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
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James Brown

James Brown: Double Dynamite [DVD]

(Charly) Rated: N/A
US release date: 28 October 2008
UK release date: 1 October 2007

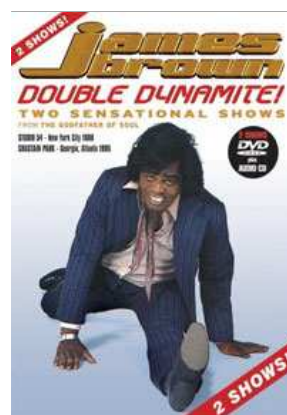
by **Christel Loar**

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James Brown: Double Dynamite captures a late period James Brown bringing his particular brand of show stopping performance to two very different venues five years apart. James Brown & the JB's do a set at New York's Studio 54 in 1980, and James Brown & the live Soul G's play at Chastain Park in Atlanta in 1985. Both shows are a testament to Brown's many titles ("The Hardest Working Man in Show Business," "The Godfather of Soul," "Mr. Dynamite," etc.), and it's amazing just how much energy and excitement comes through in these nearly 30 year old recordings!

The Chastain Park show, although later chronologically, is first on the menu, and is arguably the better overall show of the two. Many of the hits are here, but the highlights are "Try Me", a cover of "Georgia on My Mind" that Brown unmistakably makes his own and a medley of "It's a Man's, Man's, Man's World" and "Lost Someone," in which Brown calls out to all the lost legends of rock and soul, including Elvis Presley, Janis Joplin, Brown's friend Otis Redding, Jackie Wilson and soul legend Minnie Riperton. After Brown eulogizes Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Lee Moore steps up to play, "[What] Jimi would've sounded like if he was here tonight!" It's pure theater, just like Brown's end-of-show fallen prize-fighter routine, and he did many variations on the schtick over the years, but it works like a charm every time because James Brown was simply such an electrifying performer. Maybe it's the larger stage, the bigger crowd or the sheer pleasure Brown is clearly getting from being home in Georgia, but the Chastain Park show has a little more fire than the Studio 54 set.

That's not to say that the earlier show disappoints in any way, well, other than the somewhat distracting colors the stage is often bathed in thanks to a combination of early video techniques and disco lighting. The performance is still mind-blowing, and Brown is definitely in better voice here, even if he's not quite as dynamic at first. Given that this was a star-studded event at the infamous Studio 54 and disco was still in fashion, it's not surprise that the best songs are tracks like "It's Too Funky in Here," "Sex Machine" and "Cold Sweat". James Brown of 1980 was perhaps funkier than five years on, but he could also still bring the house down with the soul numbers, as well, as evidenced by the roar that greets the opening notes of "Please, Please, Please". This reaction obviously invigorates Brown, when he returns to the stage (post prize-fighter farewell) to lead the



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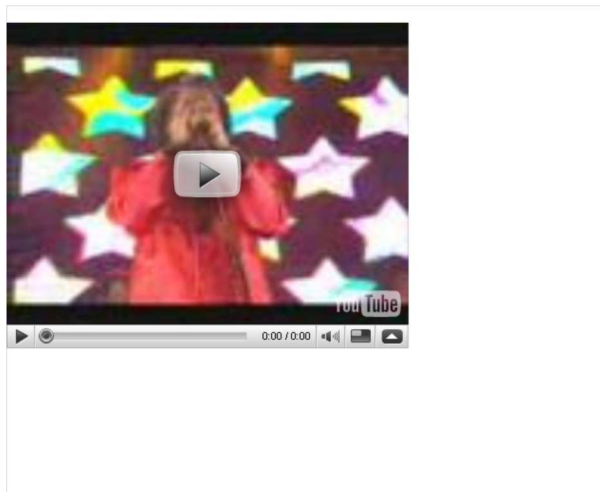
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band in "Jam", it's the tightest, most connected—to the audience, to the band, to the music—he's been for the entire show. It's perhaps the best moment of the DVD.

As for the DVD itself, it's fairly well put together. The menu is very simple and straightforward, with "Play Concerts", "Extras", "Tracks" and "Audio". The audio choices are Dolby 5.1, DTS Surround Sound, and a regular stereo mix—which actually sounds pretty amazing for the "standard" option. The track selection is easy to use, but frankly the ability to skip around is lost on me, because if you're going to watch James Brown live, you're going to want the whole experience.

The extras here include a biography entitled "James Brown: The Funky Timeline," which scrolls past as "It's a Man's, Man's, Man's World" plays. The timeline has much more information than the liner notes inside the DVD case, and highlights both Brown's ups and downs in greater detail. It's by no means completely comprehensive, but it does provide some depth for those who may only know James Brown from the scandals that plagued him at the end of his life. A selected discography also employs the scrolling, this time to "Get Up Offa That Thing". The final extra is a "Slideshow" displaying Brown's record covers, 45 labels and a few flyers as the Introduction from the Chastain Park show repeats. It's interesting to see these things, but this feature feels a little slapdash in comparison to the others.

But again, the reason for *James Brown: Double Dynamite* isn't in the extras, it's in the show. It's in the sweat, it's in the soul, it's in the music... it's in the man.



James Brown "I Feel Good" (Live Aid)

RATING: 7

EXTRAS: 6

— 30 October 2008

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murder, with America's racial and existential crises at a peak, Brown's music was itself a crisis, always on call.

edition series rolls on by documenting an overwhelming awkward period in Brown's otherwise superhuman ascension into R&B's uncharted places.

best songs of protest are passed around, from movement-to-movement, era-to-era; its singers gaining multilingual fluency along the way.

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