

OBITUARIES

Rick Wright

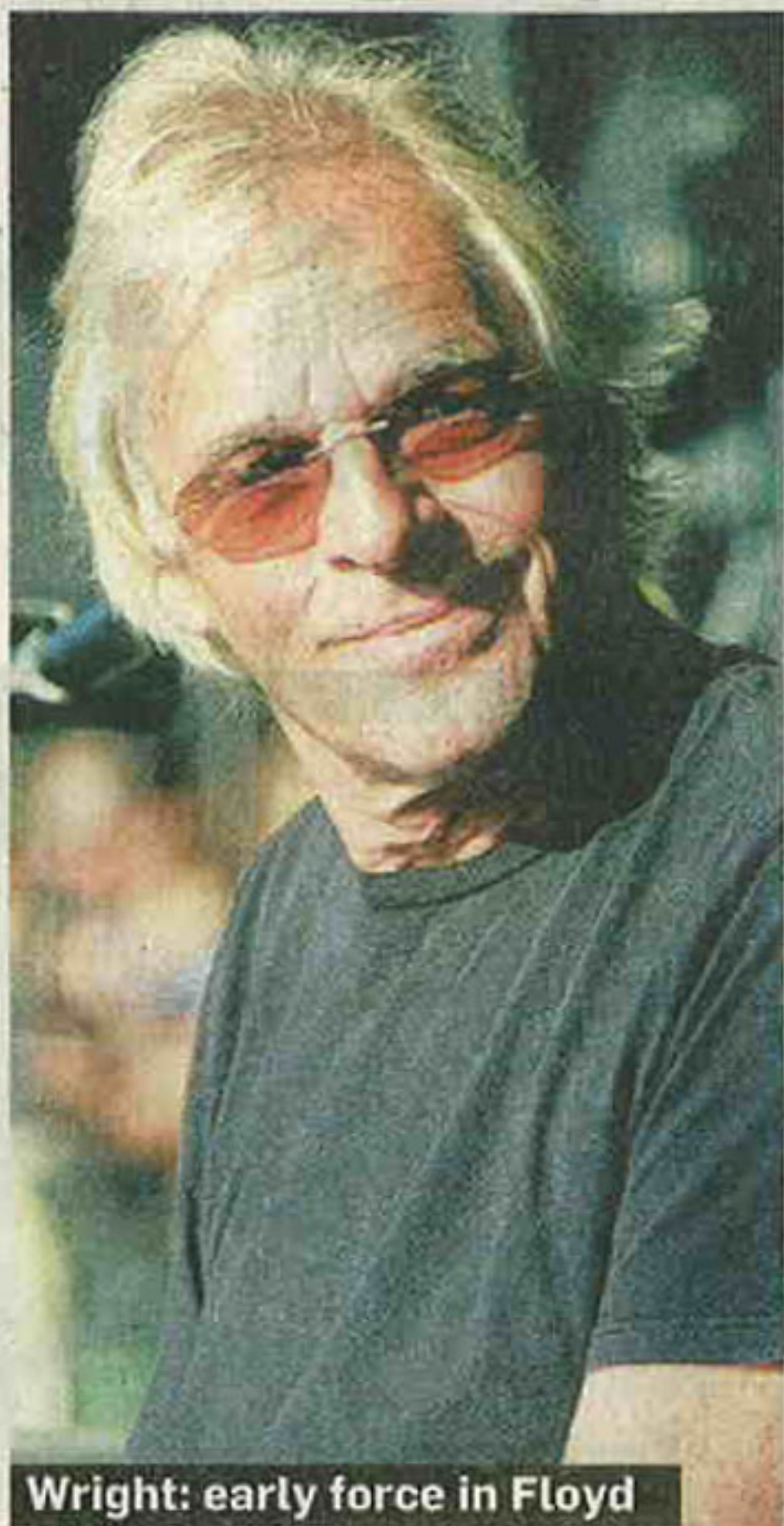
Pink Floyd keyboard player who helped define the group's platinum sound

Rick Wright, who died on Monday from cancer aged 65, was keyboard player and occasional singer and songwriter with the rock band Pink Floyd; he was responsible for the richly textured, dreamy keyboard layers that defined the mature Floyd style.

In the early days of Pink Floyd, Wright was seen as second only to Syd Barrett as the musical force in the group. But as Roger Waters, another founder member, consolidated his hold over its musical direction, tensions rose to the surface. In 1979 Waters fired Wright and allowed him to play only as a sideman during live concerts for the album *The Wall*. Ironically, these spectacular but ruinously expensive gigs resulted in a net financial loss that had to be borne by the remaining members of the band.

In 1981 the band members learnt that the company that managed their wealth was heading for collapse through a combination of inept management and fraud, leaving them facing potential tax bills for 83% of money that they no longer had. Wright claimed that Waters used the crisis as a pretext to remove him altogether. "What he said was 'Either you leave or' — because he'd written *The Wall* — 'I'm going to scrap everything we've done'," Wright recalled. "There was this big personality clash between me and Roger, and at the end of the day I realised that I couldn't work with this person anyway — so I left."

Without Wright, the band recorded one more album (*The Final Cut*, 1983)



Wright: early force in Floyd

and limped on amid growing acrimony until 1985, when Waters himself resigned. By 1988 Wright had resumed his place as a full band member with Nick Mason and David Gilmour.

The group continued to record and tour as Pink Floyd — after winning a lengthy legal battle over the rights to the name with Waters. They made two more albums, including the massively successful *The Division Bell*, for which Wright co-wrote five songs and sang lead vocals on *Wearing the Inside Out*. The subsequent tour was the most lucrative in rock history up until that time.

Pink Floyd fans became excited when, in July 2005, Roger Waters agreed to rejoin the rest of the band for Live 8 in Hyde Park, the first time the classic lineup had performed together in public since 1981. When Waters told the crowd: "It's actually quite emotional standing up here with these three guys after all these years," hopes were raised that they might patch up their differences and embark on a tour.

Wright was quick to prick the balloon. "Everyone who loves Pink Floyd wants it to happen. But I don't feel I need it, not musically and not personally," he remarked. "Maybe if Roger comes back as a different person — charming and nice, with really good ideas."

Rick Wright owned a house in France and enjoyed relaxing on a 65ft yacht that he kept in the Virgin Islands.

— *The Daily Telegraph*