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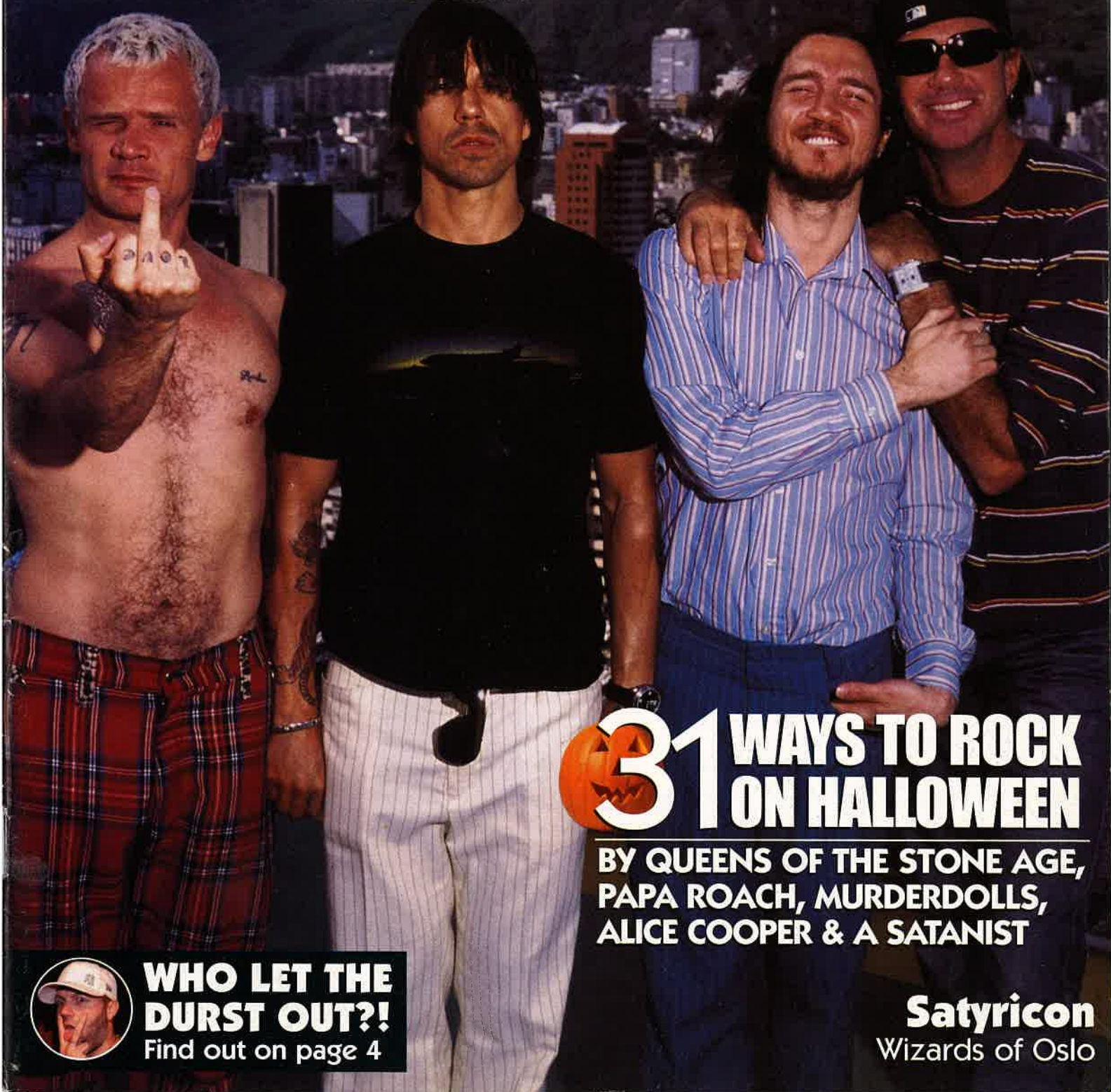
**WORLD EXCLUSIVE!**  
CHRIS CORNELL & RAGE:  
THEY SPEAK!

