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Pink Floyd

Pink Floyd is one the most influential psychedelic/progressive rock band formed in Cambridge, England, United Kingdom in 1965. Having sold over 200 million albums worldwide and with 74.5 million certified units in the United States, Pink Floyd is regarded as one of the greatest rock bands of their generation. With its elastic, echoing, mind-bending limitless sound, Pink Floyd is still gaining popularity in Today’s Youth. The original band members consisted of  Syd Barrett (vocals, lyrics and guitar), [Roger Waters](https://www.last.fm/music/Roger+Waters) (vocals, bass), [Rick Wright](https://www.last.fm/music/Rick+Wright) (organ, keyboards, vocals) and [Nick Mason](https://www.last.fm/music/Nick+Mason) (drums). Later, David Gilmour was brought into the band in 1968 to replace the band's founder [Syd Barrett](https://www.last.fm/music/Syd+Barrett), who had become increasingly erratic and departed from the band a few months after Gilmour's addition. Pink Floyd abruptly went from a moderately successful acid-rock band to one of rock music's biggest acts with the release of 1973’s “The Dark Side of the Moon”. The recording, in fact, remained on Billboard's Top 200 album chart for 741 weeks, longer than any other album in history.

Pink Floyd evolved from an earlier band, formed in 1964, which was at various times called Sigma 6, “The Meggadeaths”, “The Screaming Abdabs”, and “The Abdabs”. When this band split up, some members — Roger Waters, drummer Nick Mason, and wind instrument player Rick Wright — formed a new band called “Tea Set”, and were joined shortly thereafter by guitarist Syd Barrett, who became the band’s primary vocalist. They were all architecture students at London Polytechnic, with the exception of [Barrett](http://www.allmusic.com/artist/barrett-mn0000044874), who was an art student and a friend of [Waters](http://www.allmusic.com/artist/waters-mn0000254556) since childhood. When Tea Set found themselves on the same bill as another band with the same name, Barrett came up with an alternative name on the spur of the moment, choosing “The Pink Floyd Sound” (after two blues musicians, Pink Anderson and Floyd Council). For a time after this they oscillated between “Tea Set” and “The Pink Floyd Sound”, with the latter name eventually winning out. The word Sound was dropped fairly quickly. They began playing R&B-based material for schoolmates. By 1967, they had developed an unmistakably psychedelic sound, performing long, loud suite like compositions that touched on hard rock, blues, country, folk, and electronic music. Adding a slide-and-light show, one of the first in British rock, they became a sensation among London's underground as a featured attraction at the UFO Club. Their first single, "Arnold Layne," backed with "Candy and a Currant Bun," appeared in March of 1967, and it was banned from some radio stations due to its gender-bending lyrics, but the single wound up in the U.K. Top 20, and the group's second single, "See Emily Play" -- a menacing, mincing stomp with a profound, lasting influence -- went into the Top Ten, paving the way for the release of “The Piper at the Gates of Down” – first album.

As the band became more and more popular, the stresses of life on the road and a significant intake of psychedelic drugs took their toll on Barrett, whose mental health had been deteriorating for several months. While Barrett’s behavior has often been attributed to his drug use, there are many who think that a pre-existing condition, possibly schizophrenia, was equally to blame. In January 1968, guitarist David Gilmour joined the band to carry out Syd’s playing and singing duties. With Barrett’s behavior becoming less and less predictable, and his almost constant use of LSD, he became very unstable, often staring into space while the rest of the band performed. During some performances, he would simply strum one chord for the duration of a concert, or simply begin detuning his guitar. The band’s live shows became increasingly ramshackle until, eventually, the other band members simply stopped taking him to the concerts. It was originally hoped that Syd would write for the band with Gilmour performing live. However, due to Barrett’s increasingly difficult compositions, such as "[Have You Got It Yet?](https://www.last.fm/music/Syd+Barrett/_/Have+You+Got+It+Yet%3F)”, which changed melodies and chord progression with every take, eventually made the rest of the band give up on this arrangement. Once Barrett’s departure was formalized in April 1968, producers Jenner and King decided to remain with him. The band then adopted Steve O’Rourke as manager, and he remained with Pink Floyd until his death in 2003.

