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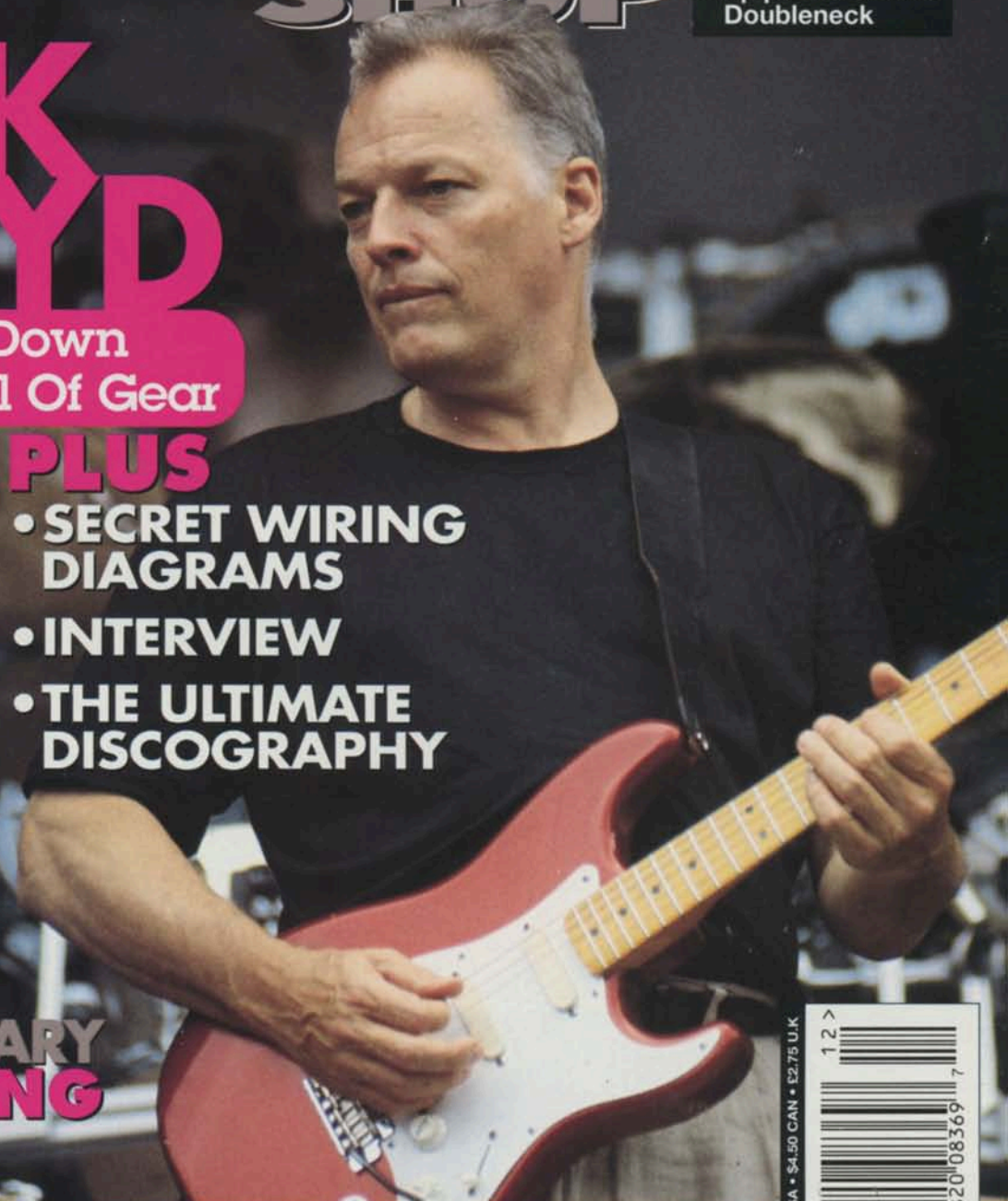
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# PINK

# NOISE

**The essential guide to David Gilmour's  
mysterious, magical guitar tone**

*by Pete Prown*

JEFFERY HAYER



There are great guitarists who are known for their chops, while others are famed for their stage presence or songwriting. But there are also a few esteemed mostly for their tone. Names like Stevie Ray Vaughan, Billy Gibbons, Eric Clapton, and B.B. King are among the greatest tone barons, but also essential to that list is Pink Floyd's David Gilmour, a man whose bluesy Strat solos established him as one of the finest rock leadmen to ever emerge from England. His classic leads are all over epics like *Dark Side of the Moon*, *Wish You Were Here*, and *Animals*, but his fans always point to his soul-wrenching break in "Comfortably Numb" (from 1979's *The Wall*) as the ultimate Gilmour solo. How did he get that perfect balance of tonal girth and Strat earthiness? Magic, it seems. With that as our starting point, *Guitar Shop* set out on an odyssey to track down every last guitar, amp, and box that Mr. Gilmour has used over the last 30 years to create his spectacular tone. It's an amazing journey—one almost as intriguing as a trip to the dark side of the moon.

David Gilmour onstage during the massive 1994 Pink Floyd tour



### Analog stompboxes sit on top of Gilmour's digital-filled effects rack

time, Pink Floyd was garnering a great deal of attention in London's underground psychedelic scene, primarily for their wild light shows and for Barrett's brilliance as a composer and rock visionary. In early 1967, the group put out their first album (*The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*) and toured America. At the same time, Barrett became increasingly dependent on drugs, and would often simply stop playing—or play something different—during live shows. By the beginning of 1968, his position in Pink Floyd was on questionable ground.

Around the same time, a band called Joker's Wild would open for Floyd at various gigs—its guitarist was David Gilmour. In February 1968, Waters & Co. decided to bring their old schoolmate Gilmour into the fold to support Barrett's sporadic guitar playing. Within two months, however, Barrett's mental state was such that he wandered away from the group. He was never formally fired and never formally quit—he just stopped showing up. Gilmour, who had been earning a living as a male model, then became Pink Floyd's sole guitarist, although Barrett was expected to return at any time. Several albums ensued with Gilmour in the guitar seat: *A Saucerful Of Secrets* (1968), *Ummagumma* (1969), *Atom Heart Mother* (1970), and 1971's *Meddle*, as well as several movie soundtracks, each one progressively more electronic and ethereal than its predecessor.

