

MAGGOT BRAIN, *Funkadelic*,  
*Westbound* (WB-2007)

ACID ROCK HAS BEEN almost exclusively a white artist's field; not surprisingly so since the so-called psychedelic revolution was primarily a phenomenon of the well-educated, well-heeled, upper middle-class. Which includes few Blacks.

But rock and roll was largely a black invention, an outgrowth of blues more than anything else, its first great practitioners men like Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and Little Richard, and with the triple infusion of psychedelics, electronics, and a highly intellectualized attitude toward composition—there was acid rock. And it was inevitable with the flow of elements back and forth across the color line that a black acid music—"funkadelic"—would emerge.

*Maggot Brain* is the third album of a group called, perfectly, Funkadelic. The band started as an instrumental backing group for the Parliaments ("I Wanna Testify," etc.) but has emerged under the guidance of the Parliaments' George Clinton as a powerful, eloquent recording band. The two groups still perform together in wild, mad performances.

Funkadelic's new album opens with a ten-minute track, a quiet bit of rhythm and arpeggio guitar work leading in along with some subdued drumming . . . and then a lead guitar takes over for a long virtuoso performance. The effect is fantastic—the wah-wah, feedback work and general style sounds heavily influenced by Jimi Hendrix



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feel to it, brings your head out of the heavy, trippy space it's been in, and puts it into a lighter, more pleasant place. Where the long opening track was heavily instrumental, the second places its emphasis on vocals—voices moving in and out, up and down, the old black-music bassman repetition working through the cut.

There are two more cuts on side one, a good piece of soul rock and a piece of heavy, cluttered vocalizing.

But side two immediately returns to the Hendrix groove on a fancy guitar piece, moves into some psychedelic games on a track called "Back in Our Minds," and then winds up for the big finish, another ten-minute cut called "Wars of Armageddon."

It's a hugely ambitious composition, with violence in the music and intermixed sounds: shots, sirens, booms, a baby's crying, animal noises, chanting crowds and plenty of feedback and electronics—and with Funkadelic's music moving all the time, going through changes, switching off instruments, switching off moods. It's like a combination of "A Day in the Life," "Revolution Number 9" and the Last Poets.

And it ends with more booming—is it the Bomb? or thunder?—and then rainfall, and then a final quick burst of music.

What does it mean? The end of the world? War? Peace? Catastrophe? Demolition and a new beginning? The