



ECHOES BY
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SYD BARRETT

Chimes of the Division Bell

In the mid-1960s, psychedelic and progressive rock was emerging in the underground clubs in London. In 1965, Pink Floyd formed. By 1967, Syd Barrett, its co-founder, brought a breath of fresh air with *Arnold Layne* and *See Emily Play*. EMI noticed the band that was rooted in Cambridge. That same year Floyd found themselves at the Abbey Road studios where the Beatles were finishing *Sgt Pepper* at the time. The dawn of a new era emerged with Floyd's influential debut album *Piper at the Gates of Dawn*.

Alas! All good stories have a twist or two. Before the 'Piper' reached the 'gates of dawn', in the darkness, he was 'caught in the crossfire of childhood and stardom'. 'The door was locked'. 'The key was thrown away'. 'There was someone in Syd's head who wasn't Syd anymore'. The 'Brain Damage' forced Syd to leave Floyd. His psychedelic colours had become 'Obscured by Clouds'. He came back in 1970 with his 'irregular head' for one last hurrah. With the help of his band mates, he recorded the albums *The Madcap Laughs* and *Barrett*. Then like the 'Golden Hair' by James Joyce, Syd returned to Cambridge. He became Roger Barrett once more. 'His book was closed'. 'He read no more'. 'Watching the fire dance', 'he left his book'. 'He left his room'.

Ten years after his death on July 7, 2006, one can't fail to ask the two questions: why was Syd Barrett so special? Why did he choose to let it all go?

The Beatles and the Stones started by imitating the rhythm and blues and rock n roll of 1950s' America. Both also imitated the accents, making them sound more American than British. British

sensibility, romanticism, and the non-sense of Lewis Carroll were absent in their lyrics. The beats and tunes didn't resemble British folk music. British bands were to develop an identity of their own. This changed in 1965 with the *Revolver* album of the Beatles. The lyrics started to narrate the British psyche. In between Beatles'



Revolver (1965) and *Sgt Pepper* (1967), Pink Floyd was slowly surfacing. There were other bands doing the same. Why did Pink Floyd shine better than others? It was because of Syd Barrett.

The moment you hear *Arnold Layne* and *See Emily Play* you feel British sensibility and romanticism. The music composition is folkie, while Syd's accent makes it sound so English. Floyd's

initial songs were also different because they were playful and youthful with the non-sense of Lewis Carroll in songs like 'Bike', 'The Gnome', 'Chapter 24', and 'The Scarecrow'. Syd excelled in two more areas. His voice harmonises with the music, tunes and the instruments. His compositions were different because he was an art student. He knew how to abstract feelings with colours. Now he was just doing so with notes.

The rest is history. Syd left Floyd and left music forever. However, Floyd didn't leave Syd. If it wasn't for Syd, his legacy and his genius, there would never have been 'The Dark Side of the Moon', 'Wish You Were Here', and 'Shine On You Crazy Diamond'. Add to that, a loosely defined 'Pinkie' in 'The Wall'.

Syd was an artiste at heart. He wanted to be happy in his world. The razzmatazz and the dark world of commercial music wasn't his cup of tea. He returned home to Cambridge. He said goodbye to his past. In the loving care of his mother and later his sister, Roger Barrett became a painter once again, returning back to the playful and youthful soul that started in Cambridge and left us from Cambridge. The 'Madcap' chose the chime of the 'Division Bell' not heard. He chose the happiness of childhood over stardom. Not too many people can do so. This is why Syd Barrett 'shines on, like a crazy diamond'.

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A Day in the Life of a Hoarder

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I had never really considered myself a hoarder until it was pointed out to me. I wouldn't say my condition's extreme but an average day of mine possibly indicates a slight inclination towards it. Here's an example of such a day.

The day kicked off on a bad note when I woke up to find the help moping the floors clean with the tattered remains of my favourite, five-year-old T-shirt. Yes, I was aware that time had left several holes on the fabric already but it was just so comfortable and had served so well, it surely didn't deserve such fate.

Packing my bag for class was another drudgery. It took up a considerable amount of time to sift through the leaflets random strangers distributed in front of my college every day and make room for my books. I had to make sure my mother wasn't around because if she saw the mess inside the bag, she would throw them away and while I was quite certain I wasn't going to buy a TV any time soon or move in with a newly married couple in an apartment in Tongi, I couldn't just dump the effort someone put behind making those leaflets in the dustbin.

My teacher had already started his lectures by the time I joined class, and I spent an entire ten minutes trying to find a pen with some ink left in it among the twenty something pens in my bag. The girl who sat next to me and was always secretly jealous of my pen 'collection'



flashed me a smug smile as she realised that not one of them worked and I had to bite my dignity and borrow

one from a friend.

I chose to walk back home from class since I couldn't decide whether I should spend the only shiny, new 100 taka note I had in my purse on a rickshaw ride or not. I bought an ice-cream on the way and slipped the ice-cream stick in my pocket when I had finished eating it. One of these days, I was going to make one of those fancy pen holders with ice-cream sticks but that day was not today. Today it found itself with the others I had been saving for I did not remember how long.

When I got to composing this article, I felt slightly intimidated by the number of untitled documents cluttering my desktop. They were all the first few drafts of previous articles and assignments. The final versions were in a separate folder but I kept the drafts, in case I ever wanted to compare the versions. My inbox was in a similar state with thousands of mails, varying from slightly important to you've-won-10k-dollars spam mails that I could have deleted but didn't for future purposes still unknown to me.

When I retired to bed at the end of the day, I craved for some good music and sought for my earphones which I had left in my study table's drawer. I made a mental list of the things that could possibly be inside it—more leaflets, unimportant papers, more ice-cream sticks, pen caps, and other things that move—and decided to go to sleep instead. I was just not ready to face the drawer. Not yet.