Around the time of *A Saucerful of Secrets*, Gilmour was playing a Telecaster through a Selmer 50-watt amp with a 4x12 cab and a Binson echo unit. The Tele was later stolen, so the guitarist replaced it with a Strat. The Selmer eventually gave way to Hiwatt amps, and soon a variety of effects pedals (fuzz, wah, volume pedals) were entering his setup. Like many guitarists, he had the problem of having a huge string of pedals wired together onstage, with batteries running out frequently, so in 1972, all his pedals were housed in a single cabinet—a forerunner of rack setups to come.



guitarists of the pre-Hendrix era were already infatuated with Fenders, largely because of Hank Marvin's Strat work with the Shadows and James Burton's Tele string-bending with Ricky Nelson. When Hendrix arrived in late 1966, Strats were again the rage, surely influencing the 19-year-old Gilmour even more on his choice of a Fender. (It's also no accident that he and fellow English picker Mark Knopfler have such a long-time fondness for red Stratocasters, since that's what Hank Marvin used during the Shadows' heyday. Furthermore, Gilmour has also gone on record as a big Jeff Beck and Eric Clapton fan—yet more great Strat heroes from which to catch the Fender bug.)

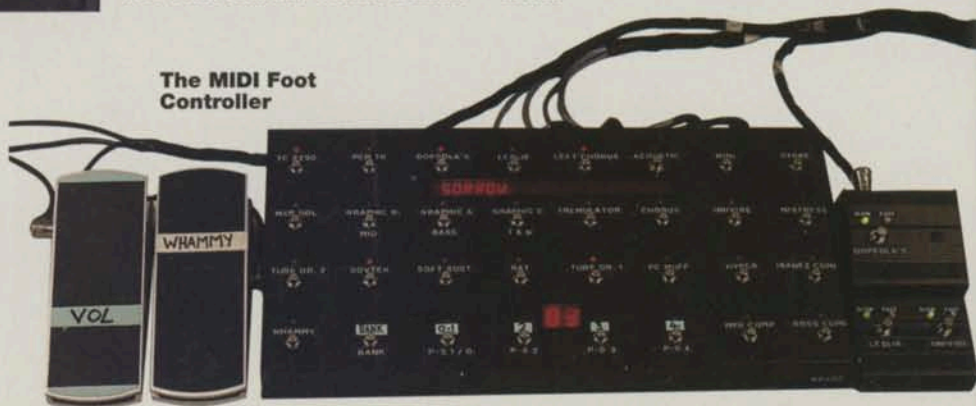
In high school, Gilmour met future Floyd members Roger Waters and Syd Barrett (for a while he even played with Barrett in a folk duo). Bassist/vocalist Waters and guitarist/songwriter Barrett put together Pink Floyd in 1965 with keyboardist Richard Wright and drummer Nick Mason. Within a short

A close-up of the live rack

## Journey To The Moon (1947-1972)

Born on March 6, 1947, in Cambridge, England, Gilmour began playing guitar at age 14 on a nylon-string acoustic. Eventually, the teenager moved on to Burns Sonnet and Hofner Club 60 electrics before getting his first Fender at age 21. This was a pivotal move. You should recall that most English

### The MIDI Foot Controller



## Flying Pigs & Sold-out Stadiums (1973-1984)

Floyd took most of 1972 off to work on a new studio album. When released in early 1973, *Dark Side of the Moon* shot up album charts all over the world and established Pink Floyd as a world-class rock act. The record stayed on the pop charts longer than any other record in history and the Waters-penned hit "Money" can be found on AOR radio stations almost hourly—nearly 25 years



Stage Cabinets: Marshall 4x12, Custom "doppola," and WEM 4x12

# Words of the Tone Prophet

## A BRIEF INTERVIEW WITH DAVID GILMOUR

▲ *There are lots of multi-tracked guitars on Pink Floyd albums. How do you make up for that in concert?*

I usually have a second guitar player along, like Snowy White, Tim Renwick, or on my '84 solo tour, Mick Ralphs. I also work out the parts that I think are important to have in the songs, and try to get one of us to be able to do any bit that is vital at any one moment. So we sort of make up a composite part for each track. Sometimes you miss things and sometimes you can have the synth play a guitar part that was on the record.

▲ *As far as your tone, you use a lot of squeals, but it seems that in other places, you're right on the edge of feedback.*

Well, I like to be there. If I want to get feedback, I just go into the studio and stay close to the amp. I control it with great difficulty. I like it to be at the point where it's all running away from you and you're only just about in control. In fact, I sometimes like it when I'm not sure whether I'm in control, or the guitar and amplifier are.

▲ *Which pickup do you prefer to get feedback?*

I use the treble [bridge] pickup virtually all the time.

▲ *Do you write on acoustic or electric?*

I work songs out on anything that comes to mind: piano, organ, synthesizer, acoustic or electric guitar. When you pick up an acoustic, for example, certain ideas tend to come—you tend to move into certain areas musically. And they're very different from the ones you come up with when you pick up an electric.

▲ *You're known as a Strat player, but sometimes we've seen you holding a Telecaster.*

Actually, it's a converted Esquire. I started on a Telecaster before I joined Pink Floyd, and it was the first really good guitar I had. I've used Telecasters ever since, though I play Strats a bit more and that's when I'm generally known for.

▲ *Have you ever considered using, say, a Les Paul or ES-335 in addition to the Fenders?*

I can't really get on with them that well. I don't really feel comfortable with them—I don't know why. I've just always been with Fenders and haven't managed to make the change. I've got a hybrid guitar that's like Strat with a tremolo and a humbucker. In fact, I find that I play guitars without tremolos less and less.

▲ *Do you find that tremos tend to make you use less left-hand finger vibrato?*

I use both fairly indiscriminately. I mean, I can be in the middle of a solo and do one note's vibrato with my finger, and then the next one with the tremolo bar. It's a different sort of sound. I don't plan to use both; I just do it without thinking. As far as the actual spring setup of my tremos, sometimes I have three, sometimes four. Then I just adjust the tremolo up until it feels right with my gauge of strings and everything else. I don't find that I have too much trouble with it going out of tune either. There are a lot of little things to make it go better, but it's never been too severe a problem for me.

