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YOU'RE MISSING: Steven Drozd

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Emphatic wizards of space age, synthed-out, supremely weird sounds, [The Flaming Lips](#) have been through 29 years in the gauntlet of the music world. Multi-instrumentalist Steven Drozd has been a part of all but nine of those years.

Drozd was born on June 11, 1969, in Houston, Texas. He grew up with music, as his dad played horns with a polka band. He got his first full drum set for Christmas when he was seven but couldn't play it for a week because he was grounded for sniffing out the gift beforehand. Then, when he was about 10, he started playing drums in his dad's polka band. Next, he picked up the keyboards when he turned 12.

The Flaming Lips - "Be My Head"

"Everything around Steven as he was a child was all about music, so I think that just made him who he is," says Drozd's wife Becky Stokesberry in the Flaming Lips documentary *The Flaming Lips: The Fearless Freaks*.

Drozd began listening to the Lips in 1990, tantalized by that year's *In a Priest Driven Ambulance (With Silver Sunshine Stares)* album. Drozd saw the band shortly thereafter, at the Cannibal Club in Austin, Texas. He recounts the show in an [ultimate-guitar.com](#) interview:

"You couldn't see the band! All the stage was filled with smoke. They played "Under Pressure" by Queen. They played a Bee Gees cover...They were from outer space or something, you know?"

Drozd also recounts the show for *Fearless Freaks*:

"It was just fuckin' balls-to-the-wall sonic assault, psychedelic rock."

Wayne Coyne, original member and bard-like front man of The Flaming Lips, saw Drozd play in his band before the Lips, called Janis 18. He didn't think much of the show or the band, but was impressed by their amazing drummer. The two got together in late 1991 to jam, and Drozd joined the band at the end of the year, shortly after drummer Nathan Roberts left for creative differences. Around that same time, guitarist Jonathan Donahue left the Lips to focus on his other band, Mercury Rev, and was replaced by Ronald Jones. Drozd and Jones brought an insightful musicality to the band, which was previously overcome with loudness and strangeness.

Though he joined the band as a drummer, Coyne soon caught on to the sonic depths and talent that Drozd possessed. Along with drums, he played guitar, keyboard, and could arrange music. The band finally hit commercial success in 1993 with "She Don't Use Jelly" from *Transmissions From The Satellite Heart*.

Drozd played much more than drums on the album, contributing one third of the total guitar work. He also contributed such notable songs to the album as "Pilot Can at the Queer of God," "Chewin' the Apple of Yer Eye," and "Be My Head."

Jones left the band in late '96, allowing Drozd more responsibility with the guitar. It was around this time that Drozd began playing keyboard and lead guitar at shows. It was also around this time that Drozd began his addiction to heroin. The *Fearless Freaks* documentary actually shows Drozd shooting up and describing the experience as it comes on him.

Fortunately, Drozd has kicked the habit and remains the central music wiz of the band. From the time after *Transmissions* up to the recent releases (they vowed to put out new music every month in 2011, which has become the latest album, *The Flaming Lips and Heady Fwends*), The Flaming Lips have innovated like no other band ever. They're always moving in some new direction. At the helm of the musical control center is Steven Drozd. In fact, the strategy for the Lips tends to be Drozd writing the music and Coyne coming in with the lyrics. There's no telling where The Flaming Lips would be without the unfathomable depth of Drozd's insight. And without that understanding, there's no telling the bounds that the Flaming Lips will cross.



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