

BEFORE AND AFTER THE WALL

Before and especially after the huge concert "The Wall" of Roger Waters in Bucharest on August 28, I deemed it necessary to point out the numerous lesser-known issues on the 11th Pink Floyd album, about the bassist, composer and lyricist Roger Waters and on the musical context of pre-achieve "The Wall". The need of reliving "The Wall" was imposed by the author himself who wanted to show us the album / show updated with the latest multimedia technology. The resuming / reconsideration proposed below I consider it relevant both for the old generation who may have forgotten and for the new generation who is just now discovering "The Wall". In the approach of the "The Wall" it should not be forgotten the disc "Atom Heart Mother" made by Pink Floyd in 1970 in collaboration with composer, conductor and arranger Ron Geesin. In this album which appeared 10 years before "The Wall" the symphonic parts act as a bridge between pieces, at the recordings participated the Symphonic Orchestra of EMI and the John Aldiss Choir. With this album, Pink Floyd became a founding member of the symphonic rock. In the alternative, a legitimate question may be asked, who is the author of these lines and what legitimacy does he have to give lessons in music history?

Before The Wall

Before entering the core of "The Wall" it is correct to analyze the activity of the Pink Floyd in the 10 years before the apparition of the album at the end of the seventh decade. During 1970 - 1980 the music scene was dominated by the progressive rock explosion, intellectual and refined branch of traditional rock through both complex compositions and special texts. In that decade emerged and reached the pinnacle of creativity, success and sales, groups from the West such as: Aphrodite's Child, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Electric Light Orchestra, Focus, Genesis, Gentle Giant, Gong, Jethro Tull, Kansas, King Crimson, Kraftwerk, Manfred Mann's Earth Band, Mike Oldfield, Moody Blues, Nice, Popol Vuh, Procol Harum, Queen, Renaissance, Rick Wakeman, Rush, Soft Machine, Van Der Graf Generator, Yes, etc. Even in Romania were big bands of progressive rock: Phoenix, Pro Musica, Progresiv TM, Sfinx, Florian din Transilvania, etc. which on the seven decade brought major contributions nationwide which are still felt today.

About legitimacy are a few things to say. Apart from the fact of always being a fan of Pink Floyd, is good to know the following. In 1973 when the band made the famous album "The Dark Side of the Moon" I was an eighth - grade student at the Elementary School nr.16 in Timisoara and I have listened the famous hits, "Money", "Time", "Eclipse" on the Romanian and foreign radio stations. At that time barely appeared the mono cassette recorders. In 1975, when the 2nd great success of the Pink Floyd album "Wish You Were Here" appeared, I was a student in the tenth grade at the "C.D. Loga" high school and on every party with colleagues and / or the gang we always danced on the song title or on the "Shine On You Crazy Diamond". In 1977 when finishing high school we couldn't believe the band's creativity: they made another famous album "Animals". These vinyl's were so successful that EMI couldn't deal with production and delivery (on the basis of orders by wholesale or retail) so you had to wait a while to get it... like that time when we stood in line for sugar, oil, flour and meat...

Soon after the apparitions of those albums we got them with great effort and at some exorbitant prices (about a month's salary on that time ... for an album!). To protect the exclusive / exhaustive collection I recorded for personal use on mono cassettes, then on stereo cassette and on four tracks tape recorders, since 1990 doubling the collection of CD's, DVD's, mp3's, Bluray.

In time I bought all the albums Pink Floyd, from the beginning, then gradually updating them with the last releases. I've become such a connoisseur of their entire discographies, listening and studying their music, texts, concepts and understanding the history and evolution of the group and their members. In the 70s - 80's there were in Timisoara a few fans that had specialized comprehensive collections of famous rock bands: Geo had Jethro Tull and Led Zeppelin, Jim had Gentle Giant, Yes and Frank Zappa, Silviu had Tangerine Dream and Jean Michel Jarre, Vladi had Genesis and Dire Straits, etc. In addition in the world of art at that time became great promoters of music Peter Umanschi, Ioan Băcălete, starting to work and to have success Mimo Obradov, Marius Giura and others. Since those years I started to collect a bibliography focused on pop, rock and jazz music, some of it being found at the end of this article.

