Back to the UFO: Pink Floyd, *The Division Bell Tour* (1994), and the Retrofied Aesthetics of Psychedelia

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Introduction

In the mid-1960s The Pink Floyd played in local community centres, student union bars and town halls - anywhere they could get a gig. In 1993 *The Division Bell* tour demonstrated just how powerful the Pink Floyd brand had become despite the changes to the line-up. Sutcliffe (1995) provides the basic but necessary details,

> Product of last year's *The Division Bell* tour, which sold 5.3 million tickets in 77 cities and grossed £100m from 110 shows, it's a double CD (triple in vinyl coming up soon), proudly overdub-free, spiffily presented in state-of-the-art Q Sound, and bearing the first ever (official) full concert recording of *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. It should take them comfortably past the 150 million mark in worldwide album sales, which may be a comforting thought on a windy night.

By the 1990s, Pink Floyd had become one of the most well-known entertainment brands in the world, and their live performances had become legendary and profitable. When they chose to tour their *The Division Bell* album, there indeed was no financial risk, just artistic, despite the huge scale of things; they needed Skyship 600 aircraft - and later A60 - for the crew and two Boeing 747 cargo planes, just in order to transfer the tour from USA to Europe.[1] The band

[1] Blake, M. (2013[2007]). *Pink Floyd. Pigs Might Fly. Fully updated with new chapter*. London: Aurum. Page 363.

were expected to break new boundaries with their touring spectacles, at least in terms of scale. This time they chose to look back to their roots.

Only few bands have had such a long and unexpectedly interesting career and history as Pink Floyd. They started pretty much simultaneously with the English version of hippie movement, in 1965, and became the house band of the 'Swinging London' by 1967. Their performances at the time, UFO-club, 24 Hour Technicolour Dream in Alexandra Palace, Albert Hall, and Queen Elizabeth Hall, to mention a few, have become legendary for their syntaesthetic quality, mixing music and psychedelic lighting in an innovative and era-defining way. Psychedelic experience was a combination of music, lights, other artistic visuals and, sometimes, effects of hallucinogenic drugs.[2] Psychedelia can also be seen as an art movement that associates wildly, mixing surrealist heritage, childlike – very much purposeful – naivety, and countercultural activity. With psychedelic aesthetics I, then, refer to the usage of audio-visual technologies that have been utilized to produce the artistic experiences in this vein.

1990s and *The Division Bell* (1994)

Roughly 30 years after touring in a van there was a notable look back to the audio-visual qualities of the sixties Pink Floyd. The seminal release of the post Roger Waters line-up of the band was *The Division Bell* (1994). The record was themed around communication, and the name was the idea – picked from the lyrics of 'High Hopes' – of satirical science fiction author Douglas Adams. Division Bell is located in British Parliament and used to summon the members for votes.[3] The record was followed by a massive arena and stadium tour in 1994, which seems to be the last big tour Pink Floyd ever did, only followed by a brief live set at Live 8 (2005), where David Gilmour, Roger Waters, Rick Wright, and Nick Mason played

[2] Whiteley, S. (1992). *The Space Between the Notes. Rock and the Counter-culture*. London: Routledge. Pages 61–81.
[3] Fitch, V. (2001) (ed.). *Pink Floyd. The Press Reports 1966-1983*. Burlington, Ontario: Collector´s Guide Publishing. Page 357.

together one last time. The mentioned tour was followed by live-album *Pulse* (1995), and the footage from the tour's Earl's Court concert in 20th of October 1994, was also released as VHS (1995) and later on DVD (2006). The VHS release of *Pulse* is the main target of my inquiry, as it was the contemporary version of the concert, and possibly the audio is less edited. Even if *The Wall* remains the most ambitious concert experience by Pink Floyd, for its pioneering theatrical ambition, once could say that *The Division Bell Tour* was the zenith of the technological aspirations of the band, utilizing the state-of-the-art technological solutions of the early 1990s.[4] This tour remains one of the most ambitious media spectacles to the date.[5]

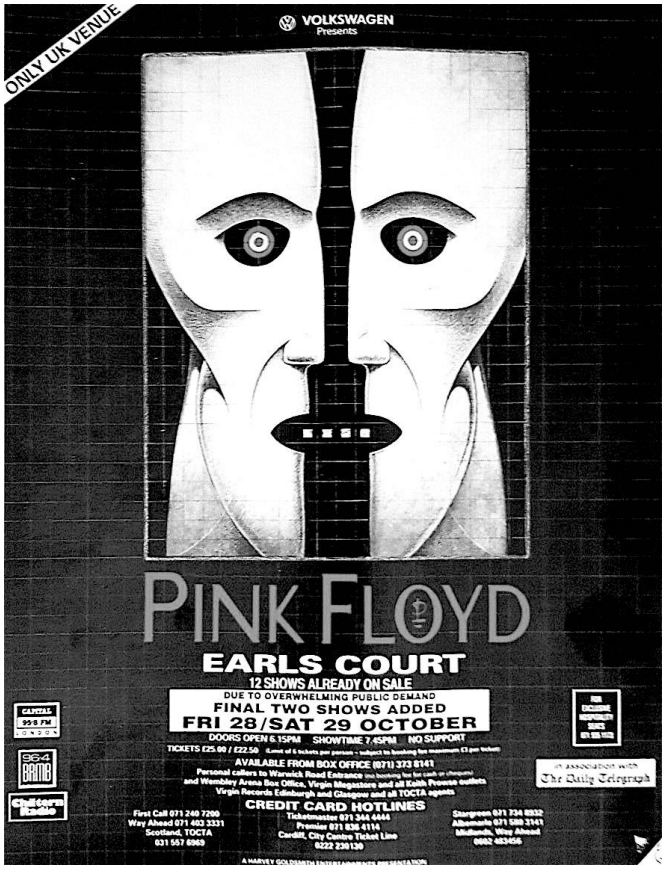

Figure x.x Poster advertising two additional performances at Earls Court, London 1994

