

Gary Shider:

Funk Is a Way of Life

By SAMUEL GRAHAM

■ "My concept has been funk ever since I can remember. It's always been there; it's like a feel, a way of living. It's like getting up and eating breakfast in the morning. Some people take vitamins—we take funk."

The speaker, P-Funk guitarist/vocalist Gary Shider, clearly subscribes to the philosophy that funk is its own reward. "You have to know where you're happiest," he says, "and safest"—and after nine or ten years with this traveling musical circus, there can be little doubt that for Shider that place is right here, in the forefront of the Parliafunkadelicment Thang.

The 25 year-old Shider, like Dr. Funkenstein himself, hails from Plainfield, New Jersey, where he was weaned on gospel music in such family groups as the Shiderets and later the Gospeltones. "My father taught me to play guitar when I was about eight," he recalls, "but my grandmother says that I used to stand out in the middle of the floor playing around with a broom even earlier than that." Shider now includes the likes of Jimi Hendrix, B.B. King, Wes Montgomery and Eddie Hazel among his primary influences as a guitarist.

Shider's first encounter with George Clinton came "when I was a real little kid. I had snuck out of a missionary service in Plainfield, and I went into a barbershop where George was working. He ended up doing my hair." Much later, when Gary was work-

ing in Canada with his group Volume Three, the call came from Clinton to give up the funk. "George was like a father figure for me in music," says Shider. "Somehow I always knew I'd end up in this group."

As a member of Parliament Funkadelic, Shider largely confines himself to rhythm guitar chores—although he does score on "Cosmic Slop" and others and vocal leads on "Standing on the Verge," "One Nation Under a Groove" and more. "I mostly leave the heavy playing to Michael Hampton and Eddie," he admits. "They can handle that, and I'm quite content with the way things are," as well as injecting some of his gospel upbringing into the P-Funk sound, Shider also contributes much to the group's writing. "I couldn't really put a label on the music I do," he says. "I like it a lot. The main thing is funk."

On stage, Shider has usually been remarkably easy to spot despite the presence of 20 or more performers in a given show. Then again, it isn't particularly difficult to single out the only one wearing a set of diapers—at least nothing else, except of course his guitar. "I used to wear pajama pants with red boots, but I had to come up with another outfit that fit really fast once when my pants got dirty, or tore or something. That's when I got into the diapers. I figured that instead of growing up, I'd grow down a little."



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