Behind the Scenes - The Wall

The history of the apparition of the album has two important roots. In terms of composition and creation after three previous albums in 1973, 1975 and 1977, mentioned in the previous chapter, the band members were pretty exhausted as inspiration. However in the immediately following years, David Gilmour released his first album, with the namesake title according with usage, Rick Wright got his first personal record "Wet Dreams" and Nick Mason co-participated in the album "Green" by Steve Hillage. For these albums all three of them worked with independent musicians. No one was longer concerned in a particular way by a new Pink Floyd album. However, during this time Roger Waters composed entirely the music and lyrics

for "The Wall", originally conceived as a triple album (outstanding creative effort), few bands managed this among the few examples being Yes, Genesis, Emerson, Lake & Palmer.

Finishing the composition, Roger Waters gave it to the colleagues for interpretation, without accepting major interventions on the 26 tracks, only on three collaborating with David Gilmour („Young Lust”, „Comfortable Numb”, „Run Like Hell”). It finally came a double vinyl, rare performance, the third disc of the original project not being as someone can believe "The Final Cut" in 1982 but the first personal album of Roger Waters "The Pros and Cons of Hitch Hiking" in 1984.

The second less known aspect about the history of "The Wall" is the financial one. The sales boom of "The Dark Side of the Moon", "Wish You Were Here" (both a few years on Billboard charts) and "Animals" was so great that the British tax payments were enormous, (83 % progressive income). Therefore (and sadly wrong advised), the members of Pink Floyd have made high-risk investments, not taxable (at first!) in various collateral business (about 3 million pounds or about 16 million pounds today !) have been also heavily taxed in the end ! At the end of 1978, Pink Floyd owed over a million pounds in taxes, a huge sum then and now. A good legal facility was to create new incomes with a new hit album as residents for at least one year outside the UK tax territory, but their creative ability as a group was stalling. "The Wall" offer of Waters was not only irresistible but the only hope of salvation. So "The Wall" was recorded in France and completed with the orchestration, choir and mixes in New York under the direction of conductor Michael Kamen. In this way the budget was recovered, even with the single preceding the album which had big sales, the hit "Another Brick in the Wall". Roger Waters became not only the unique composer and lyricist but also the financial savior... Nevertheless all of this had gone to his head, paradoxically becoming extremely authoritarian and autocratic, and desiring to lead a democratic and balanced lineup as a single supreme leader. The transformation of the fellow founder, originally a bassist and vocalist with equal rights in the band, in composer, lyricist, arranger and producer with claims of sole leader became unbearable for the band members who played together since 1965. In the summer of 1979 began the human and team splitting. Scission finally evolved to the legal and financial, Roger Waters following his own artistic way and the other three remaining Pink Floyd. The commercial and contractual album "The Wall" has Pink Floyd as the author, but the creation is virtually 90 % made by Roger Waters.

During The Wall

In the making of the album, except of the four leading members were involved some other famous musicians: Lee Ritenour (guitar), James Guthrie (percussion), Bob Ezrin (keyboard), Jeff Porcaro (drums), The New York Orchestra (symphonic parts), The New York Opera (chorus parts) and a choir of children from New York. The album was released in 1979 with 29 Pink Floyd huge promoting concerts after which they took a break of ten years, the 30th concert being held solely by Roger Waters in Berlin in 1990, marking the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin wall. At this historic concert were invited the following musicians: Bryan Adams, The Band, Paul Carrack, Thomas Dolby, The Hooters, Cyndi Lauper, Ute Lemper, Joni Mitchell, Van Morrison, Sinéad O'Connor, Scorpions, German Radio Orchestra and Choir, Military Orchestra of the Soviet Army, Waters 's own band The Bleeding Heart Band, etc., all evolving in front of over 500,000 spectators.

