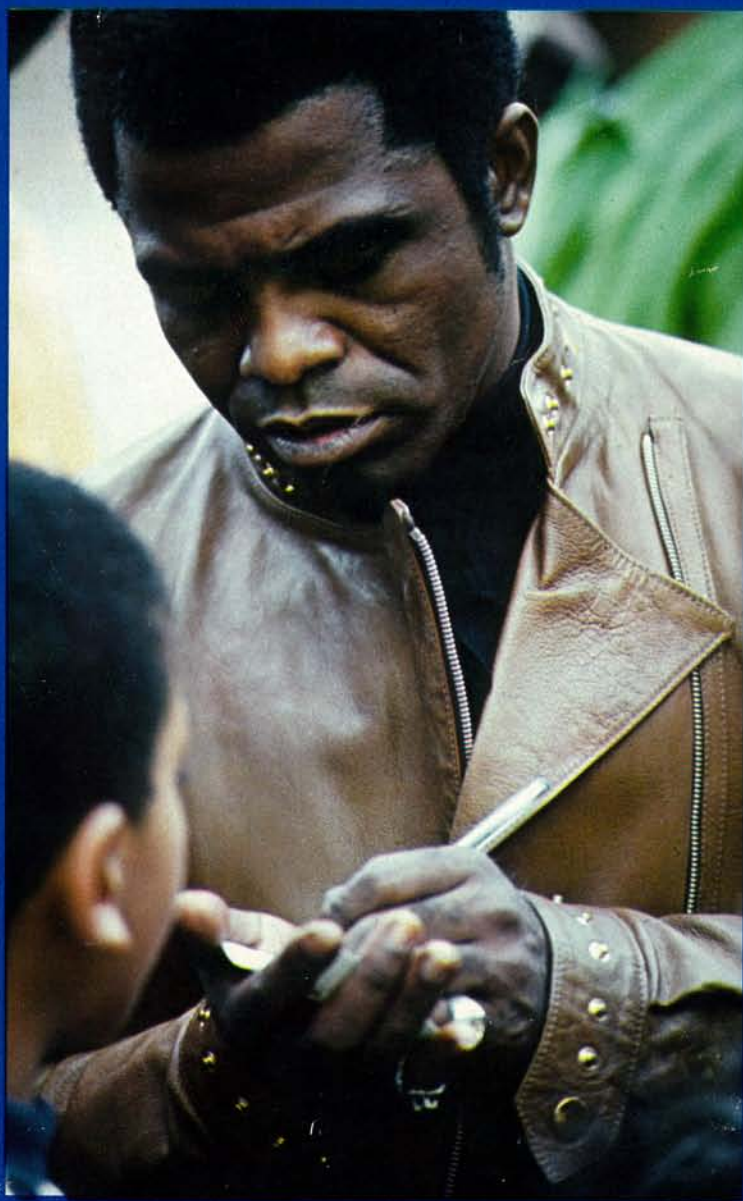


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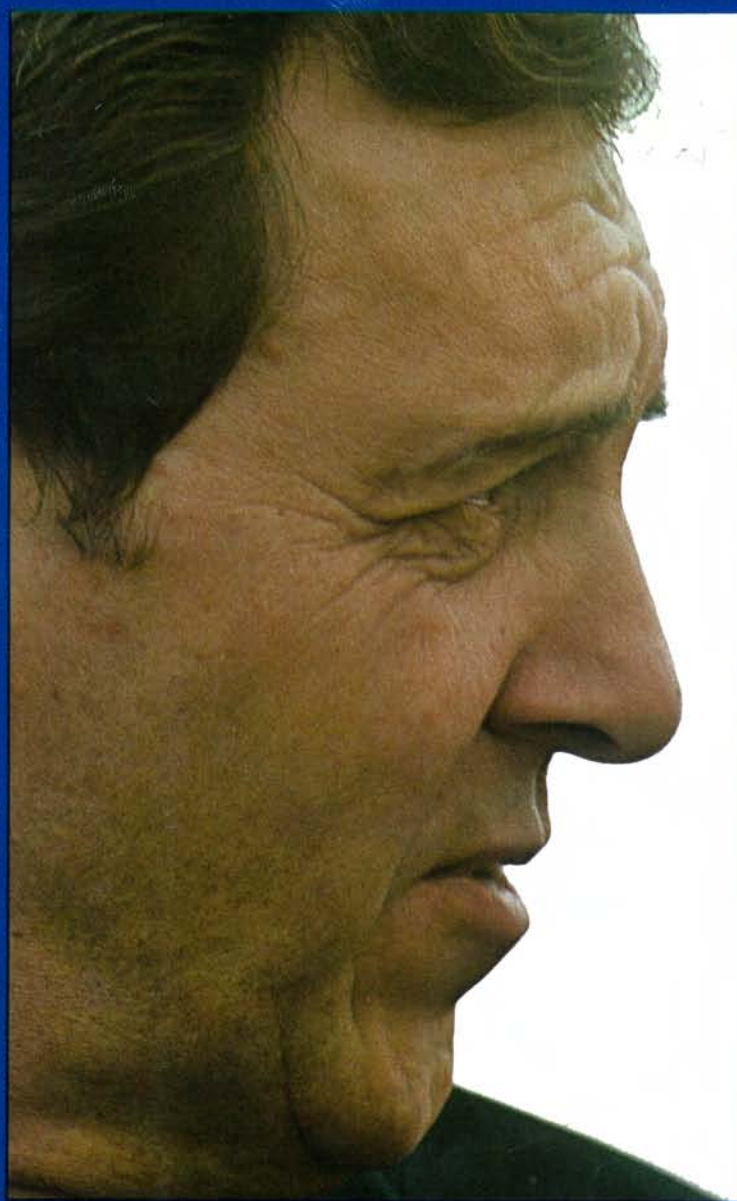
50 CENTS · FEBRUARY 18, 1969

