


# Fool the World: The Oral History of a Band Called Pixies

*By Josh Frank, Caryn Ganz*

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It's the 1980s and the rock landscape is littered with massive hair, synthesizers, and monster riffs, but there is an alternative being born in the sleepy East of America-we just don't know it yet.
Before the Internet, MTV, and iPods provided far-off music fans with information and communities-and before Nirvana-kids across the world grew up in relative isolation, dependent on mix tapes and self-created art to slowly spread scenes and trends. It was under these conditions that four young musicians found one another in Boston, Massachusetts, and started a band called Pixies.
During their initial seven-year career, Pixies would play some of Europe's most gigantic festivals, keep the press guessing, and cultivate a fervid international fan base hungry for more and more of their unique surf punk. The band worked fast, cranking out four albums at a breakneck pace, but ultimately pressures and personality clashes took their toll: Pixies broke up just as bands were singing their praises as *the* rock'n'roll innovators.
For twelve years, a Pixies reunion seemed impossible, but a sudden announcement in 2004 proclaimed the unthinkable-Pixies were getting back together. Their extremely successful reunion tour finally gave the group something they'd always lacked in their homeland: proof that their bone-rattling music had left an indelible impact.
*Fool the World* tells Pixies' story in the words of those who lived it, from the band members to studio owners, from A&R executives, producers, and visual artists who worked with them to admirers of their music, such as Bono, PJ Harvey, Beck, and Perry Farrell. With new cartoons by *Trompe Le Monde* illustrator Steven Appleby, *Fool the World* is a complete journey through the life, death, and rebirth of one of the most influential bands of all time.

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## Editorial Review

About the Author

Josh Frank is a pop culture dramatist. A director, producer, and writer of plays and books, he currently has a number of projects in development. He is twenty-nine years old and lives between Austin, Texas and New York City.

Caryn Ganz is an associate editor at Spin magazine. Her writing has also appeared in the *New York Post*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Seattle Weekly*, and *Mixte*. She lives in Manhattan.

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**Chapter One**

B.P. (BEFORE PIXIES) (1961-1984)

Kim Deal and David Lovering were born in 1961, one year before the first audio cassette became commercially available and three years before the Beatles made their first epic journey to American shores. Charles Thompson and Joey Santiago were born one year after that pop cultural landmark, in 1965.

They came from different places, but their separate paths were fated to join in Boston in 1985, where all four future Pixies shared a powerful sense of restlessness.

Childhood (1961-1983)

Charles Thompson (a.k.a. Black Francis and Frank Black; Pixies singer/guitarist/primary songwriter; born April 6, 1965, in Boston, Massachusetts): Most of high school, grades nine, ten, and eleven, I was out here in L.A., and I listened to a lot of ‘60s stuff--whatever I could get at a used record store. Could be an early Cat Stevens record, could be a Bob Seger record, not exactly hip, cool stuff. Just like, “Hey, this is fifty cents, I’ve never heard this before, I’ll buy it.” My father had a bar, so we would hear a lot of stuff on the jukebox. I used to go to the library and get records. My very first guitar was my mother’s guitar. And she bought it by stealing my father’s tips and throwing them into a closet for a period of months back in 1965 or ‘66, and bought a Yamaha classical guitar. That guitar went on a road trip with my cousin, then it ended up back in my mother’s possession when I was 11 or 12, and I started to play it again.

Johnny Angel (born Johnny Carmen; Boston musician, journalist): Charles’s dad was a bar owner/libertarian/tough guy and his mom was more of a hippie, and I think the folk rock hits of the ‘60s were echoing through his head nonstop.

Thompson: I first lived in L.A. as a baby because my father wanted to go and learn more about the restaurant and bar business. He worked in West Hollywood next to the Troubadour, a nightclub I play at today. He didn’t end up liking California--there were a lot of other factors, a divorce--but he came to California because that’s where people went. At that time there were a lot of people who were older, coming out of the ‘60s, ‘70s, hedonistic lifestyles, sexually promiscuous or involved in a lot of drugs, people that had destroyed

their lives, they came out of it clinging onto Jesus Christ. Southern California Pentecostal culture, it's fire and brimstone but it's more like, success, like, "God wants you to be successful!" I probably discovered [Christian rocker] Larry Norman when I was 13 because my family had taken up this religious experience, whatever you want to call it. I was going along with it, as my whole family was. I think when you're 13 or 14 you're open to a lot of stuff, and if people say, "Hey, Jesus!" you don't go, "Ooh, I'm cynical!" You just kind of go, "Yeah, Jesus, cool!" Larry Norman is a real oddball guy. He's not like what people would think of him. "Ooh, a Christian, what's that going to be about?" He's totally his own thing.

Kim Deal (a.k.a. Mrs. John Murphy; Pixies bassist; the Breeders singer/guitarist; the Amps singer/guitarist; born June 10, 1961, in Dayton, Ohio): In high school, I hung out with Pat Rohr, this is what I did: We had record albums, he was like three years older than me, and we would sit around. Now I know what we were doing--it's like, what people who love music do--but I didn't know that at the time. I'm like 15, 16, 17, talking about why "Dominance and Submission" is a better Blue Öyster Cult song than "Godzilla" ever was. Just doing shit like that, just pouring over the record collection. Smoking pot. Snowing, constantly snowing, and doing drugs.

