

Chili Peppers serve up spicy music mix

By Peter B. King

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The only thing wilder than the Red Hot Chili Peppers was the audience at the A.J. Palumbo Center last night. Some fans on the floor picked up portable seats (sometimes from under people standing on them) and passed them back to make room for diving and slam-dancing.

That's rock 'n' roll (or punk-funk), I guess, especially as played by the Peppers. Aurally and visually, this band is exciting enough to get people crazy.

If there's one member who epitomizes the Peppers' zany energy, it's bassist Flea. Short, shirtless and muscular, sporting a pared-down Mohawk and (like other group members) tattoos, he looked like a bantamweight boxer in training as he hopped high in the air. Even better, he played slap-and-pop bass with fire and impressive technique.

Lead singer Anthony Kiedis matched Flea in stamina and strangeness. Flea did a headstand against some amps; Kiedis did a handstand. The two traded British accents a la "This Is Spinal Tap."

Kiedis rapped with power and dexterity, occasionally sang and



The Red Hot Chili Peppers are, from left, Flea, Chad Smith, John Frusciante and Anthony Kiedis.

sometimes bellowed hardcore-style.

Drummer Chad Smith played funky. Guitarist John Frusciante delivered a good, simplified Jimi Hendrix wah-wah style.

The LA band played songs from most of its eight-year career, including from the strong new album, "Blood Sugar Sex Magik." The

tunes are an odd assortment of nature hymns, social protest, lust and more lust — often infused with a large dose of silliness.

For good measure, the band finished with a buzz-saw version of Iggy Pop's "Search and Destroy." Then Flea smashed his bass into pieces, and Smith overturned his drums and dived into the crowd.

MUSIC REVIEW

Pearl Jam, a Seattle band with roots in the defunct Green River and Mother Love Bone, opened the show. Led by the full baritone of Eddie Vedder, the band turned in an above-average mix of wah-wah guitar, feedback, deft touches of melody and hard rock.

Next up was Smashing Pumpkins. There's a buzz about this Chicago band's first album, "Gish." But live, the group came across as a third-rate mix of Led Zeppelin and Sonic Youth — lacking the chops of the former and the inspired weirdness of the latter.

Lead singer/guitarist Billy Coran was particularly irritating. He said he hates rock stars with attitudes, yet that's exactly how he came across. He used a certain four-letter word with gratuitous frequency, and he harangued the crowd of 3,269 for not showing enough appreciation.

"Hey, you know Pittsburgh's got a really bad rap," he said (expletives deleted). "You guys are supposed to be really lame. You sure didn't do a very good job during Pearl Jam."