

SCI-FI FUNKINESS



Glen Goins



Mike Hampton



Gary Shider

ALMOST 20 YEARS AGO, a group of singers organized themselves from a rather large barbershop group into a pop/soul conglomeration called Parliament. They moved from record company to record company (ABC to Tamla-Motown to Revilot) before realizing a hit single in 1966. "(I Just Wanna) Testify" was their long-awaited score, but misfortune came soon after—the Revilot company folded, and as a result of legal complications, the band lost the right to use its own name. The original vocalists of Parliament wandered off on their own, and the musicians who had backed them regrouped, dubbed themselves "Funkadelic," and changed their stylistic format from doo-wop to acid-rock and funk.

Recording on Westbound Records until 1975, Funkadelic then signed with Warner Brothers, released *Hardcore Jollies*, and in 1976 rejoined Parliament (who had been on several small labels) to do *The Clones Of Dr. Funkenstein*, which was billed as Parliament's offering. Touring with a \$275,000 set, a 75-member road crew, three buses, one Winnebago camper, and four semitrucks, the combined Parliament/Funkadelic entourage has become the largest road production ever assembled by a black group. And though the two bands are continually associated with one another, Funkadelic, nonetheless, remains autonomous.

The heart of Funkadelic consists of three guitarists—20-year-old Mike Hamp-

Triple Threat Guitar From Funkadelic

By Steve Rosen

ton and 25-year-old Gary Shider share the lead role, while 24-year-old Glen Goins handles rhythm. These three strive to go beyond the idiomatic sound usually associated with black funk bands and to blend their trio of guitars into Funkadelic's unique brand of "lunar funk."

—GP

* * * *

What were the formative years of your playing like?

Glen: Gary and I are originally from Plainfield, New Jersey, and my father played guitar. I came from a very spiritual family, so I did some strumming in church. For the first four years after starting to play, I would get the rhythm of the music by falling asleep on my father's knee. So, after four years of that, I had good timing. My father said he didn't want any kids who couldn't play guitar, so I had to learn. I was about seven when I began but I don't know if that shows.

Gary: I started when I was about

seven. I also had a very spiritual background, and my father was also a guitarist.

Mike: I originally started out on drums, but about five years ago I met this guy down the street from me who had this electric guitar—it looked like a Strat, but it was smaller. He knew the guitar part to "Get Ready" by Rare Earth, so he taught it to me. I caught on fast but I was tuning wrong—I was tuning to an open E. The first band I was in consisted of me, a drummer, and a sax player—if you can believe that. I was trying to play the chords *and* the melody. I had to learn a lot of different scales and inversions and things of that sort. My training really came from taking lessons for six months from this jazz cat. He taught me technique and how to tune—that kind of jazz. When I wanted to get into fast things, he told me about "ghost noting." He also hipped me to picking every note; Roy Clark-type things.

Glen: When I was about 11 or 12, I started playing in bands. The name of my band was the Ambassadors; first it was Glen And The Ambassadors, but then my brother got bigger, and they kicked my name off the front of the band. Plus he started taking karate and nobody wanted to argue about it. My mother bought my first electric guitar for me. It was a Gibson Roy Smeck model, which you've probably never heard of. It was a nice guitar, too;

Continued on page 104

FUNKADELIC

Continued from page 28

I've still got it. It was a hollowbody and a good guitar, but I was disappointed. I wanted a more rock and roll looking guitar, a solidbody with some fancy cut on it. That was a good guitar—that boy used to talk. Later I bought a Gibson SG. I still like SGs. There was a guy who owned a piano shop in my neighborhood, and he used to really bend backwards to help kids. I mean, you could go there with five dollars, buy a guitar, and pay him off later. I also had a Fender Jazzmaster, but I didn't keep that one because I didn't finish making the payments.

Gary: I started out on a Kay. That guitar was about as big as your body. I was using that monster in my first band which was called the Fabulations.

What other guitarists did you listen to?

Glen: Well, B. B. King was doing some nice things; Jimi Hendrix, of course—he was playing with the Isley Brothers then. I also got into Muddy Waters.

