SOUNDS

by Shawn Watson

Homecoming Jam



With the "THE HARDNESS OF THE WORLD" (1977), Slave's second album, the group expanded their funk chops with the keyboard-led rave-up "BABY SINISTER" and the alloutblues jam "VOLCANO RUPTURE." They gave fans a sensitive mood in "CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF YOU," and talked about the lessons in their lives in "LIFE CAN BE HAPPY" and "THE WORLD'S ON HARD." As with their impressive debut, " THE HARDNESS OF THE WORLD" enjoyed both heavy R&B and heavy pop airplay and

Working non-stop, Slave toured extensively during the livliest funk-band concert seasons of the decade, yet still managed to produce their third album in less than 13 months, "THE CON-CEPT" (1978). Here they took their dance-rock energy right to the rival bands and also continued to modify their songwriting. In "STELLAR FUNGK," they summed up the Ohio Players' entire fun- andgames career, adding a jazzy string of breaks and solos of their own. In "JUST FREAK," they updated those early-1970's Kool & The Gangjive talks with cold, syncopated bass and trance-like pacedvoice chants.

In 1979, with "JUST A TOUCH OF LOVE," Slave turned totally around and surprised fans with their romanticism and delicacy. The LP, which marked the return of producer Jimmy Douglass to the Slave fold (he had contributed to the success of the first album), hit the Top 10 on the R&B LISTINGS, WHILE CRUISING THE NATIONAL POP CHARTS FOR FOUR

MONTHS. The catchy New York-styled set-up- choir boy backups, a cooly crooning dapper lead, and a drum-and bass rhythm section minus rock guitar. Slave continued this date with Manhattan urbanity on"ARE YOU READY FOR LOVE?," adding acoustic piano and salsa-like rhythms to their repitiore. "FUNKY LADY (FOXY LADY)" (the second single) allowed Mark Adams to show off his spacey bass while alluding to Jimi Hendrix. In"Roots," "THANK YOU" and "SHINE," the band displayed its songwriting intricacy, blending funk and jazz with the delicate love affair and lullaby melodies to which the album was dedicated. And not only was "JUST A TOUCH OF LOVE" a sales success; the album cover became the first record jacket to

win the prestigious CEBA Award

(Communication Excellence to

By the time of "STONE

JAM"(1980), Slave had pretty

well rested its case of having to

prove they could do the funk and

Black Audiences).

jazz do. Now it was necessary to talk about a "Slave style": a walking bass and sliding rhythm duet able to carry off just about any mood or tone of song the band cared to write (even a strings-backed ballad like "STARTING OVER"). "WATCHING YOU," an R&B/pop smasingle, found the band neatly writing a message pun into a sexy come-on lyric. And that song touched off an entire album side (including "DREAMIN'," "NEVER GET AWAY" and "STONE JAM") of walk and slide, progressive soul/funk - raunchy and loud, to be sure, but also mellow-grooved

and easy-paced. Not surprisingly, STONE JAM" became Slave's second RIAA gold winner, remained a Top10 national R&B chart item for over two months and rode the pop charts for over six months.

In 1981, Slave presented "SHOW TIME." Recording of the band's sixth album took place at Atlantic Studios in New York, with Jimmy Douglass once again at the production helm. All eight cuts of the album of Slave "Jam Patrol" oringinals, ranging from the smooth'n 'groovin' funk of the first single pick, "SNAP-SHOT" (complete with camera sound effects), big' n' brassy dance moves of " PARTY LITES,) the rock flavored "SPICE OF LIFE," the laid back feel of "WAIT FOR ME," and the self - descriptive "FUNKEN TOWN."

With the release of "SHOW TIME," Slave has taken the opportunity to look back at how far they've come in such a short time. It was nearly eight years ago, on October 16, 1975 (as perfectionist Mark Adams specifically recalls it), that Mark and some neighborhood schoolmates got together In Dayton, Ohio to put a band together. In April of 1976, Slave made their live debut at the city's Roth High School. The Ohio Players had come out of Dayton, and their success inspired other young Daytonians interested in music - showing that, with enough talent, dedication and togetherness, they too could make it all the way. Dayton has since spawned a whole school of such bands - bands specializing in an ebullient, rock/funk/jazz style of pop music. Besides Slave, there Heatwave, Lakeside, Zapp and others. And, says Mark, "when each one of us makes a hit, it inspires a still younger band to do the same."

