

# 5,000 rock at 'Funk Festival'

By Lisa Brownlee

The Parliament Funkadelic crusade returned to Richmond — but without P. Funk master George Clinton.

The second annual Mardi Gras-style Funk Festival Saturday evening brought out a diverse audience of more than 5,300 old-school fans to hear the sounds of go-go legend Chuck Brown, soul artists the Average White Band and funky R&B maestros the Dazz Band and the Bar-Kays.

But the Original Parliament Funkadelic — the act that most everyone came to see — left some feeling a little shortchanged and wondering how much better the show could have been if only the effervescent and irreverent Mr. Clinton were suddenly to appear.

Despite the absence of arguably the single-most important figure in the indomitable P. Funk movement, there were those who knew what they were getting and did not leave the Brown's Island festival disappointed.

"I got my money's worth," said 40-year-old computer operator Jeff McIver, who has been attending Parliament concerts since he was 13. "They give you the same funk."

"The weather was perfect. The show was perfect," said 44-year-old Ernest Mitchell of Hopewell, who attended the festival with his 45-year-old wife, Cynthia, as his Father's Day gift. Mr. Mitchell, who fashioned noisemaking maracas out of plastic beer bottles and rocks to keep the beat, said his only complaint was that he wished the stage were higher so he could have seen more of the show.

The seven-hour festival, which started promptly at 4 p.m., had audience members up and out of their seats for



Photos by Jerome Reid for Richmond Free Press

**From left, sisters Katherine and Cheryl Lundy and Tina Barr celebrate during the Mardi Gras-style Funk Festival on Brown's Island, sporting '70s fashions and enjoying old-school music.**

lawn chairs and great expectations of strolling down memory lane.

Stroll they did, with Parliament tunes like "Flashlight," "Cosmic Slop" and "Atomic Dog," which, in keeping with tradition, brought audience members to the stage to dance with the more than dozen band members representing the P. Funk force.

Parliament, a great beneficiary of the sampling craze of the 1990s, has enjoyed renewed interest among listeners. Today, a whole new audience of younger fans are reinforcing the P. Funk anthem, "Make My Funk the P. Funk," which had the audience bouncing Saturday night.

"We grew up on this music," said 30-year-old Cheryl Lundy, a Richmond

resident, who celebrated her 30th birthday by donning '70s-inspired fashion, including platform shoes, oversized earrings and an applejack hat. "Our parents sang to this music, danced to this music. We enjoy these kind of functions."

The Dazz Band and Bar-Kays, who teamed up to open the show, took the audience on an hour-and-a-half thrill ride of hits, including "She Talks to Me With Her Body," "Hit and Run" and "Let It Whip."

Platinum-blond Bar-Kays lead singer Larry Dodson, clad in snakeskin-patterned pants, titillated the audience by playfully slipping the head of a boa constrictor into his mouth

during "Freak Show on the Dance Floor."

The combined band which began touring together about three years ago, got the audience moving in unison as they tor through a list of favorite dances from the 1980s: Hundreds fell into step with the Smurf, the Gigolo and the Snake. Even Mayo Rudy C. McCollum Jr. gave in to the reptilian romp.

The Average White Band did not disappoint.

After opening its set with a soulful saxophone solo, the band treated the audience to an upbeat rendition of "Walk on By." Its performance of "A Love of My Own" had the audience sing



**Go-go King Chuck Brown, left, and Bar-Kays lead singer Larry Dodson, titillating the audience with a snake, perform at Funk Festival.**

ing along. And smash hit "Pick Up the Pieces" predictably moved the crowd.

Go-go legend Chuck Brown, with a trio of capable horn players, took the stage to show why he's still considered the king of the D.C. sound. After reminding the audience that it "don't mean a thing if it ain't got the go-go swing," he later led listeners in a chant from "Moody's Mood," repeating "oh, when we are one, I'm not afraid, I'm not afraid."

The Chuck Brown set also featured newer titles, including a cover of Michael Jackson's "Butterflies" and Tweet's "Oops, Oh My" with Cherie Mitchell on lead vocals. Both went over well.

After an unwelcome setup delay, Parliament Funkadelic took the stage, including P. Funk veterans Grady Thomas, Clarence "Fuzzy" Haskins and Ray Davis. Sitting in with the group that night was lead guitarist and Richmond's own

Lenny Holmes, a successful R&B producer whose presence was conservative next to the outrageous display of funkster Mr. Haskins.

Far from shy, Mr. Haskins was cloaked in a revealing mesh outfit that displayed the contours of his upper and lower torso. Mr. Thomas was also daring, layered beneath a black cape and head wrap with purple trim and translucent shades in a way that left him mistaken by some for the irrepressible Mr. Clinton.

Also on stage was Larry Heckstall, known affectionately among P. Funk fans as Sir Nose — a character Mr. Clinton created as an identity devoid of funk. Mr. Heckstall, whose claim to fame is dancing for the group, grew up in Jackson Ward.

"Richmond is like a second home," original Parliament member Mr. Davis said after the show. "We love Richmond."