

By the Way, Red Hot Chili Peppers are back

 By [Emily Stander](#)

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I think we all have that one band, that one artist that speaks to who we are as a person. This ranges from one person to another - and the reason they have that special place in our music collections varies.



The cover art of Red Hot Chili Peppers' *By the Way*

I found Red Hot Chili Peppers (RHCP) when I was very young. It was just after they released *Stadium Arcadium*, their double-boxed triumph from 2004. *Dani California* was my awakening, one of their most famous songs, and my younger self totally fell in love with the slap-bassing-funk-rock-rhythmic-singing LA band.

However, it wasn't until years later that I understood why they are the epitome of how people can grow through music.

Singing songs to me

There are a few things that make a musician special. In particular, people connect with the way they croon their lyrics. But there are other things we can also relate to, things that make us feel less alone in the way we feel. Knowing that there is someone else out there who connects with us, across continents, possibly universes, without ever meeting them.

It can be a chant for the crestfallen - and it can be a dance for the momentarily untroubled.

RHCP started out, well, pretty silly. I'm talking wearing nothing but socks over their nether regions and hopping around a stage because, why not?

But their start was born from the idea that they were friends who knew how to have fun (take too many drugs) and had some semblance of how to put a tune together. In fact, it was unlikely that they would make it as big as they have. But, perhaps, that's exactly why they did.

Universally speaking

The truth about RHCP is that they sing about sex, drugs and rock and roll. However, Anthony Kiedis, their charismatic (slightly mad) and extensively tattooed lead singer has a masterful way of stringing words together so you can interpret them the way you need to.

By the Way was a different take from what RHCP had released previously. A more melodic approach to their usual funk-ed-up rock, it is an ode to what the band would become in later years.

Despite the move to harmony, John Frusciante (guitarist) and Flea (bassist) keep with their unique style, weaving some incredible work with their instruments in *By the Way*. However, the crowning achievement of the album is the deeply experiential way Kiedis speaks to the listener.

By the Way is packed with stories of torment, beauty and assiduity. It was a twist from their fun-loving (somewhat sexed up) look at the world, because this time, you could feel the memories bleed through their words.

Venice Queen is my favourite example of this. As the track starts, you feel you're floating somewhere in the endless darkness of space. You find a story of loss as you continue listening - the melancholic nature of the song explodes into a quintessential Chili Peppers tribute and leaves you understanding that life is more about celebration than mourning.

Music, the great communicator

The albums that follow *By the Way* seem to follow this recipe. More authenticity. Even if in anguish, the songs follow personal stories and bewitching paintings-through-words that help you connect to music in a way very few artists manage to.

I will leave you with these lyrics from *On Mercury*:

"Memories of everything
Of lemon trees on mercury
And come to me with remedies
From five or six of seven seas
And you always took me with a smile
When I was down
Memories of everything
That blew through"

If anything, RHCP have a set and interesting voyage from where they started into their growth as a mature band with members who wake up in the morning thirsting, truly, to make music. And you can see it in their latest release, *Unlimited Love*, which is a true homage to what the music industry needs to cling onto with both hands: An undisputed devotion to forming connection through art.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

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