

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2009

James Brown: Double Dynamite! ★★★1/2

(2007) 127 min. DVD: \$19.95.
Music Video Distributors (avail.
from most distributors).



Oww! Good Gawd, y'all!! The man had many nicknames—"The Godfather of Soul," "Mr. Please Please Please," "Soul Brother #1," "Mr. Dynamite," "The Hardest Working Man in Show Business"—and James Brown (1933-2006) lives up to every one of them in these two concert dates from the 1980s. At the time of the first, filmed at New York's Studio 54 in 1980, Brown's career was not at a high point, but the trendy dance emporium was a perfect spot for him, and he balances the deathless funk of "Sex Machine," "Get On the Good Foot," "Cold Sweat," and the *uber*-classic "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag" with ballads like "Try Me" and "It's a Man's, Man's, Man's World" (replete with shout-outs to Elvis, Otis Redding, Jimi Hendrix, Wes Montgomery... and Van "Do the Hustle" McCoy?). Of course, it was never just about songs with Brown: melody, harmony, and lyrics were all in the service of the music's relentless rhythmic attack. Everything—the urgent, chanted vocal lines (he uses a kind of jazz scat approach here), the pure funk of the bass lines, the short and punchy horn riffs,