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**Wire**  
***Pink Flag***  
***Chairs Missing***  
**154**  
**(Pink Flag Records)**

It's often a slippery slope where art and rock meet. The air of pretension and precious commodity that goes with refining the shoot-from-the-hip nature and guttural glory of rock and roll can be hard to swallow unless you're name is David Bowie. What then can you figure from a band of art school misfits who met at a Roxy Music show in London? Yes, the odds were against Wire to begin with. Their debut *Pink Flag* hit the streets in December 1977, the very tail end of England's punk rock's ground zero. While that new wave of rock was all the rage, it was a crowded marketplace. Most of the manifestos had been written and virtually every band had already thrown their two fingers at the music industry, the royal family and anyone else who was watching. Another precarious bit for Wire was that they were signed to EMI's Harvest, an imprint well-accepted as home of the preeminent muso and prog bands, including MOR-staples ELO and the mammoth Pink Floyd, who were so despised by the punks. Once their *Pink Flag* was flown, Wire came on instantly as one of punk rock's most distinct and consistent voices. With a nervy, taut and barbed energetic attack of precision guitar and beat, *Pink Flag* made a statement that adhered enough to punk's understood but expanding ethos yet lived well outside of it. The truth is, as great as the Pistols and the Clash were, they weren't terribly far removed from the staid rock acts they sought to dethrone, with their Les Paul guitar heroics and pop song structures. Wire were different. They took lessons from Bowie, Eno and krautrock that resulted in something as against the grain as anything by a first wave punk act. They stripped down to sparse, mercury-thin guitar lines and almost fragmented rhythms while disembodimenting the standard verse/chorus/verse. Colin Newman's lyrics were, if not necessarily a cut above, certainly miles away laterally from his punk peers, establishing his own prosaic style highlighted by shifts of contrasting emotions and an acidic wit. In 21 tracks most under two minutes, it's a nearly flawless document. Newman's chanted vocals set the template for hardcore and oi! on the raging "Mr. Suit" while "Low Down" finds the band hitting a disheveled, skewered garage funk kin to Patti Smith Group. *Pink Flag* is an album that has shown its widespread influence and sounds completely fresh 30 years on. American hardcore stalwarts Minor Threat grabbed a cover from it ("12XU") in the 1980s, while 1990s Britpop darlings borrowed heavily from "Three Girl Rhumba" and bands like Joy Division and Clinic show their angular debt to it in this new millennium. For their followup, 1978's *Chairs Missing*, the band continued their sharp and rhythmic attack but started to slow down the tempos and implemented keyboards. The pallet was further expanding beyond punk's constraints with broody synth and introspection on "Used To" with a clear foreshadowing of where Joy Division would tread, "Outdoor Miner" takes a glistening turn toward tender pop territory. The stark and pulsating buzz of the ode to insect in ointment "I Am the Fly" was proof that Wire were moving well ahead of the rest of the Class of '77. By 1979 Wire was indeed leading the way, as the punk of two years before had become just that, while the kind of discordant, art-damaged noisenik music that Wire were well ahead of the curve in crafting had taken root with bands like Joy Division, Bauhaus, the Cure and Gang of Four. It was post-punk and Wire had virtually invented it. The band's third album, *154*, marked not only the close of the 1970s but also the close of Wire's great period. *154* is wildly experimental and a landmark signpost signaling the emergence of goth rock. The stark machine-gun beat and dark, macabre twist of "Two People in a Room" and the dirge quality of the vast "A Touching Display," a soundscape that spreads nearly to the seven-minute mark, show the band's continued reinvention of itself. The anthemic quality of the brilliant "Map Ref. 41n 93w" peered at the sort of punk-inspired populism that U2 and Echo and the Bunnymen would make stock in trade. With the idea well run dry and not content to make musical mediocrity, Wire folded up the tent (before reuniting half a decade later) with the legacy of one of punk's greatest bands and these three stellar records remaining intact.

