

MIXDOWN



RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

BANGIN' THE GONG

**CASSETTES FOR KIDS
MOTEZ
AKG 75TH ANNIVERSARY**

ANNUAL GEAR GUIDE

**REVIEWED:
FENDER JOE STRUMMER TELECASTER
NEKTAR IMPACT LX MINI
UNIVERSAL AUDIO VOLT 476P
FOCUSRITE ISA ONE
+ MORE**

FREE



Red Hot Chili Peppers

Detroit-drummer Chad Smith was a denim-clad, long hair and bandana type of operator when he moved to Los Angeles in 1988. The antithesis of the Sunset Strip subverters in the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

The Chili Peppers had yet to break through in the sense we know them today and were in the midst of rebuilding, but had gained quite the cult following for their crazy stage antics, high-octane performances, and *choice* haircuts.

So when Chad walked into the Hully Gully rehearsal studio to audition for the band, he could have never imagined what was to come.

Fast forward 34 years later and that same sock-sporting fleet of funk-rockers have conquered the globe, releasing two double LPs in 2022, *Unlimited Love* and *Return of the Dream Canteen*.

"To be still relevant, playing, and making new music with people filling up stadiums all over the world – it's insane! It is, come on," Chad exuberantly and laughingly reflects from his Long Island abode in the lead up to Thanksgiving.

"The Chili Peppers?! The guys with the socks on their dicks?! We're in the fucking Hall of Fame it's unbelievable."

Persistence has been a staple of the Chili Peppers through their many iterations, but the renaissance of quartet Smith, Flea, Anthony Kiedis, and wunderkind John Frusciante had fans buzzing.

The famed four made the Red Hot Chili Peppers a household name in 1991 with *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, the same album which spawned many of the same writing techniques employed today.

Unable to record the new material for *Blood Sugar* due to being without a label, producer Rick Rubin implored them to continue writing, refining, and reworking the music. The result was having much more than the album required, but produced the best work they had done so far.

So when the pandemic hit, it's needless to say the group got to work, got in a room, and just wrote, and wrote, and wrote.

"We all get in a room and just improvise, or somebody has an idea or a part from home," Chad

explains. "It could be a bassline or a chord progression or I start a drum beat and those guys join in.

"We've been doing it long enough where somebody hits on a chord progression or riff or something we all kind of like, we all look at each other like, 'Keep going, that's pretty good!'. Anthony's in the room too and will often go, 'I can do something with that'.

"It's always been like that... I think it's possible that's why we sound kind of unique because everyone's involved in the creative process."

"There comes a time when you're playing your instrument you just want to change up and see what inspires you."

Another aspect of their unique product stems from the dynamics of the band musically, essentially being a trio with Anthony's vocals over the top which allows for so much space to work in the mix.

"The tendency is to fill it up," Chad explains. "But I think you learn over time that often the simplicity and the space is what makes things really special.

"Live, we tend to play a little bit more because we're kind of a bunch of show offs, but on the record, there's going to be other elements whether that's John's guitars, percussion, horns, keyboards, whatever we feel the song calls for.

"Some of our favourite bands were a three piece with vocals, Van Halen, Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath. There's no hiding though, you can't layer a bunch of shit over it, pan seven guitars, what you hear is us playing. I think that connects with people. If you're a good band and you can play well together, that'll come across.

"We haven't lost that perspective in today's modern day of recording where you can have 64 tracks of shit – it doesn't make it better."

Driving that simplistic charge is producer Rick Rubin who has worked with the band on every record since *Blood Sugar* except for one.

"Often we can go on and on and on, play too much and too long," Chad laughs. "He's good at keeping it more concise and finding the thing about a piece of music that's special or different and honing in on that.

"He hasn't been writing and working on these songs for six or eight months like us, we're very close to them, and then he comes in towards the end of the process where we have a bunch of songs and we play them for him. He has very objective ideas about them.

"Sometimes some things we think are really great, he'll be like, 'That's cool, I like it, what else ya got?' We're like, 'No, no! This is the greatest thing ever!' Then we'll play something that we jammed on one day and he'll be like, 'What's that?!'. He's got great ears and knows how to get the best out of people."

Much is made of the relationship and chemistry Flea and John share with the bass boffin's work getting him back in the band (twice) and their on-stage jams leading into songs.

Chad sees himself as the canvas for the rest of the guys to paint on top of, giving the Chili's a solid foundation to support the lyric and melody. But despite the beautiful melodic elements John brings, rhythm is at the crux of it all through Chad and Flea's masterful interplay.

"There's no shortcuts in that musical telepathy that you have with someone, Flea and I have played a lot of notes and a lot of rhythms together," Chad says. "We know each other so well, and the Chili Peppers are so rhythm-oriented that it's important we have an understanding of what's the best thing for the song."

While the lineup is back to what so many people fell in love with, there has been a significant change that might have gone unnoticed for many – Chad's cymbals. His use of Sabian cymbals predated the Chili Peppers as after 35 years, he's now transitioned over to Paiste.

"There comes a time when you're playing your instrument you just want to change up and see what inspires you," Chad explains. "I've used Paiste before on *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, lots of records, lots of different things. But to use them live on tour, they were thinner cymbals, they weren't as durable and I'd break them! So that was a bit of a problem.



"They've since made them a little more durable, they sound great, it was just time for a change. Nothing political. Some of the greatest rock drummers in the world played Paiste – John Bonham, Stewart Copeland, Phil Rudd, Jim Keltner, Keith Moon. Some of my favourite drummers!"

The latest addition to his cymbal setup is a 52" symphonic gong which has been present on their tour and will assume its position behind Chad when the Chili Peppers head down under in February.

"We love playing in Australia, and Flea is one of your countrymen so it's special for him and us. I don't know if we've done just football stadiums before!

"We added more shows and we're going to be well rested to blow the minds of the young Australian people."

BY ELI DUXSON

CHAD SMITH'S LIVE KIT

KIT:

- DW Collector's Series maple/mahogany shells
- 16x24 bass drum
- 8x12 rack tom
- 14x14 floor tom
- 16x16 floor tom
- 16x 21 gong drum
- 10" vintage Staccato tom
- 7x12 side snare
- Cluster of 4 6" Rata toms various depths
- Alternates between 5.5x14 or 6.5x14 DW thin aluminum Snare drums
- Remo 10" Rototom
- All DW 9000 series hardware
- DW Single 5000 bass drum pedal

PAISTE CYMBALS:

- 12" 2002 Splash
- 15" Signature Power Hi Hat top
- 15" 2002 Sound Edge bottom
- 19" 2002 Extreme Crash
- 20" 2002 Extreme Crash
- 24" 2002 Ride
- 24" 2002 Crash
- 20" PSTX Swiss Medium Crash
- Stack 10" 2002 Mini China/12" PSTX Splash
- 10" PSTX Pure Bell
- 20" 2002 Spiral Cymbal
- 52" Symphonic Gong

PERCUSSION:

- LP Red Jam block
- LP Chad Smith Cowbell
- LP City Series High Hat Jingle Ring Double

DRUMHEADS:

- Remo Drumheads
- Toms/Rata Toms-Colortone Emperor (Smoke Color) batter side
- Clear Ambassador Reso side
- CSX Coated snare
- Ambassador Snare bottom
- Powerstroke 3 Colortone (Smoke)