

Tim Kinley/Groove Maneuvers Archives

FUNK- MONGER

FINGERS IT OUT

by Ed Ward

"It's the end result of the commercial pimping of your natural instincts and habits, the bombardment of the senses for money or power." George Clinton's eyes are blazing, and he stabs the air with his finger to emphasize each word. He's mad. His bed in this Charlotte, North Carolina Ramada Inn is littered with books on behaviorism, techniques of mind-control, and the web of multinational corporations. What he's doing is promoting funkentelechy. What? Oh, he's promoting the latest Parliament Casablanca disc, *Funkentelechy Vs. The Placebo Syndrome*, but that's the same as promoting the concept of funkentelechy. And what he's talking about is not funkentelechy, no indeed; it's the dreaded adversary, the Syn-

This is a rabbit. Now, if you just crook your fingers a bit, you have a dog . . .



Diem 3 Studios

Wendi Lombardi



“
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”

drome. All I'd done was ask him what it was and how to detect it, and what its early warning symptoms were.

"It's too late for early warning symptoms. This shit's all around. I believe there's a conspiracy between state, church, corporations and scientists to keep you goin' around in a vicious circle of wantin' and gettin', makin' you suppress perfectly natural urges so they can satisfy them little by little, feed 'em to you like a pimp feeds his 'ho sex, so you completely dependent." He exhales sharply, then glances back at the literary logjam on his bedspread. "I don't read shit like this," he says, almost pleading, "but now I know I *have* to." He's right: this Syndrome stuff is deadly serious. And there isn't much time.

It's not so serious that Parliament isn't landing the Mothership night after night—no, the P-Funk stage show is alive and playing nightly in sports arenas and large halls all over the country, but the message is changing. For instance, they still chant "Shit! Goddam! Get off yo' ass and jam!" but there's a new chant now that goes "Think! It ain't illegal yet!" And Mike Hampton is still the best young lead guitar player in the world, and he's still kicking it out night after night with blazing solos on "Cosmic Slop" and (oboy!) "Maggot Brain," but he's also featured when the band asks, "How's your funk/entelechy?" I mean, the only sensible way to deal with Syndrome, as George repeatedly points out, is to play with it.

But how is your funkentelechy? Entelechy, depending on what philosophical system you see it in connection with, means either "Actuality as distinguished from potentiality," or "a vital force urging an organism toward self-fulfillment." Can you manifest the Funk? Or is it something you keep meaning to get around to? Is there something in your life that is pushing you towards ever better ways to improve your groove? Or has Sir Nose D'Voidoffunk already hit you with the snooze gun and convinced your ass to lay back, consume, and Not Dance? If you've already got funkentelechy, I don't have to urge you to read further, but if you haven't, PAY ATTENTION. A mind's a terrible thing to waste—or to give away.

Back to the pimping of instincts and habits: "There's a natural principle in you where the things you need feel good, and the pleasure principle that says you gotta fuck to make babies and eat to live. So what *they* do is put some mess on those same frequencies so that all of a sudden you feel you gotta have a Mack truck to live or to get a nut. Now, you ain't nothin' but a big CB radio, messages comin' over you all the

time, and if you're uneducated, you respond to 'em like you actually thought 'em yourself. And after your senses get overrun by this shit, you start malfunctionin' and it starts workin' by itself. So you go out to get some pussy and wind up rapin' a little kid or shootin' with your gun instead of your dick, like the Son of Sam. And then, uh-oh. You crazy. You sick. You criminally insane. And they blame *that* on you. You gotta go to jail for it, like it's your fault! You ain't got a fuckin' chance."

Okay, wait a minute here. This is all getting pretty deep. *Who* is doing all this stuff to us, and *why*, and what proof do you have that it's all conscious? "There is a conspiracy between the church and the state and the behavioral scientists. The church keeps things immoral, taboo, sets you up to secretly suppress these natural urges so that you're vulnerable to somebody who gives it to you piece by piece in the form of advertisements. If they gave it to you all at once, the novelty would wear off— why else do you think pornography's illegal and *Hustler's* in so much trouble? It's all subliminal, and that's what's so scary about it. They know we hip to it, that in another ten

“
... all of
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to live ...
”

YOU LOSE!!! We didn't
say "Simon says" ...



Lynn Goldsmith

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years the generation that had their heads blown open by acid— and who can decode the subliminal shit in the commercials—is gonna be in control, so they only have a little while longer to make their control of us permanent, be it through genetic engineering, or psychosurgery or chemical control . . . The behaviorists tell them how to manipulate the instincts, and the state gets its kickback from the way buying this shit stimulates the economy and feeds sales tax into the treasury. So they all in this together."

