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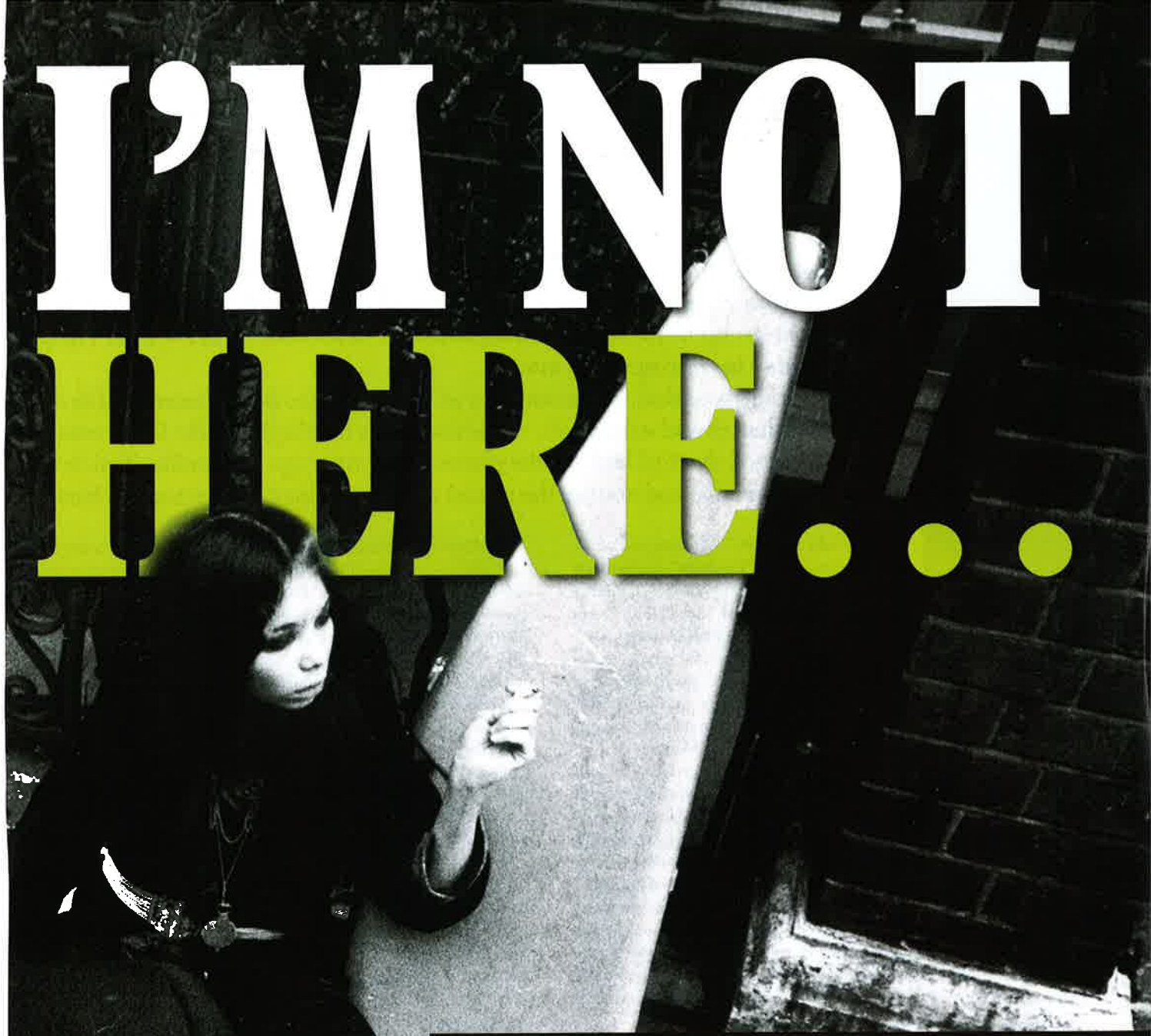
Syd Barrett and Iggy The Eskimo outside Wetherby Mansions, Earls Court, London, circa spring 1969. "Sometimes he would just lock himself in his room," says his former flatmate Duggie Fields.

I'M NOT HERE...



HIS FIRST SOLO ALBUM, *THE MADCAP LAUGHS*, SEALED HIS REPUTATION AS PSYCHEDELIA'S DOOMED POET AND SAW HIM WITHDRAW FURTHER INTO HIMSELF. NOW, FOUR DECADES ON FROM ITS INITIAL RELEASE, DAVID GILMOUR, ROBERT WYATT, MICK ROCK AND THOSE WHO KNEW HIM BEST TELL THE TRUE STORY OF SYD BARRETT'S MYTHICAL DESCENT INTO MADNESS...

WORDS PAT GILBERT

PORTRAIT MICK ROCK

Mick Rock/Retna

IN THE EARLY HOURS OF JULY 21, 1969, SYD BARRETT AND HIS FLATmates settled down to watch the BBC's all-night coverage of the Apollo 11 moon landing, an event many of the acid-fried heads present firmly believed was being faked in a Hollywood TV studio on the instructions of the Pentagon.

Handsome and tousled, Syd sat in the corner, next to his friend Sue Kingsford – star of a TV advert for the Cadbury's Flake chocolate bar – and said nothing, seemingly lost in his own inner-space. Perhaps the fact that the BBC were soundtracking their Apollo coverage with an instrumental titled Moonhead by Pink Floyd – the group from which he'd been ousted 18 months earlier – wasn't helping to lighten his introspective mood.

But the truth was that, by the summer of '69, visitors to his flat were used to Syd Barrett's silences and wild stares. As British pop's first high-profile LSD casualty, it was accepted that Syd had left the planet a long time ago and, unlike Neil Armstrong and friends, had neither the means nor the inclination to return to Earth.

Already, aged just 23, Barrett was referring to himself as a "has-been", having been the driving force behind Pink Floyd's initial success, then effectively sacked in the early months of 1968 when his behaviour became ever-more bizarre and erratic. In the next 18 months he disappeared from public view entirely, further annihilating his brain with copious doses of LSD and Mandrax.

"Syd was at a crossroads with nowhere to turn," explains his friend Jenny Spires, who lodged with Syd in his Earls Court digs in early 1969. "He didn't like the 'music business', and when he realised its hard-nosed attitudes weren't changing in line with the times, he'd showed his disaffection. He didn't want to participate any more – and so had no way forward."

However, Barrett's story was about to take an unexpected twist. Six months after Neil Armstrong took his historic steps on the Sea Of Tranquillity, the singer would release an extraordinary solo album that would cement his reputation as '60s psychedelia's great English eccentric, and inspire a cult around his life and work that seems to grow bigger with each passing decade.

Curiously, *The Madcap Laughs* – as the album was aptly called – was pieced together by David Gilmour, Syd's old Cambridge college friend who'd replaced him in Pink Floyd, and whose musical vision would, in the late '60s and early '70s, help make the group one of the biggest rock bands in the world. But the tale of how the two musicians came to create one of the most unhinged and mysterious records in rock history isn't a cheery one, coloured as it is by insanity, guilt, violence, the dark excesses of drug abuse, and an unpleasant incident involving a steaming turd left on a door-step...

Perhaps its most famous track, Octopus – released as a single in late 1969 – sounded like a strange, Shakespearean witch's curse recited over a Beatles *White Album* outtake. Elsewhere there was a genteel, jazzy, Olde Tyme ditty called Here I Go and the sublime, charming Terrapin, while the album closer, Late Night, a hauntingly wistful, semi-spoken blues, seemed like the ultimate love song for clinical depressives: "Inside me I feel/Alone and unreal/And the way you kiss will always be a very special thing to me."

At a stroke, Syd became a cult hero – the man who'd created the arty, abstract, free-form psychedelia of Pink Floyd, then crawled from LSD-induced exile to make the ultimate outsiders' album. Thereafter, the Syd Myth exploded, his reputation as a deranged hippy magus and psychedelic messenger fanfared by any number of disciples who've purported that he was – among other things – telepathic, a genius, "the sane one", Britain's Brian Wilson and "a dark star".

The truth about his life and work is, however, both complex and contradictory. For Syd's younger sister Rosemary Breen, a retired nurse who still lives in Cambridge, her brother's story is a painful and profoundly human one. Understandably, she has little time for the elements of voyeurism that underpin his legend. "I wish it had never happened," she states poignantly, referring to the disturbing course the life of Roger Keith Barrett, as Syd was first named, took.

