

the Graham train

styling. "By the time it was over they were standing in their seats and shouting and had become completely uncool," he says.

"Our whole show is what we believe in, and it's for the people," Larry says. "If we can't get them off, then we haven't succeeded at all. I don't care how many people come up and say 'that was a great show, man,' if it didn't get across to the people it was nothing."

He pauses for a minute, then gets very serious and adds, "That's what makes it successful. You know what man? When you go out there and you ain't for real the audiences can detect it. Audiences are much hipper today than what they used to be, in my opinion. They are quick to pick up on what's real and what's not."

"When you go out there and you aren't for real, you might have a few little girls out there screaming and partying but the bulk of the audience will be wondering what's happening."

Larry sits back and thinks for a minute. He's speaking from experience, having played professionally for 13 years or, roughly, half his life, starting out accompanying his singer-mother, Dell Graham, on tour with her supper club act. He also had bands all through high school, where his major interests were in music. He was a straight-A student, until one day one of his teachers noticed the music he was supposedly playing was upside down! He

had been playing by ear all along!

It was while Larry was playing with his mother that he was first introduced to Sly, a local DJ at the time. Graham and his mother were playing at a supper club in San Francisco and this "mysterious lady" (he's never seen her again) would come to every set. She had heard that Sly was forming a group, and kept bugging Sly to come and hear this bass player, and kept on him so much that one night he decided to come see what she was talking about. He heard.

That was the beginning of a six-year relationship with what turned out to be Sly and the Family Stone. It was the group that had the right concept at the time, music fashioned somewhere between the raw-but-polished Motown sound and intense fullness of the Hendrix inspired music. Their sound eventually became the sound: the music of Sly and the Family Stone stands as another institution in the Afro-American musical heritage. It was here that Graham learned what grooves and audience: the final lesson being the Woodstock concert, where they brought 500,000 people to their feet.

At the heart of the Family Stone was Graham's bass with a style that has completely revamped modern concepts to playing the electric bass. The bass has, since its invention, been an important part of the music — the Motown sound of the early Sixties

quite often highlighted the bass part — but with the Family Stone, Graham's lines had something more to them, more of an importance in the more complex rhythmic flow; yet they maintained the function of holding the chordal bottom. Most important was a new playing style creating a new sound, one emanating from a thumping-plucking attack.

"That came about while I was with my mother," Graham explains. "At first it was me, her, and a drummer. After a while we stopped using a drummer. So to compensate for not having a drummer I would just thump my bass — thump it and pluck it — and try to get a more percussive sound."

While with the Family Stone Graham began looking for outlets to record the many tunes he had been writing over the years. He put together a group centered around Patryce and called it Hot Chocolate, and began to work over the material. He would play the bass parts and when time came for the group to go on the road he would teach them to the bass player. As things happen, Graham ended up leaving the Family Stone and decided to go with the group, although he did not leave the Family specifically to start his group. Then one rainy Oakland night standing in front of a Doggie Diner the name Graham Central Station came to him. It was the start.

In nearly three years the group has made only one



"We tease the mind," says Larry, as Tina listens

personnel change: original drummer Willie Sparks has been replaced by double bass-foolin' Manuel Kellough, formerly with Billy Preston's God Squad. Together with Robert Sam (another Preston alumnae), Herschall, David, and Patryce, Graham has come on strong. So strong that

they were nominated for a Grammy award as the best new act. The guy who beat them out had "only" written two film scores for the past year... They are considered to be on the crest of the new wave in music today, "progressive funk."

"We couldn't be classified as just plain R&B," Larry explains. "It's like putting everything together — a little jazz, a little classical, a little rock — all of these things together. It's like a whole movement in music. And like funk is there; in our case, it's the foundation."

GCS' brand of progressive funk has been right there in the forefront of the movement. Their two albums are very impressive performances, each an instant energy package, needing only to be placed on the stereo to come alive and work its way under your skin. That magic — that special something that happens when a group's music moves you — happens when a group is "tight" and the music is welded together by the

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FAMILY PORTRAIT: Graham poses with grandmother, Alma "Mama Em" Narcisse, mother Dell Graham and wife Tina

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