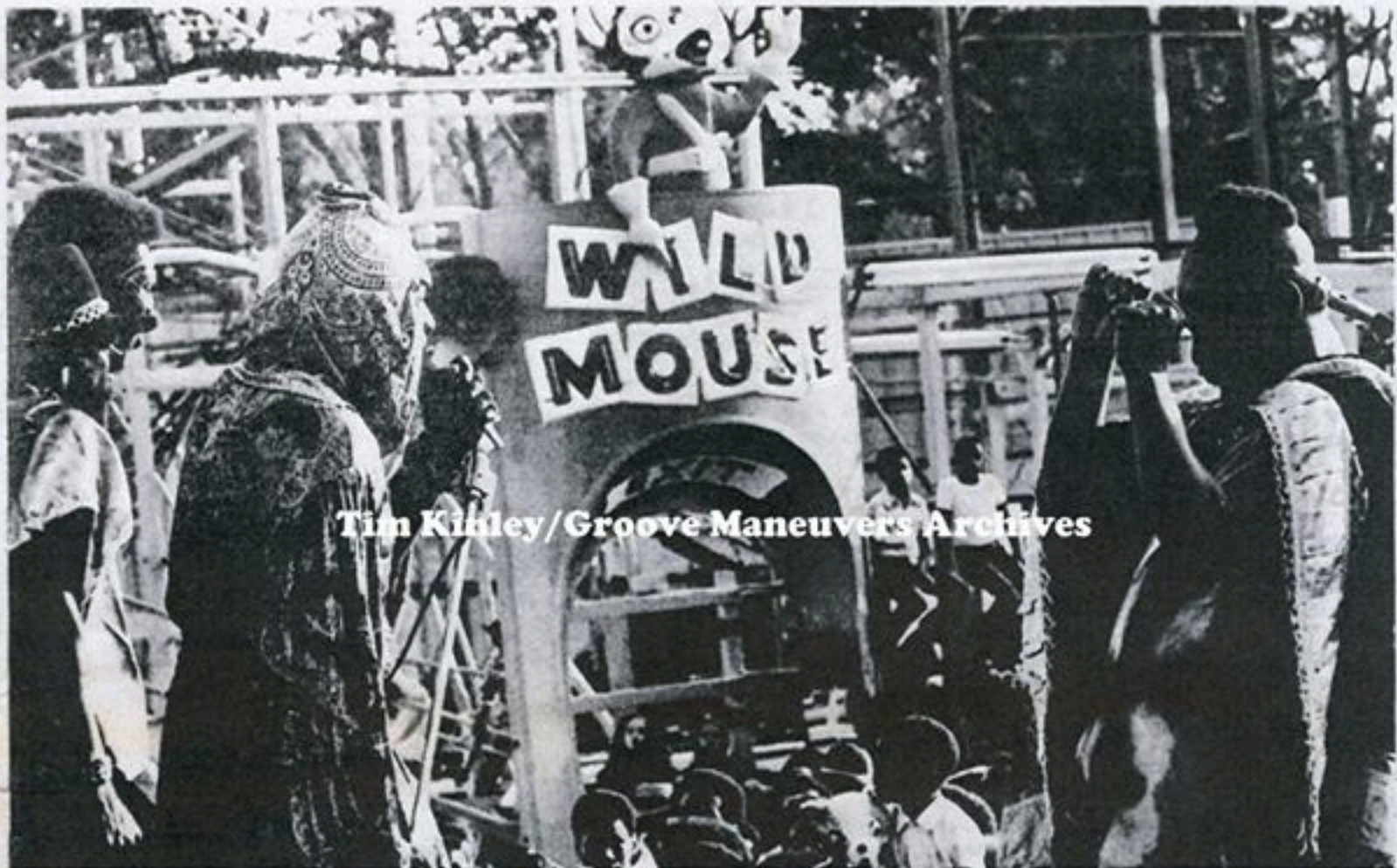


# GREEN



HAIL ERIS  
ALL HAIL DISCORDIA  
VOL. 2 NO. 16

Dr. Tim  
Welcome Here



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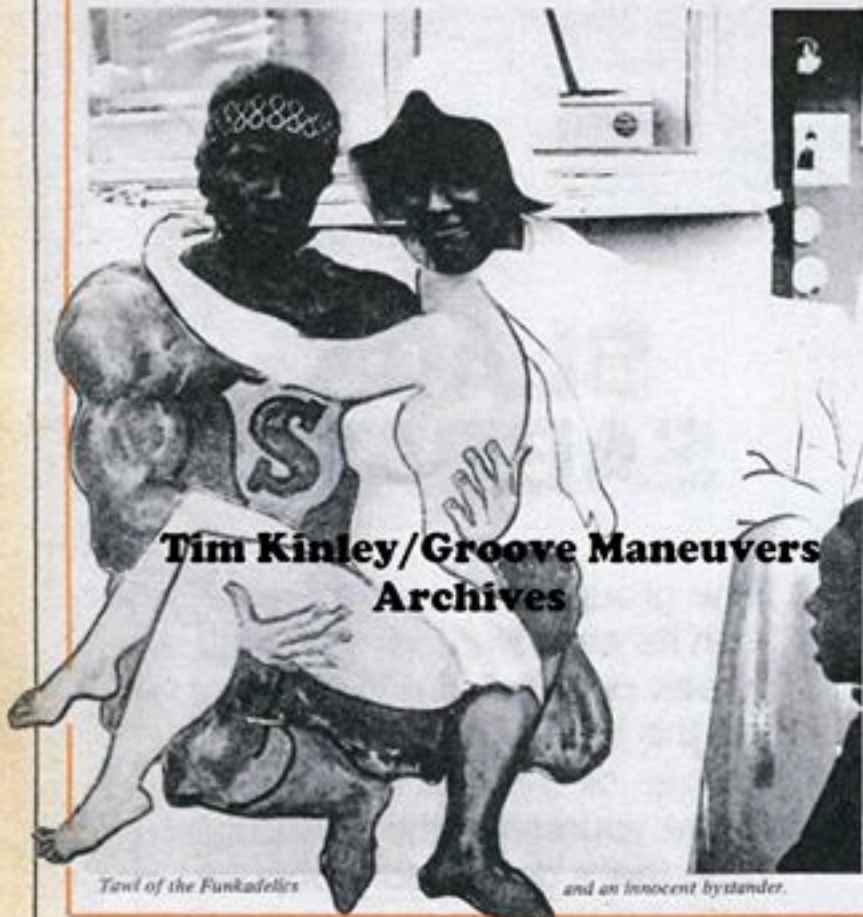
Photographs by Ric Siegel

## Parliafunkadelicment Thang

When the Parliament-Funkadelic trample on stage, everything is suddenly transformed. It's just like hearing rock and roll or John Coltrane for the first time; you really don't know what's happening, but whatever it is, it won't hurt you. It sounds and feels too good.

They come on dressed as clowns or magicians or maybe this time it's African kings or Zulu warriors. The array of bizarre costumes is seemingly never ending. Their show is a combination of dance, singing and all types of weird sounds coming from the amps. Whatever it is, it's not like *anything* we're used to hearing.

Continued on page 26.



Tim Kinley/Groove Maneuvers  
Archives

Towl of the Funkadelics

and an innocent bystander.



Tim Kinley/Groove Maneuvers  
Archives

Tiki and Ed of the Funkadelics in silhouette - the Parliaments out front.

