Pink Floyd Essay, Research Paper

Pink Floyd

Pink Floyd has revolutionized the way that the world looks at music. By creating their own powerful sound, along with tantalizing lyrics, the band has painted imagery in the mind of their public through four decades. The message of the Floyd has been varied, but the soul-filled meaning behind it has always remained intact.

The band formed in 1965 when a group of friends (Roger Waters, Rick Wright and Nick Mason) decided to cover some R&B songs. They called themselves Sigma 6. They were hooked, but success was not to be theirs just yet. They played under many names, such as The T-Set, The Meggadeaths, The Architectural Abdabs, and The Screaming Abdads.

Later that year Waters, thinking they needed a new sound, brought in a friend from High School. His name is Syd Barrett. Barrett gave them the name we all know them by now, Pink Floyd, after two American Blues musicians, Pink

Anderson and Floyd Council.

Very rapidly, the Floyd grew an underground following. Syd Barrett began to show his creative genius in lyrical, and sometimes witty ways. Despite their “cult” status, they would sometimes have beer bottles and other things thrown at them on stage. The reason for this is something which has not changed as the Floyd has developed (although no one throws things anymore), they would often play very extended versions of songs, like a forty minute version of “Interstellar Overdrive”.

But still, the band’s popularity was growing. While playing in the underground London club scene, it wasn’t too uncommon to see The Floyd headlining with the likes of Jimi Hendrix. Their first released single was “Arnold Layne”, and rapidly flew up the charts.

The band reveled in their newfound popularity. All this time, however, Syd Barrett was drawing apart from the band. He regularly lost himself in LSD daydreams, and started developing some mental health problems at about the same time. Towards the end of his stay with Pink Floyd, he was known to stand on stage strumming a single

chord while staring into the lights, or just to detune his guitar while playing. It is also said that the band would have to take him offstage at the end of a concert and wipe the drool from his mouth. This was rapidly becoming too much for the rest of the band. Syd had to go.

The search for a new guitarist was something that the band thought would take the popularity from them that they had. Roger Waters wanted to initially ask Jeff Beck to take over for Syd, but was afraid he’d say no. It finally came down to the band taking in long time friend and folk-blues guitarist, David Gilmour. Syd Barrett reluctantly left the band, and was checked into a sanitarium a short time later.

The band had a new problem before them, and that was finding their style of music. The first few years from this new lineup revealed a diversity in music that has to be heard to be believed. After doing a couple of soundtracks for foreign films, the band released “Meddle”. It is from this very album that the well known sounds of Pink Floyd started to develop.

Through the early seventies, the band gained a larger and larger foreign audience – namely in the United States. In 1973, their fame began to apex with the release of “Dark Side of The Moon”. This new project showed a different band. All members of the band had matured artistically since they had first played together nearly a decade before. Waters had become an accomplished lyricist, and Gilmour had become a much respected guitarist. And it was these two prevelant personalities that would come to

odds with each other the most.

It was also at this time that the band began to know what fame and fortune can bring, tension. It started to become apparent that there was a struggle between Roger Waters and the rest of the band. He threatened to walk out on the recording of the album, and also on the following tour.

The band then started to record the classic, “Wish You Were Here”. It was released in 1975. David Gilmour later speaks of this album as being a “Thank You” to Syd Barret for his guidance and wisdom in the early years of the band. Much to everyone’s surprise, Barrett showed up in the middle of recording, nearly seven years after leaving the band. He no longer resembled the sheik looking rock star he once was, though. He had lost most of his hair, put on much weight, and didn’t seem to have the same personality. Needless to say, this was very inspirational to the band and it can be heard in every song off of that album.

In 1976, “Dark Side of The Moon” had entered Billboards Top 200, nearly three years after its release. And most certainly, no one expected it to stay on the charts for the thirteen consecutive years that it did (until 1989).

Sounds of strife settled down for a while then. “Animals” was released in 1977, and was met with respectful popularity.

In 1978, they began work on “The Wall”. Early in the recording of this album, Gilmour approached Waters with a complete instrumental song that he had played for the rest of the band. After listening to it, Waters said that he hated it and wouldn’t have it on his album – he considered the music to be “childlike and simplistic”. The rest of the band stood up for this song, and demanded that this song be included or they would walk. Reluctantly, Waters accepted. He put together the lyrics in less than half and hour. The song is “Comfortably Numb”. Only two weeks after this fiasco, Waters “fired” Richard Wright and the band was now a trio. “The Wall” was released in 1979, and met with world wide success, as did the movie production of the same name. A massive tour followed, as did the rumors from the media. A few people, who were ridiculed immediately for thinking so, saw the band breaking up soon.

In 1983, amidst the rumors of turmoil in the band, Pink Floyd released “The Final Cut”. The name so ironically characterized the present status of the band. Some people, the rest of the band included, considered it to be a Waters “solo” album. On this album, no song was co-written with another band member. Indeed, much of the sound and emotion that gelled the band together seemed to be missing.

After a very punctuated tour and a U.K. mini-movie, no one heard from the band for two years. Then in late 1985, Waters left the band and immediately sued the remaining band members for exclusive rights for all the works of Pink Floyd, including the name. The fight was long and messy, lasting over a year. Finally, in 1987, a decision was made. The judge said that Waters had left the band of his own free will, and since the band never entirely broke up, the rights to most of the material belonged to what was left of the band. However, Waters did receive a partial decision in his favour. He was to receive royalties for what he had worked on. Neither side entirely satisfied, but it was over….In September of 1987, Pink Floyd (Gilmour and Mason,

with Wright as a paid musician) released “Momentary Lapse of Reason”. Originally intended as a solo album for Gilmour, he wanted the album to be done as a whole.

Some fans embraced this new album, saying that the spirit of the band was still alive. On the other hand, some fans turned their backs entirely to this new project from The Floyd. A very successful tour followed, though, and it seemed that the band was as popular as ever.

Waters also was having success of his own. He released The Pros and Cons of Hitchhiking in 1984, Radio K.A.O.S. in 1987, and Amused to Death in 1992. The albums sold well, and had very sucessful tours. And when the Berlin

Wall came down in 1989, Waters orchestrated a star studded performance of “The Wall” in a now unified Germany. Performers for this gala event included Bryan Adams, Thomas Dolby, Cyndi Lauper, and a very special appearance by the infamous Vera Lynn.

In 1994, The Floyd released “The Division Bell”, which went to No. 1 on the American charts.

And through this deep and winding history there are still many things that are unknown. The wounds in the band run deep, and only time will tell of what is yet to come.