

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS
WITH BAND INSIDERS

SPECIAL EDITION

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF
THEIR DEBUT ALBUM

MUSIC LEGENDS

THE
**ROCK
ICONS**
IN
THEIR OWN
WORDS

THE INSIDE STORY OF ROCK'S GREATEST NAMES



PINK FLOYD

THE SYD BARRETT YEARS

THE GENESIS AND EARLY DAYS OF PINK FLOYD





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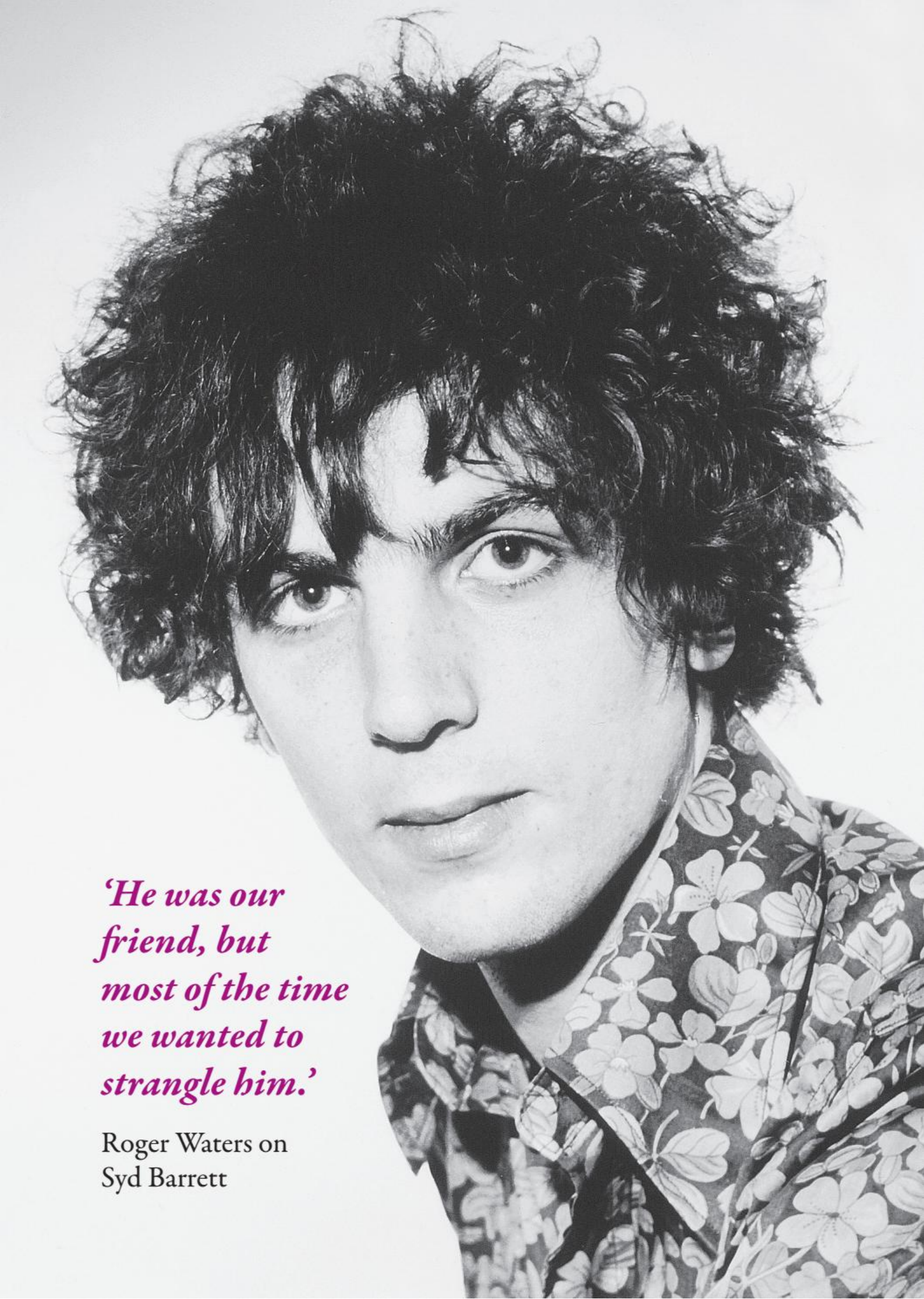
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INTRODUCTION

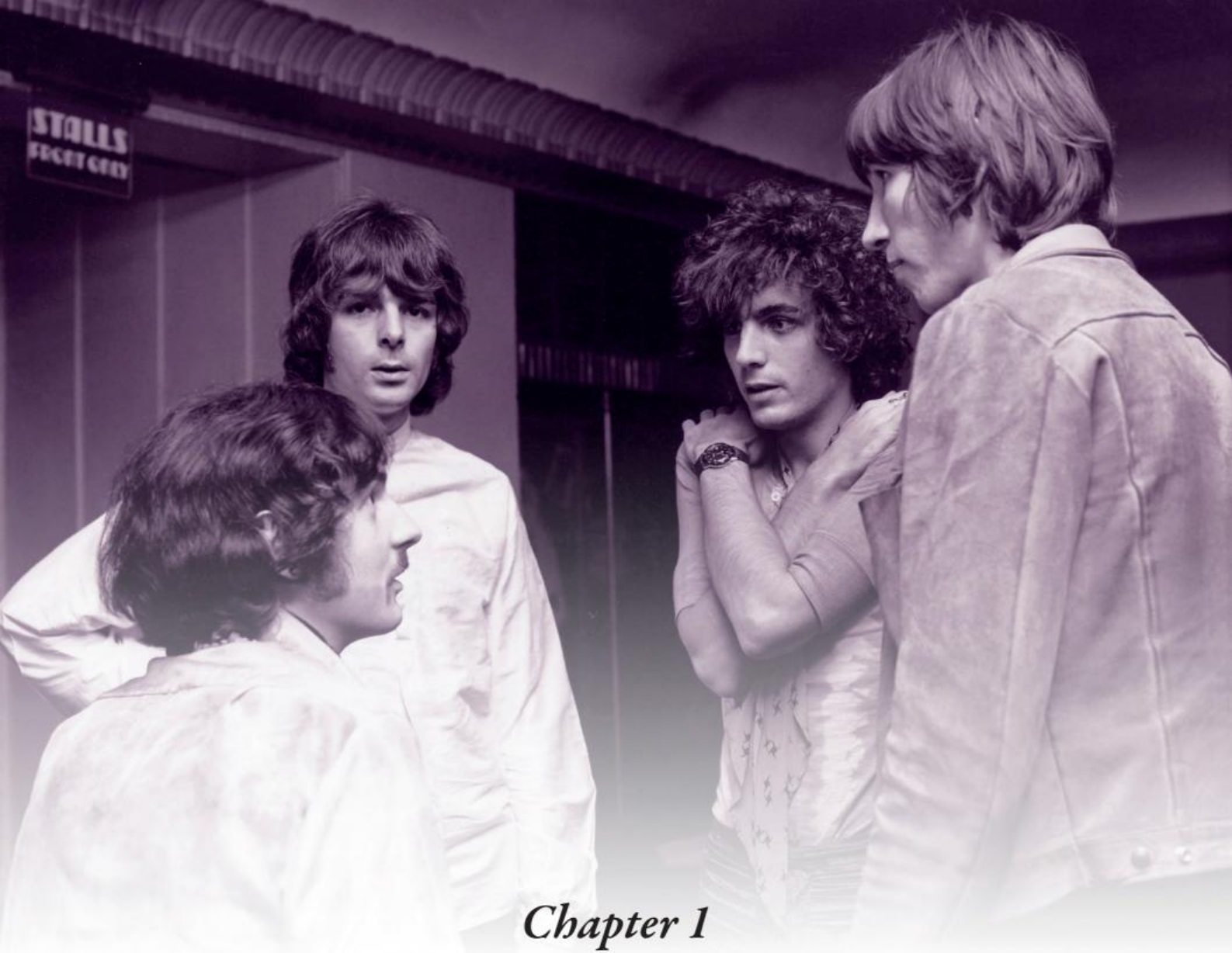
Today, few music fans do not know the name Pink Floyd. The pioneering band have been amazing audiences for over five decades, with their incredible stage shows and ground-breaking studio albums.