# Parliament funkadelic ment Thang



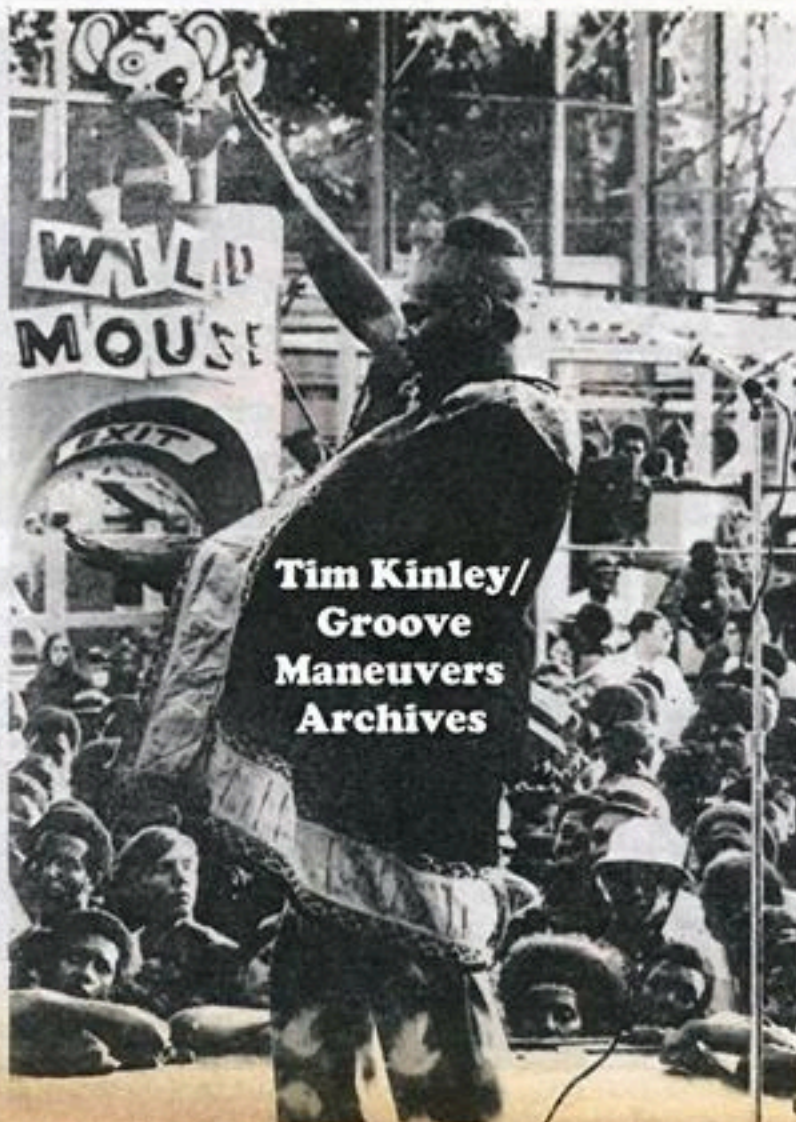
**TKGMA**

*Continued from page 1.*

Their show finds its closest parallel in that of Sun-Ra, the Black mystic-jazz-band-leader/pianist. Sun-Ra will tell you he's from outer-space; the Parliament-Funkadelic tell you they are "not of this world". But where the Sun-God wants to take you on a trip to stars, all the Parliament-Funkadelic want to do is "Lick your funky emotions", if you will only "suck their soul".

The bizarre act is attacked with an almost religious fervor, as though you were witnessing a service at a store-front sanctified church. The Parliament-Funkadelic seem to hypnotize and seduce their audience with their mad rituals. Well before the act is half over, the P & F have the audience joining in, and here, when an audience rushed the stage, it is not just to "tear the clothes off their favorite rock-star, but to join him in his dance. It is as if they were caught up in the ritual of praise, the holy spirit caught hold of their bodies and won't let go.

You undoubtedly remember the



**Tim Kinley/  
Groove  
Maneuvers  
Archives**

*Four views of George Clinton*



**TKGMA**

Parliaments. They had one of the biggest rhythm and blues hits of 1966, "I Wanna Testify". Their back up band was the Funkadelic. Only they weren't the Funkadelic then, just the Parliaments' back up band.

Edgewater Park seemed the perfect place for this band, with its grotesque assortment of rides and people. Fittingly enough, I was led to a trailer, presently serving as a dressing room, tucked under a gigantic roller-coaster-like ride. On the way in, we ran into a number of band members, mainly Parliaments.

It should be noted here that the band is divided into two groups, the Parliament and the Funkadelic. The former are the vocalists, who recorded "I Wanna Testify" four years, on a tiny label called Revilot.

Revilot, owned by then-Parliament manager Le Baron Taylor, had adequate distribution to allow the song to become a hit but, because of an



**TKGMA**

apparent rift between Taylor and the group and because of the lack of any kind of royalties to the group from the song's success, both were cast aside.