[4] *Inside Pink Floyd: A critical review.* (2004). DVD. Rock Express (B0002NRRVU).
[5] On the notion of 'Spectacle' in the context of arena rock performance, see Kärki, K. (2015). 'Evolutions of the Wall, 1979–2013'. In B. Halligan, K. Fairclough-Isaacs, N. Spelman and R. Edgar, (eds.). *The Arena Concert. Music, Media and Mass Entertainment.* London: Bloomsbury Academic. Pages 57–70, and Kärki, K. (2018). 'The Technological Reach for the Sublime On U2's 360° Tour'. In S. Calhoun, (ed.). *U2 and the Religious Impulse. Take Me Higher*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. Pages 107–119. On 'Media Spectacle' see Jones, C. (1994). 'Pink Floyd: Earl's Court Exhibition Centre, London'. *MOJO*. Pink Floyd.

Paradoxically, at the moment of such technological triumph, the band turned their gaze back to their early roots in London's psychedelic clubs, partially to tap into nostalgia, partially to make a massive and modernized version of the impressive late-1960s psychedelic aesthetics the band originally helped to create, and definitely also pioneered in the UK. In the middle of these two distinctive eras – 1960s and 1990s – the most successful period of the band in the 1970s provided the release 15 of the songs, in comparison to six from the later Gilmour era, and none from the early years. The album version had 'Astronomy Domine' Special emphasis is on a live version of *The Dark Side of the Moon*, which was played in its entirety.

The Random Psychedelic Bliss of the Late 1960s

> The best thing was Friday night, when you could dress up like an old film star, drop acid, go down to UFO, see all the likewise people, get a stick of candy floss and float around until the Floyd came on. They were the first authentic sound of acid consciousness. I'd lie down on the floor and they'd be up on stage like supernatural gargoyles playing their spaced-out music, and the same colour that was exploding over them was exploding over us. It was like being taken over, mind, body and soul.[6]

This is how Jenny Fabian, the author of the autobiographical novel *Groupie* (1969), remembered a typical synaesthetic Pink Floyd experience at the UFO. The band began to be associated with ambitious audio-visual technology in the very beginning of their career. During the early days of their London underground club gigs, Pink Floyd performed with some of the

[6] See Mason, N. (2004). *Inside Out: A personal history of Pink Floyd.* London: W&N. Pages 46, 50.

first psychedelic lightshows in Britain, assisted by lightmen Mike Leonard and Peter Wynne-Wilson. This is when the moving image was introduced to their performances, with off-beat film projections and liquid (heated oil) slides adding to the random psychedelic experience.[7]

During this era, Pink Floyd's music had developed from rhythm and blues to long arty, psychedelic and predominantly instrumental pieces, with otherworldly titles such as 'Interstellar Overdrive' or 'Astronomy Domine'. The live aesthetic was similar to their surreal and psychedelic album cover aesthetic, created by band's friend Storm Thorgerson and his company Hipgnosis. The live aesthetic of the band was directed to creating an alternative reality, and thus the early days of the band were very much less political – even if they were definitely the house band of the countercultural hippie movement in London – than what would follow in the 1970s. The audience was meant to go into a trance-like state, to move away from external aggression to internal journey, to lose themselves to the multisensory waves of sound and light. This was indeed the psychedelic experience, very much associated with the intensity of hallusonogenic drug experience.[8] According to Roger Waters, Pink Floyd's first 'audio-visual' gig was at Essex University, with a film being projected behind them. This was considered by the band to be an excellent way to enhance their show. Soon afterwards they witnessed a really spectacular background, when someone used bubbles and oil to create a psychedelic pulsating effect at Powis Garden.[9] John 'Hoppy' Hopkins, one of the most well-known underground figures of Swinging London, claims that the first real psychedelic lightshow was seen at the *International Times* magazine launch party, which took place 15th October, 1966: 'And these Americans I knew called Joel and Toni Brown, who were friends of Timothy Leary, did some slide projections to go with what the Floyd were doing.'[10]

[7] Cunningham, M. (1999). *Live & Kicking. The Rock Concert Industry in the Nineties*. London: Sanctuary Publishing Ltd. Page 15.
[8] In Holding, E. (2000). *Mark Fisher. Staged Architecture*. Architectural Monographs No 52, Chichester: Wiley-Academy. Pages 31, 33.
[9] *Op cit.* Fitch (2001:77).
[10] See Williamson, N. (2001), 'Notes From the Underground', *Uncut*, 54:54-62. And Fitch, V. (1997), *The Pink Floyd Encyclopedia*, Burlington, Ontario: Collector´s Guide Publishing. Page 355.

