

IN
STORES
NOW



Features | Columns | Blogs | News | Music | Film | TV | DVDs | Books | Comics | Multimedia | Events | PopComix | Front
about contributors submissions book imprint advertising contests PopShop Media Center



PopMatters Picks CALL FOR PAPERS: *PopMatters* seeks feature essays about any aspect of popular culture, present or past.

Pink Floyd

Meddle: A Classic Album Under Review [DVD]

(Chrome Dreams / Music Video Distributors) Rated: N/A
US release date: 12 March 2007
UK release date: 19 March 2007

by Sean Murphy

[Email](#) [Print](#) [Comments \(0\)](#)

1971's *Meddle* captured the moment when Floyd finally found their sound.

Pink Floyd were hardly an inconsequential group in the late '60s and very early '70s, and yet, without 1973's *The Dark Side of the Moon* and the albums that followed, their status today would be decidedly diminished. Most everyone would agree that *Dark Side* made them who they are today, but not as many people might appreciate that, if it were not for 1971's *Meddle*, there would have been no *The Dark Side of the Moon*.

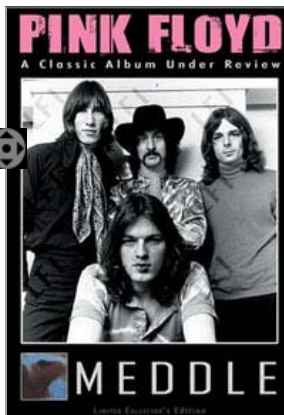
Meddle is indeed a classic album that is not accorded the level of attention it would otherwise receive if it did not exist within the ever expanding shadow of the subsequent string of albums it helped inspire. This is not an uncommon occurrence in rock (or any genre of music for that matter): it's likely, to take one obvious example, that *The Who Sell Out* would receive those accolades generally reserved for *Tommy* or *Who's Next*, the better known albums that came just after it.

It is appropriate then that, 40 years after the release of their first album, we have a serious critical appraisal of the pivotal record that served to end one era and instigate another. Regarding that earlier era, casual fans might not realize that Pink Floyd made as many albums before *Meddle* than they did after it (more casual fans might not even realize that Floyd made *any* albums before *Meddle*).

For this reason alone, the first section of this DVD provides an excellent overview of not only the group, but also the London underground for which they served as de facto house band. There were, really, three different Pink Floyds: the initial one led by Syd Barrett, the one forced to soldier on after Barrett's LSD-induced demolition (at which point he was replaced by his good friend David Gilmour), and the one that eventually made the string of masterpieces starting with *The Dark Side of the Moon*.

Getting from *Piper* to *Dark Side* required several years and several albums, none of which sounded especially alike—a fact that seems more remarkable with the benefit of hindsight. Each album, however, had one particular track, often an extended instrumental piece, that served as a centerpiece that at once set it apart and connected the sonic dots that burst through the pyramid in 1973: "Interstellar Overdrive" (from *Piper*), "Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun" (from *A Saucerful Of Secrets*), "Quicksilver" (from *More*), "The Narrow Way" (from *Ummagumma*) and "Atom Heart Mother Suite" (from *Atom Heart Mother*). As the band has indicated repeatedly over the years, there would be no "Echoes" without "Atom Heart Mother Suite", and so on working backward.

The assembled critics interviewed for this DVD express varying opinions on the overall merits of these transitional albums (all of them generally agree that *Piper* is a masterpiece, although that one was Syd Barrett's baby



POPSHOP
AMAZON
AMAZON UK

Click to Listen
Now

Pink Floyd
Keep Talking
Breathe
The narrow way - p
Waiting for the Wor
more...

powered by | mercora

TODAY ON POPMATTERS

FEATURES | [recent](#)

- [PopMatters @ Cannes: La Belle \(Glorieuse\) Communauté Internationale](#)
- [Pete Doherty: Unstrung](#)

COLUMNS | [recent](#)

- FROM THE CHEAP SEATS: [The Fall of Foos](#)
- SUB ROSA: [Shit Happens](#)

BLOGS | [recent](#)

- SHORT ENDS AND LEADER: [The Front Page: Critical Mess](#)
- PERIPATETIC POSTCARDS: [Buddy, Can You Spare a . . . Metaphor?](#)
- RE:PRINT: [Secondhand Wonderland: Library Book Sale](#)

MUSIC | [recent](#) | [short takes](#) | [archive](#)