▲ *Years ago, you occasionally used a slide in your right hand while fretting notes and chords.*

It was not really playing slide; it was more like making spaceship noises. But I usually hold the slide in my left hand. I really don't use bottleneck slides, either. If I'm going to play in that style, I'll use some sort of lap-steel guitar. For that style, I'll either use a pick or just use my fingers and no pick.

▲ *Do you ever cut guitar parts direct into the board?*

Not very often, but it has happened once in a while. The solo in "Another Brick In The Wall, Part II" was done straight into the board. After it was recorded, the signal was then put through an amplifier to add that kind of amp tone.

▲ *Do you mostly cut tracks with your amp in a large room to get your famed tone and ambience?*

I've found that if you use a big amp, it only works in big rooms. And little amps work in little rooms. Most of the tones that sound like that come from fairly large amplifiers in fairly large rooms. But I've got tiny Fender amps that sound positively enormous if you get them in the right place. It's quite amazing.



by Tony Marsden

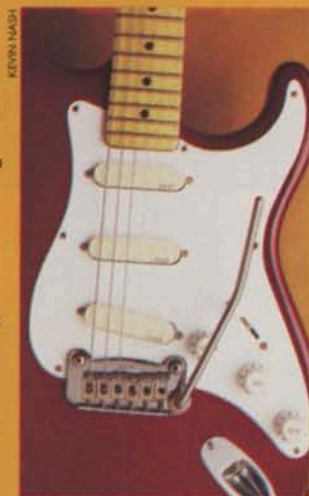
To go along with David Gilmour's taste for pristine Strat tone is his use of EMG active-electronic (i.e., battery-powered) pickups. Since the mid-'80s, each of his Stratocasters has been loaded with the company's low-impedance SA single-coils, which he beefs up with two more tone modules: the EXG mid-cut/expander and SPC mid-booster. According to EMG National Sales Manager Doug Marhoffer, "David's been using our pickups for a long time, since his 1984 solo album and tour. We've had a great relationship with him since then, too. His tech, Phil Taylor—who has been with the band for about 20 years—is also a good friend of ours and he's the one who introduced David to EMG pickups. Now all of David's guitars have EMG's, including his acoustics and lap steels, which have

our H model—this is a single-coil in a humbucker cap.

"I suppose one reason he likes our active-electronic approach is that it's the only way to get the signal strong enough to travel through his rack. His effects rig is simply huge. As far as the SA pickups, they have Alnico magnets, which have a little more midrange than our ceramic S magnets—Vince Gill uses those and they add a little more snap to the sound. Then David has our SPC midrange-boost control on there, which lets it sing a little more and sound like a humbucker. Finally, there's the EXG, which almost sounds like a BBE Sonic Maximixer. David uses that a lot for rhythm, since it really helps define the notes, especially when there's a little distortion on

## Gilmour-ize Your Strat!

### A Look At The Guitarist's Favorite EMG Pickups



Continued on page 45

accord with the high-fidelity sound of albums like *Dark Side of the Moon* and *Wish You Were Here*, the guitarist also adapted an almost "hi-fi" mentality to his rig. Instead of just plugging into a 100-watt tube amp and cranking the bejesus out of it to get overdriven distortion, as many other '70s guitarists did, Gilmour set out first to create a strong clean tone and then blend in any fuzz or other effects on top of that solid clean sound (again, harkening back to the clean Strat tones of Hank Marvin and other early rock 'n' rollers). His main pedalboard during the *Dark Side of the Moon* era contained an array of fuzz boxes and MXR pedals; ironically, this same board was being used in the '90s by Gilmour's live co-guitarist, Tim Renwick.

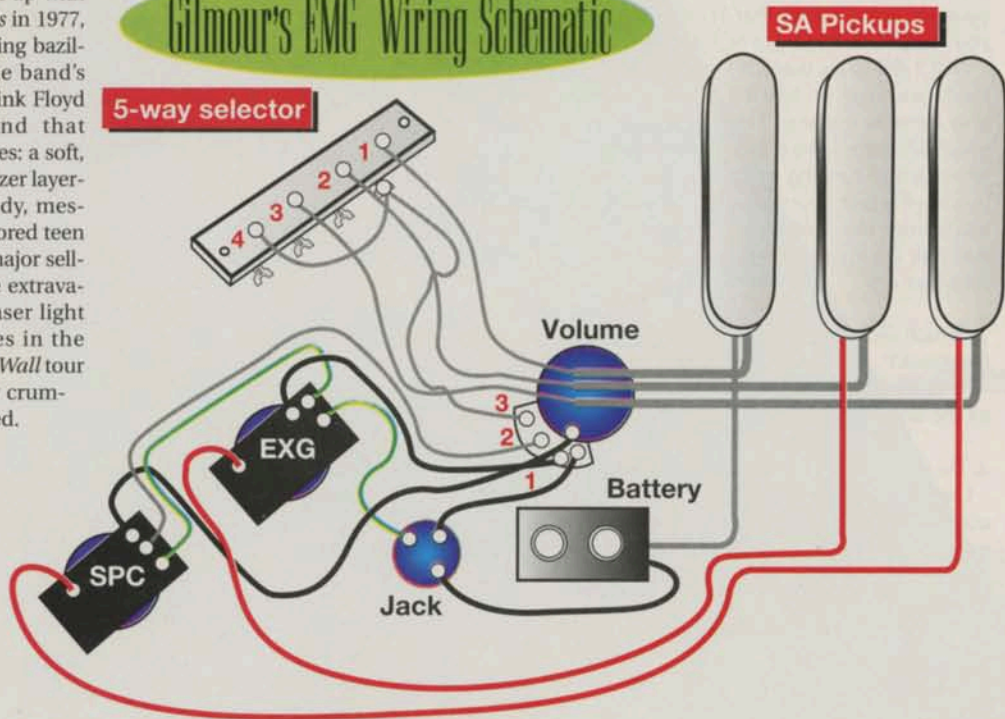
The turning point in the creation of his amp rig was the discovery of an Alembic F2-B bass preamp, which had been used by Waters for his bass rig. One day, the techs tried it out on Gilmour's revolving speaker cabinets (at the time, Yamaha RA-200's) and Gilmour liked its warm sound. The Alembic soon became an integral part of his main guitar rig. The signal then traveled to the output (power) sections of the Hiwatt heads and finally out to a series of 4x12 WEM cabinets. This powerful clean tone has been the heart of Gilmour's tone ever since, especially for live work.

