

The Vinyl Phyle

**Red Hot Chili Peppers
Mother's Milk
Capitol/EMI**

Mother's Milk. Those are two words that conjure up many different images. Purity. Parental love. Nurturing.

Well, the Red Hot Chili Peppers exemplify none of these.

But the words "Mother's Milk" suggest many other things as well. It's food. It's sustenance. It's probably the first thing you've every tasted.

Well now we're getting closer. To your musical palate, The Chili Peppers can be all these things. They can be refreshing, nourishing, even urgent.

This is music with flavour. It's a melting pot of many different musical styles — a boiling cauldron with leg of funk, head of metal, and ear of hardcore. PunkFunkMetalRapCore.

But let's forget about cheap attempts at inventing labels. It's cool.

Any band that covers Hendrix' "Fire" and does it justice is a band that has tapped into that rock & roll intangible. That groove aspect, if you will.

The Chilis are a passionate band, a band of extremes. I mean, look what they call themselves, and look what they're calling their latest release.

This in itself is very indicative of *Mother's Milk*. There's much to be found on it. It's an eclectic listen to say the least.

The Chilis see themselves "busting people

out of their everyday cage." Whether or not this is true, only a listen can help you decide. But if it is true, you are sure to be in for a very intimate and mind-blowing experience. The Chilis themselves invite you:

"For those of you who doubt the nature of our spirit, we play it out loud for anyone to hear it."
—Ron Kuipers



**Big Audio Dynamite
Megatop Phoenix
CBS/Columbia**

At this time last year, Big Audio Dynamite's front man Mick Jones was near death in a London hospital, laid low with pneumonia coupled with chicken pox. For two weeks no one was sure whether he'd live or die. And after the danger had passed, no one was sure whether he'd ever sing or play guitar again. However, as the title of Big Audio Dynamite's fourth album suggests, Mick Jones and the rest of B.A.D. aren't quite ready to ride off into the sunset. In a recent *Melody Maker* interview Jones says that coming so close to death has given him a new determination. If it has, the determination doesn't seem to come through on *Megatop Phoenix*.

Mick Jones wasted no time after being unjustly sacked from The Clash in 1983. He formed Big Audio Dynamite and they rode into town with *This Is Big Audio Dynamite*, making music recorded in Cinemascope — Cadillacs and machine guns, denim jackets and the Wild West, sideburns and dreadlocks, beatboxes and big Gibson guitars. Big Audio Dynamite's style was a great mix of electro and rock 'n' roll. Jones and F/X man Don Letts always knew how to keep the balance and never allowed the electronic side of B.A.D. to make the music hollow or weak. However, *Megatop Phoenix* turns out to be

too much button-pushing and not enough bricks and mortar.

There's a lot of material on this album and it's quite different to listen to since there are no cuts between the tracks. The rhythms all drift into one another or change abruptly, bridged by ramshackle cut-ups of sampled voices and drum machine riffs like "All Mink And No Manners" and "Mick's A Hippy Burning." All of this nifty experimentation only makes a lot of the songs sound the same, despite sampling everything from Alfred Hitchcock to *The Great Escape* to 1960's reggae. A couple of the songs like "Union, Jack" and "Contact" manage to reprise some of Big Audio Dynamite's previous style and strength, while most of the other songs leave it far behind.

As a Big Audio Dynamite album, *Megatop Phoenix* is fairly good. As an album on its own, it walks the tightrope between pop and alternative. B.A.D. still manage to use brains with their beatboxes and the album still rises above most contemporary music. *Megatop Phoenix* doesn't really reach up from the turntable and grab you as other Big Audio Dynamite albums do, but as Mick Jones concludes: "This time, though, I don't want to steamroller anyone. I want to encourage them to come on our journey because it's not a wasted trip. It's a strange trip, a challenging trip, sometimes an exotic trip, but it's never dull."

— Michael Chevalier

RED HOT CHILI



PEPPERS



**Concrete Blonde
Free
I.R.S. Records**

Sirens chase pounding footsteps through backstreet ghettos. Listless, angry residents take shelter and smoke under roofs that leak. These are the images focused in song by this L.A.-based foursome.

The music is hard-edged guitar-driven rock, full of energy and urgency. Lyrics take aim at God, drugs, money, birthdays. The only liner note is an anti-establishment thing by Leon Russell. So I assume that their anger is directed at people who run things, those who are often deaf to under-class wants. *Free* brings the din of urban ghettos into audible range.

The song "God is a Bullet" offers little hope for an afterlife. In "Happy Birthday," singer Johnete Napolitano celebrates by "staring up at the ceiling stain." But this is nice stuff for a band that has had songs banned for foul lyrics.

The music under the lyrics is strong. Napolitano's voice soars and seizes, and spare production gives a forceful, straight-ahead sound. But such an upbeat sound is unusual company for harsh words. Also, rhyme seems to diffuse the impact of the words. The groove pulls you and your mind goes along for the ride. The chorus "can't believe the way you bleed when you run" made me think about a friend whose toenail bleeds when he jogs.

If I hadn't escaped by not listening right, I might have considered the message in "Carry Me Away," in which an alcoholic finds that release comes from a new outlook. Escape for the mind is a theme that shows up several times on the album, which exalts dignity as a condition — free.

— Robert Nordal



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