

**Tim Kinley/Groove Maneuvers Archives**

# George Clinton

Cosmic funk father, soul leader of the black acid movement  
and most high supremest player in the Parliament Funkadelic universe.  
He has seen the future, and it is funky

by Charlie Frick



**G**eorge Clinton, the Cosmic Funk Father and head of the post-Jimi Hendrix black acid movement (BAM), fights a never-ending battle for truth, justice and the power of positive funk. Along with the other members of the Parliament-Funkadelic mob, George wields the sword of truth in an attempt to subdue, subvert and submerge the forces of intergalactic jivation and corporate riffraff. BAM is the black, '70s answer to the white acid-rock movement of the Grateful Dead and the Jefferson Airplane in the '60s.

Onstage at Madison Square Garden, past the flame throwers, smoke makers, ice machines and other assorted space-age effects of Clinton's touring tower of babel, the seats are packed with the residents of chocolate city and its vanilla suburbs. In P-parlance (the language of P-Funk) they are Maggot Brains and Geebies, dedicated followers of the funk, members of the United Maggots of Funkadelia, devoted to the preservation of the Funkadelic Invasion Force. Street blacks mingle with \$1,000-a-day players and their ladies. For them and many other space blacks and psychedelised bumpers, George is the only cosmic newscaster able to communicate with them in their own language, a mixture of street black and rock talk, with a heavy helping of cosmic slop.

As the members of the mob gear up for the show, the air backstage becomes thick with the smell of herbs burning and greasepaint. George is reminiscing back ten years to the Summer of Love. At that time he was the head of the Parliaments (remember "I Just Wanna Testify"?), a fairly successful R&B group from New Jersey, originally known as the Positive Nuisance from Plainfield. 1967 brings them to Boston, a center of the counter-culture. Clinton tunes in, turns on, drops acid and drops out of the stereotyped mold of the band on the road.

"Acid is something the master program just dropped into the game to liberate ourselves. Man, sheeit! I used to fly across the country to cop good acid. It got to the point where I was able to take seven or eight tabs, and nothing would work anymore but the speed. We were taking it every day. The group was composing and performing on acid. That's what liberated the whole funkadelic concept. We could imitate all aspects of reality—some of them might frighten people or make them laugh, some of them might go against their taboos, but all of it is valid.

"We would get onstage, all trippin' and shit, and we'd see that it really didn't make no difference, 'cause the kids in the audience were so tripped out themselves that they didn't care. They couldn't tell if we stopped, started or what song we were into.

"Sometimes some misguided dude in the audience spikes the whole party with PCP or some really bad shit like that. I can



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feel that vibe in the audience; it's a deathly vibe and you have to *really* waltz with them people. The downs and the smack? Yeah, down on the smack and all of the downer drugs. The government is giving us behavior-modifying drugs. They don't want us to experience it like we are doing now—you know, wide open and loose. You know they made it impure and started selling it. They fucked it up real good.

"That's why I say there's got to be a new drug, a drug of the mind, and that's what we consider P-Funk.

"People is really suffering from the Placebo Syndrome. The system says that you have a set time to live and die, and in between they want you to buy, get fat and die. They is just *pimping on your pleasure principle*. They got their scientists and computers all zeroed in on making money, and that's all. They describe happiness as all the pleasurable shit they'll show to you, then tell you that you got to work for the system to get them.

"When people get into the funk, like it frees their mind, and their ass just naturally follows. When everybody connects on the one, the one rhythm of the universe, that's the power that nothing can't stop."

But acid isn't the only influence on the P-Funk philosophy. A series of strange UFO sightings and contacts by members of the band over the years was to change the future of the funk. At the turn of the decade George and former James Brown wonder-kid bassist Bootsy Collins were driving down a deserted country highway late one night after a concert when their car was struck by a beam of light from an unknown source. George's head was zapped with the vision of the Mothership Connection.

"At that time, black music was com-

mercial-period," George explains while suiting up for his appearance onstage. "Any situation we could put a black in other than just straight-out pimpin' and dopin' would be very new and sell. Especially with the power of the funk behind it. I was always into science fiction anyway, so I figured to put a nigger on a spaceship was commercially just as smart.

