

PINK FLOYD'S AZTEC AIRWAYS

On a gusty night last March, New York's cavernous Radio City Music Hall, that brave remnant of the Thirties, became the site of one of Rock's classic concerts. Radio City's Atwater-Kent grille interior had echoed before to the strains of rock-'n'-roll, but the likes of Mountain, David Bowie and James Taylor had never taken full advantage of the Hall's audio-visual riches. Radio City, with its mock-heroic murals and *Art Deco* furnishings, had been created to house the movie and stage show—the mixed-media mass spectacle of its day. The musical and technological mastery of England's Pink Floyd finally made the Hall yield its potential.

Pink Floyd made a stunning entrance. They rose up slowly to stage level, surrounded by jets of steam and watched over by a mysterious orb swathed in a red corona, all the while playing their rich, pulsating music. Throughout the evening, as their notes trickled into gentle brooks or swelled into raging torrents, sound and light harmonized perfectly, creating a symphony of moods.

The concert was the culmination of all the attempts to join rock musical and visual energies, dating back to the first Trips Festival in San Francisco nearly a decade ago. The spirit of acid-rock had finally come of age, but it seemed almost as great an anachronism as Radio City itself.

While the Byrds and the Grateful Dead had gone country, the Jefferson Airplane had gone berserk and other bands had simply burned themselves out, Pink Floyd had always remained faithful to its psychedelic origins. Seven years ago they had changed from just another British blues group to an avant-garde quartet that has experimented with extended musical forms, bits of *musique concrete* and ambitious sonic effects.

Beginning with strong Oriental and Middle Eastern influences, Pink Floyd's eclectic music has, over the years, evolved to the more melodic and accessible progressions of jazz and R&B. All along they have maintained their allusions to space, beginning with their early masterworks, "Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun" and "A Saucerful of Secrets," to their latest album, *Dark Side of the Moon*.

Inspired by the travails of life on the road, "Dark Side of the Moon" is a landscape of estrangement and futility. Alarm clocks ring, airline terminals hum with activity, an old codger asserts, "I know I've been mad, like most of us have." Yet the music carries on; it provides help for enduring and transcending the damage inflicted by modern society.

With three of its members trained as architects, Pink Floyd has always sought transcendence by taming technology. Early on they integrated one of the first light shows into their concerts. They also sought the best sound reproduction, developing the first quadriphonic P.A. system almost five years ago. At their Radio City concert, maniacal laughter, cash register noises and bird songs became entertaining apparitions as they wafted around the hall. In addition to their unique sound setup, Pink Floyd also haul with them a trailer truck full of beams and girders that become light scaffolds and special-effects machinery in their spectacular stagecraft. The huge globe, borne aloft by pillars arranged into a cross, can transform itself from a dull red star into a bright revolving reflector containing four lasers.

Hong Kong movie companies use Pink Floyd's music for Kung Fu film sound tracks, dozens of Japanese groups copy their style, and the French rock press still debates whether they or the Rolling Stones are the greatest. But it is only recently that Pink Floyd has gained acceptance in the U.S. The group is finally attaining the mass following it deserved years ago.—*Steve Ditlea*

Pink Floyd at New York's Radio City Music Hall. They had the first light shows, sought the best sound production and developed the first quadriphonic P. A. system.