The members of Pink Floyd are now rock legends, but there is one that has eschewed the limelight – the enigmatic Syd Barrett. Here we look at the formation of Pink Floyd and the early years of the band, with Barrett at the helm.

A black and white portrait of Syd Barrett, a member of the band Pink Floyd. He has dark, curly hair and is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark shirt with a light-colored floral pattern. The background is plain white.

*'He was our
friend, but
most of the time
we wanted to
strangle him.'*

Roger Waters on
Syd Barrett



Chapter 1

THE BEGINNING

The mid sixties marked the beginning of the psychedelic era and the burgeoning London 'underground' scene was instantly host to a vast array of bands who were busily evolving a dreamy, tripped out sound to fit the mood of the day. After the drab post war era the world was suddenly in glorious technicolor and life was groovy.

One of the less appealing hallmarks of the sixties psychedelic scene was the willingness of some performers to take themselves far too seriously. The litany of new bands ready to turn on and drop out soon gave the impression that an explosion had taken place in the mythology section of the local library, as a host of new bands

emerged with unlikely titles like Dantalion's Chariot, Jacob's Ladder, Aphrodite's Child and the Gods. Fortunately amidst the stream of portentously named groups striving earnestly to celebrate the Age of Aquarius, there were a few who were happy to give a nod to the idea that the whole scene might just be a little too earnest. A few bands were prepared to recognise that the underground scene might just be a huge passing joke and kept one eye firmly on the exit by incorporating a gently self mocking pun into the name of the group. The Tea Set definitely fitted into this category. In 1965 the band in question featured a five piece line up formed from a group of friends from Cambridge in England augmented by newer acquaintances from architectural college in London. Initially the group played gigs in small clubs, private parties and in the safe confines of their own college.

Venturing out into the wider world with a gig at RAF Northolt it was discovered, perhaps rather surprisingly, there were two groups on the London circuit who had chosen to name themselves The Tea Set. The inevitable double booking caused the newcomers to adopt an on the spot alternative. The name quickly chosen by their lead singer was The Pink Floyd Blues Band. From the early summer of 1965 the name began to appear on posters and fliers. The Pink Floyd Blues Band initially included Bob Klose on guitar and vocals. Bob didn't stick around for too long and neither did the blues element of the name. By the summer of 1965 the band was slimmed down to a four-piece and the name too was reduced to match. For the next couple of years the band would be known as The Pink Floyd. It was not until the early 1970s that the band finally managed to shake off the definite article, but by 1971 they had become universally recognised as simply – Pink Floyd.

The initial members of the four-piece known as The Pink Floyd were Roger Waters on bass, Richard Wright on keyboards and Nick Mason on drums. Handling both lead guitar and vocals was Roger Keith Barrett, better known to one and all as Syd.

For Syd's group there were no long years of unrewarding obscurity. This was the line up which in 1966 took the London psychedelic scene by storm. The band had by now dispensed with the rhythm and blues standards, which had seen them through the early days, in favour of the unstructured improvisations which were the basis for long, extended freak-outs which were then highly fashionable. By November 1966 word on the band had begun to creep out beyond the cosy world of the capital. *The Herald*, a local newspaper published in Kent, was among the first to publish an interview with a member of Pink Floyd. Rick Wright was given the job of handling this particular interview and explaining the effect of the band's music on their rapidly expanding audience. 'It does sometimes get to a point where it is a wow. That is when it works, which is not always. Then we really feel the music is coming from us, not the instruments, or rather the instruments become part of us. We look at the lights and the slides behind us, and hope that it all has the same effect on the audience as it does on us. It's completely spontaneous. We just turned up the amplifiers and tried it, thought about it, and it developed from there. But we still have a long way to go before we get exactly what we want. It must develop still further. There is probably more co-ordination between the members of our group than in any pop group. We play far more like a jazz group than anything else. Because we have to be together to produce the right sound, we have come to think, musically, together. Most of our act is spontaneous and unrehearsed. It just comes when we are on stage. As we are a comparatively new group and are projecting a really new sound, most people just stand and listen at first. What we really want is that they should dance to the music and with the music, and so become a part of us. When some people do experience what we want them to, it gets a bit of a jungle, but it is harmless enough because they are wrapped up in the music and themselves. It is a release of emotion, but an inward, not an outward, one, and no one goes into a trance or anything.'

As a result of the rapidly spreading word of mouth on the underground scene the band soon came to the attention of the mainstream press including the prestigious *Sunday Times*. Late in 1966 the paper carried one of the first national features on the band interviewing Andrew King in the process. 'As for being psychedelic,' manager Andrew King stated, 'We don't call ourselves psychedelic. But we don't deny it. We don't confirm it either. People who want to make up slogans can do it.' Bass player Roger Waters added, 'It's totally anarchistic. But it's cooperative anarchy, if you see what I mean. It's definitely a complete realisation of the aims of psychedelia. But if you take LSD, what you experience depends entirely on who you are. Our music may give you the screaming horrors, or throw you into screaming ecstasy. Mostly it's the latter. We find our audiences stop dancing now. We tend to get them standing there, totally grooved with their mouths open.'

