

# CD Review: Red Hot Chili Peppers — I'm With You

September 6, 2011



**Red Hot Chili Peppers**  
*I'm With You*  
[Warner Brothers](#)

By [Al Kaufman](#)

There was a time, some twenty or more years ago, when one of the greatest things to do would be take some drugs, blast the Chili Peppers, get naked, and dance like a maniac; a drug addled, naked maniac to be precise. Fast forward twenty years and these same former naked druggies, now upstanding citizens, can listen to the latest Chili Pepper CD with their kids before dropping them off at private school in the morning.

Although his porn star moustache makes him look kind of creepy, the Anthony Kiedis of "[Suck My Kiss](#)" is no more. Once the Peppers learned that songs like the ballad "[Under the Bridge](#)" would sell more copies than epic blasts like "[Give It Away Now](#)," they chose the way of commercial success. And now, like their aging fans, they have comfortably settled into middle age.

While the old Chili Peppers celebrated sex and drugs, these guys contemplate mortality and spiritual happiness. "I was really quite a jerk," explains Kiedis on "Factory of Faith." That song gives way to "Brendan's Death Song," on which Kiedis philosophizes, "The nights are long but the years are short when you're alive."

When the band tries to sound all bad ass, it feels forced. When Kiedis raps, “I want to rock you like the 80s/Cock blockin’ isn’t allowed,” on the first single, [“The Adventures of Rain Dance Mary,”](#) he sounds like a guy with a comb-over trying to relive his youth. The same is true for his boastful brag, “Hustle me bitch and you best beware,” on “Look Around.”

The fact of the matter is these guys are not really a funk rock band anymore. And it’s not just because guitarist John Frusciante left and was replaced by Josh Klinghoffer, who is really just Frusciante-lite. They just seem more at home in the mid-tempo rockers and ballads. Even the opening track, “Monarchy of Roses,” which tries to set the tone with pounding drums and resonator vocals, eventually settles into the typical Pepper groove. There’s nothing wrong with these numbers. They’ve been the bread and butter for the band these past ten years or so. Songs like [“Californication,”](#) [“Scar Tissue,”](#) and [“Snow \(Hey Oh\)”](#) go down easy and have kept the band playing Lollapaloozas while other bands from their era have moved onto the summer tent circuit.

There’s still some fun on here. Flea’s bass still spews out some thumping grooves, and Kiedis is fun in his fire and brimstone preacher role on “Even You Brutus?,” but, let’s face it, the crowd that gets into the Chili Peppers now can’t handle much more. They’ve added a few pounds, their cholesterol and blood pressure are high, and too much excitement may evoke a heart attack. No need to risk losing the fan base.