

## THE BROTHERS JOHNSON

**L**It has been four years since The Brothers Johnson launched their brand of sophisti-funk on the unsuspecting world, and while the music has grown in leaps and bounds since their debut, the message musically and spiritually remains the same.

"We are all about growing, progressing and capturing the things that happen in our everyday life and applying that to our music," comments Louis Johnson. "We have been blessed with a great deal of success since day one, so our task of matching our past success becomes greater with each album."

A capsulized history of The Brothers' career outlines a classic case of "overnight success." Their first three albums, "Look Out For #1," "Right On Time," and "Blam!" have all achieved platinum-plus success. Add a couple of hit singles and a Grammy award and you can have a mind boggling effect that can lead to a certain sense of creative impotence, but The Brothers see it differently.

"When everything started to happen for us, it was definitely a mind blower," George adds in his typically understated fashion. "We were fortunate though, because we had people around us who helped keep things in perspective. It's scary when you think, 'How can we ever live up to that initial buzz?' But the positive side of that is the challenge it gives you to go back in and do nothing less than your best.

"We try to maintain a balance of priorities, but the music is our life force, it's what's important. It comes first. You can get caught up in a very strong cycle in the music business and sometimes you have to alter your plans to get the priorities right again. We found ourselves in that situation in 1979. Suddenly we felt ourselves in a spin, so we pulled back to regroup and concentrate totally on making the best record we could, and giving our all to just that.

"I think that the tour we did, as well as the third album was the writing on the wall for us. 'Blam!' was a good album, but looking back it doesn't feel as good as the first two."

"We felt real good about it at the time," adds Louis, "But we both know now that it was a turning point for us. The concert business in general had slowed down for everyone, and Disco was waiting in the wings. Our lives had changed with wives and kids and a lot of touring to the point where it became necessary to put the brakes on. We had to sort out what was happening around us musically and socially and draw all our energy in real tight and then just go for it. That's what 'Light Up The Night' is all about—it's both the message and the product of all that wood-shedding that we did."

While the trademark of The Brothers' sound has been Louis' thundering bass and George's melodic guitar lines and vocals, they strive to make music that doesn't repeat itself. In "Light Up The Night" they show the most structural and stylistic growth of all their albums to date. It is their most melodic effort yet, filled with churning grooves and sing-song hooks, but the essence has swung off of vamping on to well structured songs.

"Quincy really pushed us on the message of structure and melody," George comments. "You couldn't ask more of a producer than Quincy gives, and he has so much knowledge to give too. His ability to produce and arrange is obvious. Just look at his work in 1979 alone. The Michael Jackson album is a masterpiece of production, and the Rufus and Chaka 'Masterjam' album isn't bad either!

"We're really lucky to have had him egging us on about melody and that the essence of melody is what you can hum along. We've learned a lot from this past year and from making this album. I guess the bottom line is that you've got to love what you're doing but not so much that you don't keep trying to make improvements on it."

And what can we say to that but "Amen!" That kind of spirit and this kind of music will always "Light Up The Night."

