

a Soul to Squeeze

an unofficial biography of Anthony Kiedis

by Penny Lane



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First of all I would like to thank Pascale and Maria for giving me the info I requested.

Secondly, I would like to dedicate this pamphlet to all the Red Hot Chili Peppers fans in the world and particularly to those who've been with me in this adventure which has been going on for 12 years now, to Jason, Yvette, Michelle, Zoe and all my friends of The Red Hot Chili Peppers Forum/Ezboard and One Hot Globe Forum.

And last but not least, everybody do a jig for my editor, the Great Ardnac.

NOTE OF THE AUTHOR

This biography is mainly based on interviews and facts I have read on the press and that to my opinion are reasonably reliable; I have just briefly hinted at a few things I've heard with my ears from the man himself or from people close to him. Of course some things might be missing or inaccurate, but nothing has been made up. While reading on you will notice I have written some dialogs between Anthony and Flea, or Anthony and Hillel or other people. Of course those dialogs have been made up because I wasn't there and even if I had been there I would have needed a tape recorder with me to report them faithfully. However, the reason for those conversations is mainly to lighten up the story and to add something fresh to things we already know (you will notice the dialogs are inserted mostly in the points of the story all the world already knows about) cause repeating the same things over and over again would be rather boring. But once again, also those conversations are based on true facts and are written with a style echoing the typical way of expressing of the people involved. Also Dave Thompson, in his book about the Red Hot Chili Peppers, had to insert dialogs based on his intuition. I have followed the same rule.

Penny Lane

Chapter 1 : Mommy, where's Daddy ?

The origins of the Kiedis family appear to be still strangely unclear even to the members of the same bunch. When asked about the subject by a group of fans in the year 2000, Anthony's father painted this picture:

"Well, I know a little since I was born John Michael Kiedis and am the father of the most famous of all the Kiedises. My grandfather (and Anthony's name sake) Anton Kiedis came to America from Lithuania through Ellis Island around 1910 and eventually settled in Michigan where my father John, myself and Anthony were all born. Many have assumed Anthony was Indian because of his tattoos and his fervor for their rights (he's bullish on all aboriginal and repressed peoples' rights), but we'd always thought we knew otherwise. In addition to his Lithuanian side he had French from my maternal grandmother; Dutch, Irish, English and a little Spanish from my maternal grandfather (Vanderveen); and English, Irish, Scottish and a little German from his mom's side (Noble). Recently however, after the Vanderveens conducted an exhaustive search into the family tree that went all the way back to 1066, we discovered that the Dutch Vanderveens after having first settled in New York City moved on to upstate New York where some of them (including our direct descendents) intermarried with Mohawk Indians".

On the other hand, in spite of these diffused explanations, Anthony Kiedis up to this day is still proud to go around briskly claiming that he is "1/4 Apache". Anthony is perfectly aware he's got a lot of issues backing up his theory, first of all his facial features, which, particularly back in the days of the "long chestnut hair wiping his ass" undoubtedly remind those of the native Americans. Secondly, as his dad said, his double tattoo featuring Sitting Bull (right shoulder), the first principal chief of the entire Sioux nation, and Chief Joseph, (left shoulder), the leader of the Nez Perce tribe, known as "The Thunder Traveling to the Loftier Mountain Heights", plus the phenomenal great Indian totem covering half his back, and finally his long term, deeply heartfelt support to the struggles of the native Americans, expressed at its best in the song "Johnny, kick a hole in the sky", closing track of 1989 album "Mother's Milk", all these ingredients have contributed to complete the picture of a man who's got a heavy Indian component in his blood, and who's greatly proud of it.

"Anthony is clearly partly native American" said once a real native American fan "You can tell it by the way he feels things". Less romantically, in a past period of his life, our man used to go around happily telling everyone that he had inherited (not clear from whom) an "Indian penis". In reality, none of the 125.847 women who have slept with him has ever made any comment about this peculiarity of his reproductive organ.



