

Wish You Were Here - Pink Floyd

General Info



Pink Floyd is an iconic British rock band that formed in 1965 in London, England. The Original band line up consisted of the creative mind Syd Barrett who played guitar and lead vocals, bass player Roger Waters, drummer Nick Mason, and Keyboard player Richard Wright. Unfortunately Syd Barrett's mental health quickly deteriorated mainly due to his heavy use of the drug LSD. Syd Barrett's mental health got to such a tragic point that he wouldn't even perform on stage. In late 1967, guitarist and vocalist David Gilmour joined the band as a fifth member to make it a little easier for Syd. Syd would only last a couple more months in the band before officially leaving in March 1968, before the completion of the groups second studio album "A Saucerful Of Secrets". The group would go on to gain much more fame after Syd leaving, resulting in many people not recognizing his importance in the band's history. Syd Barrett's psychedelic influence on the band's sound would transition into progressive rock following his departure. The band is known for their elaborate sound and live performances, impactful lyrics, and complex themes. Some of their most famous and best known work consist of the albums "Dark Side of the Moon" released in 1972 and "The Wall" in 1979.

Inspiration and making of the album

Wish You Were Here is Pink Floyd's 9th studio album, and second conceptual album. Exploring a tribute to late bandmate Syd Barrett, themes of absence, isolation, and the band's growing disillusionment with the music business. It was released in September of 1975. After the band's massive success with their album "Dark Side Of The Moon" in 1973, the band went through a period of time where they felt that all of their success still hadn't made them feel enormously satisfied. Roger Waters, the band's songwriter, believed that they were "finished" at that point, and could have easily split up during that period. However, he stated that they did not disband because "We were frightened of the great out there, beyond the umbrella of this extraordinarily powerful and valuable trade name, Pink Floyd." The band put themselves under enormous pressure to follow up their great success of Dark Side of the Moon. In January of 1975, the band assembled at Abbey Road Studios to start working on their new album. In the early periods of working on the album, the band struggled with sparking new ideas and concentrating on the album, and felt as if they were trying to make an album out of nothing. This heavily frustrated the band and even more specifically Roger Waters. Roger came up with the plan to book-end the album with "Shine On You Crazy Diamond", a song they had written about the loss of ex bandmate Syd Barrett. The album is sandwiched by 'Shine On You Crazy Diamond Pts. 1-5' and 'Shine On You Crazy Diamond Pts. 6-9' with three songs in between. "There's one song about Syd, but the rest of it isn't, it's a much more universal expression of my feelings about absence," Roger Waters has explained. Storm Thorgersen was the graphic designer behind the famous album cover. While thinking of ideas for the album cover, a concept he had in his head was somebody getting burnt in the business, leading to the famous album cover displaying two businessmen shaking hands and one of them getting burnt. They lit stuntman Ronnie Rondell on fire for the shot.



Track #1/5 - “Shine On You Crazy Diamond” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54W8kktFE_o <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wE2GZ2Vpqjo>

On June 5th, 1975, a fat man with a shaved head and eyebrows walked into Abbey Road studios while engineer Brian Humphries was working on the final mix of Shine On You Crazy Diamond. The band initially didn't realize who this man was, but once they had realized, they were shell shocked, causing Roger and David to burst into tears. The man was Syd Barrett. Shine On You Crazy Diamond is a heartfelt tribute to Syd Barrett, the original lead singer and main songwriter of the band. The lyrics express a sense of loss and a deep yearning for Barrett, who struggled with mental health issues and addiction. The title, "Shine On You Crazy Diamond," captures both a symbolization of Barrett's genius and a reflection on his tragic fall into obscurity. The song opens with a haunting and atmospheric introduction, featuring David Gilmour's famous guitar riff and Richard Wright's beautiful keyboard melodies, which create a somber mood. It is divided into two sections: the first part reflects on Barrett's unrealized potential with a theme of mourning, while the second part (last track) builds up with the band's signature intensity, expressing a desire for the return of someone who significantly influenced their music. Shine On You Crazy Diamond highlights not only Barrett's absence but also the existential challenges faced by the band.



