



THE EVOLUTION OF PINK FLOYD

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There isn't much that hasn't been said about Pink Floyd. And yet, it's a story that still begs to be told again and again. The adoration and obsession surrounding their unique and unequalled approach to music have remained constant while the band itself had gone through numerous alterations both in their lineup and their style of music. A journey through their discography from *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* (1967) to *The Endless River* (2014) makes it abundantly clear how much they've changed over the years.

What made the very first Floyd album special to me was the innocence behind it. The simple hearted nature of the lyricism intensified by tracks like "Bike" and "The Gnome", coupled with the leap into a realm of music never ventured before with tracks like "Astronomy Domine" and "Interstellar Overdrive", *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* (1967) is a reflection to a time in our lives filled with wonder and adventure: our childhood. *A Saucerful of Secrets* (1968) built on this in a much more refined way. But with Barrett becoming more and more unstable and signs of divide becoming much more apparent, the album was a goodbye to the old Floyd, an adieu to a simpler carefree time, a farewell to a wondrous youth.

The first major change in the sound of Pink Floyd came through *Ummagumma* (1969), and perhaps not in a positive way. This, along with the following album

Atom Heart Mother (1970) was a time for experimentation and incoherence. The band members were trying to find a direction where the band would be headed through their individual musical identities. This pubescence phase of their musical journey was the next phase to their evolution. As confusing and polarising that phase can be, it leads to the emergence of maturity and finesse, as observed by perhaps the pinnacle of the Pink Floyd experience, *The Dark Side of the Moon* (1973).

Whereas their very first album explored a world of innocence and wonder, *The Dark Side of the Moon* explored the dark and mature topic of isolation and insanity, greed and consumerism, fear and hope. Two completely contrasting albums concocted by the same band, but in two distinct phases of their journey. The experimentation in the previous albums was replaced by a more jazz heavy Walters-focused style of music that blended in perfectly with the melancholic vibe of the album. This marked the start of their exploration of weighty themes instead of individual tracks with concept albums like *The Wall* (1979) and *The Final Cut* (1983), each embracing a story told through multiple tracks.

The political overtone is another prominent feature of their later albums, whether it's the cry of a soldier in the frontlines in "Us and Them", or his repressed guilt and trauma in "The Hero's



Return". Pink Floyd, from a band that wanted to enchant their audience with a synchronised auditory and visual experience with innovative light shows and improvised instrumentals, went on to be a band that wanted to shed light on darker and more personal and political struggle.

The final phase of Pink Floyd's evolution was one of nostalgia, a yearning for the past and a tribute to the ones they lost on the way. *Wish You Were Here* (1975) hailing a long lost friend in Barrett and *The Endless River* (2014) paying homage to the quiet brilliance of the ever present Rick Wright. The final album, consisting of mostly instrumentals, was a nod to the Pink Floyd of the early days.

The most intriguing part about the evolution is perhaps the fact that a listen to the entirety of the discography gives a stark outline of the band's growth itself. How tracks like "Jugband Blues" showed the writing on the wall for Syd Barrett's departure in *A Saucerful of Secrets*, an incident that completely changed the course for Pink Floyd in the later years: how the incoherent mess that was

Ummagumma and *Atom Heart Mother* (1970) was symbolic of the divide and lack of a unilateral direction for the band after Barrett's departure. And of course the heavy and heart-rending masterpiece that is *The Dark Side of the Moon* proclaiming the apex of the band. Not to forget the swansong to their origin and a hearty goodbye to a legacy through the very last album *The Endless River*.

The Floydian experience is one that is impossible to explain. Maybe the reason behind it is that it never was a single thing. It was never just one genre or one member or even about a single inspiration. Pink Floyd's evolution is the same as the one every single one of us will go through, from childhood to decay. It's a humble story of growing up and seeing the world differently every step of the way.

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