-tech world?

I think all of us.

And the idea of embracing Art with a big A?

(Dismissively) Nah. My memory is that it was all very much shared between the three of us – I say three because Nick didn't write – all the way up to *Animals*. That was when Roger started taking over. But I had a wonderful time recording with Roger during *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, for example. Even *Atom Heart Mother*, which I think is our weakest album. But I still think Echoes is one of the finest tracks the Floyd have ever done. Everyone on the Dave Gilmour tour agreed. It



"When I left Floyd I was extremely upset and angry..."