



Unfortunately, 15 minutes into a very solid conversation about, among other things, the Chili Pepper's new album *Blood, Sugar, Sex, Magik*, Mr Kiedis abruptly excused himself, saying he had to attend to a sudden emergency. He said he'd phone back, but of course he never did. A pity, as we'd just started talking about sex, a subject as crucial to Pepper music as Hendrix or Parliament or enchilladas. Here's what he said before he vanished.

How do you like Tokyo?
"I happen to be mesmerised by the oddity of the ordinariness in this country so I find it very interesting and amusing, but I don't think I'd ever choose this land to live in for any length of time. It's certainly different from anything else on the planet that I've ever experienced and for that reason it definitely keeps me amused. It's just a little too on the anal side for me."

Have you got many fans over there?
"Fans? That's all relative. There seem to be many crazed fans wherever we go. I suppose compared to America the numbers are actually much smaller, but they're very dedicated over here."
You were in Tokyo when the riots erupted in L.A. How did you feel about seeing all that stuff happening in your beloved home town?

"The first thing that I heard was the verdict which was given to the four policemen who beat the shit out of Rodney King with their clubs and the first thing I did is, I wanted to

THE CHILIS

Anthony Kiedis needs no introduction as the turbo-charged frontman for America's white hot, Red Hot Chili Peppers. Currently in the middle of a world tour which sees them play Auckland on 23 May, *RIU* finally tracked down one of rock's most wanted men to a hotel room in Tokyo, where he was registered under the alias Sammy Shake.

throw my television through the wall, just because I was so incredibly mad. I'd been waiting for months to get this verdict and it came when I was in Tokyo. I was just so pissed off I felt like destroying my own hotel room because I was livid, I didn't know what else to do.

"And then as the rioting began and progressed, my anger and my rage and my fucking hatred for that fucked up legal system turned to sadness when I saw what was happening and the stupidity and the violence and the misdirected energy in LA just became sadder, sadder and sadder until it was time to cry and just bow your head and mourn for the ridiculousness of life in that city."

Your song 'The Power of Equality' is certainly a song for the hour with lyrics like: "All I see is insanity / whatever happened to humanity". Kind of prescient.

"Yeah it is, but it's not that much of a statement. To those who are even half way aware of what goes on, that's as plain as night and day."

Talking about Los Angeles, 'Under The Bridge' is virtually a

love song to that city.

"Yeah, that could definitely be interpreted as a love song to Los Angeles and the funny thing is, I haven't been there since the riot took place, but I spoke to my father who lives in Michigan and he explained to me that on this television news show called *Alternative Affair* they did this three-and-a-half minute montage of Los Angeles burning in the riot and they played 'Under The Bridge' behind the montage. So I guess people are definitely relating to the tune in relation to their own experience."

You've spawned a legion of imitators. How do you feel about that?

"This is a question that I've answered before and my feeling is that there is no band that I've heard of or been exposed to that sounds anything truly like the Red Hot Chili Peppers. There are people who definitely attempt to borrow elements of what we do and apply it to their own creative enterprises, but I don't think that anybody does it accurately enough for me to feel like

they're stealing from us. Granted, everything musically is borrowed from something else in some fashion or another. To me, it makes much more sense to become creatively inspired by an art form and maybe apply it to your inspiration, but not to try to recreate it in your art, because then it's just an imitation or a duplicate which has so much less meaning and truth to it.

"So for anybody who is directly trying to copy what we do, my advice to them is to give it up. Definitely connect and become inspired, but allow your own creative vision to come through without being hindered by somebody else's creative expression. And certainly it's a great form of flattery if nothing else, that people would realise that what we do is a lot of fun and want to do it as well."

They can mimic the funky bass and rock guitar, but your intense fusion of rap, funk, rock, jazz, lyrical density and extreme physical presence is a hard act to copy.

"No one could ever copy what we do because no-one lives the lives that we lead and no-one experiences the same things that we do and all of our music and our lyrics come directly from the way that we live our lives. We're certainly by no means the first band to ever fuse different varieties of music together. People have been doing that for a long time with, like, Miles Davis, Parliament, Funkadelic. In the heyday of Parliament and Funkadelic they were considered too black to be played on rock radio and too rock to be played on black radio so they were definitely masters of that funk / rock fusion."