Improvised music can of course be a very hit and miss affair but the addition of a swirling psychedelic light show added to the overall experience and provided a much needed distraction for the frequent moments when the music missed its target. Crucially the band dedicated a great deal of time and effort to the creation of a truly mind bending light show which marked them out from the crowd and produced an all round experience which complemented and, on occasion, excelled the music. As a result of this powerful and immediate impact Pink Floyd were one of the select group of bands which found a ready audience right from the outset. For the Floyd there was to be no extended period of paying their dues. Almost instantly the band found themselves the darlings of the exploding psychedelic scene in London. The Floyd began 1966 with a number of regular appearances at the fabled Marquee club which did an enormous amount for the new group's credibility. Towards the end of the year the equally famous UFO club opened its doors and The Pink Floyd rapidly became known as the house band for the club which was at the epicentre of swinging London and widely

recognised as the barometer for all that was considered hip and trendy. In September 1969 Rick Wright reviewed the experience of the UFO club for the magazine *Top Pops and Music Now*. 'When we started out, you had to have a hit single or nobody would listen to you. In those days, music was to dance to. Now people go to see a group to listen. But it's a pity people don't dance, in a way. At the moment audiences are involved in their heads and not physically. But it's bound to change again. We noticed this at UFO. When we started there, the whole audience used to dance, and gradually they stopped dancing and started listening. UFO played a very big part in the change, I think. It used to be held in a church hall in Powis Gardens, very much a sort of workshop atmosphere. It was all very experimental, and, at that time, we were working things out with music and lights. I suppose our whole life was centred around UFO then, but it was a complete way of life. It all came out in the open, and that was such a nice feeling. The whole thing was an entity in itself, you know, the Floyd were on stage, but the audience and everything else that was happening was just as important. It was an experiment in those days. Money had nothing to do with it. Now we've had to adopt a more professional attitude. We still experiment a lot, but it isn't the same. People know about us now, and they know what to expect. The audience feeling now is nice, but there's that thing behind us that we had to fight through to get established. Then, we just played basically to dig the music, and the future didn't concern us. We didn't think about it. But now we have the confidence in ourselves to know we'll be going for some time.'

On 14 January 1967, much closer in time to the UFO experience, Nick Mason and Roger Waters were interviewed by *Melody Maker* and covered the early days of the band in an interview that revisited much the same territory as Wright but shed a very different light on events. 'We were very disorganised then, until our managers materialised and we started looking for a guy to do the lights full-time. The lighting man literally has to be one of the group. When





Pink Floyd onstage at All Saints Hall, Notting Hill, London, in October 1966.

*'I think it's good if a song has more than one meaning.
Maybe that kind of song can reach far more people.'*
– Syd Barrett

we were in our early stages, we didn't play a lot of our electronic interstellar music, and the slides were still rather amateurish. However, this has developed now and our "take-off" into the mainly improvised electronic scenes are much longer, and, of course, in my opinion, the slides have developed to something out of all proportion. They're just fantastic. You have to be careful when you start on this psychedelic thing. We don't call ourselves a psychedelic group or say that we play psychedelic pop music. It's just that people associate us with this and we get employed all the time at the various freak-outs and happenings in London. Let's face it, there really isn't a definition for the word "psychedelic". It's something that has taken place around us, not within us.' Roger Waters then interrupted, 'I think the reason is that we've been employed by so many of these freak-out merchants. I sometimes think that it's only because we have lots of equipment and lighting, and it saves the promoters from having to hire lighting for the group. A freak-out, anyway, should be relaxed, informal, and spontaneous. The best freak-out you'll ever get is at a party with about a hundred people. A freak-out shouldn't be savage mobs of geezers throwing bottles.'

Of course there was more to Floyd than just the hype and freak-outs. The group cared genuinely about its stage show which was then at the forefront of combining light with sound to present a genuine audio-visual experience. The early experiments were conducted with the help of college lecturer and landlord Mike Leonard. By the standards of the day the swirling coloured patterns thrown over the performers and audience were both innovative and truly striking. The ever changing light show was synchronised by hand to the hypnotic pulsing rhythms of the music and the results were by turns genuinely disturbing, inspirational and hypnotic. Leonard's light show was considered sufficiently avant garde to be included in an episode of the BBC's popular science programme *Tomorrow's World*, which featured The Pink Floyd, who were described in the accompanying voice over as providing the background music for the lights!

These early television broadcasts were of course in black and white so the event lost something in translation. For the drugged up portions of the concert audience the show was indeed mind blowing, but it also worked equally well for straight audience members who were prepared to leave their preconceptions behind and embrace the experimental improvised aspects of the performances which could often build to a quite extraordinary crescendo.

The driving force behind the initial incarnation of the band was, of course, Syd Barrett: writer, guitarist, vocalist and focal point of the whole Floyd experience. It's interesting to note however just how small and London focused the underground scene then was; while The Pink Floyd were busy ascending the heady heights of the swinging London scene future Floyd collaborators such as Ron Geesin, co-writer of *Atom Heart Mother*, remained totally unaware of the rising phenomenon. As Ron later recalled, 'The Pink Floyd with Syd Barrett was outside my field of vision. As regards his own music I suppose you could say, it's a bit ragged, it's individual, but I can't say that it's great form in the sense of structure in composition. In fact the only time I saw Syd Barrett was when he popped into the Abbey Road session when we were doing *Atom Heart Mother* and he kind of spun round a couple of times in slow motion and then went out again and that was all I ever saw of him.'

Geesin may have been unaware of the Floyd but the hip London crowd always on the look out for the next sensation were well aware of the music of this amazing new band with its powerful live show. By early 1967 Floyd were huge news on the thriving underground scene and attracted the attention of Peter Whitehead, an independent film maker, who was the first to capture the Floyd experience on film. He filmed the band in action performing *Interstellar Overdrive* at Sound Techniques Studios and cut the film to a montage of performances from the UFO Club on 13 January 1968 and the 14 hour Technicolor Dream described as a fourteen-hour 'happening' at the Alexandra Palace in London, which took

place on 29 April 1967. Interviewed in *Record Mirror* a few weeks later Roger Waters tried to explain the relevance of Floyd's music to these events 'We play what we like and what we play is new. I suppose you could describe us as the house orchestra of this new movement because we're the only people doing what the fans want to hear. We're really part of the whole present pop movement. We're not, repeat not, an anti-group. In fact, we're very much in favour of a lot of things, including freedom and creativity, and doing what you want to do, but, of course, tempered by social conscience. We're not really anarchists. Our aim is not to create hallucinatory effects on our audiences. We want only to entertain. We link sounds together which are not usually linked and link lights which are not usually linked. We are relying a lot on our album to show what we're really trying to say. We try to develop. We don't have much time for people who just copy other artists, or get hold of an American record and just put it down, note by note.'

With such a strong visual story it was not long before the TV companies too began to take an interest in the wild and wonderful world of the underground scene. In late January 1967 Granada Television also filmed the band performing *Interstellar Overdrive* at the UFO club for the documentary series called *Scene Special*. The episode itself was entitled *It's So Far Out It's Straight Down* which may well have been a not so subtle dig at the quality of the music; but for the Floyd the only way was up. On 1 February 1968 the band turned fully professional.

The newly professional Floyd formally appointed a management company called Blackhill Enterprises to represent them. Managers Peter Jenner and Andrew King had formerly booked gigs for the band and were the driving force behind much of the early Floyd activity which included recording the first ever single *Arnold Layne*. In a reflection of the true spirit of the times Jenner and King later divided the ownership of Blackhill Enterprises equally between themselves and the group. Another early champion of the group was

American A&R man called Joe Boyd. Joe was keen to lure Blackhill into a deal with a pre-Doors Elektra records. Elektra was rejected as a label, but Boyd soldiered on offering the fledgling Polydor as an alternative. It was with Polydor in mind that the band recorded their first single *Arnold Layne* which was produced by Joe Boyd at Sound Techniques Studios in February 1967. Long before the days of pop video this catchy slice of psychedelia even had a promotional film to accompany it. Produced and directed by Derek Nice, this naïve little short film is basically shot in the fashionable Beatles style, featuring the four Floyd's larking around on a beach with a tailor's mannequin. When the film received its world première at the UFO club on 10 March 1967, no one could have realised that this unprepossessing film was the forerunner of some of the most intense audio visual experiences in rock music to ever make it onto celluloid.

