



Scripts.com

Get on Up

By Jez Butterworth

1 EXT. ROAD. AUGUSTA. 1988. 1 EXT. ROAD. AUGUSTA. 1988. 1

A hot muggy Georgia morning. A pickup truck comes around a corner and moves towards us. Inside, music plays on the radio. We can't quite see who's driving.

2 INT/EXT. PICKUP TRUCK/AUGUSTA STREETS. MOMENTS LATER 2

The driver heads down the road. He beats his hand on the steering wheel to the rhythm of the music. The driver turns up the music. As the rhythm speeds, so does the truck.

3 INT. BATHROOM - SAME TIME 3

A WOMAN, 40, sits on toilet within a stall using the bathroom. She's smoking a cigarette.

4 EXT. PARKING LOT. MOMENTS LATER. 4

Cars parked in rows. The pickup pulls into the lot and screech-stops.

5 INT. ADJACENT OFFICE. INSURANCE SEMINAR. DAY. 5

About 30 people are attending a seminar. Behind a SEMINAR PRESENTER, The truck can be seen outside a window, stereo thumping.

SEMINAR PRESENTER

Which brings us on to Dental

Insurance. Generally speaking, when

you receive care from a

participating PDP dentist, your out

of-pocket expenses will typically

be lower than if you were to

accept care from a dentist outside

the group. The law deems it illegal

for dentists to charge any more

than the network approves... But

listen, in my three and a half

years of experience in this

business people mainly care about

keeping their premiums low. So,

each of you must be prepared to

sell the network to your clients

and always cater to their specific

condition.

Annoyed, the presenter turns momentarily to the truck.

6 INT/EXT. PICKUP TRUCK / PARKING LOT 6 INT/EXT. PICKUP TRUCK / PARKING LOT

6

A fifty-five year, out of shape black man in mirror shades and a shell-suit.

He's breathing heavily. Patting the dashboard, as the song ends. The man

sits there a moment and

exits.

JAMES BROWN hitches up his pants, and walks across the lot.

7 INT. NONDESCRIPT OFFICE 7

There's no one around. He's jumpy. His movements odd.
Twitchy.

JAMES :

(To himself)

Where's everybody?

Around a corner he comes face to face with a cleaner, MAVIS,
who is wearing headphones as she vacuums.
Mavis screams and removes her headphones.

MAVIS :

Mr. Brown. You scared me!

JAMES :

Mavis. Where's everybody at? I gotta meetin' this mornin'.

MAVIS :

It's Sunday, Mr. Brown.

JAMES :

No, it's Tuesday, Mavis.

James is caught flat-footed. SOMEWHERE OFF a toilet flushes.
He rounds the corner. No-one. Opens the bathroom door. Looksinside. Sniffs.
Slams it and storms off down the corridor
passing a sign outside his office that reads: GET ON UP.

8 INT./EXT. ADJACENT OFFICE/ PARKING LOT. DAY. 8

As the INSURANCE SEMINAR presenter continues, the woman who was on the
toilet takes her seat.

SEMINAR PRESENTER

Now, understand that not all people have the same type of needs. When it
comes to an insurance plan everyone is different.

(MORE)

SEMINAR PRESENTER (CONT'D)

You can't possibly sell the same
monthly premium to just anyone who
strolls through your door. If you
learn one lesson this weekend, let

it be this:

specific condition of the client.

Bottom line! Their needs are-

The adjoining door flies open as James enters, pissed.

JAMES:

OK Stop. Sir. Stop. Who been in there?

SEMINAR PRESENTER

Excuse me?

JAMES:

I own this building, someone has been in there used my commode. Now who was it?

SEMINAR PRESENTER

Sorry. We're actually renting this part of the building today, and we're in the middle of a seminar.

JAMES:

I don't care if you're in the middle of a heart attack son. Someone been in there, I hear the chain flush, I can smell it. Now who it was?

INSURANCE SALESMAN

It is. It's fuckin' him.

BACK AT THE FRONT someone sniggers.

James spins round. SILENCE. Someone sniggers behind him.

James spins back round and approaches the salesman.

JAMES :

Something funny?

INSURANCE SALESMAN

No, sir.

JAMES :

Then why you cats laughing?

INSURANCE SALESMAN

I wasn't laughing. It wasn't me.

James stares at the man. Turns on his heel.

He storms out of the building and across the lot to his pickup truck

THE PAYBACK starts: insanely tight, deep funk.

INSURANCE SALESMAN (CONT'D)

I'm telling you that was James

Brown.

Outside a window behind the seminar presenter, James can be seen rifling through the back of his pickup truck.

The woman who used his bathroom watches James' every move.

SEMINAR PRESENTER

Look, I suggest we just continue...

OK. So. How does the program work?

Initially, participating dentists undergo an extensive credentialing process which, if approved, allows customers to pay the minimum deductible allowed and the remainder is insured. But with non participating dentists the cost per visit is much higher and comes completely out of pocket. So some people may want a high deductible because they have more to cover, but most common folks simply want the lowest possible plan... and remember our key takeaway!?

Entire seminar in UNISON.

We must accommodate the specific condition of-

The office door flies open. James comes back in with a SHOTGUN.

JAMES :

OK listen up people.

The room goes still and completely silent.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Being it's Sunday and all I'm gone ask each of you to imagine you're sittin' in church right now. While today's sermon may be good they's something else on your mind. You realize you gotta take a shit.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

Real bad. And you don't want toshit at the church house, naw sir.

So you just sit there and thinkabout getting home to your owntoilet in your own master bath onBeech Island, South Carolina. I gotta a bidet in my master bath.

Love my bidet. And a big prettyoval tub too.

James spins around to man.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You got a bidet, Sir?

He shakes his head. James looks to a woman.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You?

She shakes her head.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Well you gotta get you one. You allgotta get you a bidet. Are y'all sure its really Sunday today?

A woman nods.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What was just saying... Oh, that's right. Yes! You gotta take shit. So, after church, you speed back home and you run like hell to the house scared you ain't gonna make it. But you do. Now imagine unhitching your pants as your open your bathroom door. And then you see me. James Brown. Sittin' on your master toilet taking a break.

What would you do?

More sniggers from all over the room. James raises his gun and KABLOOM!!! James accidentally blasts an enormous hole in the ceiling.

SCREAMS AS EVERYONE HITS THE DECK. James looks up the the hole in the ceiling.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Good God. Tear up the devil. I'm gone have to get that fixed.

James looks to the gun unsure of how it went off.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Now I'm a busy man, and I'm guessin' you cats are too. But someone has abused a personal convenience. Now I ask you nicely.

I'm gone ask you again. Which one of you gentlefolk hung a number two in my commode?

James approaches the salesman.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Was it you, Sir? Was it you?!

INSURANCE SALESMAN

Don't shoot.

JAMES:

I ain't gone shoot nobody, son.

Then, as if told by God, James spins around and locks eyes with the woman who used his bathroom. He approaches her.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Ma'am, it was you wasn't it? You took a break in my bathroom, didn't you? She shakes her head and begins to cry.

FEMALE SALESWOMAN

Yes sir, Mister Brown.

JAMES :

Yes you did. Now, don't cry. It's gone be okay.

James lowers the gun to the floor. As he tries to console the woman.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You had to use the toilet. You saw an opportunity and you took it.

Yeah, I got mad but, Lady, you did right by yourself. I've spent my whole life doing right by myself.

I'm James Brown and I made a difference.

JAMES LOOKS TO CAMERA AND TALKS DIRECTLY TO US:

JAMES (CONT'D)

You cats may not own my records but you can bet every record you have got a piece of me in 'em. Ain't nobody singing today that ain't been touched by James Brown.

James turns back to the woman.

JAMES (CONT'D)

So, Lady, you did right by yourself. And there ain't no other way to live. You understand me?

The woman nods. James turns back to us.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You understand me?

Police sirens are heard in the distance. James turns to his truck outside the window.

9 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. DAY. 9

SUDDENLY - a pickup truck passes at a hundred MPH. FOLLOWED A MOMENT LATER by two city cop cars.

10 INT. PICKUP TRUCK. DAY. 10

James rocks in his seat. Odd guttural sounds. In therearview. The two cop cars close upon him. Hits the gas, hard.

11 HELICOPTER SHOT: EXT. ON RAMP - I-20. DAY 11

The pickup truck skids onto the interstate where two citycars are now joined by two Highway Patrol cars.

11A EXT. STREET LEVEL 11A

A police car pulls up next to him, the officer aiming a weapon and flagging the car down. James sees him andflinches.

JAMES:

Don't hurt me. Don't stop me. Don't stop me.

He rams the cop car. It retreats.

12 EXT. I-20. DAY 12 EXT. I-20. DAY 12

Three prowlers and a highway patrol RV form a road block. A high engine note pierces the air. The police take up firing positions.

13 INT. PICKUP TRUCK. DAY 13

James sees the roadblock ahead.

JAMES :

Don't stop me. Don't stop me.

He smashes through road block. The windscreen is blown out with gunfire showering James with glass.

He glances in the mirror as wind whips around the truck:

Up ahead another police car sits in the middle of the road. A policeman steps out from the car firing his pistol at the pickup truck.

James makes a hard right down a dirt road.

14 INT/EXT. PICKUP TRUCK. GRAVEL PITTS, DAY 14

James's front tires are blown out. James struggles to control the skidding vehicle.

JAMES :

C'mon. C'mon.

15 EXT. GRAVEL PITTS, DAY 15

The pickup truck rolls to a stop. Five various police cars from different jurisdictions enter the Pitts from five different entrances and take up positions blocking exit routes.

16 INT. PICKUP TRUCK. DAY. 16

James sits staring straight ahead. Breathing hard. A loudhailer off screen: "EXIT THE VEHICLE WITH YOUR HANDS ABOVE

YOUR HEAD." James opens the door scattering glass onto the ground.

Around the perimeter armed police tense. Safety's off.

Keeping James in their sights. A young officer sweats nervously.

9

James stands next to the bullet riddled wreckage of his pickup, hands above his head. He leans back and sings to the sky.

JAMES:

"I Don't Feel Noways Tired".

17 EXT. AUGUSTA COUNTRY CLUB. NIGHT. 1942 JAMES 9 YRS 17

A wide, opulent looking club has taken residence in a huge antebellum home with wrap around porches.

A crowd of Deep Southern white folk, in cocktail attire, fill both levels of the porches and spill out onto the lawns surrounding a BOXING RING.

A GROUP OF SIX BLACK MUSICIANS FORM A DIXIELAND BAND. Without inspiration they play methodically to the all white crowd.

A FAT, SWEATING ANNOUNCER, walks into the ring, grasps a dangling mic.

ANNOUNCER:

Aaand now folks, before the main event, the Augusta Country club is proud to present to y'all it's Annual Charity extravaganza..!

(Drum-roll)

Ladies and gentlemen..The Battle...

Royale!

Music. HALF A DOZEN BLACK BOYS enter the ring. Hyped. A glove is pulled onto one hand. The other tied behind their backs.

They are blind-folded.

A WHITE MAN with a BUCKET OF WHITE PAINT daubs a number onto each boy's chest.

DING! DING! The boys stagger out, blindly swinging. The crowd roars, bangs the tables as they stumble, lurch, in the baying din.

The smallest of the boys stands stiff. He struggles to throw much less land a punch. The number "One" is painted on his chest.

A much bigger boy, "Number Six" punches "One" in the gut.

"One" goes down but then slowly rises.

10

The dixieland band watches the exploitation with both horror and intrigue as they can't help but wonder who will be left standing.

The band's sound begins to change. It becomes as energized as the match before them. They sink into the rhythm, and the effect is one of heightened energy.

The drummer begins to pull the beat and the bass player instantly follows suit finding the new pocket. The drummer and bass player share a glance. This inspired pocket soars across the lawn and into the ears of boy "Number One".

We are now transported into the mind of "Number One".

Complete silence except for the sound of the band. Then one by one all other instruments fade away leaving only the drum and bass.

James turns to the band and lowers his blindfold from over one eye. He catches eyes with the drummer and bass player.

The drummer nods at James and smiles.

James nods back and closes his eye. The sound morphs again as "Number One" begins to arrange the music in his head to his own liking.

James opens his one eye and sees only the drummer and bass player on the

stage. They are now playing what we and James are hearing in his head. James covers his eye again with the blindfold and forms a slight smile. His stance becomes more relaxed. His body begins to swing and morph like rubber. He throws a punch. IT LANDS.

ALL AT ONCE "Number One" dances forward, dips, swings and sweetly CONNECTS to "Number Four". As the vanquished head hits the canvas, the victor, "Number One", bloodied, panting in the waves of laughter and summer heat, stands alone.

As the boys hit the deck and are deemed "out" they are pulled off the mat and carried to the bed of a parked truck.

"Three" goes down. Then "Two" and "Five". A ringside punter THUMPS the canvas with a fistful of dollars, berating him.

People screaming with laughter. Only "One" and "Six" remain.

Panicky, jerky, they stalk one another. Listening.

"Number One" connects with lightning speed. "Six" removes his blindfold, jumps off the ring and runs across the lawn disappearing into the nearby woods.

11

"Number One" stands victorious. The crowd goes wild. "Number One" absorbs the admiration as he slowly pushes up the blindfold and looks toward the bandstand.

All the band members have returned to the stand as in reality they always were. They clap wildly as the beat and rhythm of this budding continues in his head.

THE EIGHT YEAR OLD JAMES BROWN LOOKS RIGHT AT US. A level gaze. That million dollar smile, teeth coated with blood.

THE BEAT CONTINUES OVER...

18 CLOSE UP ON:

The June 1968 cover of Look Magazine: A silhouette portrait of James: "IS THIS THE MOST IMPORTANT BLACK MAN IN AMERICA?"

19 EXT. PLANE. VIETNAM. DUSK. 1968 JAMES 35 YRS 19

A rickety old twin prop army plane flies low over the jungle.

SUDDENLY below, tracer fire BURSTS out of the canopy.

20 INT. PLANE. VIETNAM. IN THE BELLY 20

Marva Whitney, Clyde Stubblefield, Jimmy Nolen, MACEO PARKER, Waymond Reed and BOBBY BYRD sit in a line opposite a line of soldiers. The soldiers hold rifles. The band hold instruments.

PING! PING! PING!

BOBBY:

What was that?

They glance at each other nervously. PING! PING! PING!

OUTSIDE -A rocket propelled grenade streaks up out of the canopy and explodes near the plane, rocking it violently.

BELOW -The world explodes, as Napalm sears across a football pitch size of jungle, a hundred feet below.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

They're shooting at us.

MACEO :

Please, Lord! Please!

They look at the soldiers, who are also nervous. Marva looks out the window. Nothing but fire below.

MACEO (CONT'D)

(Shaking)

Oh. My. God.

Drummond taps the soldier opposite. Points out the window. A soldier looks out, turns white.

SOLDIER :

Holy shit.

IN THE COCKPIT -The pilots wrestle to keep the craft upright. Between them, a completely unruffled James Brown is holding court.

JAMES :

See Captain Jenkins, the James Orchestra is a 22 piece, but the Gov'ment or the Army, powers't besay I can only bring six fellas.

Right now I got 16 pieces sittin' in a Bangkok hotel. If I'm paying my own money to be here, and I am,

I oughtta bring as many cats as I want. Breaks my heart, son. 'cause I know they all wish they was hereright now.

PILOT :

Mr. Brown, it's probably best if you go back now.

JAMES :

We gone be fine, Captain.

PILOT :

We're under attack Mr. Brown.

JAMES:

Settle down, Captain. James Brown was born dead but then I breathed. God didn't want me then and he sure ain't gonna call me back now.

The soldier from the back rushes in.

SOLDIER :

The port engine's on fire.
The PILOT looks back.

PILOT :

How far to Tan Son?
13

IN THE BELLY -Everyone is frozen. Saying prayers. Moaning.
James appears.

JAMES :

Marva, fellas, Listen up. We underattack.

MACEO :

No shit, Mr. Brown.
James flashes five fingers at Maceo four times.

JAMES :

Watch that mouth, Maceo. That's
twenty dollars right there.
The plane suddenly lurches forty five degree and lets out anawful groan.
Everyone screams. Except James who is stillstanding like rubber even though
he wasn't holding ontoanything. Bobby sees this.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Mr. Byrd, I've decided to opentnight's show with "I Got TheFeeling".
James demeanor somehow gives comfort to Bobby. James nods atBobby and
smiles.

JAMES (CONT'D)

How's that sound?

BOBBY :

Sounds good, Mr. Brown.
Bobby smiles at James. The plane lurches again, Bobby
screams.

21 INT. HANGER - SAME TIME 21

A very white female news journalist talks into a camera, asscores of rowdy
troops rush toward a make shift stage. Nextto her, a group of BLACK
SOLDIERS wait to be interviewed.

NEWS JOURNALIST

Soul Brother Number One James

Brown, the Hardest Working Man inShow business is embarking on atour with a
difference.

(MORE)

14

NEWS JOURNALIST (CONT'D)

In association with the USO, Mr.

Brown is playing a series of shows for battle fatigued US troops across Vietnam-

A BLACK INFANTRYMAN grabs the mic and looks into the camera.

BLACK INFANTRYMAN 1

80 percent of 9th Division is brothers. We been here 2 years.

What do we get as thanks?

Another Infantryman leans in.

BLACK INFANTRYMAN 2

Country music.

BLACK INFANTRYMAN 1

Country and fuckin' Western. But

James is ours, man. He's comin'.

Bringin' some fuckin' soul,

brother.

The other Infantryman grabs the mic.

BLACK INFANTRYMAN 2

Welcome to the shit, nigger!

The Infantrymen laugh and slap hands. As they walk toward stage...

NEWS JOURNALIST

(To Cameraman)

We can't use that.

22

INT. PLANE. IN THE COCKPIT. 22

PILOT :

SOLDIER:

I'm losing her. We're going Oh mother of Christ!

down.

The wounded beast judders in low over the canopy and starts sinking into it when the jungle suddenly clears.

23

EXT. TAN SON NHUT AIRFIELD 9TH DIV INFANTRY CAMP OUTSIDE 23

NOM PEI. JUNE 1968. SAME TIME

The damaged plane breaks out over the field with both engines smoking.

Barely regaining control, the pilots make a very hard landing.

MUSIC:

Army personnel race toward the plane. Next to the runway an old hanger is

teeming with soldiers.

24 EXT. AIRFIELD. MOMENTS LATER 24

Biblically pissed, James and Bobby walk from the flamingplane alongside CORPORAL DOOLEY.

Behind them, in deep shock, Maceo and the rest of the band, clutching instruments.

CORPORAL DOOLEY:

Welcome to Bear Cat, Mr. Brown.
Corporal Dooley. USO Liaison
officer. Can I first say I'm a big,
big fan of your mus-

JAMES:

You in charge when Bob Hope was
over Corporal?

CORPORAL DOOLEY

(proudly)

I was.

JAMES :

(to Bobby)

Mr. Byrd, You think Bob Hope'splane got shot down?

BOBBY :

No sir, Mr. Brown.

As they approach the hanger filled with troops, a chantbegins inside.

TROOPS:

James Brown! James Brown! James
Brown!

CORPORAL DOOLEY

(Tightly)

Sorry about the plane trouble-

JAMES:

Plane trouble? They tried to kill
James Brown today. You wanna go
down in history as the man who
killed the funk?

