



TV / FILM

"A SINISTER CABAL OF SUPERIOR WRITERS"

Blogcritics is an online magazine, a community of writers and readers from around the globe.

Publisher: [Eric Olsen](#)

REVIEW

DVD Review: *The Pink Floyd & Syd Barrett Story*

Written by [T. Michael Testi](#)

Published November 06, 2007



The Pink Floyd & Syd Barrett Story is a documentary by John Edgington that explores the tumultuous story of Syd Barrett and Pink Floyd. It is about the tragedy that befell Barrett, and the everlasting effect it had on the band, its members, and its music.

Roger Keith 'Syd' Barrett was a founding member of the psychedelic rock band Pink Floyd. Barrett came up with the name "The Pink Floyd Sound" in 1965, later shortening it to the version we know. They began, like many bands of the time, doing cover songs of American R&B music, but soon created their own style of rock and roll, drawing from improvised jazz sounds.

By 1967 they had a contract with EMI and produced two singles: "Arnold Layne," which hit number 20 on the British charts, and "See Emily Play," which hit number 6. From there they recorded their first album, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, in which Barrett had a part in writing ten of the eleven songs (eight of which he wrote alone).

While not a big hit in the States, it was a huge hit in Great Britain. Then Barrett's behavior became increasingly unpredictable. Some of this was attributed to his experimentation with LSD and other mind-altering drugs, but now it appears that an existing mental illness, exacerbated by drug use, may have been largely responsible.

After an aborted U.S. tour that found Barrett going downhill fast, David Gilmour was brought in as second guitarist to cover for Barrett's bizarre behavior. Barrett did not contribute any new material to the band after *A Saucerful of Secrets* was released in 1968. In March of that year, it was officially announced that he was no longer a member of Pink Floyd.

Barrett did have a brief solo career in which he released two albums, *The Madcap Laughs* and *Barrett*. Most of the material was from 1966 and 1967. In 1972, Barrett formed a band called Stars, but it was disastrous and short-lived.

Barrett made only one other appearance, in 1975, at a recording session for *Wish You Were Here*. Pink Floyd was recording "Shine on You Crazy Diamond," a song about Barrett. He had a shaved head and was overweight, and none of the band members recognized him. In *The Pink Floyd & Syd Barrett Story*, that whole ordeal is explained, including how utterly weird it made everyone there feel. (The scene was also referenced in the Pink Floyd movie, *The Wall*, when Pink shaves off his body hair.)

Except for that incident, Barrett remained in seclusion until his death from pancreatic cancer on July 7, 2006 at the age of 60. A tribute concert was held for him in London on May 10, 2007.

I found the main disc of *The Pink Floyd & Syd Barrett Story* to be remarkably good. It has contributions from Jerry Shirley (Humble Pie drummer, and drummer for Barrett's two solo albums), and Pink Floyd members David Gilmour, Roger Waters, Nick Mason, and Rick Wright, as well as Bob Klose, known as the fifth member before he left in 1965. The disk also contains an interview with Roger Waters about Syd, and one with David Gilmour about the song *Wish You Were Here*, and includes Robyn Hitchcock playing the Barrett songs "It is Obvious" and "Dominoes," and Graham Coxon playing "Love You."

The second disk contains more drawn-out interviews, some of which seem almost forced. These are listed as "The Complete Interviews" and include talks with Waters, Gilmour, Wright, Mason, Hitchcock, and Coxon. While I would buy the set for Disc 1, one should read the word "Complete" as meaning "unedited" - the Disc 2 interviews tend to drag on.

There are some interesting characters interviewed, as well. The standout is the artist Duggie Fields, who lives where Barrett lived and who painted the floor boards. It is also the site of the *Madcap Laughs* cover shot.

If you are a fan of Pink Floyd, this is a must-have. *The Pink Floyd & Syd Barrett Story* goes into detail, some of which is not generally known. (One tidbit is that Barrett's change seemed to happen over a weekend.) But even if you just want to know more about rock music history, *The Pink Floyd & Syd Barrett Story* should be on your shelf.