—donny kutzbach

*These sonically restored and remastered reissues of Wire's first three albums, unfettered with needless and uncomplimentary "bonus tracks," are in stores now. A five-disc set, Wire 1977-1979, that includes two live discs and exclusive booklet, is available online only at [www.posteverything.com](http://www.posteverything.com).*



**Red Hot Chili Peppers**  
***Stadium Arcadium***  
**(WEA/Warner)**

The music of Red Hot Chili Peppers has always been a reflection of its home state of California. The macho funk-metal of the band's early records makes for ideal party listening, a devil-may-care, Parliament-Punkadelic sound that could only come from young Californians high on drugs and adrenaline. After the Peppers lost their baby fat and started facing their demons, meaningful songs started popping up amongst all the testosterone-scarred, hypnotic meditations that exposed the serious vocal gifts of Anthony Kiedis and the subtle melodic interplay between Flea and John Frusciante. Suddenly, Red Hot Chili Peppers were invoking pain, regret and sweet nostalgia with their music—and scoring their biggest hits. With the sparkling double album *Stadium Arcadium*, the band has come full circle. It's the most beautiful thing they've ever done, and their most entertaining record since 1991's *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*. More recent records like *By the Way* (2002) and *Californication* (1999) were heavier on sun-streaked balladry, which made forays into classic Chili Peppers funk feel a bit out of place. On *Arcadium*, the band manages to bring these disparate styles together in a way that sounds completely natural. As a result, the songs are gorgeous and kinetic, communicating wider ranges of moods and emotions in four- to five-minute intervals. The verse of "Tell Me Baby" features a monster groove a la *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, replete with Frusciante's chattering funk picking and Flea's throbbing slap bass. But when the chorus kicks in, Kiedis' pleading vocal and Frusciante's falsetto harmony intertwine like two flowers reaching towards the sunlight. The guitarist has always been RHCP's unsung genius, and *Stadium Arcadium* is the showcase he deserves. On top of his lyrical playing, his harmonies burst and blossom all over both discs—an angelic, mournful voice without which these songs would certainly suffer. California seems go hand in hand with rock stardom: rich, inviting and littered with devilish pitfalls. Red Hot Chili Peppers have survived it all, and with *Stadium Arcadium*, they just may have created the definitive soundtrack to their beautiful, unforgiving birthplace.

—joe sweeney

**Name:** Dee Adams  
**When/Where playing this week?**

With my band, Dee & the Housecats on Sat., May 20 at Mohawk Place, 47 E. Mohawk St., 7:30-10pm. \$5.

**When did you start performing?**

I've been singing and performing since grade school. I studied at Berklee and learned guitar, songwriting, and live sound, and haven't stopped learning and playing for 13 years.

**You might like my music if you like...**

I'm too close to it to be objective, but I've been told: Indigo Girls, Jonatha Brooke, Edie Brickell, Pretenders, Richard Thompson, John Hiatt.



**List of Recorded Releases...**

Dee Adams & the Roadtrippers, *Taking My Time* (Sage Indie Music, 2003) and a song "Pennsylvania" on *Artists Inspired by Literature, Chapter 2*. ([www.artistsforliteracy.org](http://www.artistsforliteracy.org))

**Upcoming events...**

I'm looking forward to lots of solo gigs, lots of band gigs, and lots of friends' bands gigs throughout the summer. In the fall, Channel 23 WNLO will be broadcasting the Music Is Art Live At The Center show that I played with my band Dee & the Housecats.

**Worst show ever played...**

ABC No Rio in NYC, because it was 98 degrees at 9pm, the venue had no air conditioning, and had gotten a noise ordinance violation so they could not open the windows or doors.

**Anything else you would like our readers to know about yourself/your music?**

I do a lot of shows as a solo act, as well as with my band, Dee & the Housecats, which is made up of some great Buffalo musicians—Charlie Gannon on guitar, Michael Tinsmon on bass and Nick Runfolo on drums.

**Contact information...**

[www.deetuned.com](http://www.deetuned.com), [www.myspace.com/deeadams](http://www.myspace.com/deeadams). Booking [dee@deetuned.com](mailto:dee@deetuned.com). 716-238-2123.

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