Since "The Wall" Pink Floyd music has become with and about the people, being theatrical, dramatic and with a marked militant character and political and social involvement. At the double album remarkable roles had the conductor Michael Kamen who took care with the orchestral parts and the cartoonist Gerald Scarfe who made a special graphic. In 1982, the film director Alan Parker made the MGM movie "The Wall" with Bob Geldof as leading actor, in which the classic scenes were alternated with excellent animated films made by the same Gerald Scarfe. In this, the cartoonist proved that he understood perfectly the multiple messages of Waters: for example the child / little man becoming nothing, devolving in fear, despair and loneliness, becoming a homunculus, a captured prey, devoured and swallowed by the family, education and state institutions, growing up as an alienated artist and neo-nazi leader, Pink. Other examples: the dove of peace that turns into an eagle and then in to the bomber, the marching hammers, etc. The performances of "The Wall" during the promoting tour in the '79 - '80 years, in the MGM movie in 1982, in the 1990 show in Berlin and the tour from 2011 to 2013 with "The Wall" updated, a lead role, absolutely original and without whom the show could not be imagined is the wall itself. It is a true metaphor embodied in reality which brings theatricality and background to the whole concept. The wall has a double meaning imagined and made by Waters, the two territories made by the wall that rises / builds in front of the public. The part before / in front of the wall, (of the audience) means the state institutions building brick by brick the separation and the isolation and becoming in the end a multi imprisonment of the individual in today's world. The part from behind / back of the wall (of the artists) means seclusion, the island that the musician needs to withdraw from the masses / public and to stay alone with the art and his creative force. Breaking down / the final collapse of the wall still has obviously a double meaning. In the first place, destroying the barriers built against / around individual by the family, education, the army, religion, politics, institutions, etc., that person's release. In the second place, the demolition of the obstacle raised by the artist between him and the public for the purpose of personal protection for optimum conditions of creative emulation with restoring communication with the simple, ordinary man.

The news from The Wall

The apparition in 1979 of the album "The Wall " was a radical change of Pink Floyd music, framed in progressive rock, the band simultaneously taking part of the " founding fathers" of psychedelic music... Until then, their psychedelic albums had been abstract, initiatic, ambiguous, exclusive and elitist and to some extent even esoteric character. "The Wall" album from 1979 opens the music of the band in three main directions. Primarily through the use of an orchestra and similar passages of classical / symphonic music is draining a new audience which loves classical and jazz music. The initiative was not a first, other great bands had similar achievements in the symphonic rock genre, many years before. The most important are: 1967, Moody Blues – „Days of Future Passed”, 1968, Nice – „Ars Longa, Vita Brevis”, 1969 King Crimson – „In the Court of Crimson King” and Deep Purple – „Concerto for Group and Orchestra”, 1970, Pink Floyd – „Atom Heart Mother” (!), 1971, Emerson Lake & Palmer – „Pictures at an Exhibition”, 1973, Renaissance – „Ashes are Burning” , Genesis - „Selling England by the Pound” and Yes – „Tales from Topographic Ocean”, 1974, Rick Wakeman – „Journey to the Center of the Earth”, 1975, Electric Light Orchestra – „El Dorado” .

Secondly, the design of new rhythms and tempos which had as a result dancing and popular hits heard in all the world clubs, at the jukeboxes in pubs, at radio stations, etc. had captured another important segment of the public, pupils, students and youth who were not fans of psychedelics and who entered in the new era inaugurated by the new wave and punk music.

Thirdly, by using a massive volume of texts in "The Wall" it doesn't appear a meditative instrumental and enduring part, traditional for all previous Pink Floyd albums which made the other members to accuse that the new double album is unbalanced and violates the unitary concept laid down from the beginning of the four band members.

"The Wall " album is also framed by music critics in the rock-opera category due to the unifying musical concept, and an coherent text that looks like a opera libretto, the use of a whole show props (bricks, wall, puppets, models, etc.), the existence of individual roles (the child, the teacher, mom, Pink, the lover, the extremist detachments, the worm, the judge, etc.), the use of costumes, the makeup, etc. In this framing too, as in the symphonic rock, Roger Waters didn't realize a premiere. Long before the opera rock had appeared in the UK: 1969, The Who - „Tommy”, 1971, Andrew Lloyd Webber – „Jesus Christ Superstar”, 1972, David Bowie – „Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust...” 1974, Genesis – „Lamb Lies Down on Broadway”, followed by „Quadrophenia”, „Evita”, etc. In an identical manner, across the ocean in the US appeared the rock operas: 1973, Lou Reed – „Berlin”, 1978, Jeff Wayne – „The War of the Worlds”, 1979, Galt MacDermot – „Hair”, Frank Zappa – „Joe's Garage”, etc. However, "The Wall" published in late 1979 was and remains deeply original, open for meditation and peppered with bursts of rebellion.