Pink Floyd were captured performing at All Saints Church Hall, Notting Hill, London, in October 1966. The speed of colour film around that time resulted in about eighty-percent of live shots taken in artificial light at gigs being rejected, but Pink Floyd's use of early strobe effects exacerbated the problem.

Arnold Layne's progress towards Polygram was hijacked by the intervention of London Agent Bryan Morrison who steered the band towards the welcoming arms of EMI Records. With an interesting new single already recorded and ready to go EMI knew they were on to a winner. The band were equally happy to be signed to such a prestigious label which was universally recognised as the home of the Beatles.

A very 'English' song, *Arnold Layne* was inspired by a real-life incident encountered by Roger Waters and Syd Barrett in their home town of Cambridge. Syd and Roger's mothers both took in female student lodgers and their washing lines full of underwear were regularly raided by a local transvestite who struck at night. Syd explained the background to the song to Melody Maker in 1967. 'Well, I just wrote it. I thought *Arnold Layne* was a nice name, and



'I think young people should have a lot of fun. But I never seem to have any.'
– Syd Barrett



it fitted very well into the music I had already composed. I was at Cambridge at the time I started to write the song. I pinched the line about 'moonshine washing line' from Roger, our bass guitarist, because he has an enormous washing line in the back garden of his house. Then I thought, 'Arnold must have a hobby', and it went on from there. *Arnold Layne* just happens to dig dressing up in women's clothing. A lot of people do, so let's face up to reality. About the only other lyric anybody could object to is the bit about 'it takes two to know, takes two to know', and there's nothing smutty about that. But then, if more people like them dislike us, more people like the underground lot are going to dig us, so we hope they'll cancel each other out.'

The B-side was *Candy and a Current Bun*, another Barrett composition. This track was originally entitled *Let's Roll Another One* and EMI only consented to its release on the understanding that the title was changed. With the band still in its early days and still willing to toe the party line the name was duly altered. Despite the unusual subject matter of the A-side this first release under the band's new contract with EMI was to prove a surprise hit with the record buying public. The surprise element however was somewhat less intense in the offices of Blackhill Enterprises. It was they who, as Andrew King later revealed, had helped the single along with a little discreet chart rigging which hyped the song to a respectable No. 20 position in the singles charts. The decision to hype the single was a wise one given the snobby reaction to the lyrics which resulted in calls from some quarters that the single should be banned. The pirate radio station Radio London did formally ban the single; but it is debatable just how much effect a ban by an organisation which was itself banned had on sales of a single which was rigged to hit the charts in any event!

Roger Waters, Rick Wright and Syd Barrett all gave an extended interview at the time of the single's release. Roger took the lead 'Let's face it, the pirate stations play records that are much more "smutty"

than *Arnold Layne* will ever be. In fact, its only Radio London that have banned the record. The BBC and everybody else plays it. I think it's just different politics, not anything against us.' Rick Wright added his own perspective, 'I think the record was banned not because of the lyrics, because there's nothing there you can really object to, but because they're against us as a group and against what we stand for.' Barrett succinctly summed up the whole situation, 'It's only a business-like commercial insult anyway. It doesn't affect us personally.'

Fortunately *See Emily Play*, the follow up single to *Arnold Layne*, was less controversial and proved to be even more commercially successful. *See Emily Play* reached No. 6 in the charts, and is without doubt one of the finest psychedelic songs produced during the brief sixties flower-power era. It was written for a special concert the band gave at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in spring 1967 called Games for May, an event which is name-checked in the lyrics. Shortly afterwards *Record Mirror* ran a piece based on an interview with Roger Waters that touched on the event, 'We play what we like, and what we play is new. I suppose you could describe us as the movement's house orchestra because we were one of the first people to play what they wanted to hear. We're really part of the whole present pop movement, although we just started out playing something we liked. We're not an anti-group. In fact, we're very pro lots of things, including freedom and creativity, and doing what you want to do, but tempered by social conscience. We're not really anarchists. But we're in a very difficult position, because the sort of thing we do comes over best in concert, rather than in clubs or dance halls. We gave a concert a short while ago at the Royal Festival Hall, and although we learnt a lot from it, we also lost a lot of money on it. We had to give up a week's work in order to arrange everything, and so on. Games for May, as it was called, was on in the evening, and we went onto the stage in the morning to try and work out our act. Up till then we hadn't thought about what we were going to do. Even then we only got as far as

rehearsing the individual numbers and working out the lighting. So when it came to the time of the performance in the evening, we had no idea of what we were going to do.'

Games for May turned out to be a major milestone in the development of Pink Floyd, which marked the first signs of the care the band put into the sound quality of all of their live shows, but as Nick Mason recalled in an interview given at the time, there seems to have been a great deal less consideration for the music. 'We just took a lot of props on stage with us and improvised. Quite a bit of what we did went down quite well, but a lot of it got completely lost. We worked out a fantastic stereophonic sound system whereby the sound travelled round the hall in a sort of circle, giving the audience an eerie effect of being absolutely surrounded by this music. And, of course, we tried to help the effect by the use of our lighting. Unfortunately, it only worked for people sitting in the front of the hall. Another thing we found out from giving that concert was that our ideas were far more advanced than our musical capabilities, at that time, anyway. We made a lot of mistakes at that concert, but it was the first of its kind. And we, personally, learnt a lot from it. But it makes us feel good to know that what we are doing, what we have been doing for the past three years, has now been accepted, and has had a great effect upon the sort of thing other groups are doing now. It wasn't until February of this year that everything started happening for us and made us decide to turn professional, and life has been a bit chaotic for us since then. But it was worth the wait. Three years ago, no one knew what it was all about. But now the audience accepts us. We don't feel that we should try to educate the public. We don't want to push anything onto them. But if they accept what we're offering and they seem to be at the moment, then that's great. And we feel good because our ideas are getting across to a large number of people.'

Syd claimed *See Emily Play*, the single which evolved from Games for May was inspired by a vision he had after he inexplicably woke up in a wood one morning, but there was a real life muse behind this

piece, a fifteen-year-old girl nicknamed 'Far Out Em'. Emily Young was the daughter of Labour politician, Lord Kennet and a student at Holland Park school where she was pals with film director John Huston's daughter Anjelica. One night the pair witnessed an early Floyd gig at the Free School in Notting Hill and, afterwards, went back to band manager Peter Jenner's house, where they apparently shared a joint with Syd. Released on 16 June 1967 the charming psychedelic whimsy of the second single cemented the band's growing reputation as a singles act. It also meant that the band had neatly avoided the trap door marked 'one-hit wonders'. The time had now come to record an album.

