

## Out in L.A. The Red Hot Chili Peppers: 1983

**Hamish Duncan**

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Long before they became Hall of Fame rockers, the Red Hot Chili Peppers were misfit teenagers on a lark in Los Angeles's chaotic alternative music scene. Hamish Duncan's *Out in L.A.* is a whirlwind chronicle of the band's first year, tracing their growth from a "joke" band to a formidable outfit sought after by a major record label.

With forensic detail, Duncan recounts the group's activities during 1982-3, from its first thrown-together gigs in eccentric Hollywood dives to a game-changing performance at the Kit Kat Club during which the band took to the stage wearing only socks over their privates. The book focuses on the band's two primary members: lead singer Anthony Kiedis and bassist Michael "Flea" Balzary. These street-tough kids formed an unlikely partnership even as other careers beckoned.

Brisk and affectionate, *Out in L.A.* shares fascinating insights into the group's interpersonal dynamics and the development of their unique punk-funk sound. Its chronicle includes lows as well as highs: triumphant concerts are counterbalanced by ugly gigs in which the band was heckled off the stage with racial epithets, and the thrill of getting a record deal was dampened by the decision of two members to leave the group. Most of all, *Out in L.A.* is an immersive look at the vibrant early-1980s LA music scene, when cult bands like The Circle Jerks and Oingo Boingo jockeyed for dominance, converted restaurants and hotels hosted anything-goes performances, and "cowpunk" bands, funk--thrash outfits, and one-man ukulele acts all played on the same bill.

A feat of painstaking research and a lively look back at a unique moment in music history, *Out in L.A.* captures the spirit of the Red Hot Chili Peppers's music in all of its rambunctious glory.

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