16

James and crew near the rear stage entrance of the hanger.

CORPORAL DOOLEY.

About the show, if you could just

keep it to 25, 30 min-

JAMES.

(Interrupting)

Whoa, whoa, whoa.

BOBBY :

(under his breath)

Oh no.

JAMES:

Corporal, let me tell you the first thing about James Brown. The first thing is James Brown don't tell no man his business. He won't tell you how to take Pnom Ridge or how you screwed up the Tet offensive. I don't tell you how to fight your war Corporal. So don't tell me when, where or for how long I can be funky.

25 INT. HANGAR. CONTINUOUS. 25

HUNDREDS OF HOT, STEAMING TROOPS ROAR, like a thousand space rockets taking off at once. It's awesome, shaking the stage.

TROOPS:

James Brown! James Brown! James Brown!

James and Bobby enter the hanger. We walk with them and strut up six steps and onto the stage.

Bobby stands back and watches as James grabs the mic and looks out over the sea of faces.

JAMES:

Sorry we're late. Are you cats ready?

The troops roar even louder.

James turns straight to camera, flashes his smile and talks directly to us.
17

JAMES (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Are you cats ready?

26 EXT. A PINE WOOD. 1941. DAY. JAMES 8 YRS 26

A cold fog hangs in the fading sunlit trees.

Eight year old James stands alone in a forest clearing. He looks all around

him.

JAMES:

Momma?

He scans the trees. He's alone.

SUDDENLY in the trees he glimpses someone. A woman. 30. Red dress. She giggles as she scampers from behind one tree to another. She peeps round. He beams.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Momma!

He chases her. She's laughing.

SUSIE:

You can't catch me!

Each time he loses her she peers from behind a tree hesqueals in delight but she disappears. He is suddenly alone.

JAMES :

(Scared)

Momma?

She jumps out from behind a tree and scoops him up.

SUSIE :

I gotcha!

He squeals and laughs in her arms.

27 EXT. WOODED PATH. DAY. 1941 27

Susie and James walk hand in hand.

JAMES :

Momma, I'm hungry.

SUSIE :

You ain't hungry baby. That feelin' in yo tummy?

(MORE)

SUSIE (CONT'D)

That feelin' is the spirit inside

you. He's in there tickling your

belly right now cause he knows you

such a good boy. You ain't hungry.

He's just trying to make you laugh.

Susie begins tickling James. James starts to laugh.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

Are you a good boy?

He tries to speak but can't from laughing.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

I can't hear you.

Susie continues to tickle James.

JAMES :

(through laughter)

I'm a good boy!

28 EXT. SHACK. BROWN FAMILY HOME. DEEP WOODS. SOUTH CAROLINA.28

Cold. James sits on the porch with a stick. He continually beats the stick on the porch post forming a beat.

He suddenly stops as a man in a thick worn work coat and heavy boots, is approaching singing the blues to himself.

The man puts his pack down, ruffles the kid's hair, says nothing and walks inside.

SUSIE:

Where you been? I been sittin' here for nine days with your child. You nine days late Joe. Where you been?

JOE:

Working turpentine, baby. Chippin' trees.

James peers around the opened door and watches.

SUSIE:

Where you been? Gamblin? You spent the money again?

JOE :

No.

19

SUSIE:

DON'T LIE TO ME JOE! Give me some money.

JOE BROWN :

I ain't lyin'!

SUSIE :

Give me some money!

Susie tries to put her hands in Joe's pocket. He shoves her hand to his side.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

I'm here all alone here for four weeks. And we got nothing. Nothing!

JOE:

Susie. Shut your sweet mouth get those panties off baby.

Joe grabs Susie and carries her into the cabin.

28A INT. CABIN. CONTINUOUS. 28A

Joe and Susie kiss and begin tearing at each others clothes.

Joe's been gone A LONG TIME.

As they lower to the bed, we see James watching through the opened door.

James soon turns his head and walks off into the woods.

28A EXT. FOREST. BARNWELL. DAY. LATER THAT DAY 28A

James walks down a worn path deep in the woods singing a song to himself. He suddenly stops.

There, about ten feet up in the air, hanging in a tree is a black man. Aged about eighteen.

The child stares up at the lynched man who is dressed in nice clothes. Then to his feet within beautiful leather shoes.

Silence. He looks at him carefully.

James reaches his small hand up to touch the suspended foot of the man.

Pulls on his laces. His shoe comes off.

20

James drops the shoe and removes the other.

CUT TO:

29 OMITTED 29

30 INT. DARK CORRIDOR. DAY. TAMI SHOW 1964 30

BEN BART, 50's, running along the corridor backstage. Here reaches the door with JAMES BROWN written on it. Outside sits an enormous, middle aged black woman, knitting.

BEN BART :

I need to speak to James.

GERTRUDE :

He resting, Pop.

BEN BART:

Gertrude, it's important.

GERTRUDE :

He resting. Nobody allowed in.

Ben offers Gertrude some money. It's a twenty. She takes it.
Gertrude kisses Bart on the cheek. She opens the door.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

Mr. Brown will see you now, Mr.
Bart.

We go inside with Ben. Sitting slumped, back to us, on a
burnished throne in front of a lit mirror, James Brown.

HENRY STALLINGS attends to the towering bouffant on James' head. Bobby Byrd
sits in a chair next to James going over a play list.

James stares at Ben in the mirror.

JAMES :

Gertrude!

Gertrude walks in.

GERTRUDE :

Yes, Mr. Brown.

JAMES :

I said I didn't want to be
disturbed.

(holds out his hand)

That'll be twenty dollars.

Gertrude walks over and hands James the same twenty spot Ben gave her. Ben
winks at Gertrude as she exits.

BEN BART:

James, I just spoke to the producers. They've requested the Rolling Stones
close the show.

James looks confused.

JAMES :

Huh?

BEN BART:

Rolling Stones, James. You'll go on right before them. It'll be you,
then the Rolling Stones top of the bill.

JAMES :

The Rolling Stones, huh?

James to Bobby.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Then why we here, Bobby?

BOBBY :

We here to play, James.

BEN BART :

You're here because they want you here, James. You're James Brown! I want you here. Because this isn't the chitlin' circuit man. We're done with that shit. This is an audience full of white faces and you're gonna make them love you. You're just not closing the show. His eyes focus.

BEN BART (CONT'D)

James. Now don't start. Let it go.

BOBBY :

This don't matter, James.

22

THE DOOR FLIES OPEN. JAMES BROWN STRUTS DOWN THE CORRIDOR AS BEN BART FOLLOWS.

JAMES :

The Rolling Stones ain't even had a hit record here. They pass several dressing rooms along the way.

JAMES (CONT'D)

They ain't even ever played in America. Have they?

James passes a dressing room where a group is rehearsing.

BEN BART :

They're just kids. In a year from now we won't even know who they are. It's business, James.

JAMES :

And it's my business to hear what they got to say about this.

He passes another dressing room with a group of guys harmonizing.

James stops, glances at the VERY WHITE CALIFORNIA GROUP and then to Ben.

BEN BART :

James, don't...

James is off again. He rounds the corner walks straight up to the Stones dressing room. On the door it says THE ROLLING STONES.

A guy on the door stands but knows he can't stop James Brown who walks straight in. Ben stops at the door and watches.

JAMES BROWN :

Fellas, how ya doin'. Mr. Jagger.

Mr. Richard. Hear you boys are closing the show. Did you know that?

MICK JAGGER :

Uh..That's what they're saying.

Yeah. They just told us.

Mick looks over to Keith and the rest of the Rolling Stones.

23

JAMES BROWN :

Uh-hmm. Well, I was told I'm closing the show. That's why I flew out here.

Mick leads James to a couch. They sit.

MICK JAGGER :

Listen man. We're filming a movie here today. This isn't live.

JAMES :

I know that.

MICK JAGGER :

What I mean is, the order in which

we play makes no difference.

They're going to edit and arrange the show any way they want later.

James raises and shakes Mick's hands. James shakes a couple of the other guys hands.

JAMES BROWN :

Y'all have a great show, fellas.

We march out with James. He turns to Ben.

JAMES :

I'll be on stage in five. They better be ready. And the white people.

BEN BART:

Yes Sir, Mr. Brown.

JAMES struts to the side of the stage. On a television backstage we see a live feed of:

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: THE SUPREMES FINISHING THEIR PERFORMANCE.

James waits in the wings. On the other side of the stage, the Rolling Stones watch. James flashes his trademark smile. They all wave back.

Archival Footage:

JAN AND DEAN approach the microphone and introduce the flames.

ZAP -a white follow spot burns into James as he stands headbowed. Check jacket, waistcoat, black pipes and mirror boots.

24

He throws his head back, steps forward and the groove starts.

The screams rise to a deafening pitch

He's already on the move, in a snake hipped side slide, mashpotatoes, up on one leg, level with the mike, spin and BAM!

JAMES:

You got your high-heel sneakers on-

The teens in the audience lose it. Bobby Byrd and the Flames in immaculate tuxedos snap and step in time.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You know you out of sight-

IN THE WINGS -The Stones and Ben Bart watch a television being fed the show in real time.

A big smile crosses Ben's face.

CLOSE ON TELEVISION/INSERT ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

INTERCUT FILMED STAGE AND ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE OF JAMES AND THE FLAMES ON TELEVISION.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Say I...I...I...I love you so!

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: Teenagers shake their heads completely in the thrall of the minutely controlled and manipulated frustration and reward.

BACK STAGE -James stalks off past the Stones and Ben.

Keith Richards is slack jawed. Ben swallows a laugh. James continues on. We go with him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Welcome to America.

James looks right at us. Sweating. Focused. Wide awake.

CLOSE ON TELEVISION/INSERT ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

The Rolling Stones begin their first song. TIME IS ON MY SIDE

The crowd goes wild. A sea of white faces screaming for Mick.

James is watching the monitor. His face registers a realization. James stays on the Stone's as he talks to us.

25

CLOSE ON JAMES MOUTH IN PROFILE SURROUNDED BY BLACK AND WHITE

SCREEN:

JAMES (CONT'D)

The British Invasion make a man

strong. Make him stand up. You ain't never been down how ya gonna get on up?

James turns to us with an even deeper intensity.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I can't never quit cause it gethard. You quit, you goingbackwards. You going backwards,
you dead. So, I take it. But I takeit and flip it. I go forward. And I live.
31 INT. SHACK. WOODS. DAY. 1941. JAMES 8 YRS 31
Fall day. Under the eves, James climbs round the side of thehouse. He reaches the corner to see HIS MOTHER STANDING ON THE PORCH of the cabin, a suitcase packed. Her eye isswollen.

JOE BROWN:

You leavin' you take your child,
girl. You his momma. I don't need
no hungry child.
Confused, James approaches. Looks up at his mother.

SUSIE:

You keep him. You can feed him. I
can't.
(She holds him, kisses him)
Bye, baby. You be good.
She leaves. Joe calls after her.

JOE BROWN:

That's right. Why don't you go try
to sell your ass on Twigg Street.
That's right. Buy yourself a dress.
Maybe I pay you a visit.
Alone with his son, Joe stares at him. The boy stares back.

CUT TO:

26
32 INT/EXT. SHACK. DAY. 1941 32
A MORNING IN THE CABIN. James watches his father silentlypack a few meager belongings into a sack.

JOE:

Be back in a week or so. Mind you
don't makes no mess.
James runs over to the glassless window to watch his fatherlead a mule,
barrels on its back, away into the woods.

CUT TO:

33 INT. SHACK. NIGHT. 1941 33
Wind howls and blows the door open. Shivering, Young Jamespulls a chair
across the door of the shack and makes a nestof blankets under the bed. He

crawls in.

34 TIME LAPSE PHOTOGRAPHY OF NIGHT 34

CUT TO:

35 EXT. SHACK. DAY. 1941 35

Morning. James tries to fetch water from a stream. He pulls a bucket via a rope. The bucket tips over and spills the water.

CUT TO:

36 EXT. PRODUCE STAND. 1941 36

James approaches a woman who's selling produce. Annoyed, she picks up a over-ripened tomato and throws it to James' feet.

James picks up the tomato and walks away.

CUT TO:

37 EXT. WOODS. DILAPIDATED CABIN. MOMENTS LATER 37

James approaches a dilapidated cabin that has been flattened by a fallen tree. He raises his stick and begins tapping it on the cabin's rusted tin roof.

27

Slowly he begins to work out a simple, familiar tune. He begins to stomp his feet, move his hips.

CUT TO:

38 TIME LAPSE PHOTOGRAPHY HERE - LEAVES BEGIN TO CHANGE 38

39 INT. SHACK. DAY - 10 WEEKS LATER. 1941 39

Joe's back. Fully bearded. He unpacks his sack onto the bed.

In the doorway appears the boy. Half naked. Covered in mud.

It's clearly been weeks rather than days he's been alone.

JOE:

(Chuckling)

Look at you boy. You go clean yourself up 'fore you come in here.

CUT TO:

Int. SHACK. KITCHEN TABLE. DAY.

1941

James sits opposite his father at the table. Joe eats and hums and sings a blues tune, No More My Lord.

James beats his stick on the leg of the table perhaps to join in and impress his dad.

Joe acknowledges the beat that James is creating. For a brief moment, father and son are making music together.

Joe quits singing but James continues beating the stick on the table.

JOE BROWN :

Quit that. Driving me crazy.

LITTLE JAMES :

Keep singin'.

(James taps the stick quieter.

(Staring at his father.)

"No more my Lord"

JOE BROWN:

I said stop!

Joe gets up. Takes the stick and snaps it in two. James stares hard at his father's face.

JOE BROWN (CONT'D)

You gawkin' at me?

28

James stays on Joe. Joe quickly rises and yanks James out of his chair.

CUT TO:

41 INT./EXT. SHACK. DAY. 1941 41

From outside the shack, we hear the sounds of abuse.

JOE BROWN (O.C.)

Stop crying. I said stop crying.

Suddenly the shack door opens, and James runs out.

He sprints full pelt through the woods. He comes to a clearing. He slows, approaches us and suddenly stops, breathing heavily, he stops and looks straight at us.

Levelly.

BLACKOUT. A THUMPING RHYTHM BEGINS.

Beneath his tears a smile emerges...

CUT TO:

42 INT. HOLLYWOOD SOUND STAGE - DAY - 1964 JAMES 31YRS 42

CLOSE ON:

GOOD) ramps up.

We widen to see James Brown singing.

JAMES:

I feel good! And I knew that I would now...

Even wider to reveal BOBBY BYRD and the rest of the flames dancing in sound stage dressed to resemble a Ski Lodge.

FRANKIE AVALON and THIRTY VERY WHITE EXTRAS dance around James and the flames. Everyone is in argyle and bright colors. To the side, FILM CREW MEMBERS AND A DIRECTOR do their best to keep up with the rhythm. James is killing it. His legendary moves in full force.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I feel nice. Like sugar and spice.

SLOW MOTION PHOTOGRAPHY

29

Music stops. (Tom Newman theme here) James watches the cast, crew and Flames doing their thing for camera.

James turns to us and speaks.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Take it and flip it.

END SLOW MOTION. END TOM NEWMAN THEME.

James removes his sweater and begins dancing and singing again but now to a faster version of "I GOT YOU". He smiles at us, looks into our eyes. We push in tight.

We pull back to reveal James now singing this song in the future at The Olympia show. He's sporting a "natural".

Beautiful girls dancing behind him.

Flash- We are back to "Ski Party". Now the boring extras are up on their feet. They dance with precision the way Mr. Brown would prefer. Just for us, James has transformed the "Ski Party" into something way cooler.

James' feet slide and move him back toward the door of the ski lodge set.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I feel good and I knew that I would now. So good. So good. Cause I got you.

James moves outside the door and does a split in the pile of fake snow. We are now back to reality. James is again wearing the sweater. The extras are now seated and clapping in a corny fashion. The stage bell rings. Over a loudspeaker-

VOICE :

That was great James.

Frankie Avalon runs up to James. James remains in his split.

FRANKIE :

Wow, James. You've got some groovy moves my friend.

JAMES :

Thank you, Mr. Avalon. And please call me, Mr. Brown

30

As Frankie nods and walks away, James catches eyes with BOBBY BYRD, 30. Bobby stares quizzically at James as he remains on the floor in his split.

BOBBY :

Get up, James.

JAMES :

How many times have I done this split Bobby?

BOBBY :

A thousand, maybe five thousand.

JAMES :

Exactly, and now the first and only time I rip my pants has to be in front of all those white people.

Bobby cracks up.

BOBBY :

In white boy sweater.

JAMES :

My trumpet, bass, and drums are spread out all over this cold floor.

James begins to laugh.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Go get my towel!

BOBBY :

You got it boss.

43 OMITTED 43

44 INT. CAR. 1949 DAY. JAMES 16 YRS 44

A man's three piece suit hangs in the rear of a sedan.

SMASH. An elbow shatters the back door glass. A hand comes inside and pulls the suit out of the car.

44AA EXT. RURAL ROAD. MOMENTS LATER. 44AA

A picturesque country road flanked by high, earthen embankments lined with trees.

31

James sudden bolts out of the trees with the stolen suit and runs down the embankment.

Just then a police car speeds down the road towards him.

James drops the suit and runs to the opposite embankment.

As James tries to climb the embankment, the police car stops, two officers get out.

James can't get a footing on the steep embankment. We now see that James is wearing the lynched man's shoes.

CLOSE ON SHOES:

Digging deeper and deeper in the soil embankment. BLAM! A gun fires.

James stops climbing and turns to see two guns pointed at him. He slides back down the embankment and raises his hands.

CUT TO:

FLASH! James gets his mug shot. Front and side.

JAMES (O.S.)

I'm seventeen...

45 EXT. RICHMOND COUNTY JAIL - THAT NIGHT 45

CLOSE ON:

JAMES:

Know what that means, Big Junior?
Means they can try me in Superior Court. Means they can send my juvenile ass down for a man's term. 3 maybe 4 years.

Reveal a young man, BIG JUNIOR, 25, standing on the lawn by the jail house holding a lantern. He looking up to James on the second floor speaking out of the window.

BIG :

For robbing a suit?

JAMES :

You reach my daddy?

BIG :

He's in the Army, James.

32

JAMES :

I know he's in the Army. So you gotta go find him. Big Junior looks to the ground and nods.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What'd Aunt Honey say?

BIG :

Aunt Honey say she can't help youright now. Not this week.

JAMES :

Go find my daddy, Big. Please!

Okay?

Big Junior sighs, really uncomfortable.

BIG :

Aunt Honey already talked to him,
James. Your daddy say it's a badtime too.
James fills with panic.

JAMES :

So, he knows I'm here?

Big looks all around, everywhere except at James.

BIG :

He say ain't nothing he can do. Gotmoney problems. Sorry.
He shrugs and walks away.

46 INT. CELL. NIGHT - CONTINUOUS 46

James turns from the window. He goes to the sink of his tinycell, heaving
for breath. He looks at himself in the tinycracked mirror.

JAMES :

Don't cry Junior. Don't cry now.

James begins expertly tapping his sliding his feet on thefloor. A more
developed version of the tune he arranged inhis head during the boxing
match is heard. James stares at usin the mirror. He smiles.

33

WARDEN (O.S.)