Chief Joseph

Not that Anthony is ashamed of his Lithuanian descent. He's never denied that's the main place where he comes from. Actually the only thing he's a bit ashamed of is that he's never visited the land of his ancestors. Lithuania is the largest of the three Baltic countries, its population is about 3.700.000, mostly Lithuanians and Russians. But Lithuania is generally out of the touring circuit of a world-famous rock'n'roll band and it has also little of the exotic allure Anthony always looks for whenever he decides to go on holiday. Probably the closest Anthony's ever been to the place was during a summer Festival in Turku, Finland, in 1996. Nevertheless, he's willing to show that he hasn't forgotten where he comes from.

"I dream I'll go there one day" he stated once "and I'll find the woman of my dreams. And I'll retire and I'll get old over there".
Oh, Anthony!



Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania

His Scottish descent, on his mother's side, is not that well known. When Anthony's sister Julie got married, in summer 2000, a band of Scottish bagpipe players were called to enlighten the proceedings, but maybe the episode which best empathizes the Scottish component in our man's blood is something which happened in 1999 in a Grand Rapids eatery when an irate waitress told a group of curious reporters that Anthony Kiedis, the billionaire rockstar who used to sing in that Red Hot Chili Peppers mega-famous band, had left her as a tip nothing more than... 50 ridiculous cents.

Grand Rapids, Michigan, population 700.000. A medium sized Midwest town on Michigan Lake, grown in the shadow of the Big Motor City, Detroit, unbearable heat in the summer, polar freeze in the winter. An average American town like so many others. But it was in such uneventful zone of the world that at the end of the fifties the event that we most care about took place.



Grand rapids : City Hall

The event was the fatal meeting, and subsequent falling in love, of the local hunk John Kiedis and the sweet and sensual Peggy Noble. John Kiedis was already a curious and funny bloke: not particularly tall nor fit (working out wasn't so popular in those days), nonetheless he surely had a beautiful tough face and an arrogant air which made him rather attractive to the local female youth.

Among such excitable teenagers Peggy Noble wasn't surely the most beautiful nor the most sexy but she was very pretty, a small brunette with a sweet smile. John and Peggy were little more than two kids when they got together. The pictures of the two at the end of the fifties show a typical white American young couple of those times: ponytail and white socks for her, sporty outfit and short hair for him. John was 18, Peggy 16. They came from middle class families and their parents were very strict. John said once: "My father has never allowed me to do anything that I wanted to, he was extremely strict. He believed in corporal punishment and all that stuff. While I was growing up I started thinking that was not the way to bring up a young boy. And I made up my mind, that if I had ever had a kid of my own I would have let him free to do anything that he liked to, whatever the price might be".

John Kiedis was not fond of the quiet, middle-class, Midwest kind of life. His plans did not involve a nine-to-five kind of job, a small house with a garden and two screaming kids in the sitting-room. He was an ambitious young man, and he was convinced he had some kind of talent. He deeply loved films and his dream was to become a great movie director. But, what kind of hopes could he have, being stuck in Grand Rapids with a strict family and no money to fulfill his dreams? None. First of all, he had to start walking on his own legs. A precocious marriage could be the solution, at least for the moment. John and Peggy got married in 1960. They were young and naive but happily in love. Peggy's family was catholic and so they got married in a catholic church. Peggy wore a classical bride's white dress and John a white jacket and tie. They settled in a small house in Grand Rapids and they got back to college.

But whereas John was an ambitious and impatient young hunk, Peggy was quiet and down-to-earth. She knew about her hubby's dreams of leaving Grand Rapids and making fortune in Hollywood but she didn't give too much importance to that. Those were just dreams, while their house, their marriage, their future life together were reality, all this and their future kids, cause now, after two years of marriage, Peggy was pregnant.

John didn't think that fatherhood could break his dreams. His kid would have been happy and free, that's all he knew. But he hadn't quit his ambitions, like Peggy seemed to think. He had just learned to keep them quiet, waiting for the right chance. He wanted his family to be part of his future plans, but Peggy wasn't so convinced about it. She knew that those plans did not involve Grand Rapids and this thought did not suit her at all.

