

= Under the Bridge =

" Under the Bridge " is a song by American rock band Red Hot Chili Peppers , released on September 24 , 1991 as the second single from the group 's fifth studio album , Blood Sugar Sex Magik . Vocalist Anthony Kiedis wrote the lyrics to express feelings of loneliness and despondency , and to reflect on narcotics and their impact on his life . Kiedis initially did not feel " Under the Bridge " would fit into the Chili Peppers ' repertoire and was reluctant to show it to his band mates until producer Rick Rubin implored him to do so . The rest of the band was receptive to the lyrics and wrote the music .

The song became a critical and commercial success , peaking at number two on the Billboard Hot 100 and later certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America . The single 's success was widened with the release of its accompanying video , which was frequently played on music television channels . It won the " Viewer 's Choice Award " and " Breakthrough Video " at the 1992 MTV Video Music Awards .

" Under the Bridge " allowed the Red Hot Chili Peppers to enter the mainstream . David Fricke of Rolling Stone said the song " unexpectedly drop @-@ kicked the band into the Top 10 " , while Philip Booth of The Tampa Tribune commented that it was a " pretty , undulating , [ and ] by @-@ now omnipresent single . " Its success led in part to the departure of guitarist John Frusciante , who preferred the band to remain underground . The song has become an inspiration to other artists , and remains a seminal component of the alternative rock movement of the early and mid @-@ 1990s .

" Under the Bridge " follows " Give It Away " as the band 's second most performed live song , having been performed over 600 times .

= = Origins and recording = =

During the production of the Red Hot Chili Peppers ' 1991 album Blood Sugar Sex Magik , producer Rick Rubin regularly visited singer Anthony Kiedis to review Kiedis 's new material . He found a poem titled " Under the Bridge " while flipping through Kiedis ' notebook and instantly took an interest in the poignant lyrics . Rubin suggested Kiedis show it to the rest of the band : " I thought it was beautiful . I said ' We 've got to do this . ' " Kiedis was reluctant as he felt the poem was too emotional and did not fit the Chili Peppers ' style . After singing the poem to guitarist John Frusciante and bassist Flea , Kiedis recalls that they " got up and walked over to their instruments and started finding the beat and guitar chords to match it " . Frusciante chose the chords he played in the introduction to balance out the depressing nature of the lyrics , saying " my brain interpreted it as being a really sad song so I thought if the lyrics are really sad like that I should write some chords that are happier " .

For several days Frusciante and Kiedis worked on the song , and it became one of the few tracks written and completed prior to the band moving into The Mansion where they recorded the album . After the song was recorded , Rubin felt the grand and epic outro would benefit from a large group of singers . Frusciante invited his mother , Gail , and her friends , all of whom sang in a choir , to perform .

= = Lyrics and meaning = =

Kiedis wrote much of the song 's lyrics during a period when he felt distraught and emotionally drained . He had maintained sobriety for roughly three years and felt that this had distanced him from his bandmates . While the group worked on Blood Sugar Sex Magik , Frusciante and Flea often smoked marijuana together , ignoring Kiedis , who felt that Frusciante was " no longer in [ his ] world . " Driving home after rehearsal in April 1991 , Kiedis thought of his heroin and cocaine addiction during his relationship with former girlfriend Lone Skye : " the loneliness that I was feeling triggered memories of my time with Lone and how I 'd had this beautiful angel of a girl who was willing to give me all of her love , and instead of embracing that , I was downtown with fucking gangsters shooting

speedballs under a bridge . "

Kiedis ' feelings of alienation from his bandmates led him to feel that the city of Los Angeles was his only companion : " I felt an unspoken bond between me and my city . I 'd spent so much time wandering through the streets of L.A. and hiking through the Hollywood Hills that I sensed there was a nonhuman entity , maybe the spirit of the hills and the city , who had me in her sights and was looking after me . " The lines " Sometimes I feel like / My only friend / Is the city I live in / The City of Angels / Lonely as I am / Together we cry " show a direct link to Kiedis ' isolation and sense of susceptibility . Despite these emotions , Kiedis believed his life was better without drugs , telling Rolling Stone that " no matter how sad or lonely I got , things were a million percent better than they were two years earlier when I was using drugs all the time . There was no comparison . " The optimistic ideology gave birth to the chorus of the song : " I don 't ever want to feel / Like I did that day / Take me to the place I love " , the place he loves being his band mates , friends , and family .