And you were thinking of this as aprofession...

47 INT. PAROLE REVIEW BOARD, ALTO REFORM SCHOOL. 1952. DAY 47

James, 19 years old, sits on a bare wooden chair. James'
aunt, HONEY, 40, is in attendance. Next to her sit two youngblack women
dressed very sexy.

WARDEN :

So you want to be a singer?

JAMES :

Oh no Sir. Truth is I ain't reallyinto all that so much. Not no more.

Five white adults sit behind a long table, studying him.

WARDEN :

But the other boys, they call you Music-box.

JAMES :

It's just a old nickname is all.
I'm looking for something stable.
Steady. I want to be a Mechanic.

WARDEN :

So first a singer and now a Mechanic?

JAMES :

Yes Sir. There's a fella I know
back in Augusta, he owns a garage,
he said he could find me a job if-

WARDEN :

You can't go back to Augusta.

In the event of parole, the Court in Augusta ruled you not be allowed to set foot in Richmond County til the full term of your sentence.

James is silent. Aunt Honey locks eyes with the Warden and smiles.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

Do you know anyone outside Augusta who could act as your parole sponsor? Any family? Associates? Is there anywhere else you could go?

34

Aunt Honey and the girls raise their skirts up there legsever so slightly with subtle sexual gestures.

The Warden gives Aunt Honey and the girls a disapproving stare.

STAMP! A red stamp hammers down - REFUSED.

48 INT. HALL. ALTO. DAY. JAMES 19 YRS 48

A BAND, The Starlighters "entertains" the inmates. A tall black kid in a white tux, flanked by four other boys.

BOBBY BYRD:

We the Gospel Starlighters, from
right here in Toccoa. Three Four..

The vocal group rip into a juiced up "Mary Don't You Weep".

And its good. James watches intently. The music plays over...

James begins to sing along and dance. Two rows back, a huge, badass looking kid is staring. James turns and stares straight back.

The big kid walks up to James.

BIG KID :

You eyeballin' me, Music-Box?

The big kid punches James in the gut. James struggles to his feet and punches the BIG KID and fights back fearlessly.

All hell breaks loose. Two rough factions break out and the melee spreads. James picks up a chair and throws it at the big kid. He ducks.

CUT TO:

49 INT. INFIRMARY, ALTO. LATER THAT DAY 49

Bobby sits in a chair outside the infirmary. He holds a cold press to his nose.

James, bruised and torn but apparently victorious is led by a warden into the infirmary to cheers from his friends. He's seated next to Bobby and cuffed to the chair.

JAMES :

What happened to you?

BOBBY:

Someone threw something.

JAMES :

Gee, that's too bad.

They sit there. James shrugs.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Walk in the jungle sometimes you get bit by a snake.

BOBBY :

(Deadpan)

I'll try an' remember that.

They sit there.

JAMES :

Say. What's that song you done?

BOBBY :

We only done half of it. "Mary Don't You Weep" is an old gospel, man. You ain't heard that before?

Everybody be doin' it.

JAMES BROWN :

I ain't heard nothing since my radio got busted. That's a cool song bro'. You sung it great. That sounded real sweet.

BOBBY BYRD :

Crowd sure went crazy.

(James smiles. Then:)

You like music?

JAMES :

Only thing keeps me sane in here.

BOBBY :

How long you in for?

JAMES :

Five to thirteen years.

Bobby moves his chair an inch or two away.

BOBBY:

What did you do?

JAMES :

Robbed a suit.

A nurse leads Bobby inside the exam room.

BOBBY :

They give you five to thirteenfor...

(Shakes his head)

That's time man.

James turns to the doorway and continues talking to Bobby as the nurse tends to his nose.

JAMES :

Tell me about it.

BOBBY :

You get parole?

JAMES :

Board say I need a permanent familyaddress and a job. But see I don'tknow no folks here.

BOBBY :

Where yo' folks at?

JAMES :

My Daddy's in the army. And mymomma... well, she left.

BOBBY :

Sorry to hear that.

They sit there.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Seriously. You think I sung it good?

James looks at Bobby. He moves his seat a bit closer to the door.

JAMES :

You got that swing feel. Hittin' it late. Buh, dum, Bop. That's what a song need.

James rises up, pulling the chair with him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

See without that feel, song just sit there. Don't move. You gotta fill it with something. You know what I'm sayin'?

37

Suddenly James breathes in deep, and sings "Mary Don't You Weep". It's sweet, hard, deep, raw all at the same time.

James holds the chair and begins to dance.

The nurse shuts the door. Bobby and James stay on each other through glass.

James' talent hits Bobby like a ten pound hammer between the eyes. A warden forces James to his chair. We hear one unforgettable line of the song before we...

50 ESTABLISHING. TOCCOA STREET. THE BYRD HOUSE. 1952. DAY. 50

BOBBY (O.S.)

He can do Roy Brown and The Dominoes and Louis Jordan and and...

51 INT. BYRD HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY 51

Bobby, panting, petitions his impassively busy mother.

BOBBY:

-you should hear'm holler momma!

You ain't heard nothing LIKE IT. He

sings every day in chapel. He's a

very, very religious boy Momma.

He could sing in St. Stephens!

MRS. BYRD

Bobby. We got us enough mouths to

feed an' enough butts to clothe.

(Yelling out the door)

Daryl! Sarah! Get down here!

BOBBY:

He sings every day in chapel. He's

a very, very religious boy Momma.
He could sing in St. Stephens!
Since Old Henry passed you been shy
a baritone...he a showstopper.
Momma? This is it. It's like a
miracle. This is what Jesus wants!
He knows he's over-done it.

MRS. BYRD

Jesus speak to Bobby Byrd now. He
tell you that himself?

38

BOBBY :

Momma, he could be in there another ten year just 'cause he got nofolks. He
got no-one.

MRS. BYRD

Bobby. The answer is NO. Now, go on outta here and get cleaned up.
Crestfallen, he plays his final card.

BOBBY :

What's that thing you always told me, since I was real small. About Mercy.

What's that saying momma?

That thing you always say?

She glares at her son.

52 INT. BYRD HOUSE. DAY JAMES 19 YRS 52

Dinner at the Byrds. Mom, Pop, and Grandpa, sister SARAH, ten year old
brother DARYL, BOBBY.... and James. He's clearly uncomfortable.

James' eyes dart around the well-appointed dining room with its beautiful
wallpaper and curtains hanging from a window.

James traces the lines of the curtain noticing its lace and perfect pleats.

MRS. BYRD

Like I always say.

(Sighs)

"It's a sin to stand in Mercy's way".

JAMES :

Thank you, Mrs Byrd.

Grandpa stares hard at James for a moment. Then...

GRANDPA BYRD :

So what you in the pokey for?

BOBBY :

Grandpa-

GRANDPA:

(to Bobby)

You know how would have felt you bringing this boy over here?

BOBBY:

Big momma married you and you were in the pokey before.

Bobby gets a look from his mom.

MRS. BYRD

Bobby Byrd!

GRANDPA BYRD:

(to Bobby)

If I'm going to be forced to have a jailbird in my house I at least like to know what I'm dealing with.

BOBBY :

Grandpa-

James looks to Bobby.

JAMES:

No. He got a right to ask. I am a jailbird. I've done wrong and I gotta own up to that.

James turns to Bobby's grandfather.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I stole a man's three piece suit.

You want to know me? I tell ya.

My daddy is in the army. My momma

left when I was five. I'm skinny

but I'm strong. I can read a little

bit and I like to sing. That's

who's sittin' here.

James becomes emotional and sincere.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And I think God knew that when I

took that suit that I might end up

with you. I ain't never sat at a

table with such a fine group of

people in my life.

Sarah looks admiringly at James.

40

JAMES (CONT'D)

I used to wish I could put that suit back, but now I'm here with y'all. Fried chicken. Green beans.

Corn bread. Those nice curtains.

Grandpa Byrd turns to the curtains.

JAMES (CONT'D)

A house smells good. I'm happy I stole that suit. And I thank you for having me here.

GRANDPA :

Boy, pass them beans before you get your bullshit all over them.

MRS. BYRD

(Changing subject)

James is going to sing with us in church this Sunday Sarah.

SARAH BYRD :

Really. Well maybe we could work up a little harmony together.

Sarah turns to James and gives a tiny wink. James stops chewing.

52A INT. BYRD HOUSE. NEXT MORNING. 52A

Bobby Byrd sleeps in his bed. James sleeps in a cot that has been brought into Bobby's room.

Grandpa Byrd enters the room holding a suit. He approaches the sleeping James.

GRANDPA BYRD :

Jailbird!

Startled, James and Bobby rise up from their pillows.

GRANDPA BYRD (CONT'D)

(to James)

This out to fit ya.

Grandpa Byrd throws the suit on top of James and exits.

James smiles at his new suit.

53 INT. BYRD HOUSE. NEXT MORNING. 53 INT. BYRD HOUSE. NEXT MORNING. 53

Bobby comes in with NAFLOYD and BABY ROY who are all dressed for church

BOBBY:

There's coffee in the kitchen,

Nafloyd. Make yourselves at home.

(Calls)

James!

Bobby vaults upstairs.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

James. Come meet the band.

Opens a door. INSIDE James has Sarah pressed up against the wall. They are having vigorous sex. James' pants are around his ankles. Sarah's church

dress is pushed up her body.

Sarah has her hand over James' mouth trying to keep him quiet.

Bobby throws it into reverse, shutting the door. Did he just see that? A full gamut of emotions cross his face.

Mrs. Byrd starts up the stairs.

MRS. BYRD

Sarah! I ain't tellin' you again.

Get down here.

Bobby panics. He crosses and meets his mother at the top of the stairs.

BOBBY :

She's coming, Momma. She's coming.

MRS. BYRD

Sarah!

BOBBY:

Go fix Nafloyd and the boys some coffee. We got guests, Momma.

Mrs Byrd nods and heads down the stairs.

MRS. BYRD

Nafloyd?! Where you boys at?

42

54 INT. ST. STEPHENS CHURCH. DAY. 54

A congregation watches as BOBBY, NAFLOYD, BABY ROY, SARAH AND JAMES sing righteous gospel. "Steal Away To Jesus".

Above their heads a HOME-MADE SHEET-BANNER: "The Gospel Starlighters"

Bobby looks to Sarah and James with a searing gaze. Sarah innocent, James really giving it up.

James steps out front. His voice soars sweetly over the congregation.

Bobby's gaze softens.

MRS. BYRD and GRANDPA watch on. Mrs. Byrd leans forward and

catches Bobby's eye. Gives a small nod of approval. Bobby's smile is...more equivocal.

56 FLASHBACK:

James is asleep in his bed. Alone. It's been a year after his momma left.

Suddenly, Joe approaches and throws a burlap sack at James.

JOE BROWN :

Pack up. We leaving.

James wakes and sits up in bed. Joe is clean shaven and wears his nicest shirt and neck tie.

JOE BROWN (CONT'D)

Hurry up.

James waits a beat to make sure his father is gone.

James gets out of bed and crawls deep underneath. He backs out holding the dead man's pair of shoes and places them in the burlap sack.

57 EXT. AUNT HONEY'S HOUSE. LATER THAT DAY. 57

Joe and James walk down Twigg street. Joe pulls his donkey along with them.

JOE BROWN :

You miss your momma, boy?

James nods.

JOE BROWN (CONT'D)

We gone fix that.

43

James flashes a hopeful smile.

58 EXT. TWIGG STREET, THE TERRY. DAY. 1942 JAMES 9 YRS 58

Red dirt street. Shacks. Joe and James walk around to the back of "AUNT HONEY'S" house. The donkey has been tied to Aunt Honey's fence.

BACKYARD:

We find Aunt Honey sitting a chair. She holds a small dog in her arms.

SEVEN PROSTITUTES wash clothes in tubs and hang them on a line to dry.

Aunt Honey clearly runs the house. She rises from her chair.

Clearly she takes no shit.

JOE:

..S'much appreciated Honey. Sure is mighty kind..

AUNT HONEY:

What the hell am I supposed to do with that donkey, Joe?

JOE BROWN :

Thought you could sell it.

AUNT HONEY:

I don't sell donkey, Joe. And Jumpin' in the Army ain't gone make this boy go away.

Joe looks away from Honey.

JOE :

(to James)

Look after yourself Junior.

Aunt Honey and James watch Joe cross the street and disappear.

AUNT HONEY:

Everybody gotta be somewhere.
What's your name, sugar?

JAMES :

Junior.

AUNT HONEY :

Guess you Little Junior now.

44

Honey turns to a small two story building in the rear of the yard.

AUNT HONEY (CONT'D)

Big Junior!

A huge 15 year old boy comes out of the building and begins walking down the stairs. This is the younger version of Big Junior who we met outside the jail.

AUNT HONEY (TO JAMES) (CONT'D)

You show me you can bring it in you an me ain't got no problem.

(as Junior approaches)

Junior'll show y'how to do.

59 EXT. THE TERRY. STREET. DAY. 59

Big Junior leads James away from Aunt Honey's. Big Junior turns to James.

BIG JUNIOR :

I do this...

(BJ touches his hat)

You say 'Pretty girls', unnerstand?

So when they come, you be ready,

alright? I'll say-

Yessir, yessir, come on down the street-we got sweet whiskey, we got music-

(touches his hat)

JAMES :

Pretty girls.

BIG JUNIOR :

We got cards, we got dice, dancing

(touches his hat again)

JAMES :

Pretty girls.

CUT TO:

60 EXT. BUS STOP. THE TERRY. AUGUSTA. DAY. JAMES 9 YRS 60

Soldiers disembark from a troop Bus. Big Junior and James stand on the platform playing and dancing in bare feet. The soldiers ignore James.

45

We again begin to hear "James' Theme" in James' head. He dances faster, sharper. The soldiers stop and take notice of his ever sharpening skill.

61 INT. AUNT HONEY'S PARLOR. LATER THAT NIGHT. 61

The Brothel is in full swing. Girls. Soldiers. Drunks.

Hustlers. Music. Ten soldiers scramble over only five prostitutes.

James hands over money to Aunt Honey. She bundles him up and kisses him. He holds onto her tightly. She sets him down.

AUNT HONEY :

You done good Little Junior. You the sweetest little boy in the world. Hear me?

James nods as two soldiers begin fighting over one of the prostitutes. Each pulling her in a different direction.

Honey rises.

AUNT HONEY (CONT'D)

(to James)

Go on in the kitchen. Find you a scrap to eat.

Aunt Honey pulls out a knife that has been nuzzled inside her bra. James watches as she fixes the situation.

62 INT. BARBERSHOP. THE NEXT DAY. JAMES 19 YRS 1952 62

The band has just gotten their hair-cut like Louis Jordan (and James Brown). Bobby Byrd looks at his hair in the mirror.

BOBBY :

I don't know, James. This don't look too gospel.

JAMES :

What you talkin' about? Your hair is rising up to the Lord right?

Like a flame.

Nayfloyd looks deep into the mirror in front of him.

NAYFLOYD :

The flames of hell. We're the

Gospel Starlighters. We a gospel group. This is R & B hair.

JAMES :

What you think "Caldonia" is,
Nafloyd.

NAFLOYD :

(Ruffled)

We just playin' around with "Caldonia" when we practicing.
That don't make us R & B. We still
Gospel.

63 INT. BIG BILL'S RENDEZVOUS. TOCCOA, 1954. NIGHT. 63

The place is packed. On stage the 22 year old Little Richard is all over the
piano, singing the hell out of Tutti Frutti.

AT THE BACK -- Bobby and the band stand in shock and awe.

NAFLOYD :

I swear he's gonna break that
piano.

James is transfixed. Motionless. Soaking it up.

ON STAGE -- The song ends. The crowd explodes.

LITTLE RICHARD :

We'll be back in ten to flip you again! Whoooo! Yeah!

Bobby scans the crowd.

BOBBY BYRD:

(Frustrated)

Look at these people James. Man!

I'm ready. You know'm saying? When it gone be us up there?

James hasn't moved. He's still staring at the stage.

JAMES BROWN :

Now.

BOBBY BYRD :

What?

James turns to Bobby.

JAMES BROWN :

There's a piano. And a stage. And right now.

(Looks at it)

Ain't no one on it.

47

NAFLOYD :

What you talking about? We can't goup there.

JAMES BROWN :

Why not? Like you said, Nafloyd,
"We just playin' around with "Caldonia". So let's go playaround.
Bobby nods, and James strides towards the stage and gets up.
The others look at each other: HOLY SHIT! and scramble after
him. James gestures to them to pick up instruments.

JAMES BROWN (CONT'D)

Ladies 'n Gentlemen. Hope you'reenjoying the show.
Nafloyd speaks into his mic.

NAYFLOYD :

We're the Star-
James quickly interrupts.

JAMES :

We're the Famous Flames.
Nafloyd looks at Bobby.

NAFLOYDS :

Flames?

BABY ROY :

Famous?
James hollers. The Flames hit their queue, bang on, and theyTEAR INTO
Caldonia. James loosens with every bar. Unhooks themic. Throws a move. As
he hits the hook again the audience isdrawn to his energy like a magnet.
BACKSTAGE DOOR -Leaning against a wall backstage, LittleRichard looks up
from his pocket mirror. Frowns.

LITTLE RICHARD :

What is that?
IN THE WINGS -the club manager watches on unsure what to do.
ON STAGE -James and Bobby, hollering into the same mic areripping the place
up.
IN THE WINGS -Little Richard appears at his side, fuming.

48

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)

Get those bitches off my stage!
Power to the stage is cut off. The performance is over butthe crowd go
batshit. NAFLOYD, BABY ROY are shaking.

NAFLOYD :

We the Flames.

BOBBY looks at JAMES. A new, knowing look. They bow as one, turn, and walk offstage, CLEAN PAST a furious Little Richard. James returns his glare with an even straighter one.

JAMES BROWN :

(Deadpan)

Just keepin' it warm for ya.

He walks past.

LITTLE RICHARD :

Hey. What's your name?

JAMES :

The Famous Flames.

James looks back levelly.

LITTLE RICHARD :

No. What's your name?

They look at each other. Neither blinks.

64 EXT. MALT SHOP. NIGHT. 64

2AM. James sits alone at a table off to the side of the order window.

Little Richard dressed as a chef comes out of the kitchen and drops two burgers in front of them. James and Richard, cigarette in a long holder, holds forth.

LITTLE RICHARD:

I play a show in Lafayette last week twenty thirty girls pass clean out. Need oxygen. I'm killing 'em James. They should lock me away. I cut loose it's like a spaceship land. Did I say I got a record out? They drop it five times a day on WIBB. Five times a day.

(He looks at James)

And I'm flippin' burgers. You know why?

(MORE)

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)

Cause WIBB antenna reach 60 mile.

60 mile. This country is 5000 milestop to toe and 7000 coast to coast. You catch the wind, get a hit, areal hit, every inch of that is yours.

JAMES BROWN :

So how we catch the wind?

Richard smiles. Stops the waitress. All charm.

LITTLE RICHARD :

Sugar, may I borrow your pencil?

He takes a napkin. Starts writing on it. All business.

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)

You got a hundred bucks?

JAMES BROWN :

No.

LITTLE RICHARD:

Rob a liquor store. You take a hundred bucks to WIBB in Macon. Ask for Big Sauk. Say Richard sent you. You make an acetate. Ten copies. You send them to these people. He writes them down. James watches.

