

## DAVID GILMOUR

### *On An Island: taking it easy, the Pink Floyd way*

By David Sinclair

It is hard to know quite where David Gilmour fits in as a solo act. Neither a celebrity showman like Mick Jagger or Paul McCartney, nor a wandering troubadour in the Van Morrison or Mark Knopfler mould, he is a curiously anonymous superstar without portfolio. But whatever he is, he is most definitely not a man given to sudden stylistic lurches or leaps in the dark.

Much as you might expect, his first solo album for 22 years operates within a broadly similar musical framework to that of his work at the helm of Pink Floyd. There is the slightly menacing build-up of neo-symphonic sounds and clanging bells at the start of *Castellorizon*, which incorporates his latest thinly disguised rewrite of that guitar intro to *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*. Then comes the title track, one of several numbers that boast plenty of reassuringly familiar ingredients – the measured tempo, the clusters of scalpel-sweet guitar notes, the precise-

ly enunciated vocal, the long, languid arrangement – but which somehow lack the magisterial clout of the Floyd in full flow.

The best moments come when Gilmour, aided by his lyric writing collaborator (and wife) Polly Samson, takes an occasional detour down the road less travelled, notably on *This Heaven*, a delightful, almost sleazy, jazz/blues shuffle featuring Georgie Fame on Hammond organ. “So break the bread and pour the wine/I need no blessing, but I’m counting mine,” Gilmour sings before cutting loose with a string of perfectly judged blues licks. Following hard on its heels, *Then I Close My Eyes* starts with a tantalising few phrases of folk guitar, before melting into a mellow piece of instrumental mood music which could pass muster as the soundtrack to an obscure arthouse movie. Like all the numbers, it is dispatched with an unhurried air of calm professionalism, a carefully refined mode of expression that protects and cocoons this singular man’s art rather than exposing any bare wires.

*On An Island* is on EMI