- [Paul McCartney: Memory Almost Full](#)
- [Get Him Eat Him: Arms Down](#)
- [Ben Mono: Hit the Bit](#)
- [Benni Hemm Hemm: Kajak](#)
- [Various Artists: Music From And Inspired By Spider-Man 3](#)
- [C-Mon & Kypski: Where the Wild Things Are](#)
- [Cowboy Roy Brown: Street Singer](#)

EVENTS | [recent](#) | [archive](#)

- [FEST FLASHBACK: Download Festival 2006 feat. Guns & Roses, Metallica, Tool, and Coheed and Cambria](#) — 11. September.06: Leicestershire, UK

TELEVISION | [recent](#)

- [Creature Comforts: Series Premiere](#)

DVDS | [recent](#) | [archive](#)

- [TLC: Now & Forever - The Video Hits](#)
- [Hex - The Complete First Season](#)

BOOKS | [recent](#) | [archive](#)

- [The Strange World of David Lynch: Transcendental Irony from Eraserhead to Mulholland Dr.](#) by Eric G. Wilson
- [Sovereign](#) by C. J. Sansom

MULTIMEDIA | [recent](#) | [Checkpoints](#)

- [Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End](#)

NEWS | [recent](#)

- [INTERVIEW: Heeere's Michael: Ex-Disney exec hosts cable talk show](#)
- [Love blooms anew for 1967](#)



Ads by Google

New Music from Ghosts

Indie & rock fans will love Ghosts Check out the band & the music here
www.ghostsmusic.com

Pink Floyd Art, Signed...

...by Storm Thorgerson: Dark Side, Division Bell, Animals, much more!
www.sfae.com

Free Pink Floyd Songs.

Free Music Downloads! Get Your Favorite Songs Now 100% Legal
www.EZ-Tracks.com

Awesome Pink Floyd Tees

Hard to find t-shirts Officially licensed
www.buycoolshirts.com/pinkf

Pink floyd music

Download Your Favorite Hits From Today's Hottest Artists. 100% Free!
www.MusicVixen.com

whereas the others were assuredly group efforts), but the consensus seems to be that while Floyd should be commended for their bold experimentation and constant evolution, the results were decidedly mixed. True, yet the participants seem to overlook how important Floyd's live performances were in terms of reshaping and refining many older songs. The critics correctly single out "Set The Controls" as a crucial track, but none of them mention the title track of that album as a major cornerstone that Floyd built a foundation of sound upon.

The ways in which "A Saucerful Of Secrets" expanded and crystallized is documented on the live section of *Ummugumma*, as well as the definitive version, which they recorded live for their movie *Live At Pompeii*: Gilmour's guitar and vocal contributions delineate the ways in which he was asserting himself as the major musical force within the group (a very positive development), forging an increasingly melodic and ethereal sound. The point that cannot be overemphasized is that *Meddle* was not so much an inspired product of its time as much as it was the realization of a sound and style the band had been inching toward, carving away at the stone with each successive effort, until the pieces finally came together (or fell apart, if you like) in the form of "Echoes".

Ping...ping...ping. That is how it begins: the song that many still consider their definitive statement, the first track completed for the new album (like "Atom Heart Mother Suite", it was a side-long opus; unlike the previous album, it was saved for the second side): "Echoes" unfolds deliberately, with carefully structured precision. This remains a striking departure from the previous album's centerpiece which, in fairness, might well enjoy a better reputation, or at least seem less pretentiously impenetrable for many fans, if Floyd had stuck with its working title, "The Amazing Pudding"—quite apropos for such a gloppy, sweet, not especially easy to digest jumble.

Virtually every element Floyd had attempted to incorporate into their best songs is unified in "Echoes", with no false notes or forced feeling: the moods and colors captured on those shorter instrumental pieces remain, stretched out to utilize the group's considerable ambition and enthusiasm. The merging of Gilmour and Wright's voices—a harbinger of good things to come, although on "Time" Wright sings the choruses while Gilmour handles the verses—is appropriately mesmerizing, and the two remain uncannily in synch on their respective instruments. "Echoes" also signals a minor step forward for Waters lyrically (the major step would be *Dark Side of the Moon*):

Strangers passing in the street
By chance two separate glances meet
And I am you and what I see is me...

