

"ROCK WITH ITS COCK OUT" Red Hot Chili Peppers

I began hearing about the Red Hot Chili Peppers from friends in L.A. about a year ago: an outlandish, athletic group of white boys who played funk with the stripped-down roar of hardcore. They had a gay punk following, and soon bare-ass performance photos began showing up in In Touch's (sadly discontinued) Sexiest Men in Rock features.

The band's visual focus was 21-year-old Anthony Kiedis, a blond Lithuanian beach-hunk whose rap vocals were inspired by Grandmaster Flash, but whose lyrics ranged from demented updates of Hank Williams to odes to dolphins and sex, and a wiry, half-Aborigine 21-year-old class clown, who plays bass, called Flea. The band's musical expertise was crucially enriched by the additions of guitarist Jack Sherman (28) and drummer Cliff Martinez (30), who had earned his stripes with the mad genius Captain Beefheart.

The band's first LP, *The Red Hot Chili Peppers* (Enigma), arrived last fall, and their record company took out an ad in In Touch promising "Rock with Its Cock Out." The LP, produced by Gang of Four guitarist Andy Gill, disappointed Kiedis, who complained: "It's a sissified, high-tech version of our sound. I wanted gritty, raw funk." Though it proved a cult favorite—topping the charts of many college radio stations—it didn't prepare listeners for the band's untamed live shows. Kiedis, doffing a bomber jacket with tin cups stapled to its shoulders, stripped down to nothing but boots and black spandex shorts. Grinning, stalking, flexing, then whipping his blond mane, Kiedis is the most physically audacious performer to seize the stage since the glory days of the young Iggy Pop.

The Red Hot Chili Peppers are neither gay nor homophobic. If guitarist Jack Sherman drawled "shut up homos" to one rowdy San Francisco crowd, bass player Flea was deadpanning to another, "I may not be gay, but my skateboarding buddy Scotty Glenn and I used to enjoy getting it off together." Gays are neither invisible nor despicable to this lot—just part of the crowd.

—Adam Block

The motto of the Peppers, who have been known to perform dressed in nothing but a sock, is "Play like you have a big dick." Being well endowed is more "a state of mind" than anything else, say the Peppers, who admit: "We're serious about having fun." Adds bass player Flea (right), "There's nothing more soulful than having fun." But lead singer Anthony Kiedis (above, middle) has the last word: "I think we're going to be really big in spite of ourselves."