Barrett, who withdrew from the public eye in 1972, died of pancreatic cancer in 2006, following a long history of diabetes. Rosemary had looked after his welfare throughout his reclusion, and requested in the early '70s that none of Pink Floyd, nor their fans, should bother him. Some of the latter ignored her: a French journalist famously door-stepped Syd at his unremarkable Cambridge semi in 1982, and conducted a short interview, while YouTube has several minutes of footage of a fiftysomething Barrett, presumably not long before his death, walking to his local shops, a shaven-headed, overweight, boggle-eyed echo of the Bohemian waif on the *Madcap* sleeve.

Syd ended his life as what you might call the 'local eccentric'. "He just wanted to become the real person that he was," says Rosemary. "I'm not sure how genuine the Syd character really was. Roger wanted to live a life as Roger. When the people who wanted him – in other words the press – knocked on the door, he did once say, 'Syd doesn't live here.' He wasn't being obtuse, it was the truth."

Perhaps the most unsettling aspect of *The Madcap Laughs'* story is that plain Roger Barrett seemed to ➢

Alain Dister/Dalle/Retna

STEPPING OUT OF THE train station in Cambridge, fans in search of Pink Floyd landmarks will be immediately minded of Syd's quirky 1967 track Bike – there are literally thousands of the things chained up everywhere, the vehicle of choice for this flat, cycle-friendly city's huge student body.

At the start of the '70s, Barrett's debut *The Madcap Laughs* was something of a student favourite here, and everywhere else in Britain. Appearing on the progressive Harvest label, it seemed the weird document of a posh Home Counties Englishman gone stark raving mad.

"SYD WAS GOOD-LOOKING, SNAPPILY DRESSED, FUNNY, PROVOCATIVE, RATIONAL. I LOOKED UP TO HIM, WITH A LITTLE JEALOUSY."

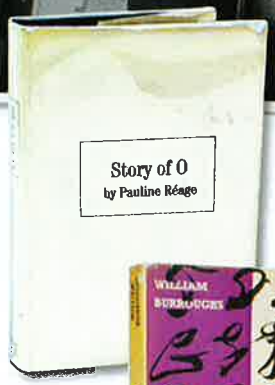
DAVID GILMOUR

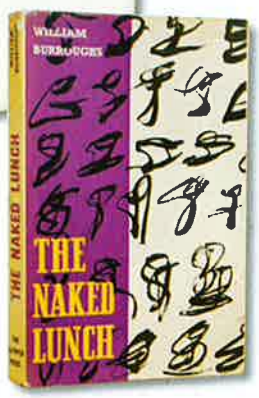
In the Pinks: Barrett in his full psychedelic pomp, London 1967: "The world was changing and he believed we should all be perfect being cool and groovy," remembers co-manager Andrew King.

have had a happy and privileged start in life. He was born in Cambridge on January 6, 1946 at 60 Glisson Road, to a pathologist father, Max, and mother Wynn. When he was four the family moved a mile or so to a capacious semi-detached villa on Hills Road, a busy route into town. "We were very lucky to have a very talented father who was interested in many things – art, music, literature – and who encouraged us to explore all possibilities," recalls Rosemary. "Syd developed a very original approach to things. He never seemed to do anything normal, I don't think he had it in him."


Syd with his sister Rosemary, Cambridge, 1961.


David Gilmour (far left) in Jokers Wild, 1964; Syd and David's reading matter, 1965.





Rosemary remembers the young Syd as a confident, cheerful and mischievous spirit. At family gatherings, he and Rosemary – the youngest of five siblings – would perform duets on the piano, while at bedtime their mother would enrich their imaginations with fairytales, poems and the 'nonsense' rhymes of Edward Lear. Syd was well liked and impish.

"I remember one trip climbing up Snowdon," says Rosemary. "When we arrived back at the car park, we realised Syd was not with us. He'd gone off on his own, and there was a very tense hour or so until he came down the mountain, grinning broadly."

Syd's memories of an idyllic, arty childhood would later reverberate through his recorded work – in songs like Bike and Mathilda Mother – partly, perhaps, because his inner life was about to take an unhappy turn. In December 1961, when he was approaching his 16th birthday, his much-loved father died of cancer. The loss seems to have hit the teenage Syd particularly hard. "I think it left a huge gap in his life," says Rosemary. "I don't think he ever connected with anyone else in quite the same way."

He outwardly coped with the tragedy stoically, though Mark Blake's superlative Pink Floyd biography, Pigs Might Fly (Aurum), suggests some contemporaries felt the experience lent him a barbed, anarchic edge. "He had a real mouth on him," observed one school friend. "He wouldn't take any bullshit and was always pissing about."

During his year at Cambridge College of Arts & Technology, his interest in rock music blossomed. The guitarist with an irregular combo called Geoff Mott And The Mottoes, he also began jamming with a fellow student who would be inextricably linked to his future fortunes – good and bad. The son of a respected zoologist, David Gilmour – a shy, pretty blond kid seemingly welded to the guitar his parents had bought him – had apparently first encountered Syd some years earlier at a Saturday morning art class held at Homerton College on Hills Road (Pink Floyd's bassist Roger Waters attended, too, though none of them could ever summon clear memories of this epochal meeting). "Syd was a pretty remarkable character," recalls Gilmour of the teenage Barrett. "He was good-looking, always snappily dressed, attractive, funny, provocative, rational. I looked up to him, with a little jealousy."

At lunchtimes, Syd and David would meet up to play Stones, Beatles and Bo Diddley numbers. Some students remember Barrett as a kind of Pete Doherty figure, studiously slouched on a window-sill strumming old music hall songs. Gilmour simply remembers them as "fairly normal teenagers, interested in girls and drinking, and weighing up our options. Oddly, I didn't sense that there was anything particularly *musical* about Syd at that time."

In fact, Syd's most obvious gift was for painting, and in September 1963 he enrolled at Camberwell Art School in south London. Meanwhile, Gilmour deliberately flunked his A-Levels and began playing full-time with his R&B band Jokers Wild. The two boys remained close during the next few years. In 1965, they enjoyed an adventure in the South of France, where they camped out near St. Tropez, got drunk on cheap plonk, and were busted by the gendarmes for illegally busking. In Paris, nosing around the stalls on the Left Bank, they bought two books then banned in England, Anne Desclos' pseudonymous erotic novel The Story Of O and William Burroughs' The Naked Lunch. "We got back to our campsite and read them by torchlight," smirks Gilmour, "then got nervous on the ferry back to England in case we got searched by Customs and arrested for possession of illegal literature."

In London, Syd had joined forces with an old Cambridge pal, Roger Waters, in what would eventually become Pink Floyd. On a couple of occasions, Jokers Wild and the Floyd played on the same bill. Gilmour didn't feel threatened by Syd's outfit, which were still playing mainly R&B covers – and not very well.

"We were a lot more slick and professional than they were," he explains. "That change in Syd becoming a writer, an ideas person, that particular bloom hadn't blossomed." It was Pink Floyd's aversion to being "slick" – and a growing fascination with volume, noise and pushing their blues jams into more avant-garde territory – that would be their making.

Syd's early experiments with LSD – a drug that looms large in *The Madcap Laughs*' story – were bending the Floyd's music into ever more abstract shapes, and by the autumn of 1966, their trippy performances had made them stars of London's underground psychedelic scene. That December, the Floyd played what was effectively a homecoming gig at Cambridge Arts College Christmas Ball. Mick Rock, a first-year Modern Languages student at Cambridge University who would later shoot the cover of *The Madcap Laughs*, saw the group for the first time that night.

"The show was an amazing revelation," says Rock. "It was only four years after The Beatles' first records, remember, and there was this mesmerising figure bobbing up and down in front of a swirling oil-slide projection. There was no reference, it was like nothing you'd ever heard or seen before."

After the gig, Rock joined Syd's entourage at a party in his den at 183 Hills Road. "We spliffed away – tobacco and hashish," recalls the photographer. "I got to know Syd that night. We talked about Childhood's End, an Arthur C. Clarke book with a scene at the end when these kids dance themselves into oblivion. It seemed kind of appropriate! Syd was very cheerful, open, communicative."

Also there that night was Jenny Spires, Syd's girlfriend whom

Rosemary Breen, ©Mark Hayward Archive (2)

he'd soon immortalise as 'Jennifer Gentle' in the Floyd track Lucifer Sam. "He rang to say he'd written a great song, and came over to fetch me from my parents' to play it to me. It was Arnold Layne, which was completely unlike anything else I'd heard them play."

With Syd having penned what became, three months later, the Floyd's first hit single, the omens for the next year looked good. Little could anyone know that the next 12 months would, instead, be the beginning of Syd's nightmare.

IN APRIL 1968, FOUR WEEKS BEFORE BARRETT BEGAN work on the first tracks for *The Madcap Laughs*, his management released a statement saying he'd left Pink Floyd. The banal circumstances of Syd's dismissal have passed into rock lore: en route to a gig at Southampton University on January 26 in the band's old Bentley, one of the group asked whether they should pick up Barrett. Roger Waters replied: "Let's not bother."