## P.O.W. MY FOUR YEARS IN A VC PRISON



**JAMES  
BROWN**

Is he the most  
important black  
man in America?



**SENATOR  
MUSKIE**

A close-up  
of the loser as  
a big winner



# THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING MR. JAMES BROWN

JAMES BROWN learned the blues early. A poor-black bantam from the red-clay hills of the Georgia-Carolina line, he grew up in houses where there was no real mother, no brother or sister, a father only on occasion. He got his first store-bought underwear when he was nine. Before he left school in the seventh grade, he had shined shoes, washed cars, picked cotton and danced for nickels and dimes from soldiers at Fort Gordon, near Augusta. He went into reform school at 16 (car theft, breaking and entering), was paroled at 19. He began to sing spirituals in a Toccoa church to support an early marriage and because "I was trying to get a foothold, in anything. I just wanted to be able to sit down and eat a good meal."

"In those days," says Sylvester Means, now a policeman in Toccoa, "James could tear a church down with his singing."

This past December, soul singer James Brown, 35, became the first black man in the 30-year history of *Cash Box* magazine to be cited as best male vocalist on single pop records. For the uninitiated, "pop" means sales to the whole record-buying public, not simply in the predominantly Negro rhythm 'n' blues market where Brown has been No. 1 since 1966.

Thus, 15 years after he left Toccoa to tour cheap Southern dives in a ranch wagon containing, at one period, eight musicians plus instruments, James Brown is receiving belated recognition from white America. His stature among American Negroes, in the meantime, has become monumental. He is The King, Soul Brother No. 1 of the 1960's, the man who can outsing, outdance, outthrust any rival—and does it for an hour and a half per show, 250 to 300 nights a year in ball parks and auditoriums from Orlando to Oakland, with a \$5 top and children under 12 let in

for 99 cents. To millions of kids on ghetto street corners, he is living proof that a black man can make it big—and still come back to listen to their troubles. To their parents, James Brown is all this plus something else: the author of the 1966 message-song, *Don't Be a Drop-Out*. To announcer Buddy Lowe of station XERB in Los Angeles, "he is our most lovable entertainer—and our best teacher."

Dick Clark, the original TV disc jockey whose *American Bandstand* daytime show is in its 12th successful year, introduced James Brown on television in October, 1961, and has had him back a dozen times. "We both started with music that was looked down upon," says Clark, "me with pop in general, James with what used to be called 'race music,' then rock 'n' roll, then rhythm 'n' blues, now soul music. There's no doubt that this Negro-oriented music has been the basis of Top 40 music since the early 1950's."

Over four decades after Paul Whiteman "introduced" jazz to America, 15 years after Bill Haley's version of Ivory Joe Hunter's *Shake, Rattle and Roll* began a new pop era, ten years after the Beatles copied the electric-guitar techniques of Muddy Waters, James Brown is another reminder of the world's continuing debt to Afro-American music. Syncopated rhythms, call-and-response singing, shouts, growls and the falsetto voice, gospel harmony and earthy, uninhibited lyrics—plus the African twist, the jerk, the mashed potato, the camel walk, the boogaloo—are part of the original rhythm 'n' blues musical legacy. Elvis Presley stunned white America with *Hound Dog*, an old R&B standard, in 1956, the same year of James Brown's first million-seller, *Please, Please, Please*.