In spite of all this, and of course unaware of all this, the kid in question came to this world screaming and kicking at 4 a.m. on November 1st 1962 at Grand Rapids' St. Mary's Hospital. The name Anthony was nothing more than the yankee version of the name of his Lithuanian great-grandad, Anton. His middle name... well, it never existed. A lot of people have been questioning about it for a long time. The truth is that Anthony Kiedis hasn't got any middle name. Apparently there was a dithering between John (who wanted to give him a hippish name as "Courage" or "Freedom") and Peggy (who simply opted for John's second name, Michael). The result was that only Anthony was, and only Anthony would have been. Forever.

The pictures of the first months, and also of the first years, of Anthony's life show a white American little boy similar to other millions. Actually no particular event seems to be occurred in this period which was spent in the first peaceful exploration of the world. The only thing worth to be noticed in those years was John's ever growing impatience.

John was crazy about the kid but he had also finally understood that that kind of life was not meant for him, or maybe he wasn't that kind of man, but whatever it was, he had to get away because his future was not meant to be there. He felt, he was sure he was going to be someone. He had always been a smart attractive guy, he used to like big cars and beautiful clothes, now he had started to grow his hair too, like the Beatles. He was deeply attracted by beautiful women, and often beautiful women were attracted by him. What the hell was he doing in Grand Rapids? He simply had no chance in that place. He had to break free.



At the end of 1964, the blow of luck he had been waiting for so long: John had applied for a grant at UCLA Film School in Los Angeles. A few months later he was given the news that he had won the grant! He couldn't believe it: he would have gone to Hollywood!!! He would have made it, he would have fulfilled all his dreams! It was more that he could ever hope for. John watched the smiling toddler who was trotting around him, watched his young wife who was sitting on the couch patiently waiting for a decision, and he finally knew: the time had come for him to say goodbye to Midwest. Heaven couldn't wait.

University of California in Los Angeles

Anthony was 2 years old when his dad put him and his mom on his little Corvair with a U-haul trailer and the happy little family moved to the land of dreams. John Kiedis was an optimistic engaging bloke, but Los Angeles was not an easy place to live, particularly for a provincial young man who aspired to become a star in the movie world. Competition was (and still is) extremely tough, friendship is rarer than gold, and anybody, even your quiet neighbor, has to be considered as a menace, if anything because he could take the right chance before you could.

Music-wise, in mid-sixties Los Angeles was not the rock capital of the world, neither it was of California. San Francisco was doing much better, also because it had been able to capture the vibes of those years and concentrate them in places like the Universities of Berkeley and Stanford, and cult areas of hippy culture like Haight-Asbury. Two of the greatest American bands of those years, Jefferson Airplane and Grateful Dead, were from San Francisco. Los Angeles was still generally seen as the capital of surf and surf music, and although the most famous band of this genre, the Beach Boys, was about to do a U-turn and deliver a record, "Pet Sounds", which had little to do with surf, L.A. was not a very interesting place in those years. But something was about to change. A man, Frank Zappa, and a band, the Doors, were ready to show the world that reality was more tough than what the lysergic paradises of the hippy culture seemed to make you think. The leader of the Doors, Jim Morrison, was a student at UCLA, as well as the keyboard player Ray Manzarek. They were both deeply interested in cinema other than music, but John Kiedis has never mentioned Morrison or Manzarek among his acquaintances in his first years in L.A., though they were attending the same school.

The films of those years were going thru the same changes which were affecting music: enough with Hollywood-Doris Day-Rock Hudson comedies, the time had come for alternative low-budget movies which told about real life. L.A. is a killing city full of miserable areas that Hollywood had never shown, Hollywood itself is a shattered place falling into pieces where nobody has the guts to walk around at night.



The Ultimate L.A. Band : The Doors

Tourists stop at Chinese Theater, take some pictures, take a look around and they cannot believe what they see: is this the fabulous Hollywood? Films always distort reality but people had had enough with distortion. A new wave of young directors began doing movies which didn't talk anymore of happy families and wooden cottages and blonde wives and husbands in trouble cause they couldn't go to see the football while their horrible cousins were getting married. And after all, hadn't anybody realized that Rock Hudson was homosexual?

