

WELLS FARGO	HOME MORTGAGE	Lesley Pretorius • 831-648-1058 Lesley.H.Pretorius@wellsfargo.com	
I'll help you get home.			

MONTEREY COUNTY
WEEKLY

Let me
be your
lighthouse
in this storm



Karen Calley
809-0532
karen_calley@redshift.com

COLDWELL BANKER

Just Remember
J.R. ROUSE
REAL ESTATE

Matching
Buyers and Sellers
together.
Are you ready
for a match?





Long and Strong: James Brown's furiously energized rendition of "Sex Machine" in Monterey lasted 20 minutes.

Downtown Brown

Unearthing the lost tale of James Brown performing live in Monterey.

By [Stuart Thornton](#)

Thursday, March 31, 2011

Back in January of 1979, soul and funk great James Brown walked onto a Monterey stage and began chanting, "I'm back." Then the charismatic tuxedo-clad performer, who was already sweating like a boxer in the 12th round, launched into an explosive "Get Up Offa That Thing."

Later on, Brown hit the peak of his powers on the darkened stage with the one-two punch of "Sex Machine" and a cover of the Ray Charles hit "Georgia on My Mind."

[James Brown -Sex Machine Live Monterey \(part 1\)](#) by [malaperdas30](#)

Brown's phenomenally funky 20-minute rendition of "Sex Machine" features disco-calling female vocalists, a bongo solo, a saxophone solo along with some of the 46-year-old performer's amazing scatting and a freestyled bit where "funk" seems to be a stand-in for another way of getting down.

The legendary performance was taped for a film known variously as *The Lost James Brown Tapes* and *James Brown – Body Heat: Live in Monterey 1979*. Reissued last week on DVD, *Body Heat* is an important James Brown artifact connected to Monterey with a story that's never been told. Until now.

Hired by a music promoter named Bob Colonna, Santa Cruz filmmaker Eric Thiermann filmed Brown's performance, which took place inside a big room at the Monterey Convention Center, with his cousins Robert Sheridan and Rod Cowe. Thiermann remembers that as the raucous crowd began chanting James Brown's name the legendary performer was nowhere to be found in the venue, which caused Colonna to panic.

Eventually, Brown arrived at the Monterey Convention Center with an unexpected reason for being late. "He had hired a limousine to take him to Oakland to do his hair, because he knew he was going to be filmed," Thiermann says.

Now working as the documentary director at the Santa Cruz and San Francisco-based Impact Media Group, Thiermann says that – other than Colonna almost suffering a heart attack due to Brown's late arrival – the show and its filming went really well.

While Thiermann gave Colonna the master tapes, the Santa Cruz filmmaker was allowed to keep a version of the footage for himself. Though the blurb on the cover of *Body Heat* notes that "the videotapes were locked in a vault for 12 years," Thiermann knows they were elsewhere. "They ended up in my attic and then under my bed," he says.

According to Thiermann, he was contacted by James Brown's management after the soul singer got in trouble with the law following a high speed chase on the South Carolina-Georgia state border in 1988. The Santa Cruz filmmaker says Brown remembered liking the footage Thiermann had shot of "Sex Machine" and his management wanted to screen it at a James Brown benefit concert following the incident, which eventually landed the soul superstar in jail for three years.

After a clip of Thiermann's footage was shown at the benefit concert, music super producer Alan Douglas got wind that the Santa Cruz filmmaker had some superb raw footage of Brown in concert. Along with producing albums by everyone from Duke Ellington to the posthumous releases of Jimi Hendrix, Douglas is credited with discovering the influential New York City act the Last Poets, who helped invent hip-hop.

At the time, Douglas was creating a music-based television program, which later became *Mojo Working*, a British television series that featured powerhouse performances by Hendrix, John Lennon and Otis Redding, among others. When Douglas saw the Monterey footage of Brown, he quickly realized its value. "I mean if you look at James Brown in 1979 and look back at his career, there was a period there where he wasn't prevalent," Douglas says by phone from Paris. "And he came back at this show in 1979 and hit it just like the old days. I thought that was very significant, and that's why we picked up the show and worked on it."

Douglas says his group did the post production work on the raw footage that he attained from Thiermann. It later became the basis for a 1992 *Mojo Working* episode on Brown as well as the concert film *Body Heat*, which has been out in different DVD versions since 1998.

To the music industry icon, one of the primary draws of the footage is Brown's take of "Georgia On My Mind." On *Body Heat*, Brown is clearly enjoying doing the Hoagy Carmichael and Stuart Gorell penned classic. At one point, he

personalizes the song by singing that maybe Georgia is on his mind, because he is from the southern state.

Having been a major player in some of contemporary music's biggest moments – including a near miss where he almost produced an album by Miles Davis and Jimi Hendrix together – Douglas is still dazzled by what Brown did with “Georgia On My Mind” on a Monterey stage over 30 years ago. “I’m the one who continues to push ‘Georgia,’ and I thought it was a superb representation of the song,” he says. “I never heard it sung better. I think he even sang it better than Ray Charles did.”

James Brown – Body Heat: Live in Monterey 1979 is available for \$19.95 through Music Video Distributors at www.musicvideodistributors.com.

- [Favorite story](#) [Your favorites](#)
- [Discuss](#) [Comment](#), [Blog about](#)
- [Share this](#) [Email](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)

Comments

Use the comment form below to begin a discussion about this content.

Sign in to comment

Username

- I have an account.
- I'm new.

Password [Forgot?](#)

Or login with:

[OpenID](#)

Have the *Weekly* delivered to your inbox, [subscribe today](#).

Staff Blogs

[Edible Complex \(food blog\)](#), [Always Alive \(music blog\)](#), [Nic Coury's Photo Blog](#), [News Blog](#)

Features

[Squidfry](#), [Ask A Mexican](#), [Rob Brezny's Real Astrology](#)

Events

[Today's events](#), [Best bets](#), [National acts](#), [Recommendations](#), [Submit an event](#)

Advertise

[General Info](#), [Media Kit](#), [Rate Card](#), [Ad Submission Guidelines](#)

Policy

[Terms of Use](#), [Privacy Policy](#)

4/1/2011

Downtown Brown | MontereyCountyWe...

The mission of the Monterey County Weekly is to inspire independent thinking and conscious action, etc.

Serving Big Sur, Carmel, Carmel Valley, Castroville, Del Rey Oaks, Marina, Monterey, Moss Landing, Pacific Grove, Pebble Beach, Prunedale, Salinas, Salinas Valley, Sand City, Seaside and the entire Monterey County. © 2011 Milestone Communications Inc. All rights reserved. Formerly the Coast Weekly newspaper.