

Bass hot in Chili Peppers' mix

Next time somebody tells you one man can't make a difference, take them to see the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

More accurately, take them to see Flea.

His atomic-powered bass, which is about the most bass any human can play, was the thing that made Sunday night's show worth attending. And worth standing on your chair and dancing and screaming. He's that good.

His right hand was slapping and popping, his left hand skittering up and down the fretboard, his skinny little tattooed body doubled over and his head is probably still rolling around the Convention Center.

When he cranked up "Nobody Weird Like Me," about seven songs into the set, it was funk bass played fast as a machine gun, but with those all-important hesitations and accents that *make* it funk, and not just a handful of notes.

The cool thing is that he didn't overplay. He can, and did, go a million notes a minute when he has to, but he can rein it in and just lay down a big, fat bottom, too.



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On Music

Flea's playing pointed out, however, the band's Achilles' heel: His groove is *so* important to the sound that nothing else really matters in the live act. Listen to the records and you can hear what a funny, funky, hard-rocking band this is — a terrific blend of funk and hip-hop and in-your-face rock. Live, the groove is all you really get.

John Frusciante knows how to play hard

rock and he knows how to play funk, but several times during the night he didn't seem to be particularly gripping at either.

Singer Anthony Kiedis was fine, with the exception of "Under the Bridge" from the Peppers' new "Blood Sugar Sex Magik" record. On the disc it's OK, but live, ballads are not among the things the Chili Peppers do well. It was brutal.

Much of the band's hour and 20 minute set came from the new disc, but the coolest stuff was from earlier records, especially "Organic Anti-Beat Box Band" and their superior cover of Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground."

There was good stuff from the new record too, though — "Give It Away" and "If You Have to Ask."

Opening acts Pearl Jam and Smashing Pumpkins were yawns. Pearl Jam stayed more to the rock side of the funk-rock line, but it wasn't particularly exciting or interesting. And Smashing Pumpkins went back and forth between boring heavy and boring psychedelic.