**SILVERCHAIR**  
Daniel fights back

## CHILI PEPPERS

Guns. Murder. Whores.  
Welcome to Venezuela...

**FUGAZI**  
LIVE IN THE UK



## 31 WAYS TO ROCK ON HALLOWEEN

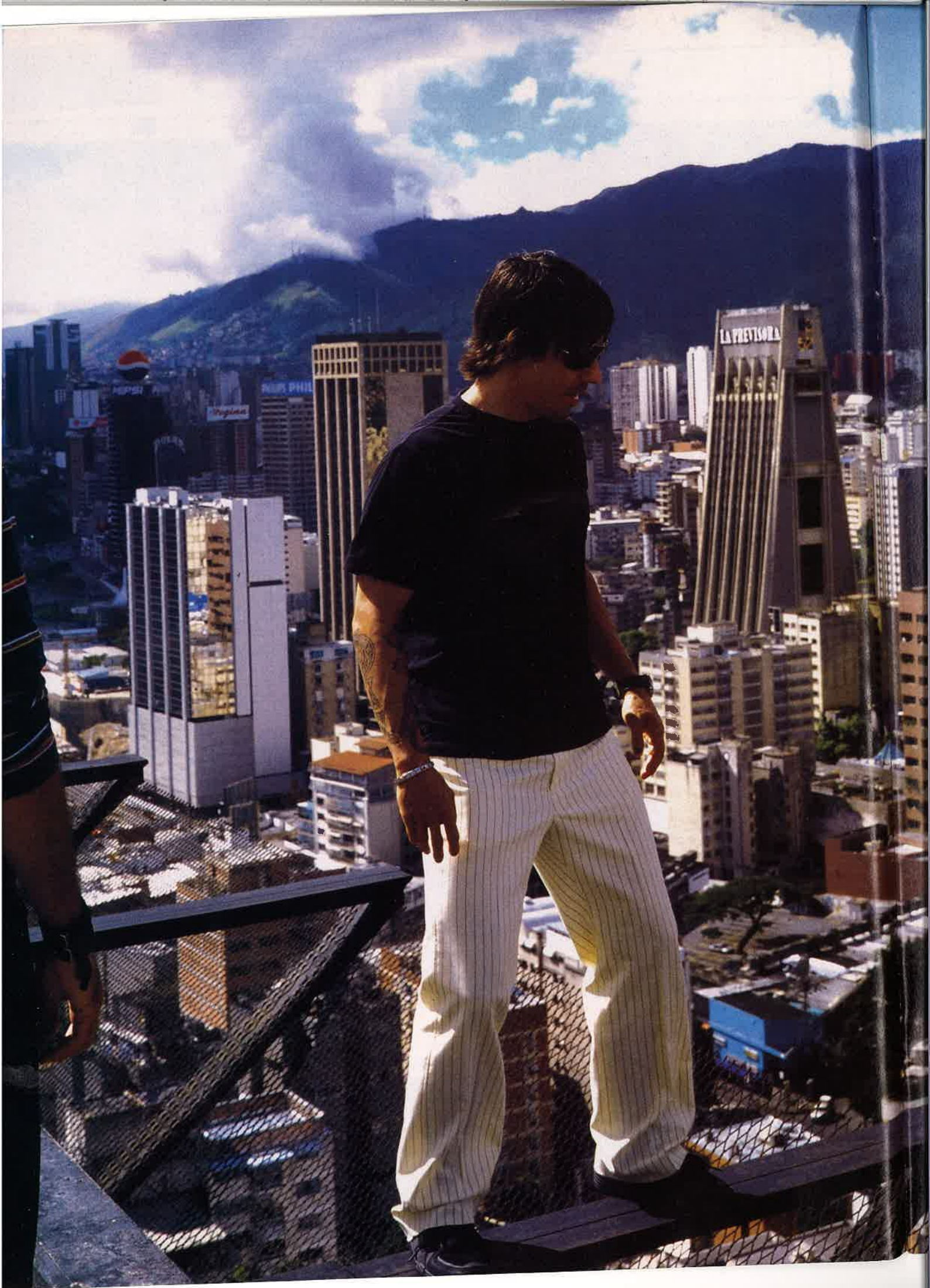
BY QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE,  
PAPA ROACH, MURDERDOLLS,  
ALICE COOPER & A SATANIST