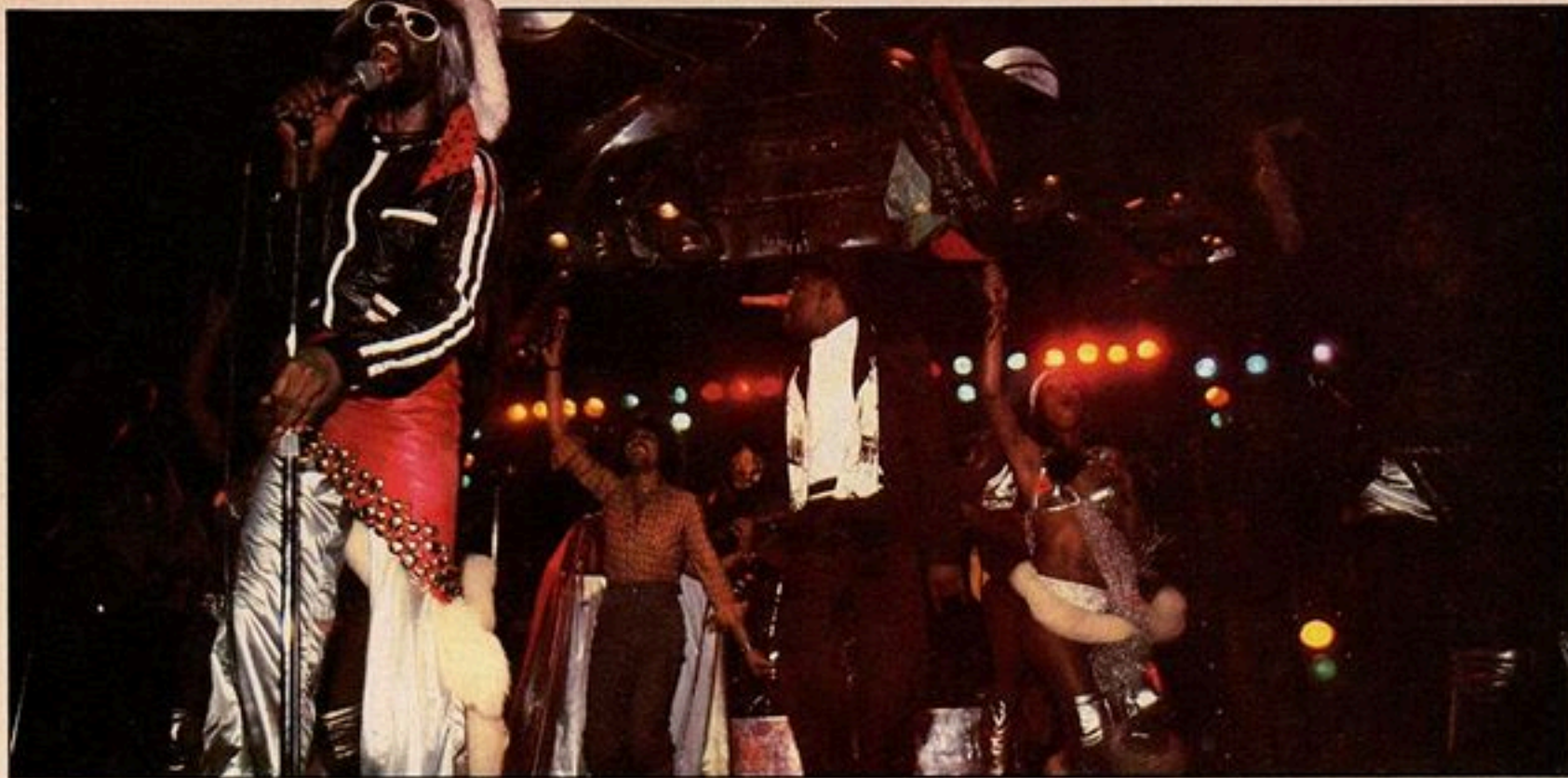
"A lot of that consciousness came from acid, too. A lot of the white kids were eager to trip off into hippism, which was being black, being funky, partying, hanging loose all of the time, havin' fun, being poor. Then all of a sudden Jimi Hendrix comes on the scene, the supernigger fronting a white acid-rock band and taking trips to other planets and solar systems. It was the electric age when we experienced the drug before they got to it."

Another close encounter did not have such fortunate results. Lead guitar player Eddie Hazel was getting stoned in the bathroom of an airplane while returning from a concert. When he returned to his seat and looked out the window he saw a UFO off the wing of the plane. The ship beamed him out of his seat and into the starship. He was later returned to his seat on the plane but was understandably upset. A stewardess and an air marshal tried to calm him down, but he thought they were sauceroids. He bit the stewardess on the neck and drew a one-year jail term.

The combined forces of the Parliaments and the Funkadelics—former James Brown horn men Fred Welseley and Maceo Parker and the hot horny horns—lay down a heavy instrumental groove as the plastic, silver-plated, inflatable pimp-mobile is wheeled onstage. Out steps Clinton dressed in a floor-length white ermine coat. Following him out of the car comes Parlet and the Brides of Funkenstein, a bevy of slippery, shining, bumping beauties. They enact the legend of Funkentelechy vs. the Placebo syndrome, a space-age high-noon cosmic Western that pits the forces of evil (Sir Nose D'Void of Funk, Darth Vader with a heavy dose of R&B, master of the zero funkativity vibe and spreader of the Placebo Syndrome) against the Star Child, pilot of the Mothership Connection, Dr. Funkenstein's head earthly clone.

