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The Iconic Bootsy Collins Speaks On 'World Wide Funk,' Embracing The New & Guitar Battles [Interview]

3 YEARS AGO



ERICKA BLOUNT DANOIS Photo Credit: Michael Weintrob

BC: Every club that we went to—there was a lot of clubs between Cincinnati and Dayton—we tried to be the happening thing. You weren't going to find it on the radio. The happening thing was being there at these after hour spots and clubs. For us, we were feeling the people, seeing the people and performing for the people. You could see what the people were wearing that night. You could hear what the artist was playing that night. What are they going to do different? You had choices on both sides with that right there. Nowadays, the only choice you got is on your iPhone. You're not in communication with anyone.

OKP: Do you think that funk has carried on successfully into the 21st century?

BC: It is carrying on, yes, but people still don't want to recognize the real raw. We [Parliament-Funkadelic] were scary. That was a scary thing that could've gotten out of hand, y'know? The market knew if this really caught on we were going to be in trouble. After we started sizzling in the early '80s, it was like Bootsy and them must've got their funk from **Rick James**. We were like, "Huh?" If you from that other side, you don't know what to expect except what the radio taught. They weren't trying to hear us.

Anything we talked about doing we had to pay extra for. Comic books in the album? Uh, no. The funky star glasses? Take it out of my money. They package it up as cheap as they can, so they can put it out and sell it for as much as they can get. We thought and felt different about that. We were gonna give the people more than what they were funk'n' for [laughs].

OKP: Whatever happened to the Sweat Band and the Uncle Jam label?

BC: It was George trying to do a whole lot of business and he really didn't know how to do it. That's why it fell short of what it could've been. It should've been somebody that had nothing to do with it and have George telling him what to do. The business part is the curse of this music thing. The music is the blessing and the bliss. The business part, I hate it. I had to learn how to deal with it, but that's not really our thing.

OKP: Tell me about the tribute to Bernie Worrell on the album. Were these unreleased keyboard tracks featured on *World Wide Funk*?

BC: Bernie and I used to record together. Anything could be going down and all of a sudden, I would feel a vibe and say, "Let's go ahead and put it down." I always had a studio set up and running, so we could be rehearsing and I'd feel a vibe and we'd record it. We had a bunch of those tracks and songs that we never did anything with, so I went back and listened to them and picked the ones I felt like Bernie would want to hear. That unfinished track felt like it was the one [for *World Wide Funk*]. I wanted to make sure it was Bernie playing all of the keyboard parts. The only thing that we put on there that was live was the drum. I played one part, where the guitar was laid down, and Bernie played all the rest on the keyboard. It had that Bernie thing... the way he communicates. He communicates better through his keyboard than actually talking to you. He guided me through there.

OKP: "Worth My While" is a lead track from *World Wide Funk* that is very reminiscent of old school Bootsy...

BC: That is like one of the young parts of me, y'know? The relations thing. "What's a Telephone Bill," "I'd Rather Be With You," "Oh Boy, Girl," all those things rolled up into one. My personal, personal stash. I wanted to hear a woman's take on it. I have a lot more women leading on this record. Women are coming out of their seats now and it's that time. The women had something to say on this album and they stepped up and showed out.

OKP: Can you update us and your fans on what's going on with Funk University?

BC: [Funk University] was an online school that we had about three years ago. It featured different bass players and was going on for a while until I got back onto the road and couldn't keep up with it. [Funk University] took a lot of attention in being put together and getting the different artists involved. It was a great thing for about two-to-three years, and could be done again with the proper sponsoring. We are still working on Funk University because people love it. It was a great way to have people connect with each other and bring artists and musicians together.

Funk is making something out of nothing. We've always had nothing and made something out of it. That's what we do. It's in us. That's what hip-hop did, y'know? Mama's record player is in the living room? Let me see what I can do with that. Of

course, mama was through with you because you were scratching up her records—but we made something out of nothing.

OKP: Switching gears a bit, but were there any memorable guitar battles that you share with us?

BC: It wasn't a battle consciously [laughs]... We were always just trying to be the best you could be. That was what George and I would be doing. Every time I thought I would beat somebody over to the studio, all those mugs would be there practicing [laughs]. It kept fueling the fire that kept us flowing. Everybody wanted to be the best at any and every time they got a chance to be so. When you find yourself slacking somebody else would attempt to move into that position. So, you'd be in the studio and feel like dag, I wasn't on it.



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Those “battles” made me want to be better, y’know? James [Brown] would call us into the dressing room after we had really just murdered the people. He’d be there after the people had this beautiful performance from James Brown and The JB’s, and he’d be like, “Meh. Y’all weren’t on the one.” We looked at each other with a little smile like what is he talking about. “Nah, y’all wasn’t on it,” he would say. “Y’all didn’t kill me tonight.” He would do that every night! We would be trying to figure out what this crazy man is talking about. All the evidence is pointing towards us being great, and he’d be like, “Y’all wasn’t on it.” Each time he told me that it made me practice that much harder. I would practice until my fingers would bleed. And it was because James was telling me I wasn’t on it. I felt like I was, but when James Brown say you ain’t on it, you ain’t on it. So, I better practice some more and I would have the band doing the same.

He was making me a better person and I didn’t have enough sense to know it. We sometimes get ourselves into situations where you have a negative thing going on. The main thing is to take that negative and to make something positive out of it. We have such a hard time doing that because we have always been treated so negatively. So, to swallow another negative pill is too much, but that’s why we can take more [than

others]. Other people haven't gone through it. They don't know what it feels like or they can't relate. Ain't no way you gonna understand that real raw funk because if you don't go through that, there ain't no way you gonna know how it makes you feel.

That's what it is really about, man. Just learning how to be yourself and not getting frustrated with people who don't know. Once you get all that in place then you can start embracing everything.

Bootsy Collins' World Wide Funk is available for purchase and streaming on all digital platforms. Press play and support the funk!

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Ericka Blount is a journalist, professor, and author from Baltimore, Maryland. Her book 'Love, Peace and Soul: Behind the Scenes of Soul Train' is available on Amazon. Please follow her (and us!) on Twitter @ErickaBlount.

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Two underground stars show out on a new project

Dope beats, dope rhymes. What more could ya'll want?

Queens rapper **Meyhem Lauren** and legendary producer **DJ Muggs** have joined forces to release a new album.

The album is called *Gems From the Equinox*, and it's the first new project from Meyhem since last May's *Piatto D'Oro* tape. It's also a big moment for Muggs; this is Mugg's first new

collabo album — otherwise known as Vs. album — since his LP with **Ill Bill** which dropped seven years ago.

Gems From the Equinox features appearances from the likes of **Sean Price, Action Bronson** — who appears on three songs — **Roc Marciano, Conway, Benny the Butcher**, and more.

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