The pace intensifies, with some extraordinary playing by Gilmour who employs an array of distortion, feedback and effects, culminating in a groove that inspired a billion jam bands. Then, the bottom drops out, spiraling into the great disintegration, an abyss of whale cries and subterranean shadows (courtesy of Wright and Gilmour, and what at the time was cutting edge use of an echo unit, which is discussed in some detail on the DVD). Out of the darkness the song slowly returns, bringing release as well as realization as the music fades into infinity.

What elevates *Meddle* from being a very good album to a great album is the fact that most of the remaining songs are quite memorable. The opening track signals the artistic leap forward Floyd had taken in only one year: "One of These Days" features contributions from the entire band, creating a sound that, like "Echoes", manages to be abrupt yet unrestrained. The song materializes out of a sonic fog, like a laser closing in from a great distance, with Waters' bass and Mason's drums offering thudding contrast to Wright's icy keyboards, then—after Mason's singular, and amusing, vocal contribution: "One of these days I'm going to cut you into little pieces!"—Gilmour torches the track with a slide guitar assault, the most powerful soloing he'd put on record to this point.

The future is now: Pink Floyd have found their sound. Gilmour, having already assumed primary vocal duties on the recent albums, is now firmly established at the forefront, his guitar truly (finally?) a lead instrument. Like the album itself, this is more a culmination than a revelation: on the less self-consciously psychedelic soundtrack *More*, Gilmour *smokes* on several tunes (listen to "Main Theme", "More Blues", "Ibiza Bar" and "Dramatic Theme" for hints at what was to come, and how overdue this unfettered sound, either overly refined or actively suppressed, really was).

The next song encapsulates much of what Floyd had attempted, but not quite mastered, on songs such as "If" and "Grantchester Meadows". "A Pillow of Winds" is a fuller, more realized take on the Pink Floyd *pastoral* song, variations of it having appeared on each album after *Piper*. Again, Gilmour figures prominently; where his vocals had been, at times, tentative and even frail, there is a warmth and authority here that suggests augmented confidence and comfort with the superior material.

RECENT MUSIC

In bold are PopMatters Picks, the best in new music.

CD REVIEWS

- **A.G.**
- **Azam Ali**
- **The Bad Plus**
- **Battles**
- **The Beach Boys**
- **Benni Hemm Hemm**
- **Black Moth Super Rainbow**
- **Boris with Michio Kurihara**
- **The Bravery**
- **Cowboy Roy Brown**
- **CeU**
- **C-Mon & Kypski**
- **The Church**
- **Company**
- **Elk City**
- **The Exiles**
- **Robbie Fulks**
- **Get Him Eat Him**
- **Gypsy Groove**
- **Hanson**
- **Garrison Keillor: When I Get Home: Songs**
- **Keren Ann**
- **Miranda Lambert**
- **Amel Larrieux**
- **Avril Lavigne**
- **Linkin Park**
- **Madagascar**
- **Willy Mason**
- **Paul McCartney**
- **Barrelhouse Buck**
- **McFarland**
- **The Milk and Honey Band**
- **Ben Mono**
- **Faithless And Inspired By Spider-Man 3**
- **A Northern Chorus**
- **Ola Podrida**
- **The Orion Experience**
- **Ozzy Osbourne**
- **Palomar**
- **Parts & Labor**
- **Oscar Peterson / Ray Brown / Milt Jackson**
- **Porcupine Tree**
- **Prodigy**
- **Shitdisco**
- **Tangerine Dream**
- **The Rough Guide to World Music: Africa & Middle East**
- **The Rough Guide to the World**
- **Pam Tillis**
- **Umpire's McGee**
- **Armand Van Helden**
- **Vandaveer**
- **Voxtrof**
- **Loudon Wainwright III**
- **Rufus Wainwright**
- **Wax Tailor**
- **Wheat**
- **Zep & Azeem**
- **Warren Zevon**

EVENT REVIEWS

- **Air**
- **Amv Winehouse + Patrick Wolf**
- **Andrew Bird + Apostle of Hustle**
- **Arcade Fire**
- **Björk**
- **FEST FLASHBACK: Download Festival 2006**
- **feat. Guns & Roses, Metallica, Tool, and Coheed and Cambria**
- **Faithless Mouse—Part 1: I'm not when you're around**
- **Modest Mouse—Part 2: Teeth Like God's Shoeshine**
- **Modest Mouse—Part 3: We Still Have the Radio**
- **Patti Smith**
- **Promising Developments: The Sixth Annual Tribeca Film Festival**
- **Sing Out for Seva feat. Mickey Hart and Chris Robinson's Wooden Family**
- **Smooch + the Postmarks**
- **Talib Kweli**