Contracted, perhaps shackled, to Revilot and Taylor by the beginning of 1969 the group still hadn't recorded in over a year. It was then the Funkadelics, previously only the Parliaments' back-up band, were brought forward and signed to Westbound, with Parliament lead singer George Clinton stipulated as the producer.

Holland, Dozier, Holland who were presently involved with setting up their Invictus label (which Capitol distributes) had negotiated management and publishing pacts with both the Parliaments and the Funkadelics. However, the Funkadelics still had to honor their Westbound contract and thus the Parliaments are at present an Invictus/Capitol/HDH act, while the Funkadelics are recording for Westbound.

Now then, on the Parliaments'



The Parliaments in 1967.

records, the Funks serve as back-up band and on some of the Funkadelics' albums, the Parliaments are the vocalists but on the other hand, on some of the album, the Funks do their own singing. Confused? Good, you understand.

Inside the trailer, I sat down to talk with George Clinton, the parliaments lead singer. George, along with the rest of the band, is a totally outrageous looking person, with his head shaved, save for a distinct five o'clock shadow on the top. He looks like the last of the Mohicans in bell bottoms.

Funky? He handed me some cold, barbecued fried chicken, cole slaw and baked beans and we talked as the rest of the band drifted into and out of the room and the conversation.

"We started in a group in, let's see . . . 1955. We started as the Parliaments and sang regular "doo-wop" songs. You know, the old 1950's rhythm and blues. Then around 1963 or '64, we changed. Most of us (Parliaments) know each other from grammar school.

"We knew the Funkadelic since we were nine years old; we used to hang around together. We were like brothers.

"The Funkadelics . . . I used to have a barber shop and they used to hang around the shop, at least most of them. They had their hair done there and even learned to play their instruments right there in the shop, most of them."

The barber shop is in Plainfield, New Jersey; most of the group is from Newark and Plainfield. They played there in the early days, at schools and record hops and parties, looking for a break. In 1963 they signed with Motown as the Parliaments, stayed there until 1966 and never had a

record.

When they hit with "I Wanna Testify" in 1966 they still weren't "ready."

"We still hadn't found ourselves. We were trying to get away from ourselves and be like other people. The first time we went into the Apollo Theatre, we wanted to be there so bad, we practiced like we never practiced in our lives. Then we went out for the first show and froze.

"We didn't make it that day but the rest of the week we were the stars. The first day we were there, they made us open up that motherfuckin' show. The O-Jays were the stars of the show, but we were bigger than them because we had a hit record. We were definitely the stars of the show but we blew so bad! We were trying to be real slick, you know. We had no idea that it was going to be that rugged."

At this point (mid-sixties) the Parliaments were a rhythm and blues vocal group in the same vein as, say, the Temptations, only they weren't quite as tight. "We only had half a routine; we would always get carried away somewhere in the song and forget about the routine. We were never a routine group."

Considering the "half routine" of the Parliaments, on the one hand, and the slickness in the routine of groups like the Temptations (who were, needless to say, the group in 1966, it's amazing that the Parliaments looseness didn't make them suffer. Surprisingly, it didn't. "Because we had something else that they liked. We never knew what it was. We always tried to correct it (the looseness) but we couldn't. Like, we'd always lose our shirts, so never had shirts alike; we never had ties alike. We just couldn't do it. After awhile, we'd just start wearing



The Funkadelics a few months ago.

anything. It became a real thing for us. At first it was funny, you know, and then we started liking not wearing the same things. People were liking what we were doing and copying it. We didn't plan it, it just was. Then psychedelic came out. That just gave it a legit name, we were already into it."

"By the time we hit the road with "I Wanna Testify", we had cut our processes off. Just before "Testify", everybody looked like us, so we cut our hair off; and still too many people looked like us, cause everyone had just

During this period they were working in both white and Black clubs, their main pull being in Black clubs in places like Boston and Detroit. Clinton says that "Testify" was more popular among white audiences than Black, though it certainly doesn't seem that way in retrospect.