This is not to say, of course, that Gilmour doesn't like effects; in fact, he has tons of them. Back around *Dark Side of the Moon*, David had just discovered wah-wah, and was filling out his effects with a Electro-Harmonix

after it was written. They followed it up with *Wish You Were Here* in 1975, *Animals* in 1977, and *The Wall* in 1979, each one selling bazillions of copies and cementing the band's massive international popularity. Pink Floyd codified the "space-rock" sound that appealed to the album-buying masses: a soft, balladic style with extensive synthesizer layerings, bluesy guitar solos, and cloudy, message-riddled lyrics, just perfect for bored teen suburbanites everywhere. Another major selling point was the inclusion of stage extravaganzas, which at times involved laser light shows, massive floating dirigibles in the shapes of farm animals, and, on *The Wall* tour of 1980, a huge wall that eventually crumbled around the band as they played. Snowy White, later of Thin Lizzy, was the band's second guitarist on these mega-tours. Snowy's main stage axe was a Les Paul, along with an 12-string Ovation round-back acoustic.

It was during this gold-and-platinum-laden period that Gilmour's core equipment philosophy began to take shape. In

## Gilmour's EMG Wiring Schematic



Big Muff and Uni-Vibe (these showing a strong Hendrix influence). Another vintage device he used during the '70s—and still does—was the Maestro Rover, a small rotating speaker on a stand that looked more like a space satellite than a guitar effect. Via a crossover, it sent the lower-frequency sounds to your amp, while the upper-frequency tones could be miked off of the swirling, variable-speed speaker. As has been seen again and again in Gilmour's gear for over 25 years, the man just can't get enough of that Leslie sound.

By the release of his first solo album, 1978's *David Gilmour*, and Pink Floyd's '79 epic, *The Wall*, Gilmour's effects setup had progressed considerably. Along with the old Big Muff, you could now find an MXR Phase 90, Electro-Harmonix Electric Mistress, Orange Treble/Bass booster, Arbiter Fuzz Face, and custom tone pedal. More interesting, however, was the setup. His new state-of-the-art board had sophisticated switching capabilities that were far ahead of most late-'70s pedal setups. Each effect could be individually bypassed or configured in any sequence, and there were three outputs for various amps. Sound familiar? This is almost like today's MIDI rack processors and foot-controllers, albeit using old analog technology. Like Pink Floyd's classic records, Gilmour's effects setup was way ahead of its time.

For guitars during this era, his main axe was a '79 black Strat with DiMarzio pickups and a '62 neck with a rosewood fingerboard (it also had a custom switch that allowed him to turn on the neck pickup in conjunction with other pickup configuration). Gilmour also two Teles, a Les Paul, and a '55 Esquire that had been modified by Seymour Duncan with a new neck pickup. All the Strats were also shielded to cut down on extra noise, something endemic to most Fenders. For extra tuning stability with his Fender tremos, he screwed down the front six screws on top of the trem faceplate as far as they would go to make total contact. He felt this kept the bar in better tune. Another trick was using different spring setups on the tremolos for different situations: three springs in studio, four onstage.

In the amp department for live work, there were two 100-watt Marshall stacks and two 200-watt Yamaha Leslie amps with WEM cabs for all. In the studio, David also experimented with various Fender Twins and MESA/Boogies. But he wasn't always beholden to amps, however: for his famous clean solo in "Another Brick in the Wall, Part II," he DI'd the lead right into the board. His picks were Herco heavy-gauge, while strings rotated between Ernie Ball or Gibson Sonomatic sets in the .010 range.

Career-wise, Pink Floyd faced a few rough years after *The Wall*. Their 1983 set, *The Final*

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## Gilmour-ize Your Strat!

Continued from page 42

there and he's moving chord voices around. You can tell the difference in concert, too. His live sound was amazing—the solos, the mix, and the quadraphonic sound were just outstanding."

On an EMG-loaded G&L test guitar sent to *Guitar Shop* for evaluation, we plugged into a Fender Hot Rod Deluxe combo and put the pickups through their paces. The top knob on the guitar was for volume, but instead of two tones, as you'd traditionally find on a Strat, the middle knob controlled the EXG and the bottom knob handled the SPC. The EXG works like a "V" configuration on a graphic EQ; when you turn it up, the midrange gets cut, while the bass and treble get boosted. It yields a brighter, vaguely acoustic-like quality, making it great for chords, as Doug mentioned. But I think the SPC midrange-boost is where you really hear the Gilmour sound emerge. Using the clean channel of the Hot Rod Deluxe (with bass up and a dash of reverb), I set the SPC control full up and just *nailed* the tone he uses for the bluesy solos to "Shine On You Crazy Diamond, Part I." It didn't take much twiddling on my part; the tone was right there in the EMG's. Over to the gain channel and bit of SPC, and you're all set for the fat lead tone from "Comfortably Numb."

For the Stratier tones of "Another Brick In The Wall," roll back the SPC and mix in the EXG for more Fenderish qualities. When using the SA pickups alone, I found them to be a little flat and bland, but when the electronic modules were blended in, this Strat became devastatingly effective. With a little practice using the SPC and EXG, you should be able to get everything from a Texas Strat tone to a screaming humbucker tone out one guitar. It's a pretty impressive range of tones for one guitar.

With the battery located underneath the pickguard, I wondered if this might be difficult to replace, but EMG's Marhofer says it's not a problem: "The battery for our pickups will last for months and months. Nervous guitar techs replace them after every three gigs, but they really last far, far longer. To conserve battery life even more, the jacks on our pre-wired assemblies are stereo, so there's an extra contact point in there that serves as the battery on/off switch. Whenever you pull the plug out after playing, the battery turns off. Even if you leave the plug in, you'll still be changing strings far more often than changing batteries. And to install our systems, the only thing players need to solder are the jack leads. There's no groundwire, either, since EMG pickups are internally grounded. That way you won't get shocked by microphones. There are lots of configurations, too, so you can get the

pickup setup, like single/single/humbucker or all singles with the SPC or whatever the player wants."

