

George Clinton: Man With His Fingers In Many Pies

By ROSAN KOZAK

NEW YORK—George Clinton, pushing time behind Parliament, Funkadelic and related projects, has diversified his activities once more. He now runs Uncle Jam Records, a new CBS Associated Labels, which has just released LPs by Clinton projects Philippe Wynne and the Sweet Band.

While Clinton is interviewed at the CBS offices, he points out the meeting could have taken place at Warner, which records Funkadelic and Booby, Casablanca which has Parliament, or even Atlantic which has Booby of Funkemont, sister company. All are Clinton projects.

"But I am still an artist at heart," insists Clinton. He claims he has so

many projects with so many different labels in order to maintain a high level of excitement.

The latest project with CBS also features affiliates from previous Clinton projects, Philippe Wynne, who was the lead singer of the Spinners, has often sung with Booby's Rubber Band, and the principals of the Sweet Band were also in the Rubber Band.

"I guess we are all affiliates of one another. All the various groups we try to make into major acts. They are all talented enough to stand on their own," says Clinton, who acts as producer or coproducer on most of the projects.

Clinton is on a promotional tour

for Uncle Jam. He promises to be out visiting radio stations and radio outlets around the country with Wynne and Booby.

Clinton's recorded projects frequently involve fantastic concepts, but he says for Wynne the direction is toward the singer's strength: good, well-made, love songs. The Sweet Band is more basic funk. As the Sweet Band gets more established he will begin to work on developing a concept for the group. "Conceptual albums will come and go," points out Clinton.

To keep track of his business affairs Clinton maintains offices in Los Angeles and Detroit. While most of his staff is in the "album divisions," working on new projects and direction Clinton says taking care of his business affairs are Ackerly, president of Uncle Jam Records and Dick Tringler, his business manager.

"We are ready to be the record company that enjoys being a record company," adds Clinton. Outside of Uncle Jam Records, Clinton says Parliament has released a single on Casablanca and a new LP is due soon.

"This year there is going to be a Funk attack," promises Clinton. "Zapp was the first group (Zapp is produced by Booby). Now Booby has an LP coming on Warner Bros. Records, and an LP with the Slick Band, another of his groups. Then there is Philippe (Wynne), Sweet Band and Paris (singing Booby of Funkemont) will be out just after Christmas. And then there will be a new Funkadelic LP, called 'War Babies.' Maybe everybody, Parliament, Funkadelic, Booby, and the Boobies will go out touring together.

"There are so many of them, maybe we will have two tours, and do a big star kind of thing with them," he says laughing.

Clinton himself has been performing since the mid '60s. His original particular brand of funk was influenced by such artists as James Brown, Frankie Lynan and Allen Toussaint. In the late '60s and early '70s he was playing with such local white Detroit acts as Alice Cooper and the MC5.

It was Cooper who first influenced Clinton to create what became, with the "Mother Ship" spaceship, the first black funk/rock combination. Clinton remembers that he toured with that spaceship and a crew of 50 for three years. While he admits that the concept did not go over that well in the beginning, in the long run it has paid off.

Though Clinton has retired his planetarium wig and no longer performs live with the various acts, he feels that in these post-disco times, the hard funk music he experimented in coming into its own. He points to such acts as Queen and especially Talking Heads (who now have Clinton albums) as well as Booby playing keyboards in acts that will help popularize funk among white audiences.

That is why, says Clinton, he decided to go with a label deal with CBS at this time. The CBS companies have the distribution system, he says, and that will get his records out to the public.