Partly by choice, partly because of the times, James Brown has stuck with what LeRoi Jones, in

*Blues People*, describes as music "performed almost exclusively for . . . a Negro audience. For this reason, it could not suffer the ultimate sterility that would have resulted from total immersion in the mainstream of American culture." Brown is thus a popular leader in a manner few white Americans understand. Charles Keil, author of *Urban Blues*, writes that the entertainer is one of two "ideal types," or culture heroes, for lower-class Negroes. In 1968, Brown's million-selling chant, *Say It Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud*, became an anthem among youth from Watts to the Harlem playground at right.

James Brown is also a ranking black capitalist, directly employing 85 people to run his production office, two radio stations (only five of America's 528 "soul stations" are black-owned), record-company and real estate interests. His annual payroll is \$1.1 million. Spending money to make money, he has used promotions to boost his road gross from \$450,000 in 1963 to \$2.5 million in 1968 (of which ten percent went to local youth groups or charities). Records, publishing and investments pyramided his total 1968 gross income to \$4.5 million. He is now worth well over \$3 million, but is not sitting on it: four more radio stations and a chain of black-managed restaurants are being planned.

In 1969, when millions of hyper-aware young men and women wonder whether it is still possible to be both black and American, James Brown is a new, important leader. His constituency dwarfs Stokely Carmichael's and the late Dr. Martin Luther King's. Warily, he has begun to speak not for programs but dignity: "I'm a racist when it comes to freedom. I can't rest until the black man in America is let out of jail, until his dollar's as good as the next man's."

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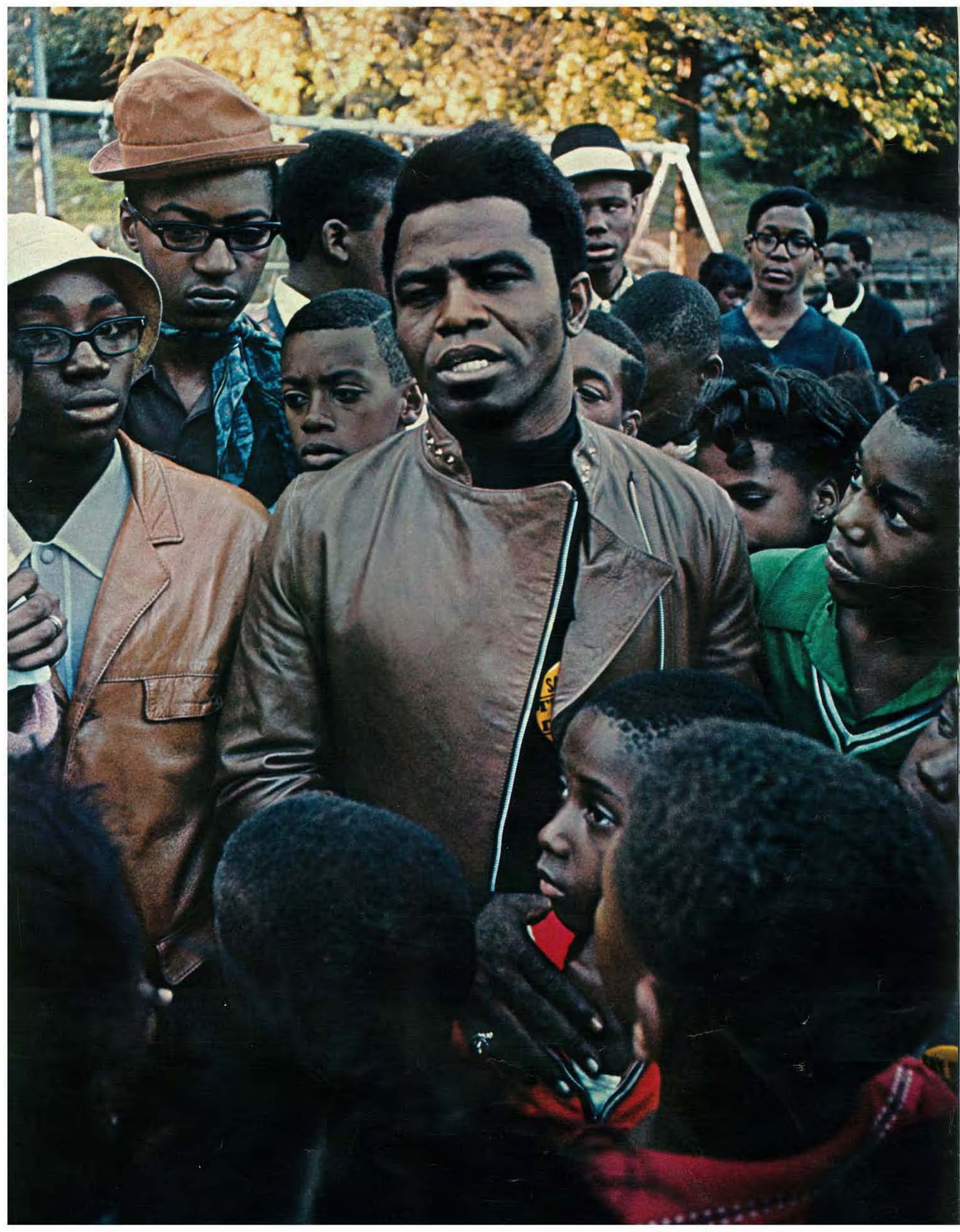
Many men have  
gone from ghetto to glory,  
and forgotten.  
He bothered to come back.

