



Tim Ainley/Groove Maneuvers Archives

MOTHER FUNKER

Tim
Kinley/
Groove
Maneuvers
Archives

**AFTER DECADES OF DECADENCE, GEORGE CLINTON
IS READY TO GET HIS GROOVE ON AGAIN**

BY LIQUID TODD

The story of George Clinton's Parliament and Funkadelic is populated with larger-than-life personalities, epic battles with drugs and the law, massive hits which dominated the R&B charts in the 1970s and juicy samples that nourished hip-hop from the very beginning right through last week. And—through it all—the almost inhuman schedule of live concerts and studio recording sustained by the talents of the hundreds—perhaps even thousands—of musicians who have rotated in and out of the P-Funk collective over the years.

This is the band which made Bootsy Collins a household name, where hip-hop artists from Public Enemy to Jay-Z have lifted their hit-making hooks and where millions of devoted fans have found the funk.

Lately the man behind the whole circus—who founded the Parliaments while straightening hair at a salon in Plainfield, New Jersey in the late 1950s—has been battling one of the biggest trolls in the history of music copyright. According to George Clinton, an outfit called Bridgeport Music—run by a former songwriter named Armen Boladian—forged documents to claim ownership of hundreds of George Clinton-

penned tunes. Immediately thereafter Bridgeport starting suing anyone who had sampled as little as two seconds of the songs they now claimed as their own, alleging over 500 counts of copyright infringement from upwards of 800 different artists and labels.

A lengthy and costly battle has played out in the courts and in the halls of Congress over this issue. At stake are thousands of songs and millions of dollars in publishing revenue that Clinton—and many others—argue should have been paid to the musicians who wrote the legendary songs rappers can't resist sampling for their megahits. Some of Clinton's most-sampled songs are in dispute, including "(Not Just) Knee Deep," "More Bounce to the Ounce" and "Atomic Dog." The musicians came from James Brown's house band and from every other corner of the funk universe. Legendary players like Bootsy, Bernie Worrell, Fred Wesley and Maceo Parker—just to name a few—all did stints on the Mothership.

I recently spoke to Clinton—who is scheduled to perform at the Showbox at The Market in Seattle on March 17—about touring, trolls and THC.

SO GIVE ME AN UPDATE, GEORGE. HOW IS IT GOING?

Well, when this copyright stuff comes through everybody will be paid for all this work that they've been doing and I'll make some money. I ain't making nothing now. But this thing is so big and it's inevitable, you know, because [of] the copyright law from Congress and from the court cases. They won't be able to get around it for much longer.

WELL, IT'S A COMPLICATED CASE, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE YOU ARE FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT, MAKING PROGRESS FOR ARTISTS' RIGHTS. THAT'S IMPORTANT BECAUSE MOST OF THESE GUYS AREN'T EXACTLY LOADED.

Yeah, nobody's loaded here. I'm pissed that I had to get un-loaded to do this. They made me give up my habits so they really got a problem with me!

SO YOU'RE ANGRY FOR MORE THAN ONE REASON.

Hell yeah, I'm angry for more than one reason. I'm cool with it. Believe me, I feel good. I feel better. I'm making a whole lot more money and all that shit but... I was having a good time!

YEAH, YOU WERE HAVING A BALL, BUT YOU GOT ROBBED WHEN YOU TOOK YOUR EYE OFF THE BALL.

Yeah, I got ripped off. So that's my fault. It's called f#@ked up, and you don't know how really f#@ked up you be getting until later.

SO YOU DON'T SMOKE THE MARIJUANA ANYMORE?

Oh, I'll smoke a joint. Hell yeah. I ain't

talking about that. I was smoking EVERYTHING.

I BET YOU WERE. YOU KNOW THIS IS FOR CULTURE MAGAZINE, RIGHT? ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH OUR WORK?

Oh yeah. That's what I'm talking about. I need the medicine.

OF COURSE. WE ALL NEED OUR MEDICATION.

