



## George Clinton to crossover acts: FUNK YOU!

BY ANTHONY DeCURTIS

ARISTA RECORDS PRESIDENT CLIVE DAVIS isn't the only music-biz heavy up in arms about tight radio formats. Funk superstar George Clinton is fed up with a system that encourages black artists to sacrifice their soul roots to gain pop success — and with those artists who go along with it. "Any record can cross over," Clinton insists. "It's just that people make those decisions *beforehand*: 'This is a funk record, this can't be crossed over.' I'm not willing to change my music just to cross over."

While Davis expressed his desire for more open airwaves at a recent music-business symposium (RS 477), Clinton chose a different route. "We get beat over the head with it all the time — 'Give me a record we can cross over,'" Clinton says. "I figured the best thing to do, since I catch so much flak about it, is to just sing and write about it." Clinton's new album, *R&B Skeletons in the Closet*, playfully, but pointedly, criticizes black artists for "Only playin' the class gigs/ Never takin' it to the bridge." The LP's cartoon cover art features a helpful list of "What to Drop to Go Pop," including avoiding black slang in lyrics ("it'll be easier for somebody else . . . to make

'their' versions of your songs") and "any garment that looks Third World."

Ironically, "Do Fries Go with That Shake!?", the first single from *Skeletons*, has already begun to pick up some CHR radio action, and Clinton sees other signs that tougher black music is gathering steam on all types of radio. "They have an R&B weekend out in Detroit, and I heard 'R&B' in L.A. — just *saying* that again, not 'urban contemporary' or 'black radio.' 'R&B' has not been said in a long time. . . . I mean, they didn't play James Brown this time. That's almost a sacrilege. This is a dude that *is* black radio, and they said, 'This don't fit our format.'"

Clinton will be undertaking another of his classic roadshows, beginning in mid-July and, most likely, continuing through the end of the year. He also co-wrote the title track for the new George Lucas film, *Howard the Duck*, with synthesizer whiz Thomas Dolby. How does Howard the Duck, whom Clinton describes as "that funky little feather-bearing waterfowl," fit into the funkmaster plan? Easy. Says Clinton, "That's where the concept comes from: Go funk a duck!" ■