Joe Gannon, Pink Floyd's first light man, told *The Herald* about the slides and lights Pink Floyd used already in 1966:

> I design the slides, basing them on my idea of the music. The lights work rhythmically. I just wave my hand over the micro-switches and the different colours flash. We have only been using the lights for one month. But before that, we were concentrating on starting with the right equipment. The lighting is so much a part of the group that it had to be good before it could be blend properly with the music.[11]

According to Syd Barret biographer Julian Palacios, it's really difficult to determine who did what first when discussing the use of light and backdrop images in England. Dozens of people had been working with the light already in the 1950s, having different purposes. It seems – in the context of the psychedelic era – that at least Mark Boyle, Peter Wynne-Wilson, John Marsh, Mike Leonard and Joe Gannon must be considered when listing the essential early lightmen of London.[12] Each and every one of them also worked for Floyd, mainly between 1966 and 1967, the hottest period of London underground, with John Marsh staying on the longest, throughout 1966–1968.[13]

The audio-visual innovations introduced during the reign of Syd Barrett fronted Pink Floyd were numerous. The main feature were the pulsating oil slides. Another feature that was introduced in 1967 were the 'Daleks', lighting towers named by drummer Nick Mason after exterminator robots of the TV series Dr Who, 'for their robotic nature, and obvious hostility to humanoids'.[14] These were movie lights in maximum, with two spinning colour wheels in front that could be rotated in varying speed, producing 'silvery purple metallic colours.[15]

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[11] *Op cit.* Fitch (2001:10–11). *The Herald*, Kent, U.K., 23rd November 1966.
[12] Palacios (1998: 81) see rising
[13] *Op cit.* Fitch (1997). Pages 43, 112, 171, 186, 345–346.
[14] *Op cit.* Mason (2004:72)
[15] *Ibid.* Mason (2004:71–72)

But how was this technological psychedelic aesthetic translated in the 1990s? Was it just a nostalgic throwback, or did the arena size offering of *The Division Bell Tour* have something new to add to ever widening possibilities of rock performance? At least the conceptual song structures, so much prevailing in post-1960s Pink Floyd, had almost zero randomness and chaos. Perhaps the throwback was partly an effort to introduce something wild into the Gargantuan live Pink Floyd arena spectacles. But also, the concert design had the nostalgic retro element to it, one of the truly huge rock dinosaurs was 'addicted to its own past'.[16] But Pink Floyd was also still very much attaching itself to the same surreal audio-visual 'language' as back in the 1960s. This surrealism, being 'above' and 'beyond' of 'reality', was in the core of the intended concert experience: to create a connection between dreaming and waking stages.[17]

Technological Retro-Nostalgia

The production costs of *The Division Bell Tour* were enormous, which is not surprising considering the sheer size of the operation. The tour staff alone needed eight busses and eighteen trucks for the 161 people involved, the three full stages, two giant pigs, 400 Vari-Lites, 300 speakers, power supplies, and other needed additional services, such a catering. Already before the first note was played live, the band had spent four million dollars, and the running costs of the tour was 25 million on top of that.[18]

The stage design was a collaboration by architect Mark Fisher and lighting designer Marc Brickman. Fisher had designed stages for Pink Floyd already since the mid-1970s. Brickman

[16] For a detailed discussion on 'retromania' and popular culture see, Reynolds, S. (2011). *Retromania. Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past.* New York: Faber & Faber.
[17] Holding, E. (2000). *Mark Fisher. Staged Architecture*. Architectural Monographs No 52, Chichester: Wiley-Academy. Page 45.
[18] *Op cit.* Fitch (1997:86) and Blake (2013:363)

had worked with Pink Floyd already in the early 1980s and *The Wall*, and also with e.g. Bruce Springsteen.[19] Their special innovation was the arched roof of the stage construction, a combination of steel structures and reflecting surfaces. Brickman had seen Pink Floyd play Hollywood Bowl in the 1970s and remembered the beautiful lighting possibilities that the arched roof design provided: 'I thought it just looked so beautiful and so simple. The band also felt that was one of the greatest gigs they ever did, so I said, why don't we take the Hollywood Bowl on tour?'[20] This, then, provided Mark Fisher with the ideal architectural model. All in all, Fisher's arena designs are part of a larger phenomenon of portable or mobile architecture.[21]

Brickman started to think about the lighting and special effects, with the early synaesthetic Pink Floyd light shows in mind. For this reason, he contacted lighting designer Peter Wynne-Wilson, who had provided the lighting for those early live shows. Together they decided, that they could re-create the psychedelic light show, but with the latest high technology. One of the things they came up with were new versions of the 'Dalek' lighting towers. This time the lighting towers were obviously much bigger, but also safer than the ones that in the late 1960s nearly decapitated the operators, those days mainly Wynne-Wilson himself. In order to actualise the best possible technology to achieve similar effects in arena surroundings, Bricman contacted Hughes Corporation, a company famous for cold war era military technology. The civilian versions of the designs originally developed for the army had become a growing area of production for them, even if the actual conversion to rock spectacle was not exactly simple.[22]

[19] *Op cit.* See Mason (2004:256) and for a more detailed description on the planning and actualisation of the staging, see Gottelier, T. (1994). 'Tales From the Pink Floyd Locker Room'. *Lighting+Sound International*, June:51–57; McHugh, C. (1994). 'Welcome To the Machine'. *Lighting Dimensions*, September. 55-61, 92; and *Op cit.* Holding (2000:30-45).
[20] *The Division Bell Tour Program* (1994).
[21] *Op cit.* Holding (2000), and Kronenburg, R. (2012). *Live Architecture: Venues, Stages and Arenas for Popular Music*. London: Routledge. Siegal, J. (2002). 'The Mark Fisher Studio'. In J. Siegal, (ed.), *Mobile. The art of portable architecture*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press. Pages 78-89.
[22] *Op cit.* Mason (2004:325, 328), Holding (2000: 39) and Blake (2013:363–364).