"The band had got bored of him," says Andrew King, who with his friend Peter Jenner had managed the group since mid-'66. "And I don't blame them for that."

No one can pinpoint exactly when Syd's personality changed, but people tend to agree it was around April 1967, when Barrett, then with girlfriend Lindsay Corner, moved into 101 Cromwell Road, a large, dilapidated townhouse in Earls Court divided into flats. The building was home to a bunch of pharmaceutical adventurers, many from Cambridge, whom Peter Jenner describes as "messianic acid freaks".

Barrett and his friends were ingesting the infamous LSD-25, a powerful psychiatric drug, still legal at that time in the UK. Mick Rock was a visitor to Cromwell Road, and lived there during his summer vacation in 1967. "There was this geezer and he'd be high on acid, dropping sploshes of acid on blotting paper with an eye-dropper," he recalls. "That stuff was incredibly strong. Plonk! Bingo! You were off to another dimension! The first time I took it I didn't move for several hours. It was crazy."

As with many others, LSD proved an almost religious experience for Syd. "He really did believe the psychedelic revolution was flowing through him," explains Andrew King. "The world was changing and he believed we should all be perfect beings, cool and groovy. I think that tipped it for him. It seems like hippy nonsense now, but it was all very serious then. The Vietnam War, the idea of World Peace..."

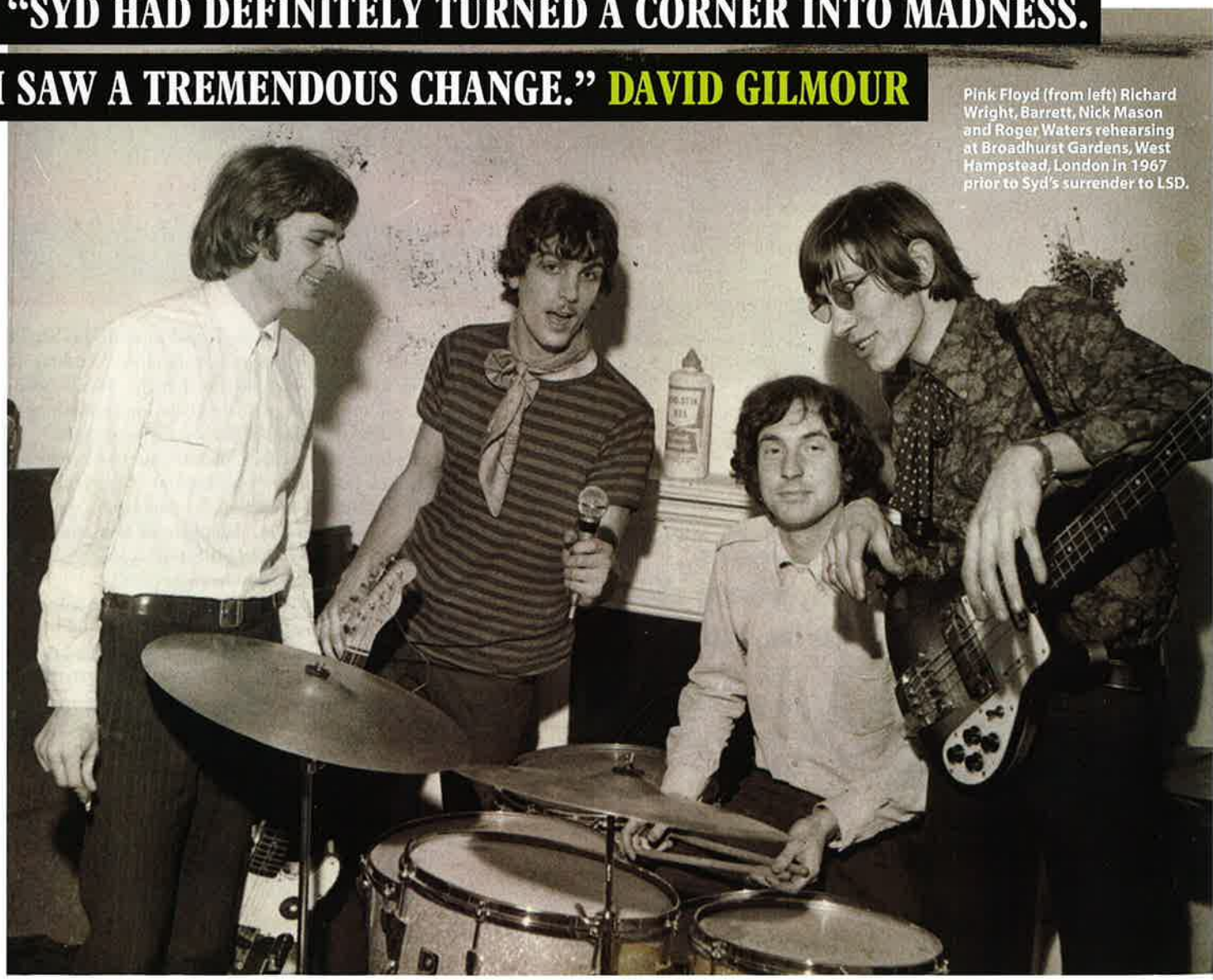
Barrett began taking acid regularly, with an enthusiasm many found alarming. Some visitors felt a malevolence surrounded Cromwell Road that cast a dark shadow on its blitzed occupants: it was here allegedly that one of Syd's cats was dosed with LSD.

In late May 1967, Gilmour returned from a year living in France and caught up with the Floyd at the Chelsea studio where they were recording their second single, See Emily Play. The guitarist was disturbed by what he saw. Barrett seemed barely to recognise him. "He'd definitely turned a corner into madness," asserts Gilmour. "Maybe his friends who'd been with him every day didn't notice, but I saw a tremendous change."

Around this time the producer Joe Boyd recalls seeing a dishevelled Syd sitting on a kerb in central London, "his eyes crazed". He'd apparently been taking acid every day for a week. His commitment to the band began to suffer. In July, when the Floyd were invited to perform See Emily Play on Top Of The Pops for a third time, Syd went AWOL. "We couldn't find him," sighs Andrew King. "I mean, telling the BBC, Erm, sorry, we can't find the lead singer. It was unheard of! You can chart his decline through those three weeks. The first one he looks lovely, the last one he looks rough."

Promoting See Emily Play meant a wearying carousel of TV, radio and live promotion. It didn't seem to suit Syd's tempera- ➢

"SYD HAD DEFINITELY TURNED A CORNER INTO MADNESS. I SAW A TREMENDOUS CHANGE." DAVID GILMOUR



Pink Floyd (from left) Richard Wright, Barrett, Nick Mason and Roger Waters rehearsing at Broadhurst Gardens, West Hampstead, London in 1967 prior to Syd's surrender to LSD.

"HE WAS USUALLY ON MANDRAX, AND WOULD SIT ON A STOOL THEN FALL OFF IT." DAVID GILMOUR

ment – or to chime with his attitude towards creativity. Throughout his life, Syd would set fire to his paintings once they were completed – "Once a creative need was out of his head and onto the paper he had no further use for it," explains sister Rosemary – but now repeating things endlessly was part of his job.

On October 6, 1967, Syd failed to turn up for a show at Brighton Top Rank – Floyd's 117th gig that year; soon after, the group flew to America for a short promotional tour.

"It was a fucking nightmare!" cries Andrew King. "By then, we weren't talking to Syd, and Syd wasn't talking to anyone." The weirdest incident came at the Cheetah Club in Santa Monica, where a wild-eyed Barrett slathered his hair with Brylcreem and did little on-stage but blow a whistle. It was a typically confusing instance of what David Gilmour today refers to as "The Madness of King Syd".

"I thought there may have been an element of playacting that night," says King. "He was a good actor. It was like he was saying to us, 'What are you going to do about me?' Pushing us. It was impossible to fathom what he was thinking. Was he withdrawing into himself to alienate us? Or had we done something to alienate him? I think he thought the others were too straight."

Alice Cooper's band witnessed the parlous state Syd was in and took him back to their flat to try to "cool him out". Clearly his acid-fried hippy mumbo jumbo was infectious – the band's guitarist, Glen Buxton, claimed in all seriousness that Syd sent him telepathic messages during dinner to pass him the sugar bowl.

Back in Britain, Syd's eccentric behaviour continued, even among his close-knit friends outside the band. King organised a getaway weekend at his family's cottage on the Welsh border, handing the assembled throng the keys and absenting himself. It was a crazy, drug-fuelled trip. One night the Bohemian aristocratic Stash De Rola stepped into the flames of the log fire, convinced that if they all believed in love, he wouldn't burn. But Syd surpassed even that lunacy, squeezing out a huge turd on the cottage doorstep – an act

Mick Rock/Retna

Who's That Girl?