But if you want your Strat to sound just like David Gilmour's, just go grab the three-single-coil SA assembly (\$241 prewired with pickups, pickguard, and 5-way switch), along with the EXG and SPC modules (\$66 each). It may cost way more than three new passive pickups, but after witnessing the tonal versatility offered by this system, one can see why it's his pickup of choice. Like Pink Floyd's ethereal music, it's positively mind-expanding. —PP

EMG Pickups, Inc., P.O. Box 4394, Santa Rosa, CA 95402, (707) 525-9941, fax (707) 575-7046, Web site: <http://www.emginc.com>



David's custom road case with slide-out guitar trays

*Cut*, was a critical loser, largely as the result of weak songwriting and fierce internal disputes between Gilmour and Roger Waters on the direction of the music. It didn't help that the taste of the times had turned towards New Wave music and big acts from the '70s were dropping like flies (Led Zeppelin, Bad Company, the Allman Brothers, the original Yes, and Deep Purple had all bitten the dust by this time).

As if to take a break, Gilmour cut another well-received solo album, *About Face* (1984). Again the guitarist's rig had advanced with the times, but as always, he kept the hi-fi quality of his setup. Among his amp and effects choices of the day were a pair of Fender Showman amps fueling two Marshall 4x12 cabs with Celestions and two WEM 4x12 cabs. Another favorite was a BOSS Heavy Metal Pedal into a MESA/Boogie, then feeding out into a DDL and finally a Fender amp. Instead of his old custom "switcher" effects board, he now opted for the BOSS SCC-700 pedalboard, which he filled with a compressor, flanger, distortion, overdrive, and digital delay. To round things off, a couple of MXR digital delays and a Pete Cornish volume pedal were looped on the board, as was a Boogie amp that was being used as an overdrive. An early wireless advocate, he



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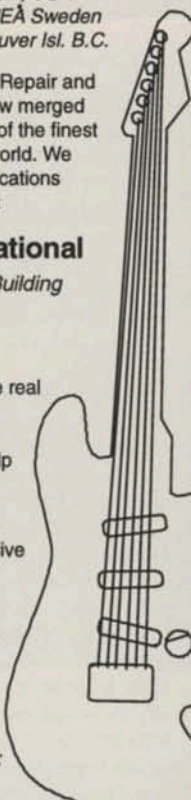
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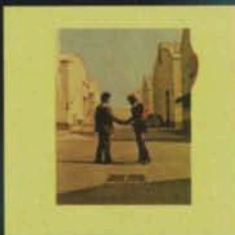
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# The Ultimate

by Pete Prown

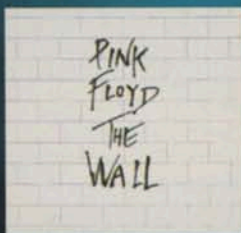
# David Gilmour Discography!



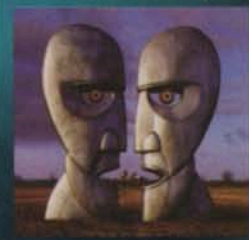
**GROUP & SOLO ALBUMS:** *Jokers Wild, Jokers Wild* [Gilmour's first band] (private pressing, 1966). *Pink Floyd* [on *Harvest*, except where noted] *A Saucerful Of Secrets* (1968), *More* (1969), *Ummagumma* (1969), *Atom Heart Mother* (1970), *Relics* (1971), *Meddle* (1971), *Obscured By Clouds* (1972), *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973), *Wish You Were Here* (Columbia, 1975), *Animals* (Columbia, 1977), *The Wall* (Columbia, 1979), *A Collection Of Great Dance Songs* (Columbia, 1981),

*Works* (Capitol, 1983), *The Final Cut* (Columbia, 1983), *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason* (Columbia, 1987), *The Delicate Sound Of Thunder* (1988), *Shine On* [Box Set] (Columbia, 1992), *The Division Bell* (Columbia, 1994), *Pulse* (Columbia, 1995). David Gilmour [on Columbia] *David Gilmour* (1978), *About Face* (1984).

**GUEST APPEARANCES:** *Unicorn, Blue Pine Trees* (Charisma, 1974). David Courtney, *David Courtney's First Day* (EMI, 1975). Sutherland Brothers & Quiver, *Reach For The Sky* (CBS, 1975). Roy Harper, *HQ* (Science Friction, 1975), *The*



*Unknown Soldier* (Harvest, 1980), *Whatever Happened To Jugula?* (Beggars Banquet, 1985), *Once* (Science Friction, 1990), *Burn The World* (Science Friction, 1990). Rachid Bahri, *Rachid Bahri* (Pathe Marconi, 1977). Kate Bush, *The Kick Inside* (EMI, 1978), *The Dreaming* (EMI, 1982), *The Sensual World* (EMI, 1989). Atomic Rooster, *Headline News*, (Voiceprint, 1983). Paul McCartney, *Back To The Egg* [with Wings] (MPL, 1979), *Give My Regards To Broadstreet* (Columbia, 1984), *Flowers In The Dirt* (EMI, 1989). Doll By Doll, *Grand Passion* (Magnet, 1982). Arcadia, *So Red The Rose* (1985). The Dream Academy, *The Dream Academy* (Blanco Y Negro, 1985), *A Different Kind Of Weather* (Blanco Y Negro, 1990). Pete Townshend, *White City: A Novel* (Atco, 1985). Grace Jones, *Slave To The Rhythm*, (Manhattan, 1985). Supertramp, *Brother Where You Bound* (A&M, 1985). Bryan Ferry, *Boys And Girls* (EG, 1985), *Bete Noire* (Virgin, 1987). Berlin, *Count Three And Pray* (Mercury, 1986). Liona Boyd, *Persona* (CBS, 1986). Dalbello, *She* (EMI, 1987). Various Artists, *The Secret Policeman's 3rd Ball* (Virgin, 1987). John "Rabbit" Bundrick, *Dream Jungle* (Lumina Music, 1988). Peter Cetera, *One More Story* (Warner Bros., 1988). Sam Brown, *Stop!* (A&M, 1988), *April Moon* (A&M, 1990). Kirsty MacColl, *Kite* (Virgin, 1989). Warren Zevon, *Transverse City* (Virgin, 1989). Vicky Brown, *Lady Of Time* (RCA, 1989). Rock Aid Armenia, *Smoke On The Water* (Life Aid Armenia, 1989). Blue Pearl, *Naked* (Big Life, 1990). Elton John, *The One* (Rocket, 1990). Paul Young, *Other Voices* (CBS, 1990). Michael Kamen, *Concerto For Saxophone* (Warner Bros., 1990). All About Eve, *Touched By Jesus* (Vertigo, 1991). The Law, *The Law* (Atlantic, 1991). Jools Holland, *Together Again* (IRS, 1991). Jimmy Nail, *Growing Up In Public* (Eastwest, 1992). John Martyn, *Couldn't Love You More* (Permanent, 1992), *No Little Boy* (Permanent, 1993), *Live* (Permanent, 1995). Paul Rodgers, *Muddy Waters Blues* (Victory, 1993). Chris Jagger, *Chris Jagger's Atcha* (Sequel, 1994). Snowy White, *Highway To The Sun* (Bellaphon, 1994).





