

first night

Gilmour's ascent is touching the Floyd

Pop David Gilmour

Albert Hall
★★★★★

DAVID SINCLAIR

THE Pink Floyd reunion at Live 8 last year was not enough to revive the group. But it has propelled David Gilmour's solo career to new heights and reawakened an Olympian performing ambition in the man now described, with good reason, on the ticket as "The voice and guitar of Pink Floyd".

The first half of this show was given over to a performance of his third solo album, *On An Island*, which this year sailed to the top of the chart in the week of his 60th birthday.

From the opening bars of *Castellorizon*, the spiritual and musical links to the Floyd legacy were evident, as clanging church bells and assorted sound effects gave way to Gilmour's celestial guitar tone,

ringing round the hall like a reveille.

However, left to his own devices, Gilmour tends to hand over the reins to the more mellifluous side of his muse, and songs such as *The Blue* and his forthcoming single *Smile* hinged on supremely graceful melodies sketched with a delicate, acoustic touch. David Crosby and Graham Nash, no less, were on hand to sing harmony vocals, while Robert Wyatt arrived to perform his cornet solo on *Then I Close My Eyes*. The band, which featured Phil Manzanera on guitar, Rick

Wright on keyboards and Dick Parry on saxophone, not only played superbly, but also contributed to a gathering sense of occasion as the show moved into the second half.

Like an ocean liner slowly yet inexorably building up momentum, the band now set off with *Shine on You Crazy Diamond*. Combining a magisterial performance with an air of calm humility, Gilmour measured out his symphonic blues guitar lines with unearthly precision as they negotiated a sequence of less exposed Floyd songs, including *Inside Out*, *Coming Back to Life* and *High Hopes*.

The centrepiece of the show was an epic performance, in full, of *Echoes*. The lightshow, which was tremendous throughout, went into overdrive. Lasers bounced at crazy angles off mirrors, while strobes placed all around the hall went off like tracer fire.

Meanwhile, dry ice welled up from the floor and billowed down in thick clouds from the

BRIAN RASIC / REX FEATURES



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ceiling, engulfing the audience in the stalls such that, at one point, only their heads were visible, poking through the mist-like a field of alien eggs.

As if such theatrical and

musical splendour were not enough, David Bowie then arrived to perform an encore of *Arnold Layne* and to share the vocal with Gilmour on *Comfortably Numb*, bringing the

curtain down on a show that not only echoed, but surely rivaled, the glories of Pink Floyd themselves.

The tour continues at the Albert Hall tonight

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