The Piper at the Gates of Dawn was recorded in the spring and early summer of 1967 and released on 5 August 1967. The album was produced by EMI staff producer Norman Smith. Norman had worked successfully with the band on the *See Emily Play* single and had previously earned his spurs as engineer on the Beatles albums. As a veteran of the *Sgt. Pepper* sessions, Norman was used to experimental attitudes, but even he must have been puzzled by a band that had two distinct musical personalities. On one hand were the whimsical very English compositions that climbed the singles charts with ease, on the other side were the extended freak-outs that the band performed on stage.

In the 1 July 1967 edition of *New Musical Express* Roger Waters gave an interview in which he again attempted to explain the Pink Floyd phenomenon and its relationship to improvised music, again the Games for May concert was a point of reference. 'We recently played a concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, and that's usually where string quartets play. The people who came to see us there were a very mixed lot, some really way-out people with bare feet, and a few old women who always go to the Queen Elizabeth Hall no matter what's on. But mostly they were average men and women between seventeen and twenty-five, mixed with a few teeny-boppers. We are simply a pop group. But because we use light and colour in our





Pink Floyd in 1967.
Left to right: Nick Mason, Richard Wright, Syd Barrett and Roger Waters.

'Getting used to the studio and everything was fun, we freaked about a lot.'
– Syd Barrett

act, a lot of people seem to imagine that we are trying to put across some message with nasty, evil undertones. It sometimes makes it very difficult for us to establish any association with the audience. Apart from the few at the front, no one can really identify us. We're not rushing into anything. At the moment we want to build slowly and I think we're doing not too badly. The important thing is that we're doing what we want to do. We record the numbers we want, and fortunately they seem to be the ones that people want. No one interferes with us when we're in the studio. They just leave us, more or less, alone to get on with what we want. We listen to Radio London and the other stations, but we don't really concern ourselves with what other groups are doing. We'd like to play the major centres like Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow, doing our own two-hour show. You see, contrary to what some people think, it's not just the Southern audiences that we appeal to. In fact, the further North we go, the better the reception. We played in Belfast recently, and the reception there was great. The same thing happened when we played in Abergavenny. We had screamers and everything. It really astonished us.'

The 'screamers' were presumably drawn to Pink Floyd more by songs like, *Arnold Layne*, *See Emily Play*, *The Scarecrow*, *The Gnome* and *Bike*. These flower power driven songs however were in total contrast to the freaked out experimental sounds created in the live arena by the band. As a result the album also had to make room to feature the extended instrumental piece *Interstellar Overdrive* and the general weirdness of *Pow R Toc H*. The two styles sit together rather uncomfortably and Norman Smith had the difficult task of reconciling these apparently incompatible genres. The only time the two styles seemed to come together in one track was the album's opening track *Astronomy Domine*. This album is so steeped in psychedelia it could only have been made in 1967. The overall effect is one of almost palpable confusion as two completely different, and totally irreconcilable, musical personalities battle for supremacy. Not

surprisingly, the results are confusing, and by the standards of what was to come later, deeply disappointing. Nonetheless the album did find a measure of favour with the public of Great Britain and climbed to No. 6 in the charts, this time without any of Blackhill's 'help' along the way.

The title for the new album was taken from a chapter heading in Kenneth Grahame's wonderful children's book *The Wind in the Willows*, one of Syd Barrett's favourite books. The cover for *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* was based on a photograph by Vic Singh and in many respects was an archetypal Psychedelic era sleeve. It consists of a multiple lens image of the band calculated to achieve the LSD trip effect favoured on so many sleeves at the time.



A track-by-track review of

The Piper at the Gates of Dawn

Released 4 August 1967

As with the music, this record features album sleeve could only have been produced in 1967. The composition by photographer Vic Singh simply reeks of psychedelia, with the image of the band shot through a multiple lens to produce the desired and suitably way out effect. For the non-drug user the result was intended to simulate the distorted visions enjoyed by the legions of listeners who were supposedly out there enjoying a never ending succession of LSD trips. Presumably the tripping fraternity experienced multiples of the multiple image.

Astronomy Dominie (Barrett)

The album opens with *Astronomy Domine*, the first of eight Syd Barrett compositions on the album. Syd was not exactly a major science-fiction fan, admitting only to liking classic late 1950s/early 1960s films like *Quatermass* and *Journey Into Space* but little else

besides. Nonetheless this is a fine piece of early space rock and boasts some very graphic psychedelic poetry – pure lysergic Technicolor. Manager Peter Jenner has suggested that some of the lyrics were inspired by the pages of *The Observer Book of Planets* especially lines like the chanted ‘Jupiter and Saturn, Oberon, Miranda and Titania.’ Jenner’s is the wild, distorted voice recorded through a megaphone at the beginning of the track.

Lucifer Sam (Barrett)

The second track on the album is the cartoon-like *Lucifer Sam*. The track was slated as the subject of a possible animated film, but given the circumstances of Syd’s imminent breakdown, it was understandable that it never got made. The song is about a Siamese cat and is given a sinister tone by the rocking ‘secret agent’ riff that sounds like it might have been influenced by the James Bond *James Bond Theme*. Lucifer Sam was also allegedly a nickname of Roger Waters. It also includes a reference to a Cambridge girlfriend of Syd’s, Jenny Spires, and the album’s first references to the *I Ching*.

Matilda Mother (Barrett)

The third track on the album and the third successive Barrett composition. It was originally taken word for word from verse by Hilaire Belloc, the 19th-century, Anglo-French writer whose books *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts* and *Cautionary Tales for Children* were well regarded by Barrett. Indeed the first set of lyrics were taken from a poem called Jim and then re-written in the studio – however they still retain the style and spirit of Belloc.

Flaming (Barrett)

This track boasts more trippy lyrics that suggest the influence of the omnipresent LSD during this period. Again very much in a whimsical, fairy-story vein but full of that child-like Barrett mischief, with the line, ‘Yippee you can’t see me but I can see you.’

Pow R Toc H (Barrett/Mason/Waters/Wright)

A bizarre instrumental written jointly by all four members – both the band’s managers Andrew King and Peter Jenner suggest the title was just word sounds, onomatopoeia. Pow was certainly in youth culture common parlance at the time from comic books like Batman. Toc H might have related to the charity of the same name the values of whose mission statement – ‘committed to building a fairer society by working with communities to promote friendship and service, confront prejudice and practise reconciliation’ – would certainly have had a lot of resonance with members of the late-1960s UK alternative society and the band itself.

Take Up Thy Stethoscope and Walk (Waters)

Pow R Toc H is followed by the first Roger Waters composition to appear on a Pink Floyd album; *Take Up Thy Stethoscope and Walk*. This early Waters effort certainly doesn’t suggest any trace of the cynical, world-weary word-smith of a decade later on LPs like *Wish You Were Here* or *The Wall*. Roger seems quite happy to follow his leader and come up with some rhyming nonsense about a patient telling medics that he is still alive.

