

UNDER THE RADAR

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THE FLAMING LIPS

Wayne Coyne

What's your earliest music-related childhood memory?

I think it was seeing The Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Before then, I don't think anything would have been brought up a thousand times afterward. If I go back I think, "oh yeah, I remember that." I was born in 1961, so that was 1964 I think, so I was pretty young as far as I can tell. But at least I know when that is. I can think of things when I was younger, but I can't tell, there's no reference.

If your house were on fire, what would you grab as you were running out?

Well I would definitely grab my girlfriend and the dogs and the cats. I'd get them out first, then I'd go back and see. I haven't really thought of it that much. I have a lot of cool stuff, but I don't think of it in that way. The house itself I'd want. I do have a lot of cool artwork that people have given me that I wouldn't like to be burnt up. But I have a fairly good fire alarm system. There is one, a Damien Hearst piece that Damien gave to me and wrote a note on for me, and it's right near the door, so I could grab it. Most of my valuable things would be stuff that belonged to my mother or my dad, and they're dead now. But I don't even know if I have that stuff in my house.

What song will most unite or amp up the tour bus or van (à la "Tiny Dancer" in *Almost Famous*)? Which song do you love that the rest of the band or crew refuse to let you put on?

Luckily, that's one of the great sort of connections that you make and why you're in a band with people, there's a synergy, you like the same things. If you were in the band with us, you'd hear everything from The Beatles to Led Zepplin, a myriad of classic rock, Elton John. A lot of classic songs. We were in a van not that long ago, a 45-minute drive, late at night, and we were all kind of fucked up and having a good time. But then the cuts got too deep! There's this unifying thing, we were all enjoying and singing along and remembering different things, but then the cuts get too deep and nobody knows it. That's why the DJ is sensing the room, or the van, or whatever it is. We used to make cassette tapes back in the day and we would drive around then with a cassette tape with all of your favorites. As much as you would find old things, you'd have favorite new things. So you'd make a cassette with all the songs. Steven [Drozd]

and I will remember that. I remember when Steven first played a song by the group Yes called "Heart of the Sunrise." It was a great moment in our evolution. I'd never considered it that much, and then I heard it and I loved the sound of it, it was just insane. I loved the melody and loved the emotional part. It became part of the language that we have. That led us to being the group that made *The Soft Bulletin*, because we were just being more open about what we loved about music. It's a bizarre song, and a lot of people don't even know what the group Yes is all about, so some people hear and they're like, "What is this shit?" And other people hear it as the direct enemy of punk rock. We never thought of it like that, we always thought you could be punk rock and prog rock. We thought that's what punk rock was, just do whatever the fuck you want.

"When I was in third grade, there was this big drawing the whole class had to do, and I just took it upon myself to do the whole thing, even though I was supposed to do it with six or seven other third graders."

What got you in the most trouble as a kid?

I didn't really get into trouble in that way. The things that would get me in trouble would be my persistence. I just would not give up. When I was in third grade, there was this big drawing the whole class had to do, and I just took it upon myself to do the whole thing, even though I was supposed to do it with six or seven other third graders. Little by little they got bored and I got to draw on this giant, giant sheet of paper. I wanted to stay there after school and keep drawing on it. I would stay as long as anybody would stay. That would be the thing that would get me in trouble. I just wanted to keep going. I think that still happens now. I don't think I did anything bad or illegal until I was much older.