Gary: I listened to Albert King and Freddie King, and my man, Chuck Berry.

Glen: I was mainly into Chuck Berry. Once, I was going to be in a talent show in school. I had my guitar and amp, and I was trying to figure out something suitable to do. The only thing I could relate to was stuff I'd seen on TV, or by Chuck Berry, because at the time, you couldn't listen to the radio and *not* hear Chuck Berry. So all

I had in my mind was a mixture of Elvis Presley, from seeing all his movies, and Chuck Berry with his guitar thing. So I got up there and auditioned for the talent show; I thought I was going to be *bad*. I knew I could sing, so I got up there and did a song that was a mixture of Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley. I had the words all mixed up, but I knew I was supposed to stand up there and move my legs. I was up there doing my thing, and there were girls out in the audience just rolling on the floor. The whole time I thought, "Oh, you're killing them, Glen." It didn't dawn on me until I was all the way through that they were laughing. Actually, that was my introduction to rock and roll—and that should have been enough to stop me right there.

Mike: I was listening to Jimi Hendrix and Rick Derringer, and I liked Deep Purple's guitarist, Ritchie Blackmore [presently with Rainbow]. I haven't heard much of John McLaughlin, but I've been told I play un-McLaughlin. I play my own interpretations of everybody's things. I listen a lot; I pick up different things from different guitar players. I think the sounds I encounter daily have helped a lot.

What kind of amps and guitars are you using now?

Mike: I'm using two 100-watt Marshalls with four cabinets, and a Fender Stratocaster. It has a left-handed neck, although it's a right-handed guitar. This is because I believe Fender's stock model

is made wrong; the high *E* string has to go the greatest distance. If you get into stretching strings, you pop a lot of them. That's why I turned it around. This way, the largest string goes the farthest distance, which is more desirable, because it can withstand the most tension. You won't be bending it as much. It's a fairly new Strat but it *looks* old. I also use a Gibson doubleneck similar to Jimmy Page's [see *GP*, July '77]; same color and everything. I don't know the exact year it was made, but it's fairly new. And let me tell you, it's one *heavy* guitar. I mean *really* heavy. It weighs you down, but you get used to it. I can stand up and play it for long periods of time now; not two hours, but maybe an hour. We don't do much moving or jumping around onstage, like some bands do. A Les Paul is heavy, but it's not *that* heavy, and Les Pauls are durable. In the future I'd like to get an Alembic guitar [8360 Industrial Ave., Cotati, CA 94928]; I've heard a lot about them. I also play some acoustic guitar—although I don't own one—and banjo. If I had all the guitars I wanted, there wouldn't be enough room on the whole stage.

Glen: I'm using a Fender Strat, too—a really old one. It's about a '56 or a '57. And I use two Ampeg V-9 heads, two V-9 cabinets, and two V-4 cabinets. Sometimes I use a V-4 head with the other two heads. Occasionally, I use a V-9 head and Ampeg SVT bass head with V-4 cabinets. I bought

Continued on page 106

FUNKADELIC

Continued from page 104

a Gibson L-6 for my brother, and now I want one. I knew they were good guitars, but I didn't know I'd want one so badly. From the time it took me to get it home from the store, I wanted to keep it.

Gary: I use the Travis Bean and Acoustic amps. The speaker cabinets are four 260s and one 270, but they all have 270 heads with the equalizer powering them. All the cabinets have JBLs.

Are there certain settings you use as far as tone and volume are concerned?

Gary: I like to use a lot of highs. I set the treble up all the way and the bass about in the middle; the midrange varies. I usually have the higher frequencies set pretty high on the equalizers on each amp. I try to get them all to sound the same all the way around.

Glen: Basically I like a big sound; you have to exaggerate the highs to cut through, but I still like it to be thick—I don't like a thin sound. I play mostly rhythm and a lot of the bass lines doubling the bass player, so I try to keep my sound thick. For different sounds, I use a Maestro phase shifter, a wah-wah, and sometimes I use an MXR phase shifter.