At present, they are playing primarily collegiate dates, according to their management, and a minimal number dates in Black clubs. They've deliberately shied away from white progressive rock palaces until they have



The Parliament-Funkadelic Thang.

gone into the Afro thing. But we just couldn't keep the clothes alike."

All this happened in a sort of transition period, where the Parliaments were transformed, in about a year and a half, to what can now only be described as a mindblast — the Parliament-Funkadelic Thang. Or more simply (sometimes), the Parliaments and the Funkadelics.

time to build an assault on that front. Still, the Funkadelic album has received excellent notices in most of the rock press and the time may be right for their initial breakthrough.

I can remember that "Testify" was very, very popular, though, in my neighborhood and the neighborhood I live in is almost all Black. I also remember seeing the Parliaments on



"George has been known to bound into the crowd... and emerge wearing nothing more than a scarlet jockstrap."



**Tim Kinley/Groove Maneuvers Archives**

If you haven't heard the first Funkadelic album by now, you ought to be ashamed. The album is, like their show, a completely unique experience. It might be termed "Space Rock" or "Space Soul" but suffice it to say that you have literally never heard such sounds in your life.

The new Parliament album, on the other hand, is, like the man said, totally different. It is definitely a "cleaner" sound; but contrary to what the Parliaments may tell you, it is definitely *not* a "white" sound. It sounds very Black, even though some of the songs come off as a parody of white rock and roll.

As a matter of fact, everything they do seems to be a parody of something. Besides the exotically bizarre costumes they display when they perform, the Parliaments also have a dance routine . . . sort of. It is vaguely reminiscent of dance routines of the Temptations and others of that ilk, but with their own special Parliafunkadelic flavor, that is: "not of this world". Sometimes it is reduced to nothing more than bounding up and down in unison with the beat. Other times they are actually dancing. The routine seems to be something they can't or won't

shake. It may not be as "tight" as that of the Temptations, but it is still there. The show is completely spontaneous, but it doesn't always seem that way.

They are also a band with a reputation of being obscene. In truth, they are a very raunchy, coarse band, in the same way as, say, Iggy Stouge or Mick Jagger. At the least, they're excellently raunchy and even though they shrug off the accusations of being obscene ("It's only in your mind") they are among the best at it.

If the group ever assumes the status of a major attraction (one which, in certain areas of the country, they are nearing) you can expect that very coarseness which seems so charming now to be labelled "obscene", the same way that Jim Morrison's was, the same way that a lot of Janis Joplin's has been, the way Iggy Stouge's may be or Mick Jagger's always was.

And that intensity is, of necessity, to be closely linked with sexuality—in all of the above cases, to be sure, and the Parliament/Funkadelic are no exception here, either. Coupled with that, their appeal is multi-racial, a problem which few Black performers have ever had to deal with . . . primarily because they were castrated before they could make the

attempt. Only Sly Stone and Jimi Hendrix, among Black performers, has been able to pull off what the Funkadelic/Parliament are attempting and Sly has never emphasized the sexual. Hendrix has and he's been roundly blasted in many circles for it.

George Clinton has been known to bound into the crowd, Indian headress streaming after him, and emerge wearing nothing more than a scarlet jockstrap. One wonders if a Black man can get away with that, without being accused of pretension (under the guise of fear), even in the supposedly liberated, theoretically leftist world of rock. They may have to give up what ordinarily would be their greatest asset (their sexuality) in order to "Make it". Jimi Hendrix paid that price, in order to garner full stardom, and then, when he'd obtained it, they screamed that he'd lost his virility.

