

ABOUT THE GREAT GIG IN THE SKY

“The Great Gig in the Sky” is the fifth track on *The Dark Side of the Moon*, the 1973 album by the English rock band Pink Floyd. It features vocals by Clare Torry.

The song talks to the pressure of mortality on life, with the “Great Gig in the Sky” being a reference to heaven or an afterlife

What have the artists said about the song?

Almost everyone involved in this song with the exception of drummer Nick Mason has commented about the production, offering different inputs and insights about how the song was created.

Great Gig in the Sky? It was just me playing in the studio, playing some chords, and probably Dave or Roger saying “Hmm... that sounds nice. Maybe we could use that for this part of the album.” And then, me going away and trying to develop it. So then I wrote the music for that, and then there was a middle bit, with Clare Torry singing, that fantastic voice. We wanted something for that bit, and she came in and sang on it.

Richard Wright, taken from 1984 interview with Charlie Kendall

It was something that Rick had already written. It’s a great chord sequence. “The Great Gig in the Sky” and the piano part on “Us and Them,” in my view, are the best things that Rick did – they’re both really beautiful. And Alan [Parsons] suggested Clare Torry. I’ve no idea whose idea it was to have someone wailing on it. Clare came into the studio one day, and we said, “There’s no lyrics. It’s about dying – have a bit of a sing on that, girl.” I think she only did one take. And we all said, “Wow, that’s that done. Here’s your sixty quid.”

Roger Waters, taken from 2003 interview with Rolling Stone

She [Torry] had done a covers album; I can remember that she did a version of “Light My Fire.” I just thought she had a great voice. When the situation came up, they started head-scratching, saying, “Who are we going to get to sing on this?” I said, “I’ve got an idea – I know this girl.” She came, and in a couple of hours it was all done. She had to be told not to sing any words: when she first started, she was doing “Oh yeah baby” and all that kind of stuff, so she had to be restrained on that. But there was no real direction – she just had to feel it.

Alan Parsons, taken from 2003 interview with Rolling Stone

Clare Torry didn’t really look the part. She was Alan Parsons’ idea. We wanted to put a girl on there, screaming orgasmically. Alan had worked with her previously, so we gave her try. And she was fantastic. We had to encourage her a little bit. We gave her some dynamic hints: “Maybe you’d like to do this piece quietly, and this piece louder.” She did maybe half a dozen takes, and then afterwards we compiled the final performance out of all the bits. It wasn’t done in one single take.

David Gilmour, taken from 2003 interview with Rolling Stone

I went in, put the headphones on, and started going ‘Ooh-aah, baby, baby – yeah, yeah, yeah.’ They said, ‘No, no — we don’t want that. If we wanted that we’d have got Doris Troy.’ They said, ‘Try some longer notes’, so I started doing that a bit. And all this time, I was getting more familiar with the backing track. [...] That was when I thought, ‘Maybe I should just pretend I’m an instrument.’ So I said, ‘Start the track again.’ One of my most enduring memories is that there was a lovely can [i.e headphone] balance. Alan Parsons got a lovely sound on my voice: echoey, but not too echoey. When I closed my eyes — which I always did — it was just all-enveloping; a lovely vocal sound, which for a singer, is always inspirational.

Claire Torry, taken from 2005 interview with John Harris

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