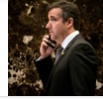


TRENDING



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Clinton Funks Up the Apollo

Parliament/Funkadelic find a familiar groove in New York

By Robin A. Rothman

July 1, 2002

It's the second in a two-night New York City run for George Clinton and Parliament/Funkadelic. The band has been jamming on "Funkentelechy" for about ten minutes and George Clinton is still backstage at the Apollo Theater, sprawled out on a couch with one leg propped up on a table, mid-interview. The woman behind the camera checks the frame and the interviewer leans in with the seriousness of a war correspondent to ask, "After all of your collaborations, who would you still like to work with?" The answer, incidentally, is Rakim and Sly Stone.

Word comes from a crewmember that the band's planning to go into "Bop Gun." Clinton nods his approval and wraps the interview with a station ID promo, signs everything that's placed in front of him, hugs a couple of funky white girls who've been watching from the corner of the room, and finally heads down to the stage. Already over thirty minutes into the show, the band begins "Cosmic Slop," now a sure sign

to regular P-Funk partygoers that Dr. Funkenstein will soon be appearing.

Two and half hours later, the house lights are up, the stage lights are down and Clinton is leading what's left of a previously packed room in chant after chant with nothing more than a light drum beat behind him and a few band members beside him. "We want the funk, give up the funk!" "Free your mind, and your ass will follow!" "Ain't no party like a P-Funk party, 'cuz a P-Funk party don't stop!"

In the interim, Parliament/Funkadelic have executed what has become a fairly standardized show -- the kind of comfortable routine that, despite swapping certain songs night to night or rearranging the order a bit, allows the band to put on a high-energy, seemingly spontaneous performance without a whole lot of complex thought. First-timers tend to be blown away by what has always been the beautiful chaos of a P-Funk performance, while repeat customers can follow the cues, but don't mind as long as the bass lines still move their booties.

What was most markedly different about this particular show, however, was the crowd -- an unstable mix of hardcore funk fans, uppity, program-toting JVC Jazz Festers, and lazy, jaded Apollo regulars. A good quarter of the crowd at least couldn't be bothered to give up the funk. Instead they chose to chastise those who had the energy to get up for the down stroke.

Still, it was mostly the same old glorious same old. Guitarist Garry Shider is still sporting the saggy diaper. "Flashlight" still finds the nimble Sir Nose bumping and grinding against every nubile babe within the first five rows. The inimitable Belita Woods still takes "Knee Deep" into "Sentimental Journey" and back again. "Atomic Dog" is still an all-hands-on-deck finale affair.

Clinton is still the coolest grandfather in the universe (and beyond) for bringing LaShonda out to rap about weed, and moreover the coolest great grandfather for having the funkier two-year-old stage dancer. No matter how raspy his voice gets at screaming level, Clinton can still nail a ballad duet.

The band still challenges the audience to out-party them. The show still goes on long after the venue workers are ready for it to be over. And, finally, getting down just for the funk of it is still reason enough.

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