JAMES BROWN :

It's that easy why don' you do it?

LITTLE RICHARD:

I already did. Baby, this is the last time you're gone see my beautiful ass 'cep on TV. Six months the whole world gone know me. I gone be bigger than Cleopatra. It's written in the stars James. Yes Sir. I'm gone have the world on a string.

(Then)

And that's when the trouble start.

JAMES BROWN :

And why that.

He fixes James. The air turns cold.

50

LITTLE RICHARD:

That when the Devil come. And he

ain't gonna be red with no fiery
tail. He gone be white. In a fancy
suit. And he gone look you in the
eye and he gonna ask what you want.
And you best not shake, nor
tremble. You best not blink one
eye.

Swats a fly on the table. James doesn't blink.

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)

You gone be ready for him James?

You got it inside?

JAMES BROWN:

You tell me Richard. You tell me
what you see.

James stares at Richard, who stares the same stare back.

LITTLE RICHARD :

What happen to you?

He looks real hard.

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)

I know what happened to me. What
happen to you?

James looks away.

65 OMITTED 65

66 OMITTED 66

67 INT. UPSTAIRS AT TWIGG STREET. DAWN. 1942 JAMES 9 YRS 67

James lies awake in a bed with four or five other sleepingbodies. He looks
out of the window. Dawn is breaking througha cracked pane.

Way off in the distance he hears music and singing. He getsout of bed.

He passes a room, TWO SOLDIERS wait their turn with one of

Aunt Honey's PROSTITUTES.

James reaches the front of the house. He looks to Honey, outcold in a
chair. A needle protrudes from her harm.

51

He walks out of the house passing several people asleep inthe yard.

68 EXT. CHURCH/ DIRT ROAD. DAY 68

Early morning. James continue his walk towards the music.

69 INT. UNITED HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE. DAY 69

A evangelical congregation lit up by the spirit.

SWEET DADDY GRACE: a suavely coiffed but ferocious southernfirebrand
preacher wearing a suit made of dollar billsscreams and berates the
congregation into a frenzy.

DADDY GRACE :

Do you love him?!

People are having fits on the floor, beating themselves.

Shrieking and weeping hallelujah.

DADDY GRACE (CONT'D)

(even higher pitched)

Say you love him!

Daddy raises his voice even louder ending in a shrillingfalsetto.

DADDY GRACE (CONT'D)

Say it louder for Jesus! Say it
louder!

Daddy Grace falls to the floor and is attended by alter boyswho drape a
cape around his shoulders which he flings aside.

James looks around the room at the people. Then at thepreacher.

70 EXT. TWIGG STREET BUS STOP. NIGHT. 1942 70

James stands silhouetted against the high beams of theapproaching troop
Bus. James begins to dance to the theme inhis head. He's dancing
differently now. Mimicking the movesof Sweet Daddy Grace. James does a
spilt in the beams oflight.

52

71 OMITTED 71

71A INT. BYRD HOUSE. 71A

Mr. and Mrs. Byrd listen to Please Please Please on the
radio. They aren't pleased.

71B INT. AUNT HONEY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT 71B

Aunt Honey has just injected herself with Morphine. Sheopens a drawer and
places a needle and vial inside.

She crosses to her bed and lays down. Please Please Please
plays on a radio. Aunt Honey sings along and closes her
eyes.

71C INT. CAR - NIGHT 71C

RALPH BASS drives and hears Please Please Please. A smile
crosses his face.

71D EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT. 1954 71D

Establishing of exterior boarding house with the crappystation wagon parked
out front.

72-73 OMITTED 72-73

74 INT. BOARDING HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT. 74

All the flames asleep laying across as single bed in onemotel room.

CUT TO:

75 INT. BOARDING HOUSE. NIGHT. 75

James and Bobby sleep next to each other. James whispers toBobby:

JAMES:

Bobby. I can't make practice
Thursday. I gotta get married.

BOBBY:

(Whispers)
What are you talkin' about? Who you marryin'?

JAMES :

That chick I met after the Stone
Mountain Show. Velma.
A silence falls.

BOBBY :

What about my sister?
James flashes a devilish smile.

JAMES :

Oh, I'll still harmonize with Sarah from time to time.

BOBBY :

I ain't playin', James. How you gone do all this?

JAMES :

Do all what?

BOBBY :

Practice. The road. Makin' records.
Startin' a family.

JAMES :

I ain't startin' nothin', Bobby.
Except what we doin'.
James reaches under the bed and pulls out the acetate they just recorded.
JAMES (CONT'D)
That us. We in there Bobby.
James holds the record close and studies it with Bobby.

BOBBY :

That's all the money we got.
And some we don't.

JAMES :

But, it is beautiful. All those

little grooves. That's us. It's been written.

(MORE)

54

JAMES (CONT'D)

Now, men gone lay with women. That's nature. But a woman ain't never gone stop a real man from what he's supposed to do. That's God. Husband? Daddy? That gives a man purpose. Man gotta have purpose. But purpose don't stop me neither, Bobby. Ain't nothin' gone stop us. Nothin'. And that's God too.

CUT TO:

76 INT. KITCHENETTE. 1955. DAY. JAMES 22 YRS 76

James Brown stares back at his infant son with the same wary look.

JAMES :

You gone smile for me, Teddy Brown? He bounces him on his knee once.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Come on, boy.

Twice. The kid smiles. James suddenly becomes moved. He leans over and kisses his son.

VELMA:

We out of greens. You want me to go pick some up? Velma, a cute nineteen year old girl is fixing dinner.

JAMES :

No baby.

A car horn outside. He looks out the window.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Baby. I gotta go.

VELMA :

But I got your supper.

He hands her the baby, kisses her passionately. She melts.

VELMA (CONT'D)

Wake me up.

James pretends to look shocked, covers Teddy's ears.

55

77 EXT. JAMES AND VELMA'S KITCHENETTE 77

James bounds off the porch towards the station wagon.

Velma steps onto the porch with the baby. She suddenly looks very young.

James turns to his family and pats his hand over his heart.

JAMES:

(shouts out)

I got you right in here, Teddy

Brown.

Velma raises Teddy's hand and waves it at James.

James begins to serenade "Lost Someone" to his family...

78 EXT. CRAPPY STATION WAGON. RURAL ROAD - SUNSET. 1955 78

CLOSE ON:

James continues to sing. Only now he's humming as if working out a new way into "Lost Someone".

We widen to see The Flames, Baby Roy, Nafloyd, Bobby and James pushing an old crappy Chevy station wagon down the road. Nafloyd has the easy job of keeping the steering wheel straight.

Nafloyd is clearly annoyed by James' humming.

JAMES BROWN:

Nafloyd, you know in "Let's Make

It" when it goes (he hums). If you

go up there and hold it, like.

(hums). It's gone be sweet. Make it

like you got a harmonica stuck in

your throat.

Nafloyd looks back at Bobby Byrd.

NAFLOYD SCOTT:

You know what? Why don't you sing

it, James?

JAMES BROWN:

What? I can't sing it. It's your

song man.

NAFLOYD SCOTT:

But I ain't singing it right James.

I just ain't.

(MORE)

NAFLOYD SCOTT (CONT'D)

I ain't got a harmonica in mythroat. But you do. We all know you do.

I ain't got a harmonica in mythroat. But you do. We all know you do.

James continues with his humming. Nafloyd stops pushing andwalks alongside with a finger on the wheel.

NAFLOYD SCOTT (CONT'D)

You know how it be done. You got itall worked out. Don't you?

BOBBY BYRD :

James ain't saying that 'floyd.

He's just hearing something.

Get back to pushing the car.

NAYFLOYD:

Let's all take a break for a minute.

Everyone stops pushing. Bobby turns to Nafloyd. Fuming.

BOBBY BYRD :

What I say in Peterstown? Huh?

NAFLOYD SCOTT :

I know what you said.

BOBBY BYRD :

What I say?

NAFLOYD SCOTT :

You said 'Fill her up Floyd.

BABY ROY :

That's right. That's what he said.

NAFLOYD SCOTT :

I know you he said fill her up,

Baby Roy! Problem is we don't gotthe dough to fill it.

(to Bobby)

We don't got the dough becauseBobby here let James spend all ourmoney on some fake record which isright now sittin' in trash cansoutside King, outside RCA, outsideChess.

(to James)

You took all our money, James.

Where my money at?
They are about to throw down.
57

BABY ROY :
Cool it Floyd!

NAFLOYD SCOTT :
Where my money, James?!

JAMES :
I'm taking you to the money,
Nafloyd.
(James tap his head)
Right now.
This lands hard on Bobby's ears. He smiles

BOBBY BYRD :
So, push the Wagon, Nafloyd.
Nafloyd resumes pushing the wagon.
79 INT. PEACHES DINER. 1955. EARLY MORNING. 79
James stands in the rear of an African American diner talking on a pay
phone. He's a sweaty mess having walked through the night.
His face drops. It registers sudden concern.

JAMES :
Are you sure, Baby?
80 INT. PEACHES DINER. MOMENTS LATER 80
James joins Bobby at a booth of the diner. Bobby is also a sweaty mess.

BOBBY :
The Tuxedo Room already cancelled tonight's show. Said if we couldn't show up
last night then why we gonna show up tonight.
James shrugs.
BOBBY (CONT'D)
Now we got twenty four hours to get to Prestonville. Hundred and forty miles
West. We got no gas. No bread. No show. I miss anything?

JAMES :
Velma's pregnant again.
Bobby looks at him. Deadpan.

BOBBY :
Congratulations.

James nods.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

So now, we gotta make us a business decision.

He reaches in his pocket. Puts a few coins on the table.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Thirty cents. The question is, do I call the Two Spot, find out we got any messages. Or do I get me a coffee. Or do I skip the coffee, and get me a donut.

James considers this. Reaches in his pocket. Puts some coins on the table.

JAMES :

Knock yourself out.

A black waitress comes over. Bobby acts as if he's a highroller. Living the life. Perusing the menu.

BOBBY :

Hey honey. Can I get me a coffee...

Looks at James. Now for the ultimate luxury.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

..and...let's see...a donut?

WAITRESS :

You boys from outta town?

JAMES :

We're Musicians. We the Famous
Flames.

WAITRESS :

Flames?

(noting their disheveled look)

More like a flicker.

James reaches over and grabs the waitress' hand.

59

JAMES :

All we need is a spark, baby. So we can turn the lamp down low till this sun
rise up on us in the morning.

The waitress pulls her hand back.

WAITRESS :

Y'all's broke ass is splittin' that donut, ain't you?

Bobby starts to laugh.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

I'll bring it with a knife.

James winks before the waitress walks away.

BOBBY :

I gone call the Two Spot.

James expression instantly changes.

JAMES :

Oh no.

BOBBY :

What?

Over at the door, A white guy. Obviously a cop. He waves our waitress over.

WHITE GUY :

Excuse me ma'am, I just came from a place called the Tuxedo Room. I'm looking for the boys who were supposed to be playing there tonight?

JAMES:

(whispering)

I ain't supposed to leave Bibb County without telling my parole officer.

BOBBY :

Shit James! What we do?

Bobby looks around and James has disappeared under the table.

Bobby drops like a stone under the table as well.

Bobby peers around the booth for a peek.

60

BOBBY (CONT'D)

He's coming this way. Oh shit.

JAMES :

I can't go back to prison Bobby.

The waitress sits the man down at a nearby table.

WHITE GUY :

I've been driving across over two states looking for these boys. They have to be here in Macon. Tell ya what, I'll make it worth your while if you can tell me where they are.

The man hands the waitress ten bucks and a business card.

The woman shrugs as she reads the card.

WAITRESS :

King Records? What did they do?

WHITE GUY :

Everything right.

Bobby and James look at each other.

JAMES BROWN :

(pole-axed)

King records?

Bobby crawls out from under the table suddenly all business.

BOBBY :

Evening, Sir. I'm Bobby Byrd this is my associate James Brown.

James crawls out and stands before RALPH BASS.

JAMES :

Hi.

BOBBY :

I understand you're looking for the Famous Flames.

LATER AT THE DINER -Bobby and James sit with Ralph Bass. The breakfast crowd has cleared out.

RALPH BASS:

I'm Ralph Bass from Federal records in Cincinnati. An imprint of King Records. I heard your acetate. I want you to come to Cincinnati. I want you to make a record for King.

61

Bobby looks back at him. Nods.

BOBBY:

King records. As in King Records.

The King records.

The waitress arrives with a donut and a plate of steak and eggs. She places the steak and eggs in front of James and winks.

RALPH BASS:

You sure put a lot into that cut.

The main vocal. You got some soul right there.

BOBBY:

Uh.. That's not me. That's uh.

That's James.

RALPH BASS:

That you singing?
James looks BACK TO US.

JAMES :

Yeah. That's me.

81 EXT. FEDERAL/KING RECORDS, CINCINNATI. DAY. 1956 81
James stands alone looking up at the towering building.

CUT TO:

82 INT. RECORDING STUDIO. DAY. JAMES 23 82

JAMES BROWN:

Please, Please, Please....!

They put everything they've got into "Please, Please,
Please".

James leans into a chrome studio mic and sings: Please...

please...please... He leans out and the Flames lean in to the same mic.
"Please please don't go"..

IN THE BOOTH --

Gene Redd mans the desk. Ralph stands nervously while SYDNATHAN, the
impressively fat 60-year-old owner of King sits in jamjar spectacles and
Bakelite Headphones, listening.

62

JAMES :

Wait...wait a second here-

Raggedly they all come to a halt. Nafloyd seems annoyed.

NAFLOYD:

What we stop for? That was cookin'.

Everyone looks pissed at James who seems agitated. Byrd's nervous they're
wasting time.

BOBBY :

It's OK sir we OK. We can just
start right at the top.

JAMES :

It ain't right. It's too slow. We
gotta pick up the pace fellas.

James begins to pace. Bobby grows concerned.

BOBBY :

What are you doing, James? These

men been doing this for a longtime. We need to listen to them.

JAMES :

I need to come in early..push it.
Drive it. Early. Before the beat.
Then speed it up, man.
Ralph Bass speaks to James from the booth.

RALPH :

James, this is a ballad. The pace we've set is perfect.

JAMES :

I know it's a ballad, Mr. Bass.
But a ballad is supposed to get her in the mood, not put her to sleep.
The Flames all look at Bobby who looks at the impatient faces waiting on the
other side of the glass.

BOBBY :

Let's just get it done OK?

JAMES :

But it ain't right.
THEY LAUNCH INTO PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE. JAMES NAILS HIS LEAD
but the pace remains the same.

63

IN THE RECORDING BOOTH

Syd Nathan, takes off his headphones, and turns to Ralph,
pissed as hell.

SYD NATHAN:

(Takes off cans. Yells)
What the hell is this Ralph?!
Where's the rest of the song?

RALPH BASS :

Syd-

SYD NATHAN :

He just keeps hollering that oneword over and over. "Please".
"Please" what, Ralph?! Please jerkmy dick? What the hell does he want? If he
doesn't tell me, you're fired.

IN THE STUDIO:

Bobby and Nafloyd can see something is wrong. James oblivious still singing,

lost in the moment.

IN THE BOOTH:

RALPH :

Listen, Mr. Nathan. This song-

SYD NATHAN :

I don't hear a song Ralph. A song has verses. A snappy chorus. It's not just some unfortunate niggerpleading. Who needs that? Give me the fucking song Ralph. The song.

RALPH:

It's not about the song.
Nathan stops. This is sacrilege.

SYD NATHAN :

What?

RALPH:

It's not the song.
Nathan turns to and looks again. His eyes narrow UPON James Brown, his heart and soul pouring out onto the tape.

CUT TO:

64

82A INT. BIG BILLS RENDEZVOUS. 1954. NIGHT. 82A
THE FAMOUS FLAMES are back on stage at Big Bills only now THEY OWN THE ROOM. A packed standing room only house is going wild for James and the flames. Side doors to the club have been opened. People pour outside and dance. James sings PLEASE! at a much faster pace than at King. Aunt Honey and her girls bump and grind to the music.

JAMES :

Please! Please! Please.
James lowers to the floor and belts his heart out as the song concludes. James walks off stage and just outside Big Bills. A bath towel is put over James' back and head to absorb his sweat. James is breathing hard, completely exhausted. The crowd is not wanting the show to end. The band is vamps amid cheers.

CROWD:

James Brown, James Brown, James
Brown.

James slowly rises his head from under his towel and looks right at us. He begins to smile.

He then looks over to Bobby and nods. The band resumes
Please, Please, Please.

Suddenly James throws the towel off of himself and runs to the stage. The
stage act is born.

JAMES :

Please! Please! Please!

James jumps onto the floor singing as if for his life. He
soon disappears into a sea of women pulling at his clothes.

83 INT. KING RECORD. MEETING ROOM. DAY JAMES 23 83

James Brown sits on a couch next to Ralph Bass.

RALPH :

James. I want you to meet somebody.

Ralph Bass gets up and opens the door. On the chairs outside the meeting
room a friendly looking man looks up from a magazine.

65

RALPH (CONT'D)

James, this is Ben Bart. Ben is President of Universal Attractions.
New York's biggest booking agency.

BART :

That was a great show last week over in Jersey.

JAMES :

Well thank you Sir, we worked real hard to-

BART :

Not we James. Not the Famous

Flames. You. James Brown.

James looks from one to the other.

RALPH:

What Bart is saying James is-

JAMES :

I know what Mr. Bart is saying. I heard him. Loud and clear.

He looks at them both.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I see where we goin'. Saw it this morning when your secretary called
ask me to come here an hour early.

Alone. I knew it six months ago.

Hell, I knew it the day I was born.

James looks back. He doesn't blink. He looks to us.

JAMES (CONT'D)

There's some things I'm gonna want.

83A INT. KING RECORDS. CONFERENCE ROOM. LATER THAT MORNING. 83A

A receptionist shows the rest of the band in. The Flames join Ralph, Syd Nathan, Ben Bart, and James.

BEN BART:

Come in Boys. Come in.

There's no chairs. They stand.

66

BEN BART (CONT'D)

Boys, I have something to show you.

He hands them each a record sleeve. They look down.

BOBBY :

I don't understand. Is this some sort of mistake?

NAFLOYD :

(Reads)

His Famous Flames?

The sleeve has clearly printed on it "James Brown and his Famous Flames."

BABY ROY :

Sir, this ain't right.

BEN BART:

We agree. See I believe it should

say simply James Brown. The fact is Gentlemen, James Brown doesn't need the Famous Flames. King records and Universal don't need the Famous

Flames. But James has requested that the name remain in some form. Now if you want to stay, stay, but from now on you work for James Brown, on James Brown's records.

Should you find this disagreeable in part or whole, you can go home.

NAFLOYD :

(Stunned)

James?

James stares straight ahead. Nafloyd throws the record at the wall. Bobby stands there, stunned.

Slowly, James looks at Bobby and then crosses to him.

JAMES :

Bobby. It's just a name. Ain't nothing different between us. This for all us not just me. It's gone be good.

Bobby stares back. Nafloyd steps up to James.

NAFLOYD :

James Brown. I never liked you.

Come on. Let's get outta here..

67

He turns and walks away with the band. Bobby rises and follows out the door.

PUSH IN:

On James. Bart sits down opposite him.