Interstellar Overdrive (Barrett/Mason/Waters/Wright)

The second group composition on the album and was the one number on the LP which captured the way the early Floyd sounded live on stage. It was an epic by the standards of the day running to nine minutes of instrumental experimentation. The coda is built around a riff supposedly based on the melody of a Burt Bacharach song, *My Little Red Book*, as interpreted by the US West Coast band Love. According to Peter Jenner, he’d been trying to hum the tune to Syd who then followed it on his guitar and eventually that infamous cyclical riff emerged. Barrett was very influenced by free music such as the British avant-garde outfit AMM and borrowed elements of his sound from their guitarist Keith Rowe which included the habit of

Pink Floyd backstage at London's Saville Theatre in October 1967.





rubbing metal objects up and down his guitar neck to produce truly cosmic sounds on the guitar.

The Gnome (Barrett)

Another Barrett composition and hardly qualifies as Shakespeare, but it is a funny innocent ditty that fitted in perfectly with the whole Syd aesthetic, and became part of the blueprint for the flower-power era. 'I want to tell you a story about a little man if I can, a gnome named Grimble Gromble'. JRR Tolkien, whose books became de rigueur reading for this era, springs to mind as one possible influence. It was no surprise that other bands that came within the Blackhill orbit such as Tyrannosaurus Rex would soon be writing and recording songs along these lines. Syd was understandably a huge influence on their leader, Marc Bolan.

Chapter 24 (Barrett)

The next track on the album and returns to lyrics which are inspired from *I Ching*, the Chinese *Book of Changes*, a 5000-year-old Taoist oracle. The book became very popular with late 1960s youth and Chapter 24 is *Fu, Return or Turning Point*. One translation of the book by Richard Wilhelm, published in 1951, seems to have been the one Barrett consulted – the guitarist lifting lines like 'all movements are accomplished in six stages and the seventh brings return' verbatim. He was probably turned on to the book by the bohemian mother of Cambridge friend Seamus O'Connell.

The Scarecrow (Barrett)

The ancient mysteries of the *I Ching* are left behind for *The Scarecrow*. The song is basically what it says on the tin – a wistful, melancholic ode to a scarecrow. A perfect evocation of the golden age of 1960s innocence and the fabled Summer of Love. The dreamy vision of the title is enhanced by the clip-cloppety percussion and Rick Wright's wispy keyboard fills. The short film which the band shot for Pathé

newsreel featuring *The Scarecrow* is the quintessential psychedelic romp and it's entirely typical of the values of the day. The film made by Pathé for cinema audiences has all the hallmarks of the sixties attitudes to music film making. The master plan for this film seems to have simply consisted of taking the band into the country and asking them to lark about for the camera. The results are predictably uninspiring... as is the music. Songs like *The Scarecrow* were in total contrast to the freaked-out experimental sound of the band on stage which was based around a stage show of hypnotic intensity developing the canvas of *Interstellar Overdrive* and the weirdness of instrumentals such as *Pow R Toc H*.

Bike (Barrett)

A magical blend of frivolity and melody closes the album on something of a high. Perhaps the most disconcerting and unexpected element here is the massed ranks of quacking toy ducks which close the song – this was one of Barrett's last recorded performances with the Floyd, but sound effects remained a major component of the music of the band for years to come.



Astronomy Domine has proved to be the most enduring composition on the album and was actually revived by Pink Floyd for the very last shows in 1994, but crucially the album was well received by the critics who included Richard Middleton writing in *Pop Music and the Blues*, 'An important characteristic of psychedelic pop is the use of electronic effects and electronically-created noise. One of the best examples of this is the work of the Pink Floyd, a British group well known for their multi-media shows and the vast amount of electronic equipment which they use. The Pink Floyd have developed an improvisational, 'free-form' style, in which traditional pop techniques are mixed with a multitude of electronic effects. It

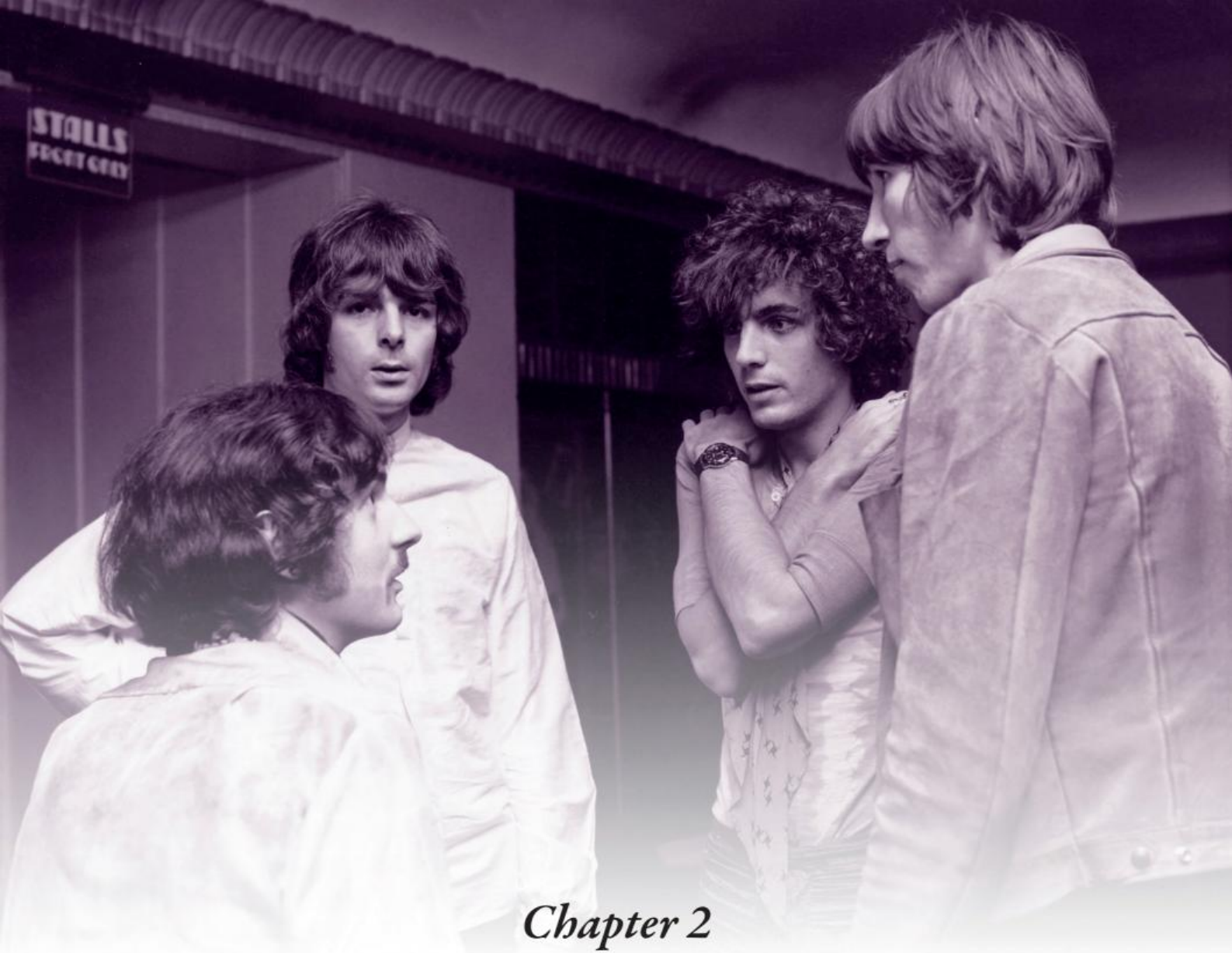
is significant that they share Jimi Hendrix's interest in space and astronomy, many of their songs carrying his obsession much further, both in explicitness and musical implications. So it is not surprising that in their music pop reaches possibly its most 'inhuman' form, man all but disappearing in the vastness of the cosmos. They are not always quite so extreme as this. *Pow R Toc H* alternates sections of chaotic noise with sections of expressive blues piano. Man is set in a non-human context but still exists – though chaos wins in the end. *Take Up Thy Stethoscope and Walk* seems to be a medical allegory, in which humanity is 'operated on' by horrific electronics and brain-battering noise, beat and ostinato. But here, at the end of the piece, vocal music appears and the patient asserts 'I'm alive'. And *Astronomy Domine*, as the title implies, goes so far as to explore man's control of his environment, his superiority to the cosmos.'

