



Graham Central Station
GCS2000
(NPG)

Aw yeah, it's a family affair! Former Sly and the Family Stone bassist Larry Graham, with wife, Tina, and daughter Latia, has busted out with an album that brings old school up to date in a way that only he can. He's a funk legend, for Chrissakes, so pay attention. Check out the NPG anthem "Free," with support from the Artist and labelmate Chaka Khan. Anyone who's had the good fortune to see these three share a stage recently knows it's true. This is what freedom (from Warner Bros.) sounds like. "I don't want them messin' with my song" hits the mark of a good groove and an indie-label manifesto all at once. Don't ignore the instrumental "I'magetin'." This is the unmistakable deep-bottom boom and bass-slappin' craziness that put Graham's face next to funk in the dictionary. And if you can't get into "Groove On," then you just ain't funky, period.

It's clear that the Artist had his fingers in a bit of everything here: coproducing, singing, composing. It really shows in "Utopia," with a blatant sample of "Gett Off" and, of course, in "Free." But smaller hints are interspersed throughout, as with backup vocals on the reworked "Just B My Lady" (Tina confirms, with 23 years of marriage, that the line works) or "Love 4 1another," where he's uncredited but definitely present. To be technical, though, every-funky-thing Prince did and the Artist does can be traced back to the foundation Graham laid in the first place, so really it's all the same thing. You've got to love it when mutual respect allows two badasses to riff off of each other like this. And though the Artist gives a lot of his flavor to most of the tracks, as a whole, the album is really a Graham and fam production.

Robin A. Rothman
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