The mystery of Syd's *The Madcap Laughs* co-star, **Iggy The Eskimo**. By **Mark Blake**.

SYD BARRETT'S DEVOTEES have always wanted to know more about the girl whose naked body graced the back cover of *The Madcap Laughs*. Known only as 'Ig' or 'Iggy' (the 'Eskimo' nickname seems to have come later), by 1969 the mysterious cover model was already a veteran of the London club scene. Iggy had been snapped dancing at The Cromwellian club in 1966, while DJ and scenester Jeff Dexter recalls first seeing her at the Orchid Ballroom in Purley in 1963, when it's believed she was still a schoolgirl in nearby Thornton Heath: "She was mysterious because she didn't look like anyone else at the time."

By 1967, Iggy was a regular at the UFO club nights, The Roundhouse and fashion emporium Granny Takes A Trip (where she was filmed shopping for a Swinging London documentary, Look At Life). That year, Iggy was introduced to Barrett's Cambridge friend and film-maker Anthony Stern at a Hendrix gig at The Speakeasy. Stern never knew her real name, but spent time with Iggy, "dropping acid, going for dawn walks in Battersea Park" and filming her dancing in Russell Square.

Homeless in early '69, Iggy moved into Wetherby Mansions at Syd's ex-girlfriend Jenny Spires' suggestion. Like Stern, Jenny never knew Iggy's real name or background, only that she was two or three years older than Syd, and a Londoner, possibly of Chinese descent (no one can confirm any Inuit or Yupik origins). Jenny also insists that, despite popular belief, Iggy was never Syd's girlfriend. By the end of the year Iggy was rumoured to have joined a religious cult or hooked up with a wealthy banker, becoming a Sloane ranger – or, in the memory of another Barrett associate, disappearing to the Far East.

"IGGY CAPTURED THE SPIRIT OF THE '60s."

In 2008, Dexter and Stern tried to trace the elusive Iggy, and were interviewed in the Croydon Guardian appealing for leads to the whereabouts of the "carefree girl who captured the spirit of the '60s". There were no takers. Intriguingly, at The City Wakes charity tribute to Syd Barrett that year, an unidentified audience member declared that Iggy was alive and still living in Chelsea. As the Croydon Guardian's headline trumpeted: "So, where did she go to, our lovely?" Perhaps we will never know for sure, as the 21st century Iggy (estimated age: 66) is clearly in no hurry to let us, or her old admirers, know.

croydonguardian.co.uk September 17, 2008

So, where did she go to, our lovely?

by KIRSTY WHALLEY

In the Swinging 60s she was an iconic model who broke the heart of Pink Floyd's Syd Barrett.

Known only as Iggy, she is thought to have lived in Thornton Heath and was a regular at the Orchid Ballroom in Purley between 1963 and 1967.

Then she vanished, and for the past three decades the former 60s it-crowd has wondered where she went?

Former friends, director and artist Anthony Stern and DJ Jeff Dexter, are both searching for the enigmatic model, who featured naked on the cover of Barrett's solo album Madcap Laughs.

She was nicknamed "the Eskimo" because it was thought that she was part Inuit.

DJ Jeff Dexter, who regularly played at the Orchid, vividly remembers the beautiful girl who used to talk to him while he played his set. He first noticed her in 1963.

He said: "Iggy was part of a group of very wonderful looking south London girls. She was very mysterious, she was unusual because she did not look like anyone else at the time.

Since she disappeared, she has become a bit of an enigma."

Dexter says that he met the director and artist Anthony Stern in 1967 and that Iggy became involved with him at about the same time. Anthony took many pictures of the model and also made a film of her which will be shown for the first time at the City Wakes festival this October in Caterbridge.

Stern said: "Iggy was my muse. I met her at a Hendrix gig at the Speakeasy. She was a lovely inspiration and free spirit. I never knew her real name.

"We used to hang out together, occasionally dropping acid, staying up all night, going for walks at dawn in Battersea Park."

The artist said he recently discovered photographs that he took of Iggy on a houseboat near Lots Road in Chelsea.

"She certainly captures the spirit of the 60s, living for the moment, completely carefree."

Photographer Mick Rock re-

ON

members turning up at Stern's to take photographs for his solo album cover. At an interview in 1969 he said: "God was still in his underpants when he opened the door. He'd totally forgotten about the session and lied about laughing. Iggy the Eskimo was naked in the kitchen making coffee. She didn't mind either. They both laughed a lot and it was a magical session."

The most iconic images of her appear on the album, where she poses naked in the background.

After she broke up with Barrett she disappeared. Felix Aleong, who has set up a website in her honour, said: "According to the painter Diggie Fields, she got married to a rich guy from Chelsea and led a 'decent' life after that."

Anthony and Jeff both admit they have spent time looking for her. "The truth is, if she has not come forward by now, she probably doesn't want to be found," said Anthony.

Do you know where she is? Contact kwhalley@london.newsquest.co.uk

B-crowd icon: Iggy the Eskimo

Iggy and Syd during Mick Rock's *The Madcap Laughs* photo session. "Iggy answered the door naked," recalls Rock today.

considered somewhat outré even in acid circles. Clearly, things were reaching crisis point. In December, after a testing Christmas show at Olympia, the Floyd's drummer Nick Mason asked David Gilmour if he'd like to join the group as Syd's back-up.

"I said, Yes," says Gilmour. "I was being invited in to help."

The following month, January 1968, proved to be a bizarre one, even by Pink Floyd's standards. At rehearsals at a Ladbroke Grove school to get Gilmour match-fit, Syd showed them a new song: Have You Got It Yet. The band attempted to learn it, but every time they played it, the chords appeared to change... until they twigged: no, we haven't got it yet, and we never will...

"It was pure Syd mischief!" roars Gilmour. "One cannot help but think he was hooting with laughter as he led us up that particular garden path."

"That was the thing about Syd," says Andrew King. "On one level he always seemed completely together. It was frustrating. Peter Jenner, myself, and Dave, we all tried speaking to him directly. But he was like an object that, depending on which way you looked, always appeared different."

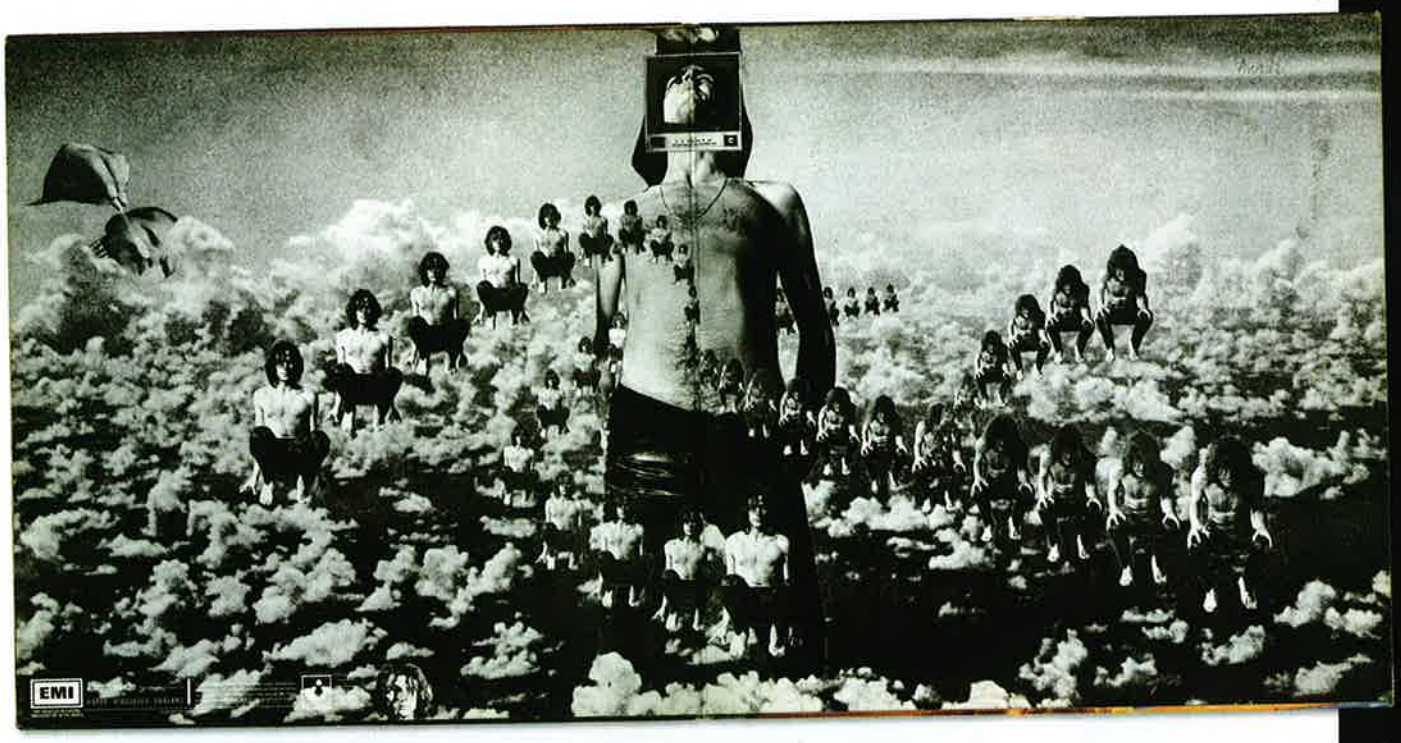
Outwardly, Syd seemed to express little emotion at the recruitment into the band of one of his closest teenage pals, and the four shows the five-piece Floyd played passed without incident, bar one night as a spaced-out Barrett circled Gilmour on-stage, examining him as if he was some kind of weird hologram. David himself recalls that sometimes everything "seemed almost normal": indeed, Nick Mason has 8mm film of Syd and the band cheerfully doing a jokey tap-dance routine together backstage in Weston-Super-Mare.

