

Australian Pink Floyd keeps the original's flame burning

By MIKE CHAIKEN
EDITIONS EDITOR

Pink Floyd, the original, has been on the sidelines for several years now. Keyboardist Richard Wright passed away. Drummer Nick Mason is touring solo. Guitarist David Gilmour is taking it easy. And original bassist Roger Waters has long been on the outs with Mason and Gilmour.

So for fans of the Floyd live, the only way the band's music can be heard is by turning to bands like Australian Pink Floyd, which has dedicated itself toward replicating the sound and songs of the legendary group.

Australian Pink Floyd is coming to the Toyota Oakdale Theater on Aug. 23.

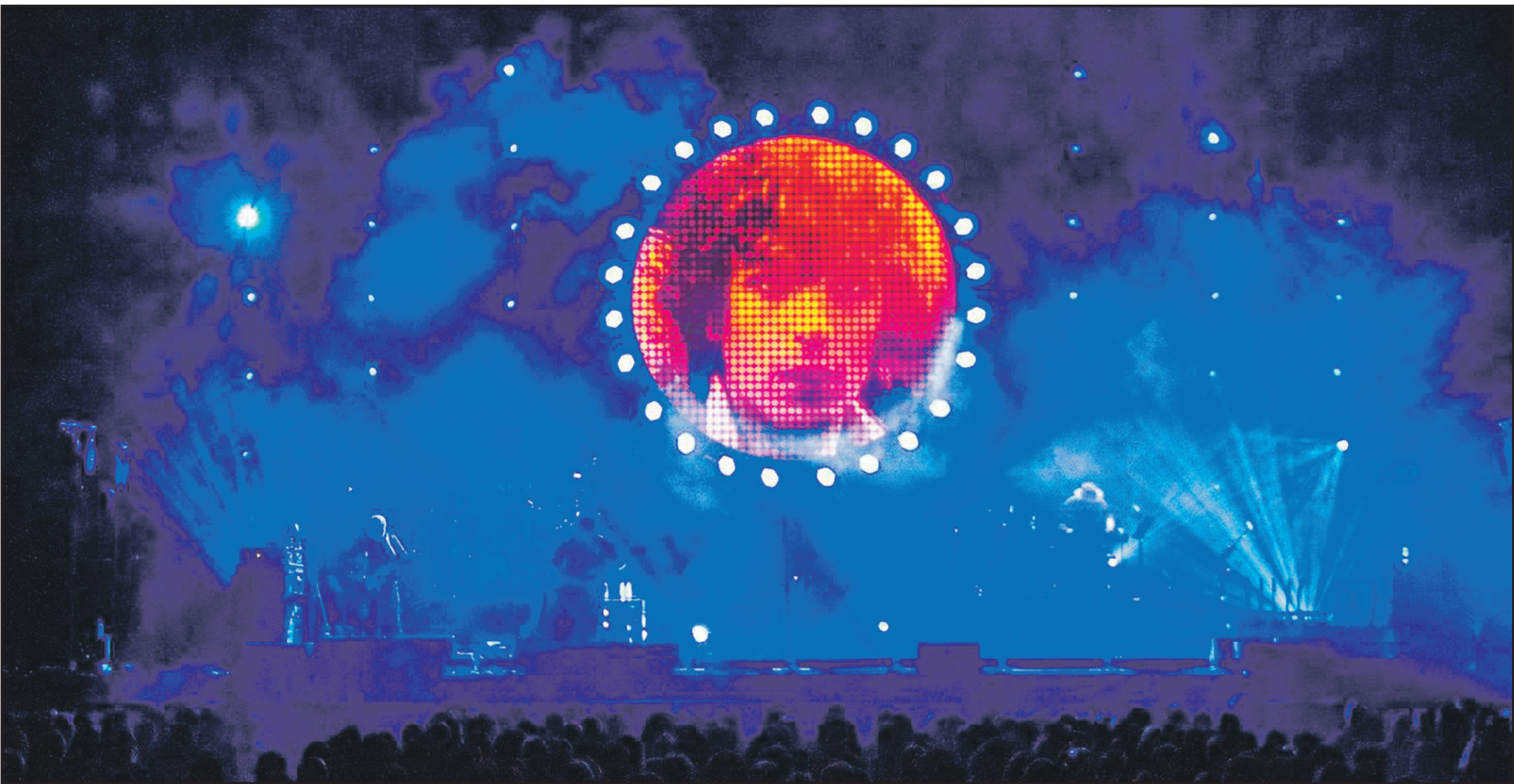
"Pink Floyd is one of the great rock bands of all time," said Jason Sawford, Australian Pink Floyd's keyboardist and a founding member. "They stumbled upon a style of writing music that retains its appeal across generations."

