

WHAT GOES ON

Heart and soul: Rick Wright, the Floyd's unassuming but integral keys man, in '60s oil wheel majesty.

Richard Wright, 1943-2008

PINK FLOYD'S KEYBOARD-IST LOST HIS FIGHT WITH CANCER ON SEPTEMBER 15. BY MARK BLAKE

Forever cast as the 'quiet one' in the band, Rick Wright was an integral, if underrated contributor to Pink Floyd's signature sound, both with Syd Barrett in the '60s and his successor, David Gilmour, in the '70s and beyond.

Born in Hatch End, Harrow, north-west London, as a young Humphrey Lyttelton fan Wright learned piano, trombone and trumpet, later declaring that he "wasn't into pop music at all".

As an architecture student in London, he met his future bandmates Roger Waters and Nick Mason in 1962. By 1964 the three, with Wright on keyboards, were playing in a group with guitarists Bob Klose and Waters' childhood friend from Cambridge, Roger 'Syd' Barrett. When Klose left, the band signed to EMI, and adopted the name Pink Floyd (shortened from the original The Pink Floyd Sound).

Their debut album, 1967's *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, is recognised as a flagship for the talents of frontman Barrett. However, Wright's contribution was also significant. He added his own distinctly English vocals to some of the material, while the organ (best sampled on the group's second hit

single See Emily Play) took the role normally favoured by a lead guitarist.

Wright's musicality was often seen as a saving grace during some of Floyd's more outré musical experiments. When Barrett's behaviour became unpredictable, co-manager Peter Jenner believed that Wright, rather than Waters, would be best suited to succeed him as the band's principal writer. Barrett's successor Gilmour helped steer Pink Floyd towards a more conventional sound, and *Echoes*, from 1971's *Meddle* was the perfect union of Gilmour and Wright, their shared lead vocals blending, as Gilmour put it, "telepathically".

Wright delivered some of his best work on 1973's *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, including *The Great Gig In The Sky* and *Us And Them*, a song regularly praised by Waters as one of his favourite Floyd tracks.

Wright co-wrote the lion's share of 1975's *Wish You Were Here*, but by the late '70s turmoil in his private life seemed to sap his creativity. A solo album, *Wet Dream*, in 1978 came and went. An ongoing personality clash with Waters found him sidelined during the making of 1979's *The Wall*.

Wright acquiesced to Waters and agreed to leave the band, playing as a

salaried session musician on *The Wall* tour. A collaboration with ex-Fashion frontman Dave Harris led to the album *Identity*, released under the name Zee in 1984. But within two years Wright was back in the now Waters-less Pink Floyd, performing on the comeback album, *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*, and its supporting tour. Wright was returned to full-band privileges for 1994's *The Division Bell*, co-writing five songs, including *Wearing The Inside*

Out, in which he sang candidly of his own personal troubles. A second solo album, 1996's *Broken China*, was a downbeat affair that tackled the subject of his third wife's depression, and included a guest appearance from Sinéad O'Connor.

A shy, sometimes reluctant interviewee, Wright was nevertheless forthcoming on the subject of Pink Floyd's music, of which he remained justifiably proud.

Wright played on David Gilmour's 2006 solo album, *On An Island*, and accompanying tour, where he regularly received a standing ovation. He described the tour "as the happiest I have ever been on". Gilmour applauded the "heart and soul of Rick's playing" and, following his death, paid tribute to a "gentle private man... a musical partner and a friend".

"He said he 'wasn't into pop music at all'."