But with Syd's musical contributions becoming ever more unpredictable, the inevitable happened. In fairness to Gilmour, no-one has ever suggested he was an active participant in this bloodless coup. Nevertheless, at the Southampton University gig, Gilmour became Pink Floyd's new lead singer and guitarist, replacing his old friend whose charisma, talent and original mind-set had created the band's success.

"It was upsetting," admits Gilmour. "But what could we do? To be frank, no one really tried hard enough [to help him], and like most ambitious young people we were too busy getting on with other things in life to dedicate the time to sort him out."

Syd technically stayed a member of Pink Floyd for another three months, in which time he even signed a new band contract with EMI. However, when the decision came to oust him in April, his reaction was typically enigmatic. When the group played the Middle Earth club in Covent Garden in May, he stood alone at the front of the stage staring at Gilmour as he sang Barrett's old songs.

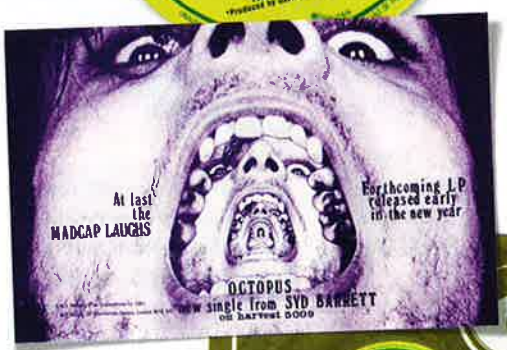
"Whether his look was anger, hatred, annoyance, something else... I don't know," says Gilmour. "In my paranoid state, I ➢



"THE SONGS WOULD STOP, START AND FALTER, JUST LIKE YOU'D GET WITH AN OLD BLUES SINGER." ROBERT WYATT

interpreted it as a bad vibe." However, he dismisses the story – popularised by Barrett himself in a 1971 interview – that his predecessor took to tailing the group around the country in a Mini Cooper as "bullshit".

It was a testament to Syd's reputation as Pink Floyd's sole talent that Jenner and King chose to leave with Syd, in the hope he might rouse himself to record a solo record. Jugband Blues, Syd's main contribution to Floyd's second album, *A Saucerful Of Secrets*, eventually released in July 1968, suggested that inside the bombed-out shell of Barrett's mind, he was still acutely self-aware. Its opening lines ran: "It's awfully considerate of you to think of me here/And I'm much obliged to you for making it clear/That I'm not here..."



Within a week or two of officially leaving the Floyd, Syd announced he was ready to record some new material. Jenner arranged half-a-dozen or so sessions at Abbey Road, beginning on May 6 and ending July 20. They would prove testing for everyone. The engineer, Peter Bown, summed up the meandering, energy-sucking mood with his weary announcement at the beginning of one track, Lanky Part 2, "Five minutes of drums!"

Nonetheless, though the sessions inconclusively ground to a halt, they did show that later *Madcap* gems like Octopus (then titled 'Clowns And Jugglers'), Late Night, Silas Lang and Golden Hair (a song based on words from James Joyce's Ulysses) had already been written.

Clearly, Barrett had found moments amid his dissolute existence to compose. "Everyone thinks Syd got up around lunchtime, took some acid, then wrote a genius song," comments Andrew King. "And that really annoys me. He was a competent classical pianist, a skilled guitarist and he'd worked, practised and knew his craft. Syd told me it had taken him two weeks to write the lyrics to Arnold Layne. He took his art really seriously."

Yet, now freed from the Floyd's crushing work schedule, Barrett found himself being sucked, willingly, further into a decadent, drifting, druggy existence. Sometime in 1968, he and Lindsay Corner moved into a flat in Egerton Court, South Kensington, whose sumptuous art deco interior was featured in Roman Polanski's 1965 film Repulsion. The stories that emerge from this era are perhaps the darkest in Syd's life. His and Lindsay's relationship was tempestuous, and an out-of-it Syd occasionally ended up lashing out at her. An old friend from Cambridge, Iain 'Emo' Moore, recalls intervening when Barrett repeatedly banged Corner's head on the wooden floorboards. Copious doses of LSD were, once again, the inhabitants' drug of choice, and Syd continued to partake enthusiastically. It has also been suggested that Barrett was by now experimenting with heroin.

At this point, he was generally viewed as having lost control. One visitor, the future broadcaster Jonathan Meades, recalls arriving at Egerton Court to hear banging upstairs: he was told that they'd locked Syd in a cupboard. They hadn't; it turned out he'd actually locked himself in a bathroom, and was too stoned to figure out how to get out. Gilmour has claimed that, around this time, Barrett began cross-dressing and pondering whether he was homosexual. He also began reading works by occultist Aleister Crowley.

Naturally, those around him were concerned by Syd's worsening condition. Andrew King recalls an aborted attempt to take him to

Phil Smee (4)

The heart of darkness: Syd's look in late '69 mirrors the mood that had begun to engulf him; (left) the inner gatefold for *The Madcap Laughs*, filled with long-forgotten symbolism.

see the noted unorthodox psychiatrist R.D. Laing. "I was quite into that R.D. Laing thing – that Syd was the sane one and we were all mad," says King. "I think genius is overused, but you know it when you see it. And Syd was a genius. Sartre had a phrase about 'a false position', and Syd had put his talent in a 'false position'. He simply couldn't function as part of the music industry."

Towards the end of 1968, by which time Syd had effectively left the music business, he moved into a large flat in Wetherby Mansions on Earls Court Square with an artist friend called Duggie Fields. Weirdly, his nemesis David Gilmour was living in a flat behind their block. "I could look into their kitchen window," recalls Gilmour.

Soon the two estranged friends would enjoy a rapprochement that would give Barrett's story an extraordinary, unexpected turn.

AWAY FROM THE EXCESSES OF EGERTON COURT, Barrett's general condition seemed to improve, though his behaviour remained erratic, especially where girlfriends were concerned. "He was with Gala Pinion by then," says Duggie Fields. "He behaved very badly towards her. He stubbed a cigarette out on her after they'd had sex. He only did it once, but once was too much."

If anything, the dark romance of a beautiful young Englishman gone mad increased his allure, and female groupies tracked him down, as did 'followers'. "Sometimes he'd just lock himself in his room," says Fields. "It could get too much."

His old girlfriend Jenny Spires crashed at Wetherby for a while at the beginning of 1969. "He was in quite a good mind-set," she remembers. "He didn't really have any visitors at this time. I think people weren't sure how he'd be with them. In the past, his behaviour had been bizarre. He wasn't communicating."

In the cleaner air of Duggie's flat, Syd, for the first time in a year, rediscovered his muse and began writing again. Not long after Spires left for America in February 1969 – leaving her soon-to-be infamous mate Iggy The Eskimo to lodge with him [see page 76] – Barrett did a remarkable thing. Out of the blue, he phoned Abbey Road's booking office, expressing the desire to record some new tracks. This unexpected request found its way to Malcolm Jones, who was then in charge of a new label, Harvest, catering for EMI's more progressive acts. In 1982, Jones, who died in 1991, wrote a detailed account of his part in what would become *The Madcap Laughs*. In it, he stressed that, following the failed solo recording sessions with Peter Jenner, "no-one at EMI's A&R department had gone out of his way to encourage Syd back."