One of the most notable verses in the song discusses the harsh effects of drugs , their role in destroying many of Kiedis 's relationships , and impact on his happiness . Based on one of Kiedis 's experiences , the verse of " Under the Bridge " illustrates his efforts to enter gang territory under a bridge to purchase drugs . Kiedis pretended that a sister of one of the gang members was his fiancée to be permitted inside . Although he successfully acquired the drugs , Kiedis considers this moment to be one of the worst of his life as it demonstrated the level to which he was willing to sink in order to feed his addiction . Kiedis refuses to acknowledge the location of the bridge , though he notes that it is in downtown Los Angeles . Using clues provided by Kiedis in previous interviews and in his autobiography Scar Tissue , writer Mark Haskell Smith concluded that the bridge that inspired the song was located in the city 's MacArthur Park . Other possible cited locations have included the Belmont Tunnel about half a mile from MacArthur Park , and more recently , the overpass where Interstate Highway 10 ( the Santa Monica Freeway ) crosses over Hoover Street close to downtown LA .

= = Music and composition = =

" Under the Bridge " is performed in 4 / 4 time in the key of A major , shifting from the key of E major after the first verse . The song marks an important shift in style for Kiedis , who had spent most of his career singing rapidly due to his limited ability to reach high notes . The song begins with Frusciante playing a moderately slow intro that the guitarist said drew heavily on the 1967 Jimi Hendrix song " Little Wing " . As Kiedis begins to sing , the guitar playing becomes more rapid until it reaches an E major seventh chord that halts the song ; the silence is broken by Chad Smith 's closed hi @-@ hat and wood block struck at a moderately fast tempo . Frusciante borrowed the E major seventh chord technique from British guitarist Marc Bolan of the glam rock band T. Rex , who initially wrote it in the song " Rip Off " from the group 's 1971 album Electric Warrior ; Frusciante lightheartedly noted that " I ripped off a song called ' Rip Off ' . I thought that was interesting . "

The song continues with another verse and subsequent chorus , when the bass finally enters . After the next verse an E major seven chord again marks a break before the start of the chorus . The second chorus transitions into a different verse , where Chad Smith begins to play the drums , and Kiedis sings " Take me all the way / Yeah / Yeah @-@ e @-@ yeah / Oh no , no . " After Kiedis cues " One time , " a choir , whose presence was added to make the ending sound more epic , sings " Under the bridge downtown , " in which Kiedis sings " Is where I drew some blood / I could not get enough / Forgot about my love / I gave my life away " in between . As the choir , Kiedis and drums stop , Frusciante and Flea play the outro until the song ends .

= = Release and reception = =

The first single off Blood Sugar Sex Magik was " Give It Away " , which reached number one on the Billboard Modern Rock Tracks chart in late 1991 . The band did not foresee " Under the Bridge " being as successful , but understood the potential commercial viability . Warner Bros. Records sent representatives to a Chili Peppers concert to determine which song should be the next single .

When Frusciante began playing " Under the Bridge " , Kiedis missed his cue and the entire audience began singing the song instead . Kiedis was initially " mortified that I had fucked up in front of Warner 's people [ ... ] I apologized for fucking up but they said ' Fucking up ? Are you kidding me ? When every single kid at the show sings a song , that 's our next single ' . " " Under the Bridge " became the album 's second single in October 1991 ; upon release , journalist Jeff Apter noted that it " was the bona fide , across @-@ all @-@ formats radio hit that the band had been working towards for seven years . " It spent twenty @-@ six cumulative weeks on the United States Billboard Hot 100 chart , peaking at number two , being one of the several songs stuck behind Kris Kross ' 8 @-@ week reign of " Jump " . The single has been certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America .