The six Hiwatt heads used on Pink Floyd tours

chose the Shaffer-Vega system.

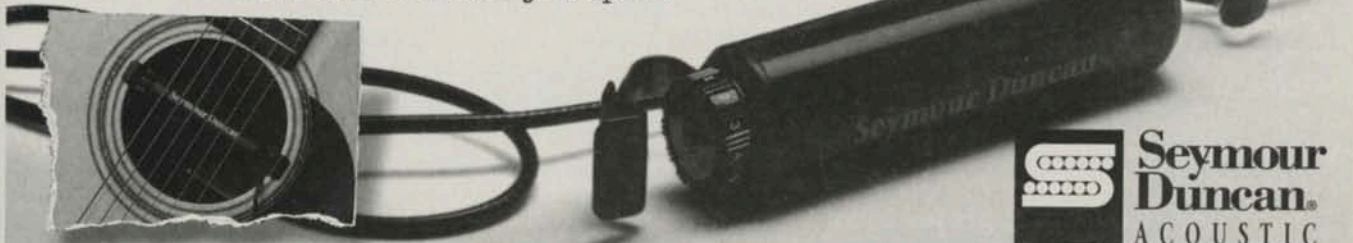
For the recording of *About Face*, Gilmour jammed on a Strat, his tweaked Esquire, and a Martin D-35 on "Murder" (caped at the 3rd fret). He later took the album on the road (with Bad Company's Mick Ralphs playing rhythm on a Strat). His tour guitars included a '61 Telecaster with a Charvel neck and five Strats (from the Vintage Series Strat line) set up in various tunings. He also used a Washburn solidbody acoustic-electric and Ovation Custom Legend, as well as a rare headless Roger Giffin electric with 19" scale.

David Gilmour's personal guitar collection of around 300 instruments was also peaking at this time. Among the masses were several old Gretsches, a Lake Placid Blue '57 Strat (serial #0040) that belong to Homer Haynes of Homes & Jethro, the '55 Esquire, a '55 Les Paul goldtop with P-90s,