Simultaneously, Fisher started to develop his idea of the arena as a 'dream landscape, inhibited by the people'.[23] The original sketches had included ideas of a massive robotic arm that would have provided spotlights, and being able to reach all stage areas from its point of attachment at the highest point of the arc. This design was even prototyped, before it was realized that the arm would be too complex for easy transportation between cities. Another abandoned idea were gigantic metal insects that would have moved on wires between the PA-towers on both sides of the stage, and the mixing tower at the centre of the arena.[24] Furthermore, they could not realize the globe that would cover the stage before and after the show, as the audience should have been moved further away from the front of the stage. This was one of the last arena tours to use the traditional monitoring system, where monitor speakers were placed in front of the musicians. The in-ear monitoring was still being pioneered at the time, and the band decided to go with the old, more reliable system.[25]

The final stage design – or the three of them that leapfrogged from city to city to keep up with the tour schedule – was 60 meters wide, 23.5 meters high, and 22 meters deep. The steel construction weighted 700 tonnes, and took three days to build, 18 hours to set up for live show, seven hours to take down, and two days to pack into the 22 trucks in each case. Thus, the tour was a continuing cycle of one stage being built, one being performed on, and one being taken down.[26] Before the start of the tour there was not only the usual concert rehearsal with all sequencing of the songs, visuals, and special effects, but also the packing rehearsal. The staging needed to be fitted to the tiniest possible space in shortest possible amount of time. Even saving one truck from the duration of nine-month tour saved a decent amount of money.[27]

[23] *Op cit.* Holding (2000:35).
[24] *Mark Fisher Studio* (www.stufish.com/project/division-bell). See also *op cit.* Siegal (2002).
[25] *Op cit.* Mason (2004:324)
[26] *Op cit.* Fitch (1997:86)
[27] *Op cit.* Mason (2004:329)

All this was preceded by a computerized simulation at Mark Fisher Studios. All stage constructions were created as 3D-models, where one could witness the variety of staging elements at their right places. These were, at least by 1997, also animated and sequenced with music.

The Concert

Figure x.x Earls Court, *Divisional Bell* Tour 1994. Original concert ticket Chris Hart. ©

Films, projected on to a circular screen behind the stage, ooze with heavily symbolic images and webs of laser light criss-cross the darkness. Lights explode and die away in exquisite rhythmic flux as flowers, clocks, eyes and spiralling computer-generated sequences take us deep into the Floydian universe. Soon it all fuses together in a giant electric fish tank of light and sound: a trip for people who don't trip.[28]

[28] *Op cit.* Jones (1994).

Journalist Cliff Jones was present at Earls Court, but I need to rely on the released footage. I still have my cherished VHS version of *Pulse* (1995), but also the later DVD release (2006). There is difference in audio-visual quality, because of the medium. The following are my impressions, observing the concert now, 24 years after it was performed, and with the added emphasis of thinking it in terms of return to psychedelic aesthetics. The line-up was 'beefed-up' Pink Floyd, obviously without Roger Waters at that time. David Gilmour, Nick Mason and Rick Wright were all supplemented by an additional player – Tim Renwick, Jon Carin, and Gary Wallis, respectively. The rest of the band at this point was Guy Pratt on bass, Dick Parry on saxophone, and Durga McBroom, Sam Brown, and Claudia Fontaine on backing vocals.[29]

The first thing to note is the venue itself. Instead of releasing a concert recording from a stadium, Pink Floyd used Earl's Court arena, a favourite of David Gilmour. And one could tell it was favoured indeed, the last 14 concerts of the tour were performed at Earl's Court, 13 to 29 October 1994.[30] What Gilmour was after – in the unavoidably massive Pink Floyd scale – was intimacy:

> I *am* aiming at intimacy believe it or not. How that gets across... we have got the best PA system in the world, we've got wraparound sound, but no it's not a club, the audience isn't seeing me up close like you are now. It's not that kind of intimacy, I know. I'm not terribly attracted to the idea of tiny venues. I find them more frightening than huge venues. My ideal is to mix them up to quite a degree, 10,000-seaters and 100,000-seaters. On this last tour, for some reason, perhaps me not listening because of concentration on the record, it seemed that we played pretty much exclusively outdoor stadiums. I didn't like it. Playing in the small intimate atmosphere of Earls Court was a great way to close it.[31]

[29] *The Division Bell Tour Program* (1994); also see Reising, R. (2005). 'On the Waxing and Waning: A Brief History of *The Dark Side of the Moon'*. In R. Reising, (ed.). *Speak to Me: The Legacy of Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon*. Aldershot: Ashgate Press. Page 21.
[30] The concert on the 12 October 1994 in Earls Court, London was stopped and then cancelled when a grandstand collapsed; the date was rescheduled for 17 October.
[31] See Sutcliffe, P. (1995), 'The 30 Year Technicolour Dream', *Mojo*, Issue 20:64–80.

Intimacy must be considered in comparison to stadiums. According to Robert Kronenburg's typology, the venues can be divided to adopted spaces, adapted spaces, dedicated spaces, and mobile spaces.[32] Both arena and stadium concerts file under mobile spaces, as the structures travel fully with the band. But in terms of scale, despite the staging being same, it makes a big difference to scale down to arena level: this could mean 20,000 people instead of 60,000 in one single show.

The concert starts with 'Shine On You Crazy Diamond' from *Wish You Were Here* album. The quiet and hypnotic synthesizer drone is, after two minutes, accompanied by Gilmour's signature clean guitar intro, that goes on for five minutes. Both delay and very subtle phaser effect colour the guitar tone. A starry space landscape unfolds from the centre of the stage arc, and the round central screen shows a video, provided by Storm Thorgerson of Hipgnosis. The film is a mixture of beautiful everyday English landscapes, but as the song continues, the mood becomes more and more surrealistic: a jump into a swimming pool leads a man into a bottle, through a giant yin-yang-symbol, a colourful spiral, to the bottom of an empty swimming pool that is then cleaned at the end of the song.