After the departure of Syd Barrett, the band suffered to create concise psychedelic singles, the band concentrated on wider-ranging psychedelic epics. They developed a different musical identity, one that was expansive and eerie, characterized by the band's spacey, somber explorations and, eventually, [Waters](http://www.allmusic.com/artist/waters-mn0000254556)' cutting, sardonic lyrics. This transition took some time. In 1968, they released “[A Saucerful of Secrets](http://www.allmusic.com/album/a-saucerful-of-secrets-mw0000650632)”, which contained [Barrett](http://www.allmusic.com/artist/barrett-mn0000044874)'s final composition for the group, "Jugband Blues," and it found the group moving forward, particularly on the instrumental sections.

Soon they worked for the film soundtrack “More”. Two of these songs, “[Green Is the Colour](https://www.last.fm/music/Pink+Floyd/_/Green+Is+the+Colour)” and “[Cymbaline](https://www.last.fm/music/Pink+Floyd/_/Cymbaline)”, became fixtures in the band’s live sets for a time, as can be heard in the many available bootleg recordings from this period. 1970’s “[Atom Heart Mother](https://www.last.fm/music/Pink+Floyd/Atom+Heart+Mother)”, the band’s first recording with an orchestra, was a collaboration with avant-garde composer [Ron Geesin](https://www.last.fm/music/Ron+Geesin). Atom Heart Mother was considered a huge step back for the band at the time and is still considered one of its most inaccessible albums, it had the best chart performance for the band so far, reaching #1 in the UK and #55 in the U.S., although it has since been described by Gilmour as "a load of rubbish" and Waters as suitable for "throwing in the dustbin and never listened to by anyone ever again.”, the popularity of the album allowed Pink Floyd to embark on its first full U.S. tour.

The Floyd went on shedding their association with the “psychedelic” scene and became a distinctive band that is difficult to classify. The divergent styles of Gilmour, Waters and Wright were merged into a unique sound. This era contains what many consider to be two of the band’s masterpiece albums, “The Dark Side of the Moon ” and “[Wish You Were Here](https://www.last.fm/music/Pink+Floyd/Wish+You+Were+Here).” The sound became polished and collaborative, with the philosophic lyrics and distinctive bass lines of Waters combining with the unique blues guitar style of Gilmour and Wright’s light keyboard melodies. Dark Side showcased the talents of Pink Floyd's chief members: Waters' lyrics, Gilmour's guitar. The two would continue to dominate the band but soon furiously contend against each other. Subsequent albums explored similarly dark territory, although the relatively warm Wish You Were Here (Number 1, 1975) was dedicated to Barrett, elegizing him with "Shine On You Crazy Diamond."  The Wall, a brooding concept album about a troubled, isolated rock star named Pink, topped the U.S. chart for 15 weeks, and its nihilistic hit, "Another Brick in the Wall," was banned by the BBC and in 1980 became the band's only Number One American single.

In a famous anecdote, a heavyset man with a completely shaved head and eyebrows wandered into the studio while the band was recording “Shine On You Crazy Diamond”. The band could not recognize him for some time, when suddenly one of them realized it was Syd Barrett. He was greeted enthusiastically by the band but subsequently slipped away during the impromptu party for David Gilmour’s wedding (which was, coincidentally, also on that day). It was the last time any of the other band members saw him.

A film entitled “Pink Floyd: The Wall” was released in 1982, incorporating essentially all of the music from the album. The film, written by Waters and directed by Alan Parker, starred [The Boomtown Rats](https://www.last.fm/music/The+Boomtown+Rats) founder [Bob Geldof](https://www.last.fm/music/Bob+Geldof) and featured striking animation by noted British artist and cartoonist Gerald Scarfe. It grossed over $14 million at the North American box office. A song which first appeared in the movie, “[When the Tigers Broke Free](https://www.last.fm/music/Pink+Floyd/_/When+the+Tigers+Broke+Free)”, was released as a single on a limited basis. This song was finally made widely available on the compilation album “Echoes: The Best of Pink Floyd” and the re-release of “The Final Cut.”