John Kiedis waved the new wave of directors with enthusiasm. He himself had begun experimenting with his camera and some black and white films and all his first productions were clearly showing that he was fitting perfectly in the "realistic" thread. His short movies were shot in the most degraded areas of L.A. and his main actors were homeless, old drunkards, general dropouts. A constant presence though could be seen in all his films, like a pure redemptive figure in all that misery, a little child, almost an angelic bringer of hope.

John hadn't had to search a lot to find the ideal actor for this role: that child was always played by his 3-year old kid, Anthony. One of this movies still exists, it's entitled "The Hooligans" and shows the kid waking up an old homeless drunk from his alcoholic sleep and leading him to a dirty bathroom of a shattered building to have a "washing up". Little Anthony did not seem to be intimidated at all by the camera. He wore a striped t-shirt and his light-brown straight hair was cut a la Beatles. In one frame he even wore a cap of the Los Angeles Lakers!

Nobody could say now if John Kiedis was meant to become a new Orson Welles, or at least an ordinary TV director. Nobody has ever wondered about it either, also because at one point it seemed that John himself did not give a shit about it anymore. Hollywood had sucked him in. It's an old and well known story: the provincial bloke who arrives in the big city loaded with hopes and good intentions and quickly gets devoured by the same big city. John was too smart, too attractive and too impatient. High life's temptations had ruined many other young people before him, why did he have to be different? Hollywood was full of smashing girls and throbbing with life, parties and fun. Who was he to say no? Nobody! The family? Forget it! Peggy was patient enough at first. It's not clear how she had reacted to the impact with the great L.A., she, the quiet girl from Michigan. In spite of what it seems Peggy was not all so sweet and easy going. Anthony has always said that his mother is a genuine and strong person. She hadn't been as struck as her husband by the big city's lights.

She used to spend most nights at home with the kid while John would go out partying, wondering if that was the kind of life her husband was so eager to achieve. Could a marriage based on these issues last? Of course it couldn't. In 1968 Peggy packed her things, dragged 5-year old screaming and struggling Anthony behind her, said goodbye to Hollywood and, horror, went back to Grand Rapids. She hadn't been sucked in, and her kid wouldn't have either! Or so she thought. Tony was maybe too little when he and his mom left the City of Angels and went back to his hometown, maybe he was too little to be traumatized, but surely enough the transition from the glittering big city to the Midwest provincial town, combined with the separation from his adored father was not a pleasant experience. What was worse, soon after their homecoming Peggy had fallen in love again and his mom's new boyfriend was not a nice bloke at all.

But life goes on and in that same year Anthony began his schooling career. The institution was named Stocking Elementary School. Peggy started working as a secretary in a law firm and the little family seemed to fall back in a simple, peaceful, middle-class kind of life. L.A. was another planet. But was it for Anthony? It didn't look so. His dad often came to town to see him and for Anthony those visits were something to wait for so anxiously. John had gone under a funny physical change around that time. His hair had grown a lot, down to his shoulders and a beautiful mustache was decorating his face. As Anthony himself once told: "He used to walk around with platform boots up to his knees and bell bottoms with a lot of things all over them, and when people watched us I was like, hey folks I know you think we're freaks but this is my dad!". Peggy was pregnant again and she had to get married. Her second husband was a horrible person, much worse than John, at least according to Anthony. "He used to come back home at five in the morning with black eyes and a smoldering gun and he started smashing everything around". Peggy gave birth to Julie but things did not get better. The step-father was making Anthony's life in Grand Rapids more and more unbearable. The boy would constantly write to his dad, praying John to take him to California. "Please work hard" he wrote "so I can come to California".



Anthony and Julie, 1969

But what was exactly his father's job? John had quit his plans to become a movie director long before. Now he was determined to become an actor. He had changed his name, choosing the "nom de plume" Blackie Dammett. The inspiration of this name is questionable. Dammett echoes Dashiell Hammett, the famous writer of detective stories of the 20s. Blackie could easily be the name of a dog, but John liked it and it stuck. With this brand new name John/Blackie launched himself in a new career and started struggling to get roles. And sometimes he was lucky, and sometimes he wasn't. But the main characteristic of his life in L.A. was getting in trouble. He was attracted by young girls (a passion which he'll communicate to his son), he liked soft drugs and he loved partying every night.

