



Red Hot Chili Peppers guitarist John Frusciante makes a solo effort inspired by disembodied voices with *To Record Only Water for Ten Days*.

# Run DMC Makes Disappointing Comeback

**Run DMC**  
*Crown Royal*  
★★

On "Sucka MCs," a classic track from Run DMC's self-titled 1984 debut, DMC rapped, "When I rhyme, I never quit/And if I got a new rhyme I'll just say it/Cause it takes a lot, to entertain/And sucker MCs can be a pain."

Almost two decades later, that simple verse has become prophetic.

*Crown Royal*, which hits stores this week, is the legendary group's seventh release and proof that it will never quit. Unfortunately, the album's content makes a strong case for why it should.

Two years ago, Arista Records founder Clive Davis had a great idea that led to the resurrection of Carlos Santana. Davis surrounded the guitarist with the brightest contemporary talent and then let Santana work his black magic. The result was an eclectic and memorable album that struck Grammy gold.

Apparently, that formula is only good for one use. *Crown Royal* brings together a who's who of MTV's Total Request Live, including Sugar Ray, Fred Durst

and Kid Rock. But the guest artists left their chart-topping gifts behind.

Some of the tracks are exceptionally bad, while others are well-meaning but uninspiring. They all share one quality: the annoyingly blatant recitation of Run DMC's career achievements.

If you don't know what Run DMC was and what Jam Master Jay, DMC and DJ Run did, fret not. *Crown Royal* will tell you exactly how great these kids from Queens were. It just won't show you.

Unlike Santana's album, where the melange of artist helped showcase the breadth of his talent, Run DMC does the same thing from song to song over different beats.

Run DMC's sound — sparse beats, hard production textures and raw-knuckle lyrics — is unmistakable. It is authoritative, driving and unique. But it isn't versatile. On the group's latest, this inflexibility is glaring. Run DMC either tries too hard to adapt its style or dominates to the point that you wonder why it even invited someone onto the track.

Not surprisingly, the only pairings that work are those with rappers. "Queens Day" brings together some of the Q-borough's finest over a slow track with a splashy piano loop. Assisted by Fat Joe, Run DMC successfully jumps on the Latino bandwagon with "Ay Papi." And "Simmons Incorporated" uses a Timbalandesque beat and Method Man's voice to close out the album on a high note.

But, as DMC noted, it takes a lot to entertain. And listening to Run DMC

try to do so has definitely become a pain. They will always be the Kings of Rock, but their reign as hip-hop royalty ended long ago.

Michael Woods

**John Frusciante**  
*To Record Only Water for Ten Days*  
★★★

John Frusciante, the talented Red Hot Chili Peppers guitarist, hears voices, and they tell him to write songs. Usually, when someone hears voices, it's not a good thing. It's debatable whether Frusciante's are a good influence either.

His third solo try, *To Record Only Water for Ten Days*, is Frusciante's attempt to write, sing and play a whole album as a one-man show.

The music and songwriting is solid, and the fact that Frusciante is a seasoned musician shines through in all the songs. The one major flaw that drags the album down is Frusciante's singing.

His voice is boring and can't seem to capture the lyrics in the right way. The lyrics are cranked out in a dull drone, and the flow is a painful one. It takes away from the album and doesn't do justice to Frusciante's incredible talent.

There is a reason Frusciante is the Chili Peppers' guitarist and not the lead singer. It is unfortunate that bad singing dulls Frusciante's musical and lyrical talent. The songs have amazing potential to make a quality album if Frusciante had let someone else sing his lyrics.

Frusciante is branching out from the structured style of the Chili Peppers' music, and his solo album is more free-flowing and improvised. The music explores Frusciante's soul, and it's the mature result of a musician who has risen and fallen from glory for years.

A few tracks work with Frusciante's funky style, such as "Away and Anywhere" and "Ramparts." They come together to show the musician's quirky nature and have an ambient feel.

Naturally, the album's guitar playing is extraordinary and reaffirms Frusciante's position as a first-class musician. Frusciante's playing stands on its merit, and a completely instrumental album would have been much more impressive and enjoyable.

The voices Frusciante is hearing might be giving him inspiration and ideas that he translates into music, but they should advise him to leave the singing to someone else.

But this solo try truly earns Frusciante the title of an artist because, despite the

singing, the composition and execution of the album is the well-developed feat of an undoubtedly talented musician.

Tiffany Fish

**Saunter**  
*Saunter*  
★

Just what we needed — more Phishtastic jam slop-rock.

The local five-piece Saunter's independently released EP falls well short of mediocre, packed with clichéd guitar riffs and unbearably lifeless songs. Consider yourself warned that there is a hippie-jam-hopeful fungus among us.

