



Courtesy Photo

Frusciante doesn't reach potential

Though the musician's abilities were an essential part of the Peppers' success, his solo album seems to prove otherwise.

BY ANDREW SHAW

John Frusciante should be the poster boy for the war against drugs, and "To Record Only Water for Ten Days" could serve as the anthem.

Frusciante, the guitarist for the Red Hot Chili Peppers, fought addictions to hard drugs through most of the '90s, leaving his body a complete mess.

Frusciante's story begins with gleeful rock success. The high school dropout discovered the Chili Peppers early in their career, becoming an instant fan of their college radio combination of funk, rap, and rock.

In 1988, Hillel Slovak, the Peppers' founding guitarist, died of a drug overdose, and Frusciante was invited to become part of one of his favorite bands. The first album he contributed to, "Mother's Milk," was the first Peppers' album to go gold. The second, "Blood Sugar Sex Magik," propelled the Peppers into the mainstream with the hits "Under the Bridge" and "Give It Away." His fame collided with heroin, and he left

John Frusciante
★★★★★

the band halfway through the Japanese tour for "Blood Sugar Sex Magik."

He seemed to drop off the face of the earth, releasing virtually unknown solo albums in '95 and '97. Finally, with the help of friends, Frusciante checked into rehab.

In an act of celestial destiny, Frusciante came out of rehab as the Peppers were firing Dave Navarro, one of the myriad of guitarists who tried to fill Frusciante's spot in the band. Frusciante was asked to rejoin the band, and he enthusiastically accepted.

A year later, the Peppers released "Californication," quite possibly their most celebrated album, which makes one believe that the creative abilities of Frusciante are essential to the Peppers' success.

But from reviewing Frusciante's newest solo album, that theory is blown out of the water.

The 15-song album, with an average song length of 2:50, falls short in almost every aspect.

I feel as if Frusciante's demo for "To Record Only Water" was released instead of the album itself. The recording quality is very sub-par. His vocals, slurred speech behind a wall of brain damage, sound like they were

recorded through a telephone. When his singing reaches higher volumes, it distorts into a cloud of fuzz.

Frusciante's guitar playing on "To Record Only Water" is simplistic, to say the least. The songs don't seem to be propelled by any energy, and the skill he used on "Blood Sugar Sex Magik" doesn't appear in his solo effort.

To finalize my theory that we are simply experiencing the demo version of the album, the drum tracks are completely mindless electronic patterns, looped continually from the time the song begins to the last note played.

Every song seems to have potential that is never reached. The lack of dynamic variation makes the entire album sound flat and unfinished.

The album's best tracks are the short "Ramparts" and "Murderers," instrumental tunes that sound like outtakes from "Californication." The dueling guitar parts on both songs create dreamlike images that speak tomes without the use of voice.

It's "Ramparts" and "Murderers" that leave me with some belief that Frusciante still has the ability to construct impressive riffs. If "To Record Only Water" included only instrumentals, it may be worthy of praise, but the other 13 tracks make a good case against sticking a needle in your arm.

John Frusciante "To Record Only Water for Ten Days" Warner Bros. Records 2001

Three-day weekend boosts ticket sales

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Moviegoers remained hungry for "Hannibal," which grossed \$30 million and topped the box office for the second straight weekend.

The sequel to "The Silence of the Lambs" became the first movie released this year to hit \$100 million, taking in \$103.9 million in just 10 days, according to studio estimates Sunday.

Chris Rock's comedy "Down to Earth" — a remake of "Heaven Can Wait," itself a remake of "Here Comes Mr. Jordan" — debuted at No. 2 with \$17.5 million.

"Recess: School's Out" premiered in third place with \$10.8 million. Based on the TV cartoon "Disney's Recess," the movie follows a pack of school chums as they battle a plot to do away with summer vacation.

"Sweet November," a remake of a 1968 movie starring Sandy Dennis and Anthony Newley, debuted at No. 4 with

\$10.6 million. The tearjerker romance stars Keanu Reeves and Charlize Theron.

The box office was boosted by the long President's Day weekend, with more people hitting theaters on Sunday because they had the day off yesterday.

Overall, the top 12 movies grossed \$109.8 million, up 17 percent from the same weekend a year ago.

Last week's Oscar nominations gave a box-office bounce to some best-picture contenders.

"Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" expanded to 1,651 cinemas, up by 447, and grossed \$8.8 million, a 62 percent increase over last weekend. "Chocolat" added 333 theaters, bringing it to 1,481, and took in \$4.8 million, an increase of 56 percent.

"People love to catch up with the best-picture nominees before the Oscars," said David Kaminow, senior vice president of marketing for "Chocolat" dis-

tributor Miramax.

Another best-picture contender, "Traffic," boosted its weekend take by 47 percent, grossing \$6.5 million.

Smaller films with key acting nominations also benefitted. "Pollock," which had a one-week Oscar-qualifying run in December, reopened with a best-actor nod for Ed Harris, who also directed, and a supporting-actress slot for Marcia Gay Harden.

The film biography of painter Jackson Pollock grossed \$240,500 in 14 theaters, averaging an impressive \$17,180 per cinema.

Paramount's "Down to Earth," Rock's first starring role, averaged a healthy \$6,942 per theater despite mediocre reviews.

"Films that appeal to younger male audiences like this, I don't want to say they're review-proof, but the audience will show up even with mixed reviews," said Wayne Lewellen, head of distribution for Paramount.

Disney's G-rated "Recess" had the young children's market all to itself.

"The market was devoid of family films. There was a real pent-up demand," said Disney distribution chief Chuck Viane.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at North American theaters, according to Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc. Final figures were to be released yesterday.

1. "Hannibal," \$30 million.
2. "Down to Earth," \$17.5 million.
3. "Recess: School's Out," \$10.8 million.
4. "Sweet November," \$10.6 million.
5. "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," \$8.8 million.
6. "Traffic," \$6.5 million.
7. "The Wedding Planner," \$5.7 million.
8. "Cast Away," \$5 million.
9. "Chocolat," \$4.8 million.
10. "Saving Silverman," \$4.3 million.

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Jessica Heiden
Ayres Advertising/Marketing
P.O. Box 9595
Lincoln, NE 68506
E-mail: jheiden@ayres.com

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