BART :

So. Do you know what you want James?

84 EXT. WOODS. DILAPIDATED CABIN. 1941. 84

FLASHBACK -JAMES, aged eight, outside the shack in Barnwell, beating his stick against the shack.

YOUNG JAMES:

(Incredulous)

I know exactly what I want.

85 INT. KING RECORDS. CINCINNATI. DAY. 1962 JAMES 29 YRS 85

SYD NATHAN :

Forget it. King doesn't make live albums. They're too expensive.

JAMES :

I think a live album-

SYD NATHAN :

James, your audience is Negro.

Negroes don't buy albums. They don't have the resources.

Especially not for a bunch a song they already got.

James turns to Ben Bart.

BEN BART:

James, Recording live is five, six times as expensive as the studio.

And that's for some violin concerto

at the Met. No one jumps up and shouts "Blow it fucker!" in the middle of The Magic Flute.

JAMES :

But, Pop, you know my show.

James turns to Syd.

68

JAMES (CONT'D)

Mr. Nathan, you ain't ever even
seen the show. My show.

SYD:

Don't need to.

Syd rises and begins to dance. He attempts the "MashedPotato".

JAMES :

Mr. Nathan-

JAMES (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

SYD :

The "Mashed Potato".

JAMES :

That ain't the "Mashed Potato".

SYD :

Exactly.

SYD (CONT'D)

I can't do the "Mashed Potato".

That's your job. That's the show.

But what I can do is the business.

Syd goes back to his desk and sits.

SYD NATHAN :

So I stick to what I know. You
stick to what you know. And that's
the showbusiness.

86 INT. ELITE RESTAURANT. 1962. DAY. 86

Ben Bart and James, in a booth. James silent, tense.

JAMES :

Book the Apollo. I'm gonna spend my own money on this. Syd Nathan's
wrong.

BEN BART:

I'm not going to let you do that,

Jimmy.

JAMES:

Book it out next week for the whole week, go in, we drill it, we drill it, we drill it, then we drop it.

BEN BART :

Forget it, Jimmy. It's too big of a risk. Let's order something to eat. Ben signals for a waitress to come over. James grows intense.

JAMES :

I don't understand risk?

James stiffens.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I don't understand cos I'm just the "show"? Is that all I am to you, Pop? The show? The money?

BEN BART :

Of course not, Jimmy.

JAMES :

Sure it is. That's all me and my black brothers are to the "White Devil". We the show and you the money. And that's how the White Devil keeps it all.

BEN BART :

I'm not the "White Devil". I'm trying to protect you. I'm doing my job. James becomes intense. A waitress walks over.

JAMES :

Pop, look me in the eye.

Ben stays on his menu.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Pop.

Ben looks up. The waitress scurries away.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Yeah, I'm the show. But, if I'm spendin' my own money on the show, then I'm gone be the business too.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

And after we kill The Apollo, I'll kick over a few bucks to the white

devil. Whatever I think he
deserves. And If I'm payin' you,
Pop, you gone show me how to do it.
Ben takes this in.

BEN BART:

I'll call Nola Sound. They got
these new three track stereo
recorders from Ampex.

JAMES:

And I want the best engineer in
town. I don't care what it takes. I
don't care what it cost. I want
everyone in uniform, the ushers,
front of house, the peanut
peddlers.

BEN BART:

We'll need the band in New York
immediately.

JAMES:

And I want 'em in Sapphire bluesuits. Pop. Sapphire.

BEN BART:

Sapphire Blue. Underwear too. How
does that sound?

Pop smiles as does James.

87 INT./EXT. CAR/ APOLLO THEATER. 1962. NIGHT. 87

Ben Bart drives a sedan. James rides in the front seat.

JAMES:

It's cold. It's cold. It's too cold
man. It's too cold. Cold. Cold.

They round the corner.

JAMES (CONT'D)

C'mon. C'mon. C'mon. C'mon. C'mon.

SUDDENLY and for the first time, we hear the classic Jamesgrunt, guttural.
A THUMPING RHYTHM BEGINS. James, stock still, no longer looking out of the
window. Head completely still.

Out of the window: a line of people. On and on. We round the corner. More
people. Another corner. More.

The doors of the theatre open as we pass. People rush forward as THE CAR

PULLS UP. James gets out outside by the stageentrance. Ben follows.

GERTRUDE:

Evening, Mr. Brown. Cold out tonight.

JAMES:

Gertrude. See if you can get somecoffee for the folks in line. James walks into the stage door entrance of the Apollo. Benfollows with a big smile. It's happening.

INT. APOLLO THEATER. STAGE. NIGHT. 1962 88

ONE BY ONE TWELVE PAIRS OF PATENT LEATHER SHOES HIT THE STAGE.

THE NEW JAMES BROWN REVUE file in with instrument cases like some ultra hip sect.

In the dimly lit back stage we see the motions of openingtheir cases and begin setting up their stations, A beautiful black girl pulls up her mini to reveal even more leg.

James enters looking amazing in a cobalt sharkskin. Heapproaches the all new band.

A member of the band, whose back is to us, peers out of thescarlet curtains towards the packed house.

JAMES :

You ready Mr. Byrd?

Bobby Byrd turns from the curtains. THE ONLY SURVIVING MEMBER OF THE STARLIGHTERS. His profile lighted by a powerful spot.

BOBBY BYRD :

(Ice cool)

Ready Mr. Brown.

Gertrude rushes to James with his jacket. He smooths his hair.

FATS V/O

Are you ready for star time? Thank you and thank you very kindly

72

89 INT. APOLLO. STAGE. NIGHT. 89

Syd Nathan and Ben Bart stand in the wings. Syd shouts in Ben's ear.

SYD:

We got the level on his main mic way up to drown out the crowd. You gotta get him to hold back a little

in the first number!

CLOSE UP:

spindles. Recording live.

Ben Bart looks over at James at the curtain edge. A manpossessed.

BEN BART:

I think its too late for that. You
ain't got a breeze, Syd. You got ahurricane.

James looks at Bobby. Bobby nods. James nods back. The band
vamp.

JAMES :

Watch me.

The curtain opens. BANG! James Brown & the New Revue are inperfect timing
looking impeccable in their new sapphire bluesuits. The crowd goes wild
with excitement.

Mr. Dynamite steps on stage-- and floats and dances across bareplanks like
they were polished ice. He reaches the mike.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You know I feel alright.

(Yeah!)

You know I feel alright children.

(Yeah!)

I feel aaaaaaaallllriiiiiight.

Les Buie whacks the guitar strings and the world ceases tospin. A rising
6/8 blues riff pulses up like adrenaline.

As he sings the song, a shock wave blasts out from the stageof the theatre
on 125th street and into the Universe.

Bobby might as well be sitting on the moon. He never misses
a beat.

CUT TO:

73

James Brown and the New Revue are tearing up their secondnumber, "Think."
SYD NATHAN now sits in the audience surrounded by a SEA OFBLACK FACES. We
gather that Syd has never really experienced"The Show". He smiles and nods
to the beat.

Just then a female seated behind him shouts as the horns kick
in.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Blow it fuckers!!!

James stares into the darkness. He's already begun to sweat.
The drums stop a six punch combination from the horns dead.

He reaches for the mic without looking. Leans in and lockseyes with Syd.

JAMES:

Think...Think...Think...About yourbad self...

James drops to his knees. The crowd goes wild.

A few rows behind Syd, we find Susie Brown sitting in theaudience. James' mother has come to the show.

90 INT. APOLLO DRESSING ROOM. NIGHT. 90

After. The cheers still ringing out. People packed into hisdressing room. Champagne corks pop. Congratulations from all.

JAMES :

Thank you. That's very kind of you.

Bobby, at the door. Can't get to him. Turns to Gertrude.

BOBBY :

Gertrude. Get everybody out.

GERTRUDE :

What?

ACROSS THE ROOM:

JAMES:

We gone celebrate tonight. And then tomorrow we gone Wilmington and do it to it all over again.

74

BOBBY :

Mr. Brown. Excuse me. Mr. Brown.

(Then)

...James.

James stops. Turns to face Bobby's grave expression. Bobbywhispers in James' ear.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

There's a woman here, Mr. Brown.

She says she's your mother.

James stops dead. COMPLETELY STILL. We push in. He doesn'tblink.

91 FLASHBACK - EXT. STREET. NIGHT. 1942. JAMES 9 YRS 91

Little Junior walks Twigg street at night. Passing dives andjoints.

Suddenly he stops, across the street, he sees a woman comingout of a bar arm in arm with a BLACK SOLDIER.

He follows her up the street. She's weaving and laughing withthe drunk

soldier.

JAMES :

Momma?

SUSIE and the soldier walk into a side yard where a party is in full swing. James approaches her from behind.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Momma it's me. It's me.

She turns. Focuses blearily.

SOLDIER :

You know this little nigger?

For a moment it looks as if there is a flicker of recognition. Then swivels her head to look at the soldier.

She shakes her head.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Beat it.

YOUNG JAMES :

But Momma!

The soldier picks up a rock and throws it.

SOLDIER :

Get the fuck out of here.

92 INT. AUNT HONEY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT. 1942 92

Aunt Honey and James lie in bed together. James has been crying.

AUNT HONEY:

Don't cry, Little Junior. Don't cry. Now, child, I want you to listen to me. You gone be okay. You hear me? Little Junior, you were born dead. Did you know that?

James shakes his head.

AUNT HONEY (CONT'D)

When your great Aunt pulled you into this world you were dead. You had gone cold. She slapped your ass hard too but you never drew a breath. Your momma and daddy had to say goodbye to you. But then your Great Aunt breathed in you one last time. And then you turned warm and

then you screamed. So loud we heard
it all the way here in Augusta.
You're special, boy. Cause you got
the spirit in you. And that spirit
told me you gone be a rich man,
Little Junior. And Everybody gone
know your name. Ain't nothin' can
touch you. You hear me? Nothin'.
James nods.

92A INT. TOUR BUS. DAY. 1964 92A

The band on the bus. Bobby Bennet frowns and turns to Bobby Byrd. A new
girl, YVONNE FAIR, gets on.

DOWN THE BUS -- The others watch.

MACEO :

Who's this?

BOBBY BENNET :

(quietly)

James gone wear that seat out.

MACEO :

Which seat. Her's or the bus?

Having overheard, Yvonne spends around.

YVONNE:

I'm Yvonne! I'm a singer. Let me
worry about my seat.

Bennet and Maceo snicker.

93 EXT. STREET/FISH HOUSE. DAY. 1965 93

James and Ben Bart walk up a street. They turn a corner to
see a gleaming new Cadillac parked next to the Fish House.
We see a DRIVER inside. The driver exits.

BART:

Compliments of Universal
Attractions.

JAMES:

This for me? Looky this! We got us
a chauffeur.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(to the chauffeur)

Gimme the keys. What they payin'you?

James takes the keys and then pulls out a roll of bills and counts out six hundreds. He hands them to chauffeur.

JAMES (CONT'D)

This here's a month's pay, help you get yourself another job. I gone drive myself.

The chauffeur smiles, hands Bart his hat and walks off down the street.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Don't mention it.

(turns to Ben Bart)

That's six a month goin' somewhere else.

94 EXT. FISH HOUSE - DAY 94

James and Pop sit at a small dining table outside the FishHouse.

JAMES :

Pop, see there's something I been meaning to ask you.

BART :

What's that Jimmy.

JAMES :

I got a seventh grade education Pop, so you'll have to excuse me. I was looking over those figures you sent me, and something occur to me: we don't pay the promoter, the promoter pay us.

BART :

Just standard Jimmy. Guarantee against fluctuating ticket sales. Lets plan a-

JAMES :

-sure we planning, see I ask myself, what if we don't got fluctuating sales. What if you knocking the tar out of every show. Ben Bart watches James with a new outlook on his partner and friend.

BART :

Well let me explain the way it works. When you book a show. Take Chicago. Now our promoter in Chicago is-

BART (CONT'D)

Lenny J Frank. Lenny's the number one promoter in Chicago has been for twenty years.

JAMES :

I don't doubt it.

BART :

Now when Lenny pays us a flat rate,
we can account. You know, number one, you're getting top rate and number two-

JAMES :

What if we took the gate?

(Bart stops JAMES looks over)

What if we took it ourself.

(MORE)

78

JAMES (CONT'D)

And still got the show promoted,
but better.

BEN BART:

Better than Lenny Franks?

JAMES:

Lenny Franks a James Brown fan? How
old he, sixty? Why's he gone try
harder for James Brown than for Sam
Cooke? Or Ray Charles. Or Tom
Jones. See Pop. We go to the radio
stations.

BART:

Jimmy, I understand your
frustration but you gotta realize
you're entering a game where the
rules are set out. If you were a
ball player you can't walk in and
change how many innings they're
gonna play just because...

As Bart drones on, James loses interest and starts addressing us directly.

JAMES:

You see my point right? OK. Listen
up. We go to the radio station. We
go to the young cats. The hungry
cats. The late night cat.

95 INT. RADIO STATION. 95

James talks to us as he stands next to a DEEJAY, ALAN LEEDS,

The deejay doesn't hear James talking to us.

JAMES:

The twenty year old white deejay in Richmond Virginia who's getting paid nothing and is only doin' it because he loves music. We go to him we ask him if he want to be the sole James Brown promoter for the Richmond show. For a percentage. He

gone say:

The deejay suddenly looks up to James.

YOUNG RICHMOND DEEJAY

Are you fucking kidding me? Do you know how much they pay me?

79

JAMES WALKS PAST THROUGH THE STATION TALKING TO US.

JAMES :

Between nothing and fifty bucks aweek. But he love my music. He digs James Brown. And he got amicrophone and a turn-table andfour hours airtime to kill.

YOUNG RICHMOND DEEJAY

Screw Payola.

LATER - THE RADIO STATION.

He spins it. MUSIC starts: "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag."

JAMES BEGINS TO GROOVE.

JAMES :

And at the end he gone say..

95A

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE. VOICE-OVER OF DEEJAYS ANNOUNCING THE 95A UPCOMING SHOWS OVER.. "MAKE SURE YOU CATCH JAMES AT THE ARENA IN RICHMOND THIS TUESDAY!!! " ETC.

96

INT. FISH HOUSE. DAY. 96

BACK AT THE FISH HUT, JAMES IS TALKING TO US AS HE ORDERS A PLATE OF FISH.

JAMES :

Now because he's twenty he's gotstrong legs. And he knows everyone.

97

EXT. THE STREETS. 1965. 97

THE VARIOUS DEEJAYS -- riding around town on bikes, onskates, diving out of cars, pasting up posters everywhere.

JAMES (V.O.)

He know the guy in the barber shop knows the guy at the pool hall, the guy at the garage.

98 INSIDE JAMES PAYS FOR A LARGE PLATE OF FISH. 98 INSIDE JAMES PAYS FOR A LARGE PLATE OF FISH. 98

JAMES:

(to us)

That way we get our record played outside Payola, we get our show promoted better, harder, cheaper, and we keep the gate.

99 EXT. FISH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 99

James exits the fish house and sits down at a rickety card table with Bart.

JAMES:

(to Bart)

And the best part is, you can put it all through the books. Item. Promoter.

(He turns to Bart)

What'd you think Pop?

BART :

Its beautiful Jimmy. I can't do it.

Bart picks up a piece of fish and eats it.

JAMES :

Why not?

BART:

Universal Attractions promotes many acts. I can't piss off the 60 or 70 promoters in this country to skim a little extra on the James Brown Show.

JAMES:

It's not a little. If the show sells, and it's sellin', we talking thousands of dollars a night.

Difference per year between 2 and 3 million dollars.

BART:

And I'm out of a job. Think you're forgetting I don't just work for James Brown.

JAMES:

And there's my next point Pop. Why not?

(Bart stops)

(MORE)

81

JAMES (CONT'D)

I can do something for you, and you can do something for me, and it ain't buy me no Cadillac. Did you buy Wilson Pickett a Cadillac? Did you buy Jackie Wilson a Cadillac?

You know which way this thing is going Pop. I got people around me who don't see it.

Bart looks at him for some time as a black 1965 limousine pulls up to the fish house.

James looks straight back to us. Smiles. Ben Bart rises and grabs a piece of fish.

BEN BART:

(to James)

I thank you for the fish. And I'm gonna need some benefits, boss.

Bart crosses to the limo and leaves.

BLACKOUT. SCREAMS. HORNS VAMPING.

100 INT. THEATER. NIGHT. 1965 JAMES 32 100

The whole band on stage looking sharp. Knocking the shit out of MAN'S WORLD.

James falls to his knees

James turns to backup singer, YVONNE and winks. She winks back.

James scans the front row and sees a very beautiful black woman, DEDE, dancing in the audience.

James and Dede lock eyes. The attraction immediate.

Man's World continues over the next three scenes.

CUT TO:

101 INT. SECURE ROOM 101

Ben Bart counts bundles of cash. He shuts a case full of money. Hands it to 300lb MINDER. An ASSISTANT tries to handcuff it to his wrist. It won't close.

BART :

Po-lice have the same problem.

Bart looks at the three hundred pound minder. Tacitly decides it's probably safe.

82

102 EXT. STREET IN CINCINNATI. 1965. DAY. 102

Two shiny cars pull up to the bank. The 300lb MINDER, and a couple of his fellas, head into the bank each carrying several suitcases full of money.

103 INT. BANK. DAY. 103

They form a queue as the good folk of Cincinnati stare agog.

The carriers hand over BUNDLES AND BUNDLES OF CASH.

BEHIND THE COUNTER The manager spots how many suitcases they have.

103A INT. THEATER. NIGHT. LATER THAT SAME NIGHT. 103A

James is concluding his show with Please, Please, Please. He is at the tail end of his cape routine. The cape is brilliant blue with rhinestones.

He glances at Dede one last time from under the cape.

104 INT. BACKSTAGE. POST SHOW. NIGHT. 1965 104

James walks down the corridor backstage. Stops. Sniffs. Opens an equipment room door. NEW BAND MEMBER is inside smoking reefer.

JAMES :

Who you play Sax with son?

NEW BAND MEMBER

James Brown Orchestra, Mr. Brown.

JAMES :

What's the rule?

NEW BAND MEMBER

No hopheads. No reefer heads. No junkies.

JAMES :

Not on the bus. Not backstage. You a talented horn player, son. You gotta keep your game tight. Now you wanna smoke a little groove on your own time, that's yo' business.

But we out here to work hard and we gone do just that you dig? Fifty.

83

Puts out his hand. NEW BAND MEMBER counts off bills and walks down the corridor.

James turns around to find a beautiful black woman staring back at him. She holds a notebook and pen.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hello pretty thing. You want an

autograph?

She nods.

James approaches and tries to grab the notebook. She pulls it back from his grasp with a smile

JAMES (CONT'D)

You want to come with me? So I can sign it somewhere private?

James flashes that million dollar smile. They walk away together.

105 INT. JAMES BROWN'S HOME. BEDROOM. WALTON WAY. AUGUSTA. 105

James walks into the bedroom of his home. Dede is sitting at the end of their bed looking beautiful in a sexy negligee.

JAMES :

I called you yesterday, you ain't home.

DEDE :

I was home all day.

JAMES :

You were home all day. So why you didn't pick up the phone?

DEDE :

I don't know. What time you call?

