

= Zaireeka =

Zaireeka is the eighth studio album by the alternative rock band The Flaming Lips . Released on October 28 , 1997 , the experimental rock album consists of four Compact Discs . Each of its eight songs consists of four stereo tracks , one from each CD . The album was designed so that when played simultaneously on four separate audio systems , the four CDs would produce a harmonic or juxtaposed sound . The discs can also be played in different combinations , omitting one , two or three discs . The album 's title is a portmanteau of two words : Zaire , chosen as a symbol of anarchy after Wayne Coyne heard a radio news story about the political instability of the African nation , and eureka ( literally : " I have found it " ) , an expression of joyous discovery .

Zaireeka was the first album made by the band since the departure of guitarist Ronald Jones . It acted as a preview of the music and style that would surface on the next album , The Soft Bulletin ( 1999 ) and is the predecessor to the band 's more conventional surround sound releases .

= = Background = =

Adverse circumstances led to the production of Zaireeka . The departure of guitarist Ronald Jones compelled the band to change fundamentally . In addition , the limited success of the previous album , Clouds Taste Metallic , threatened their status at Warner Bros. Records . They eventually found that drummer Steven Drozd could compensate for the loss of Jones by becoming a multi @-@ instrumentalist . However , live shows proved to be more challenging and in order to maintain activity and output , Wayne Coyne conceived an experimental show .

= = = The Parking Lot Experiments = = =

During 1996 and 1997 , The Flaming Lips ran a series of events known as " The Parking Lot Experiments " . The concept was inspired by an incident in Coyne 's youth , where he noticed that car radios in the parking lot at a concert were playing the same songs at the same time , Wayne Coyne created 40 cassette tapes to be played in synchronization . The band invited people to bring their cars to parking lots , where they would be given one of the tapes and then instructed when to start them . The music was " a strange , fluid 20 minute sound composition " .

= = = Production = = =

Production of the album was preceded by two unfortunate events , which were recounted in " The Spiderbite Song " from The Soft Bulletin . Michael Ivins was involved in a car crash , and Steven Drozd 's hand became severely infected . Drozd initially claimed that his hand had been bitten by a spider , although later he admitted the infected abscess was caused by injection of heroin .

The Flaming Lips began work on Zaireeka in April 1997 in the then @-@ new Tarbox Road Studios . Initially , the band was frustrated while making the album . Even after diverting half of the budget for the next album into Zaireeka , there were no tangible results . The band experienced difficulty writing songs for the album . Finally , Coyne exclaimed " Look , we don 't have to be friends ... but we have to make this record ! " While this philosophy aided progress , the band only began to complete songs when they learned to write for the medium as opposed to trying to split normal songs across four CDs .

The group wrote several songs that were unsuccessful in the four @-@ CD format . These songs , including " Race for the Prize " , were reserved for the next album , which would eventually become The Soft Bulletin .

= = = Release = = =

Warner Bros. Records was initially apprehensive about releasing Zaireeka , so manager Scott Booker carefully researched the costs of releasing a box set . Booker discovered that Zaireeka could

be released so that once 12 @, @ 000 copies had been sold , the label would break even . ( Advance orders for the album came to 14 @, @ 000 copies . ) Booker pitched the album to Warner Bros. Records president Steven Baker .

Eventually , the two factions reached an agreement in which the album would be released , although Zaireeka would not count towards the seven albums the band was contracted to deliver to Warner Bros. For an advance of \$ 200 @, @ 000 , the band would make both Zaireeka and The Soft Bulletin . In addition , Booker mentioned that by allowing the media to proclaim how " weird " the band was with Zaireeka , they would be more prepared to treat The Soft Bulletin as a serious album . Zaireeka was released in October , 1997 . As of 2006 , 28 @, @ 000 copies have been sold .

= = = Logistics of listening = = =

The speakers being used may be physically positioned in many different configurations ( e.g. at different heights or even in entirely different rooms ) . Some listeners may even choose to disable the left or right speaker of one or more systems . Synchronization errors between the audio systems may cause effects such as reverb or echo being heard on one disc before the original sound is produced from another . Further , the type and quality of each audio system affects the relationship between the four CDs .

= = = The Boom Box Experiments = = =

After completion of Zaireeka , The Flaming Lips tried an unconventional method to tour the album . " The Boom Box Experiments " , like " The Parking Lot Experiments " , involved tapes being played at the same time . However , these shows were held in conventional rock venues , and the band supplied their own boom boxes . Coyne and Drozd conducted two " choirs " of people controlling the boom boxes , giving them instructions for actions like turning the volume up or down , while Ivins controlled the mixer .

Songs played in The Boom Box Experiments include :

" The Big Ol ' Bug Is the New Baby Now "

" A Winter 's Day Car Accident Melody "

" Altruism , or That 's the Crotch Calling the Devil Black "

" Heralding in a Better Ego "

" Realizing the Speed of Life "

" Schizophrenic Sunrise , or The Loudest Blade of Grass "

" Should We Keep the Severed Head Awake ? ? " ( used in both the Parking Lot and Boom Box experiments . Part of it was included on " Sleeping on the Roof " on The Soft Bulletin . )

= = = Aftermath and legacy = = =

With Zaireeka , The Flaming Lips had overcome the loss of Ronald Jones and proved they could still work as a band . The situation at Warner Bros. Records was still dire , including a risk of being dropped from the label . However , songs had already been written for the next album , The Soft Bulletin , which would be both a critical hit for the band and their breakthrough into mainstream success . Following the release of Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots in 2002 , The Flaming Lips would return to the concept of surround sound with a DVD @-@ Audio special @-@ edition of that album in 2003 .