**WHO LET THE  
DURST OUT?!**  
Find out on page 4

**Satyricon**  
Wizards of Oslo









# Don't Look Down

ON AN AVERAGE WEEKEND, 60 PEOPLE DIE ON THE STREETS OF CARACAS. IF HE MAKES ONE WRONG MOVE, **RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS** FRONTMAN ANTHONY KIEDIS WILL BE THE 61ST...

Words: Ben Mitchell Photos: Tony Woollscroft

**ONE GOOD** gust of wind and Anthony Kiedis is dead. He won't leave a good-looking corpse either, not after a 200-foot swan dive onto the circular concrete drive at the entranceway to the luxurious Gran Melia Hotel here in downtown Caracas. Assembled with the rest of the Red Hot Chili Peppers to be photographed on the roof in the early afternoon October sun, the frontman has decided to walk out onto a girder protruding four feet into thin air.

There's no handrail and only a flimsy steel mesh between Kiedis and lethal freefall, so drummer Chad Smith protectively moves a little closer to the edge.

"You're making me nervous, Chad," Kiedis warns the drummer, the breeze tousling his brown hair.

"You're making me f\*\*king nervous, Anthony!" shouts bassist Flea as guitarist John Frusciante laughs and shakes his head.

"I just want to be alone!" the singer shouts, enjoying the view for a few seconds longer before calmly taking three deliberate steps back to safety.

"We might be getting old," grins Smith, "but we're not boring."

**THE CHILI** Peppers are in South America to play 10 shows, many of them in uncharted Peppers territory such as Costa Rica, Panama and today's stopover, Venezuela's tense capital.

Looking straight down from the roof, the swimming pool below is surrounded by stunning women catching rays, sipping cocktails and flicking through 'Vogue' – Venezuela boasts five Miss Worlds, more than any other country in the event's 50-year history. Look a little further and you'll see the black iron hotel gate, watched over by two large men wearing jackets that fail to cover the bulge that big guns make. Look past that to the left – a direction that the staff in the lobby strongly advise against travelling – and you'll see the street where John Frusciante's guitar tech had his fake Rolex ripped from his wrist a couple of hours earlier. Beyond that, past the office blocks, clogged roads and garish billboards common to any big city, thousands upon thousands of brick huts stretch away up into the surrounding hills for miles into the distance. This is the barrio, a lawless makeshift slum that rings Caracas. When night falls this foreboding sprawl loses its daytime ugliness as the white lights from the crumbling dwellings twinkle like stars. A closer look will, however, get you killed. The police only tend to go here to perform "extra judicial executions" of undesirables, ie protecting their anonymity with hoods and shooting murderers and rapists, hundreds of them each year. Even if the police hesitate to take some of these criminals out of circulation, routine mob lynchings get the job done just as effectively.

Eighty per cent of the 4.6 million population here in Caracas live below the poverty line, which is surprising when you consider that Venezuela is the world's fourth largest exporter of oil. Indeed, the oil

boom of the '70s brought people flocking to the city from the countryside as the economy flourished. To use a local saying, life was easier than a low-hanging mango.