Yeah, but that's the only thing I smoke!

WHAT DO YOU PREFER WHEN YOU PARTAKE?

Well I can't take the heavy-duty stuff. I try to get as old-fashioned stuff as I can find.

I FEEL YA. SOMETIMES I'D LOVE TO GET SERIOUS ABOUT SELF-MEDICATING BUT SOME DAYS YOU NEED TO USE YOUR BRAIN. MOST DAYS ACTUALLY.

Yeah right! The idea of smoking anything is to basically get f#@ked up. But I can't get f#@ked up. I just like to... sustain myself. So I be asking for shit that's so old people don't know what I'm talking about. I'll be looking for Acapulco Gold and shit.

YOU HAVE ABOUT 31 MEMBERS IN THE BAND—SO IF A COUPLE OF DUDES DECIDE TO SPLIT ON TOUR, HOW DO YOU REPLACE 'EM ON THE FLY?

You got 10 people waiting on somebody to leave! They can't wait for somebody to move and give them a spot. And the roadies are musicians and they be waiting to play.

"I CAN REMEMBER WHEN N.W.A. SOUNDED LIKE THE SUGARHILL GANG!"

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON IN THE STUDIO?

Oh, we have so much stuff that's getting ready to come out. 'Cause we putting out these apps and we putting our new stuff in there too. We got Parliament stuff, Funkadelic and then each member of the band got all kinds of shit. We putting out loads of shit. We got gangs of Parliament and Funkadelic stuff that I've [been] working on for the past two or three years, but it's taken me this long to actually be able to settle down and start putting it together as an album.

I'M SURE THAT IS WELCOME NEWS TO P-FUNK FANS EVERYWHERE.

And we got this cartoon we've been working on called *Dope Dogs*.

YOU'RE MAKING A CARTOON CALLED DOPE DOGS?

"U.S. Customs Coast Guard Dope Dog." And that's Funkadelic. We did an album on 'em already, but the cartoon is gonna be an Adult Swim-type thing. It's a lot of dogs tellin' their stories.

SPEAKING OF MUSIC-BASED ANIMATION, HAVE YOU SEEN THE SHOW METALCALYPSE?

Yeah! That's Titmouse [the production company that makes *Metalocalypse*].

DAMN, YOU KNOW EVERYBODY.

I worked with those guys on *Dope Dogs*! When I first got started I did the first dog with them.

AND YOU'VE ALWAYS HAD A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH HIP-HOP ARTISTS TOO.

Sure. Eminem was 14 when I first met him.

NO KIDDING?

His producer was my partner, Mark Bass. The Bass Brothers. He took him to [Dr.] Dre.

IT'S ALL CONNECTED AND EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE THROUGH DR. FUNKENSTEIN.

And Dre, before they was N.W.A. had a club we called Uncle Jam, and we lent him the name. We loaned Dre the name Uncle Jam. He was right outta high school.

DAMN, YOU'VE HAD A PRETTY INTERESTING JOURNEY, HAVEN'T YOU?

Yeah, I can remember when N.W.A. sounded like the Sugarhill Gang! ☺

www.georgeclinton.com,
www.georgeclinton.com/funkproboscis,
[@george_clinton](https://twitter.com/george_clinton)

KICK OUT THE FUNK



To get to George Clinton's roots, you have to go way back to the counterculture of the '60s: "I started Parliament when I was in fifth grade," the P-Funkster says. "Listening to Frankie Lymon and shit. So I wanted a group, so I started Parliament. We became one of the doo-wop groups in New Jersey. In the '60s we did 'I Just Want to Testify.' And that was a big record in '67. After that we

started something called Funkadelic because Motown was leaving Detroit—going to L.A.—and we needed to get a new sound... [We] became kind of a funk rock band. The MCS, Ted Nugent, Iggy Pop, John Sinclair... we were all in the same agency. We were called the Bad Boys of Detroit. We had smoke-ins in Detroit trying to John Sinclair outta jail."