MAKE IT FUNKY
1. MAKE IT FUNKY, PT. 1
   James Brown
2. IT'S YOUR THING
   The Isley Brothers
3. UP FOR THE DOWN STROKE
   Parliament
4. CISCO KID
   War
5. MIGHTY MIGHTY
   Earth, Wind & Fire
6. EARLY IN THE MORNING
   The Gap Band
7. OUTA-SPACE
   Billy Preston
8. GIVE IT TO ME BABY
   Rick James
9. FUNKIN' FOR JAMAICA
   Tom Browne
10. I HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE
    Roger
11. HOT PANTS, PT. 1
    James Brown
12. PICK UP THE PIECES
    Average White Band
13. PLAY THAT FUNKY MUSIC
    Wild Cherry
14. FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY
    The O'Jays
15. YOU AND I
    Rick James
16. HOLLYWOOD SWINGING
    Kool & the Gang
17. MAMA USED TO SAY
    Junior
18. SHE'S A BAD MAMA JAMA (SHE'S BUILT, SHE'S STACKED)
    Carl Carlton
19. DANCE FLOOR
    Zapp
20. BOOTZILLA
    Bootsy's Rubber Band

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James Brown was a fixture on the R&B charts for the quarter century following his 1956 debut, Please, Please, Please. But in many ways his influence on other black artists was strongest in the '70s. It was during that decade that Brown moved his soul music into the funk arena, and any number of other artists hit the charts by following his example. Hot Pants, Pt. 1 and Make It Funky, Pt. 1 define Brown's '70s sound. Hot Pants, from 1971, was the last record he cut for King Records, where he’d spent all but about a year of his career. While it was still on the charts the single switched over to People, the custom label Brown had been granted when he jumped ship to Polydor. The group that recorded Hot Pants was equal parts veterans and newcomers. Bassist Bootsy Collins and his brother, rhythm guitarist Catfish Collins, had split after helping Brown lay the groundwork for his new sound. Trombonist Fred Wesley, who had been key to Brown’s earlier successes but had clashed frequently with his boss, returned to take over as bandleader after a self-imposed 18-month hiatus. As usual, Brown came up with the idea for the song and Wesley worked with the band to flesh it out. Then Brown joined them in the studio to fine-tune the track, cutting his vocals and calling for solos as the band played. This party-down groove worked equally well for Make It Funky, with its improvised litany of soul-food references. Bootsy Collins, meanwhile, had become one of the star attractions in George Clinton’s Parliament-Funkadelic juggernaut, which expanded on Brown’s
preference for coming down hard “on the one”—the first beat of a four-beat measure. Parliament, the more vocally oriented of the two groups, dedicated a song to that motif in *Up for the Down Stroke*. Collins was so highly regarded within the P-Funk camp that his fellow musicians often described him as a monster. He went solo in 1976 (though he continued to work with both bands), and two years later his *Bootzilla*, which celebrated that monster image, replaced Parliament’s *Aqua Boogie* at the top of the soul charts.

Zapp, an Ohio band consisting of leader Roger Troutman and his brothers Lester, Terry and Larry, was very much in the P-Funk mold. Indeed, its big break came when Clinton heard its independently made album (featuring a heavily vocoderized sound) and finagled a deal with Warner, already home to Funkadelic. Zapp was an instant success nationally, but fans complained that the vocoder box so distorted the vocals that they couldn’t make out the words. When Roger made his first solo album, he decided to neutralize that objection by cutting a song that everybody already knew. Using an arrangement influenced by Cameo and Weather Report, he topped the charts in 1981 with *I Heard It through the Grapevine*, making it the only song ever to hit No. 1 three times (the two previous versions were by Motown’s Marvin Gaye and Gladys Knight and the Pips). Zapp came back the following year with *Dance Floor*, which Roger wrote while imagining a shy guy at a disco who fantasizes on the sidelines instead of getting down himself. Roger sent a copy of the finished track to a DJ friend in Cleveland for feedback; when the jock began airing it as an exclusive instead, Warner rush-released a single to avoid offending rival stations.

