

A MODEST, UNASSUMING CHAP HAS GUIDED ONE OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST BANDS THROUGH 37 YEARS OF UNTOLD TURMOIL – AND WRITTEN SOME DARN FINE SONGS AND PLAYED SOME STONKING GUITAR SOLOS ALONG THE WAY. AS THE PINK FLOYD LEGEND APPROACHES HIS 60TH BIRTHDAY, MICHAEL HEATLEY KICKS OFF THE CELEBRATIONS BY OFFERING THREESCORE REASONS TO ADORE DAVID GILMOUR...

# Diamond DAVID

**T**he recent re-emergence of Pink Floyd in a one-off reunion for Live 8 reminded the world just what a great group they were – and reminded guitarists what an unique player David Gilmour still is. Recruited to the band in 1968 as a 'musical elastoplast' to keep them together in a period when original frontman Syd Barrett was rapidly coming off the rails, he found himself effectively fronting the group on his friend's departure. It was a challenge far greater than Roger Waters' defection a decade and a half later, and one he negotiated with surprising ease – and stickability has been his watchword ever since.

Gilmour's leadership of the band after the often edgy relationship with Waters finally crumbled in the mid '80s has been praised and criticised in equal measure. But whatever opinion may hold sway of the last incarnation of Pink Floyd, he has achieved the unlikely double of leading a world famous rock band while retaining the personal anonymity to walk down any main street in Britain without being mobbed or harassed.

As for his guitar playing, David ('not Dave, please!') has established himself as a master of the Strat without the need for excess of any kind. His style will never be as flamboyant as a Hendrix, his earliest hero, or as pointedly neo-classical as a Blackmore, yet it is every bit as much a signature sound. As he gears up to his 60th birthday early next year, he promises to unleash a long-awaited third solo

album on his adoring public. In this humble tribute, we present 60 reasons – one for every year! – to love Mr Gilmour.

**1 HE CREATED ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS INTROS IN ROCK**, the four-note riff to *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*, 'mucking about' on his Strat. It's nine minutes – count them – before a voice is heard, further cementing the intro and the track's epic status.

**2 HE'S A DISTINCTLY ENGLISH ROCK STAR**, with very little discernible US influence on his style or image (though he once admitted 'Eddie Van Halen has done a few things I like'), and makes no attempt to be 'with it'. He's quite happy living quietly on his country estate with his growing family. In 1978, when asked why he hadn't followed other rock stars of the time into tax exile, he explained 'I'm not keener on paying tax than anyone else, but my freedom's not for sale.'

**3 HE RECOGNISED SYD BARRETT AS A GENIUS**, even though he had to watch his friend's stability crumble. Gilmour was invited to the recording session for the band's second single, *See Emily Play*, and recalls even then that Syd didn't even recognise him. 'He looked through you. He wasn't quite there.'

Since then, he's ensured Syd has benefited from royalties generated by five songs included on the *Echoes* compilation and *Astronomy Domine*,

performed on the 1994 tour and later released as part of the album *Pulse*.

**4 HE KISSED AND MADE UP WITH WATERS IN 2005**, even though he once described him as 'not a generous-spirited person' – but few realised that he had asked the bassist to rejoin nearly a decade earlier to perform *Dark Side Of The Moon*. He insists it was a genuine offer, while conceding that 'there's a vast difference between having to sit in the studio and having someone come on, play a bit of bass and sing...'

**5 HE REVELS IN ANONYMITY** – a fact that probably helped Pink Floyd survive the loss of first Barrett and then Waters. The band once boasted that they mingled with the crowds while leaving a sellout gig at New York's Madison Square Garden and weren't accosted once. A press advertisement of the time used the backs of their heads to press home the point that music this good could afford to be 'faceless'.

**6 HE'S TURNED DOWN A FORTUNE** to take the Floyd out on a memorial tour, knocking back a rumoured \$150 million offer for the 're-formed' band to play the States. 'It's completely mad and we won't do it,' said Gilmour. 'The idea for Live 8 was a one-off.'

And when, as with Live Aid, Live 8 artists saw their post-concert sales figures skyrocket, Gilmour was first to urge artists and record companies to donate