



Story by **TOM MOON** *Knight Rider*

**I**t happens every time: A band strikes gold with an innovative sound, and within six months, there are copycats in every club. Instant trend.

The Red Hot Chili Peppers are experiencing this phenomenon on something of a delayed basis: Nearly 10 years ago, when rock was pre-classic and the smell of Parliament-Funkadelic's sweat still lingered in the air, the Los Angeles foursome stumbled onto a hard-rock-meets-funk hybrid distinguished by earth-moving bass and distorted, unapologetic crunch guitars.

Their lewd roar was proof that music could be exceedingly physical without being dumb. It was novel. It played to the fringe. The Chilis became a cult attraction, a cool step up for disaffected slammers.

But the following grew, and now the Chili Peppers sound is everywhere: in the music of Living Colour, Urban Dance Squad, Primus, Scatterbrain, 24-7 Spyz, Hard Corps, even MTV jingles.

In their view, the Red Hot Chili Peppers arrived years ago, and over countless tours, an EP and four albums (including 1989's "Mother's Milk," with their hit "Higher Ground" by Stevie Wonder) have merely honed their work until they have become irresistible even to Big Chill yuppies in suits. Nonetheless, with so many reverent knockoffs, and a memorable cameo in the Andre Agassi commercial

for Nike ("You wanna play rock 'n' roll tennis?"), 1991 has been a breakthrough year.

"Blood Sugar Sex Magik," the album the Chilis made to distance themselves from their imitators, sold more than 500,000 copies in its first five weeks. And despite the soft economy, the band's tour has sold out at every stop.

Naturally, as newly crowned patriarchs of funk-fusion, the Red Hot Chili Peppers are psyched. But they're also a little concerned. "Some of those bands are making the mistake of connecting with the sound instead of the spirit," says lead singer Anthony Kiedis, 29. "They're being way too literal. You can hear the calculation in what they do."

He and the other Chilis prefer the approach taken by the grungy hard-core trio Nirvana. "We all really like their new album, 'Nevermind,'" Kiedis said from Boston, prior to a show.

"We called them up while they were on the road to see if they could do some dates with us on the West Coast. They were burnt and wanted to get off the road. But they were into it, because they said they've been listening to the Chili Peppers for years and years. That's cool. We might have influenced them, but they don't sound anything like us."

The Chilis, Nirvana and Pearl Jam play a sold-out show at the Del Mar Fairground's O'Brien Pavilion Saturday.

**RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS**

- Red Hot Chili Peppers, Nirvana and Pearl Jam
- When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday
- Where: O'Brien Pavilion, Del Mar Fairgrounds
- Tickets: Sold out
- Info: 619-570-1222