Mike: Well, I've had certain things done to the guitar which give it a different sound. I had three DiMarzio pickups put on; they get better as they get older. When

I first had them, they weren't distorting at all, but after some time, they would distort. I also had an Alembic preamp put in, but I have to replace that because it's busting up. I'm pretty good at using gimmicks, and I use a Foxx Tone Machine with octave sustain. It's nasty; you can really get that dirty Hendrix sound. And I use a Big Muff and a Morley wah-wah, though I like the Cry Baby and would like to get a Vox wah-wah. I also use a Bi-Phase made by Musitronics. It's a stereo phaser, and you can get a Leslie effect with that. But we don't do too many things now that require these, so I just get up there and crank up the amps. There really aren't any particular settings I use on the amp, just up and down. I turn the amp all the way up and control the volume with my guitar. I use a Y cord between the two heads, but I still want to get them beefed up. If I'm getting ready to do a really loud song, I'll turn all the way up on the amp with very little volume on the guitar and get a nice, punchy, thick sound. Marshalls are not like a really dirty amp; they can get a mellow sound—jazzy—it depends on how you put the settings. All four of my cabinets have JBLs, also. Like I said before, there isn't too much room in this band for a lot of different guitar sounds. Playing with singers and basically being a backup band, you have to play very tasteful stuff; that's what being an accompanist is all about.

What kind of picks and strings do you use?

Mike: I use Fender medium and heavy picks and Gibson light-gauge strings. I've found that Ernie Ball Super Slinky strings break too easily. They're wrapped differently than Fender strings.

Glen: It's just the *B* and the *E* strings that really break, because I use Ernie Ball Super Slinks, too. So I usually use Gibson

Next Month: Domenic Troiano

or Fender *Es* and *Bs*, because they seem to hold up better. And I use a Fender medium pick.

Gary: I use a set of Gibson light-gauge strings and thin Fender picks.

Explain how the three guitarists work together as a unit.

Glen: Actually, I think it's a pretty good unit, because Michael plays really fine lead guitar and Gary plays a really tasty, soulful, melodic kind of guitar. I just play good rhythm, that backup thing, or anything else I want to do. We can all play lead, but that rhythm/lead setup is usually the formula that keeps it going. If the bass needs thickening, I'll play along with the bass line.

Continued on page 110

Tim Kinley/Groove Maneuvers Archives

FUNKADELIC

Continued from page 106

What about the way the three guitarists work in the studio?

Glen: This is such a big family [11 people perform onstage], that it depends on whoever's there. Anybody could be playing anything. I might play some keyboards, bass, and anything else I can get away with.

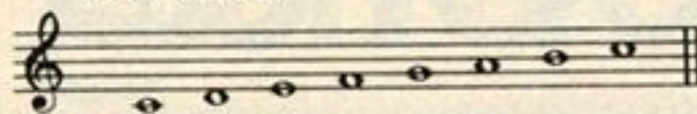
Do you have special picking techniques or attacks that you use?

Glen: I think practice is the best technique. A person can play as well as he wants to, according to his dedication to practice. I'm talking about guitar players, but I'm sure that it's true with everything. If you can make yourself sit down and practice for eight hours a day, you'll sound like it—unless you're just naturally great, like myself, but everyone can't be blessed like that [laughs]!

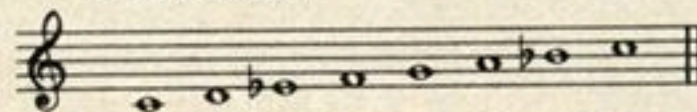
Mike: It's really true. I used to practice six to eight hours a day because I had this idea that if I was not practicing, somebody else was! And if you think about that, it's a trip in itself. I do like to sit down and practice modes—mixolydian, dorian, ionian—and take different scales and work out patterns over the whole neck of the guitar. I'll do some scales all over the whole neck, if I want to stay in that particular scale. I work on whole-tone scales, which are really *outside*, but they

can be inside—it depends on how you use them.