Recently, however, life has not been quite so carefree. President Hugo Chavez – reinstated in April after a violent coup – has put the brakes on oil production to protect Venezuela's natural resources in the long term. In conjunction with unstable oil prices, the socio-economic crisis has crept ever further into a very deep hole, the murder rate quintupling in the last 10 years. Violent street crime is rife – funeral homes hire security guards to prevent mourners from being robbed – with tourists viewed as especially easy prey to the extent that traffic lights are disregarded after dusk to combat car-jacking.

Found on the northernmost tip of South America, Venezuela is a beautiful country, boasting pristine beaches, luxuriant rainforests, the 979-metre high Angel Falls and the Andes. Caracas, however, is not a beautiful city, it's a desperate one.

**TWENTY MINUTES** after Anthony Kiedis' high-rise balancing act, Chad Smith is relaxing in the private lounge bar adjacent to the Chili Peppers' suites on the 19th floor. The drummer signs the bill for a tray of prawn cocktail and spaghetti bolognese as Dixie Normous – past aliases have included Willy Nailem, Haywood Jablowme, Ivan Joierpuss, Mike Litoris and, when in Ireland, Pat McGroin.

Even at 40, the six-foot four-inch drummer jokes around like a huge schoolboy – and in his grey and yellow DC trainers, striped T-shirt and Oakland A's ball cap swung backwards on his head he looks like one too, despite actually having three kids of his own.

"I'm currently single – unencumbered," he says. "Personal relationships I'm not so good at, I'll stick to playing the drums. I have three very steep child support payments every month, and that's fine because I love my kids and I want that they should be well taken care of and they are – but their moms are well taken care of as well."

The rest of the band want to wait until they have finished their duties for the day – a press conference and tonight's show – before meeting to talk. Kiedis and Flea relax, chowing down on room service in their rooms. Touring staff try to track down a pillow that Flea's 14-year-old daughter, Clara, knitted for him which has been left at the band's last hotel in Panama, while an assistant searches a nearby mall for hair-clippers to trim the bassist's bleached crop. Frusciante tends to spend all of his free time playing guitar and listening to his iPod or Discman – the 16 hours a day he habitually uses these portable CD players means the tour manager carries spares for when the motors inevitably burn out. Smith has no need for "me time", however, preferring to lark about with anyone in his vicinity and chain-smoke cigarettes.

"I don't have to meditate with Flea or do yoga with John to feel connected to them," he explains. "We have two buses. I'm in the smoking meat wagon, they're on the tofu bus."



**A LATE** lunch with Smith is an entertaining hour of anyone's time. He is the only Chili Pepper that will admit to having a least favourite country to tour – "I'm not a big fan of Germany. They're just so f\*\*king... German!" – and tends to be the one keen to sample local nightlife. Have the groupies changed much over the years?

"I don't really partake of the groupies too much anymore."

Do they stay the same age as you get older?

"That's what I like about this business!"

Pushed on an earlier overheard conversation regarding his whereabouts the previous evening, Smith admits that he and some of the road crew "went to three warehouses, sort of".

Warehouses?

"Not really," he explains. "They were like strip clubs but you get to take away, like McDonald's or something. It didn't seem rough, but I was with guys with guns and shit."

At a discrete distance stands such a gentleman by the name of José. José is one of two bodyguards hired by the promoter to shadow the band. José's duties extend somewhat beyond moving on overzealous autograph hunters and fending off girls, as American rock stars are a prime target for potential kidnapers, a lucrative local cottage industry that currently thrives on ransom business. Asked whether he's "packing", José hitches back his smartly-pressed black Levi's denim jacket to reveal a holstered Glock 9mm pistol. "Ready to go!" he smiles. "Only Mexico City is worse than Caracas. On a good weekend here maybe only 60 people get killed".

A bad weekend sees that figure double. However you feel about guns, right now it feels good that someone on your side is carrying one, ready to go.

**THE RED** Hot Chili Peppers congregate to be escorted by way of service elevators and kitchens to the waiting local press. José and a similarly armed associate make sure the path is clear and instruct the band to wait for them to be announced. As they wait in a corridor to go in and take questions, Smith makes the formal introductions.