Mark describes Dayton as "a more or less laidback city, peaceful and friendly. That's why we love to play live - to work off all that energy that builds up when your home's so laid back." That energy took Slave away from Dayton, out on to the road and into life; and Mark says that taught the band a lot of hard lessons, but also won them many new friends. It also gave them a lot to write about, and Mark notes that all of Slave's songs and album titles come from" the way we were raised, what we've learned, and the way we feel about ourselves. Slave's a very true group. We all play emotionally and write about things we encounter ever day."

"'HARDNESS OF THE WORLD' came from an actual event we were speaking about and from the way we living at the time," Mark explains. "'STONE JAM' came from our hanging out at the parks during the summer. The lyrics tell you what we were doing. In our new album, 'SHOW TIME,' we're showing what we have done and learned in our musical career. It's emotional music. Hopefully we can inspire a lot of people."

All this comes from a band whose members were scarcely into high school when they first started, and who are still dealing with turning 23. Evidently, Dayton doesn't believe in keeping kids waiting to get out into the world or to talk about dealing with the world. Imagine

how experienced, at an age younger than most schoolteachers, Slave must now sound to this year's freshmen at Roth High.

Slave is managed by Bill Underwood. He also oversees the band's fan club, The Jam Patrol, which can be reached at 1775 Broadway, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10019.

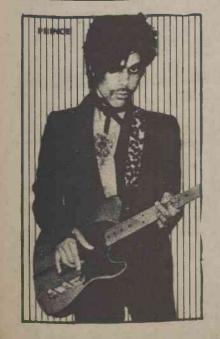
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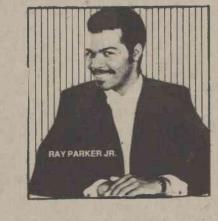
Tom Browne



Heart Attack

They don't come more suave than Ray Parker Jr.. Parker was a session musician who decided to make it big on his own. Since then he has had hit after hit all based on music's oldest subjects, seduction and cheating-from "Jack and Jill" to his latest hit "Bad Boy." As a lyricist, he gets to the heart of the matter in no time, but as a tunesmith, he borrows from pop: from Free's "The Other Woman" to the Spinners' "You Can't Change That" to Sly and the Family Stone's "Jack and Jill." And it looks like he's getting away with





Seductive Seasonings

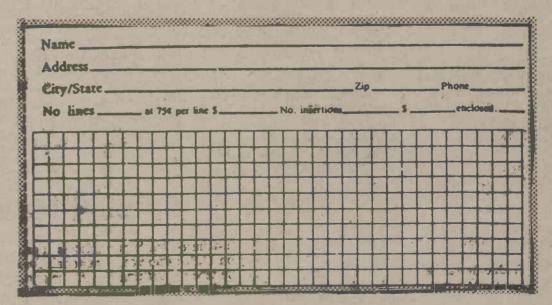
The 22-year-old who calls himself Prince has been making do-it-yourself albums since 1978, writing, arranging, producing and performing almost every part of every song. His fifth LP, "1999," sums up his priorities in a cut called "D.M.S.R.": dance, music, sex, romance. In "1999," Prince, who lives to party (his favorite is the sort of intimate affair for two that last all night), decides to dance through Judgement Day. Although "1999" isn't quite as blunt as Prince's "Dirty Mind," the kid's still pretty cocky, billing himself as "a body that will do U right." He backs up his boasts with taut, snappy dance tracts that don't worry about whether they're rock or funk.

Jackson's Heights

Michael Jackson spent his early years onstage, in Motown Studios and as lead singer of the Jackson Five. Now, the lesson he learned has him bubbling at the top of the charts.

"Billie Jean" may be the first hit single about a paternity suit and the most danceable one at that. But with so many silky grooves, they zing right by you.





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