

What Shall We do Now?

Good afternoon. My name is Björgvin Rúnar Leifsson and this is an episode about Pink Floyd.

When the money for "Dark Side of the Moon" and "Wish You Were Here" began to flow, members of Pink Floyd considered all their financial problems solved and began to invest in various things due to advice from investment experts so they didn't have to pay sky-high taxes but in the UK, the high-income tax rate was 83% in 1977. As the boys had absolutely no knowledge whatsoever in these matters, they left it all to the experts who were so successful that in 1979 they had to leave Great Britain for a year to avoid total bankruptcy. This did not go down well with all the band members. Richard Wright who had children attending school had to leave them in the UK with their mother and missed them a lot. In fact, his marriage was on the decline, and all this did not help his mental well-being at that time. The children of the others were however much younger so they could take their families with them on this exile.

In 1978, both Gilmour and Wright released solo albums. Gilmour's is simply called "David Gilmour" and among the demos he wrote was one which never went on the album but appeared considerably modified on "The Wall" with a guitar solo, that many consider the best rock guitar solo of all time. Among the musicians who helped Gilmour was Willie Wilson from Gilmour's old band, "Jokers Wild". Wright's album is called "Wet Dreams" and among the musicians there is Snowy White on guitar. Wright said in an interview when the album was released that he was very happy with it as it helped him get rid of a kind of musical writing block and now he was ready to go and write more for Pink Floyd. Mason, on the other hand, states that Gilmour and Wright had become more or less music-drenched by this solo work but that did not matter as the workhorse Waters had used the time well.

As mentioned at the end of the last episode, there was a small incident at an "Animals" concert in Canada which inspired Waters with a new theme but both him and most likely other band members as well felt like a rift had formed between them and the audience at the giant event, that Pink Floyd concerts had admittedly become by this time. Sometime during the year 1978, Waters called everyone over to the Britannia Row studio and played for them two almost complete demos of two works, which he asked them to choose between and he would then himself release what they rejected. All liked the draft of "The Wall" better and Waters released "The Pros and Cons of Hitch-hiking" in 1984 which thus became the beginning of his solo career.

Mason says in his book that he, Gilmour and Wright were glad to have gotten in their hands such a perfect draft for a new album right from the start as none of them had any new material at this time. Both Wright and Gilmour have admitted they did not compose much in those years despite Wright's statements following his solo album and Gilmour himself has said that sometimes he is rather lazy and often needs much more time than Waters to compose a song he is happy with. However, Mason also states that because the Wall was more or less perfect from the beginning it was difficult for both Gilmour and Wright to contribute something new. Mason further believes that over time, Gilmour has become dissatisfied that his contributions to the work, especially "Comfortably Numb" and "On the Run", did not receive reasonable recognition and although all such feelings were laid aside when the work began in the fall of 1978 in the Britannia Row studio, it all came to the surface when everything went wrong later.

Before starting the work, they had to find a new technician as they believed that Brian Humphries, who was the lead technician of the last two albums and had worked for them before that, now suffered from a perfect Pink Floyd burnout. Alan Parsons, who assisted in the making of "Dark Side of the Moon" recommended a young, quiet and patient man, James Guthrie, who reportedly dropped his lower jaw all the way to the floor when the agent Steve O'Rourke invited him to be the technician for the new work. He was approved by Waters who sent him the demo

James Guthrie was apparently the complete opposite of co-producer Bob Ezrin, who Waters wanted to include for some reason and Waters' girlfriend by then, who had worked for Ezrin, recommended him. According to Mason, Ezrin was full of energy and Waters certainly liked that, but he was also very unreliable and it is strange to say the least that he was approved by the energy ball. Legend has it that Ezrin did set the tone by arriving too late for the first meeting with the band in the studio and Waters greeted him by hammering his fingers on his wristwatch

Shortly after work began, it became clear that the Britannia Row studio was not enough for The Wall even though it was good enough for "Animals". At the same time the finances collapsed. As remarkable as it may sound it was the financial advisor from the same company that provided the investments for the Pink Floyd members, who found that everything in the garden was far from lovely and was honest enough to expose the scandal. The CEO of the company fled to Spain but was arrested and sentenced to 3 years in prison. A lot of old-age and disability pensioners lost their money. Our men lost 1 million pounds and suddenly owed somewhere in the range of 5 to 12 million pounds in taxes, but contrary to the old and disabled they could continue to work to pay their debts. They decided to leave the country and finish The Wall abroad as the tax law in Britain, at least back then, was that the income that a UK citizen received while abroad was tax-free in the UK - if he was away for at least a year and did not set foot in the UK meanwhile. They settled in France and the work on "The Wall" began mostly in a recording studio in the French Alps near the city of Nice.