**T**he Good Ship P-Funk revs up its twin engines and backs slowly out of its berth in the harbor near Clinton's new dream studio in a remote section of the industrial warehouse section of Miami, Florida. Aboard are several high-ranking officials in the intergalactic funk organization—Bootsy, Big Daddy Electric, Bumptusi and the Atomic Butt, Danooga the God of Reefer, Great Greasy the soul-food loa and a handful of sun-tanned bikini-clad Hyperbolic Strumpets. Under George's arm are the final-mix





tapes of his latest project, *One Nation under a Groove*, slated for release this fall on Warner Records. With the album in the can, it's time for some rest, relaxation and partying. Besides, George loves deep-sea fishing in the Bermuda Triangle.

The water is deep blue with the blazing Miami sun reflecting off the whitecaps. The boat cruises out of the harbor then kicks in the jet thrusters and raises up out of the water on its hydrofoils. Picking up speed and heading into the unknown. Clinton puts the tapes on the boat's sound system and turns up the volume.

Champagne bottles are uncorked, there's a lot of backslapping and congratulations. George has just cranked out another album that's destined to go gold or platinum in a very short time. That's all he makes, gold records, and the record companies love him for it.

"When Bootsy gets a hit or we get a hit," Clinton reflects, "believe you me, as soon as them suckers behind the desks see us comin' up with another monster hit, their dicks get hard."

Heading northeast past the coast of Bimini, within an hour we are well within the Bermuda Triangle, over an area where the undersea floor is scattered with the forgotten remains of a lost civilization. It's a place of mystery and fear. For many years the triangle has been suspected to be the secret underwater base for UFOs. It was also one of the favorite fishing spots of the late senator from Harlem, Adam Clayton Powell III. George is standing in the front of the ship, eyes cast into the shimmering reflection on the horizon.

George takes a long pull on a spliff and then laughs a hearty belly laugh. "It gets really subtle out here sometimes. I think that it's some kind of magnetic trip that we get turned into. It just seems to light up the light bulb of ideas real good. I can just

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smoke this joint and it'll have the same effect like good coke do.

"We come out here to party with the dolphins and the UFOs. Lots of UFOs out here, so many that it's like taking acid and not taking acid. They dance right across the sky in front of the boat like they don't care that we are watching them. They look like they is going to the store for a six-pack, then they'll be comin' back again the other way, flyin' right across the sky over there. Sheeit! You can be out here and see so many of them that you'll say, well they is just meteorites or falling stars or some trip like that. Shit, stars don't fall up! They don't fall fuckin' sideways, do they?"

"A lot of time we'd be out here and a whole school of dolphins will hang around and party with us. They'll follow us all the way into the harbor. We is really in tune with them dudes, whoever they is. That's what I'm working on next—gonna call it Dol-Funk. We is going to take the Mothership Connection underwater here for the next album and the next road show. We are going to vibrate Atlantis to the surface and connect the continents. That's the ultimate power of the funk. It'll be the greatest bumpathon ever. Gonna call it the Motor Booty Affair. Gonna be all kinds of trips comin' down real soon, a whole army of dudes called Rump of Steel Skin—they got bombs in their ass that explode when they bump with you."

His gaze focused on a twinkling set of lights hovering near the horizon. The boat was slowing down, dropping the anchor 30 miles inside the triangle. The party had just started to get rolling; the music cranked up to full volume; heavy guitar jams and chanting could be heard on the stereo.

"Ain't no need to panic," says George. "No need to riot in the street, just riot in your head. Burn down the architects and the designs in your mind, 'cause you can always refresh that."

"Reality isn't constricted as much as they want you to believe it is. Thinking ain't illegal yet. You got to relax, question and experience. Don't panic, there is a definite need to be aware. When you become aware, your brain begins to grow itself and can defend itself."

"UFO is only the next step in the liberation of the mind. The electricity that stayed is what the acid ignited. All that is focused into leaving the planet now."

"We got to do it on our own, because that corporate money-making consciousness is in a hurry to have us actin' like mummies and actin' robotically. Eventually you'll have a few corporations and they will figure out a way to eliminate all of the stockholders. They are going to narrow them motherfuckers right out. They don't need no partners..."

The lights on the horizon had moved closer to the boat and were now hovering about a mile and a half off the port side. The partygoers on the boat stopped dancing and rushed to the rail to gaze at the airborne light show. George was smiling, taking a long drag on his spliff, as the speakers blasted his voice a hundred times into the supercharged night air: "Think—it ain't illegal yet/A mind is a terrible thing to waste/So free your mind and your ass will follow." ■