

Happenings

D'Angelo joins Clinton to hike excitement

By Jeremy M. Lazarus

Guess who joined funk master George Clinton and his Parliament Funkadelics?

None other than D'Angelo — Richmond's own superstar.

Dressed in a loose-fitting black shirt, baggy black pants hanging off his hips, he electrified the performers and the already pumped-up crowd of 7,600 people when he bounded onto the Brown's Island stage Saturday night and embraced Clinton.

The grammy-award winner, sporting his signature clean cornrows and a new beard, made his surprise appearance about 10 p.m. as Clinton and the crew swung into their classic "Flash Light."

After giving Clinton a hug, D'Angelo dropped to his knees in an apparent homage to the 61-year-old music maker and then bounded up to inject his youthful energy into the show.

Clinton had notified promoters in advance that D'Angelo might come and left tickets at the gate for him. But even Clinton didn't know when, or if D'Angelo would actually appear.

D'Angelo and Clinton took a brief break after the big finish on "Flash Light" as veteran guitarists Michael Hampton and Blackbird McKnight came forward to lead back-to-back instrumental solos of "Maggot Brain" and "Fly On."

Then D'Angelo was back. Escorted to the stage this time and initially placed behind a speaker, D'Angelo came on with Clinton to give the diverse audience more than a surprise appearance.



Photos by Regina H. Boone for Richmond Free Press

D'Angelo and George Clinton electrify 7,600 on Brown's Island as fans dance while Gary Snider, in diaper, does his special thing.

Discarding his shirt and displaying his well-defined body, D'Angelo joined diaper-clad Gary Snider and Clinton for "One Nation," and took a turn at the keyboards as he encouraged the crowd to get "under a groove ... just for the funk of it."

And he kept it up as the band swung into the crowd-pleasing "Atomic Dog." As is traditional, members of the audience were admitted on stage to dance along, and D'Angelo thrilled several women as he danced between them, working their bodies with his.

"It's something I always dreamed of doing, but I never thought I'd get the chance," said Tamu Meekins, who, along with friend Val-

ley Pickren, were among the impromptu dancers.

D'Angelo's appearance reflects Clinton's wide appeal after 45 years of music-making. His sounds swept the nation from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, and is now enjoying a revival as rap, hip-hop and R&B embrace funk as their favorite background music.

Age and race melted away as the 45-member troupe poured out the funk — their inventive blend of rock, jazz, gospel, R&B and rap — like an elixir over an audience that included bus drivers, schoolteachers, bankers and housekeepers. At this event, suburban teens like Brooke Ellis, 16, rubbed shoulders with middle-aged fans like

black home-improvement contractor Allen Clarke, 52.

Garbed in a flowing, oversized dashiki and multi-colored string and cloth in his hair, the music guru held the audience in his palm as he led them in the rock chant, "Make my funk P-Funk, I want to get funk'd up" and set them up for "Cosmic Slot."

He came on about 30 minutes after Lige Curry and Velita Woods opened the show.

Some people were disap-

pointed with the ad-libs, medleys and new tunes that filled most of the first two hours. Long-time fans Salim Kahlfani and Rufus Alkebulan were among the people who left before the show ended.

But office worker Jenn Hassler, 28, called it a perfect night. "I've been listening to Parliament Funkadelic all my life and this was everything I expected."

Alfred Pittman, a 40-year-old Petersburg policeman, said it was what he expected — a chance to party.

"I don't care what they're playing. I'm having fun,"

said Frank Jandl, a 32-year-old engineer.

Early arrivals were treated to the disco sounds of Richmond's Groove Spot as they waited in long lines for fish dinners, gyros, hot dogs and cold drinks. Proceeds from the sale of beer and other beverages went to Prevent Child Abuse Virginia.

Before Clinton and his gang went on, the veteran Washington go-go band, EU a.k.a. Experience Unlimited and the Hipphuggers, warmed up the crowd, climaxing their half-hour set with their past hit, "Doing the Butt."



An enthusiastic fan displays the P-Funk sign.



Regina H. Boone for Richmond Free Press

Gettin' funky

Celebrity recording artist D'Angelo dances with fans as he grooves and sings "Atomic Dog" on a stage at Brown's Island. Coverage on B3.