Tom Moon of Rolling Stone felt the song " revealed new dimensions . The rhythm section displays a growing curiosity about studio texture and nuance " . David Fricke of Rolling Stone said " Under the Bridge " is a " stark and uncommonly pensive ballad " , commenting that the song " drop @-@ kicked the band into the Top 10 " . Philip Booth of The Tampa Tribune believed the single was " undulating [ and ] omnipresent " not only in the alternative rock genre , but pop music as a whole . Ben DiPietro of the Richmond Times @-@ Dispatch praised the record as a whole , but was most impressed by Chili Peppers ' shift from exclusive hard rock to adding more moderately paced tracks : " there 's still plenty of sonic funk to bang heads to , but the best tracks are the slower ones such as ' Under the Bridge ' " . Nick Griffiths ( Select ) described the song as " all mellow strumming and thoughtfully shallow vocals , though it 's almost exonerated by a shrill unexpectedly choral middle eight . " Amy Hanson of Allmusic noted that the song has " become an integral part of the 1990s alterna @-@ landscape , and remains one of the purest diamonds that sparkle amongst the rough @-@ hewn and rich funk chasms that dominate the Peppers ' own oeuvre " . She went on to praise " Under the Bridge " for being a " poignant sentiment that is self evident among the simple guitar which cradles the introductory verse , and the sense of fragility that is only doubled by the still down @-@ tempo choral crescendo " .

" Under the Bridge " has been included in many publications ' " Best of ... " lists . In 2002 , Kerrang ! placed the song at number six on their list of the " 100 Greatest Singles of All Time " . Q ranked the song number 180 on their compilation of the " 1001 Best Songs , Ever " . Life included " Under the Bridge " in the compilation " 40 Years of Rock & Roll , 5 Songs Per Year 1952 ? 1991 " , with the year being 1991 . Pause and Play included the song in their unordered list of the " 10 Songs of the 90 's " ; and the song ranked fifteenth in VH1 's " 100 Greatest Songs of the 90s " . Rolling Stone and MTV compiled a list of the " 100 Greatest Pop Songs Since The Beatles " in 2000 , with " Under the Bridge " coming in fifty @-@ fourth . " Under the Bridge " was also ranked # 98 in the list of Rolling Stone " 100 Greatest Guitar Songs of All Time " .

= = Music video = =

The music video for " Under the Bridge " was directed by Gus Van Sant , who photographed the band during their stay at The Mansion and provided the art direction for Blood Sugar Sex Magik . Van Sant knew Flea due to the bassist 's role in his 1991 film My Own Private Idaho . The members of the band respected Van Sant both as a person and an artist and were elated when he agreed to direct the video for " Under the Bridge " . Flea credits the video as " the thing that really made us break through the mainstream of American and worldwide pop culture " .

The video was shot on the streets of Los Angeles and in a studio soundstage . It begins with Frusciante standing alone on a pedestal wearing a red @-@ and @-@ white @-@ striped collared shirt , brown khaki pants , brown shoes , and a purple , green and multicolored chullo , with white stitched wolves in the middle . He plays a 1966 Ocean Turquoise Fender Jaguar behind the backdrop of a desert and an inverted cloudy sky . His shadow is projected on the left and right of where he stands . Frusciante 's girlfriend of the time , Toni Oswald , selected his clothes that day . Frusciante remembers Van Sant 's surprised , though favorable , reaction : " when I got [ to the studio ] Gus Van Sant was just looking at me and going ' God I 'm so glad you wore that hat . I 'm so glad you wore that shirt . Oh ! Those pants are so great I 'm so glad you wore those ' " . The video

marks a significant shift in Frusciante 's on @-@ camera behavior ; he no longer wished to jump around fervently as he had done in the band 's prior music videos .

As Kiedis begins to sing he appears on camera bathed in purple light with blue fluorescent stars as a backdrop , surrounded by clouds . As the camera pans closer , an image of the skyline of Van Sant 's home city , Portland , is superimposed from his chin downwards . Flea and drummer Chad Smith are then placed into the image while playing their instruments . Van Sant wanted superimposing to be a notable component in the overall theme of the video ; the idea came from a project he worked on with novelist William S. Burroughs . The scenes in the studio are coupled with scenes of Kiedis walking the streets of LA , wearing a white T @-@ shirt with " To Hell And Back " printed on the front ; as he walks , the camera focuses on various people . He can , at various points in the video , be seen standing in front of Belmont Tunnel before its closure . This , according to Kiedis , was vital ; he felt the studio portion alone would not convey enough emotion : " the first time we shot [ the video ] it was all in a studio and that didn 't seem to capture everything we needed to capture . It needed more ; it needed to be combined with an outdoor , streets @-@ of @-@ Los @-@ Angeles thing " . Towards the end , Kiedis is seen running down the Los Angeles River in slow motion ; the background is a shot of an atomic bomb exploding . The video ends with various superimposed images of the band , followed by Frusciante playing alone on a pedestal ? this time with an inverted shot of the ocean as the sky .