DVDs

- **Ethnic Heritage Ensemble: Hot 'n' Heavy**
- **Apocalyptica: The Life Burns Tour**
- **Tim Buckley: My Fleeting House**
- **Leonard Cohen: Under Review 1934-1977**
- **Damn Yankees: Uprising**
- **Danielson - A Family Movie**
- **The Decembrists: The Decembrists**
- **Dinosaur Jr.: Live in the Middle East**
- **Dokken: Unchain the Night**
- **Einsturzen Neubauten: Palast Der Republik**
- **Lester Flatt & Earl Scruggs: Best of the Flatt & Scruggs TV Show, Vols 1 and 2 [DVD]**
- **Pink Floyd: Meddle: A Classic Album Under Review**
- **Grave: Enraptured**
- **The Killers: The Killers**
- **The Mentors: El Duce Vita**
- **Nine Inch Nails: Live - Beside You in Time**
- **Plasmatics: Wendy O. Williams and The Plasmatics: The DVD - Ten Years of Revolutionary Rock and Roll**
- **Run DMX: Live at Montreux 2001**
- **Carlos Santana & Wayne Shorter: Live at the 1988 Montreux Jazz Festival**
- **TLC: Now & Forever - The Video Hits**
- **Various Artists: Liberation: Songs of the Cuban Underground [DVD]**
- **Wisdom in Chains: Die for Us. Live**

Two elements solidly established (the guitar sound and the vocals), a final one—Roger Waters' increasingly mature and topical lyrics—comes to fruition on the third track, "Fearless". This tune, which could be viewed as a poignant nod to Syd Barrett, is definitely an early installment of a growing Waters obsession: namely the alienated and isolated protagonist railing against (or reeling from) a mechanized, soulless machine called society. Another distinctly Floydian touch is the decision to insert a recording of fans at Liverpool's football stadium chanting "You'll Never Walk Alone", which concludes the song on a hopeful and human note. This tactic also serves as an early blueprint for the sound effects and ironic employment of actual voices used on later albums, specifically *The Dark Side of the Moon*.

The next two tracks are considered less than essential by most fans (and certainly the critics assembled on the DVD), but "San Tropez" is not without its charms. Despite pleasant enough vocals from Waters, this one might have worked rather nicely as an instrumental (no doubt to Waters' considerable chagrin), as it once again features some incandescent guitar work from Gilmour. The song that closes the first side, "Seamus" is a throwaway...and yet. The idea of incorporating a dog howling alongside the band in a lighthearted call and response literally anticipates *Animals*, but indirectly, and importantly, reveals a band doing everything they can to avoid and obliterate cliché.

So, it can fairly be asked: who would want to watch a bunch of British music critics talking about a semi-obscure Pink Floyd album? The usual suspects, obviously: the hardcore fans and the curious novices. Neither will be disappointed. Of course, it must be reiterated that no members of the group participate which, while not shocking, is still disappointing. The collected writers know their stuff, but their remarks are similar and mostly surface-level, making the absence of input from the artists more glaring.

One delightful exception is the presence of Norman Smith, whose gentlemanly observations on producing the first three Floyd albums are charming and heartwarming. Heartbreaking, too, when he discusses the challenges (to put it kindly) he faced while trying to record the Salvation Army band Syd Barrett dragged into the studio for the track that eventually became "Jugband Blues", Syd's last song with the band.

The somewhat paltry extras include "The Hardest Interactive Pink Floyd Trivia Quiz In The World Ever" which is ridiculously challenging. There are screen shot bios of the participating commentators and a short but sweet special feature entitled "The Remarkable Syd Barrett". This 10-minute bonus examines, in some depth, Syd Barrett and his fleeting trajectory, including another interview with Norman Smith who, it's fair to say, was Pink Floyd's George Martin—which brings things somewhat full circle as he worked as an engineer on the early Beatles' albums.

Pink Floyd - Echos

RATING: 

— 1 June 2007

Tagged as: [pink floyd](#)

 [DELICIOUS](#)  [DIGG](#)  [REDDIT](#)  [NEWSVINE](#)

[advertising](#) | [about](#) | [contributors](#) | [submissions](#)
© 1999-2007 PopMatters.com. All rights reserved.
PopMatters.com™ and PopMatters™ are trademarks of PopMatters Media, Inc. and PopMatters Magazine.