The staging is obviously gigantic, and so is the line-up. Two guitar players, a bass player, drummer, percussionist, two keyboard players, three backing vocalists, and a saxophone player.[33] This song has been described as a 'Sonic Cathedral', fittingly constructed by musicians that used to study architecture. As a slowly building song it is a perfect starter for a Pink Floyd concert.[34]

[32] See Kronenburg, R. (2012). *Live Architecture: Venues, Stages and Arenas for Popular Music*. London: Routledge.
[33] Pink Floyd (1995). *Pulse. Pink Floyd In Concert 1994, Earl's Court, London.* Director: David Mallet. Music: Pink Floyd. Producer: Lana Topham. EMI. VHS. PMI MVD 491463 (01325–01832) (00030–01325).
[34] *Op cit. Inside Pink Floyd* (2004:0315–0340)

What follows, is a potpourri of 1980s and 1990s Pink Floyd songs. It is obvious that the past glories would not do alone, and the current Gilmour-driven line-up had fresh material. Not everyone would have necessarily liked these songs, or, as journalist Cliff Jones expressed it in his concert review: 'But the newer sounds lack the fluid lyrical angst of the Waters material; they sound too damned happy.'[35]

'Learning To Fly' (*Momentary Lapse of Reason*) starts, with pink light and more, lasers, beams of lights. The song is percussive 1980s power rocker, but the lush soundscapes of the quieter middle part bow to ambient music, that also features a video of a gigantic passenger airplane taking off, accompanied with the sound of jet engines. During the guitar solo by Tim Renwick, the images featured are from above clouds. Learning to fly, indeed. Thematically this follows the pattern established in the previous *Momentary Lapse of Reason* tour.[36] The staging, as so many times before with Pink Floyd, took the attention away from the band, and emphasized the holistic, dreamy, surreal and psychedelic audio-visual experiences. In relation to this, Andrew Goodwin saw the 'Learning To Fly' video as a good example of 'arty' images being utilized, instead of showing the musicians or their live performance.[37]

'High Hopes'[38] is the monumental closing track of *The Division Bell* album. Starting with the quiet bell that intertwines with a piano arpeggio, the song is a nostalgic return to youth, even childhood, with majestic fantasy of a 'Cambridge' Englishness and references to Gilmour's and Pink Floyd's past. The video, indeed shot in Cambridge and Ely, again by Storm Thorgerson, shows gigantic people – perspective of a child? – pastoral academic and nature idylls, and surreal white balloons, like something out of *The Prisoner* tv-series from 1967–

[35] *Op cit.* Jones (1994).
[36] *Op cit.* Pink Floyd (1995). *Pulse.* (01325–01832).
[37] See Goodwin, A. (1993). *Dancing in the Distraction Factory. Music Television and Popular Culture.* London: Routledge. Page 113.
[38] *Op cit. Pulse* (1995:01906–02710).

1968, but less ominous – here named 'The White Balls of Hope'.[39] Gilmour sings the lyrics penned by his partner Polly Samson, about how the grass was greener, the light brighter, the taste sweeter. This perfectly captures the term *nostalgia* that comes from two Greek words, *Nostos*

(*νόστος*), homecoming, and *Algos* (*άλγος*), pain, suffering. The youth is a place of no return, hence the pain and longing. The video perhaps references back to Alexander the Great, in the form of a gigantic statue. Or it might be Syd Barrett, captured and remembered as a youthful figure, being towed away. The tributes to the original Pink Floyd frontman Barrett, who was consumed my mental illness, have been a constant building block of their mythos. The song is longing to the youthful and hopeful idealism of the psychedelia, combined with the popular surrealism of Hipgnosis that references to the melting clocks of Dali and the changing perspectives and measures of objects, echoing the painting style of René Magritte. With this Thorgerson aimed to childlike visual understanding.[40]

Figure x.x Gestalt angry face/faces with Cathedral in background. ©

[39] *Op cit.* Fitch (1997:85).
[40] *Op cit.* Holding (2000:45).

‘Take if Back’, ‘Coming Back To Life’ and ‘Sorrow’ feel a bit like fillers, even if there is an ecological theme going on in the first mentioned U2-style arena anthem. After them ‘Keep Talking’ feels again more poignant for the chosen theme of communication. After a short intro, the ‘voice’ of theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking fills the air, or, rather, his speech synthesizer: ‘For millions of years mankind lived just like the animals. Then something happened which unleashed the power of our imagination: they learned to talk.’ The whole background is filled by horizontally moving massive symbols, like an alphabet of a lost language. Firmly in the call and response tradition of Afro-American music, the backing vocalists ask: ‘Why don’t you talk to me?’ And again, Hawking gives the answer: ‘It just have to be like this: all we need to do is make sure we keep talking.’[41]

Most likely the most well-known Pink Floyd song, ‘Another Brick in the Wall pt. II’ (*The Wall*) starts with the helicopter sounds that rotate around the arena. The surround sound effects are something that Pink Floyd pioneered back in the 1960s, already in Queen Elizabeth Hall *Games for May* concert in May 12, 1967. The band had speakers placed all around the venue, and the sound effects were controlled by Rick Wright, with a ‘joystick’ device the band named ‘Azimuth Coordinator’.[42] The helicopters were accompanied by searchlights in the audience.[43]

‘One of These Days’ (from *Meddle*) is the oldest song of the whole concert film – on the *Pulse* CD there was a throwback all the way to the first album *Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, the opening song ‘Astronomy Domine’. Considering the whole idea of the concert audio-visual