MTV placed the " Under the Bridge " video on heavy rotation . At the 1992 MTV Video Music Awards the Red Hot Chili Peppers led the nominations , which included the categories of " Best Video " , " Best Group " , and " Best Direction " . " Under the Bridge " won the group " Breakthrough Video " and " Viewers Choice Best Video " ; the band 's video for " Give It Away " won " Best Art Direction " . The video ranked eighth best in a poll dictated by the readers of the Chicago Tribune called " The Best and Worst of ' 92 " .

= = Live performances = =

The song 's widespread success has made it indispensable to the band 's live set @-@ lists . Unlike several of the Chili Peppers ' other songs , " Under the Bridge " is not interpreted in a different manner than what is on the record ? aside from being played acoustically the track is performed the same as it appears on Blood Sugar Sex Magik . Kiedis is , however , notorious for being incapable of achieving several high notes in live performances ; the vocalist has noted that he sometimes forgets or rearranges song lyrics in the verses . Therefore , the song has sometimes suffered from his limitations as a singer . After being released as a single in March 1992 , the song would be included in virtually all concerts ; Frusciante , however , began to resent the song 's popularity and would play convoluted intros , purposefully throwing Kiedis off . An example of this was during a televised performance on the highly rated program Saturday Night Live on February 22 , 1992 . Kiedis said it " felt like I was getting stabbed in the back and hung out to dry in front of all of America while [ Frusciante ] was off in a corner in the shadow , playing some dissonant out @-@ of @-@ tune experiment . " The guitarist used a distortion pedal for the ending verse and screamed incomprehensibly into the microphone when providing backup vocals , neither of which were originally planned or typical of live performances . Nevertheless , sales of Blood Sugar Sex Magik skyrocketed following the show .

At times Kiedis has also resented singing the song , especially during instances when he felt distanced from the song 's lyrics . In the past few years , however , Kiedis has experienced a revival in interest : " Although there have been times when I was over [ ' Under the Bridge ' ] , I 've rediscovered it and now I feel close to it and it still has power , and life , and purpose as a song . " Frusciante believed the flexibility of " Under the Bridge " has contributed to its success : " A lot of the time that is one of the ingredients of a hit ; you can hear it over and over and it will still always mean new things , but you do go through cycles . " Flea believes the reason " Under the Bridge " had a recent revival in relevancy was due to Frusciante 's return to the band from 1998 ? 2009 after quitting in 1992 . Flea believed it was vital to have the four members who wrote the track together .

" Under the Bridge " was played at the 1999 Woodstock Festival , which the Red Hot Chili Peppers

headlined . They were the final act to perform . Attempts at distributing candles that were to be lit during the song backfired . The crowd , which was already disorderly , instead created a bonfire . Lighthearted foul @-@ play escalated into violence when several women who had been crowd surfing and moshing were raped and nearby property was looted and destroyed . Other notable performances were at Slane Castle in August 2003 to 80 @,@ 000 attendees ; and in 2004 at London 's Hyde Park , in which , over the course of three days , an estimated 250 @,@ 000 people were in attendance . Released as the band 's first live album , the event became the highest grossing concert at a single venue in history , with a total revenue of \$ 17 @.@ 1 million . " Under the Bridge " is also performed on the Chili Peppers ' concert video Off the Map released in 2001 , and on an exclusive performance for iTunes in 2006 .

