

**KERRY  
GOLD**

**Music  
Critic**



**Pink Floyd's the *Dark Side of the Moon* is about to make its Vancouver debut Friday at the Commodore Ballroom, and not a single member of Pink Floyd will be in the house.**

Instead, producer Craig Martin, the Toronto wizard behind the Classic Albums Live series, is bringing his successful production that consists of 10 musicians to the stage for a note by note re-creation of the 1973 album.

Martin, 43, is a musician and former member of a Rolling Stones tribute band who got the idea to re-create classic recordings without the aid of tapes, computers, special effects or costumes. Unlike a tribute act, the Classic Albums Live series somewhat obsessively operates as a trust for such venerated albums as Led Zeppelin's *IV*, the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's*, AC/DC's *Back in Black* and Rolling Stones' *Exile on Main Street*. Martin also operates an off shoot called Modern Classics Live, which involves re-creations of Radiohead's *OK Computer* and Nirvana's *Nevermind*, and revisited works by Smashung Pumpkins and Jane's Addiction.

Since mounting the project two years ago, Martin's Classic Albums Live series has been embraced mostly by Americans, which means



**Dan Williams, vocalist for Classics Album Live, performing Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*.**

he's regularly taking it on the road in the U.S.

But with this rendering of the Pink Floyd classic we, too, are on Martin's map now.

"These are massive undertakings," says Martin, on the phone from his Toronto home. "I mean I have an orchestra assembled for *Sgt. Pepper*, a gospel choir for the

Rolling Stones records, a children's choir, sitar player, whatever the album calls for we'll bring in. That's the way the show has to go off. We set the bar high from the get go. And we've had some endorsements from Jimmy Page, Brian Johnson from AC/DC and Brian May from Queen.

"Everybody likes the fact that we're not doing impersonations and

we're not using their intellectual property like flying pigs and all that stuff. All our effort goes into the music — we're not worried about wearing wigs and having English accents."

Martin got the idea while driving home from Montreal following a gig with his Rolling Stones tribute band. He was listening to a New York radio station that was playing *Exile on Main Street* in its entirety and by the time he arrived back home in Toronto, he'd not only decided to mount a show that performs all of *Exile on Main Street*, but to mount a series that performs all the classic albums of his youth.

He is intent on re-creation in its purist form, as in minimal contact with the audience, a minimal stage, and a production bereft of musical filler or chit chat. His show aims to re-create the album experience from opening to closing note, cut for cut. If it means hiring a musician to play one part in one song, he'll do it.

"While every Pink Floyd tribute band comes to town and presses play on the record to have those alarm clocks going off, we bring alarm clocks on stage," he says. "Our emphasis is always the music. There's no imitation, no impersonation. Musicians dress in black. We don't talk to the audience, we don't illicit response.

"It's kind of stiff in a way — I know that sounds so un rock 'n' roll but there's something alluring about it. It gives us a chance to reflect back on the time when we had these records, before there were guys pouting into cameras and lip syncing. We had imagination back then."

*Classic Albums Live Collective performs at the Commodore Ballroom, Friday.*