"This is my friend John," he tells me, as Frusciante smiles broadly. Kiedis offers his hand with a polite "Anthony", before Smith adds, "This is Flea – he plays a mean bass". All have firm handshakes, except Flea who apologetically offers chilly fingers dripping with water from holding his iced bottle of Evian.

Once announced, the band file in and sit on a stage in front of about 40 print, radio and TV journalists. Flea grabs a microphone and belches loudly while Smith helps himself from the modest buffet. Every question is asked in Spanish, translated into English, answered and then translated for the audience. In the course of the next half an hour, five

questions about set-lists, drugs, and tattoos are fielded. Frusciante does most of the talking, Flea and Kiedis speak occasionally – the singer tries unsuccessfully to initiate a game of musical chairs – while Smith doesn't say a word.

"There was a strange energy in that room," Kiedis claims afterwards.

"Really? I didn't notice," says a permanently cheerful Frusciante.

**THE DRIVE** to Valle Des Pop – a 30,000-capacity outdoor venue set on the edge of a forest – should take just over an hour from the centre of Caracas. The first thing you notice driving up the motorway with about five miles to go is the huge queue of vehicles ahead. Almost immediately after that the cars doing three point turns and driving the wrong way down the road really get your attention. The jam hasn't been helped by an excitable gig-goer getting out of his pick-up and firing his semi-automatic pistol into the air. The authorities bundle him off immediately, but leave his truck where it is.

After three hours of slow progress under police the appearance of men knocking on the windows with bootleg CDs and T-shirts for sale indicate that the end is in sight. Twenty minutes later and the sight of a naked Flea walking unashamed from the shower block to the band's dressing room is the first sight that greets you passing the familiar tool-ed-up heavy checking security passes and enter the small compound – two rows of facing purpose-built huts, washing facilities and a catering area – that comprise the backstage area.

The smell of incense hangs in the air as Kiedis, Flea and Frusciante do their warm-up stretches to Donna Summer's 'I Feel Love'. Smith reclines in a hammock and smokes. It's a relaxed period of preparation for all, the only apparent moment of stress comes when Frusciante, a man who has in the past abused his body with breath-taking enthusiasm, frets that the small biscuit he has just eaten might have had too much sugar in it.

Having changed into their performance clothes – much like their normal clothes except for Smith who wears a bright green, sleeveless, two-piece jump-suit – the band make the short walk to the stage. The next hour-and-a-half proves exactly why the Chili Peppers are where they are today, rubbing shoulders with stadium mainstays like U2 as one of the biggest rock bands in the world, out on their own as the best at delivering it live. A few tunes from 1991's 'BloodSugarSexMagik' – including a pounding run-through of 'Give It Away' and the soulful 'Under The Bridge' – are as deep into their back catalogue as they delve tonight. Otherwise the set is wholly gleaned from current album 'By The Way', and it's predecessor, 1999's 'Californication'. The Chili Peppers have reined in the funk, and in doing so



"BEING HERE IN VENEZUELA IS BIZARRE. IT SEEMS REALLY DANGEROUS AND WILD AND CRAZY."

**FLEA**



A girl who will be on stage these pictures drew these pictures





**TOWNS CALLED MALICE**  
 What's the most dangerous city in the world? Travel agent Paula Whittall gets out her atlas...



**CARACAS, VENEZUELA**

PAULA: "Caracas is quite famous as a place where it's easy to get into trouble – like many places in South America, there's a large criminal element on the streets. Obviously, if you're in a band like the Chili Peppers, there are precautions you can take. An armed guard is usually a good deterrent."



**BEIRUT, LEBANON**

PAULA: "Actually, Beirut is – or was – a beautiful city. They used to call it 'The Paris Of The Middle East', but it's been decimated by the fighting. There aren't so many kidnappings there these days, but you should keep it low-key – if you stand out, there's more chance of running into trouble."



