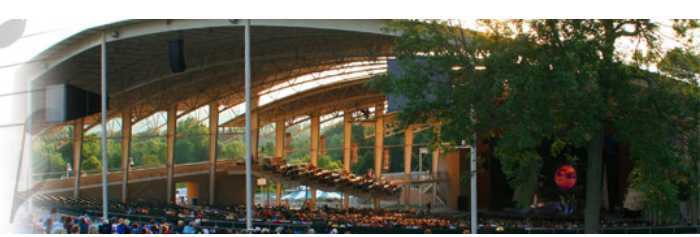




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The Flaming Lips **with Special Guest The Black Keys**

Even within the eclectic world of alternative rock, few bands were so brave, so frequently brilliant, and so deliciously weird as the Flaming Lips. From their beginnings as Oklahoma weirdos to their pop culture breakthrough in the mid-'90s to their status as one of the most respected groups of the 2000s, the Lips have ridden one of the more surreal and haphazard career trajectories in pop music. An acid-bubblegum band with as much affinity for sweet melodies as blistering noise assaults, their off-kilter sound, uncommon emotional depth, and bizarre history (packed with tales of self-immolating fans and the like) firmly established them as true originals.

The Flaming Lips formed in Oklahoma City in 1983, when founder and guitarist Wayne Coyne allegedly stole a collection of musical instruments from an area church hall and enlisted his vocalist brother Mark and bassist Michael Ivins to start a band. Giving themselves the nonsensical name the Flaming Lips (its origin variously attributed to a porn film, an obscure drug reference, or a dream in which a fiery Virgin Mary plants a kiss on Wayne in the back seat of his car), the band made its live debut at a local transvestite club. After progressing through an endless string of drummers, they recruited percussionist Richard English prior to recording their self-titled debut, issued on green vinyl on their own Lovely Sorts of Death label in 1985.

When Mark Coyne soon departed to get married, Wayne assumed full control of the group; in addition to remaining its lead guitarist, he also became the primary singer and songwriter. Continuing on as a trio, the Lips released 1986's *Hear It Is*, followed a year later by *Oh My Gawd!!!...The Flaming Lips*. While touring in support of the Butthole Surfers, they played Buffalo, NY, where they were befriended by concert promoter Jonathan Donahue; after a jam session with Donahue's nascent band Mercury Rev, he and Coyne became close friends, and Donahue eventually signed on as the group's sound technician.

After recording 1988's difficult *Telepathic Surgery*, English exited, reducing the Lips to the core duo of Coyne and Ivins; after adding drummer Nathan Roberts, Donahue adopted the name Dingus and became a full-time member in time to cut 1990's stellar *In a Priest Driven Ambulance* while simultaneously recording the brilliant Mercury Rev debut, *Yerself Is Steam*. Following a series of hopeful phone calls to Warner Bros., the company signed the band in 1991, and in 1992 their oft-delayed major-label debut, *Hit to Death in the Future Head*, appeared to little commercial notice; Donahue soon exited to focus his full energies on Mercury Rev, followed by the departure of Roberts.

With new guitarist Ronald Jones and drummer Steven Drozd, they cut 1993's sublime *Transmissions from the Satellite Heart*, which they supported by playing the second stage at Lollapalooza and touring the nation in a Ryder truck. Initially, the album stiffed; however, nearly a year after its initial release, the single "She Don't Use Jelly" became a grassroots hit, and against all odds the Flaming Lips found themselves on the Top 40 charts. They took full advantage of their requisite 15 minutes of fame,

appearing everywhere from MTV's annual Spring Break broadcast to an arena tour in support of Candlebox to a memorably surreal lip-synced performance on the teen soap opera *Beverly Hills 90210*, where supporting character Steve Sanders (portrayed by actor Ian Ziering) uttered the immortal words, "You know, I've never been a big fan of alternative music, but these guys rocked the house!"

After the 1994 release of a limited-edition sampler of odds and ends titled *Providing Needles for Your Balloons*, the Lips returned in 1995 with *Clouds Taste Metallic*, a strikingly mature and diverse collection highlighted by the singles "Bad Days" (also heard in the film *Batman Forever*), "This Here Giraffe," and "Brainville." Despite the inclusion of the remarkably melodic "Psychiatric Explorations of the Fetus with Needles," "Christmas at the Zoo" (rumored to be under consideration for inclusion on an upcoming John Tesh holiday record), and the epic "Guy Who Got a Headache and Accidentally Saves the World," the album nonetheless failed to live up to the commercial success of *Transmissions*, and the band was once again relegated to cult status.