"I think perhaps the one element that we injected into that unconscious formula was the energy of punk rock music which was something that when Parliament and Funkadelic were playing hadn't really emerged as a force in the musical world yet. Growing up in Hollywood with punk rock being a big part of our lives, this was a particular energy that kind of came naturally to us when we played music."

Everyone knows you love Hendrix, Count Basie, Miles Davis and the aforementioned artists. Are there any white artists who have particularly inspired you?

"It has nothing to do with the colour of the person playing the music, it has to do with the soul and honesty of the band. I grew up in

America so I got exposed to all types of music, it really doesn't matter about the colour. People like Hank Williams and the Minutemen and a lot of other people: Jane's Addiction, Henry Rollins... I don't want to particularly list white people that I'm into, I'm just into music for the sake of music, not because of the colour."

What about the Rolling Stones?
"Um, I'm not a huge Rolling Stones fan, to tell you the truth. I think they play good music, but I just never got into them."

I see that Gus Van Sant, the director of *Drugstore Cowboy*, took the photographs of you for *Blood, Sugar, Sex, Magik*. Are you keen to get into movies now?

"That's actually what I did when I was a kid, I was an actor from the age of 14 to about the age of 18, that's what I was doing to creatively occupy my time. But as for right now I'm far more interested in sending my energy in the direction of music because it's just much more fulfilling. When you're an actor in a film you're at the mercy of the director and the writer, but when you're writing music you are the director, the writer and the performer, both live and in the studio, and I prefer that because it allows for a much truer end result to the creative impulse."

Didn't you just star as a surf punk in a movie?

"It was called *Point Break* and it's nothing that I'm proud of. It was a completely unemotional piece of commercialism that has very little to do with actual beauty and art."

Are you a friend of Gus Van Sant?

"Actually we met Gus through Flea because Flea had been in a Gus Van Sant movie called *My Own Private Idaho*. Gus is also very musically orientated, he's a great singer and songwriter himself and he was kind of into the Red Hot Chili Peppers so we invited him to take photographs of us for the record and he also ended up directing the video for *Under the Bridge*."

You pack a lot of words into your songs.

"Words are crazy things, they're merely symbols that futilely attempt to express the true nature of feeling. So you kind of have to do your best with words."

Do you enjoy words? A lot of musicians don't even like talking about their music.

"Actually, the only reason I ever talk about my music is because I think it might in some way help to have it heard by more people. The process

of talking about it ends up exposing it to other arenas, but I prefer not to talk about it so much because it kind of takes the mystery out of it and the more you analyse something the more your brain sees it in a different light."

Do you like to read? The song 'Mellowship' includes a bit of an ode to authors. You list Mark Twain, Truman Capote, Bukowski.

"I certainly love to read. Right now I'm reading this book called *The Wicked Lady: Salvador Dali's Muse* and it's all about Gala. I'm a huge fan of Salvador Dali."

Do you own any of his paintings?

"No, I don't own any of his paintings, but I do have a collection of contemporary Los Angeles painters."

You're a big Robert Williams fan aren't you?

"Yeah, I'd have to say he's my favourite painter. I have many of his paintings."

Sex is a huge part of the Chili Pepper's magic, you guys use it to fuel your musical muscle, but do you ever feel you've explored its creative potential to the limit? Maybe you'd get a better high off meditation.

"Well, to me sexual activity and sexual energy and just the nature of sex is as multi-dimensional, vast and diverse as any thing that you experience. It isn't like a minor aspect of life, it's a huge part of human nature or animal nature and it doesn't seem appropriate to treat it like some sort of side dish because it really is a main course when it comes to living your life. It's always been inspirational to me since I can remember as a small boy and I should hope that it will always be that way until I die, it's one of the beautiful symbols — oh, you know what, there's a slight emergency that I have to deal with right now so if it's possible, I'll phone you back..."

I never got the chance to ask him all my other questions. Like how does he feel to be regarded as a sex symbol and what are his thoughts on beauty and does he have any evil impulses or is life in the Chili Peppers just one long sustained joyous combustion of creative / sexual / musical energy, peace and love and righteousness? I guess I'll never know. See you at the concert.
DONNA YUZWALK

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