

The Dark Side of the Moon Redux: Roger Waters reimagines the 1973 Pink Floyd classic

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On Friday, rock music artist and political activist Roger Waters released *The Dark Side of the Moon Redux*, a new interpretation of the highly successful Pink Floyd album that was first released in 1973.

With the new record, Waters—who was 29 when he conceptualized the album and wrote the lyrics for it—revisits the themes that have been resonating with generations of listeners for a half-century.

Pink Floyd’s *The Dark Side of the Moon* is among the most popular LPs ever recorded, having appeared on the Billboard list of top 200 albums for a remarkable 741 weeks, or more than 14 years, until the week of October 8, 1988. It has since reappeared on the Billboard list as a compact disc and, as of May 2023, it had charted a total of 981 weeks, or the equivalent of nearly 19 years.

Waters explained why he decided to recreate the record in a video statement last July, “The new recording is more reflective, I think, and it is more indicative of what the concept of the record was. It is a reinterpretation and I hope that we can gain more from it than we did back in 1973, when it first came out, cause it’s been part of all of our lives for fifty years and yet we are still not yet breathing in the air.”

Waters’ new version is musically slower in tempo and instrumentally more acoustic. It lacks the edgy saxophone and guitar solos of the original. With synthesizers, organ, piano and strings, the record takes on the atmosphere of an intimate, night club performance. On several tracks, a theremin lends the listening experience a dreamlike quality.

While the Pink Floyd signature use of sound effects—birds, trucks, trains, planes, church bells and other audio loops—is preserved, they are more subtle. For instance, the popular songs “Time” and “Money” no longer begin with iconic and loud ticking and ringing alarm clocks and the clanging of coins and cash registers.

Instead, with Waters singing all the lead vocals, these

overt studio techniques have been replaced with a more deliberate lyrical delivery. Meanwhile, the well-known words to the *Dark Side* songs have been supplemented by Waters’ delivery of spoken word poems and stories, some of which he wrote decades ago, to reinforce the song meanings.

For example, the first two tracks, “Speak to Me” and “Breathe,” contain a voice-over of Waters speaking the lyrics to the song “Free Four” from the 1972 Pink Floyd album *Obscured by Clouds*. The song opens with:

*The memories of a man in his old age
Are the deeds of a man in his prime
You shuffle in the gloom of the sick room
And talk to yourself as you die
Life is a short warm moment
And death is a long cold rest
You get your chance to try
In the twinkling of an eye
Eighty years with luck or even less*

This is a very effective beginning because it clarifies the concept of the album as the universal circumstances of life in modern society beginning at birth. The album starts with a heartbeat in the song “Speak to Me.” It is the heartbeat in a mother’s womb, the first thing heard and felt by all human beings.

Then, the cycle of songs from that point forward deals with things experienced by everyone all over the world: growing up, earning a living, class conflict, religion, war, aging and death.

In a 20-minute track-by-track video review of the new album posted on Tuesday, Waters explains, “There is only one road and it’s the road I describe in *The Dark Side of the Moon*. It’s from the ‘ba-boom, ba-boom, ba-boom’ of the womb to whatever the end is. The end is [the song] “Eclipse” and the eclipse is the ending of light.”

In describing the song “Us and Them,” Waters takes the

opportunity to express his views on war. He says, “All of these wars that we’ve lived through, certainly since the second world war, are about the futile scuffle for power and wealth and hubris and hegemony. And they’re all about empire and they’re all about getting more of the cake. ‘Let us not share the cake,’ the bounty of this planet earth that is home to all of us and that’s what ‘Us and Them’ is about.”

Waters wraps up his review of the record by saying, “That’s why I remade this record, because it describes our predicament in exactly the same way it did in 1973, fifty years later. So, I’m saying it all over again.”

There are indeed parallels between the social and political conditions existing when Waters developed the ideas for the concept album and those of today. The late 1960s and early 1970s were dominated by an upsurge of struggles by the working class and youth internationally. There was mass opposition to the imperialist war in Vietnam.

On more than one occasion, these movements reached revolutionary dimensions, such as the working class uprising in France in May-June 1968. These events and others, combined with his association with socialist politics for a short time while he was a student in Cambridge, no doubt influenced Roger Waters’ views of the world, which have stood the test of time and deepened over the years.

Today, Waters has distinguished himself as among the most principled of artists and musicians by opposing and exposing the US/NATO-instigated war with Russia in Ukraine, maintaining a steadfast opposition to the denial of basic rights to Palestinians by the Zionist state of Israel, and demanding the immediate release from prison of WikiLeaks founder and editor Julian Assange.

What is more, Waters has sustained a public campaign on all of these issues—including putting them front and center during his live world concert tours—in the face of a steady stream of vilification and lies by certain musicians, the corporate media and governments around the world, which have falsely accused him of being “pro-Russian” and an “antisemite.”

Meanwhile, the resurgent struggles of the working class internationally against capitalist exploitation and war have created fertile conditions for the creative ideas expressed by Roger Waters to find an ever-widening international interest and acceptance.

In promoting the new record, Waters has consistently paid tribute to his former Pink Floyd bandmates—David Gilmour (guitars and vocals), Nick Mason (drums) and

Richard Wright (keyboards)—for their contributions to the original record.

As he explained in the July video announcement, the purpose of the new album is not to supersede or replace the original, “but to remember it and as an adjunct to it and to progress the work of the original concept ... I love the original recording, by the way, and I love what Nicky did and what Rick did and what Dave did on the original recording.”

In an interview with NME, Nick Mason commented that, after Waters sent him a copy of the new recording, he wrote back, “ ‘Annoyingly, it’s absolutely brilliant!’ It was and is. It’s not anything that would be a spoiler for the original at all, it’s an interesting add-on to the thing.”

On his website, Waters describes the impulse for the new project as “a way for the seventy-nine year old man to look back across the intervening fifty years into the eyes of the twenty-nine-year-old and say, to quote a poem of mine about my Father, ‘We did our best, we kept his trust, our Dad would have been proud of us.’”

Roger’s father, Eric Fletcher Waters, who became a member of the British Communist Party and was an anti-fascist, died on the battlefield in World War II at Anzio, south of Rome, on February 18, 1944.

Along with Waters on bass and vocals, the band on the new album includes Gus Seyffert (bass, guitar, keyboards, backing vocals), Joey Waronker (drums), Jonathan Wilson (guitars, synthesizer, organ), Johnny Shepherd (organ, piano), Via Mardot (theremin), Azniv Korkejian (vocals), Gabe Noel (string arrangements, strings), Jon Carin (keyboards, lap steel, synthesizer, organ) and Robert Walter (piano).



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