

## The Way We Begin

It ain't easy being stankalicious. This is especially true if you are an independent entity. But the funk is proving to be more relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than ever before. Case in point: the recent revival and revitalization of **Stymie and the Pimp Jones Love Orchestra**, a San Francisco-based, multi-piece outfit lead by singer/songwriter **Sean "Stymie" Sharp**.

Stymie is an animated individual. When he speaks about anything, from music to comics to movies, he speaks with an intense and jovial vigor that is as learned as it is inspired. His tiny apartment is littered with ol' school accoutrements, from VHS tapes to boomboxes, but the beauty of modern media trends does not elude him whatsoever. "With file sharing and Youtube," says Stymie, "you are in more control of what you listen to." Thus, you can seek out what you like instead of being nudged into it or spoon-fed something more formulaic.

On this point, Stymie argues, "It is true that not all things are for all people. But this does not mean that you shouldn't give people - the fans - the benefit of the doubt." The man is speaking about categories and genres, abstract concoctions that lead people to "wearing uniforms. Like I got my punk rocker uniform and he's got his gangster uniform and so on." And sure, if you're gonna call Stymie and the PJLO anything, the man doesn't completely object to being tagged as a leader of a funk band, as he explains: "Funk is the least limited genre. 'Funk gets stronger' - to quote George Clinton - but we don't want to limit things at all." In other words, Stymie does not want to "categorize the fan base," as he is also inclined to dip his creative pen into avenues such as ska, R&B, rock, reggae, and even go-go. This musical diversity was a bit harder to realize way back in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when massive corporations still dictated listening trends and indies had less resources for getting heard. But now? The game is on.

The band has come a long way and has accomplished a lot of things to get to the pinnacle that it is at today. The current incarnation, a combo of veteran soldiers and funky-fresh blood, has Stymie tickled stink. "This version of the band is carving out its own identity with these new songs." Indeed, he has been writing new ditties at an astonishing rate, "inspired by the blessing of these talented people." The current, exuberant and extra-tight line-up includes drummer **John Merker**, **Michael Wynar** on guitar, bassists **Martin Ledyard** and **Ace Alan**, **Brigham Hausman** on trombone, **Claire Phillips** on sax, as well as vocalists **Jospeh "Mojo" Powell**, **Erica Chriss**, **Marilee Bazzano**, and **Noelle Guerin**.

The new material, with such titles as "Brand New Mustard Machine," "La Toure A Go-Go," and "Love in Space," will debut in late 2010 - (though a song or two might leak out on the web before that!) And in an effort to whet the appetites of longtime and potential fans alike, the band has uploaded high-quality performance footage of classic Stymie and the PJLO material on Youtube, tunes that can be heard on previous releases such as ***Dem Sum Goodies*** and ***The Secret Hits of the Black and Blue Parade***.

Stymie, who grew up in Hollywood off of Sunset, started the band in San Francisco in 1996. The first lineup featured Joe "Mojo" Powell, a soulful harmonizer who still sings with the band today, and Marilee Bazzano soon followed. As for the band name, Stymie thought it up while walking down Haight Street, and the name, like his songs, are meant to remind the audience that there ain't nothin' but overflowin' imagination around here. The band soon proved itself to be incredible live, and while it has enjoyed the honor of opening gigs for the likes of Earth, Wind, & Fire, Fred Wesley, and Billy Preston over the years, Stymie and the

PJLO has been packing 'em in with its own sold-out headlining shows for over a decade now.

This is why it is imperative for YOU to come see the man and his crew in a theatre near you.