It is obvious from the weightiness of the reviews that the critics were beginning to take Floyd seriously and the band continued to take their obligations to their music and their audience just as seriously, as Roger Waters and Rick Wright confirmed in yet another interview with *Melody Maker* late in 1967. 'We're being frustrated at the moment by the fact that, to stay alive, we have to play at lots and lots of places and venues that are not really suitable. This can't last, obviously, and we're hoping to create our own venues. We all like our music. That's the only driving force behind us. All the trappings of becoming vaguely successful, like being able to buy bigger amplifiers, none of that stuff is really important. We've got a name of sorts now among the public so everybody comes to have a look at us and we get full houses. But the atmosphere in these places is very stale. There is no feeling of occasion. There is no nastiness about it, but we don't get re-booked on the club or ballroom circuit. What I'm trying to say is that the sort of thing we are trying to do doesn't fit into the sort of environment we are playing in. The supporting bands play Midnight Hour, and the records are all soul, then we come on. I've got nothing against the people who come and I'm not putting down

our audiences. But they have to compare everybody. So-and-so's group is better than everybody else. It's like marking exercise books. Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Tich get a gold star in the margin, or Tich – very good. On the club scene we rate about two-out-of-ten and "must try harder". We've had problems with our equipment and we can't get the PA to work because we play extremely loud. It's a pity because Syd writes great lyrics and nobody ever hears them. Maybe it's our fault because we are trying too hard. After all, the human voice can't compete with Fender Telecasters and double drum kits. We're a very young group, not in age, but in experience. We're trying to solve problems that haven't existed before. Perhaps we should stop trying to do our singles on stage. Even the Beatles, when they worked live, sounded like their records. But the sort of records we make today are impossible to reproduce on stage, so there is no point in trying. We still do *Arnold Layne*, and struggle through Emily occasionally. We don't think it's dishonest because we can't play live what we play on records. It's a perfectly okay scene. Can you imagine somebody trying to play *A Day in the Life*? Yet that's one of the greatest tracks ever made. A lot of stuff on our LP is completely impossible to do live. We've got the recording side together, and not the playing side. So what we've got to do now is get together a stage act that has nothing to do with our records, things like *Interstellar Overdrive*, which is beautiful, and instrumentals that are much easier to play. When the music clicks, even if it's only with ten or twelve people, it's such a gas. We're trying to play music of which it can be said that it has freedom of feeling. That sounds very corny, but it is very free. We can't go on doing clubs and ballrooms. We want a brand new environment, and we've hit on the idea of using a big top. We'll have a huge tent and go around like a travelling circus. We'll have a huge screen. 120-feet wide and forty-feet high inside, and project films and slides. We'll play the big cities or anywhere and become an occasion, just like a circus. It'll be a beautiful scene. It could even be the salvation of the circus! The thing is, I don't think

we can go on doing what we are doing now. If we do, we'll all be on the dole.'

The difficulties of attempting to put their music across to a hostile audience are there for all to see in the surviving footage of the BBC Two show *Look of the Week* . On 14 May, a couple of months before the new album's release, a short extract of *Pow R Toc H* and all of *Astronomy Domine* were performed by the band for this BBC Two review of the arts scene. At the conclusion of the live performance of the track the band were joined in the studio for a discussion of Floyd's music by a decidedly frosty Professor Hans Keller who looked on with obvious disdain and was blunt in his criticism of the band's music which he found repetitive and over-loud.



Chapter 2

THE END

Despite the disparagements of the establishment and often bemused dance hall crowds, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* continued to sell in respectable numbers and the band were also keen to capitalise on a growing following in America; but it was here that disaster struck.

In November 1967 Pink Floyd had just released their third single, *Apples and Oranges*, and it was during North American television appearances to publicise the single on *The Pat Boone Show* and *Dick Clark's American Bandstand* that Syd Barret first began to exhibit the signs of the total mental collapse which would soon engulf him. In the aftermath of a distinctly poor performance Boone's easy going

questions elicited only a blank stare and total silence from Syd. Even the most casual observer can clearly see how bad Syd's performance is in these two much bootlegged television clips in which a clearly embarrassed Rick Wright desperately tries to cover for the guitarist.

Not only was Syd performing badly both on stage and in the television studio the material he wrote had also taken a massive dip in quality. *Apples and Oranges* as a composition was well below par. Roger Waters blamed poor production by producer Norman Smith for the failure of this single, although it's difficult to see what could have been done to make it succeed. Barrett though was very pleased with the new release, talking about the new single the singer enthused 'It's unlike anything we've ever done before. It's a new sound. Got a lot of guitar in it. It's a happy song, and it's got a touch of Christmas. It's about a girl who I saw just walking around town, in Richmond. The apples and oranges bit is the refrain in the middle.' On the subject of the band's live performances Barrett indicated that the band were considering a major change of direction, 'We are going to play a lot more songs now. Our organist, Rick, is writing a lot of things, and I am still writing.'

Rick Wright was indeed writing at this time but the results were just as uninspiring as Syd's later offerings. *Paintbox* was the B-side of *Apples and Oranges* and represents Rick Wright's songwriting debut on vinyl. Wright was a less able wordsmith than Barrett, with whom he was closest, both socially and musically in the early Floyd. This is a pleasant enough tune best described as an early commentary on the music business, which later resurfaced with far greater bite on the *Wish You Were Here* album.