[41] *Op cit. Pulse* (1995:05122–05847); *Op cit.* Blake (2013:360)
[42] July 2017 – in *Pink Floyd: Their Mortal Remains* exhibition at Victoria and Albert Museum, London - curator of the exhibition, Victoria Broackes.
[43] *Op cit. Pulse* (1995:05915–10550)

design being a nod to the early psychedelic days of the band, the exclusion from the audio-visual recording is strange. One possibility is that the footage turned out darker than intended. At least, observing the bootleg video, this seems to be a case. It is truly a shame, as the throwback is indeed glorious in all the psychedelic haze that can be produced in arena surroundings.[44] 'One of These Days' is nostalgic in the sense that the original songs utilized the Binson Echorec disc delay unit in a very distinctive way, the song is dominated by bass pulse that is doubled by the delay. In the quiet middle part there is a musical reference to *Dr Who* theme, with two pulsating rings on the screened, pulse synched to the tempo of the bass. Percussive effects and a recorded announcement followed - 'One of these days I'm going to cut you into little pieces!'. As the song explodes to full speed again, the tops of both PA-towers expose two giant pig heads that have searchlights as eyes. The full 1960s style psychedelic lightshow is evident here but extended with groups of synchronized Vari-Lite-lamps and precisely timed explosives in front of the stage. Every bit is carefully timed for maximum theatrical effect. This, along with the scale of the arena performance, is the biggest difference to the 1960s Pink Floyd random psychedelic lightshow.[45]

The second half of the show was dedicated to the full live treatment of *The Dark Side of the Moon* album (1973), save the three last encore songs. Even if the album from 1973, and the whole album is conceptual and very carefully structured, for example Whiteley (1992:104–118) sees the album, as well as its different performances, as part of the psychedelic aesthetic. But instead of the childlike innocence, this collection of songs offers dystopic and alienated tales on (then) contemporary world. Whiteley even compares it to Krzysztof Penderecki's

[44] see www.youtube.com/watch?v=0siszbObCcw [Referenced 2nd November 2018]
[45] *Op cit. Pulse* (1995:10550–11220).

Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima and The Beatles' 'A Day in Life', where 'synthesised sound is used to create a hallucinogenic nightmare.'[46]

Reising (2005) considered this the supreme and 'definitive' version, of *The Dark Side of the Moon*, at least live, and went on to declare that it 'might be the greatest concert video ever made', and continues: '*Pulse*, as a film, gives viewers every possible best seat in the house for every possible musical and visual moment.'[47] Obviously, this is what the director David Mallet might have wanted to achieve in the editing stage. In comparison to the often-uncomfortable concert experience, with limited visibility, *Pulse* indeed offers the intended concert experience and highlights every climax. If the concert was a run-through of Pink Floyd history, also the accompanying films - and they were indeed shot and shown on proper film - were a mixture of the old and new.[48]

The intro, 'Speak To Me', already flirts with the psychedelic aesthetic, both in the sound collage of Chris Adamson and Jerry Driscoll talking about madness. The accompanying film sequence used 1973–1975, and again in 1994, features cardiograph heartbeat that blends into a close-up of an eye. 'As the view gets closer, stars and the moon form in the black of the eye, until the moon fills the entire screen.'[49] The intro leads directly to 'Breathe In the Air', a song about people being like rabbits, bound by routines, commitments, circular temporality and death. It's far from the psychedelic hippie dream.[50]

'On the Run' starts with the spiralling synthesizer-melody, and another film by Storm Thorgerson. The film features a psychotic young man on a hospital bed, hearing voices and seeing balls of light. Finally, the bed starts to move in the hospital hallways, and then on a

[46] *Op cit.* Whiteley (1992:105).
[47] *Op cit.* Reising (2005:20–21).
[48] *Op cit.* Holding (2000:45).
[49] *Op cit.* Fitch (1997:283–284); *Pulse* (1995:11245–11426).
[50] *Op cit. Pulse* (1995:11427–11705).

runway, taking off. At times we get to witness that the bedbound man is still in a hospital. But the sequence ends with an aircraft diving from the back of the arena and crashing to the stage, a prop that Pink Floyd had used already during *The Wall Tour* (1980–1981).[51]

'Time' starts with the ringing clocks, also seen in the animations, followed by an ambient guitar sequence with roto-tom percussions. The visuals move from the original 1970s animations by Iaen Eames to the new computerised ones by Storm Thorgerson, which takes place in the 'Castle of Chronos'.[52] Another song about time running out, essential part of the cultural pessimistic concept of the album. This is also the first song of *The Dark Side of the Moon* to feature the full band, the dystopic thematic emphasized by the backing vocalist now dressed in black, instead of white that was featured in the first half of the show. It also returns to the theme in the beginning, with 'Breathe Reprise'.[53] This is followed by the instrumental 'The Great Gig in the Sky', which starts as a quiet piano ballad, but grows into an orgasmic vocal performance by the three backing singers who take turns on lead vocals. This time the video portrays water, we stay beneath the waves, and the intensity of the water movement and lighting is varied – blue for quiet parts, red, oranges and yellow for the peak moments.[54] The feeling is more abstract, serene and perhaps meditative – this might be the most successful throwback to the psychedelic sublime nature experience.