It's not hard to guess that, nice and engaging as he was, he also liked to spread these passions to his closest friends, and sometimes he got paid for this. In 1969 Anthony wrote him "I'm glad you don't have to go to jail. You should be more careful".

In the meantime, in Grand Rapids things were getting worse and worse. "At that point I had realized that nobody was going to intimidate my family" told Anthony "Nobody was going to do no harm to my mother or my little sister. I would have done whatever it took". Peggy divorced again, and life went back to something resembling normality. Anthony was not a shy kid. At school he had already made a name of himself for easily getting in trouble. He now claims he had taken the parts of disabled and handicapped kids and he used to get shouted at because of that.

"I went to a school that integrated deaf and mentally retarded kids" he once told the Rolling Stone, "and I was sort of the self-appointed defender of these kids. I always got expelled for getting in fights with kids who'd torment the handicapped kids. And my mother was always OK with it. It was important to know somebody would stand behind me for doing what I believed in". Something Anthony didn't believe in anymore was religion. Being of Scottish descent Peggy had raised Anthony as a catholic. But at a very early age Anthony rejected that religion. Hell disconcerted him, that God so similar to a tough and strict high court judge did not suit him at all. "I wanted a relationship with God based on love", he said. One day he came back home after catechism and told Peggy "I'm not going there anymore". His mother just nodded. Many years later Anthony would have talked about his rejection of Catholicism in a song, "Shallow be thy game". A long long time and so much trouble would have to pass before Anthony came close again to something resembling spirituality.

Summertime was the best time. As soon as school was out, our kid packed his things, waved goodbye to his mom, left dark Michigan and started sailing towards California. Blackie's acting career was at stall. For every little role he got, other 100 were lost. It was clear enough that his future wasn't there. But Blackie was a nice friendly guy who loved having fun and in a few years he had managed to become friends with many people in Los Angeles, including other guys hanging in the showbiz. One of those guys was Sonny Bono, the male half of the "Sonny and Cher" duo. The couple, after a few years of good record selling, was running an appalling Saturday night TV show. In 1999, when the Red Hot Chili Peppers were recording the video for their single "Around the World", Anthony observed the scenography and commented: "I have the impression that the scenography has been taken straight from one of Sonny and Cher's TV shows". Sonny and Cher divorced in 1972. Sonny began another relationship with a young girl who had been already linked to Blackie, and passed his ex-wife to Anthony's dad.

That summer Anthony went with his dad to his first rock'n'roll show! The band in question was Deep Purple, British hard rock ensemble led by classic guitarist Ritchie Blackmore and screaming singer Ian Gillan, who that summer were experiencing their first great American hit with the fabulous single "Black Night". Eight-year old Anthony was so excited that after the show he went out running in the parking lot but tripped on an iron bar and fell face down on the concrete. The result of this misadventure was that one of his front teeth started growing up the wrong way, giving his smile that peculiarity for what a lot of his female fans notoriously go crazy.



Also caught Sonny Bono on the run with Chastity, girlfriend Susie Coelho, and Chastity's friend. Sonny says "the awesomeness of the whole Hollywood thing" is putting kinks in the Cher-Allman marriage.