The Isley Brothers put Stax horns to a Sly and the Family Stone groove for *It’s Your Thing*, the first release on their own T-Neck label. The folks at Motown
1. MAKE IT FUNKY, PT. 1


2. IT'S YOUR THING

3. UP FOR THE DOWN STROKE

4. CISCO KID
War • Music and lyrics by Thomas Allen, Harold Brown, Morris

5. MIGHTY MIGHTY

6. EARLY IN THE MORNING

7. OUTA-SPACE

8. GIVE IT TO ME BABY

9. FUNKIN' FOR JAMAICA

10. I HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

11. HOT PANTS, PT. 1
12. PICK UP THE PIECES
*Average White Band* • Music by Roger Ball, Malcolm Duncan, Alan Gorrie, Robbie McIntosh, Onnie McIntyre and Stuart Hamish. Atlantic 3229 (1975) No. 5* Joe’s Songs Inc./Average Music. ASCAP. © 1975 Atlantic Recording Corp. Produced Under License From Atlantic Recording Corp.

13. PLAY THAT FUNKY MUSIC

14. FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY

15. YOU AND I

16. HOLLYWOOD SWINGING

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immediately sued, claiming that the Isleys had cut the song while still under contract to them; decisions went back and forth in the courts several times before the group finally won. Former child gospel star Billy Preston, the favorite sideman of the Beatles, cut two albums for the Fab Four’s Apple label before that company faltered. Back home in the U.S., he improvised the instrumental Outa-Space on a clavinet played through a wa-wa pedal; it was the first time he’d ever picked up the instrument. Though the song was released as the B side to I Wrote a Simple Song, Outa-Space became the hit after DJs began flipping the single en masse. War, Eric Burdon’s onetime backing band, had its first real success with Latino audiences with Cisco Kid, and has cut similarly flavored material ever since.

With For the Love of Money the O’Jays continued to pack dance floors with their combination of topical

lyrics and the Philadelphia International sound. Kool and the Gang’s Hollywood Swinging was inspired by African sax man Manu Dibango’s Soul Makossa, another dance favorite. Mighty Mighty marked Earth, Wind and Fire’s first trip to the R&B top 10. The Average White Band (whose members were Scottish, and which was given its name by singer Bonnie Bramlett) scored big with the instrumental Pick Up the Pieces, produced by Arif Mardin in a Jazz
Messengers vein. Wild Cherry was another group of white boys, this time from Ohio. Singer-guitarist Bob Parissi had failed with another band named after a cough-drop flavor, so when he tried again he wanted to make sure he did something commercial. At a disco in Pittsburgh, customers responded to his band’s heavy rock by demanding that he “play some funky music, white boy.” Parissi wrote the lyrics to Play That Funky Music on a napkin in the dressing room between sets.

Rick James hit No. 1 with his debut single, You and I, written about his former wife and built around an indestructible bass line. The track came from a self-financed album that James sold to Motown, where he’d previously toiled as a writer-producer. Following a relatively poor-selling album of ballads, James began working back toward his super-freak image with Give It to Me Baby.

Charter airline pilot and fusion-jazz trumpet player Tom Browne wrote Funkin’ for Jamaica in honor of his Queens neighborhood. The single had the rare distinction of topping the R&B charts while missing the pop charts completely. When former gospel singer Carl Carlton launched what proved to be a journeyman’s secular career in 1966, he patterned himself after Little Stevie Wonder. But his only top-10 success came when he talked dirty on She’s a Bad Mama Jama (She’s Built, She’s Stacked) 15 years later. Junior was a British funkateer who scored his biggest hit with his debut, Mama Used to Say. The Gap Band had a well-established track record when it reached No. 1 for the first time in 1981 with Burn Rubber, which began with the line, “I gotta get up early in the morning...” When the next two singles experienced a drop-off in sales, the band made that line the basis for Early in the Morning, which was meant to appeal to drive-time morning DJs, who often doubled as their station’s program director. The result was another No. 1, proving that radio “got the funk.”

—John Morthland