

By Shelley Mika

A band that plays on "Beverly Hills 90210" is more than likely to get a one-hit wonderdom.

For the most part, only catchy pop songs with a shelf life of two weeks are heard on a show of this caliber, so rarely does a truly original band make an appearance.

There is one exception, the Flaming Lips.

Since the band's performance on "Beverly Hills 90210" in 1994, the Flaming Lips have been up to more significant ventures than gracing the pop charts. With multi-media shows and a new album making "Best of 1999" lists all over the country, the Flaming Lips have developed into a band that pushes the limits of traditional artists.

Tonight, the Flaming Lips bring their unique performance to Knickerbockers.

With beginnings as odd as those of the Flaming Lips, the band was bound to break conventional standards.

In 1983, guitarist-vocalist Wayne Coyne allegedly stole instruments from a church hall, resulting in the not-so-immaculate conception of the band. Originally, the Flaming Lips consisted of Coyne, along with his brother Mark Coyne and bassist Michael Ivins.

In the nearly two decades the band has been together, members have come and gone, but original members Ivins and Wayne Coyne remain and are now joined by drummer Steven Drozd.

The history of the Flaming Lips is a mysterious one, bordering more on mythology than actual fact. Exemplifying the peculiar nature of their past is the unusual nature of their name.

Myths fly about its origin—that it comes from a dream of Coyne's where a flaming Virgin Mary kisses him in the back seat of his car, that, as it always seems to be with experimental bands, it is somehow said to be a reference to Jones, or the most common, that it comes from a porn flick.

However, in a telephone interview from his Oklahoma City home, Ivins dispelled the myths.

"We had just started and had a page list of names and thought, 'We've got to put something on the poster,'" Ivins said. "We picked a name that you couldn't say was one thing or another."

Apparently, this became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

One thing that can be said is that in the course of more than 10 albums, the band's style and approach to music has evolved.

Ivins said, although the Flaming Lips have been influenced by such bands as Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin, the trio is creating its own unique sound.

"I think in the past, like a lot of bands, we were a little guilty of making music that sounded like our influences," Ivins said. "I think we're actually trying to be influenced more by ourselves now. We're trying to make Flaming Lips music as opposed to our favorite music."

In the past, the Flaming Lips have worked to forge an original path on both their approaches to recordings and performances.

"We try not to limit ourselves," Ivins said. "It's always changing."

Involved in the changes aren't simply meditations on guitar chords. The experiments of the Flaming Lips are of a grander scope.

The band's last album, "Zaireeka," was released on four discs designed to be played simultaneously. The Lips' latest recording, "The Soft Bulletin," isn't quite as experimental in format, but has allowed the band to explore its style.

"I know 'The Soft Bulletin' is a lot deeper in terms of sound," Ivins said. "It's a more sophisticated sound, something that's not as flat as some of our earlier songs."

Many critics have dubbed "The Soft Bulletin," which embodies songs that are as diverse as intellectual pop and sound freak-outs, as a concept album. Although some songs have certain lyrics in common, Ivins said, "The Soft Bulletin" isn't a traditional concept album in which songs are linked thematically.

"The concept in general was being able to communicate the idea of the songs better," Ivins said. "It seems like the whole record is the concept instead of a big collection of songs. It's a concept after it's already done instead of filling it in to fit the concept."

Ivins said the record also explores the extremes of human senti-

ments.

"Someone said, 'Drama is life with all the boring bits taken out.' We'll take things that happen in everyday life and exaggerate them, that way you can get to actual emotions and underlying human struggles," Ivins said. "I think that's what the concept would be behind the record more than anything else."

The Flaming Lips also take an original approach to their performances. A live project, dubbed "The Parking Lot Experiment," incorporated more than 60 cars gathered on a tarmac stage with their doors left open, playing pre-recorded Flaming Lips tracks.

Another, the "Boom Box Experiment," recreated the Lips' sound as audience members gathered on the stage holding specially supplied boom boxes, while manipulations of balance and volume were executed by the band.

"They're pretty technical," said Sean Tyrrell, owner of Knickerbocker's, about the band. "Their live show is different from a regular three-piece band."



Tyrrell said that because Drozd plays the guitar and keyboards live, the drums are pre-recorded on this tour.

"They have a big screen in the back, and they put the drummer on that," Tyrrell said.

Tyrrell said the band plans to hand out headphones to the audience members, again employing different approaches to the live performance.

"They always do something different," Tyrrell said.

Ivins said the band makes its live show audience-friendly.

"We used to think that playing had to be some sort of artistic expression. After a while, we found that's all well and good, but if

you're not in on the inner workings, 20-minute jams are all lost on you," Ivins said. "We decided we didn't like that sort of thing when we saw shows, so we shouldn't play it either."

Tyrrell said the Lips' current tour is still experimental, but differs slightly from their earlier shows.

"This one's kind of different. It's a little mellower with a lot of samples mixed in," Tyrrell said.

Ivins said the show will be more like a multi-media experience rather than a traditional concert.

"When you come to see us, it's big and loud, and there's a lot of stuff to look at: video screens, confetti flying around," Ivins said. "We look at it like we're part of a good night out."

**REVIEW** **Flaming Lips**  
**TONIGHT: 9 p.m.**  
**WHERE: Knickerbockers,**  
**9th and O streets**  
**COST: \$15**  
**THE SKINNY: Lips bring**  
**modern sound to**  
**Lincoln stage.**