

# Grapevine

## Syd Barrett — 1946-2006

Roger Keith "Syd" Barrett, founding member of Pink Floyd and an almost mythical recluse since being fired from the group in 1968, died July 7, 2006, at his home in Cambridge, England, from complications related to diabetes. He was 60 years old.

Barrett was born Jan. 6, 1946, in Cambridge, the youngest of five children. The first instrument he played, the banjo, was given to him by his father. He later took up guitar and played in the Cambridge bands Geoff Mott And The Mottoes and The Hollering Blues; he also played acoustic guitar around town with another friend, David Gilmour. He was given the nickname "Syd" in reference to Cambridge drummer Sid Barrett, adding a "y" to differentiate himself from the other musician.

After attending Cambridge's College Of Arts And Technology, Barrett moved to London, studying art at Camberwell Art School. He then joined a group started by yet another Cambridge student, Roger Waters. After some lineup changes, the group settled into a four-piece outfit, with Barrett on guitar, Waters on bass, Rick Wright on keyboards, and Nick Mason on drums. Barrett named the group The Pink Floyd Sound (the "The" and "Sound" were later dropped), taking it from the names of two American blues musicians, Pink Anderson and Floyd Council.

The band quickly moved on musically from their R&B roots and became leaders in London's burgeoning underground music scene, holding court at the legendary psychedelic club UFO. In 1967, they signed a contract with EMI and released their first single, "Arnold Layne," which reached #20 on the U.K. charts, despite a ban due to its subject matter (the title character being a transvestite who steals women's underwear); their second, "See Emily Play," reached #6. The singles and the bulk of the group's debut album, *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* (taken from a chapter title in the children's book *The Wind In The Willows*), were written by Barrett, who was the group's dominant artistic voice during their early years.

*Piper* reached #6 on the U.K. charts and was hailed as an innovative mix of psychedelic music, fairytale whimsy and a decided British sensibility. But by the time of its release, Barrett was



already evincing signs of mental instability. As the band increased in popularity, he began to complain about record company pressures and became less social with his friends and associates. He was also regularly consuming large amounts of marijuana, hash and LSD. During a brief tour of America that year, Barrett would simply stop playing during shows, and during TV appearances he would refuse to mime.

As a result of Barrett's increasingly erratic behavior, Gilmour was added to the lineup, and Barrett was subsequently dropped in early 1968. He then pursued a solo career, releasing two albums, *The Madcap Laughs* (which reached #40 in the U.K.) and *Barrett*, in 1970. In contrast to Pink Floyd, Barrett's albums feature stark production and a vocal delivery that just barely seems to stay on key. He made a few radio appearances promoting the albums (later released on *Peel Sessions* and *The Radio One Sessions*) and a live appearance at London's Music and Fashion Festival June 6, 1970. Back in Cambridge, he formed the band Stars with bassist Jack Monck and former Pink Fairies drummer John "Twink" Alder in 1972, but the group disbanded after a few shows. His final live appearance is believed to have been at a poetry reading in Cambridge in 1973; his final recording sessions (which remain unreleased) were held in 1974.

In the early '70s Barrett alternated between living in London and in the basement of his mother's home in Cambridge. The last time the members of Pink Floyd saw him was when he dropped in on a recording session dur-

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## GRAPELEAVES



**News & notes:** Garth Hudson, former keyboardist for The Band, will make a leap into the jazz world this fall with a solo release for the Savoy Jazz label... Former McAuley Schenker Group (MSG) frontman Robin McAuley has replaced Jim Jamison as the new lead vocalist for Survivor... Grateful Dead Productions (GDP) has appointed Rhino Entertainment as the exclusive manager of its entire repertoire of intellectual property. Under the license agreement, Rhino assumes primary responsibility for the full range of Grateful Dead assets, recorded and otherwise, including the archive of unreleased live concert recordings, the band's Web site (dead.net), all related direct-to-consumer and merchandise businesses, digital initiatives and select band-related name and likeness licensing. The agreement does not include Grateful Dead music publishing, which will continue to be managed exclusively by Ice Nine... Pete Townshend's solo catalog, which currently includes several out-of-print titles, will be reissued Aug. 29 by Hip-O/UME. Most of the titles will feature new bonus tracks... Nashville/Legacy's upcoming Waylon Jennings box set, *Nashville Rebel*, will include a previously unreleased duet with Johnny Cash recorded in 1978 titled "The Greatest Cowboy Of Them All." Look for the set Sept. 26... To support his new album, *Modern Times*, Bob Dylan will kick off his third annual tour of minor-league ballparks — touted as the Summer '06 Baseball Tour — Aug. 12 at Fifth Third Ballpark in Comstock Park, Mich. Dylan and his band will be supported variously by Jimmie Vaughan with Lou Ann Barton, Junior Brown, and Elana James & The Continental Two. Visit [bobbylan.com/live](http://bobbylan.com/live) for complete tour dates and the latest news.

**Digital bits and bytes:** Sony BMG became the first major record label to sell an unprotected digital song when it offered Jessica Simpson's "A Public Affair" for sale at Yahoo! Music. The song is compatible with all portable music players.

**Sites and sounds:** National Geographic has launched a world music Web site at [worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com](http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com) containing features, music news and celebrity DJ playlists. If you're

bored with your record collection or just want to explore what else is out there, check out music from countries ranging from Angola and Albania to Romania and Rwanda.

**For couch potatoes:** Music Video Distributors/Sexy Intellectual's *Radiohead: OK Computer — A Classic Album Under Review* is a 53-minute documentary/review of this very influential album. It includes rare musical performances such as live and studio versions of each song on *OK Computer* and comments, criticisms and insights on every track from the album by various music writers. *The Rolling Stones — Under Review 1962-1966* (MVD/SI) is a 90-minute film reviewing the music and career of the Stones during their formative years. Features include rare musical performances, interviews and live and studio recordings of Stones classics such as "The Last Time," "Not Fade Away" and "Little Red Rooster."

**On the bookshelf:** Unveiling the mysterious life (and death) of singer/songwriter Nick Drake is not for the timid. However, Trevor Dann's biography — *Darker Than The Deepest Sea — The Search For Nick Drake* (DaCapo, ISBN: 0306815206) — does an admirable job of reconstructing Drake's too-short existence, using many newly discovered documents and all-new interviews. Dann traces Drake's life from his proper English upbringing in a family of privilege, through his hash-fueled school days at Cambridge University, to the missed opportunities and mismanagement that defined his career. Friends and colleagues describe the difficulties that he faced as each new album was released, only to fail, and the despair that consumed him. Complete with discography and rare photos. (Sept. 11)

**For analog kids:** In 1978, all four members of Kiss — Gene Simmons, Paul Stanley, Ace Frehley, and Peter Criss — released solo albums on the same day. Each of those has been reissued as a picture disc on 180-gram vinyl from the Russian label Lilith. Other recent import vinyl pressings of note include Colosseum, *Daughter Of Time* (180-gram, Earmark); Van Morrison, *Blowin' Your Mind* (Sony); Bob Marley, *Kaya* (180-gram, Universal/Polydor); and Phil Collins, *No Jacket Required* (Virgin).

— Todd Whitesel