Jones was intrigued, however: he understood the cachet of anything decent Barrett might record. He phoned Syd, who told him he had an album's worth of songs; he also felt he could salvage some elements from the abandoned Jenner sessions. A meeting was arranged at Wetherby Mansions. Jones was impressed by what he heard, and booked them into Abbey Road's Studio 3.

Over four sessions beginning on April 10, 1969, Syd and Malcolm Jones completed six new tracks – Opel (a beautiful, cracked, misty ballad that wouldn't see the light of day until 1988), No Good Trying, Terrapin, No Man's Land, Here I Go and Love ➢

You – as well as overdubbing the Jenner recordings of Late Night, Clowns And Jugglers, and Golden Hair. Bass and drums were added on some tracks by John 'Willie' Wilson and Humble Pie's Jerry Shirley.

"No matter what people say to the contrary, Syd was very together," insisted Jones. "He was on top form."

Peter Mew, the engineer, begs to differ: "It was boring. In those days, doing four songs of just guitar and vocals in four or five hours wasn't considered very productive. There were lots of takes of everything. Those were the kind of sessions engineers tried to avoid."

In early May, Syd drafted in the Soft Machine – minus guitarist Kevin Ayers – to provide backing. "I was very surprised when, out of the blue, I got a call saying Syd wants you to play on some songs," remembers Robert Wyatt, the group's drummer and vocalist. "So we trooped along."

The group played along to several tracks, including Octopus, with its tricksy changes and irregular metre. "There didn't seem to be much of a regular rhythm, he just played guitar as he sang," continues Wyatt. "The songs would stop, start and falter, just like you'd get with an old blues singer. I really enjoyed that. So we just clattered along amiably.

Their contribution was brief. "After we finished, he was very shy and polite and said, 'Thank you for coming along.' And that was it. We thought it had been the rehearsal, but it was the finished take."

What happened next is the subject of contention. Some sources claim that David Gilmour, who had been recording Floyd's *Ummagumma* in an adjacent studio, was played the Soft Machine's version of Octopus and was so horrified he volunteered to step in and sort things out.

Gilmour remembers events differently. "In my memory, work on the record had stopped and they were going to dump the album," he says. "They'd spent too much time and money getting just half-a-dozen or so tracks. Syd asked if I could help him and I said, Sure. So I went to EMI and asked for some more studio time to complete the album."

That Barrett should have approached the very man who had unwittingly deposed him from his group may have appeared odd. But, as new neighbours in Earls Court, Syd had already popped round to see Gilmour on several occasions, and even borrowed a guitar amp from him for one of the Malcolm Jones sessions.

"Syd looked up to Dave," says Jenny Spires, who knew them both well. "I think, despite everything, he trusted him. It was arduous making *The Madcap Laughs*, but therapeutic for them both, I should think."

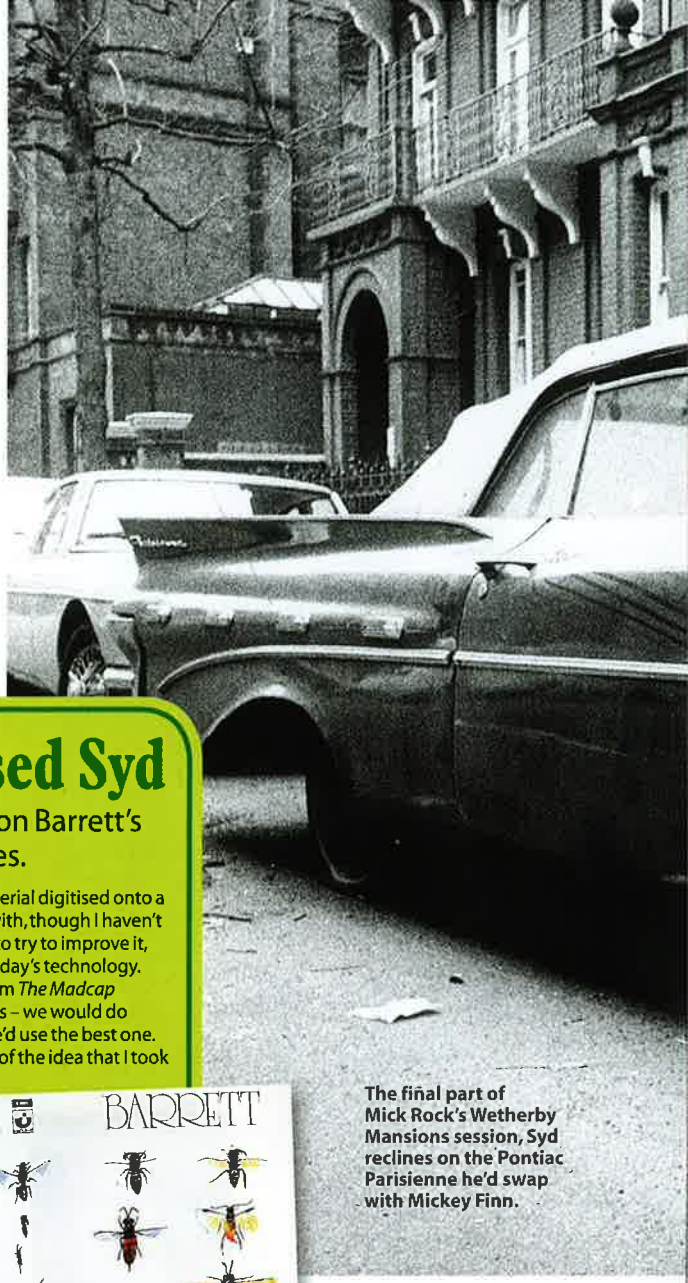
Gilmour freely admits that "a guilty conscience" helped to influence his decision. "I haven't talked to my shrink about it," he deadpans, "but I'm sure it played a part."

Over the next month, the Floyd singer found time in the group's schedule to re-record several of the Jones tracks, record four new ones and tidy up the rest.

It wasn't a particularly pleasant experience. "It was murder, murder, trying to get him to do anything," he sighs. "He was usually on Mandrax, and would sit on a stool then fall off it. You can practically hear him fall asleep on some of the takes. But I always felt there was a part of him that wasn't impaired, that knew what was going on."

Duggie Fields was also in attendance. "By that time, you didn't know if he was playing with you," he says. "Is he going to forget the words? Does he know where he is? Those all became issues in your mind."

Gilmour, with Roger Waters occasionally in tow, knocked the material into shape, playing drums seamlessly through the cranky time changes of Octopus and adding bits of rhythm guitar. "Syd would have all these anarchic changes in metre, things I'd never be brave enough to do," says Gilmour. "I loved it. That line [in Octopus], 'Little minute gonk coughs/Clears his throat'. I could play it perfectly well because I knew that when the words finish the chord changes. I followed it on the drums in an unlearned way. He certainly had a bent towards making the words take over. It was part of what made him so exciting and original."



The final part of Mick Rock's Wetherby Mansions session, Syd reclines on the Pontiac Parisienne he'd swap with Mickey Finn.

Unreleased Syd

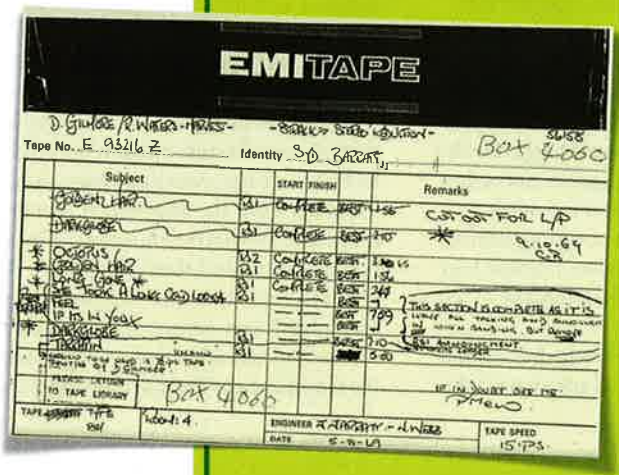
David Gilmour on Barrett's mythical outtakes.

"I'VE GOT A LOT of Syd material digitised onto a hard drive that I can play with, though I haven't yet. I have got half a mind to try to improve it, which can be done with today's technology. The tracks are outtakes from *The Madcap Laughs* and *Barrett* sessions – we would do half-a-dozen takes, and we'd use the best one.

"People have got hold of the idea that I took home the master tapes of Bob Dylan Blues [mythical unreleased *Barrett* outtake, which finally saw daylight on 2001's *The Best Of Syd Barrett: Wouldn't You Miss Me*], but it was just a copy, and it just so happened that EMI had lost whatever they had. I had a high-quality tape player back then, which was the only way to listen to work-in-progress at home, so I'd take home stereo tape copies.