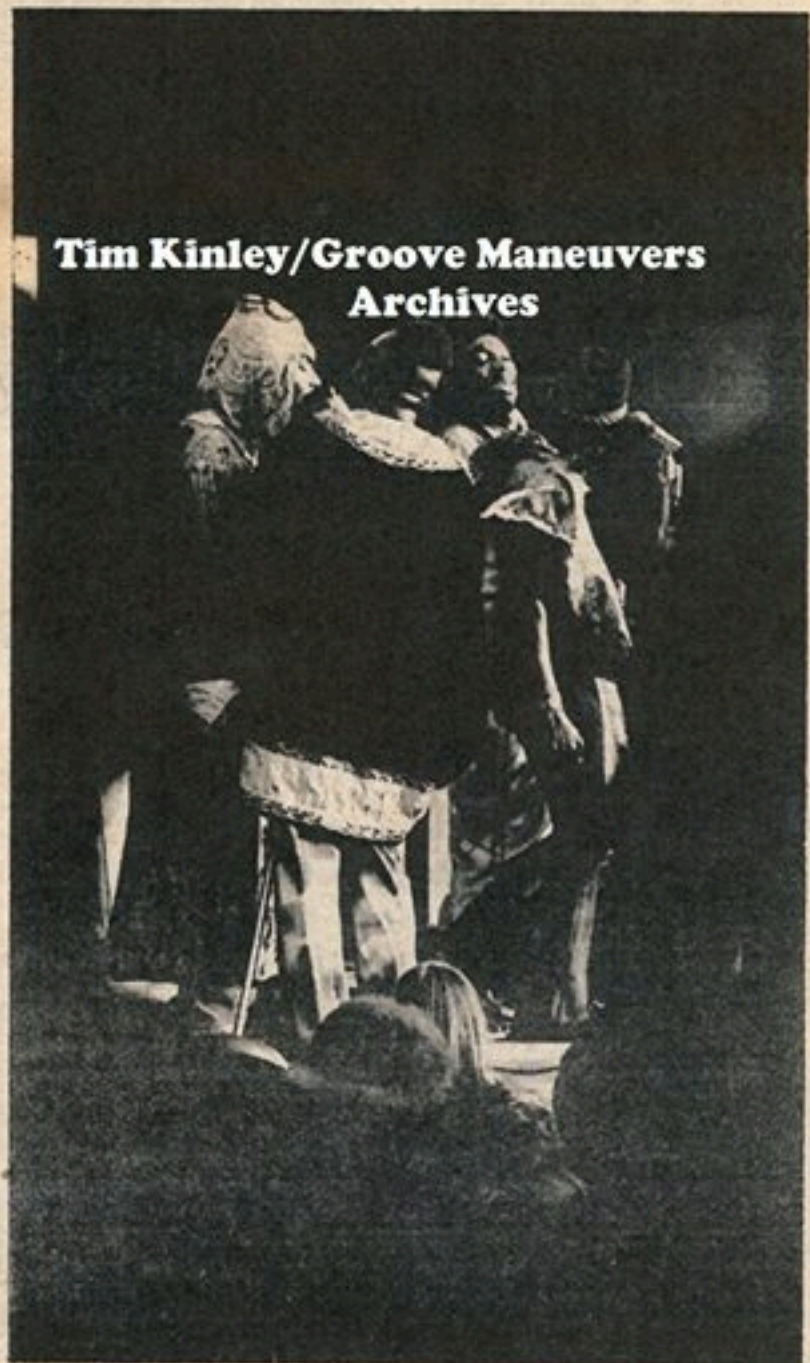
Those in control of the rock industry, especially those in control of Black music, obviously aren't prepared to unleash a Black Jim Morrison (in the person of George Clinton or otherwise) on their minions. Certainly, the white kids can accept that, if they're given as Hendrix has already shown, because of the very mystique associated with miscegenation in this

country. Its another taboo and like any other taboo, white youth is ready to bust it open.

Somehow, it seems as if a white band with this much potential would have achieved much more at this point. (They've had one album out for the best part of a year, a second and third about to be released, including a "Parliafunkadelic Thang" lp with the Iron Butterfly, a few Detroit and other area local hits). It may be that the innate white racism of the rock scene is *exactly* what's holding them down; they've paid enough dues by now, they've got their show together, there's not much more they can do.

Still, ten years ago, who'd have thought rhythm and blues would suddenly emerge into this many-headed hydra? That soul has been able to spawn such a bizarre hybrid, while the Supremes, Temptations and so many others have become the white supper club hits, is testament to its immense virility. And all that remains to be seen, in the case of the Parliament/Funkadelic, is whether or not the insidious white racism of the record industry and the rock and roll scene will allow that virility to emerge undiluted.

Geoffrey Jacques



**Tim Kinley/Groove Maneuvers Archives**