

UP

STARTS

Parliament/Funkadelic ... "Funkin' It"



Parliament/Funkadelic: Searching for the eternal fountain of funk.

by Mitchell Feinman

That "Parliamentfunkadelic Thang" is an extraordinary consolidation of talents that eludes most comparisons or categories. It is a vocal group, The Parliaments, whose roots date back twenty years to singing in barber shops in Newark, N.J., merged with instrumentalists, The Funkadelics, whose potpourri of styles most closely resemble funk/rock, but whose sheer diversity obscures them from being labeled too easily.

This musical union is currently touring the country with an extravagant stage show that would surely make Busby Berkely proud. The estimated cost of production is \$275,000, said to be the largest concert production ever undertaken by a black group. The stage design is the brainchild of Jules Fischer, who has performed similar feats of frivolity for Kiss, David Bowie and The Rolling Stones.

The show, boogie-ing along with

seventy-five roadies, four trucks, three buses and a camper, bases itself upon the Parliaments' recent Casablanca recordings, *Mothership Connection* and *The Clones of Dr. Frankenstein*. It is a three part "funk opera" dealing with extraterrestrial beings who travel to our planet on the "U.S.S. Ego Trip" ship in search of funk. The aliens find that earthlings have abused the gift of funk. Through a process called "supergroovasticpresfunkstication" they attempt to restore funk to the world, thereby redeeming man and his planet.

This good-natured madness has encountered a rabid following who are attracted to the groups combination of contemporary urban rhythms and palatable mirth. Even a fan club has been spawned which encompasses an age group from six to forty.

The leader and conceiver of the managerie that comprises Parliament/Funkadelic is George Clinton, lead singer of the band and self-proclaimed "Maggot Minister". To George, "funk" is religion and the members of Parlia-

ment/Funkadelic are the disciples whose purpose is to spread "funk" throughout the land. Clinton explains; "You can never say a swimming pool or a new house is the end result of life. You've got to have some funk in there somewhere, so that just in case you lose the swimming pool and house, you won't have to jump off a roof, you can just say funk it. People are jumping out of windows everyday because they can't say funk it—they take life too seriously. If you can laugh things off, it's never so bad five minutes later. "We say go by the system, but if you happen to go off the system and ad lib a little bit in life, improvise, then funk it."

For Clinton, the road to "funkin' it," was a slow but sure one. In 1954 the primal source of Parliament was established among a couple of twelve-year-old grammar school students in Newark, N.J. By 1958, many members of the current "funk mob" were already in the band, doing gigs in Newark, at The Apollo in New York and at Murray the K's Swinging Soiree.

Clinton feels that through the years many bands found their inspiration by listening to Parliament/Funkadelic. Among them he mentioned The Chambers Brothers and The Temptations. Clinton also admits to gathering many influences for his music during the years he was trying to get persistence to pay off. Rated high among these influences were The Beatles who, "were the first group to get the little kids, the people who would listen to symphonies and the blacks. Every song they put out is conducive to funk or blues singing. They had soul from somewhere. When you see Liverpool though, you've got to have soul. It reminded me of Newark. That's pure funk, they were it."

The perseverance of Clinton, along with what he refers to as "ten years of rehearsal for today," has finally paid off. *Mothership Connection* went platinum and *The Clones of Dr. Frankenstein* is headed strongly in the same direction. For Clinton, the formula has been to, "... constantly give the people what they want." In that spirit, all the money that was made on the *Mothership* LP was reinvested into the bands' current tour. George finds much pride in this, feeling that his goal was to tour on a level that had never been reached before by a black group. Reaching this goal is payment enough for Clinton, who states emphatically that, "if we go broke on this tour I will still be happy."

Graham Parker: Rock 'n' Roll Heat Treat

by Jim Farber

It all sounds so familiar, you'll swear you've heard them before. Put on their new record, *Heat Treatment*, and you get snatches of Van Morrison's mush-mouth drawl, Springsteen's desperation,