"These days, you can take bits of each and seam them together invisibly, and make something that's still Syd but a little bit prettier. It's one of those things I'm tempted to look at, but I suspect your ardent Syd fans would go, 'That's terrible, sacrilege!', so I don't know. Whether it will ever happen, I wouldn't like to promise... But it's important that the world is reminded what a total genius he was."

As told to Pat Gilbert



"HE REALLY DID BELIEVE THE PSYCHEDELIC REVOLUTION WAS FLOWING THROUGH HIM," ANDREW KING

It's impossible to know what Syd thought of the *Madcap Laughs* sessions, if indeed he was capable at that time of rationalising such things. Interviewed in 1970, he said, confusingly, of the record: "It's very together. There's a lot of speaking on it, but there's not a very recognisable mood. It's mainly acoustic guitar and there are no instruments at all."

With the album in the bag, Barrett flew to Ibiza to meet some friends for a holiday. He turned up in full King's Road psychedelic regalia and carrying a plastic bag filled with pound notes. But before he left, he did something extremely touching.

"I gave him a lift back to Earls Court when we'd finished the album," recalls Gilmour, who's today toying with the idea of putting out some of the *Madcap/Barrett* outtakes he's sitting on [see panel, opposite]. "I went up to his flat with him in this rickety little lift with the iron gates you draw across. As we got to his floor, he turned to me, looked me in the eye, and said, quietly, 'Thank you.'"

THE MADCAP LAUGHS WAS RELEASED IN JANUARY 1970 and was warmly received, selling 5,000 copies within a few weeks. The Madness of King Syd seemed to touch a nerve with a generation who'd seen the end of the decade take a darker turn with Altamont, the bombing of Vietnam and the apparent failure of the hippy revolution. EMI were pleased enough to request a follow-up, *Barrett*, which came out in November the same year and was again produced by David Gilmour. Syd would only ever play three solo gigs – one a short set at Olympia in June 1970, with a backing band including Gilmour, which was plagued with sound problems – and two in a half-arsed boogie band called Stars in Cambridge in early 1972.

By then, Syd had moved back to his home town, ostensibly to get married to Gala and train as a doctor. Neither happened. He did, though, give up making music, turning instead to his first love, painting, and to pottering around the house doing DIY. To this day, his sister Rosemary insists he was never mentally ill – just different, and irreparably damaged by his pharmaceutical excesses.

As for his musical legacy, as early as 1972 his influence as a singer and composer was being heard in artists like David Bowie – the first of many musicians, from R.E.M., Paul Weller and Julian Cope, to Blur, Oasis and J Mascis, to fall under the magical spell of his psychological *vice Anglais*, brilliant ear for melody, and reputation as a tortured genius.

For those closest to him, though, Syd's memory will always be tinged with complex and difficult emotions. "I still think we treated him very badly," says Andrew King. "We all felt we could have done more after he left Pink Floyd to help him get through it all. When he fell off the map, it was as if he committed suicide. Suicides leave waves of guilt behind them. It's the cruellest thing to do. Everyone felt, 'What should I have done?' As you can still see I feel guilty about it all to this day. And I'm sure others do too."

Special thanks to Mark Blake, author of Pigs Might Fly: The Inside Story Of Pink Floyd (Aurum), Phil Smee, The Syd Barrett Archives www.sydbarrett.net and Escape Artists And The Syd Barrett Fund www.escapeartists.co.uk

MORE SYD! Turn the page to read the history and the mysteries of *The Madcap Laughs* photo session...

Mick Rock/Retna,EMI Archive

IN MY ROOM

A portrait in alienation, never has an album sleeve contributed so much to the myth of a musician. But the photo session that begat the images for *The Madcap Laughs* is itself enshrined in intrigue. Paul Drummond reports…

JUST LIKE THE MUSIC IT CONTAINED, THE ALBUM SLEEVE FOR SYD Barrett's *The Madcap Laughs* was multifaceted and broke with convention. It was The Beatles, swiftly followed by Pink Floyd, who had initially resisted EMI's policy of not commissioning outside designers for LP covers and, as a result, Floyd's design team Hipgnosis – consisting of Storm Thorgerson (a childhood friend of Syd's) and Aubrey 'Po' Powell – were hired to work on Barrett's first solo album. However, instead of the proud proclamation of a potentially glittering solo career the image itself was a dark and intriguing piece of poetic reportage.

On January 30, 1968, 10 days after his final show with Pink Floyd, Syd first entered a studio as a solo artist when he turned up at Sound Techniques for what would be an unfruitful session. Barrett, like Roky Erickson (his supposed US 'acid casualty' counterpart), was unable to control his predisposition to mental disorder, resulting in a pharmacopoeia of self-medication. By late '68, he was directionless and hanging out on the west London hippy scene until sharing a flat with an old artist friend form the infamous '101' (Cromwell Road) acid house in '67, helped instigate his creative comeback. The *Madcap* photos, taken in his new apartment, are important not least of all because they document Syd's tipping point and form the pictorial foundation of his legend. In reality, his bohemian lifestyle masked his growing alienation prior to a subsequent complete withdrawal; these photographs mark Barrett's last theatrical stand, a stage-managed snapshot, crouching in the shadows of the human condition.

Yet despite the increasing number of Barrett books even the most basic facts behind the startling cover image aren't confirmed. Who actually took the photograph? Mick Rock or Storm Thorgerson? And when? Spring or autumn 1969? The shoot is often cited as taking place in October '69, thereby delaying the album's release until Christmas, so why – as we are about to find out – does the presence of a naked woman and a huge Canadian car prove otherwise? In the hope of resolving some of the seemingly irreconcilable inconsistencies that have dogged the story of the sleeve and so intrigued Syd-devotees down the years, MOJO visited the celebrated pop artist Duggie Fields, who still resides at Wetherby Mansions, the Earls Court address he shared with Syd from January 1969 to October 1970, who began by telling us about how he ended up living with Syd…

Duggie Fields: I'd gone to America in '68 with Gilly Staples, who'd been connected with Quorum [Alice Pollock and Ossie Clark's shop]. She'd done a bit of modelling, a bit of a shop assisting, and when we got back she started seeing Syd. Dave Gilmour was the hunky van driver at Quorum that the girls fancied – I slept on Dave's floor. I needed somewhere to stay, so did Syd. He'd left the Floyd by that stage. He didn't talk about them particularly but I don't remember him being miserable either.

How did you find the flat?

DF: I'd gone to South Ken to buy the Evening Standard because it came out there first. There was a flat in Egerton Court, where Syd had already lived. I rang up the agent and said I'd take it. She said, "You're second in line but I've got another in Earls Court," so I said I'd take that, there wasn't a choice… Syd signed the lease because he had the income, which I didn't.

What was the flat like when you arrived?

DF: It was pretty primitive, two-bar electric fire, concreted-up fireplaces… it was an area in decline. I don't think there was anything, no cooker, bare floorboards. We had nothing. A mattress on the floor was the way we lived because that was the cheapest option. So, one started furnishing with whatever. I started going to Portobello, we found a chair in the street.

Where was Syd's head at?

DF: Well, I thought he was very positive when he first moved in. He started painting; he was playing his guitar and writing. I don't know how long it took before he didn't get out of bed. But I had other people falling to bits around me too, he wasn't the only one. I'd left college, I was living hand-to-mouth, but I had started selling [paintings].

Was he taking Mandrax at this point?

DF: Yes, Mandrax and smoking [marijuana]. I don't think anything else heavier, certainly not acid. I never saw acid in this flat at all.

In some of the photos you see canvases piled against the wall…

DF: Most of the canvases were blank. Some would be started with a watery idea. I don't think he ever found a direction in painting. I only ever saw what he moved in with… He had a couple of hanging mobiles; there was one that was like a castle. I wasn't impressed by what I saw. I wouldn't have picked it out, unless it was associated with him, as anything interesting. I don't think I was a help because I was on the other side of this wall, painting away continuously.

Were there other people who shared the flat?

DF: We had [another friend] Jules first and he ended up not paying rent, which is why we kicked him out.

Then came the mysterious Iggy The Eskimo who appeared naked on the back cover?

DF: When Jules left Iggy came soon after and she wasn't here for long. Jenny Spires [Syd's ex] brought her round. Iggy was just around, she didn't officially live here. I remember being at a 31 bus stop and seeing her coming down the stairs very elegantly in this gold lamé 1940s dress that had bell sleeves that buttoned to a train but with no underwear and completely exposed… Not a care in the world. There were these incredible creatures around, no other word for them.

© The Mark Hayward Archive, Phil Smee/ Waldo's Design & Dream Emporium

Subterranean homesick blues: an outtake from the *Madcap* front cover session in Syd's front room, Wetherby Mansions, London spring 1969.