Thompson: I used to hang out with some misfits. We weren't the stoner kids, we weren't the jock kids, we were the "we listen to oddball music" kids. I wasn't hanging out at all-ages shows or trying to get into clubs to see bands, and I was buying records at used record stores and borrowing them from the library. You didn't necessarily see a Ramones record at the used record store. You just saw Emerson, Lake and Palmer records. So I didn't know [punk] music but I had started to hear about it in high school. But it was probably a good thing that I didn't know it, that I instead listened to a lot of '60s records and this religious music. It was a different diet. It wasn't mainstream at all, but it wasn't hip, for sure. By the time I did start to make music for real with a band, Pixies, of course I had discovered some things that again, weren't exactly punk. Iggy Pop is not a punk, Hüsker Dü is not punk (they're a post-punk band, they're more related to hardcore), [Captain] Beefheart is not a punk, the Talking Heads are not a punk band (even though they came out of CBGBs, they don't sound like the Sex Pistols or the Damned). By the time I started to write music I heard some punk and punk-influenced things, but it was kind of good that I didn't listen to all these hip records when I was 16. It was good that I was in my own nerdy little world.

Deal: My mom had this, I think it was two-track, quarter-inch tape reel-to-reel that she'd get me and [twin sister] Kelley to sing to when we were 4 or 5 years old. When I was 11, my dad was taking guitar lessons, and the only reason why I know this is because there was an acoustic guitar in the living room and these tablature sheets. I would sit down and look at the tablature sheets, and I learned "King of the Road" by Roger Miller. And he would laughingly say, "Kim, I can't believe you learned that before I did." So that was nice and encouraging to hear that.

John Murphy (Kim Deal's ex-husband; Mente leader; life-long Bostonian): I worked with David Lovering at Radio Shack when I was in high school. He lived in Burlington, Mass., I lived in Wilmington, and we worked at the Burlington mall together. He was a riot, and he really looked at things in a very peculiar way. He always made fun of the customers and did these bizarre things. One time he was supposed to be subbing in for a guy at the store in Stoneham, and it was summertime, and at Radio Shack in the summertime it's dead. He didn't get one single customer, so he set up a little amateur recording studio and made tape loops, put a couple of songs together. He was always a drummer. He was always drumming on something during work.

Thompson: My family moved a lot. Cycled between Southern California and New England. Fifteen times. Just before my senior year in high school we moved to Westport, Massachusetts, which is where I received my Kiwanis Award for being the Teenager of the Year. You know the Kiwanis Club? It's like a

neighborhood, community service kind of group. They thought I was a good kid or something in high school. We stood out. We were blond and from California and everybody else was very Portuguese and very brunette.

Deal: I was a cheerleader. I don't know if that makes you popular. I'm not embarrassed. People get the idea cheerleaders are mean. You know who the mean folks are? The smart kids, they were fucking pricks. I graduated with honors, I was still smart. These guys were the fucking freaks, they were the ones that were supposed to be so delicate and like, awkward. They were the Dungeons & Dragons crowd. Mean fucks!

Joey Santiago (Pixies guitarist; Martinis guitarist; born June 11, 1965, in Manila, Philippines): Before I met Charles I was listening to classic rock. The Who, Stones, stuff like that. Bowie, Iggy Pop. In fact, the Velvet Underground, too. I had a brother that was like, ten years older than me, so he had White Light/White Heat and he had a turntable, so I would just listen to it. I liked it. It was the first piece of music that I heard and was like, "This is doable. I can get my hands around this." Just the simplicity.

Thompson: I remember learning how to scream. The guy who taught me was a neighbor of ours when I was a teenager. He was this guy from Thailand and he ran a T-shirt and florist shop. I used to deliver flowers for him. I was playing the Beatles' "Oh! Darling" for him and he said, "No, no, scream it like you hate the bitch!"

Deal: I got, like, a hundred songs when I was, like, 16, 17. I look at 'em and I just think, Oh, you poor... The music is pretty good but the lyrics are just, like, OH MY GOD. We were just trying to figure out how "blue" rhymes with "you." When I was writing 'em, they didn't have anything to do with actually who I was. I started thinking that I'd be published and that I'd write for other people, and they just needed silly, stupid songs with "blue" and "you" in it. That's what people sang about. I just wanted to be a songwriter. And I wanted to be a guitar player in a rock band. I didn't want to be a bass player. They always have the tightest pants or something, they seemed moody and weird. And the singers seem like assholes. Outgoing, and on all the time. And the drummers, I couldn't play drums. I can now, I really like the drums. If I could do anything, I'd play the drums now in a band. I have to find a band who needs my kind of drumming. I have no chops, and most bands still like chops, whatever.

Kelley went to the drive-in movie and saw The Song Remains the Same. She did acid, I think. She must have been 16, and in her trip she said that she wanted to do that. I think that was the first time [she said that] about rock. Wasn't my idea, it was her trip.

Kelley Deal: (Kim Deal's twin sister; member of the Breeders, the Kelley Deal 6000): Not th...

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