JAMES :

I call you at one and quarter past one, then I call you at two. And I call again at three.

DEDE :

You must've wanted to talk to me pretty bad.

JAMES :

Where were you?

84

DEDE :

Yesterday. I don't know..in the bath?

JAMES :

For two hours?

DEDE :

You want me to take shorter baths?

You don't have a phone in the bathroom, James. What you gonna do?
Fine me?

He looks at her levelly as he walks past and grabs a phone from the bedside table.

He yanks it out of the wall. Dede turns, James races towards her but passes and heads into the bathroom.

106 INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS 106

James walks in with the phone. James throws the phone at a bathroom mirror. It shatters.

BACK IN THE BEDROOM

Dede is still as stone. James looks to Dede and then begins to smile.

JAMES :

I ain't gone fine you, baby. You
fine enough already.
Dede smiles.

DEDE :

Then get over here, Mr. Dynamite.
James approaches Dede and begins taking off his clothes.

JAMES :

Got you a phone in the bathroom
now.
James and Dede begin making love.
MUSIC. MONEY WON'T CHANGE YOU. Over.
85

107 EXT. CADILLAC. 1965. DAY. 107

James, Dede and Bobby are standing outside James' Cadillac.
Dede has her hands over Bobby's eyes. Dede has a huge diamond ring on her finger.

DEDE:

Keep your eyes closed Bobby. Keep
'em closed.

BOBBY BYRD :

They're closed, Dede.

JAMES :

You peekin' brother? OK. OK.
(James stops the car.)
You ready. You ready? OK. Open 'em.
(Bobby does.)

Check it Bobby. Is that something?

Bobby opens his eyes and sees a Lear Jet stands on a runway.

"James Brown" on the side.

JAMES (CONT'D)

That something Bobby? Is that something?

BOBBY :

Yeah brother. That's something.

Velma pulls up in another car. It's full of James kids. Teddyplus four more. He picks them all up and hugs them. As hedoes, Bobby sheepishly greets Velma.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Hey Velma.

VELMA :

Hey Bobby.

James and Dede come over. Bobby takes a step back.

VELMA (CONT'D)

Teddy got impetigo.

JAMES :

Impetigo?

DEDE :

It's a skin infection.

86

VELMA:

All that mess round his mouth.

That's impetigo. It's highlyinfectious.

Velma turns to Dede.

VELMA (CONT'D)

I'm just sayin' Mrs. Brown, Iwouldn't go too near Teddy. Notunless you wanna catch impetigo.

DEDE :

Thank you, Velma. I'll considermyself warned.

VELMA :

Warned? Oh, that's a whole other conversation. Welcome to the family.

Dede and Velma smile at each other.

James looks at the two women then to Teddy. He pulls Teddy in close. James turns to his other kids.

JAMES :

Listen up. Which one of you cats want to fly to Reno on daddy's airplane? The kids all say "me!... me!" The kids, Bobby and Dede walk up the steps onto the plane as Velma gets in her car.

James lingers.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(to Velma)

You need anything?

VELMA :

I'll let you know. I'm putting a big list together right now. Velma smiles and cranks her car.

108 EXT. RENO PRIVATE AIRPORT. ESTABLISHING. DAY. 1965 108

109 INT. PRIVATE AIRPORT TERMINAL. LATER THAT DAY. JAMES 109

James is giving a press conference to a group of journalists. Bobby, Teddy and Dede stand next to James.

INTERVIEWER:

Welcome to Reno, Mr. Brown. What exactly do you call your style of music?

JAMES BROWN:

I call it James Brown music. What I mean is, it's so far ahead of it's time that they ain't got a name for it yet. Take another record, any record from your stack at home. I don't care if it's from Motown or Stax or whatever...and put it on your box. None of them are gonna sound like mine. Not even my own old records. Just like the title says, it's a "new bag". See the funk is in the bass. The bass never changes. It's a groove, lady. Soon as you hear that groove, I know I got you.

INTERVIEWER :

And what exactly is the groove?

JAMES BROWN:

The groove is something you feel.
The groove is solid. Bam Bap. It
don't move. It's like a heartbeat.
It's inside you, driving
everything. Hard. Flat. A groove.

INTERVIEWER :

But how exactly do you define it?

JAMES BROWN :

I just did.

(Then)

See Miss. See there's some things,
they're just too big to fit in a
magazine. But we all feel it. Even
little Teddy here know it when he
feel it.

James groans "Um booga chooca. Um". Teddy is lit up;
thrilled. He sings.

TEDDY :

"Um Booga Choooca"

88

JAMES BROWN :

See. Right there. We all feel ittogether. And that's the groove.
Understand?

INTERVIEWER :

(Checks her questions)

So what's your favorite food?

James catches Dede's eye. She and James share a knowing lookwith Bobby.
Bobby takes the mic as James walks away to aside room where Ben Bart is
waiting.

CUT TO:

110 INT. AIRPORT MEETING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER 110

BART, James study at a map. BOBBY sits across the aisle.

BART :

Then we got a day between Raleigh,
Carolina and Columbia two daysafter.

JAMES :

Day off?

BART :

Sure. Regroup. Rest the horses.

JAMES:

We ain't payin' the horses to rest'em. Besides, we got a day off into two weeks in New Orleans. The boys can get their wives, girlfriends along, kick back. What's between Raleigh and Columbia? Spartanburg?

BACK THE PRESS CONFERENCE:

BOBBY BYRD :

Well see, James started out in Augusta. Then his family moved to Toccoa. That's where we met.

JOURNALIST :

And tell me about James' first band, the Famous Flames.

BOBBY BYRD :

Well there was five of us to start with. Nafloyd Scott, Baby Roy Scott, Sylvester Keels..

JOURNALIST :

And they left...

BOBBY BYRD :

Yeah. They left.
James walks into the interview area.

JAMES:

(interrupting)

Bobby? What's the name of the theater in Spartanburg...

BOBBY :

Uh.. The Viceroy. The..

JAMES :

The Regal!

BOBBY :

Yeah. That's it. The Regal.

JAMES:

(to Bart)

On Howard Street and main. Hold about 750 people. Guy named Bennett used to own it. Yeah, Spartanburg. Yeah, we'll play there and I can bring in my masseuse from Anderson. James disappears again.

JAMES (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Call 'em up, Pop.

The journalists laugh.

JOURNALIST :

Wow. He's got an amazing memory.

Bobby nods to himself.

BOBBY :

Yeah. James remembers everything.

90

111 EXT. JAMES BROWN'S HOME. WALTON WAY. 1967. CHRISTMAS. 111

On the lawn of James' and Dede's new home a Christmas spectacular is staged. The Brown's Colonial is smack dab in the middle of Augusta's most elite, white neighborhood.

Fake snow is being sprayed on the lawn by Teddy. Kids of all races play in the white stuff.

We widen to see a huge line of people waiting to meet James who is dressed as Santa Clause.

Dede is dressed as a sexy Mrs. Clause. Dede wears sexy fishnet hose which rise up her legs, disappearing into a short red skirt. Dede holds an infant girl.

One by one, kids and their parents approach James. He hands each kid a five dollar bill.

A little white boy approaches.

JAMES:

Hey little man, you been good this year.

LITTLE BOY :

Yes, Mister Brown.

James hands him a five spot. Dede hands the little boy a candy apple.

Another little white boy and his father approach. James as James speaks to the little boy.

JAMES :

Merry Christmas, Little Man.

James then notices the boy's father checking out Dede.

The little boy moves on to Dede. She leans over and picks up an apple from a tray.

The boy's father takes full notice of Dede's ass. James takes full notice of the entire thing.

112

INT. JAMES BROWN'S HOME. WALTON WAY. AUGUSTA. LATER THAT DAY. 112

James and Dede enter the Brown home, passing a huge life size portrait of James hanging in the foyer.

DEDE :

Great crowd today, Baby.

91

James passes Dede without a word and heads to the back of the house.

Dede follows James through the living room and into the kitchen.

James disappears around a corner.

DEDE (CONT'D)

You want some dinner?

Dede follows James around the corner and disappears.

JAMES (O.C.)

You stand up in James Brown's yard dressed like that? So every man can see you?

Then suddenly, A SMACK is heard. Dede's Body falls back into frame and collapses on the kitchen floor.

A towel flies into frame and lands next to Dede.

JAMES (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Cover yourself up.

113 INT. JAMES BROWN'S HOME. WALTON WAY. AUGUSTA. CONTINUOUS 113

We are now with James in the room off the kitchen. Behind

James we see Dede starting to get up off the floor.

The camera is on James' face. We get the sense that James wants to look at us and talk directly to us but he won't.

Out of Shame, James leaves the room and goes to Dede's aid.

CUT TO:

114 EXT. HOTEL POOL. NEW ORLEANS. 1967. DAY 114

The long awaited day off. The James revue kicks back by the pool in the sunshine, wives, girls, and kids.

An idyllic scene. Kids playing with fathers. Kids towelled down by mothers.

115 EXT. HOTEL POOL. CHECK IN STAND. CONTINUOUS 115

A WHITE FEMALE TOURIST in swimming kit has been complaining to a HOTEL MANAGER. Her HUSBAND, tries to make peace.

92

HUSBAND:

(regarding the manager)

Honey, his hands are tied. The pool area has been reserved for a private function.

WIFE:

We're good people and we've paid good money. We didn't come all the way to New Orleans to swim in a pool full of-

WIFE (CONT'D) HUSBAND

Niggers. Entertainers.

Just then a band member's kid does a cannonball in the pool.

BACK AT THE POOL

Bobby, poolside, messes about with the new singer, Vicki ANDERSON.

VICKI ANDERSON :

You a bad man Bobby Byrd.

Suddenly he pulls her to him. They NEARLY share a kiss. But laugh instead. Bobby turns his head to a hotel balcony. Vicki grabs Bobby's face and turns it back toward her.

VICKI ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Quit lookin' for James Brown and keep your eyes on me, Bobby Byrd.

She sexily rises and goes and sits on a lounge.

Bobby watches her all the way. She catches his eye. Looks at him, raises an eyebrow like "what you looking at?" He feigns innocence, turns, and smiles.

116 EXT. HOTEL BALCONY - SAME TIME 116

James discreetly watches from behind a blind on his balcony high above.

117 EXT. HOTEL POOL. CONTINUOUS. 117

Pee Wee, in jams, walks with a new band member, FRED WESLEY, who is still wearing a suit.

93

PEE WEE :

Fella's this is Fred. I thought we'd show him how things work?

Pee Wee pulls out a cheap wig from his pocket and puts it on.

Everyone around the pool begins to laugh as Pee Wee begins demonstrating how things work to Wesley. Pee Wee is full on imitating James Brown

PEE WEE ELLIS :

So when I do this..

(Turns head, stamps foot)

Means you give it some punch. See.

When I dip like this.

(Dips hip and slides)

BOBBY:

Means less sharp. Bring it down.

Fred nods.

PEE WEE ELLIS :

When I do this.

(Juts chin back and forth)

MACEO :

Mean I give it some heat.

PEE WEE ELLIS :

Right. Now when I do this.

(Stamps foot and moves elbow.)

And you stab..

ALL :

On the one.

PEE WEE ELLIS :

See? And when I pop his head likethis, it mean.

ALL :

Take it to the bridge.

MACEO :

What about when he do this..?

Maceo crunches his shoulder blades together.

PEE WEE ELLIS :

I ain't ready to tell you that one yet. I'm in control Mr. Parker.

Got it. Don't ask about that again.

Pee Wee flashes his hand at Maceo.

PEE WEE :

That'll be ten thousand dollars.

The band loses their shit at this one. Laughs all around.
An hotel employee walks out with a note and hands it to PeeWee. Pee Wee reads. Pee Wee removes the wig.

PEE WEE (CONT'D)

He's called a rehearsal.

BOBBY :

When?

PEE WEE :

Now. We gotta go get dressed.

MACEO :

You're kidding. Tell me youkidding.

118 EXT. HOTEL ROOM BALCONY / POOL. 118

Hiding behind a partition, James raises a cigarette to his mouth.

119 INT. NEW ORLEANS HOTEL REHEARSAL ROOM. 1967 JAMES 34 YRS 119

The band, all in their suits, with their instruments. All glaring. One more pissed off than the next. Vicki stands in the corner.

James is in the middle of an extended anecdote.

JAMES :

See My great grandmother on my momma's side, she Asian. She got Asian blood. See Asians are a flexible race.

You get with an Asian chick? That a whole other story. No spank but they got it baby they got it.

Anyway what was I talkin 'bout?

MACEO :

Your Chinese knees Mr. Brown.

JAMES :

That's right. That it. I got these Chinese knees.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

That's how come I can dance the way

I do. Anyway. One. Two. Three.

Four. Hit it.

The band starts up. During the introduction to COLD SWEAT, MACEO comes in late on the Sax. Everything stops.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Stop. Maceo.

(Laughs)

What you doing man? You coming in maybe a little too late. What's the matter son. You lost your feeling?

MACEO :

(Flatly)

No Sir. I ain't lost no feeling.

SILENCE. James tunes into the vibe for the first time.

SOMETHING's wrong.

JAMES :

(Innocently)

Something wrong, Maceo?

(SILENCE. Directly)

Is something wrong, Maceo?

BOBBY BYRD :

James-

James rounds on Bobby.

JAMES :

You got something to say Mr. Byrd?

(Silence. Smiling)

Because a man got something to say he should say it. You got something to say?

SILENCE. Vicki looks away. All at once James loses it.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(Shouting)

Well then you just HOLDING UP THEREHEARSAL Mr. Byrd.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I can't have people HOLDING UP THEREHEARSAL. If I can't do it right I ain't gone do it at all. We got to GET ON. GET AHEAD. Now you know the rule.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

You late, you off or you hold us up, it's no good, Mr. Byrd. Its gonna cost you 50 dollars.

Bobby's jaw tightens. Everyone holds their breath.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Now are you ready Mr. Byrd. Are you ready Mr. Byrd?

Pause.

BOBBY BYRD :

Yes, Mr. Brown.

James glances to Vicki and winks.

JAMES :

Good. I ain't fattening frogs forsnakes. From the top. One Two...
COLD SWEAT resumes. Bobby sings his backing part.
James stands in the middle of the floor. Its good but-

JAMES BROWN :

Quit it.
(They all stop)
Clyde man. Lets get that POP! Dee..
app..POP! Unnerstand? It dropbefore you reach the beat. Dig?
Jimmy Nolen looks worriedly at Pee Wee.

MACEO :

(Whispers to Waymon)
Does he mean top of the bar?

PEE WEE :

(To Maceo)
He means the down beat.

JAMES :

It goin' wrong there Pee Wee, whenit rise up.

MACEO :

But Mr. Brown.
Maceo pauses and waits to be acknowledged by James. Jamesturns and glares
at Maceo.

97

MACEO (CONT'D)

We rehearsed it like you told us.
We got it like you like it.
Jimmy can't do that with the parthe's playing. We can change thepart if you
want.

JAMES BROWN:

(Suddenly angry)
Did I say change the part? Don't
change the part. How many records
you got?
James sarcastically responds to Maceo's silence.

JAMES:

Thank you! I like the part he
playin' now. I just want it in a
different place.

Blank stares from the band. James walks over to Clyde's snare and points.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What's this, Maceo.

MACEO.

It's a snare, Mr. Brown.

JAMES :

A snare what?

MACEO.

Drum.

JAMES :

Correct.

James moves over to Jimmy. Points to his guitar.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What's this, Maceo?

MACEO :

Guitar, Mr. Brown.

JAMES :

No it's not.

James goes back to Clyde and points to Maceo's sax

JAMES (CONT'D)

What's that, Pee Wee?

PEE WEE.

A drum, Mr. Brown?

JAMES :

Now you're getting it.

James crosses to Pinckney and points to Odum's guitar

JAMES (CONT'D)

What's that he's holding.

PEE WEE :

A drum?

James points to the horn section.

JAMES :

You Fellas. What are those shiny things you holding.

EVERYBODY IN THE ROOM

Drums.

JAMES :

Now we all got our drums. Now when you're playing the drum it don't matter what key you're in, what bar you're in or what planet you on. Dig?

MACEO :

(With trepidation)

But Mr. Brown.

Maceo pauses and waits for JB to acknowledge him.

MACEO (CONT'D)

Clyde'll be in a different time to the rest of the band. That doesn't work musically.

They all know it.

JAMES BROWN :

But does it sound good?

The band nods.

JAMES BROWN (CONT'D)

Does it feel good?

More nods.

99

JAMES BROWN (CONT'D)

Then it's musical. So play it like

I say. From the top.

The groove of COLD SWEAT comes to life. The beat heavier, almost irregular but actually in the pocket, the horns and Bass clipped, drum-like, the off rhythm of Jimmy's guitar bringing the whole room together.

119A EXT. POOL AREA BAR. SAME TIME. 119A

Our racist couple has now bellied up to an outside bar. Cold Sweat leaks out into the bar area.

Unable to help themselves, the couple rises and begins to dance.

119B BACK INSIDE THE REHEARSAL: 119B

The band is really hitting it hard. Vicky, Bobby...everyone feelin' it.

JAMES BROWN :

Mmmn! Huh! Now that a groove.

By God it is. James starts singing the cut.

120 INT. HOTEL BAR. NIGHT. 1967 120

The recording session is over. James has long since gone.

Maceo and Bobby relax at the bar.

MACEO:

Bobby, James Brown's my meal ticket. So I just shut my ears and chomp down his bullshit. But why you soak it up man? You his best friend. You know him for time brother. And he treat you like that. I was you I'd bust him in his damn mouth.

Bobby Byrd nods his head.

BOBBY BYRD:

I hang in there cause I remember the day that I knew. Knew I was never gonna be in front.

He looks at Maceo with a calm, measured sense of reality.

100

BOBBY BYRD (CONT'D)

You work so hard at this one thing and then one day you realize it ain't supposed to be you. You can get mad. Try to fight it but if it's God's truth. It's God's truth. James is supposed to be in front. I saw it happen. And the man in front has to BE the man in front. It ain't always pretty but that's the man's responsibility if he wanna stay there. And you and me can't know what that is. We ain't supposed to. So, don't lie to yourself Maceo.

Every man in this band walks taller because he with James Brown. Every man in this band believe in himself a little more because he's with James Brown.

MACEO:

You sure you just ain't too scared to be in the front?

BOBBY BYRD:

No. But my ears a' open. Open your

ears, Maceo. He's a genius. And
he's takin' us with him.

CUT TO:

121 INT. KING RECORDING STUDIO. DAY. 1968 JAMES 35 YRS 121
Boiling studio. James drenched in sweat howls at themicrophone.

JAMES:

Mother, she got to have. Say, yougot to have a mother for me. Yeah,
popcorn!

The band sit right into the groove of MOTHER POPCORN and
sweet thunder rolls onto another master tape. Everyone's eyesare glued to
James standing in the centre: directing themwith body movements and
gestures, playing the whole band likea single instrument.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Quit it.

(They stop.)

We missing something.

(They look at each other. It was perfect.)

(MORE)

101

JAMES (CONT'D)

Pee Wee, get over here by themicrophone. And bring that hornbox. That's
where you keep the wig,
right?

They all stop. Oh. Shit.

PEE WEE :

Mr. Brown?

CUT TO:

Now Pee Wee stands at the Microphone, uncomfortable, with thewig on,
singing the song.