= = Formats and track listing = =

= = Charts and certifications = =

= = All Saints version = =

" Under the Bridge " was the third single released from the All Saints debut album , All Saints . It became their second number @-@ one single on the UK Singles Chart . A total of 424 @,@ 799 singles have been sold in the United Kingdom . The song was cover of Red Hot Chili Peppers and releases as a double A @-@ side with " Lady Marmalade " , also a cover , by LaBelle . In Europe , a " Lady Marmalade " only single was also released . The proceeds from the single went to breast cancer charities .

= = = Background = = =

" Under the Bridge " was slightly altered since it contained personal lyrics by Anthony Kiedis and the All Saints covered it because they liked the overall sound and feeling of the recording . The All Saints version contains samples of the original recording , the most important one being the distinctive guitar playing in the beginning . The original Japanese edition of the album version features a different , more R & B version of the song . Anthony Kiedis said of All Saints ' version " It was kind of funny , they looked so pretty and clean , it looked like they didn 't know what they were singing about " . The Red Hot Chili Peppers ' original is said to deal lyrically with Kiedis 's drug addiction , and the final section which contains the line " Under the bridge downtown / is where I drew some blood " was omitted in the All Saints version . The guitar on " Under the Bridge " was played by Richard Hawley .

= = = Music video = = =

Both videos were shot as a set and cost £ 500 @,@ 000 to make . The videos took four months of production before release . The girls chose to perform their own stunts in the video , and at one point Natalie Appleton was knocked over by an explosion , although she remained unhurt .

The videos are in a futuristic big city . In the " Lady Marmalade " video , there is a party which causes several floors of a tall building to cave in . The " Under the Bridge " video appears to be set immediately after as there is already a hole in the floor of the room which appears to be a bottomless pit . In reality there was a hole which was indeed one floor deep . The 3D dimensional effect was computer generated and made by the team who also made the film Batman & Robin . Both videos were shown together as " The Bridge " at cinemas before the showing of the Quentin Tarantino film , Jackie Brown .

= = = Track listings and formats = = =

These are the formats and track listings of major single releases of " Under the Bridge / Lady Marmalade " .

== = Personnel == =

== = Charts == =

== = Other cover versions == =

" Under the Bridge " has been covered several times since its release in 1992 . The song was first transcribed in 1994 by the a cappella group The Flying Pickets from their album The Original Flying Pickets : Volume 1 . Notable jazz musician Frank Bennett covered the song by fusing elements of big bands and bebop in his 1996 album Five O 'Clock Shadow . Hip hop artist Mos Def included the beginning verse of " Under the Bridge " in the song " Brooklyn , " from his 1999 record Black on Both Sides . He , however , changed the line " the city I live in , the City of Angels " , which refers to Los Angeles , to " the city I live in is beautiful Brooklyn , " to match his song 's premise . Tony Hadley covered the song on his 1995 album Obsession . Britain 's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra has modified " Under the Bridge " at several concerts ? they perform various rock pieces combined into a single orchestral ensemble , often including the Chili Peppers ' hit . Taylor Dayne covered the song for her 2008 studio album Satisfied .

Alternative hip hop band Gym Class Heroes performed " Under the Bridge " on the 2006 assemblage Punk Goes ' 90s , an album that compiled popular rock songs from the 1990s being covered by contemporary artists . Gym Class Heroes continued to play " Under the Bridge " during their tour ; lead singer Travis McCoy has said it is " a timeless song . It 's one of those songs you hear and are like ' Damn did this shit just come out ? ' " The most successful cover version of " Under the Bridge " was released in 1998 by the British / Canadian pop band All Saints and reached number one in the United Kingdom . The cover removed the final verse of the song that discusses drug use . Red Hot Chili Peppers were , however , displeased with this version ; Kiedis felt the cover was poorly recreated and , with the omission of the final verse , it lost all personal significance . The 1993 " Weird Al " Yankovic song " Bedrock Anthem " is part parody of " Under the Bridge " and " Give It Away . " Yankovic 's satire includes an intro similar to that of " Under the Bridge " . In 2009 , the Stanley Clarke Trio covered the song on the album Jazz in the Garden . John Craigie covers the song on his album Leave the Fire Behind . Santana covered the song on their 2010 cover album Guitar Heaven : The Greatest Guitar Classics of All Time as a bonus track on the Deluxe Edition .