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# The Basic Live Rig

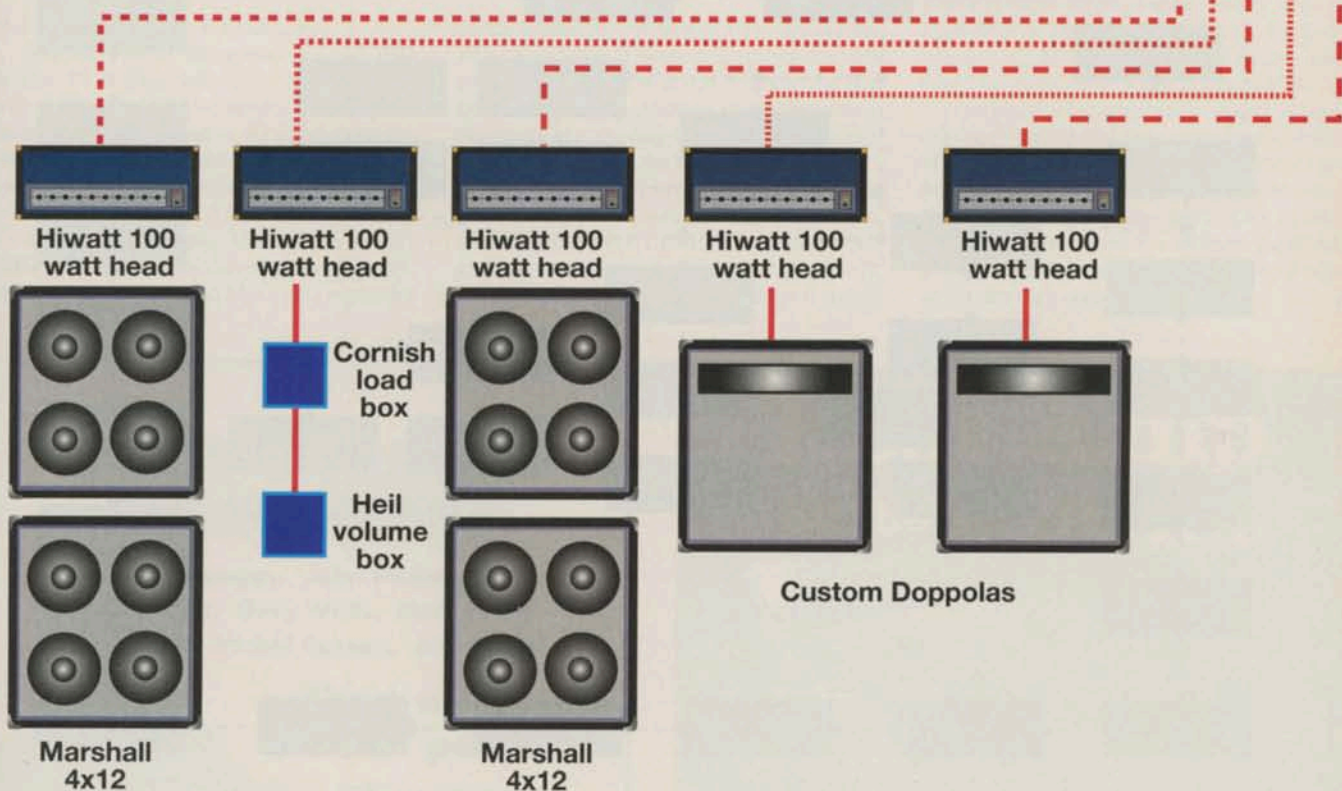


Fender Strat with EMG pickups

Wireless transmitter

Samson UHF wireless receiver

Pete Cornish custom rack  
\*See signal path illustration



and a '57 Les Paul Custom with three humbuckers (the 16th one made!). His most famous collector's item remains a Stratocaster with the serial #0001, made in the middle of 1954. While it's not the very first one, it is theorized to be an extremely early custom guitar (it had a rare creme finish and gold hardware), and that in itself is remarkable. To many vintage aficionados, it's probably as close to the first Strat as anyone is going to find, too.

## Waters Down The Drain (1985-Present)

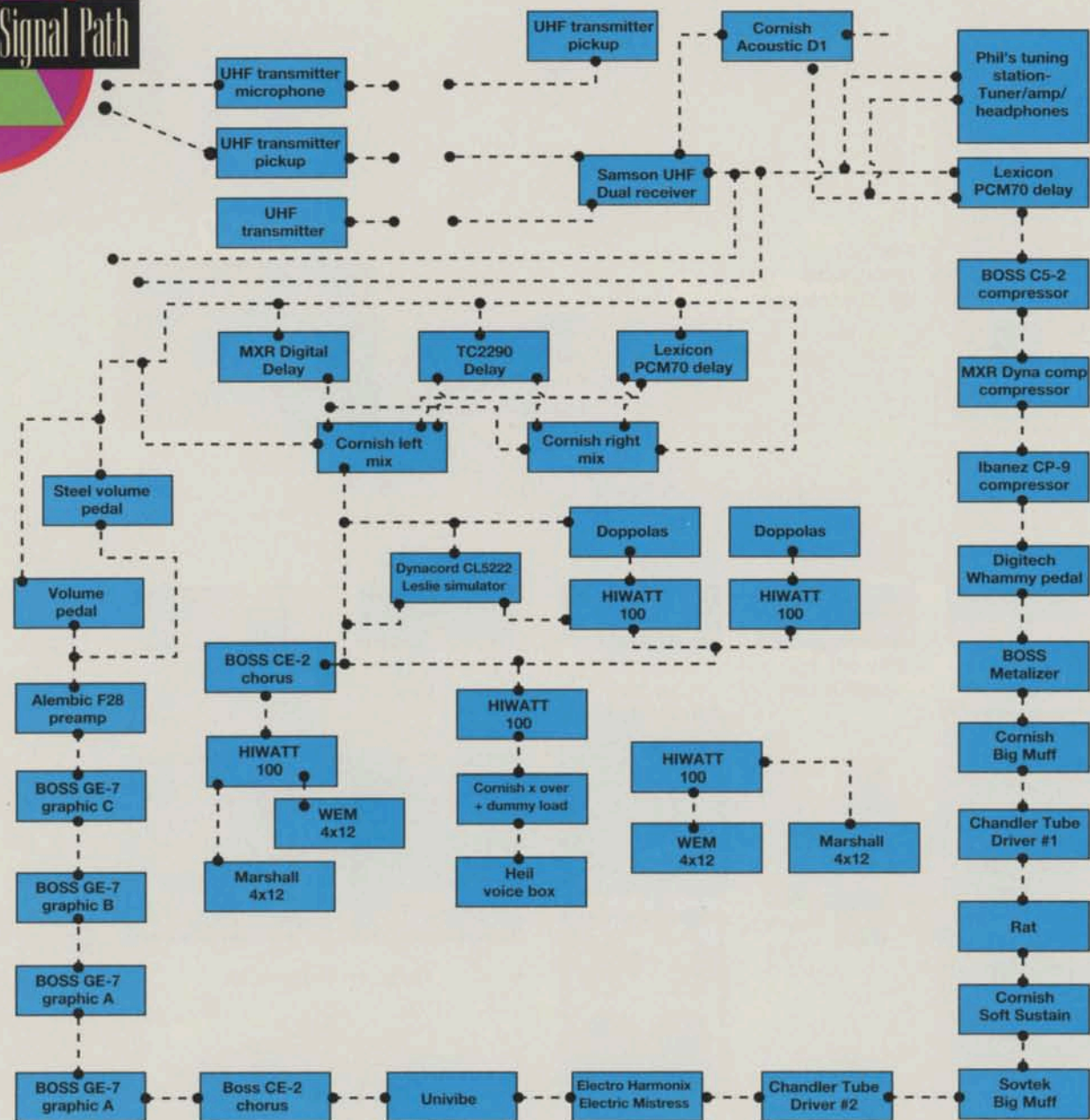
After years of wrangling, Roger Waters—

the band's chief songwriter and creative fountainhead—decided that he'd had enough of Pink Floyd and bolted in December 1985. It was also the beginning of a nasty lawsuit between Waters and his former bandmates over the name "Pink Floyd"; in the end, Gilmour & Co. won the day. The first post-Waters Floyd album, the radio-friendly *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*, was released in 1987—despite predictions of a commercial bomb—and it proved to be a triple-platinum hit. Although many bemoaned the loss of Waters and the almost scientifically cloned versions of classic Floyd material, the new disc featured those timeless synth passages, dreamy solos, and FM-ready Gilmour songs,

and accordingly won over a new generation of fans. (Interestingly, Gilmour's move from sideman to frontman was not unprecedented in prog-rock circles: After Peter Gabriel left Genesis in 1975, Phil Collins similarly leaped from drummer to lead singer. Similarly, both Collins and Gilmour took their respective bands in a more "pop" direction, to great success, too.)

