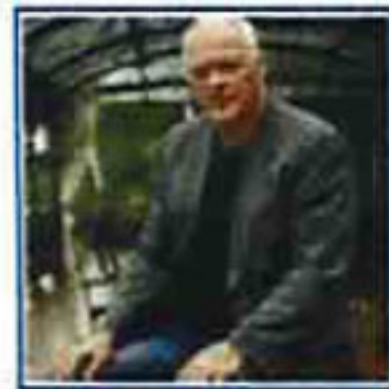




Former British Pink Floyd band member David Gilmour poses aboard his studio boat the "Astoria" on the River Thames in London, on Wednesday, Aug. 13, 2008. (AP Photo/Joel Ryan)



David Gilmour says thanks, Gdansk on new live CD

By JILL LAWLESS

LONDON (AP) — David Gilmour is sorry to disappoint, but there will be no Pink Floyd reunion. He's having too much fun on his own.

The British rock icon raised fans' hopes when the band performed at the Live 8 charity concert in London in 2005. It was the first time in almost a quarter of a century that Gilmour and estranged bandmate Roger Waters had appeared onstage together, and the atmosphere was electric.

But once was enough, Gilmour says.

The gig itself was "excellent, really enjoyable," said the 62-year-old guitarist and singer.

"The rehearsals were less enjoyable. The rehearsals convinced me it wasn't something I wanted to be doing a lot of," Gilmour said, speaking from the Astoria, his houseboat-cum-recording studio on the River Thames.

He has a famously testy relationship with bassist and singer Waters, who walked away from Pink Floyd in 1985.

"There have been all sorts of farewell moments in people's lives and careers which they have then rescinded, but I think I can fairly categorically say that there won't be a tour or an album again that I take part in," said Gilmour.

"It isn't to do with animosity or anything like that. It's just that I've done that. I've been there, I've done it."

Gilmour's latest project is a solo album and tour, captured on "David Gilmour Live in Gdansk," a double concert album and DVD to be released Sept. 23 on Columbia Records.

Recorded during the final date of Gilmour's 2006 "On An Island" tour, it's as meaty a package as you'd expect from a prog-rock colossus.

There's the concert's monumental backdrop of the Polish shipyards where the trade union Solidarity was founded in 1980. There's a crackerjack band that includes Pink Floyd keyboard player Richard Wright and Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera. And there's a 40-piece string section from the Baltic Philharmonic Symphony to enhance Gilmour's blend of classic rock, jazz and blues influences.

The discs include a fan-friendly mix of solo material, much of it from the "On An Island" album, and venerable Floyd songs: "High Hopes," "Comfortably Numb," "Shine On You Crazy Diamond" and the 25-minute "Echoes," which Gilmour said was "the highlight of the show."

"It's wonderful to have that huge catalog of songs to pick and choose through. We were doing songs I've never done. There are several that haven't been played for 30-odd years. And some real old favorites."

Gilmour says he's happy these days to play the old Floyd songs.

"I don't like the idea of going out without a new album, without some new music to play," he said. "But people have come long distances and paid a lot of money to see a show. I want to give them a bit of what they expect and will enjoy."

Gilmour didn't originally intend the album to be a record of a single show. He had recorded every night of the tour, but found "a lot of the tracks that seemed to be the best ones were coming from this show in Gdansk."

The concert was organized to mark the 26th birthday of Solidarity, the union that rose from the docks of Gdansk to topple Poland's Communist regime, and drew 50,000 fans.

"It had a special resonance to it. The place, this sort of rather derelict shipyard, was really exciting. It was the last show of our whole tour," Gilmour said. "And there were also about 10 times as many people as we'd played to on any of the other dates on the tour."

The album — like most of Gilmour's work for the last two decades — was mixed and assembled aboard the Astoria, moored along a tranquil stretch of the River Thames near London.

The boat was built a century ago, at the then-enormous cost of 20,000 pounds, for Fred Karno, a music-hall impresario whose proteges included the young Charlie Chaplin. Gilmour bought it in 1986, seduced by the Edwardian elegance of its mahogany-paneled cabins, marble bathrooms and mother-of-pearl light switches.

"I hadn't really thought about using it as a studio," he said, looking around the tiny musicians' room, crammed with drum kit and guitars. "It was just too beautiful to miss out on."

He soon began to use it as a music-making base. The post-Waters Pink Floyd albums "The Division Bell" and "A Momentary Lapse of Reason" were recorded here, as were Gilmour's solo albums, including "On An Island."

The vessel's cramped cabins are packed with high-end recording equipment and assorted instruments, including the black Fender Stratocaster that has been Gilmour's stalwart guitar since 1970.

Fender has just produced a signature guitar in his honor, the David Gilmour Black Strat. It's one of those things — like a floating recording studio — that you get when you're a rock legend.

Gilmour notes drily that there are two versions of the guitar. One has all the same knicks and bashes as Gilmour's own — "the distressed jeans model." Then there's a pristine instrument buyers will have to bash up themselves.

"Which will cost less," Gilmour said. "Because it's more work distressing it."

Casual in jeans, black T-shirt and jacket, the gray-haired Gilmour is a low-key rock star, who seems to relish his role as family man — he has eight children from his two marriages.

He says he plans to make a new album, but for now he's content to take it easy.

"I think if you are going to get on in this career or any other career you've got to be fairly ruthless while you're climbing up to the to the point in the career you want to get to," he said. "That moment is long past for me. I don't have to scramble over the bodies to reach the top anymore."

He says music is "one of the important things in my life, but it's not the only thing. My family are more important. If I had to give one up, I wouldn't be giving my family up."