

## Flame Dream — Album Overview

---

I have said it before, and I hope I will be saying it many times more: the world of progressive rock holds many astonishing surprises. The one I refer to right now is the rather unexpected return of Flame Dream. A Swiss band who from 1978 onwards released a six string of albums before they disappeared from the scene. Whether they actually disbanded, or simply remained comatose or dormant until the time was right to finally be revived again, I don't know. But after 35+ years of inactivity, I'm sure glad they have returned.

Since the band has never found its way onto DPRP's pages, I imagine their name to be new to some. Or maybe even to many. So I thought it fitting to begin with an abbreviated album-introduction of their illustrious past.



Jan Buddenberg

For this we travel back in time to the year 1977 when Flame Dream is formed by Urs Waldispühl (guitar, vocals) and the four current FD members Roland Ruckstuhl (keyboards), Peter Wolf (flute, saxophone, vocals), Urs Hochuli (bass, vocals) and Peter "Pit" Furrer (drums, percussion). With shared lead vocals between Waldispühl and Wolf, in this formation they released their 1978 debut *Calatea*, an album which at an uncanny *Yes* resemblance brings a delightful hybrid of jazz-fusion inspired prog that on the one hand reminds of bands like *Druid*, *England*, and *Starcastle*. While on the other it thanks to intricate flute play and lush key virtuosity gets to share glimpses of *Genesis* to which the use of saxophone brings a memorable touch of originality. An overall solid effort that sees an artistic highlight in form of *Volcano*.



Following the departure of Waldispühl, FD released the conceptual themed *Elements* in 1979. Featuring even longer epic symphonic prog compositions, it still wears *Yes* influences with pride. But slowly and surely it shows FD finding their own synth-driven style, which next to a fine *Genesis* impression brings lush *E.L.P.* imprints. Adding a touch of pop-fusion funkiness, Mellotron and elements of classical music with vibrant *PFM/UK* synths, it is especially the composition *Sea Monsters* that will draw the attention of prog enthusiast here.

Introducing Dale Hauskins as a guest on guitar, it is with *Out In The Dark* that Flame Dream gradually start to leave the symphonic prog arena and orientate towards uplifting synth-pop which, in a typical 80s sound, energetically dashes on with touches of *Gentle Giant*, to which the nicely maturing vocals from Wolf brings colourful imagery of Jon Anderson and Peter Gabriel. Once again it offers perfectly arranged and adventurously inventive compositions with richness of fusion. In *Wintertime Nights*, I'm reminded of the Ukrainian solo artist *Victor Go*. The two-parted symphonic synth-driven *Strange Meeting* acts as a perfectly model for Flame Dream's current approach.



*Paradise Lost* from their subsequent 1982 album *Supervision*, which was recorded in a once more reduced line-up of four, can also be seen as a template for Flame Dream's current style. Overall, their ongoing transition towards less complex synth-pop becomes much more audible on this effort. Predominantly cheerful and energetic with fine uptempo performances and funky bass, the music still contains many tasteful UK influences. And there are parts that are reminiscent of late 70s synths as in *Saga*, *The Buggles* and the pop-like accomplishments of *Anyone's Daughter* and Phil Collins & Co. But to the discomfort of many, their music by now had lost most of its delectable fusion aspect. And as a result, general interest in Flame Dream's music slowly began to fade.



As a sign of the times, this decrease in interest was also the case for their next effort *Travaganza* from 1983. If one is to believe [ProgArchives](#), this is a record only of interest for the Flame Dream die-hard. Which, as luck would have it, I consider myself to be one, because I actually adore the album. Admittedly, there's a huge nostalgia factor involved as this was the album that introduced me to their music all those decades ago. And I do have to fully acknowledge the fact that one can hardly call the album progressive seeing it is deeply rooted in typical 80s production of new-wave pop music. But recalling contemporary efforts by *The Buggles*, Jon Anderson, *Anyone's Daughter*, *Grobschnitt* and bands usually associated with the New German Wave (also known as "Neue Deutsche Welle") I



think there are ample of fine moments to enjoy for the *Roger Taylor* / Gabriel-loving synth-pop enthusiast, in songs like *Race My Car*, *Double Quick Action* and the melancholic, warming *In From The Cold*.

On their final album, *8 On 6* from 1986, Flame Dream would take this descent into the electronic pop world even further. As before, Gabriel impressions come to the fore thanks to Wolf's vocal deliveries. As do synthetic elements of Jon Anderson.

The album expresses an even more commercial appeal / unpleasantness (take your pick), a catchy blast of *Holly Johnson*, and a mid-Eighties Genesis sound on most of the songs. *In The Heat Of The Night* however, reminds me of the final pop recordings done by Anyone's Daughter (which they eventually released on *Last Tracks*). Despite prog values close

to zero and a concluding disco inferno in form of *Amigo*, I find the album to be a nice enough effort to enjoy every once in a long while. But Flame Dream's fire of aspiration does tend to feel somewhat exhausted. The various remaining members of Flame Dream may well have reached the same conclusion because shortly after the band retreated from the scene.

Only to return fully refuelled after four decades of recharging, with their seventh album *Silent Transition*.