Mason was the first to lay down the percussion for the most part and was able to spend the days in leisure. He went with the agent O'Rourke for a weekend trip to Le Mans to watch the famous race and was so fascinated that he has been an active collector of racing cars ever since.

Richard Wright, however, was not so lucky. Sometime in the summer of 1979, Pink Floyd were offered a higher percentage of sales if they were able to complete the making of the album before Christmas. Waters consulted with Ezrin and no one else and came to the conclusion that this was possible. They rented one more studio about 80 kilometers from the other and split the recordings between the two studios to speed up the work. The overactive Ezrin drove between the studios to coordinate operations and try to bridge the ever-widening gap between Waters and Gilmour but for some reason the keyboards were always postponed.

In order to complete the album at the agreed time, Wright had to sacrifice his summer vacation. They had all decided to take a little vacation in the middle of the summer and Wright had probably looked forward to getting some time to see his children for as stated at the beginning he was the only one who did not have his family with him. When the agent told Wright that he would have to record the keyboard parts while the others were on vacation he simply denied and according to some sources asked O'Rourke to tell Waters to go fuck himself. Waters was completely astounded and got very angry. He felt that he was putting a lot of effort into the work and that Wright had no interest in helping. It did not help that Wright had wanted to be a co-producer on the album and Waters had said it was okay as long as he contributed something but according to Mason Wright's contribution was nothing more than to show up at recordings and sit in the corner without doing anything. This did not go well with Ezrin either, who felt that they had enough producers already but he offered to help Wright with the keyboard recordings though for some reason Waters was never happy with the outcome.

This incident broke all bonds that may have been left between Wright and Waters. Waters contacted the agent, who was sailing to the United States and told him that when he, Waters, came to Los Angeles for the mixing of the album, Wright would have to be out of the band or otherwise, Waters would close the Wall product - and that he could because it was almost all composed by himself. Gilmour spoke to Wright and expressed support for him and whatever decision he made but pointed out that it was quite right that he had not contributed anything.

Wright made the decision to quit rather than fight for various reasons. Mason think the reasons were that he was not a co-producer, Waters did not like anything that came from him on the keyboards, his marriage was collapsing and like all of them he was very worried about the finances if the album was not released on time. Wright's decision had the side effect that he played as a paid session man at all "The Wall" concerts and the other three had to share the loss with each other.

Before we listen to the first part of "The Wall" it is worth pointing out that Waters wrote much more than was revealed on the final version of this two record album. Some of it was used in concert, like the song "What Shall We Do Now", which we heard at the beginning today. The song "When the Tigers Broke Free" was played in the film, which was released in 1982 and furthermore there was some unused material on "The Final Cut".

On the first part, Gilmour is only co-author on the song "Young Lust" but everything else is by Waters. I want to draw attention to the disco beat in "Another Brick in the Wall, part 2" which was Ezrin's idea. Gilmour was opposed to it but both Waters and Mason supported Ezrin and although Gilmour plays the guitar solo with his unique brilliancy he has stated that playing this song bores him. The school choir was also Ezrin's idea, but he did not let anyone know until he played the song with the choir for them and they all fell for it. It was also Ezrin's idea to release this song on a two-track single with an upturned disco beat. Waters was skeptical but agreed. That was Pink Floyd's first single in 12 years and the most popular one since "See Emily Play" was released as a single in 1967. The song also became Pink Floyd's most popular song since Money 6 years earlier.

The second part of "The Wall" will be played next week.

Meu nome é Björgvin Rúnar Leifsson e eu sei muito pouco sobre o Pink Floyd. Obrigado e até depois

The Wall