

Red Hot Chili Peppers - 10 Red Hot Chili Peppers

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"It was definitely a situation for kids who didn't want to go see the same old boring shit," says Flea, the Red Hot Chili Peppers' bassist and bleached-haired gremlin, more than fondly recalling this summer's Lollapalooza '92 tour. "They could spend a whole day there, have a party, and see all different kinds of music. It was a totally positive, beautiful thing."

If anybody wanted an eyeball-exploding glimpse at pop music in the '90s, stopping by the Lollapalooza '92 tour certainly would have done the trick. The nine-hour-plus concerts featured rap, crunching industrial rock, a couple of Seattle bands, and-lording over the whole carnival-four ornery white guys who played swaggering funk licks and whose strutting, shirtless lead singer, Anthony Kiedis, rapped as much as he sang.

If 1992 truly was the year of alternative rock-from Lollapalooza '92's nearly \$20 million gross to the top 10 success of Pearl Jam to fashion designers cashing in on the "grunge look" - then the Chili Peppers were its calendar boys (in photo, from left: Flea, Kiedis, drummer Chad Smith, and guitarist Arik Marshall).

"It was a very intense year," says Flea, 30 (real name: Michael Balzary). "We were able to communicate with a large number of people without changing, and we made a lot of money. Now I can take my friends out to eat whenever I want, and not have to skip out the back door.

"It's completely insane how one song can make such a difference," he adds, referring to the Chili Peppers' breakthrough hit, the uncharacteristically subdued, even pretty, "Under the Bridge." And while he's right-the song spurred the sale of 3 million copies of the group's latest mosh-and-grind fest, Blood Sugar Sex Magik-the Chili Peppers are also the right band at the right whacked-out time.

For most of the past decade, the Chili Peppers' snotty musical Cuisinart of punk, rap, R&B, and metal was considered too gonzo. These days, though, punk funk (and the amorphous "alternative rock") is practically the norm, and the Chili Peppers now have across-the-board appeal. They're streetwise frat boys who flaunt their sexual aggressiveness in the age of AIDS-and make for a good party band to boot.

The year didn't go without its hitches; guitarist John Frusciante unexpectedly quit in the spring (he was quickly replaced by Arik Marshall). And, on a bigger level, the financial success of both Lollapalooza '92 and the Chili Peppers seemingly contradicts the "alternative" stance of everyone involved.

"Now all the bands that wanted to be Guns N' Roses or U2 want to be Nirvana," Flea groans. "As soon as someone says, 'Okay, alternative rock is big and that's the thing that makes all the money now,' then it eats itself alive." Meet the new boss, same as the old boss-but at least the new boss sounds a little different.

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