After The Wall

After the concert from Bucharest we may wonder what Pink Floyd wanted with "The Wall": in fact, the band as a sum of personalities did not want anything special or at least anything that the composer and lyricist Roger Waters desired. "The Wall" is a 90 % Roger Waters composition, in which he wanted (and still wants, as proven in the last tour) to change a lot, to change the world, respectable ambition but an achievement at least from a skeptical point of view which is almost impossible. With and through "The Wall" Waters shows that he is against family authoritarianism (the matriarch), educational system (with an oppressive character), militarist system (illogical), political fanaticism (neo-Nazi) and religious sectarianism (see by him as the main wall between people and reality), etc.

I confess that both in 1980 when I bought the vinyl album "The Wall " and in 2000 when I bought the DVD of the concert " The Wall " in Berlin I have not fully understood what Pink Floyd / Roger Waters wanted with "The Wall ". Only this year, after the concert from August 28 in Bucharest, I began to understand better the messages from the album, since "The Wall " was and is conceived as a complex performance in which music and text (traditional means) are insufficient for reporting all the messages which have a major visual component, often at the immediate limit of understanding, slipping into unconscious perception. They are complemented and augmented by images, movies, symbols; all designed simultaneously on the enormous screen width of 150 meters made up with the wall itself. To these are added the quadraphonic systems, and subliminal images and texts, dynamic 3D projections, black light, huge inflatable marionettes, models, etc., all while converging all towards the elements of syncretic and environmental art.

With the occasion of the revival of the "The Wall " with the 2011 - 2013 tour, Roger Waters massive updated with the disasters from the last 30 years (the wars in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Golf, etc.), without forgetting the camps, the gulag, the poverty, the oppression, the famine. In the new versions of the movies projected on the wall, from the bombers does not fall classic bombs but packages with the specific symbols of globalization: crosses, crescents, stars of David, hammers and sickles, swastikas, dollars, Euros, Shell, Mercedes, McDonalds symbols, etc, that accumulate on the ground in a sea of blood which grows and swallows everything.

The upgrading of Roger Waters delights older generations but also it applies and is addressed not by chance to the new generation of young people which today is more oppressed by the globalization. For these reasons "The Wall " 2013 show is super actual, even if its impact is only temporary at the time of the show, the effect on medium level on the consciences assaulted daily from thousands of directions, is more than uncertain.

From the conceptual point of view and of the whole "philosophy" of The Wall, Roger Waters goes in all of its parts from denying the known world (family, education, religion, politics, army, institutions, etc.), and arrives directly or indirectly to the proposals of restoring the surrounding world. In particular it is about the restoration / remodeling / reconstruction / reforming of the contemporary human consciousness. Waters's impressive commitment was and is a huge task rooted in humanistic ideals of the great writers who imagined utopia, perfect society models: from Plato (Republic), Thomas Morus (Utopia), Tommaso Campanella (The City of the Sun), François Rabelais (Gargantua), Francis Bacon (The New Atlantis), Jean Jaques Rousseau (Discourse on Inequality), Jonathan Swift (Gulliver's Travels), Voltaire (Micromegas), H.G. Wells (A Modern Utopia), Karel Capek (War with the Salamanders), Aldous Huxley (Brave New World), George Orwell (Animal Farm), etc., from and to the flower-power movement, hippie and Green Peace from today. From this point of view Roger Waters is perhaps the first anti-globalist, an anti-establishment avant-la-lettre. In 1979, the release date of "The Wall" there was no internet, no FMI, EU or euro, globalization being a dream... In any case, the other three members of Pink Floyd didn't resist to the default pressures generated by the declared anti-state intentions of Waters.

"The Wall" is from the point of view of music, text and show very fresh even today because it hammers with its synergistic messages in to the walls that are becoming even thicker of the estrangement, the alienation of man's essence: the happiness and joy of living.

I am happy that I could be a participant / witness of the greatest creation of an artist who has turned 70 in September 2013.

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