On the one hand, it sounds like paranoia. On the other, one cannot deny that George has some experience in the manipulation of people. After all, getting people to dance is manipulating them, getting them to chant—even "Think! It ain't illegal yet!"—is manipulating them, and getting 24,000 of them to sway back and forth in unison, whether that's what you intended or not, is sure as hell manipulating them, yet when I saw that happen (at the Capitol Centre in D.C., Chocolate City, last February) nobody seemed to mind the manipulation. But then, P-Funk isn't pimping anybody, and that's the crucial distinction. They put it all right out there for you, to take as much or as little as you want without anybody stopping you. (An attitude that is un-American, to say the least, in some eyes. After all, if all the wealth in this country were equally divided, every man, woman and child would wind up with \$28,611.00.)

P-Funk characters on parade: Rashmeena, Queen of Tall; Neeblock, the headless Amazon; Shoo Fly (don't bother him); and Boy Howdy! Black. What a crew!

putting in your head, the you-gotta-have-this-to-be-hip, the don't-do-that-because-it-is-nasty, the you-can't-do-that-as-well-as-we-can-so-don't-try.

"When people know the P, the real P-Funk, they start to think. They say 'I can do this.' That's the entelechy—your own organism reaching its own potential." And that's why the Funk Mob donated the proceeds from last summer's "Think! It Ain't Illegal Yet!" Funkadelic/Parliament Chicago concert to the United Negro College Fund. That's why Rev. Jesse Jackson got zapped by funkentelechy after studying on George for a minute and withdrew all the nasty stuff he said about contemporary black pop music. Oh, the funk is indeed a powerful weapon for good, a "crazy, positive nuisance," which is how George has always viewed his merry band of crazies.

And the enemy? Sir Nose D'Voidofunk. He's cool, he's a sharp dresser, and he's been fakin' the funk for so long that his nose is long, long, loooonnng. "The nose, that's a sensory organ, and a long one is extra-sensory, but the things about your senses is you can't trust 'em because they don't think or nothin'. So Sir Nose, we made him look cool because the image of cool is attractive. But cool is a trap. Like Pedro (Bell, known as Sir Lleb of Funkadelia, theoretician and graphic artist responsible for the Funkadelic album covers) says, you will be cool, sucker, at the last ass-kick of death you will be *real* cool. It's usually poor people who fall for it at first because everybody wanna be what they think happy is, and unhappy people want it most of all. Of course, it's impossible to be that kind of happy, but that's the Syndrome script: if you buy this shit, you will be happy. It will make you cool, it will make you *look* like you got the funk, and if you fakin' the funk, your nose got to grow. So you get lulled into this sense of false security 'til you just lay back and do what you told. Sir Nose done hit you with the Snooze Gun, and you will not dance.

Which is just the situation that the forces of funk are seeking to avoid. Frankly, listening to a record like Parliament's bit hit "Flashlight," or Parlet's "Cookie Jar" or the Brides of Funkenstein's "Funk Or Walk," or Bernie Worrel's "Much Thrust," it's hard not to dance, or at least shake your rump to the funk. The message may be in the lyrics to the music, but it's also in the music itself. It makes you act crazy, makes you bop around like an idiot, makes you recall little subliminal bits of it in public so you sing out "How's your funk/entelechy?" on a crowded

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Wendi Lombardi

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"But the Syndrome isn't going to budge an inch. If anything," George says, "we've made 'em consolidate for a minute, cuz now they see that we hip to 'em. But the good thing is that there ain't one person programmin' the way this shit goes, so they don't know how much we've infiltrated 'em. See, we can't beat the system right now, so we gonna jump it, get in it, and make it dance." That sounds pretty dangerous, though. Aren't you afraid of becoming the Syndrome, or getting co-opted by it? "Naw. The funk always changes, and it's always the opposite of the Syndrome. The funk is part of the thing—whatever it is—that keeps straightenin' things out. See, I believe that even if it gets down to ten people left on earth who haven't been infected by Syndrome, they're gonna make things work out okay; but what I'm sayin' is, why let it get that far? Now, Syndrome cannot figure out what this straightenin' power is; they don't know where it comes from. They can jump on it and exploit it, take any phenomenon we find and supermarket it, like they did in the 60's at Woodstock, but by the time they do that, we gonna be somewhere else. The funk always changes and it's always the opposite of the Syndrome. Even if the Syndrome becomes what is known as the funk for a moment, the funk will have already left there. Funk and Syndrome. Oil and water. Do not mix."