**DILI, EAST TIMOR**

PAULA: "East Timor is right next door to Indonesia. There's been a lot of trouble there in recent years. Dili is actually another beautiful city, but it's the sort of place where it's dangerous to walk the streets at night. It's in the running for mugging capital of the world."



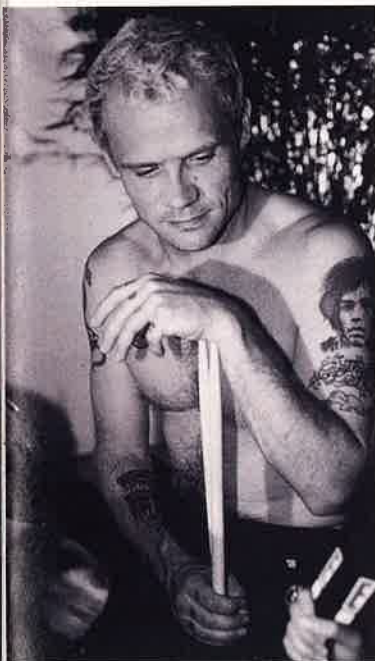
**MOSCOW, RUSSIA**

PAULA: "The problem with Moscow is that the Russian Mafia basically runs the city, and if you upset them, you're in deep trouble. I'd assume that if you're in a band, the Mafia would try to muscle in on the action somehow. That's when things start getting sticky."



**MOGADISHU, SOMALIA**

PAULA: "Now that's a place you don't want to go. There's been a lot of things written about it being a base for Al'Qaida, but that's not the half of it. It's crawling with bandits and rife with civil war. And if you do get hurt, the medical care is non-existent. I wouldn't recommend a band tour there, no."



A girl, who will be on stage tonight

drew these pictures for you guys. She asked me to deliver them. SAM (with a heart)







"WE MIGHT BE GETTING OLD, BUT WE'RE NOT BORING." **CHAD SMITH**

found exactly what makes funk work – soul. As Kiedis takes a short break, Flea gets behind the kit while Smith plugs in a guitar and leans back-to-back with Frusciante to jam. Kiedis watches from the side, smiling broadly as he sips his herbal tea. Besides writing their best songs to date, the Red Hot Chili Peppers seem to be really enjoying themselves rather than just "hitting territories" to sell more records. The crowd screams and applauds maniacally from start to finish, partly in disbelief that they are actually getting to see the band live. Caracas is a brutal place to be young, which only serves to heighten the atmosphere tonight, an unforgettable, intoxicatingly joyous release for the 10s of thousands that have diligently saved to buy their tickets. Also, the only other act scheduled to play there this year is pop-reggae gonk Shaggy. Understandably, they're making the most of it.

"THE AUDIENCE was so good tonight, so appreciative," says a shirtless Flea afterwards, perched on a white plastic chair as the band's personal effects – diet books, joss sticks, rugs and so on – are packed into flight cases for the trip to their next show in Chile. "It's audiences like tonight that make me think that what we're doing is a really worthwhile thing, but being here is bizarre. It seems really dangerous and wild and crazy. The second we got off the airplane people started mobbing us. That's happened a lot of times, but this time it just didn't feel like normal, it felt dangerous."

When on tour, Flea misses his house in Malibu (celebrity neighbours include Tom Hanks), his new girlfriend Tobey Torres, and surfing, though a day off tomorrow will be spent on a slight detour with Kiedis riding uncrowded, perfect waves in Peru. Chiefly, though, he misses his daughter.

Is your daughter happy that your hair's not blue anymore?

"I think she's getting cooler with that now. She's getting to the age where kids have funny haircuts so she doesn't think I'm such an idiot," he says clasping his hands together across his stomach, "LOVE" tattooed across the right knuckle, "LOVE" etched again across the left. "Perhaps sometimes she wishes I was a lawyer or some corporate executive like her friends' parents in her fancy private school, but I know in her heart she's really proud of who I am and what I do."