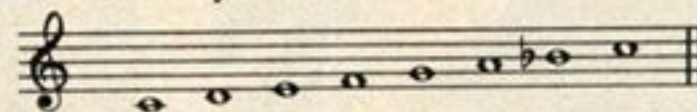
C ionian scale



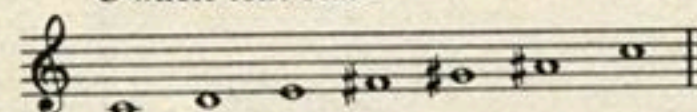
C dorian scale



C mixolydian scale



C whole-tone scale



To me the guitar is all patterns of five, four-finger spaces. When I first started learning, I made a drawing of a guitar fretboard and marked all the places where various notes occurred over the whole board. That kept me practicing a lot, too.

Does anyone in the band play slide guitar?

Mike: I play a little bit, but I haven't had any need to play any. I have to get back into it. I use a Blu-Slide [Lenny Pogan Prod., Inc., Box 353, Cathedral

Station, New York, NY 10025]; it fits like a ring and doesn't go over the whole finger. It's just a piece and a lot lighter. It goes on the pinky. You can play a lot more freely, and you're not confined so much—all you have to do is drop your baby finger down to the string in order to do a lead. It's important to use all four fingers when you do runs. When I first started, I only used two fingers. I used to tell these cats I was playing lead with two fingers, and they couldn't believe it. And I got off into it, too. Then my teacher taught me some technique and how to use all of my fingers. When I first started learning how to stretch strings, to get my baby finger strong, I used to exercise it until it hurt. Then I'd rub it on the strings real fast and make it numb. After that, I would start all over again, bending strings and whatnot. I learned real fast, but it was still very painful.

Does being an accompanist to vocalists stifle your playing at all?

Mike: Yes, it does. But I just get into the simplicity of things. I get into trying to be less aggressive, and then I'm only aggressive in spurts—just to give them a little taste that I can *do* something. It would be a different thing if it was "featuring Michael Hampton on lead," and they'd stick me out there, and I would be playing lead for 45 minutes. I'd like to do that—high energy—but I'd probably slur a whole hell of a lot. But being a solo player or an accompanist doesn't take too much—just

Continued on page 112

FUNKADELIC

Continued from page 110

common sense. You know, "this is this and that is that," and just relate it. You have to believe in what you're playing. I'd like to do an album on my own to get that other thing out of me. I studied a lot of fourths and fifths, and I'd like to do a lot of that kind of harmony. Joe Walsh and Don Felder in the Eagles have teamed up pretty nice, as far as the melodic things they do. We haven't, as yet, gotten into that, because you have to give out the funk a little at a time. Being a commercial guitarist is harder than being a professional guitarist.

Glen: But I don't think that's too much of a problem with us—that commercial thing—because I think we have more freedom than a lot of musicians. We're not doing what everybody else is doing, and this unit, as it is now, has only been together for about two years; we're still babies. I think it's full of a whole bunch of fine talent, but as we go along and do the things the way we do it, we do it naturally and by a groove. We grow on each other more and more every day.

Mike: Your guitar playing is what you make it. Your guitar can be any piece of junk, but if you have a way of finding a handle on it, do it. Guitarists should never complain about what they play on because we, too, went through some really hard times. ■

A Selected Funkadelic Discography

Solo albums: *Funkadelics*, Westbound (19631 W. Eight Mile Rd., Detroit, MI 48219), W 216; *Free Your Mind And Your Ass Will Follow*, Westbound, W 2001; *Maggot Brain*, Westbound, W 2007; *America Eats Its Young*, Westbound, W 2020; *Cosmic Slop*, Westbound, W 2022; *Standing On The Verge Of Getting It On*, Westbound, W 208; *Let's Take It To The Stage*, Westbound, W 215; *Tales Of Kidd Funkadelic*, Westbound, W 227; *Funkadelic Greatest Hits*, Westbound, WB 1004; *Best Of The Early Years*, Westbound, WB 303; *Hardcore Jollies*, Warner Bros., B-2973. **With Parliament:** *The Clones Of Dr. Funkenstein*, Casablanca, 7014.

**Tim
Kinley/
Groove
Maneuvers
Archives**