"There's a seriousness to their music, but (it's) lyrical enough to appeal to all kinds of listeners," said Sawford. "A sort of prog rock without the nerd factor."

Australian Pink Floyd, in a way, is like a symphony orchestra. But instead of breathing life into the canon of Beethoven and Mozart, they are keep the musical candle burning for Pink Floyd.

"I think (that's) a good way of thinking about the reason we do what we do and why people enjoy coming to our concerts," said Sawford.

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Australian Pink Floyd performs the music of Pink Floyd at the Toyota Oakdale Theater in Wallingford on Friday, Aug. 23.

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Jason Sawford
Australian Pink Floyd

we use, and the way we play the music involves a lot of study and devotion to the task," said Sawford.

Like many successful groups, the musicians of Pink Floyd had idiosyncrasies that when added together made for a unique sound.

"All of the musicians in Pink Floyd brought a particular element to the music," said Sawford. "Richard Wright came from a jazz background, and

some of his approaches to the keyboard arrangements use some interesting inversions and chord structures. David Gilmour brought a very lyrical style to his guitar playing, and Nick Mason's drumming gives a laid back fluidity to the songs, a sort of 'just behind the beat' feel."

"Needless to say," Sawford explained, "Roger's lyrics, songs, and the arrangements — especially with the backing vocals — are almost like a gospel style that gives an emotional intensity in some pieces."

Like an orchestra, said Sawford, "We remain faithful to the classic albums, trying to reproduce the sounds as well as the notes as closely as possible. We even try make the front of house mix sound like the recording."

However, said Sawford, "Sometimes we will explore various versions of certain songs, bootlegs of some of the older songs and piece

together a version that is based on Pink Floyd versions."

Sawford, as expected for a keyboardist playing with a band called Australian Pink Floyd, has a lot of favorites from the band. "Personally, I love 'Shine On You Crazy Diamond' and some of the longer songs, such as 'Echoes' or 'Dogs.'"

"Currently, I'm enjoying playing 'Obscured by Clouds' a lot," said Sawford.

Aussie Floyd plays most of the songs one would expect to hear from Pink Floyd, like "Another Brick in the Wall" or "Money." But Sawford said the group does reach for some deeper cuts such as "Careful With That Axe Eugene," "Fat Old Sun," or a Syd Barrett number.

"Of course," said the keyboardist, "some of the songs can be a bit odd for people who only know the greatest hits, so we try to include something for

everyone."

There is inevitably going to be some disappointment when Australian Pink Floyd can't play one particular fan's favorite tune. "The problem is that Pink Floyd songs tend to be on the long side and we can only do so much, but we try to present as balanced a set as possible in the time available."

"Each year, we change the set, so if they come back the following year they might get to hear their favorite eventually," said Sawford.

In terms of its stage production, Sawford said, "Every year we try to do something a bit different. Some new video material, for example, and every couple of years we might review the whole production and redesign it."

"We always strive to make it a Floyd style show," said Sawford. "But I think it's good to try other things as well."

"We've done various things in the past — album shows, theme shows, special production shows, and then we ask ourselves: what can we do next?" said Sawford. "It's a challenge, but we usually think of something."

The Australian Pink Floyd Show — All That You Love World Tour 2019 comes to the Toyota Oakdale Theater in Wallingford on Friday, Aug. 23 at 8 p.m.

For information, visit Oakdale.com or AussieFloyd.com.

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