Track #2 - “Welcome to the Machine” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lt-udg9zQSE>

Welcome to the Machine is a chilling look at how the music industry treats artists as products. From the very beginning, the song creates a cold, dystopian vibe, created by a deep synthesizer beat, strange sounds from Rick Wright's keyboards, and a robotic rhythm that replaces traditional drums. Sound effects like the creaking of a door add to the feeling of being trapped. The minimalist, almost robotic arrangement, especially the absence of bass and typical rock instruments, reflects how dehumanizing this system can be. Lyrically, the song tells the story of an aspiring artist who enters the industry with big dreams, only to have his individuality erased by the very system he looked up to. Roger Waters called it an ironic “welcome,” where the young musician is faced with a cold, ruthless reality, with executives already knowing everything about him before he even speaks. The line, “It's all right, we know where you've been,” highlights the invasive control the industry has over its artists. The recurring phrase “Welcome to the Machine,” sung by David Gilmour in a robotic, detached voice, adds to the sense of inevitability and loss. The song also reflects the band's own frustration with the pressures of fame, and its emotional impact is heightened by sound effects like party laughter, which Waters saw as symbolizing the hollow celebrations of the industry. Musically, Welcome to the Machine feels almost like a sci-fi story, but its message about exploitation and how art is turned into a product is something anyone can relate to.

Track #3 - "Have a Cigar" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbdpv7G_PPg&list=OLAK5uy_mzowhqljI0ba8BVGEmVkeaWel2S_bO4bw&index=3

Have a Cigar is the third track and features a much more groovy, mainstream sound. The song includes a very interesting guitar tone from David Gilmour used throughout the song which I really like. "Have a Cigar" explores themes of their dissolution with the music business. The song is written from the point of view of the music business with lyrics like "Come in here dear boy, have a cigar you're gonna go far," displaying the business luring artists in. "you become part of the whole buying and selling machine." is a quote from Roger Waters breaking down the meaning of the song. "You're not really an individual anymore... you're playing a part, you're a puppet." - Roger Waters. Originally when trying to record Have a Cigar, the band felt that neither



Roger or Dave's vocals quite fit the song. Fellow artist Roy Harper, who was recording in another room at Abbey Road Studios at the time, offered to sing on the track (for the right price). I personally think having a non-familiar voice like Roy's worked out really well considering the song's meaning and lyrical content, being in the point of view of the greedy, hypnotizing music business. David Gilmour has said that he thinks that Roy's version of the song is the perfect version, while Roger Waters has said he doesn't like Roy's version and even regrets doing it.

Track #4 - "Wish you were Here"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjpF8ukSrvk>

The title track is the emotional centerpiece of the album, blending a haunting tribute to Syd Barrett with a broader reflection on loss and alienation. The song opens with a distant, ghostly riff played on Gilmour's 12 string acoustic guitar, processed to sound like it's coming through an old radio, creating a sense of absence and disconnection. This sound is then contrasted by a second, fuller six string guitar. The writing of this song started in Abbey Road studios when David Gilmour came up with the riff on his 12 string guitar. "I think most of the songs that I've ever written all pose similar questions. Can you free yourself enough to be able to experience the reality of life as it goes on before you and with you, and as you go on as part of it or not? Because if you can't, you stand on square one until you die. And I know that may seem like bullshit, but that's what the song is about." - Roger Waters. The song itself is



structured more simply compared to most of the group's songs, and paired with the emotional heartfelt lyrics, the song stands the test of time. David Gilmour has said "Although 'Shine On You Crazy Diamond' is specifically about Syd, and 'Wish You Were Here' has a broader remit, I can't sing it without thinking of Syd." This is my personal favourite song on the album because of its simple yet effective and powerful nature, it is an easy listening song with heartfelt lyrics and a beautiful acoustic melody. This song is my favourite song on the album and it is due to how listenable it is and how you can just float away when you hear it.

Awards/Legacy

In the year of its release, *Wish You Were Here* peaked at the top of the charts in a number of European countries and has since been certified six times platinum in the US and gold in the UK. An estimated 13 million copies had been sold globally by 2004. Critics gave it mixed reviews at first, deeming the music uninspired and behind Pink Floyd's earlier output, probably due to its obscure themes and sounds. Afterwards, it was hailed as one of the best albums ever made, and it was listed on a number of greatest albums lists including, number 264 in 2021 on Rolling Stone's list of the 500 best albums. Both guitarist David Gilmour and keyboardist Richard Wright have named it their favorite Pink Floyd album in the past. "Wish You Were Here is an album I can listen to for pleasure, and there aren't many Floyd albums that I can," Richard Wright mentioned. "The end result of all that, whatever it was, definitely has left me an album I can live with very very happily. I like it very much." -David Gilmour.