While not playing frisbee-golf and scanning pixilated cover art, Saunter somehow found time to go to Hill Hall and record this EP. Speaking of recording, let's begin there.

The instruments on this EP were recorded at the same low volume as music high schoolers play at 3 a.m. when they are trying not to wake their parents in the room next door.

Although this keeps the EP from capturing the potential energy of the songs, this is a problem typical of bands with this live/improv orientation (hence, the circulation of live bootlegs).

Aside from a few spots of skilled technical drumming, the build-ups are played with a quiet, pulseless uncertainty.

I would say the tentative guitar solos could make Stevie Ray Vaughn turn over in his grave, but they are so quiet he can't even hear them. While the guitars are reminiscent of the classic Fender combo sound, the leads do not do it justice.

Saunter's passionless vocals roam aimlessly, hardly ever crossing paths to yield any sort of harmony (much less a hook).

The lyrics — well, I'll let them speak for themselves. The opening track features the line "The woman keeps trying to cry me a river, but she's not even a family friend," and the chorus of "Good and Bad" includes this line: "Now I'm alright/Yeah, I'm doin' fine/Yes I'm OK ... Right ... yeah ... OK."

Props to the organs and alto sax playing, which both find their way to the sweet spot. But what makes Saunter's self-titled EP a tragedy is the fact that some of these songs show potential, but also poor execution and musicianship.

But don't take my word for it. Well, do actually. Save the five bucks and buy some Hawaiian shaved ice. At least it will make your tongue blue.

Jason Arthurs

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**WXYC 89.3 top ten** Feb. 11-17

1. Le Tigre — *From the Desk of Mr. Lady* (Mr. Lady)
2. Soundtrack — *Genghis Blues* (Six Degrees)
3. V/A — *This is Sambal Vols. 1 & 2* (Rouner)
4. DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist — *Brainfreeze* (RCA Victor)
5. Dave Douglas — *A Thousand Evenings* (RCA Victor)
6. I Roy — *Touting I Self* (Heartbeat)
7. String Builder — "Forces" 7-inch (Handsome)
8. Gentle Waves — *Swansong for You* (Jeepster)
9. Cracow Klezmer Band — *De Profundis* (Tzadik)
10. Delarosa and Asora — *Backsome: Agony Part I*

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3 SA	Hi Mom Film Fest (w/ Poncho Holly)
7 WE	DONNAS** (\$8/\$9) w/ Bratmobile & Selby Tigers
8 TH	MATTHEW SWEET** (\$10/\$12) w/ Josh Joplin
9 FR	Mamadou Diabate** (\$15)
10 SA	Tift Merritt and the Carlines w/ Damon Ray** (\$8)
13 TU	THE BLAKE BABIES** (\$10) w/ Starlight Mints
14 WE	Chris Duarte** (\$8/\$10)
15 TH	John Cowan** (\$10) w/ Jennifer Nettles
16 FR	LAGWAGON, VANDALS, ATARIS (\$13/\$15)
17 SA	SON SEALS BAND** (\$12)
18 SU	JONATHAN RICHMAN**
19 MO	DJ Spooky
20 TU	DROPKICK MURPHYS, Swingin' Utters, Reach the Sky, Lars Frederikson**
21 WE	DONNA THE BUFFALO** (\$10)
22 TH	DISPATCH** (\$8)
23 FR	LAKE TROUT** (\$8)
24 SA	BLUE RAGS** (\$8)
27 TU	STEPHEN MALKMUS** (\$10) w/ Kingsbury Marx
31 SA	Far Too Jones** (\$8/\$10)

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3 TU	AMY RAY & THE BUTCHIES** (\$8)
6 FR	ARAB STRAP
7 SA	JUNIOR BROWN** (\$16)
12 TH	KRS-ONE** (\$18)
13 FR	KELLY JOE PHELPS** (\$14)
17 TU	LEFTOVER SALMON** (\$15)
20 FR	CROOKED FINGERS
21 SA	MELVINS/ FOLK IMPLOSION** (\$12)
24 TU	ZOSO (Led Zeppelin Tribute)

**MAY**

5 TH	BUTCHIES, LE TIGRE, TAMI HART ("Mr Lady Showcase")**
8 SU	LUCIANO**

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3/1	Tim Kinsella
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- **Three Doors Down**, Friday at The Ritz in Raleigh. If he goes crazy, then will you still call him Superman? Go crazy with modern rock faves Three Doors Down. 834-4000.
- **The Scaries**, Saturday at Go! Studios. Jump up and down with Chapel Hill's favorite pop-punk heroes. 969-1400.
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