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'Whatever Happened to Pink Floyd?' Is a Good Documentary, but Whatever Happened to the DVD?

By **Brad Cook** 17 March 2011

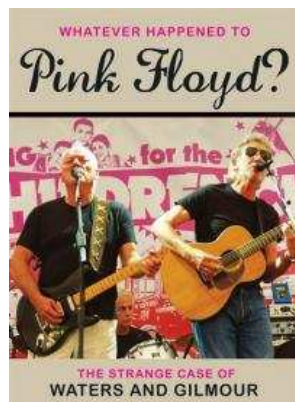
At the beginning of *Whatever Happened to Pink Floyd?: The Strange Case of Waters and Gilmour* we're treated to shots of the iconic pig floating between factory smokestacks as "The Blue Danube" plays and narrator Thomas Arnold sets the stage for the discussion to come. I couldn't help but think of Stanley Kubrick, who famously used the same music in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and the parallels between the director and the band.

Both Kubrick and Floyd broke the molds in their respective art forms, engaging audiences in roundabout ways and ultimately frustrating some fans and critics. Both Kubrick and Floyd created groundbreaking works of art that have been analyzed a million different ways, and yet they remain enigmatic. Perhaps even their creators never fully understood what they were going for.

As the title suggests, this documentary's focus is on the schism that drove Roger Waters and Dave Gilmour apart, ultimately fracturing the band and sending both of them on separate paths that produced albums which were good but not quite as great as the music they created together. If you're looking for a comprehensive look at the band's history, you won't get it here: the early years with Syd Barrett are glossed over, with the story picking up during the tour in support of *Animals*.

The members of Pink Floyd began to drift apart during that tour, but they were united in their frustration with fans who they felt didn't respect the music, preferring to set off fireworks and behave in other obnoxious ways during concerts. That attitude culminated in Waters spitting on fans in Toronto. He later expressed remorse for his actions, but he channeled how he felt into the music that became *The Wall*, complete with a new tour during which a literal wall was erected between the audience and the band.

It's clear, though, that a wall between Waters and Gilmour was also building during this time. Conventional wisdom has always held that Waters simply took creative control of the band, refusing to allow anyone else to contribute to the music, but this documentary makes it clear that reality is a bit muddier than that. Waters, for example, says that he asked for contributions from the rest of the band but received none. As Akira Kurosawa's film *Rashomon* makes clear, Truth, with a capital "T" is an elusive beast.



Whatever Happened to Pink Floyd?: The Strange Case of Waters and Gilmour

Director: **Alex Westbrook**
Cast: Mark Blake, Nigel Williamson, Andy Mabbett, Chris Ingham, John Helliwell, Thomas Arnold, Roger Waters, Dave Gilmour, Nick Mason, Richard Wright
(US DVD: 25 Jan 2011)

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This documentary also moves beyond *The Wall* covering the final shuddering gasp known as *The Final Cut* and Waters' solo work, as well as the two Pink Floyd albums Gilmour produced after he and Waters settled their legal differences. While the creation of *A Momentary Lapse of Reason* and *The Division Bell* are covered extensively, it's a shame that not as much attention is paid to the development of *The Pros and Cons of Hitchhiking* and *Radio KAOS*. The band's reunion at Live 8 is covered too, along with Waters and Gilmour's pairing at a 2010 charity event. Unfortunately, since Richard Wright passed away in 2008, the quartet can never officially reunite again.

Arnold establishes the framework for the story through his narration, while archival interviews from the band members fill in the holes. The back of the DVD case notes that this is "an independent review, unauthorized by band members," so none of them actually spoke to the documentary crew. However, several journalists did, including: Mark Blake (author of *Pigs Might Fly: The Inside Story of Pink Floyd*); Nigel Williamson, who contributes to several magazines; Andy Mabbett (author of *Pink Floyd: The Music & The Mystery*, among other books about the group); and Chris Ingham, who is a musician and a journalist. Supertramp saxophonist John Helliwell, who brought in Gilmour to play on his band's *Brother Where You Bound?* album, also pops in with his thoughts.

Those contributors have a lot of interesting insights into the band, giving us an external viewpoint that no amount of interviews with Gilmour, Waters, Mason, and Wright could ever equal, since they were too close to everything that was happening. Ingham also offers a few music lessons that explain how the lyrics and melodies complement each other in some of the band's most popular songs. Fans of the band will appreciate the large amount of archival concert and behind-the-scenes footage and pictures in this documentary.

The back of this DVD case also says that extended interviews are included, but I couldn't find them, which is a shame, since I'm sure there was a lot of material left out. The bonus features include biographical information about the contributors and the nearly seven-minute "When the Wall Came Down: 'The Wall' in Berlin", which covers Waters' staging of "The Wall" after the Berlin Wall came down.

Ultimately, this is a solid documentary that does a good job of exhaustively covering its main topic. It's a shame, though, that the DVD doesn't include more bonus features, especially those missing extended interviews.

Rating: 

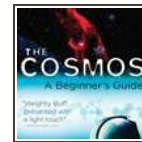
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Dave Whitaker Mar 17

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