A platinum-selling live album called *The Delicate Sound of Thunder* showed up in 1988 following the band's hugely successful stadium tour (replete with lasers and flying farm animals galore). The post-Waters winning streak continued with 1994's *The Division Bell* and yet another live album, *Pulse*, which

# Rack Signal Path



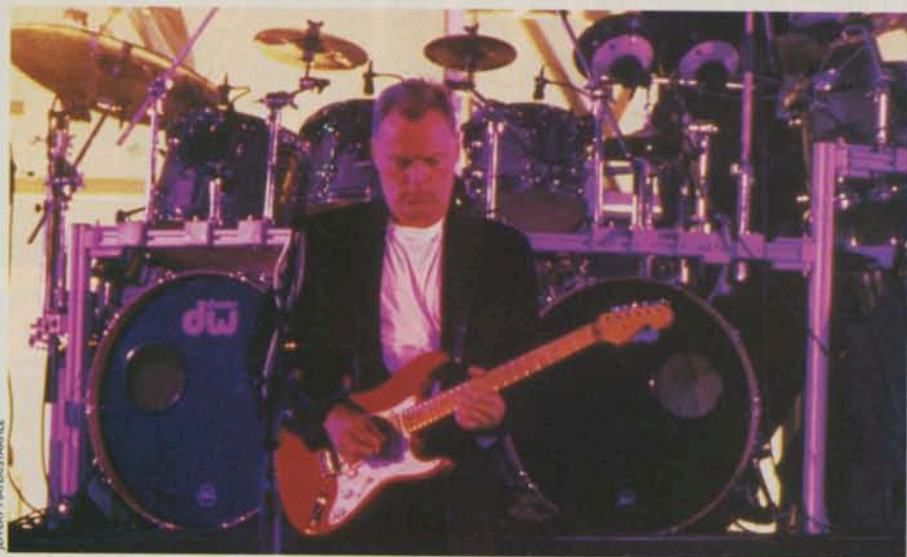
included a complete live version of *Dark Side of the Moon*. Clearly, the members of Pink Floyd were not against making as much cash as humanly possible. "Money," indeed.

Fortunately, Gilmour has put these ceaseless financial resources to good use, creating a truly sterling guitar setup for his live and studio endeavors during the past decade. In the studio, his backline has consisted of everything from '70s Hiwatt 50-watt combos to Fender '59 Bassman Reissues to the aforementioned Maestro Rover revolving speaker, and more (Gilmour's amps are usually miked with Neumann U-87's and Shure SM-57's, with a Neumann KM-86 on the Rover). Guitar journalist David Mead of England's *Guitar*

*Techniques* magazine also reported on one truly insane case of Gilmour's recording methods: "On 'Sorrow,' from the album *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*, Gilmour used a Steinberger through a Big Muff, BOSS GE-7 graphic EQ, and Ernie Ball volume pedal into a 1984 Fender Concert 1x12 combo. With us so far? Well, then the track was replayed from tape through a quad PA system, which was set up in the Los Angeles Sports Arena and re-recorded using the holophonic system. Extreme or what?" For extreme moments on *The Division Bell*, effects like the DigiTech Whammy Pedal popped up for the solo in the instrumental "Marooned," while "Take It Back" has the guitarist playing an E-Bow on a

J-200 acoustic that's fed into a Zoom unit and DI'd into the board. Clearly, Mr. G. loves to experiment with new gadgets.

On the road in the '90s, the guitar legend still uses his beloved Alembic F2-B bass amp as a preamp (modified with an extra tube, lowered output impedance, and a different capacitor to help cut the low end), as well as six Hiwatt AP-100 100-watt heads using Mullard EL34 power tubes. Three of these are just used as power amps and the other three as slaves. His cabinets are two WEM 4x12s with Fane Crescendo speakers, two Marshall 4x12s with Celestions, and three custom rotating speakers called "doppolas" for that Leslie effect (designed by his longtime tech



JEFFREY MAYER/STARFILE

Phil Taylor, along with Paul Leader).

Gilmour's main live guitar is a red 1984 Fender '57 Vintage Series Strat reissue, along with a Gibson J-200 acoustic, Gibson Chet Atkins, and a Telecaster in dropped-D for the popular rocker, "Run Like Hell." There are also two lap-steel guitars, one tuned *E B E G B E* and the other *D G D G B E*. The pickups on all his Strats are not stock. Instead, he prefers EMG-SA active single-coils with an EMG-SPC midrange controller, and EMG-EXG expander,

which boosts the treble and bass [see accompanying sidebar]. His electric strings are GHS gauge .010-.048 and acoustic are Ernie Ball Earthwound lights. Another special feature on his Strats is a shorter-than-normal tremolo arm, so he can hold the bar while picking.

Finally, the Floyd veteran's live rack for the *Division Bell* tour was built by noted U.K. effects guru Pete Cornish and includes, among other items, a vintage Big Muff, Univox Uni-Vibe, MXR DDL digital delay,

Lexicon PCM70, t.c. electronic 2290, BOSS CS-2 compressor, MXR DynaComp, Ibanez CP-9 compressor, Chandler Tube Drivers, several BOSS graphic equalizers and HyperFuzz, as well as a slew of volume pedals to control his amps, Leslie-type cabs, and voice box. This entire system is accessed by a Bob Bradshaw pedalboard. Like a lot of players these days, Gilmour also likes a mixture of analog stompboxes (particularly fuzzes and distortions) and modern digital rack gear for delays and reverbs.

## The Final Cut

In all, David Gilmour must be recognized as one of the earliest rockers to attempt making the high-intensity electric guitar into a high-fidelity instrument—sort of like Eric Clapton's soulful lead assault meeting Les Paul's pristine sense of tone, with a dose of Hank Marvin Strat-twang thrown in for good measure. From "Time" to the Syd Barrett-tribute "Shine On You Crazy Diamond" to his masterpiece, "Comfortably Numb," David Gilmour's sound and style constitute a veritable rock institution unto itself. His penchant for using tons of gear to create his massive sound may be intimidating, but it's at least proof that there are no free lunches, especially when it comes to good tone. May we all have as equally high standards.

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