

# ??Pink Floyd, but not Roger Waters, is swept up by pro-war propaganda

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The two remaining members of the rock band Pink Floyd, David Gilmour and Nick Mason, have joined with other musicians, including the Ukrainian singer and member of the band BoomBox, Andriy Khlyvnyuk, and released a new song called, “Hey, Hey, Rise Up!”

According to a statement on the official Pink Floyd website, this is the first new single by the band since 1994. The statement explains it was recorded on March 30 and has been released “in support of the people of Ukraine” and to raise funds for humanitarian charities. However, the track incorporates the vocals from an Instagram post by Khlyvnyuk, who sang the patriotic Ukrainian song, “The Red Viburnum in the Meadow,” in Kiev’s Sofiyskaya Square dressed in paramilitary fatigues and brandishing an assault rifle.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, original Pink Floyd member Roger Waters (1965-1985) has expressed a far more critical view of the US-NATO operation. While opposing the reactionary Russian invasion, Waters recently commented that a “long drawn-out insurgency in Ukraine would be great for the gangster hawks in Washington, it’s what they dream of.” We will return to Waters’ comments below.

The new song by what remains of Pink Floyd shows the degree to which many popular musicians have been swept along behind the pro-war propaganda barrage in support of right-wing Ukrainian nationalism and the US-backed NATO provocation against Russia. Given the association of Pink Floyd, at least until the early 1980s, with generally anti-war and anti-capitalist themes and messages, there are many troubling aspects to the new recording.

The title of the Pink Floyd track is taken from the last line of a song written by Ukrainian composer Stepan Charnetsky in 1914. The description in the Pink Floyd announcement refers to the tune as “a rousing

Ukrainian protest song written during the first world war which has been taken up across the world over the past month in protest of the invasion of Ukraine.”

But, in fact, the song was written to honor of the Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen, a Ukrainian unit of the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I composed of members of different Ukrainian paramilitary organizations. The reference to the song as a “protest,” with the implication that it was composed as an anti-war protest, is simply dishonest. “The Red Viburnum in the Meadow” is a patriotic battle march, whose lyrics include the refrain, “And we, our glorious Ukraine, shall, hey—hey, cheer up—and rejoice!,” and further, “Marching forward, our fellow volunteers, into a bloody fray, / For to free our brother Ukrainians from hostile chains. / And we, our brother Ukrainians, we will then liberate, / And we shall cheer up our glorious Ukraine, hey—hey!”

Explaining his own accommodation to NATO-backed Ukrainian militarism, David Gilmour said, “We want to express our support for Ukraine and, in that way, show that most of the world thinks that it is totally wrong for a superpower to invade the independent democratic country that Ukraine has become.” Gilmour also ignored the imperialist stoking of the war in Ukraine both before and after the Russian invasion, when he told the BBC that he found the “powerlessness of the West” in the face of the Russian aggression “infuriating,” but that he supported the ongoing sanctions against the country.

The 76-year-old Gilmour then called for regime change in Russia, “It’s a shame that the people who suffer most are the ordinary people of Russia—but that is the way the sanctions work. It helps to create a discontent in that country which will hopefully, at some point, create some sort of change of regime.”

The other band member, 78-year-old Nick Mason, has not made any public statements about the recording or the subject of the war in Ukraine.

Guitarist and vocalist Gilmour and drummer Mason are the two remaining members of the lineup of Pink Floyd which recorded some of the most popular music of the 1970s, including the albums *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973), *Wish You Were Here* (1975), *Animals* (1977) and *The Wall* (1979). Keyboard player Richard Wright died at age 65 in 2008 and bassist Roger Waters left the band in the mid-1980s over creative disagreements with the other members.

Significantly, Waters wrote the majority of the music and was responsible for all of the conceptual elements and lyrics for Pink Floyd's most successful albums. While the others, and especially Gilmour, contributed to the musical compositions and the vocal and instrumental elements, Waters was the primary creative force within the band. It was his social and political criticisms of modern life that resonated powerfully with listening audiences around the world.

The last Pink Floyd album that included Waters, *The Final Cut*, was released in 1983 and contained a strident anti-war message that drew parallels between World War II and the imperialist wars of the 1980s such as the British war in the Malvinas and the US presence in Lebanon.

Eager to exploit the opportunity provided by the Gilmour/Mason lineup of Pink Floyd, the pro-war propaganda machine of the corporate media has used the band's name to spread the false idea that providing arms to Kiev and sanctioning Moscow will stop the war in Ukraine and bring about peace.

The headline in the *Guardian*, for example, says, "This is a crazy, unjust attack': Pink Floyd re-form to support Ukraine," and the headline in *Esquire* says, "Hear Pink Floyd's Searing New Song of Resistance." While most reports only include the comments of Gilmour on the war, the *Guardian* focuses in on a statement made by Waters to RT News before the invasion where he said that talk of a Russian invasion was "bullshit."

The *Guardian* says that Waters later condemned the invasion by the Putin regime, but journalist Alexis Petridis ridicules his denunciation of the "propaganda to demonize of Russia," as though such a view were entirely illegitimate.

None of the media reports hailing Pink Floyd for the new song have bothered to report in any detail the statements Waters has made about the crisis in Ukraine over the past seven weeks. In an exchange of letters with a 19-year-old Pink Floyd fan named Alina Mitrofanova on March 9, Waters wrote, "I regret that Western governments are fueling the fire that will destroy your beautiful country by pouring arms into Ukraine, instead of engaging in the diplomacy that will be necessary to stop the slaughter."

"Sadly, however," Waters continued, "many world leaders are gangsters and my disgust for political gangsters did not start last week with Putin. I was disgusted by the gangsters Bush and Blair when they invaded Iraq in 2003, I was and still am disgusted by the gangster government of Israel's invasion of Palestine in 1967 and its subsequent apartheid occupation of that land which has now been going on for over fifty years. I was disgusted by the gangsters Obama and Clinton ordering NATO's illegal bombings of both Libya and Serbia. I am disgusted by the wholesale destruction of Syria initiated, as it was, in 2011 by outside interference in the cause of regime change. I was disgusted by the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 when the gangster Shimon Peres connived with the Christian Phalangist Militias in the murder of Palestinian refugees in Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in the south of that country."

Waters offers a far more politically developed understanding of the conspiracy of the US and NATO against Russia than the shameful and uncritical alignment of Pink Floyd's Gilmour with American imperialism and its proxy war in Ukraine that threatens to expand into a world war with nuclear weapons.



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