

# A little more serious, but just as spicy: Red Hot Chili Peppers on the rebound

By John Righter

Of The Battalion Staff

## Red Hot Chili Peppers Mother's Milk

EMI  
"The freakiest show I know/ Is the show of my own/ Living my life in out of the twilight zone/ Nobody weird like me."

Over the last four years the Red Hot Chili Peppers have proven, if nothing else, that few are as weird as these four funk thrashers notorious for good times, tube socks and penis fixations.

At times, vocalist Anthony Kiedis,

guitarist John Frusciante, drummer Chad Smith and bassist Flea (fresh from his role in "Back To The Future Part II") live up to their "Nobody Weird Like Me" proclamation on their fourth release, *Mother's Milk*. But they also project a noticeable seriousness evident despite their album cover, which features a naked woman strategically covered by the four Red Hot members.

It's not too hard to figure out why a slight departure from the weird has surfaced on the group's most successful release yet.

Aside from an attempt to live up to the critical accolades showered on the band since its inception, the

group also was forced to weather the death of guitarist Hillel Slovak during the middle of their last tour.

Slovak suffered from the Sid Vicious syndrome, and his fatal heroin overdose seems, in hindsight, to have shaken the group out of its mode of unaccountability.

I won't go so far as to say that *Mother's Milk* is a serious album, but it definitely has a tempered feel, and on songs like "Knock Me Down" and "Johnny, Kick A Hole In The Sky" its mood is downright somber. "Knock Me Down," a tribute to Slovak and the band's realization of its "crash/burn" lifestyle, is especially tough.

Throughout the song's chorus, Kiedis croons, "If you see me getting mighty/ If you see me getting high/ Knock Me Down/ I'm not bigger than life." He finishes the plea with, "It's so lonely when you don't even know yourself."

Let's face it: drug czars, first ladies and top sport jocks pale in their personal experience with the horrors of drugs in comparison with a band like the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

Hearing an anti-drug plea by a former addict and byproduct of a drug-related death is much more relevant and believable than seeing squeaky-clean Michael J. Fox tell us drugs aren't cool.

The real tragedy of Slovak's death is that it took the loss of his life (although those close to the group say Slovak had been dead for quite a while before then) to sway the band from their obsession with pain and pleasure.

*Mother's Milk* is an album about the group's realization that "Hope I die before I get old" is more than just a catchy anthem.

I like to compare the Red Hots to the Replacements because both bands built their popularity as much through their incredible on- and offstage exploits (the Red Hots like to perform wearing only strategically-placed tube socks) as through their music.

Fortunately, like the Replacements, the Red Hots seem to be taming down and trying to pursue the experience of their music and not the experiences that come with the musician lifestyle.

But that's not to say that the Red Hot Chili Peppers have gone fuddy-duddy.

"Good Time Boys" is a hard-rockin' foot-stomper. "Taste The Pain" is a funky groover with a sadistic beat, and the "Fire" and "Higher Ground" (Stevie Wonder) covers are excellent.

Musically, *Mother's Milk* is the Red Hot's strongest and most diverse work yet. The band is extremely talented, running the gamut of modern music with hardcore, punk, blues, rap, funk and even a little jazz ("Pretty Little Ditty").

I'm sorry the band had to lose its left leg to realize it had a handicap, but tragedies set aside, the new Peppers appear to be on the right foot to becoming one of the hottest and tangiest acts of the '90s.

# Even Chase's antics can't salvage weak script, lame humor in predictable 'Christmas Vacation'

By Todd Stone

Of The Battalion Staff

National Lampoon's "Christmas Vacation" is the type of comedy that makes you laugh a few times, but when it's over, you can't remember why. The only thing memorable about this film is the overpriced ticket.

"Christmas" is a victim of two common comedy flaws: a storyline filled with too many boring time lapses, and has-been jokes that take too much time to set up.