One of the best-known Pink Floyd songs, 'Money', starts with the iconic chime of the cash register, and the 7/4 beat bass riff. The lyric is about wealth and greed, and the accompanying video features coins, gold, furs, private jets, villas, speedboats, and other symbols of luxury. Even if the song is obviously a satire, it was thought to be a positive song about money, cars, caviar and buying a football team. The solo sections feature more modest lighting effects,

[51] *Ibid. Pulse* (1995:11705–12034).
[52] *Op cit.* Fitch (1997:85).
[53] *Op cit. Pulse* (1995:12045–12720); *Op cit.* Reising (2005:21–22).
[54] *Op cit. Pulse* (1995:12425–13310).

notably to highlight the players. This is song is also a transition from personal and individual tones of the previous songs, towards something more communal and political.[55]

The anti-war song 'Us and Them' starts with a slow, dreamy arpeggio. The film features people walking, miners working and traveling with a train. This is a dynamic film, it has movement and its aesthetic resembles that of a propaganda film. It could also be seen as a parody of such films.[56] But the moments when the 'ordinary' people feature on the screen, invites considerations on the nature of 'us' as a crowd, and this seems to extend to the concert audience as well. The song could thus be interpreted to be about individual alienation and crow experience, but also ideological and political critique. The lyric is about war and otherness, about creating borders and oppositions. War is the epitome of the insanity, generals moving pieces on the map and people dying as a result, lines on the map moving from side to side.[57] The song sequates into another instrumental, 'Any Colour You Like'[58], which is the clearest visual reference to the late 1960s, with the clear resemblance of liquid oil slides. This is a moment of pure nostalgia, but as it's sequated by the more organized audio-visual moments, the whole event becomes 'nothing less than a totalizing vision, a history of sorts, of psychedelic concert production, from the simplest experiments of the mid- and late sixties to the perfectly synchronized light, film, and laser sophistication of the 21st century.'[59] This totalization can be seen to be part of an even longer trending in staging that was highlighted already with Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*.[60]

'Brain Damage' is the most direct political commentary in the whole concert. The song about lunatics and madness features a long list of political figures in its video, filmed by

[55] *Ibid. Pulse* (1995:13322–14200); Reising (2005:22).
[56] *Op cit.* Fitch (1997:85).
[57] *Op cit.* Fitch *Pulse* (1995:14200–14910); and *Op cit.* Reising (2005:23).
[58] *Op cit.* Fitch *Pulse* (1995:14911–15225).
[59] *Op cit.* Reising (2005:23).
[60] See, in terms of 'rock liveness', Auslander, P. (2005). *Liveness. Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. Abingdon: Routledge. Pages 51–52); Macan, E. (1997). *Rocking the Classics. English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Page 11.

Caroline Wright[61]: George H. Bush, Margaret Thatcher, Bill Clinton – with a saxophone, Saddam Hussein, Ronald Reagan, Richard Nixon, John Mayor and Yasser Arafat appear as the residents of a musical madhouse. The central screen features explosion, the soldiers are running, replaced by tombstones. Insane taped laughter fills the air.[62] 'Eclipse', the closer of *The Dark Side of the Moon*, starts directly with a drum fill and descending guitar arpeggio. The video shows the sun slowly eclipsed by the moon, just like in the lyrics. Even in the end the tranquil moment is filled with fear of madness. The whole stage construction seems to be covered by the surface of the moon, with dust and craters. The voice of a man ends the conceptual song cycle, the speaker being the Irish doorman of Abbey Road studios, Gerry O'Driscoll.[63] 'There's no dark side of the moon really, matter of fact it's all dark.'[64]

Performing *The Dark Side of the Moon* in its entirety feels justified and poignant, even if it could be seen as a cynical act of tapping into the nostalgia felt by the generations of Pink Floyd fans. And despite the emphasis on nostalgia and musicianship, first and foremost in the post Roger Waters years of the band, the cultural pessimism of the original recording still comes through. None of the darkness or satire has been toned down, the live performance is surprisingly loyal to the original album version. This, however, is one central feature of 'classic rock', the original album has become so iconic that the music has to be performed as loyally to it as possible – it's the new classical music, where everything has its right place and tone, and the possible changes are more nuances than improvisation or actual departures from the original. The band, according to Nick Mason, regretted not having released a live version of the album already in the 1970s.[65]

[61] *Op cit.* Fitch (1997:85).
[62] *Op cit.* Fitch *Pulse* (1995:15225–15610).
[63] *Op cit.* Mason (2004:172).
[64] *Op cit.* Fitch *Pulse* (1995:15611–15750).
[65] *Op cit.* Blake (2013:368).

The concert did not end here. After retreating from the stage for a while, Pink Floyd was back for encores. Starting with 'Wish You Were Here', an acoustic ballad about Syd Barrett, the spectacle is toned down for a calm and 'intimate' – for an arena gig – moment. The lighting is stable, like flower buckets of light, with laser beams rising from the stage, moving slowly and elegantly.[66]

The second encore, 'Comfortably Numb', from *The Wall,* is performed with a less theatrical style in comparison to the original live performance, where Gilmour used to sing the chorus from the top of the wall. But the technological and psychedelic spectacle reaches its zenith during the solo sections. First Gilmour is bathed by the Vari-Lite spotlights surrounding the central screen above. The screen itself turns down towards Gilmour, like a giant magnifying glass emanating solar beams. After a while, the mixing tower at the centre of the arena reveals a gigantic five-meter diameter rotating mirror ball that rises up above the audience with a Tomcat Starlift retractable tower, to 21 meters in all, and starts radiating light in all directions. The whole arena is filled with the light, like starry sky projected upon the audience. This is the 'Dream World', designed by architect Mark Fisher to be the visual highlight of the concert, involving the whole arena into the experience. The arched staging was, according to Fisher, a gateway to another world, the musicians being the interpreters between the different dimensions. The attention of the audience was directed from the stage, towards the light patterns and night sky.[67] To add one more step to this collective and 'utopian' technological experience, the mirror ball opens to reveal glittering petals, like a gigantic flower of fire that floods the arena with psychedelic changing beams of light, it is as if it is interacting with the stage lighting, an audio-visual feast emphasized by the extended guitar solo by Gilmour.[68]

[66] *Op cit.* Fitch *Pulse* (1995:15930–20445).
[67] *Op cit.* McHugh (1997:57, 93); *Op cit.* Holding (2000:45).
[68] *Op cit. Pulse* (1995:20520–21435).