Zaireeka is viewed by the band as nothing more than an experimental release . " It was , and still is , intended to be listened to by other artists , musicians and producers , " Coyne would later state in the liner notes for The Soft Bulletin 5 @. @ 1 , adding that they " never expected the less involved members of our audience to care about it . "

= = Songs = =

Zaireeka opens with " Okay I 'll Admit That I Really Don 't Understand " , a mantra of sorts about the admitted lack of comprehension regarding one 's situation . The second track , " Riding to Work in the Year 2025 ( Your Invisible Now ) " [ sic ] tells a science @-@ fiction story about a man who pretends to be a secret agent in the future and imagines his own psychological demise from the stress " of being the most important secret agent in the world " . " Thirty @-@ Five Thousand Feet of Despair " , the third song , is the tragic story of an airplane pilot who ( somehow ) hangs himself mid @-@ flight . The next song , " A Machine in India " , is about the " dull and depressing , mild insanity " that the speaker 's partner slips into during her menstrual cycle . Next , " The Train Runs over the Camel but Is Derailed by the Gnat " , is a speech by a man who is on the verge of discovery , but ends up " talking himself into circles " . Track six , " How Will We Know ? ( Futuristic Crashendos ) " , is based on an urban legend that being exposed to high and low frequencies can cause a person to experience premonitions , and thus contains its infamously extensive frequencies that caused the band to place a warning on the album cover and inside the booklet . The seventh song , " March of the Rotten Vegetables " , is " music for a cartoon about a group of demented vegetables " . The eighth and final song , " The Big Ol ' Bug Is the New Baby Now " , contains a spoken @-@ word story about Coyne 's dogs ; the track ends the album with loud barking from each disc . On the 10th anniversary of Zaireeka , Wayne Coyne himself made and distributed an additional 5th disc to go along with the set . A limited amount of copies were made , and were handed out at the 10th anniversary listening party for the album . The disc , which looks identical to the other four discs with an exception of the disc being numbered 10 , contains what was originally discs 5 through 10 .

= = Critical reception = =

Critical reaction to Zaireeka was polarized . Josh Kun of Rolling Stone wrote that the album 's " wall @-@ of @-@ surround @-@ sound approach melds droning @-@ rock dissonance with warped , off @-@ kilter pop melodies , producing a totally immersing post @-@ Pet Sounds audio séance . " Jason Alkeny of AllMusic stated that the album would only really be accessible to hardcore Flaming Lips fans , but that " they 're in for the musical experience of a lifetime " .

Critics who disliked the album cited what they viewed as a ridiculous concept . Salon remarked in its review that " Musically [ ... ] their 1995 album Clouds Taste Metallic offers the same psychotic results without all the technological hassle . And conceptually ? The same thing , just all at once : stupid , stupid , stupid , stupid . " Jason Josephes from Pitchfork awarded the album a score of 0 @-@ 0 out of 10 ; in a scathing review , Josephes criticized the album for being inaccessible , asking " Do I want to buy three more CD players with which to enjoy Zaireeka or , say , eat ? " and derided the band 's fans . Further , in October 2009 , editor @-@ in @-@ chief of Pitchfork , Mark Richardson , wrote a book titled Zaireeka for the 33 1 / 3 book series , published by Continuum International Publishing , now owned by Bloomsbury Publishing . In it , Richardson chronicles the creation of the album , praises it from multiple angles , and discusses the impact the album has had on music since its release . The album was included in Pitchfork 's 2010 list of " ten unusual CD @-@ era gimmicks " .

= = Other formats = =

Wayne Coyne confirmed that Zaireeka will eventually be released on DVD format in the vein of the surround @-@ sound special editions of Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots , The Soft Bulletin , and At War with the Mystics .

In the UK , the " Race for the Prize " and " Waitin ' for a Superman " CD singles were released in 2 @-@ disc sets .

Each disc of the two sets contained a different version of " Riding to Work in the Year 2025 ( Your Invisible Now ) " and " Thirty @-@ Five Thousand Feet of Despair " . This marked the first time material from the album would be released in the four @-@ disc format in Europe . The " Waitin ' for a Superman " Maxi @-@ CD , as released in the US , contains stereo mixes of the two songs .

The album was reissued on vinyl for Record Store Day 2013 .

= = Track listing = =

All four discs have identical track listings .

All songs written and composed by The Flaming Lips .

= = Credits = =

The Flaming Lips

Wayne Coyne ? vocals , guitar

Steven Drozd ? vocals , drums , guitar , keyboards , orchestration

Michael Ivins ? vocals , bass guitar

Technical personnel

Scott Booker ? production

Dave Fridmann ? engineering , mastering , mixing , production

George Salisbury ? layout design