

ENTERTAINMENT

Graham finds artistic freedom on GCS2000

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Sentinel-Voice

Freedom.

Absolute freedom.

That's how Larry Graham, former bass guitarist for Sly and the Family Stone and leadman and guitarist for his group Graham Central Station, describes what it's like to work with the Artist we know as Prince.

The 52-year-old Graham, who most remember for the unique way he slaps the strings of his bass and for soulful songs like "One in a Million You", recently opened for the "Jam of the Year" encore performance featuring the Artist during Memorial Day weekend at the MGM Grand Arena.

It comes as no surprise that after over 30 years in the business and his signature bass playing style, people have dubbed him "the Father of Funk", "Funkmeister", and "The Man Who Invented Funk." With the release of his latest album GCS2000 in May, we interviewed Graham to find out how he has kept pace with his titles and

ascertained the elusive freedom that most musicians covet.

SV: How'd you get started playing music?

LG: I played piano for five or six years. I started when I was about 6 years old. Then, I didn't take music up again until I was in school. Through music programs, I learned to play the clarinet, the sax. I played drums in the school band.

I took up the guitar when I was 11 and switched to the bass when I was 15. I was working with my mom who is a musician.

Anyway, we were working this one club and the organ with bass pedals broke. We didn't work with drums either. The sound was so empty that I rented an electric bass guitar, and I would slap the strings with my thumb instead of plucking them with my fingertips to recreate the full effect. I didn't develop the "proper" technique or anything because it was by accident that I started playing. It was only temporary. They couldn't fix the organ, though



LARRY GRAHAM

and I've been playing bass that way ever since.

SV: Where are you from and how has that impacted you musically?

LG: I was born in

Beaumont, Texas but raised in Oakland California. I went to Hayward High School out in California and I was a track star. I wasn't nothing when we competed against

Oaktown, though! Anyway, I never had the time to get into top form and beat the guys out of Oaktown. I was always working five to six nights a week doing gigs with my mom, Dell Graham.

SV: When did you start playing with Sly and the Family Stone?

LG: We had a regular gig and this one lady who was friends with Sly Stone back when he was on the radio used to come there all of the time. She got him to come down after asking him hundreds of times to come see me play. When he finally came, he asked me to join his band.

SV: Why funk?

LG: I don't have a choice. You accept whatever gift you get and work with it.

SV: Describe your new album.

LG: Well, it's simple. "Free," I did that with Chaka Khan and the Artist. It's just what it is. You know, it's about being free to do what you love. "Love 4 1 another"—that's what we should have. "Don't Let 'em

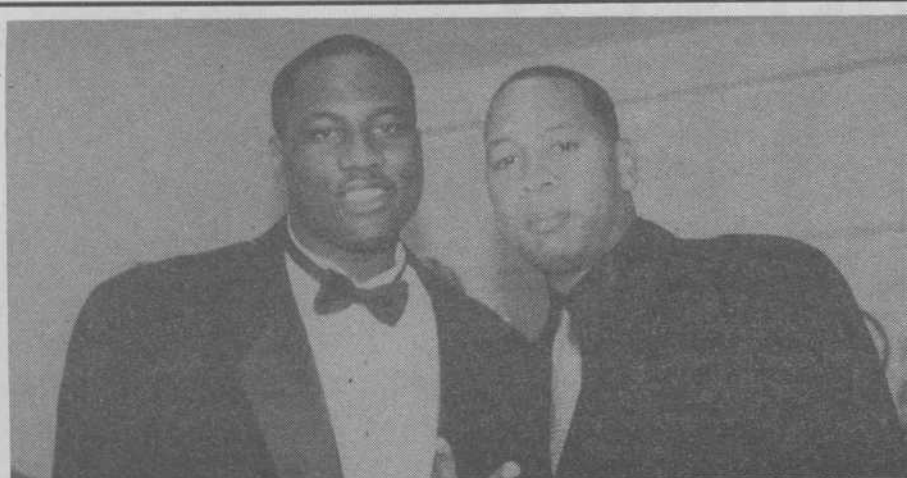
Change U" means that if you're a loving person, and a lot of people are not, you don't let that change you. The songs are all self-explanatory.

We have the greatest musicians in the world co-producing in a state-of-the-art studio. We had the freedom. There was no budget, no time limit, no contracts.

It wasn't like we had to schedule a studio time on Monday. You don't know what might happen over the weekend. You may feel jacked up Monday but you still have to go and sing your heart out. That's not how we do it.

Music is a gift from God. It should be done in the proper way. We play with people who we enjoy playing with when we want to play. Whenever we get the impulse to create, we do it. When we don't have it, we don't force anything. Plus, we keep doing it until we are satisfied with the end product. No limitations.

What's so great is that you
(See Graham, Page 9)



Sentinel-Voice photo by Marcello Sawyer

Victor Awards host Mark Curry (right) chills with Elton Brand, the No. 1 pick in the 1999 NBA draft. Brand was among numerous celebrity athletes on hand.

Victor

(Continued from Page 1)

MVP of the WNBA and Victor Award winner for Women's Professional Basketball said, "It's an extreme pleasure to be here with such tremendous talent...I feel extremely honored." She thanked the City of Hope, which receives benefits from the proceeds of the show, and praised God

for her ongoing success in life.

Described as the hallmark symbol of athletic achievement, this year's Victor Awards included a special section to honor Living Legends, athletes who have helped to significantly shape their sport in the 20th century. Muhammad Ali, Carl Lewis,

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Jackson benefit concert criticized

Special to Sentinel-Voice

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—No one told Michael Jackson to beat it, though there was scattered criticism about his concert here Friday. An estimated 54,000 fans from South Korea, Japan and neighboring Asian countries flocked to Olympic Stadium for the four-hour extravaganza, a benefit show for needy children.

Some people said ticket prices — up to \$250 a seat — were too high in the face of the

nation's economic difficulties.

Other groups, including a Korean War veterans association, noted that the concert fell on the 49th anniversary of the breakout of the Korean War, a day they said should be observed quietly.

There were no protests around the stadium, though 1,500 police officers were deployed.

Other guest entertainers included Mariah Carey, Boyz II Men, violinist Vanessa Mae and actor Steven Seagal.

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