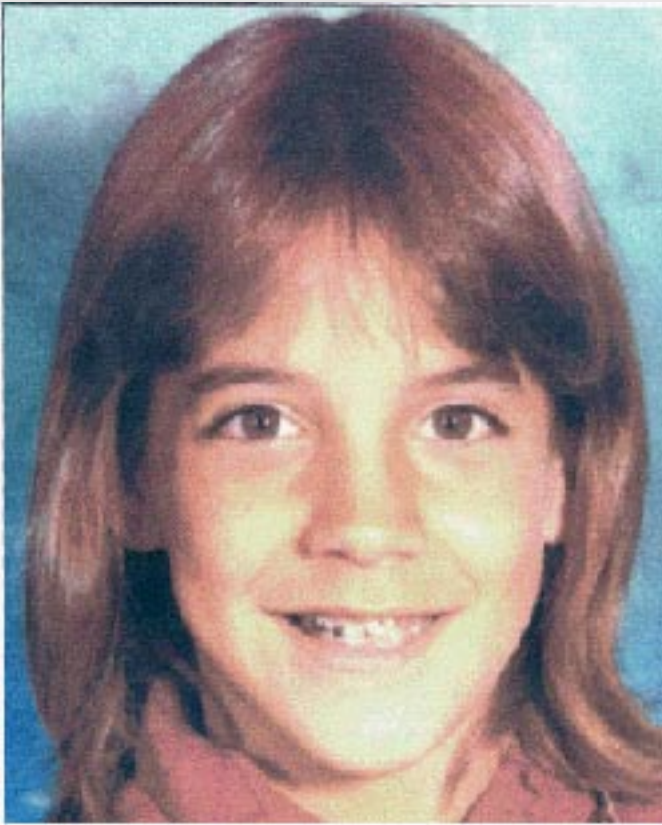
L to r: Sonny Bono, his daughter, his girlfriend and Tony Kiedis, 1974

Summertime at Blackie's pad was a real never-ending fun. Anthony's dad also remembers another rock gig he and Anthony went to, with rock-blues band Canned Heath. This band had had a huge hit a few years earlier with the classic "On the road again", and their singer Bob Hite was a very big guy who used to dance on the stage like a rock'n'roll bear. Anthony was so impressed by his image that during the gig he climbed on the stage mocking Hite's moves under the watch of his father... and at least other 10.000 people.



Blackie had parties every night. Young actors and rockstars, starlets and surfers, pushers and pimps, they were all welcomed in his house. None of them paid too much attention to the kid with the tea-colored hair and the large brown eyes who was hanging around the apartment, and who didn't seem to be too intimidated by anyone.

Brit hard-rock band Deep Purple



Anthony, age 9

At the end of the summer going back to Michigan was a real drag. In the meantime the undaunted Peggy had fallen in love again, and this time forever. A third marriage was approaching. Anthony had had enough. He felt he wasn't a kid anymore, and Michigan had nothing more to offer. He thought that his mother and his little sister did not need him anymore, they had someone new now and he could break out. The thing was, he needed to break out. He wanted to.

Peggy knew in her heart that Anthony's days in Grand Rapids were numbered, but the mere thought of sending that precocious and restless ten-year old straight into the pad of the bad wolf was filling her with horror, also because the kid was now showing all the symptoms of aspiring to follow in his dad's footsteps.

Blackie was impatient to have his son with him full-time: he had so much to teach him and Anthony seemed to be so eager to learn!

"What about school?" Peggy would enquire on the phone.

"Schools exist in Los Angeles too, darling" Blackie said.

Anthony would secretly listen from his bedroom and pray for his mom to give in. "I'll get him enrolled at Beverly High" Blackie said "where the stars' children go". "I don't want my son to attend a school full of stupid movie stars' children" Peggy said "I want him to attend a serious school. No, I'm not gonna do it. You're the usual idiot". Anthony realized that if he wanted his mom to give in he had to set up something dramatic and on that same night he packed his things and ran away to hitchhike all the way to Hollywood. Peggy had to resign herself.

End of Chapter 1

IMPORTANT LINKS YOU MUST KNOW !

- + [OneHotGlobe](#) ~ a red hot chili peppers fansite >www.onehotglobe.tk > onehotglobe.net
> onehotglobe.com
- + [One Hot Globe forums / onehotforums](#) ~ <http://rhcp.proboards6.com>
- + [Red Hot Chili Peppers BBS](#) ~ <http://pub47.ezboard.com/bchilipeppersbbs>
- + [Red Hot Chili Peppers official fansite BBS](#) ~ <http://pub56.ezboard.com/brockinfreakbbs>

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