'PROUD' IS a word that John Frusciante uses a lot, almost exclusively in reference to how he's feeling about the way things are going for the Red Hot Chili Peppers and his own contribution to the band. Frusciante is swigging from a bottle of root beer as he enters the dressing room, his shoulder-length hair held back in a ponytail. He too is bare-chested, though as our conversation progresses he will pull on a blue long-sleeved shirt and remove it again five minutes later. The guitarist will talk intelligently on any subject, though prefers to discuss music or films.

"I love to lay in bed at home watching an old black and white movie, James Cagney or Bob Hope," he says. "I have one of those big plasma screens. It just looks so good and pleasant to fall asleep to."

Home is a recently purchased house in at the top of LA's Laurel Canyon, complete with a monstrous stereo system hooked-up by long-time Chilis producer Rick Rubin.

"I have these huge speakers that are as tall as I am and this amplifier that's the size of three normal amplifiers and it sounds so good."

Frusciante travels light – music mainly – with scant regard to wardrobe.

"I don't bring that many clothes. Three outfits maybe, and just whatever I'm comfortable in, it has nothing to do with the way I look because I just don't care," he laughs.

A FRESHLY showered Anthony Kiedis makes himself comfortable on a couch in the band's moodily lit backstage meditation room. Unlike his bandmates, he has covered his torso with a black vest. Even in this half-light, the singer's dark brown eyes shine from beneath the damp strands of his fringe, his face a serene mix of smiling post-show contentment and wariness at the conversation we might be about to have.

"It's not like I hate interviews, they're just normally not that satisfying, a routine series of uninteresting questions, just the same thing over and over."

Such as?

"I won't even try to regurgitate these questions. Fortunately, I'm not carrying them around in my head right now."

Though Kiedis does not elaborate it's fair to say that these questions involve playing gigs with socks on his dick and taking heroin, both dead subjects that the band have addressed fairly comprehensively over the years. The singer is currently among the world's most eligible bachelors, still single following a split from

his girlfriend, Yohanna, earlier this year. As many of the songs from 'By The Way' were written when they were together, it must be difficult to perform them night after night?

"It hadn't been up until recently, for some reason," he says. "I still felt enough pain and enough love and enough of a connection to her that it was really exciting to play those songs because it reminded me of specific periods of time. Even if it was a sad feeling it was inspiring and made it easy to sing those songs. Very recently I stopped feeling so worried about her, even in memory, so it's become a little more difficult to get that open-heart feeling to connect with. Hopefully it's just a phase."

I read an interview with you where you were described as a 'Type 'A' Personality'.

"Did I offer that or was that the assessment?" he laughs.

That was the assessment.

"Wow. I don't know what that is, but they're right. I have type 'A' blood, and I guess Type 'A' people are – and I'm not proud to say this – control freaks by nature."

Are you?

"I try so hard not to be because it gets me nowhere, I do so much better when I just let the universe have its way with each and every person in situations in my life. Things work out way better than I ever could have manufactured or manipulated myself, and it's so much more fun and relaxing. I guess a Type 'A' personality is somebody who gets in an elevator and immediately hits the close button instead of just waiting the extra second for the doors to close by themselves."

And do you do that?

"I try not to."

AROUND MIDNIGHT the crowds have dissipated, though the roads buzz with excited fans speeding wildly around sounding their horns, stereos cranked to nosebleed level. Tired but cheerful, the band board their minivans for the drive back to their hotel. There aren't enough seatbelts for everyone, there's some fairly hostile terrain to cover and, as the tail lights shudder up the rocky path leading away from the Valle Des Pop, it looks like it's going to be quite a bumpy ride. It's impossible to say exactly how long the journey will take, but they'll get where they need to go eventually. ●

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS' new single, 'The Zephyr Song', is out now on Warners.



## NEXT WEEK!

"It could all end tomorrow!"

The Chili Peppers face the future in Part Two of our world exclusive interview.