Iggy's current whereabouts and full identity remain another of *Madcap*'s unsolved mysteries (see panel p76). Jenny Spires first met Iggy in January 1969 and introduced her to Syd and he let her stay. "I was on my way to the States and was confident she would look out for him," recalls Spires. "When I left at the end of February, she was there. There wasn't anything between them then. She wasn't his girlfriend, but she was good company." Iggy's involvement appears to date the shoot as spring '69 as she was long gone by autumn. The dying daffodils on the cover suggest the spring and Duggie seriously doubts Syd would pay for imported autumnal varieties! It's more likely Syd picked them while in the park with Iggy, as captured on Super-8 film. In March Syd contacted EMI about work recommencing on his album. It was then that he painted his floorboards, possibly in anticipation of the cover shoot. He then piled his few possessions and mattress into the bay window and appeared to literally paint himself into the proverbial corner. As long as he occupied his island, reality and a world of possibilities remained outside his door.

Proud of his work, Syd invited old friend and ally Mick Rock to take some photographs. Keen to experiment with a Pentax he'd recently bought from Po at Hipgnosis, Mick called round a couple of times but to no avail. Instead Rock was roped into the Hipgnosis shoot, which by today's standards was extremely ad hoc. Mick arrived first, to find Syd still in bed. Rock snapped a few documentary shots of Barrett in his underpants on his island-mattress, before Syd donned a pair of paint-stained trousers and Iggy added kohl to his eyes to give him that elegantly wasted look. Syd hadn't painted the entire floor and there was only one clean angle if you didn't want to expose his 'set' for what it was: a drab, domestic room with an ugly electric fire. Mick then composed more considered shots, using the perspective of the floorboards, clean backgrounds, and natural light behind the camera.

Mick Rock: "Iggy answered the door and was completely naked – as a student/hippy thing that didn't seem unusual. I didn't know what I wanted to be when I did the *Madcap* session – a lyricist or writer. I'd only started taking pictures a few months earlier. But something that day clicked in my aesthetic brain. I don't think we even talked about the record. I didn't take many photos that day, maybe two and half rolls in all. The painted floorboards, the outside shots with the car and Iggy were just elements that happened to be around. None of it was planned, I just got lucky. He didn't even finish painting around the bed; he just painted round all the furniture. It was a magical day. He looked like a *poète maudit*, something out of Rimbaud. Doomed rocker or dark star, as a paper called him. We both wanted the 'feet' picture for the cover, that looked ➢

Duggie Fields in Syd's old room, now Fields' painting studio, Wetherby Mansions, Earls Court, London.

"HE LOOKED LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF RIMBAUD." MICK ROCK

more like *The Madcap Laughs* than the Storm cover, but history is what it is. I was in no position to argue, I was just a kid. Hipgnosis put all the artwork together, I was barely out of college and Storm was commander-in-chief of artwork…"

When Thorgerson arrived his sole focus was the strongest element in the room: the floor. He worked fast in fading light, placing a wide-angled lens millimetres off the ground to create an Alice In Wonderland effect, giving the floorboards an elastic quality. Drama was also implied by the steep perspective and ethereal sidelight, directing the eye to the crouching Barrett. He isn't athletically poised but suggests defiant exhaustion and a dark edge of 'knowing'. The only other element were the wilting daffodils: possibly a Barrett in-joke, a symbol of his rebirth and inevitable downfall?

Storm Thorgerson: I think the only person with me [that day] was Mick Rock. Hipgnosis was approached and Po was busy so I went along… I don't normally take the photos.

There seems to be a lot of confusion about who took the cover photo…

ST: There's no confusion, I'd be very surprised if Mick thought he took the photo. I've never heard him say that. No, it was my photo. Mick came as my assistant and friend, to help me out. In those days we were very 'unformalised'. It was a Hipgnosis job. I told Syd on the phone that I was coming round to take his photo for his album cover, which is why he painted the floor blue and orange. I don't think he absorbed it deeply.

So the floor was painted specifically for the shoot?

ST: Yes. What I remember of that session is that Syd had bothered to paint the floor; I looked at it and thought, That's great, I'll shoot that. I was more interested in the floor than I was in Syd. Well, photographs of burgeoning rock'n'roll stars don't interest me very much. I mean Syd was just Syd. I don't think I've ever felt very special about the way somebody looks. I'd feel special about their music. Part of Syd's character was in the floor, so it should take precedence, which is why I favoured the floor. Obviously we made a feature of it because it's not often someone paints their floor for you, so in effect I felt honoured and it seemed appropriate. There have been pictures of Syd before and after, but not necessarily of his floor. That's why the picture is how it is.

Did you try lots of different set-ups?

ST: No, I just asked him to crouch by the fireplace, it looked like a good place to put him. Syd is very spontaneous, he just adopted an automatic pose. I probably made him change it a bit but not a lot and I took a quick shot. I only took a few. I did it quite quickly, I just thought Syd looked very 'Syd-like', and that was good enough.

Do you remember what he was like that day?

ST: Not particularly, it was all you were gonna get because Syd was rather mercurial and changeable of mood. I don't think one wanted to make it any more difficult for him.

The lens works brilliantly on the boards, did you try many?

ST: Either a 28mm or 35mm, an ordinary wide angle, it wasn't anything special. I don't think it's very pronounced. I mean it was very early days in our careers, we didn't know much then.

Was it a deliberate decision to underexpose the cover?

ST: The film was under-graded on purpose. It was available light but there wasn't much and I didn't have any lights with me. So we had to push the film in order to get it processed and be able to see something, to give us the grain.

The back cover is very different in feel…

ST: I think it's exposed differently rather than lit differently. We opened up the shot in order to get Iggy in the picture, so it wasn't as moody as the front.

The photos used in the gatefold – the baby's head – was there a meaning behind that?

ST: I'm sure there was, sounds too purposeful not to mean something, doesn't it?

Do any negatives survive?

ST: All gone. If only. Mick might have some…

When the cover shoot was over, Rock continued outside using Syd's blue Pontiac Parisienne as a prop (one shot was used for the 1970 *Barrett* LP). The life of this inanimate object (registration: VYP74) helps confirm that the shoot wasn't in the autumn. Mickey Finn, later of T.Rex, had won it in Quorum's Christmas party raffle at the Royal Albert Hall (December 19, 1968) but became so paranoid by the attention it drew that shortly afterwards he swapped it for Syd's mini. Syd never drove it and when it was about to be towed, he gave it away. It was next seen, painted pink, in the film adaptation of Joe Orton's Entertaining Mr Sloane (filmed between August 18 and October 6, 1969).

IN THE 40 YEARS that have elapsed since the release of *The Madcap Laughs*, the mythology that surrounds Syd Barrett has continued to grow, aided by the album sleeve's imagery. For those who identify with this bygone rock'n'roll era but are too young to have experienced it, this grainy image is a brilliant template for false nostalgia. Gone is the multicoloured glamour of psychedelia, instead we're presented with the close-of-the-'60s decadence exposed, the same dishevelled, 'the party's over' feel depicted in Withnail And I. Donald Cammell and Nic Roeg confronted the same confused reality with Jagger's portrayal of a reclusive rock star in Performance. Interestingly, rumour has it Roeg is considering a Barrett biopic.

Since the shoot itself, Storm Thorgerson has continued to redefine album artwork as fine art. Meanwhile, Mick Rock's association with Syd led on to further era-defining and iconic images of David Bowie, Lou Reed and Iggy Pop. While Hipgnosis's archive of that day has disappeared, Rock's remains intact and published in a number of different forms, augmented by the last shoot that Mick undertook in Barrett's Cambridge garden in 1971. The latter provides fans with a further tantalising glimpse into the world of the Madcap before he shut them out for good. So how does Rock view his friend's retreat from it all?

Mick Rock: It's not for me to say. I know Dave Gilmour was the one who made sure [Syd] had his money, and made sure Syd had five tracks on *Echoes* [*The Best Of Pink Floyd*, released in 2001]. That made him a lot of money. His publisher told me Syd had made a couple of million that year. He made a couple of hundred thousand a year in regular royalties, anyway. So the irony of Syd was that he didn't have to do anything after 1970 anyway.

He approached things as a painter, and he did that for the rest of his life. He destroyed all his paintings, but that's not the odd part: the odd part is he appears to have photographed all of them first. So there is a record of them. He didn't want to be The Rolling Stones 40 years on, playing the same old songs. He was more like a Charlie Parker: an improviser. He didn't want a formula that was repeated. Ⓜ

Photography: Theo Nilderost 2009 © S.T.T. Nilderost. Shoot produced, art directed: Paul Drummond, Phil Smee/Waldo's Design & Dream Emporium