As Syd had promised there were more songs in the pipeline but sadly events would not justify Syd's optimism. The next projected single *Vegetable Man* was considered too poor even to release, and the accompanying promotional film didn't see the light of day for another thirty years when it surfaced briefly in a BBC documentary with some rather telling commentary by Peter Jennings, who

described how the piece had been literally thrown together on the spot as a description of Syd himself. Only six months on from recording cheerfully wistful songs like *The Scarecrow* and *Bike*, Barrett's vision had turned extremely bleak as was suggested by the disturbing title of Syd's new offering *Scream Thy Last Scream Woman With a Casket*, which only he could have considered a possible single. By late 1967 Syd was continuing to fall apart and his last significant contribution to Pink Floyd was *Jugband Blues*, but there was very little in this slight composition to suggest that Pink Floyd might be about to arrest the creative decline which was now gripping the band. Syd gave one of his last interviews as a member of Pink Floyd to *Melody Maker* on 9 December 1967. Also present were Roger Waters and managers Andrew King and Peter Jenner. The four had just finished watching the promotional film of *Jugband Blues* which had been shot in order to air in yet another magazine programme. When he spoke to *Melody Maker* Barrett first addressed the thorny issue of the failure of *Apples and Oranges* to dent the charts, 'I couldn't care less really. All we can do is make records which we like. If the kids don't then they won't buy it. All middle men are bad.' Manager Peter Jenner was quick to interrupt and qualify Syd's words. 'The group has been through a very confusing stage over the past few months and I think this has been reflected in their work. You can't take four people of this mental level, they used to be architects, an artist, and even an educational cyberneticist, give them big success and not expect them to get confused. But they are coming through a sort of de-confusing period now. They are not just a record group. They really pull people in to see them and their album has been terrifically received in this country and America. I think they've got a lot of tremendous things ahead of them. They are really only just starting.'

Jenner was clearly papering over the cracks. Although the band's management clearly still had faith in Syd and his ability to pull through, the feeling inside the band was very different. With Syd deteriorating fast and looking increasingly like he was about to take



Pink Floyd in 1967.

*'When we parted I had written everything for the group.
My leaving sort of evened things out within the group.'*

– Syd Barrett



the fledgling band's career with him, the remaining Floyds knew that something clearly had to be done.

With Syd now reaching crisis point Pink Floyd needed a back up singer and guitarist in order to keep functioning during live performances. Finding the additional singer and guitarist was relatively easy. David Gilmour had been a pal of Syd's from their teens in Cambridge. The two were firm friends and had actually gone busking round Europe together. Gilmour had learned his craft in local Cambridge band Jokers Wild who had actually performed alongside The Pink Floyd and a fledgling folk singer called Paul Simon at a birthday party in Cambridge during 1966; not a bad line up by any standards.

Early in 1968 Gilmour was duly drafted in as a fifth member to provide on stage cover and support for the increasingly unstable front man, initially at least there was a genuine intention that the two friends would work side by side in the band. The new look Pink Floyd first performed together as a five-piece at the Aston University on 12 January 1968, but after just five gigs as a five-piece it was resolved that Syd was to be allowed to simply drift out of the picture. Syd performed his final gig with The Pink Floyd on Hastings Pier on 20 January 1968. En-route to pick up Syd for the sixth gig as a five-piece at Southampton University, on 26 January 1968, a spur of the moment decision was taken not to bother stopping for the increasingly difficult guitarist. It was clearly convenient that Gilmour was already in place as guitarist and singer which made the obvious decision all the easier.

Filling the gap left by Barrett the writer proved to be a bigger challenge that took far longer to fully conquer. Initial thoughts were that Barrett would take on a role in which he would become, in Gilmour's words, 'a kind of Brian Wilson figure' contributing material for the studio which the others would then perform live on stage. Sadly, the rapid decline in Syd's mental condition ruled out even this possibility. The other members of Pink Floyd have all at

various times described the bizarre experience of trying to learn a song called *Have You Got It Yet?* with Syd changing the chords each consecutive time he played the song as he unveiled the new piece to his increasingly concerned colleagues.

On taking over his friend's place in the band David Gilmour was faced with the awkward task of performing a set comprising mainly Syd's material. This was embarrassing enough in the live setting where Syd would occasionally turn up in the crowd seemingly just to stare blankly at his friend, an experience which Gilmour understandably recalled with unease in a much later *Melody Maker* interview with Chris Welch. 'It took a long time for me to feel part of the band after Syd left. It was such a strange band, and very difficult for me to know what we were doing. People were very down on us after Syd left. Everyone thought Syd was all the group had, and dismissed us. They were hard times. Even our management, Blackhill, believed in Syd more than the band. It really didn't start coming back until *Saucerful of Secrets* and the first Hyde Park free concert. The big kick was to play for our audiences at Middle Earth. I remember one terrible night when Syd came and stood in front of the stage. He stared at me all night long. Horrible!'

Almost as bad as being confronted by Syd was the unavoidable need for Gilmour to actually mime to Barrett's material. On 19 February 1968 RTBF the Belgian television channel were due to film a number of Floyd tracks that had originally been performed by Barrett. The rather painful footage which came out of the session features the new Gilmour line up miming to the backing track of *Astronomy Domine*, *Apples and Oranges*, *The Scarecrow*, *Paintbox* and *See Emily Play*. With the exception of *Corporal Clegg* all of the material had actually been recorded with Syd still in the band. It's small wonder that Gilmour seems to be somewhat detached from the proceedings. The whole feel is tentative, the performance is unconvincing and Gilmour still felt uncomfortable over thirty years later when he was interviewed for the BBC. With his usual flair for

understatement, Gilmour described the whole period as 'difficult and very odd'. At the time of the RTBF recordings the band hid their embarrassment over Syd's absence from *See Emily Play* by using their instruments as cricket bats in a game played with an invisible ball. Quite what a Belgian TV audience would have made of it all was anyone's guess.

The Gilmour version of Floyd were clearly far more comfortable handling the Barrett material in live performance. *Flaming* was one Barrett composition that was occasionally performed by the new line up during 1968. It was performed for two French television specials in September and October 1968.

In the surviving footage from ORTF 2 for the music programmes *Samedi et Compagnie* and *Tous En Forme* the group certainly looks more convincing and a good deal more comfortable performing Syd's material in the live situation. Also performed in 1968 for the RTBF cameras was a tentative stab at a new composition, *Corporal Clegg*. Viewing the promotional film again from a distance of almost forty years it's astonishing to see just how far Pink Floyd would ultimately travel; not just in the quality of the material but also in the quality of presentation. There is an uncertain atmosphere to the music and the performance, this is clearly a group who do not yet have the confidence to command their environment. It's amazing the difference a few months can make and Floyd were in much better form when the cameras of German broadcaster ARD caught up with the new line up in Rome where they performed a quite breathtaking rendition of *Interstellar Overdrive*. This land mark performance finally stamped the credentials of the new line up on the older material.

Another piece which was performed regularly for the cameras around this time was *Let There Be More Light*. At this point in their career the group were definitely casting around for material and had to cover the huge gap left by Syd. The quality of the compositions is understandably patchy and it's interesting to note how few even

made it into the stage set. At the time, the band had a great deal of misplaced faith in this undistinguished track. It has to be said that *Let There Be More Light* is an example of the mediocre standard of a number of the compositions which emerged early in 1968. The numerous films of live performances from the French archives all serve to illustrate why the track which disappeared from the set in 1969 was never revived.

Back in the late 1960s few could have known that Syd's departure from Pink Floyd would become only a footnote in the band's history. Since that time they have gone on to become one of the most highly-regarded bands in the world, and are true rock icons. Join us again to continue Pink Floyd's tumultuous journey to super-stardom in the next instalment of Music Legends Special Editions – *Pink Floyd 1968–1971*.



PINK FLOYD

THE SYD BARRETT YEARS

**MUSIC
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