

Entertainment

A salute to rock classics Gary Nolan explores Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon"

Editor's note: Critic Gary Nolan continues his examination of some of the music world's greatest contributions. This is the third installment of a five-part series.

by Gary Nolan
Collegian Staff Writer

When examining a particular album release, several things often come to mind, music, lyrics, and overall content, to name a few. One aspect of a good album that is often taken for granted is the production. The album to bring superior production from the background to the attention of musicians everywhere was Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon." Production is the art of combining, mixing, and often creating sounds to yield the final sound of a recording mix.

Pink Floyd's 1973 release holds "Billboard's" record for the longest time appearing on the pop charts with a stay of nearly 700 weeks. This staggering statistic signifies one of the most successful releases of all time.

Another striking feature of this album is its timeliness. It was released sixteen years ago, yet its full sound makes it sound like a brand new album. This begins to tell the public how much ahead of its time this album was.

With the help from engineer Alan Parsons, bassist Roger Waters created this conceptual piece about what Waters describes as "the pressures of modern life." Its hypnotic message has been a longtime favorite of the drug culture both in the seventies and even today.

As the album begins, and a full, heartbeat sound fills the room, the listener gets their first indication that this is not like other albums. This beat gives way to muttering as "Speak to Me" is ushered in. A whole sound complete with ticking and mad, I know I've been mad, like most of us have," the first theme of the album is revealed. It starts to discuss insanity with the taped

laughing of the late Syd Barrett echoing in the background. Barrett was taped while on one of his numerous acid trips. Ironically, Barrett was a victim of insanity caused by the numerous acid trips that led him into a chemical abyss, never to return again.

The second track "Breathe" is next, carried in by the soothing voice of Waters. The transition between songs is not totally clear due to the superior mixing, and the concept to make this release one long "song." In this track Waters explores yet another theme, this one self reflection, to examine loneliness and even death.

As "On the Run" begins, various background and foreground sounds fill the room as a man running through an airport is simulated. It is at this point in the release that headphones are recommended to get the full impact of this sound.

The listener is then startled by the echoing clocks in "Time," as the lyrics examine the passage of time. The track tells of how time slips away often unnoticed, but reminds that through reflection, one appreciates and respects this passage. David Gilmour's guitar wails through the track as Waters' vocals remind us that each passing day leaves us one day closer to death.

"Great Gig in the Sky" is filled with female vocals that hypnotize, at one point proving to soothe, and others almost sounding like a painful cry. This non-lyrical ballad is an excellent example of versatility of Pink Floyd.

The radio single "Money" is next, the only single on the album to make it on the charts. The

saxophone nicely complements Gilmour's calculated guitar.

Through the rest of the album the various themes are reiterated, and accented by the soft edges of the music, then it sculpts in into and accented by the soft edges of the music, then it sculpts in into the listener's mind with the hard edged side of this band.

The influence of this album on the music world was felt greatly, in that Pink Floyd was now more than just an art band with a cult following, it bought them into the mainstream. Also, other musicians realized the power of production, and what it can achieve.

"Dark Side of the Moon" remains one of the best, conceptual, intellectual albums to found its way into mass appeal. It will surely continue to influence and enthral audiences of all ages well into the nineties.

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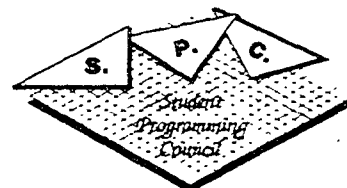
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