James is in with the horns, who are all crying with laughter,
enjoying the hell out of this rare moment of levity. James,
deadpan, eggs him on. Pee Wee calls for a horn solo from him.

SUDDENLY there's a commotion in the mixing booth. Jamesbrings them to a
stop.

JAMES :

What is it? Why we stop Henry?

The engineers hands go to their faces. Shaking heads.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What? What is it?

Bobby enters the room.

BOBBY BYRD :

It's King. They shot Dr. King.

121A BLACKOUT:

TELEVISION FOOTAGE. Riots all over America. Police beating back groups of rioting youths.

122 INT. KING RECORDS - SYD NATHAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT. 122

James sits watching the carnage unfold. Ben Bart knocks and enters

BART:

Jimmy, Mayor of Boston's office called. Wanted you to know they've cancelled tomorrow's show at the Garden. For reasons of public safety. He's worried about rioting.

102

James doesn't look away from the screen.

JAMES BROWN :

Tell the Mayor, I sold 30 million records and ninety five percent of them are to the black community.

They listen to me. They won't riot

BART :

We have virtual race war looming across the South, Jimmy. Politics, 101? Don't put 10,000 angry blacks together in one place in the middle of a city, and broadcast it live to the world.

JAMES :

Get the Mayor on the phone.

CUT TO:

123 INT. KING RECORDS. SYD NATHAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT. 123

James is on the phone with the mayor

JAMES :

Mr. Mayor, the way I see it, you already lost your next election. You lost it at 7:05 PM Memphis time.

CUT TO:

124 INT. BOSTON MAYOR OFFICE - NIGHT. 124

The mayor listens intently with the phone pressed to his ear.

JAMES :

Now tomorrow night, you either got 10,000 angry folks in the Boston Garden, or you got 10,000 angry folks on your front lawn. Take your pick son. Which one you want?

125 INT. BOSTON GARDENS. NIGHT. 1968 JAMES 35 YRS 125

Tension in the air. Police on every exit. Dogs. On stage, MAYOR WHITE speaks to a restless audience.

103

MAYOR :

All of us are here to night to listen to a great talent. James Brown. But we're also here to pay tribute to one of the greatest Americans, Dr. Martin Luther King.

So, let us look at each other and pledge that whatever else any other community might do we in Boston will honour Dr. King in peace.

James steps forward.

JAMES :

Brother before I get to this next thing I wanna say. He's a young man you dig.

He's a young man so he's thinking together. The man is together. Give him another round of applause.

James watches the restless, shouting, crowd. He looks at the cameramen. The tension is unbearable. He lets it build.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hit it.

A fast, rhythmic drum solo. Building. Faces in the crowd. The police. Tense promoters and politicians to the beating rhythms.

The band whipcrack into I GOT THE FEELING. James pulsates.

Spins. Pushes the stand away. Zip! It's back.

A kid at the front gets onto the stage and sprints for James only to be tackled by James' security. Another clambers up but is kicked back by a police officer. The audience react badly.

Another kid gets on stage and cops harshly push him to the floor and throw him back into the audience. Police come out onto the right side of the stage and shine torches down into the audience. They shove people back down.

A kid in a white jacket leaps on stage right in front of James. For a moment everyone stops. A white cop appears from nowhere and viciously bodychecks the kid back into the front row in full view of the cameras.

The mayor stands in the wings flanked by policemen. Dede stands behind them watching nervously.

MAYOR :

Oh no.

104

On stage James stops the band.

JAMES :

Wait a minute. Step off. Move off.

I'll be a'ight here. I be fine.

James waves the police off the stage on either side to cheers and whistles from the audience.

Suddenly a ten year old kid appears next to James from out of the audience. He seems amazed to find himself there.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Do you wanna dance son? You dance.

No longer held back by police more kids invade the stage.

James respects them all, shaking hands and looking at them eye to eye. Kids throng around him on stage. He's losing control.

JAMES (CONT'D)

C'mon. C'mon now. Y'all go down. Go back down. Don't nobody else come up.

Wait a minute. Wait. Ladies and gentleman. This is no way. This is.

We are black. We are black.

(Cheers.)

Wait a minute go back. Can't y'all go back down and let's do the show together. We're black don't make us all look bad. Let me finish the show. Step down there. Be a gentleman. Let's represent our ourselves. Let's represent our own selves.

One by one they step back down into the crowd.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Now I ask the police to step back because I figure I could get some respect from my own people. Now we together ain't we.

(Cheers! Screams!)

Hit that thing man.

The band strike back up and James kicks back into "I Can't Stand Myself" The stage clear. The crowd calmed. The panic over.

MAYOR:

(to a policeman)

Holy shit. He did it.

105

DEDE :

(sotto)

Of course he did.

Dede smiles proudly.

I Don't Want Nobody To Give Me Nothing kicks in over intercut Archival footage of Newscasters discussing the last minutedecision for the concert to go ahead.

126 INT. ARCHIVAL NEWS REPORT. 126

HEADLINE, under a picture of James: RACIAL PEACE RESTORED IN CAPITOL AFTER RIOTING.

ARCHIVAL NEWS REPORT

City officials in Washington DC have praised James Brown. Order has returned to the city hit by rioting largely because of radio and television appeals from the soul singer over the weekend.

OVER JAMES' PERFORMANCE AT THE GARDEN AS YOUNG BLACK GUYS DANCE.

JAMES (V.O.)

In America today you've either got to be an entertainer or a ball player or what? If you poor, young and black, what is there? And you ask me why they on the street? It ain't politics we watchin'. It's economics.

127 INT. JAMES BROWN PRODUCTIONS LEAR JET. NIGHT. 127

James is on the plane with Ben Bart.

JAMES:

You got kids out there that can't eat, robbing and stealing and doing what they have to do to make it.

And if you don't do something about it we gonna lose the country. I go to Harlem, talk to Rap Brown, talk to the Nation they call me a separatist. Here we're on our way to the White House, Pop, and they already calling me an Uncle Tom. So what I supposed to do?

(MORE)

106

JAMES (CONT'D)

Write a check for Rap so he buyrifles, machine guns, rally on125th and take

it south? What it
say to you, a street kid from Augusta, Georgia in the White House?

BART:

It says you kissin' up to the Man
James.

James is taken aback. No-one else in the world could say this.

JAMES:

You asking me to turn this plane around and stand up the President?

BART:

No. I'm saying who gives a shit.
You're already screwed, James.
Think about it. If you stand up
Lyndon Johnson to go kiss up to the
Panthers, you ain't gone be playin'
Vegas anytime soon because if they
think you can stop a riot, they
sure as hell will expect you to
start one.

JAMES:

So here I am. Just a sorry soul
brother whining inside his private
jet, huh?

They both laugh. But James is troubled. Bart tone changes.

BART:

Don't be scared my friend. Because
if you're scared, it doesn't end
well for the black man. Do your
thing, James.

(He looks at him hard)

It's worked for you so far.

128 INT. WHITE HOUSE - NEXT MORNING - 1968 128

CLOSE ON JAMES WITH HIS HEAD TILTED BACK TALKING UPWARD:

JAMES:

I want to go to Vietnam. I want to show unity for the boys out there.
The beleaguered, the tired and in the dark.

(MORE)

107

JAMES (CONT'D)

And we need to bring awareness, and Mr. President, we need to bring the super heavy funk.

We widen to see 5'7" James looking up to the 6'4" Lyndon Johnson. President Johnson shakes James' hand.

128A INT. HANGER. VIETNAM. 128A

We are now back in Vietnam at the hanger concert. James looks right at us.

JAMES :

Take it and flip it.

129 EXT. GOLF COURSE - MORNING. 129

Ben Bart is playing golf with several friends. Bart drives the ball straight and hard. We watch as the ball land three hundred yards down the runway.

Back on the tee box. Ben Bart lays face down dead in the turf. His friends race to his side in shock.

CLOSE ON:

Ben's face is pressed sideways on the grass. His opened, dead eyes stare right at us.

130 EXT. CEMETERY - DAY 130

A casket lays at the bottom of a grave that has been dug. TEN MALE FUNERAL ATTENDEES IN SUITS AND YAMMAKAS take turns shoveling dirt onto Ben Bart's casket.

Dede and James stand to the side. Completely distraught.

James starts to panic and lowers to the ground. Dede catches him under the arm.

One of the men approach James with the shovel. James can't bring himself to put dirt on the casket.

131 INT. RECORDING STUDIO. LOS ANGELES. NIGHT. 131

BAND MEMBERS FITTED WITH THEIR AFRICAN DASHIKIS are rolling a funky vamp together into a groove. Clyde hits a fat 'pop pop' beat. Sweet Charles locks the bass line in to the beat.

Country finds a chunky B-flat-9 rhythm on the guitar and the groove takes shape.

108

The door opens. James and Teddy walk in. James and Teddy's hair is cut into a short natural. Everyone looks at each other.

JAMES :

Hit it.

The band starts. James makes a few adjustments. Jimmy Nolen strikes up a womp-womp sound on a single string. The horns do the James trademark laladadidat.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Quit it.

(he pushes the intercom to the booth)

Bring 'em in.

The door opens. 32 children enter the room. Most kids are black, except for a few Mexican children. Dede and Teddy are there, along with some of James' other kids.

JAMES (CONT'D)

How we all doin'. Hope this ain't too late for you folks.

James and Teddy stand before the group. James puts his arms around Teddy as he addresses the kids.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I brought you all here today so I could tell you something very important. I want you all to know that you can do or be anything you want in this world. Don't let anybody tell you anything different. You understand? When I was a boy I used to shine shoes in front of radio station. Now I own that radio station. You got to build it. And then you gotta learn it... and that's when you earn it. James gets all the kids around one mic. He puts Dede and Teddy to the side of the kids.

CUT TO:

Later everyone is cued. Maceo whispers to Pee Wee Ellis.

MACEO :

You think they fuck up he gone take they pocket money.

Pee Wee laughs and nods his head.

109

JAMES :

We ready fellas?

The groove starts again. James flies into I'm Black and I'm Proud.

WHICH PLAYS OVER ADDRESSING US DIRECTLY

JAMES (CONT'D)

I think about a lot of things.

About problems. About solutions.

You know one way of solving a lot of problems that we've got in this country... is letting a person feel that they important.

Feel that they somebody. It's it.

Man can't get hisself together...

...until he know who he is and be

proud of what and who he is and
where he come from! WHERE WE ALL
COME FROM!

James leaves us and continues with the song. He looks to the
children

JAMES (CONT'D)

Say it loud!

They scream into the mic.

CHILDREN :

I'm Black and I'm Proud!

James catches eyes with Teddy. He nods proudly. Teddy smiles.

JAMES BROWN - GHETTO REALITY BEGINS TO PLAY AND CONTINUES
OVER THE NEXT FEW SCENES

131A

EXT. AUNT HONEY'S 1968 HOUSE IN THE LATTER YEARS - DAY 131A

James and Teddy pull up in front of a small shotgun house in the Terry. They
exit and walk up to the house.

131B

INT. 1968 AUNT HONEY'S 1968 HOUSE IN THE LATTER YEARS-131B

DAY:

Aunt Honey, now 70, sits in a chair in front of a small TV.

We soon gather that she has "retired" and is at the end of her colorful
life.

James has brought Teddy to meet Aunt Honey for the first time.

110

Teddy extends his hand toward Aunt Honey. Aunt Honey shakes his hand and
then brings him in close for an embrace.

132-134 OMITTED 132-134

135 INT. JAMES BROWN PRODUCTIONS. JAMES BROWN'S OFFICE. NIGHT 135

James is standing in his office bathroom smoking a joint. He lights it and
has four or five epic pulls as he scans the walls admiring his framed
accolades and gold records.

END GHETTO REALITY:

135AA INT. JAMES BROWN PRODUCTIONS. NEXT MORNING. 135AA

James Brown enters his recording booth to find Teddy at the controls. Gertie
sits in a chair behind Teddy.

JAMES :

You the man, Teddy Brown?

TEDDY :

I'm the man, Mr. Brown.

James notices the band sitting idle on the other side of the glass.

JAMES :

Gertie. The band ready?

GERTRUDE :

They're ready Mr. Brown.

JAMES BROWN :

Don't look like it.

James grabs Teddy.

JAMES BROWN (CONT'D)

Come watch how Poppa don't take no mess.

He and Teddy walk straight into the-

135A INT. JAMES BROWN PRODUCTIONS. STUDIO. DAY. 135A

The band is there.

JAMES BROWN :

Y'all act like y'all don't know what time it is. What you doin'?

Nothing happens. James looks Maceo in the eye. Maceo approaches.

MACEO:

I've been elected spokesman to speak on behalf of the band.

JAMES :

Spokesman? Elected?

MACEO:

We asked to get paid on time. We haven't been paid in weeks. We asked for scheduled days off. Every day off we get you make us rehearse.. We asked to get paid for recording but you included it in our salary.

James turns to Teddy. The two stare at each other.

JAMES BROWN :

Teddy, go on and wait outside.

TEDDY :

Yes, Sir.

Teddy exits.

JAMES:

Fellas. I hear ya. I really do. And I appreciate the honesty. That can't be easy. No Sir. You got grievances. You got your own selves to think about. Hell, you're men. I dig it.

PEE WEE :

I don't think you understand.

James looks to Bobby.

MACEO:

We know you owe the government back taxes.

Your restaurant, radio stations, recording studios, labels, all different businesses, Unaccounted cash passing between them.

(MORE)

112

MACEO (CONT'D)

It's a mess, Mr. Brown and if you want us to be a part of it, we gonna need our cash too. Right now.

James looks at them all for a very long time hiding his shame.

MACEO (CONT'D)

And most of all none of us ever want to be fined for anything ever again.

James nods. Studying them.

JAMES BROWN:

I'll tell ya what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna think about it. That's all.

They look at each other and file out. Waymon, Pee Wee, Maceo, Kush and Jimmy Nolen file out. Leaving Bobby and James alone.

SILENCE.

He looks at the empty room. Smiling. Unable to show any pain.

JAMES:

(He shakes his head.)

It's like I always say Bobby. You gotta know who you are. You got to know where you are in this world.

Five minutes ago, those boys were

the best band on the planet. Now they nothing. Now they a bunch of sidemen with their hearts beatin' fast. Maceo comin' in here talking about my taxes. All I've done for this country and they comin' after James Brown? How you gone keep everybody happy? Huh? And stay on top? You along for the ride while everything is groovy and now they gone kick me when I'm down? People either on the bus or they off it. James crosses to the door and opens it for Bobby to exit

JAMES BROWN:

(He turns to Bobby.)

Well go on. Get out of here.

Y'might catch 'em they gone need a singer.

Bobby rises and walks past James into the foyer. He turns.

BOBBY :

Negro, what makes you think I'mleaving? I been here all the time, Mr. Brown. I'm still here.

James looks at Bobby.

JAMES :

See that's the thing about thefunk. The funk don't quit.

BOBBY :

Last time I checked.

JAMES :

Cause if the funk gone up'n'quitthat's it.

BOBBY :

That's why the funk don't quit.

JAMES :

Are we done here Mr. Byrd?

BOBBY :

I'm afraid we ain't Mr. Brown.

JAMES :

Are we done?

BOBBY :

I think we got more funk in the trunk.

James laughs.

JAMES :

That's right. Two Musketeers.

Bobby looks at James. Remembers. Beams. James beams back.

Then, James is all business.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What's those kids from Cincinnati.

The New Dapps...Blackenizers? Who that kid play bass?

BOBBY :

(Smiles)

Bootsy.

114

135B INT. OLYMPIA THEATRE 135B

A pre-show theater in action with stagehands and riggers busy setting up.

The new kids are now all in suits and bow ties.

CATFISH :

Fancy suit bro'.

BOOTSY:

Backatcha slick. How you doin,

Chicken?

CHICKEN :

Just shit my pants.

BOOTSY:

Easy now. Don't forget. Don't ever

call him James or nothin'. He ain't

no-one but Mr. Brown.

CATFISH CHICKEN

Check. Gotcha.

James Brown walks in from the wings. They all stand straighter. He looks at them.

BOOTSY (CONT'D)

Good evening Mr. Brown.

CHICKEN CATFISH

Mr. Brown. Mr. Brown.

JAMES :

Do that button up son.

(Chicken does)

You know Kansas City?

(Blank faces)

You know Cold Sweat? Do you know

Please Please?

BOOTSY:

Can I stop you Mr. Brown. We been learning off yo' records since we was nine years old. You already taught us the songs. So with respect. We ready. Mr. Brown.

JAMES:

They say they ready Mr. Byrd. What you think?

115

CATFISH:

We been waiting for this moment our entire lives, Mr. Brown.

JAMES :

How old are you son?

CATFISH :

Twenty.

(Then)

Mr. Brown.

JAMES :

Cats know Super Bad?

Bootsy lays down a mammoth bass line on his plugged in bass.

135C INT. PARIS HOTEL ROOM. LATE AFTERNOON. 135C

The backup singer, Yvonne, nude, carries two glasses of champagne from a wet bar to a very sweaty James who is lying in bed.

YVONNE:

Why won't you say it? I said it.

Why won't you say it back?

JAMES:

Baby, I gotta get to my show. I
can't be playin' around right now

YVONNE :

I love you.

Yvonne rests the cold glass on James' stomach. He squirms.

JAMES:

You know I don't drink.

Yvonne pours a little champagne onto James' stomach. She
then begins licking it with her tongue.

YVONNE:

Say it, Mr. Brown. Say you love me.

In a flash James rolls over and pins Yvonne down on her back.

She screams with delight.

He whispers in her ear.

JAMES :

Happy now?

116

She kisses him.

YVONNE:

I'm pregnant.

James stares back at her without expression.

135D

FLASH FORWARD - ADULT JAMES, IMMACULATE, LOOKING AT US. 135D

THE SKYLINE OF PARIS IS BEHIND HIM. 1971

James walks along the outside of Olympia Theatre in Paris in
full costume.

JAMES:

Now it's true, we work hard. A man
gotta work hard if he wanna break
ground. And we breaking new ground
everyday...

James enter the theatre front door.

135E

INT. OLYMPIA THEATRE. LOBBY. CONTINUOUS. 135E

James begins walking toward us.

JAMES:

My record Live at the Apollo is the first R&B album in the history of the world to go top ten. Stayed up in there for 66 weeks..

James walks into the rear of the packed house.

GIRLS AND GUYS SCREAMING, DANCING. JAMES IS INVISIBLE TO THEM.

From the rear of the house, James watches himself and the band performing on stage. He and his band are IN MID-GROOVE.

A BEAUTIFUL BLACK DANCER DANCES ON A RISER BEHIND THE BAND.

Vicki Anderson, sings backup.

JAMES (CONT'D)

That record come across. I mean it hit hard!!! Uhn!

135F

INT. OLYMPIA THEATRE. STAGE. CONTINUOUS. 135F

James walks among his performing band members. He watches himself on stage at the microphone driving the crowd crazy.

117

JAMES:

And slowly, the whole World knew who we were.

James walks to each band member and places a twenty dollar bill in each of their pockets. They don't see the James who is talking directly to us.

He straightens a band member's tie. James turns to stage left and sees his son, Teddy Brown, dancing. He then gives Yvonne a wink who's also standing in the wings looking HOT.

