

Heart Beat, Pig Meat

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

1970 was an album-rich year for Pink Floyd, so to speak. They released the compilation album "The best of Pink Floyd" with songs from "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn" and singles from 1967 and 68 and I own this album in a rare, Dutch version. I got this album for free many years ago with the words that I deserved it much more than a famous radio show host in Iceland at that time, who had offered the owner big money for the album but was rejected. For some reason, all the songs on this album are in mono. This same album was re-released in stereo in 1974 under the name "Masters of Rock" and of course I own it too. Barrett released two solo albums in 1970 with the help of his former bandmates, "The Madcap Laughs" and "Barrett" and they became his last contribution to the rock world though an attempt was made to squeeze more drops of blood out of him much later with the release of "Opel" in 1988. Then there was the collaboration album between Waters and Ron Geesin, "Music of the Body", released at the end of the year, where those two experimented with all sorts of body sounds for a movie, which was called "The Body".

In March 1970, the album "Zabriskie Point" was released with songs from the director Michelangelo Antonioni's film of the same name, which takes place at the end of the sixties, partly in a town of the same name, in Death Valley and deals with the underground culture of the United States in those years. This was a controversial film and still is. The intention was that our men should take care of the music, but in the end, the director used only 3 songs by them, including the song "Heart beat, Pig Meat", which we heard at the beginning and is by all four of them. However, roughly eight years ago I got an album named "The Lost Zabriskie Point Album", released as a bootleg in 2006, which has all the songs that Pink Floyd wrote for this movie, both those which were used and the others which were rejected - except one, "Violent Sequence". Then again in 2011, another bootleg was released under the name "370 Roman Yards - The Lost Zabriskie Point Album" and it had all the unused songs from the film, including "Violent Sequence". I am, telling you about this because this demo was used later as the basis for a certain song on "Dark Side of the Moon".

The highlight of the year, however, was "Atom Heart Mother" which was released on the 10th of October 1970. The album is named after the main work, which covers the entire first side of the album and is the longest, continuous work by Pink Floyd at 23 minutes and 44 seconds. The name of the work, however, is derived from the title of an article in the Evening Standard newspaper, which covered a story about a pregnant woman who got implanted with a nuclear-powered pacemaker. The album was also the first PF album, which was mixed for 4-channel quadraphonic stereo as well as standard stereo version. It is worth mentioning that the picture on the album cover of a cow grazing in the pasture was to emphasize that Pink Floyd was a band with their feet on the ground despite the names of its various songs, such as "Astronomy Domine", "Interstellar Overdrive" and "Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun".

I'm going to start by looking at the back of the album, which is very interesting for various reasons. Waters, Wright and Gilmour each have their own songs and everyone is credited for the last song, "Alan's Psychedelic Breakfast", which deals with the band's lead roadie at the time, Alan Stiles having breakfast in three different ways and this was actually demonstrated at concerts. Mason gets the most credit for effects and vocals but Roger Waters' idea for the song came from a kitchen faucet leak. In fact, the drop sound continues after the song ends so if the needle was not lifted immediately on a non-automatic turntable the tap simply continued to leak out to infinity.

However, I'm not going to play this remarkable song. Let's get started with Waters song, "If". This is a beautiful ballad, even better than "Grantchester Meadows" on "Ummagumma".

The song was rarely played in concerts for some reason but it is wrong that it was never played at concerts like some lesser Floyd scholars have stated and I have a live version of the song to support my case.

If

Next we listen to the song "Summer '68" by Richard Wright. It is a good song and very much in the style of Wright and has, as far as I know, never been played at any PF concert. I hereby dare anyone to prove me wrong. Full proof is of course required.

Summer '68

The third track on the second side of the album is "Fat Old Sun" by David Gilmour. At this point, Gilmour had not written many songs, as a matter of fact only "A Spanish Theme" on "More" and "The Narrow Way" on "Ummagumma". One day during the making of the album, they left Gilmour alone in the studio, saying he would not leave until he had written one song for the album. This song is in a bit of a folk song style and according to the author it has been his personal favorite ever since.

Fat Old Sun

Now we come to the main work of the album, the suite "Atom Heart Mother". Here Ron Geesin, whom I mentioned earlier, is titled co-author of the work but he directed the string and wind instrumental band. Also we must not forget John Alldis and his choir of 16 singers, which sings on two separate places but although he has certainly a part in the final staging of the work, he is, however, not mentioned as a co-author.

The work is in 6 parts and it is the opinion of many Pink Floyd fans, including myself, that it is among the best that the band did in all their career but for some reason neither Waters nor Gilmour agree. Gilmour has even said that the album is full of rubbish, that they hit rock bottom, etc. Good thing these gentlemen are not experts in PinkFloydism. For fun, it can also be mentioned that because of a request by EMI, Waters and Mason had to play their 24 minutes parts in one shot each without any help or accompaniment by any other instruments because the EMI experts were afraid that all breakdown with accompanying mixing would affect the quality of the new 8-channel technology. The result, of course, is that the pace is not always the best due to the limited musical talents of those two band members as Mason put it.

Let's now enjoy "Atom Heart Mother". Notice Gilmour's amazing guitar playing in the second part of the work and this is actually his first distinctive guitar solo on any PF album. Immediately afterwards, the organ enters together with the choir for the first time in the third chapter of the work but in the fourth part the musical key is changed with a bluesy guitar solo with the chorus entering the second time.

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

Atom Heart Mother