In retrospect to the other "Vacation" films, this effort is not the worst of the forgettable trilogy ("Vacation" and "European Vacation" preceded "Christmas"). No film could be worse than "European Vacation," but with Chevy Chase and Randy Quaid starring in a film written by John Hughes, "Christmas Vacation" should have been much better.

The filmmakers must have made the assumption, "We have Chevy Chase; we don't need a good script to have a good comedy." Unfortunately, even Chase needs a good script to make an audience laugh.

In "Christmas," Chase is forced to stumble and trip across the screen, hoping one of his silly looks will earn a laugh. However, Chase can't pull off the "we have a boring script but the film is still

funny" charade. His best films, "Foul Play," "Seems Like Old Times" and "Fletch," were a result of a quality script as much as Chase's comedic talents.

Chase does not have that rare ability to make a film better based on his expressions and film presence. Tom Hanks is one actor who can make a good film great ("Big"), and a below average film ("Turner and Hooch") entertaining. Chase is only as good as the script.

In "Christmas," Hughes belches out a story that seems like a collection of afterthoughts. It is hard to believe this is the same person who wrote "The Breakfast Club" and "Planes, Trains, and Automobiles."

At best, "Christmas" looks like it was Hughes' first draft on the screen. The story is dreadfully simple, and has too few amusing scenes to make the audience ignore the lack of a clever plot.

Clark Griswold (Chase) decides not to travel for the holiday and spends Christmas with his family at home instead. Predictable problems arise: the outdoor lights don't work, Clark gets locked in the attic, and none of the relatives get along.

One small surprise was the effort to be sincere about Christmas spirit in a few scenes. However, the characters were too underdeveloped for the sincere approach

to succeed.

When the lewd and crude cousin Ed (Quaid), arrives, a few funny moments spark hope that the film still could turn out to be entertaining. But Quaid quickly loses himself in the weak script, and the film is doomed for mediocrity.

Director Jeremiah Chechik did not do anything special with "Christmas," which only enhances the flaws in the predictable script. Overall, the film was clumsy and often boring, but not to worry — the filmmakers are going to make plenty money from the suckers who made Chevy Chase's name more important than entertainment.

But not everyone was disappointed with the movie. Most of the audience laughed more than I did.

I did laugh about five times, but I paid \$5 to see this movie. One dollar per laugh just doesn't seem like a good deal to me. I could stay at home and squeeze five laughs out of a "Late Night With David Letterman" episode for no money at all.

If you are a Chevy Chase fan, and he can do no wrong in your eyes, then go see this film. Otherwise, "Christmas Vacation" is a mediocre comedy that isn't worth the time, much less the money, to watch.

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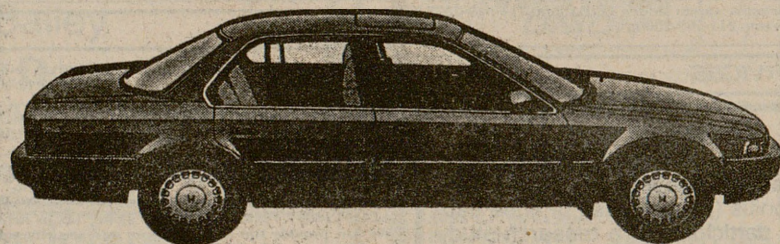
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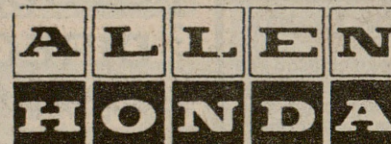
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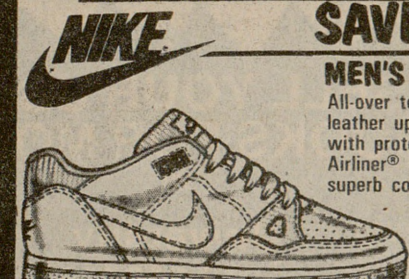


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