JAMES (CONT'D)

See in showbusiness, you got two parts. You got the show and you got the business. And brother.

(Deadly serious)

You better believe. You looking at both.

He spins around and runs up to the microphone. He replaces himself and begins to sing.

SCREAMS. HORNS VAMPING. James performs out of his skin. A medley of three songs, "Soul Power," into "Sex Machine," into "Super Bad".

Backup dancers and singers are tearing it up!

On James' signal the rag tag band of kids behind the godfather of soul take off like a rocket ship into one of the above songs. It sounds nothing like the old version. Its raw

urgent, stripped down. The Bootsy's bass rumbles like trouble brewing and Catfish's over driven guitar slicing clean through the hook.

Before them a standing room crowd dance and sing from the stage to all the

way back to entrance

James and Bobby look at each other. Holy shit.

James drops into the splits, flips up again.

The crowd is seeing something for the first time on European soil. They erupt with joy and begin dancing in their seats.

CUT TO:

136-138 OMITTED 136-138

118

139 INT. OLYMPIA STAGE. SAME NIGHT. 139

The crowd has left. A custodian roams the isles picking up trash. James and Bobby sit on the edge of an empty stage, laughing.

BOBBY :

You know what I think? After we put out my next solo album, I bet I could play Paris or the Apollo.

James TUNES IN

JAMES BROWN :

How's that?

BOBBY :

I was just saying when me and you put out my new record, I bet I could fill this place all myself.

No problem.

James stiffens at this comment.

JAMES BROWN :

What the hell you talking about?

"Fill this place all myself"? "No problem?" You sayin' I'm slippin'?

BOBBY BYRD :

No I don't think you slippin'. You

James Brown. You ain't never

slippin'. I was just...

JAMES BROWN :

People copy me, Mr. Byrd. People gonna copy my moves till the earth goes dark. You understand? You

think people are gonna buy that record like they buy my record?

That what you sayin'?

BOBBY :

No.

JAMES BROWN :

Who you been tellin' this too? You
been telling that to the Apollo?
Bobby gets mad.

BOBBY :

No, James! I haven't told nobodybut you. We were just talking.
(MORE)

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I thought you be cool with that.
You always been talking about...
About... About... standin' on myown feet.

JAMES BROWN:

Bobby, how you gone stand on your
own feet? You just spent twenty
years gettin' fat on a man's
dollar. I produce a record for you
and now it's gone to your head.
You go talking big behind my back.
You go sneaking round, raising heat
off another man's name. We here, we
doing something and you making
plans sucker?

Bobby gets more upset. He's using a tone with James we'venever heard
before.

BOBBY:

(Shouting)

I ain't told nobody or made anyplans. We just talkin' about it.
Now. That's it.

JAMES:

I'm ashamed of you, Bobby. And youshould be ashamed of you. Now youtryin'
to run around with Vicki.
Don't jive yourself bro'. Now,
Vicki, she could fill this place.

BOBBY:

Well, Vicki ain't yours. So, Vicki
and me ain't none of your damn
business.

James smiles.

JAMES :

But she's been my business before.

Bobby walks up close to James and stares him in the eye. He balls his fist.

BOBBY :

I can't do this no more, James.

JAMES BROWN:

Damn right you can't do this no more.

120

BOBBY :

I said I can't do this no more.

James looks absolutely poleaxed. THEN. He laughs. And looks at Bobby, almost affectionately.

JAMES BROWN :

See, the funny part. You say that like it's a big thing. Like "oh my God, Bobby Byrd gone leave James Brown on his own."

Bobby fights to control himself. To find anything left to give.

BOBBY :

I ain't leaving you on your own, Mr. Brown. You already on your own.

Always were.

He shakes his head and walks across the stage. He turns.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Is that God too?

Bobby turns and leaves James ALONE.

140 INT. OLYMPIA. NIGHT. 1970 140

Bobby walks across the big empty stage and for a split second looks right at us. He continues past us and away.

CROSSFADE TO:

141 INT. APOLLO CORRIDOR / DRESSING ROOM. 141

FLASHBACK -Corridor in 1962. The Night of Live At The Apollo.

MUSIC:

A woman in a flower print dress and a cheap hat sits on a bench with a coat over her arm. A young Bobby comes out of the dressing room. She stands.

142 INT. APOLLO DRESSING ROOM. NIGHT. 142

BOOM! A flashbulb goes off.

James sits next to his mother, on a couch, SMILING Happily, having the moment documented. She is smiling too. Bobby and other guests in the room watch the photographers.

The photographer is ushered out of the room by Bobby Byrd.

JAMES :

Bobby? Get everybody out of here and wait outside.

Bobby ushers the guests outside.

James sits opposite his mother. She is very, very uncomfortable but trying to appear relaxed.

SUSIE :

I was on the Subway last week, and the two kids next to me was arguing who was the best, James Brown or Little Willy John. And this one boy, he was saying "James Brown the best" "There ain't no one better than James Brown", he got so mad I thought he was gonna whup this other boy. And then-

James holds up his hand. She falls silent.

JAMES :

Why tonight?

(She stops, her face falls.)

Why you come here?

She starts to flap.

SUSIE :

Well. Sugar, I live over in Brooklyn... and you my baby and you here playin' the Apollo.

JAMES:

I don't want you to feel proud.

I ain't your sugar. I ain't your baby. Not then. Not now. And I don't want you to tell anyone you my momma, because you and me know that ain't true.

SUSIE:

Your daddy beat me. Beat you. I stayed because I loved you. I didn't know nothin' about being a wife. Nothin' about being a mother.

I did the best I could. I did that.

(MORE)

122

SUSIE (CONT'D)

I left because I loved you. I ain't had nothing to make no other choice. I

was shamed. I was.
He holds up his hand.

JAMES :

See I thought about this. I know it weren't personal and that's why this ain't neither. It turned out fine. I didn't need you. I looked after James Brown. Made sure he was OK. No-one else. No-one help me.
She starts to cry.

SUSIE:

I never wanted to be a momma. But I carried you, boy. I didn't know nothin' about being a wife or being a momma. But I carried you and I loved you when you were in me. I chose you. I chose you.

JAMES :

Don't cry. Don't cry. Don't cry.
He stiffly offers her a handkerchief.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Clean yourself up. That's it.

James softens.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm James Brown. And James Brown don't need nothing. Don't need nobody.
Susie looks back at James. She doesn't move.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Why are you really here? What do you want?

She shakes her head, searching his face. James looks back unmoved. James reaches in his pocket and pulls out some money.
He hands it to her.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Here. That's a hundred dollars.

I'm sorry but I'm gonna ask you to leave now.

123

He sits perfectly still as she gets up. She walks to the door and turns to James.

SUSIE:

You're so beautiful. You're so pretty.

Susie exits into the party outside and shuts the door.

143

EXT. CABIN - BARNWELL S.C. 1941. JAMES 8 YRS 143

We return to the day that Susie left. We stay on her face as she leaves her family behind. Tears stream down her cheek.

James tries to chase after his mother but Joe restrains him.

Joe pulls a pistol from his belt. He fires.

Bark explodes from a tree a few feet from where Susie is walking.

Susie flinches but never turns.

144

INT. CORRIDOR. 144

Bobby waits. The door opens, and Susie comes out, tears in her eyes. She looks wildly into Bobby's face who has clearly heard everything. She runs off down the corridor.

Bobby looks through the open door. Devastated, James sits staring at the floor. He looks up at Bobby.

JAMES:

Tell Pop to make sure she's taken care of. Whatever she needs.

As Bobby nods, James gets up, walks over to the door, and slowly closes it.

145

INT. JAMES BROWN'S HOME. 1988. 18 YEARS LATER. 145

JAMES 55 YRS

CLOSE ON - Numerous framed pictures of Teddy span all ages of his life now fill the top of James' dresser.

We widen to find James Brown sitting very alone in his bedroom staring at the pictures of his son.

He wears a bathrobe. His hair is up in rollers. He's twitchy and sweating.

124

He raises a glass pipe to his mouth, lites the PCP within and inhales it.

146 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. LATER THAT DAY. 1988 146

A peaceful road. SUDDENLY - a pickup truck passes at a hundred MPH.

FOLLOWED.. A MOMENT LATER - by nine cop cars.

A cop car pulls up next to James' truck. James looks to the car.

SLOW MOTION SEQUENCE:

In the front a cop drives but James' father, Joe, rides in the back next to his mother, Susie. They stare blankly at James.

Glass shatters in the truck.

SLOW MOTION ENDS.

James turns back to the cop car next to him. The vision of his parents is gone.

Two cops ride together. The cop in the front seat aims his revolver directly at James. It's clear he intends to kill

him.

James speeds up as the cop fires. The bullet strikes the

truck just behind him.

147 EXT. GRAVEL PITTS. 1988. DAY. 147

The pickup truck rolls to a stop. Police cars from different jurisdictions take up positions blocking exit routes.

148 INT./ EXT. PICKUP TRUCK/ GRAVEL PITTS. DAY. 148

James sits staring straight ahead. Breathing hard.

JAMES :

I'm OK. I'm OK. I'm OK.

LOUD HAILER:

EXIT THE VEHICLE WITH YOUR HANDS
ABOVE YOUR HEAD. DO NOT RUN. DO NOT
ATTEMPT TO START THE VEHICLE.

James opens the door scattering glass onto the tarmac.

125

Around the perimeter armed police tense. Keeping James in their sights. ONLY NOW, YOUNG JAMES STANDS IN PLACE OF HIS ADULT SELF. He stands next to the bullet riddled wreckage of his pickup, hands above his head. He leans back and sings to the sky.

YOUNG JAMES:

"I Don't Feel Noways Tired"

149 INT. PRISON WING. DAY. 1988 149

A warden walks a dishevelled James along the corridor. They stop. The cell door buzzes open. They put him in the cell.

150 INT. CELL. DAY. 150

The doors slide close. CLANK. James leans on the tiny sink. He looks up into the mirror and faces what's he's become. His face is bloated, his eyes wild, hair unkempt. We feel James wanting to turn to us but shame won't allow it.

151 FLASHBACK - INT. ST. STEPHENS CHURCH. DAY. 1952 151

BOBBY, NAFLOYD, BABY ROY SARAH AND JAMES sing righteous gospel that first time together in St. Stephens Church.

James is Really giving it up singing Send it on Down. His voice soars sweetly over the congregation.

MRS. BYRD and GRANDPA watch on. Mrs. Byrd leans forward and catches Bobby's eye. Gives a small nod of approval for James.

Bobby looks to James. They catch eyes. In awe of James'talent, Bobby unconsciously, stops singing. He just stands their watching and listening to his friend.

152 END FLASHBACK - BACK AT THE MIRROR 152

James pulls back from the mirror and splashes some water on his face and begins to press his hair down with his hands.

He breathes harder and harder as he assesses his life.
He stands straight and proud. Still looking in the mirror,
he begins to chant quietly to himself.

JAMES:

James Brown, James Brown. James
Brown, James brown.

126
153 EXT. SUBURBAN STREET. ATLANTA. MORNING. 1993 JAMES 60 YRS153
A pool cleaning truck pulls up outside a suburban home. A thirty something
white guy gets out with a satchel. Herings on the door.
Bobby Byrd, aged sixty, comes out of his house in a robe and slippers.

POOL CLEANER:

Morning Mr. Byrd. Come to open up
the pool.

BOBBY :

Got a real algae problem.

POOL CLEANER :

I'll take a look.

BOBBY:

Sure. You need anything, I be
inside.

As the Pool Cleaner walks around to the back yard, Bobby walks towards the
pool cleaning truck parked on the street.

153A EXT. STREET. BEHIND TRUCK. MOMENTS LATER. 153A
Bobby pulls out a pack of cigarettes from his pocket as he walks behind the
truck. He pulls out a smoke and lights up.
Bobby soon notices a Limo parked on the other side of the street. He stares
at it for a while. The door opens.
James Brown gets out of the Limo and waves.
Bobby watches as James approaches. He's clean and sober
in a suit looking sharp. James' appearance and presence throws Bobby.

BOBBY :

Mr. Brown.
They shake hands.

JAMES:

What you doing out here in your
robe, Mr. Byrd?

BOBBY :

What? Oh. See, I snuck out for a smoke. I s'posed to quit. Vicki don't know. He laughs. They both do.

JAMES :

Well I ain't gone tell.

They laugh a little. When they stop, there's a long lull.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Well I was just passing. Playing a show tonight at the Omni.

BOBBY :

Right.

JAMES :

Say. Maybe you and Vicki could come along. We got a great new horn section. Tight. We getting there.

BOBBY :

We got plans tonight. Vicki got family coming over.

JAMES :

Well you think about it. See what Vicki say.

Bobby laughs. Rumbled.

BOBBY :

Yeah. She still in charge.

They both chuckle at this. A nod of understanding. But then:

BOBBY (CONT'D)

You look well.. Man. I ain't seen you since-

JAMES :

Teddy's funeral.

Bobby pauses, grows uncomfortable. Bobby throws his cigarette to the ground and stomps it out.

BOBBY :

Right. Teddy's funeral. Damn. You look well. You shoulda called

JAMES :

You know, Bobby, they still don't know what happened to Teddy and that boy. Those boys weren't drinkin' or doin' drugs.

BOBBY :

I know, James.

JAMES :

No sir. Nothin' like that. He was a good boy. The car just hit that bridge head on. We ain't ever gone know how or why. They say he didn't feel a thing. Bobby nods.

BOBBY :

That's good, James.

JAMES :

But we brought him back to August didn't we? Got him home then sent him on to the Lord.

BOBBY :

We did, Mr. Brown. We did. James stands there, fixedly. The Pool cleaner comes from around the truck, breaks the tension.

POOL CLEANER :

OK. Mr. Byrd. I fixed your problem. I'll be back in the Spring to open her up.

BOBBY :

I'm much obliged. Do I have to-

POOL CLEANER :

No no. We'll send the bill on. Well that's that. Good day Gentlemen. He gets in his truck and pulls away leaving Bobby and James standing in an awkward silence.

JAMES :

Look at that. We got white folk cleaning our pool. Come a long way huh, Mr. Byrd?

BOBBY :

Yeah. We come a long way.

129

Suddenly this is awkward. For both of them. Bobby defuses it:

JAMES :

You still makin' the steps, Mr.
Byrd?

BOBBY :

Here and there.

JAMES :

You hurtin' a little in the hips?

BOBBY :

A little. You?

JAMES :

Not me. I just get stronger everyday. Gettin' better every day.
James pulls out two concert tickets from his jacket and handsthem to Bobby.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Maybe you and Vicki got somefriends who could come tonight.

Good seats, too.

James turns sharply and walks back to the Limo. He sings tohimself.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(Sings)

Oh, Mary Don't You Weep...

Bobby listens. And remembers.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(Sings)

Tell Martha Not to Moan.

He stops and turns to Bobby.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What's the next line?

Bobby looks at James.

BOBBY :

I can't seem to recall. Was a longtime ago.

James nods. After a moment Bobby nods.

130

BOBBY (CONT'D)

See you around Mr. Brown.

Bobby turns. James watches as he walks back to his house.

JAMES :

See you around Mr. Byrd.

James walks towards his Limo.

SFX:

Louder.

154 INT. DRESSING ROOM. 1993. NIGHT. 154

Show time. James sits in front of the mirror, putting on greasepaint with the assistance of a make-up artists.

A much older Gertrude comes in.

JAMES BROWN :

How we doin, Gertrude?

GERTRUDE:

To the rafters Mr. Brown. To rafters.

JAMES BROWN:

That's good. You two gimme a minute here.

Gertrude and the make-up artist look at each other. They leave him. Alone, he looks around the dressing room. At the walls. The ceiling fan. Finally at his reflection. He holds his own gaze. We push in, as he fights it. And fights it.

Slowly, inevitably the sound from the auditorium grows. Thousands of people shouting his name: "JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMES BROWN, JAMES BROWN."

155 FLASHBACK - INT. JAIL CELL. 1949. DAY. 155

JAMES AGED SIXTEEN, SITS ALONE, staring at the wall. Incanting his name, quietly. Intently.

JAMES :

(Quietly)

JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMESBROWN, JAMES BROWN...

131

156 INT. AUDITORIUM. 156

The crowd are going wild.

CROWD:

JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMESBROWN, JAMES BROWN.

157 EXT. CHURCH/ DIRT ROAD. DAY. 1941. 157

Young James, 8, walking through the forest alone, hollering his name.

YOUNG JAMES:

JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMESBROWN, JAMES BROWN.

158 INT. AUDITORIUM - EVERYONE CHANTING 158

CROWD:

JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMESBROWN, JAMES BROWN.

159 EXT. BARREN PATH. DAY. 1942. 159

YOUNG JAMES, nine, battered, bruised and shirtless walkstoward us with the number "One" painted on his chest. He sayshis name to himself over and over.

YOUNG JAMES :

(quietly)

JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMESBROWN, JAMES BROWN.

We soon realize this is the same path where he discovered thebody of the lynched young man.

160 INT. AUDITORIUM -EVERYONE CHANTING. 160

We see Bobby and Vicki in the crowd.

Slowly Bobby begins to whisper..

BOBBY BYRD :

(To himself)

James Brown. James Brown...

CROWD:

JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMESBROWN, JAMES BROWN.

132

161 EXT. RIVER. DAY. 1942. 161

Bloodied 9 year old James begins walking by the side of ariver.

YOUNG JAMES :

(quietly)

JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMESBROWN, JAMES BROWN.

162 INT. DRESSING ROOM. 162

SLOWLY James stands, buttons his jacket and opens the dressing room door.

JAMES:

James Brown. James Brown. James Brown.

163 INT. BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR. 163

James marches out of the room into the corridor..

CROWD:

JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMESBROWN, JAMES BROWN.

...two assistants fall into step and we follow on hisshoulder as he struts his way past the dressing rooms, to thewings, where the band stand.

164 INT. STAGE WINGS. 164

Alone, JAMES closes his eyes. Bows his head.

ANNOUNCER V/O

...the Hardest Working Man in show
business, Mr. Dynamite...

165 EXT. RIVER. DAY. 165

Over announcer's introduction we watch Young James reach the river's edge,
ANNOUNCER V/O Mr. Please, Please himself..

His head and body proud, overlooking the mighty river.

133

DANNY RAY V/O

..ladies and gentlemen its
showtime...the one and only

JAAAAAAAMES BROWN!!!

YOUNG JAMES, eyes closed saying his name over and over.

YOUNG JAMES:

JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMESBROWN, JAMES BROWN.

YOUNG JAMES suddenly opens his swollen eyes and looks right at us.

YOUNG JAMES (CONT'D)

I paid the cost to be the boss.

James leans back, widens his arms and looks to the sky.

166 INT. THE STAGE. 166

James steps forward and strides across the stage to the micstand.

CROWD:

JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMESBROWN, JAMES BROWN.

He looks out over the crowd. Then... He begins to sing a
capella. He stares right us.

JAMES:

Try me. Try me. Darlin tell me.

I need you. Try me. Try me.

And your love will always be true

The crowd goes silent. All we hear is Mr. Brown's soulful
voice.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Oh I need you (I need you)

Hold me. Hold me. I want you right
here by my side. Hold me. Hold me.

And your love we won't hide

Slowly Bobby smiles. Tears in his eyes.

THE END.