



Living Colour vocalist Corey Glover puts his exuberant melodies to a new sound on *Stain*.

Living Colour Gets Serious

The New York foursome buckles down to a heavy sound stocked with attitude

By Eric T. Miller, *The Temple News*, Temple U.

Try to paint Living Colour in broad strokes — alternative, rock, jazz, blues, house, metal, funk — and you've missed the point. Since 1988, Living Colour has been offering musically diverse records to a public and an industry that thrive on and yearn for classification and rules. Critics have hailed the New York City foursome for its fusion of styles — falling under no genre but reeking of many.

Still, for Living Colour frontman and volcanic vocalist Corey Glover, sometimes being in Living Colour is like being a castaway on the island of misfit toys. Sometimes you just want to fit in.

"The position we were in during the first Lollapalooza a couple years ago was a difficult one," says Glover, who with his short, reddish hair, plain gray sweats and trousers is a sharp contrast to the long-locked, colorfully dressed, provocative performer he was two years ago. He's in a midtown Manhattan office to look over the rough cuts of his group's new video, "Leave It Alone." The upbeat romp is the first single off the recently released *Stain*, the band's third LP.

"We considered ourselves very alternative [during Lollapalooza]. We didn't consider ourselves part of the mainstream in any sense that most people in the mainstream thought of us, although we might have had a popular single on our first record. All the accolades that came later on we didn't understand. And the reac-

tion on the tour in some places was like, 'What are they doing here?' or 'Why are you here?' And we were confused as to what the criteria was to be a part of this movement. We thought we fit that criteria, but evidently we didn't."

Regardless, the band has developed a sound — with a lot of different elements — that in the end is simply Living Colour. When the band's debut, *Vivid*, was released almost five years ago, MTV jumped on the band and put its virgin single — "Cult of Personality" — into heavy rotation. The mystique of a so-called black hard rock band enamored a lot of people, and this, pitted with Glover's user-friendly, exuberant melodies and Vernon Reid's aurally astonishing guitar work, quickly carried the band up the charts.

Released in August, 1990, *Time's Up* was an ambitious and musically varied follow-up to *Vivid*, though the new LP lacked a true hit single. The album pushed the musical possibilities of the Living Colour sound farther away from the main-

stream, delighting a lot of critics but discouraging top-40 listeners. Following the Lollapalooza tour in the summer of 1991, bassist Muzz Skillings left the band and was replaced by Doug Wimbish, a former member of the Sugar Hill Records house band.

Wimbish's first studio LP with Living Colour is *Stain*, the band's new 13-track record. Opting not to record with Ed Stasium, the man behind the boards for the first two Living Colour LPs, they instead worked with Ron St. Germain (the dials behind Soundgarden, Sonic Youth and Buffalo Tom) and achieved a harder rock feel. Reid's guitar lines, though similar in the spectrum of solos, pound away with more determination and aggression during verses and refrains; William Calhoun's drums and Wimbish's bass are — in some places — simply bombastic. Glover's heartfelt vocals are still in the middle of it all, weaving from speaker to speaker as he narrates political beliefs and social commentary.

Why *Stain*? It may be a bit of a reach, but

Glover's got his rationale.

"[A stain] is an indelible mark," he says. "They don't go away. Stains are always there. Everything you have, everything you wear, everything about you in one way is stained — emotionally, physically, spiritually, you know. You're always tainted by this event that happened in your life. You're always thinking about the time this happened and how it made you into what you are today. Stains just affect everything."

And throughout its six-year career, Living Colour has been stained by popularity — its most famous aspect having been the fact that each of its members is black. Though from the beginning it always has been an issue for each of the band's members, Glover maintains black always shouldn't be an adjective to describe the band.

"We got the moniker 'black rock band' and that was pretty unfair," says Glover. "It was self-imposed in a way, but it was unfair then to link everything we did to that fact. For other bands it's not true. You don't call Loudness an Asian rock band. You don't call Van Halen a white rock band. You don't call Los Lobos a Mexican rock band. That's not particularly fair to us. Again it prejudices people listening to the record. It's like 'Oh, here comes that black rock band.'"

That's definitely not the kind of label the bands wants — or needs.

"On *Time's Up* there were some issues regarding us being black," he concludes. "And they are obvious to most people. And then I saw a review of the record a couple months after it came out where the writer thought everything that was on the record... could be equated to being black in America, which is not the case. It's about being a person in this world, which is what all of our records are about.... This is who I am. The only difference there is that I tan quicker than you. Period."



REVIEW

★★★

"This Little Pig" and "Go Away" burn with an intensity never seen in the band on previous albums and this is the best yet.

radio-ready. *Stain's* best moment is at the end of the LP. Miller

Produced by Ron St. Germain, *Stain* is the band's hardest LP to date, relaying a toughness à la Seattle.

The music, sound and arrangements are pure Living Colour, which — depending on the song — is both good and bad.

has been in some of the best tunes.

If Living Colour's new record songs like this album will be one of the best hard rock books. Miller