There were constant arguments in the band as Waters went on becoming more autocratic with his vision. The arguing between Waters and Gilmour by this stage was rumored to be so bad that they were never seen in the recording studio simultaneously. There was no tour, and the band unofficially disbanded in 1983. After The Final Cut, the band members went their separate ways, each releasing solo albums, until 1987, when Gilmour and Mason began to revive the band. A bitter legal dispute with Roger Waters ensued, but Gilmour and Mason were upheld in their contention that they had the legal right to continue as Pink Floyd. The band under Gilmour returned to the studio with producer Bob Ezrin. Richard Wright re-joined during the recording sessions of “A Momentary Lapse of Reason” (UK #3/US #3) first as a session musician, paid a weekly salary, and later reinstated as a full-fledged member of the band for the 1994 release of “The Division Bell” (UK #1/US #1).

A live recording of The Wall was released in 2000, compiled from the 1980–1981 London concerts, entitled “[Is There Anybody Out There?” The Wall Live 1980–81](http://www.last.fm/music/Pink+Floyd/Is%2BThere%2BAnybody%2BOut%2BThere%253F%2B%252F%2BThe%2BWall%2BLive%2B%2BPink%2BFloyd%2B%2B1980-81). It reached #19 on the American album chart. In 2001, a remastered two-disc set of the band's best-known tracks entitled [Echoes](https://www.last.fm/music/pink+floyd/Echoes) was released. Gilmour, Mason, Waters and Wright all collaborated on the editing, sequencing, and song selection of the included tracks.

On 2 July 2005, the band reunited for a one-off performance at the London Live 8 concert. This time, however, they were joined by Waters — the first time all four band members were on stage together in 24 years. The band performed a four-song set consisting of "[Speak To Me/Breathe (Breathe In The Air)](https://www.last.fm/music/pink+floyd/_/Speak+To+Me%2FBreathe+(Breathe+In+The+Air))", "[Money](https://www.last.fm/music/pink+floyd/_/Money)", "[Wish You Were Here](https://www.last.fm/music/pink+floyd/_/Wish+You+Were+Here)", and "[Comfortably Numb](https://www.last.fm/music/pink+floyd/_/Comfortably+Numb)", with both Gilmour and Waters sharing lead vocals. At the end of their performance Gilmour said "thank you very much, good night" and started to walk off the stage. Waters called him back, however, and the band shared a group hug that became one of the most famous images of Live 8.

Barrett, the founding member, died on 7 July 2006, at his home in Cambridge, aged 60. His family interred him at Cambridge Crematorium on 18 July 2006; no Pink Floyd members attended. After Barrett's death, Wright commented: "The band is very naturally upset and sad to hear of Syd Barrett's death. Syd was the guiding light of the early band line-up and leaves a legacy which continues to inspire." Wright died of an undisclosed form of cancer on 15 September 2008, aged 65. His former bandmates paid tributes to his life and work; Gilmour said "In the welter of arguments about who or what was Pink Floyd, Rick's enormous input was frequently forgotten. He was gentle, unassuming and private but his soulful voice and playing were vital, magical components of our most recognized Pink Floyd sound."

In 2011, Roger Waters embarked on a tour of "The Wall". He confirmed that David Gilmour would perform guitar and vocals on "Comfortably Numb" at one of the performances. Gilmour appeared at the 12 May 2011 concert at the O2 Arena in London. Gilmour and Nick Mason joined Waters at the end of the show for a performance of "Outside the Wall".

In 2012, Gilmour and Mason decided to revisit recordings made with Wright, mainly during the Division Bell sessions, to create a new Pink Floyd album “The Endless River”. Waters was not involved. Mason described the album as a tribute to Wright: "I think this record is a good way of recognizing a lot of what he does and how his playing was at the heart of the Pink Floyd sound. Listening back to the sessions, it really brought home to me what a special player he was." Waters and Gilmour are still doing various projects with new artists.

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