The last song of the concert, 'Run Like Hell', yet another favourite from *The Wall*, offers an interesting comparative element to the original performance of the song. In the *Pulse* version, the rocker is performed with the full psychedelic arsenal from the staging, starting from darkness, with strobe lights and lasers cutting through in synch with improvised delay guitar effects by Gilmour. The dreamlike quality follows well from the overblown explosions of light that preceded the moment, and it is yet another clear throwback to 1960s psychedelic aesthetic. Here the 'popular avantgarde' of Pink Floyd is married with the lighting aesthetic of Marc Brickman, giving a clear and direct bow to the early days of the band. This is followed by the song, another feast of light and explosions.[69] If we compare this start of the song to the original *The Wall Tour* performance, the difference between Waters and Gilmour as entertainers becomes evident. Water starts the song by addressing the audience, framing the rocking song as a parody of 'good times' in a concert: 'Aaaaghhh! Are there any paranoids in the audience tonight? Is there anyone who worries about things? Pathetic! This is for all the weak people in the audience. Is there anyone here who's weak? This is for you, it's called Run Like Hell.'[70]

This is a clear provocation, a theatrical and raging performance by Waters. In comparison, Gilmour appears shy and modest in his communication. 'Thank you very much indeed', being his standard reaction to the ovations and loving cheers from the audience. The original *The Wall Tour* lost money, and the audio-visual feast that is captured in *Pulse* made a lot of it. To be more exact, here are two examples of the figures: Miami 30th March 1994, 1,975,665 $ (Joe Robbie Stadium, 54 738 people), Columbus 29th May 1994, 2,406,920 $ (Ohio Stadium, 75 250 people).[71] Evidently pioneering an ambitious piece of rock theatre is not as financially

[69] *Ibid Pulse* (1995:21500–21635); Holding (2000:33).
[70] 'Run Like Hell', Pink Floyd (2000). *Is There Anybody Out There? The Wall Live. Pink Floyd 1980-81*. Limited edition. EMI. LC0542 7243 5 23562 2 5 (5 23563-4 2).
[71] *Op cit.* (1997:84–85).

rewarding as creating something nostalgic and entertaining. Obviously also the times had changed by the early 1990s, stadium rock having become a firm branch of cultural industries. But Pink Floyd did well in that regard already in the 1970s – they just took more creative risks.

Conclusion

> They thrive on a cult of un-personality, a weird, anonymous chic. Think of Floyd and the images that come to mind aren't of people at all but of walls and prisms, pigs and power stations. They've cleverly recycled three or four vague themes over the years – insanity, loneliness, the angst of modern living – so all the punter has to do is assemble the clues and bingo, they've constructed something profound. In this way Floyd are all things to all men. Of course, I know they are really sages of sod all, but I'm a sucker all the same. Pink Floyd cornered the market in nostalgia long ago: not just for some imagined childhood idyll but for a collective adolescence too.[72]

The Division Bell Tour, and the recordings of it, released as different versions of *Pulse*, is a full blown nostalgic and technological spectacle. Nothing is left to chance, as the careful sequencing and the state-of-the-art audio-visual technology provide a modern version a Wagnerian unified and totalizing work of art. This tour was really not about theatrical ideas and clever intellectual concepts, but rather about technologically sublime audio-visual entertainment, to the point of exaggeration. Or, as the drummer Nick Mason expressed it, when discussing the idle post-cold war military technology offered to them: 'Unfortunately in spite of the wonderfully cheap deals available we were unable to think of anything to do with a Sidewinder missile.'[73]

[72] *Op cit.* Jones (1994).
[73] *Op cit.* Mason (2004:325).

The tour was also the culmination of the commercialization of the Pink Floyd brand, highlighted by their sponsorship deal with Volkswagen. The car manufacturer logo was well visible in the press conferences, and there was a special 'Pink Floyd Volkswagen' available for the people who liked the band and cars. At least the car was a version of relatively environmentally friendly Golf-series, not a sports car.[74] Gilmour was, from the hindsight, not very proud of jumping into the corporate sponsorship wagon:

> We took sponsorship by Volkswagen for the first time on this last tour. I confess to not having thought it through entirely and I was uncomfortable with it. Meeting and greeting Volkswagen people. I was not a popular chappy with Volkswagen. I don't want them to be able to say they have a connection with Pink Floyd, that they're part of our success. We will not do it again. I didn't like it and any money I made from it went to charity. We should remain proudly independent, that's my view, and we will in the future.[75]

Gilmour's reaction is revealing. It is connected to his personal views and charity work, but also to rock authenticity and the idea of not selling out to rock business – surely a paradox by that time, and because what kind of huge brand Pink Floyd had become. Rick Wright had actually sold 'Great Gig in the Sky' – a song he had written – to Neurofen advert, but had to record a separate version, as Gilmour again didn't want Pink Floyd directly associated with commercial products.[76] The shunning of the corporate side of rock, even so ever mildly, could perhaps be seen as one last nod to the hippie ideals of the late 1960s, when independence meant counterculture, and corporations were an enemy of grassroots creativity. Pink Floyd was still firmly rooted to the same surreal audio-visual aesthetic, but also to an understanding of the

[74] *Ibid.* Mason (2004:330).
[75] *Op cit.* Sutcliffe (1995: unpaginated). See also *Op cit.* Blake (2013:363).
[76] *Ibid.* Sutcliffe (1995).

related idealism. It is more than obvious, that there was also real nostalgia towards those early years from within the band. *Pulse* remains a bombastic statement to that reach back to the roots of Pink Floyd.