

Biding My Time

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

The song we heard in the beginning is called "Biding My Time". Roger Waters wrote it in 1969 but it did not appear on an album until the compilation album "Relics", which was released in May 1971 and contained various songs from 1967- 69. The song is a characteristic Waters' ballad as they were during these years but it also has some bluesy tint.

But let's turn to Pink Floyd's composition in 1971. They went into the studio early this year with all sorts of ideas but had a hard time bringing them together. Among the things they tried was that each of them recorded their own channel around a certain basic theme regardless of what the others were doing. Furthermore, they continued experimenting with all sorts of effects and synthesizers and they were actually among the very first bands to use the famous Moog synthesizer. Also, they were not afraid to try all kinds of sounds, both from nature and man-made environment. It's enough to mention the bird sounds on "Grantchester Meadows" on "Ummagumma" and diverse kitchen sounds in "Alan's Psychedelic Breakfast" on "Atom Heart Mother". In fact, after "Dark Side of the Moon" was released, they had an idea for an album, which would be exclusively kitchen sounds, such as plates, glasses and cutlery, but they gave up on the idea although they actually took advantage of some parts of these experiments on some albums later, such as "Wish You Were Here". But let's continue with the story.

Soon they saw that the sound mixing technology offered by Abbey Road Studio, that is 8 channel system, was by no means enough to achieve what they wanted, so they took a lot of the material, which they then used on the album, over to smaller but more modern or at least more technical studios in London, such as AIR and Morgan, which offered 16 channels technology. The recordings became longer and longer but by the end of the summer they were still not happy with the result. The experiments went by various names, such as "Nothings", "Sons of Nothings" and "Return of the Sons of Nothings" which was for a while the working title of the new album, which shows us first and foremost how difficult the birth of the album was. However, a definite theme was gradually emerging.

Sometime in the early summer, Richard Wright sent a high pitched piano tone through a Leslie speaker, which both amplifies the sound but also creates a kind of a doppler effect by the speaker spinning in circles. The result was a high-pitched "ping" similar to the sound in a submarine depth gauge. This demo was then used as the opening sound on Echoes on the second side of the album. They experimented with all kinds of sounds, some of which were purely accidental, like when Gilmour connected the guitar pedal the wrong way, so the sound was like that of a seagull in the distance. Thus gradually, the work became a whole piece and they could turn to creating songs for the first side of the album.

The album "Meddle" was released in November 1971. The name is a pun and can be interpreted as a medal or to intervene. The album is considered by many to be one of the masterpieces of advanced rock and some believe it to be fully equal to "Dark Side of the Moon" but it has fallen in the shadow of the latter, which, however, was not released until almost one and a half year later. In any case, the co-operation of the four guys reaches one of its highest moments on this album. They are credited together for three songs out of six and they all have a part in the lyrics of the album. It can also be said that in the song "Echoes" the famous Pink Floyd sound is almost perfect though it has certainly evolved more at least until "Wish You Were Here", probably largely thanks to Wright and Gilmour. The album sleeve is also a bit special. On the outside is a picture of a human ear submerged in water and you can see circular waves in the water above the ear. It may be mentioned that Storm Thorgerson, Pink Floyd's lead cover designer at the time, was never happy with the result and actually suggested using a photo of a baboon ass instead. Inside the envelope is an opening image of all four of them and this is the

last time they posted pictures of themselves in a long time or until "A Momentary Lapse of Reason" was released in 1987. This was a very conscious decision of the band members to examine whether they could maintain their fame outside of the media spotlight. To cut a long story short they succeeded.

The first song on the first side of the album is called "One of These Days" and is the first song I heard from the band as far as I know, probably in the year 1972 in the students' smoking room in the junior college I attended. This is a song by all the band members, composed around a bass sound, which Waters created by sending vibrating bass tones through a Binson echo equipment. The bass line is played by Waters and Gilmour together and is to say the least, catchy. At the end of the middle part of the song, Nick Mason is heard saying in a distorted voice "One of these days I am going to cut you into little pieces".

One of These Days

Next we listen to "A Pillow of Winds" by Waters and Gilmour. A beautiful example of their co-operation before everything went havoc later.

A Pillow of Winds

I'm going to allow you to hear one more song from the first side of the album, the last song, called "Seamus". This is a blues song, which they are all credited for and has, among other things, the merit of having most often been ranked number one in polls for the worst Pink Floyd song of all time. I do not agree with that opinion but am not going to tell you which PF song I personally find the worst one. This song is named after the dog Seamus, which Gilmour was looking after for his neighbour and the dog howls the blues as a professional. It is worth mentioning that this song was performed at the "Live at Pompei" concert as "Mademoiselle Nobs" after the name of the bitch that did the howling.

Seamus

Finally we arrive at the masterpiece "Echoes". To inform you a bit about my own taste, I do not particularly like the first side of "Meddle" as a whole but on the other hand I regard "Echoes" as a masterpiece which equals both "Dark Side of the Moon" and "Wish You Were Here".

"Echoes" is the second longest, continuous work by PF after "Atom Heart Mother" and is almost 24 minutes on the record. I have already told you about Wright's high pitched tone and Gilmour's reverse guitar pedal earlier. But we must not forget the imitations of whale sounds, which were created, among other things, by two tape recorders that were placed in two separate corners of a large room. One recorder was then fed the sounds and played them at the same time as it picked up the sounds. The other recorder played what was recorded and thus there was a time difference between the two devices, which brings us this wet echo feeling, which we hear when the work is played, so it feels like we are submerged in the ocean. The structure of the next chapter is among the greatest masterpieces in rock history, featuring Gilmour's half-muted guitar tones, probably inspired by the song "Good Vibrations" by the Beach Boys, while Wright builds up the organ solo. It is worth bearing in mind that Gilmour and Wrights guitar and keyboard interplay, which is so important for the Pink Floyd sound started well before Meddle and did not reach its peak until much later.

The theme of the work is actually twofold: On one hand it is the oceans, both above and below sea level, hence the albatross and the coral reefs, and, on the other hand, the human quality of being able to identify with the feelings of others and follow in their footsteps. This is very well presented in the lyrics and is primarily Roger Waters' idea but this is where PF's music begins to

revolve around man and humanity rather than fantasies and hallucinations. Finally "Echoes" makes it crystal clear that the band has finally broken free from any influence from Syd Barrett.

Two more things must be mentioned before the work is played. First, the "Live at Pompeii" concert was recorded in 4 days in October 1971 although the film would not be released until next year, so the premiere of "Echoes", "One of These Days" and the Pompeii version of "Seamus" outside the studio was before they were released on the album. The other thing is the musical "The Phantom of the Opera" by Andrew Lloyd Webber, based on an earlier play and premiered in 1986 in London. Here, Webber sees it appropriate to use some tones from "Echoes" without giving PF any credit and the theft is so obvious that even I can clearly hear it. Waters said in an interview about his solo album, Amused to Death in 1992: "Yes, the beginning of fucking "Phantom" is from Echoes. Daaa - da da da da da. I did not believe it when I heard it first. Same tones, same beats, same everything. The bastard." Waters' revenge, however, was in an unconventional way. Instead of going to court we have the following final lyrics in the song "It's a Miracle" on the album "Amused to death" from 1992:

"We cover in our shelters With our hands over our ears
Lloyd-Webber's awful stuff Runs for years and years and years
An earthquake hits the theater But the operetta lingers
Then the piano lid comes down And breaks his fucking fingers It's a miracle"

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

Echoes

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