In 1996, the Lips' world went haywire; first, Jones disappeared to undertake a spiritual odyssey from which he did not return, then Drozd's hand was almost needlessly amputated after he was bitten by a spider. At about the same time, Ivins was the victim of a bizarre hit-and-run accident after a wheel came off of another vehicle and slammed into his car, trapping him inside. Ironically, Coyne was having car problems of his own when rumors of his latest sonic foray — conducting an orchestra of 40 automobiles, all with their tape decks playing specially composed music at the same time — prompted fan discussion of his possible psychological collapse. "I would try to tell people what I was doing and found that I couldn't explain it very well," Coyne later remarked about the project, dubbed the Parking Lot Experiment. "Plus, I had a sore on the side of my tongue for a week and it made me talk kind of weird. I'm sure they thought I was retarded."

By the following year, the Flaming Lips (who continued as a trio, opting not to attempt to replace Jones) were back in the studio, recording an album that, according to Coyne, would be "so different and exciting it will either make us millionaires or break us" — in short, 1997's *Zaireeka*, a breathtaking and wildly experimental set of four discs designed to be played simultaneously. A previously unreleased track, "Hot Day," also appeared earlier that year on the soundtrack to Richard Linklater's film *SubUrbia*. *A Collection of Songs Representing an Enthusiasm for Recording...by Amateurs*, a retrospective of their Restless label material, followed in 1998, and a year later the Lips returned with a breathtaking new studio effort, *The Soft Bulletin*.

After a three-year absence from the shelves, 2002 brought several new releases, including the new record *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots* and a two-volume retrospective of the Restless years. *Yoshimi* won the group even more popular and critical acclaim than *The Soft Bulletin*, which the group maximized by spending half of 2002 appearing with Beck on his *Sea Change* tour as both his opening act and backing band. The Lips kept busy over the next two years by touring in support of *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots* and working on their movie *Christmas on Mars*. They returned to the studio in 2004 and spent much of 2005 recording; that year, the Flaming Lips documentary *The Fearless Freaks* and *VOID* video collection were both released, whetting fans' appetites for the band's 2006 album, *At War with*

the Mystics.

In 2007, the Flaming Lips were nominated for a Grammy for Best Alternative Album for *Mystics* and won a Grammy for Best Engineered Album, Non-Classical. In 2008, the band's long-awaited, seven-years-in-the-making film *Christmas on Mars* made its debut at that spring's Sasquatch Festival in George, WA; that fall, the movie and its soundtrack were released as a CD/DVD set. During 2007 and 2008, the Lips began working on the follow-up to *At War with the Mystics*, taking a looser, more experimental approach than they had in several albums. The results were released as *Embryonic* in fall 2009.

The Black Keys

It's too facile to call the Black Keys counterparts of the White Stripes: they share several surface similarities — their names are color-coded, they hail from the Midwest, they're guitar-and-drum blues-rock duos — but the Black Keys are their own distinct thing, a tougher, rougher rock band with a purist streak that never surfaces in the Stripes. But that's not to say that the Black Keys are blues traditionalists: even on their 2002 debut, *The Big Come Up*, they covered the Beatles' psychedelic classic “She Said She Said,” indicating a fascination with sound and texture that would later take hold on such latter-day albums as 2008's *Attack & Release*, where guitarist Dan Auerbach and drummer Patrick Carney teamed up with sonic architect Danger Mouse. In between those two records, the duo established the Black Keys as a rock & roll band with a brutal, primal force, and songwriters of considerable depth, as evidenced on such fine albums as 2003's *Thickfreakness* and 2004's *Rubber Factory*.

Natives of Akron, OH, the Black Keys released their debut, *The Big Come Up*, in 2002, receiving strong reviews and sales, and leading to a contract with Fat Possum by the end of the year. That label released *Thickfreakness*, recorded in a 14-hour session, in the spring of 2003, the Keys supported the album with an opening tour for Sleater-Kinney. The Black Keys' momentum escalated considerably with their 2004 album *Rubber Factory*, which not only received strong reviews but some high-profile play, including a video for “5 A.M. Automatic” featuring comedian David Cross. The band's highly touted live act was documented on a 2005 DVD, released the same year as *Chulahoma* — an EP of blues covers — appeared. The Black Keys made the leap to the major labels with 2006's *Magic Potion*, a moodier record that continued to build the group's base. The band capitalized on that moodiness on 2008's *Attack & Release*, whose production by Danger Mouse signaled that the band were hardly just blues-rock purists. Salvaged from sessions intended as a duet album with Ike Turner, who died before the record could be finished, the album was the Black Keys' biggest to date, debuting in the Billboard Top 15 and earning strong reviews. Following their second live DVD, the Black Keys spent 2009 on side projects, with Auerbach releasing his solo album, *Keep It Hid*, in the beginning of the year, and Carney forming the band Drummer, in which he played bass. At the end of 2009, Blackroc, a rap-rock collaboration between the band and producer Damon Dash, appeared, with a new album promised for the spring of 2010.