So exposure to the funk unprograms the crap the Syndrome has been

“ See, we can't beat the system right now, so we gonna jump it ... and make it dance. ”

If you've got the right attitude, you too can be a roady for P-Funk. Dig?



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whereby two solo artists save money on a band by sharing it? Rockpile are not easy to define, and Edmunds isn't about to analyze it himself.

But whatever Rockpile may be—super nostalgia trip, a rock consciousness raising squad, or the old farts' answer to the Sex Pistols—the hope of their continuation as a unit is one of the great promises of 1978. For, whichever way the musical trends blow, we'll always have one place to turn for the real thing—straight-ahead, flat-out rock 'n' roll, free of frills and fired with energy.

"Face it," said Edmunds, "we really couldn't do anything different . . . We can't add another instrument," he said, cracking a smile, ". . . I play too loud so there's just no room."

P-FUNK

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bus in front of perfect strangers: un-cool, un-programmed, and, with luck, unprogrammable. "Just act the fool," is George's advice, "but do it positively. You'll get on some peoples' nerves, but if somebody gets on your nerves by actin' a little weird, get your nerves together. They might be your life savior because they can still act a little different, and they see stuff a little different, and we might need that vision in a minute.

"See, we sayin' to people, when you get tired of bumpin' don't throw the record away, listen at some of this shit one time. You might use it. We gonna start givin' information away: how to be your own corporation, even if it's just a man and wife. We gonna bring all new laws to the corporate thang, cuz we know how it's done, we make more money, faster, and don't lose our sanity, and have a bunch of fun and finally upset the way they doin' the whole thang by lettin' everybody have the information." That's the way Thang, Inc. is run, the umbrella conglomerate of the P-Funk family, which supports Parliament, Funkadelic, Parlet, the Brides of Funkenstein, Bootsy's Rubber Band, the Horny Horns, Eddie Hazel, Bernie Worrel (due for a solo album from Arista immediately, as well as holding down the prime keyboard position in Parliament/Funkadelic), Fuzzy Haskins, and probably one or two funkateers who'll join up or clone between the time I write this and the time you read it. Just as funk is an ever-expanding idea, the funk family is a growth-oriented facility.

And, as easy as can be, you can be a part of it. Besides buying the records of your favorite funk folk (Essential: *Mothership Connection* and *Funkentelechy Vs. The Placebo Syndrome* by Parliament, *Stretchin' Out With Boot-*

sy's Rubber Band and *Bootsy's Player Of The Year* by Bootsy, and *Hard Core Jollies* and *One Nation Under A Groove* by Funkadelic) you should catch the upcoming tour, which will be primarily a Funkadelic (i.e., hard, guitar-dominated rock with few props) tour rather than a Parliament (i.e., groove, horns - and - backup - singers dancin' funk with a story line and props) one, and which will play smaller halls that usually book rock.

And the Mothership? Resting in the shop, getting a lube job and a routine refunkstification maintenance, while in the other part of the shop, funk mechanics work overtime on various secret pieces of deep-sea gear in preparation for the next phase of the funk conquest of the universe, to be revealed on the upcoming Parliament album, *The Motor Booty Affair*. The underwater setting will even be reproduced on stage, and, my informants tell me, the show will climax when Atlantis itself rises from the deep. How all of this will happen, as well as how such Clinton character creations as Rump All Steel Skin and the Motor Booty robots (women robots with explosive charges in their hips who explode when they do the bump with you) fit into the master plan is anybody's guess.

So in the meanwhile, listen to *One Nation Under A Groove's* little rock epic, and prepare yourself for some bad guitar jams, funkwise. And keep an eye out for Sir Nose. He's still around, you know.



DEAD BOYS

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whenever the absent-minded waiter passes our table from then on, Cheetah yells out, "I didn't do it!", drawing an appropriately blank look from the beleaguered fellow.

In the hubbub, no one has noticed that Stiv Bators has slipped a bread stick into his fly, and is busily jerking it off, so he has to call our attention to his starchy self-abuse. The joke recognized, Stiv stops well short of orgasm, and returns the stick to the bread basket, to await patrons more into oral sex. The table talk buzzes on a bit longer, until, with Bators just concluding an anecdote with ". . . and that was the third time in my life I was in a *menage à trois!*", we decide to break up the dinner, so that the Dead Boys will have time to prepare for their appearance at Hurrah later this evening.

Cheetah and I walk over to the nearby apartment he shares with Dead Boy bassist Jeff Mangrum and their ladies; Cheetah has found out that I haven't yet heard the Stooges' *Kill City* LP (not on that mailing list), so he's