BY THOMAS BARRY

LOOK ASSISTANT EDITOR

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN SHEARER AND DAN McCOY









SOUL TAKES POWER:  
IN ONE HOUR,  
JB WILL CROON,  
GRUNT, HOWL AND DANCE  
A LIFE OF BLUES

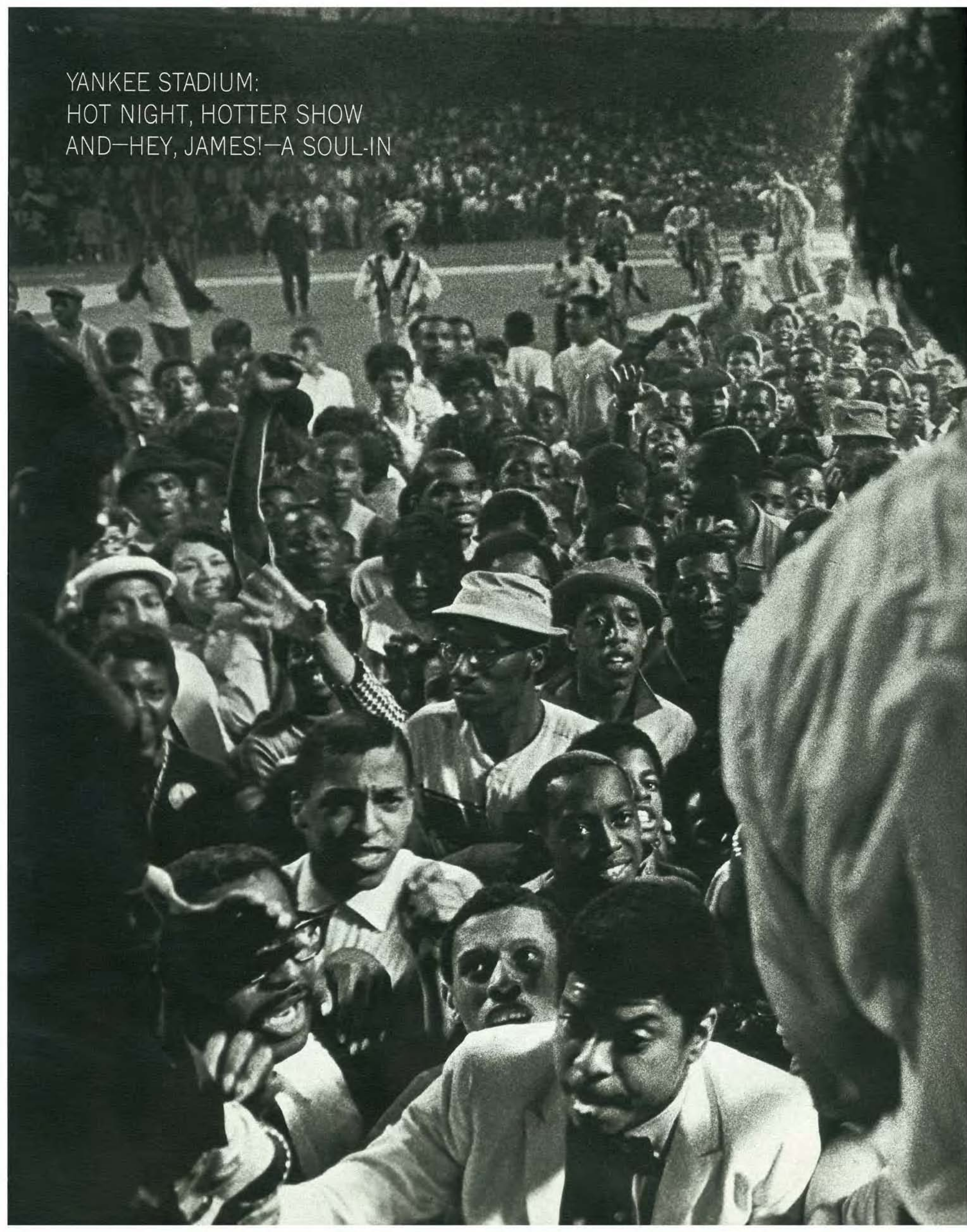




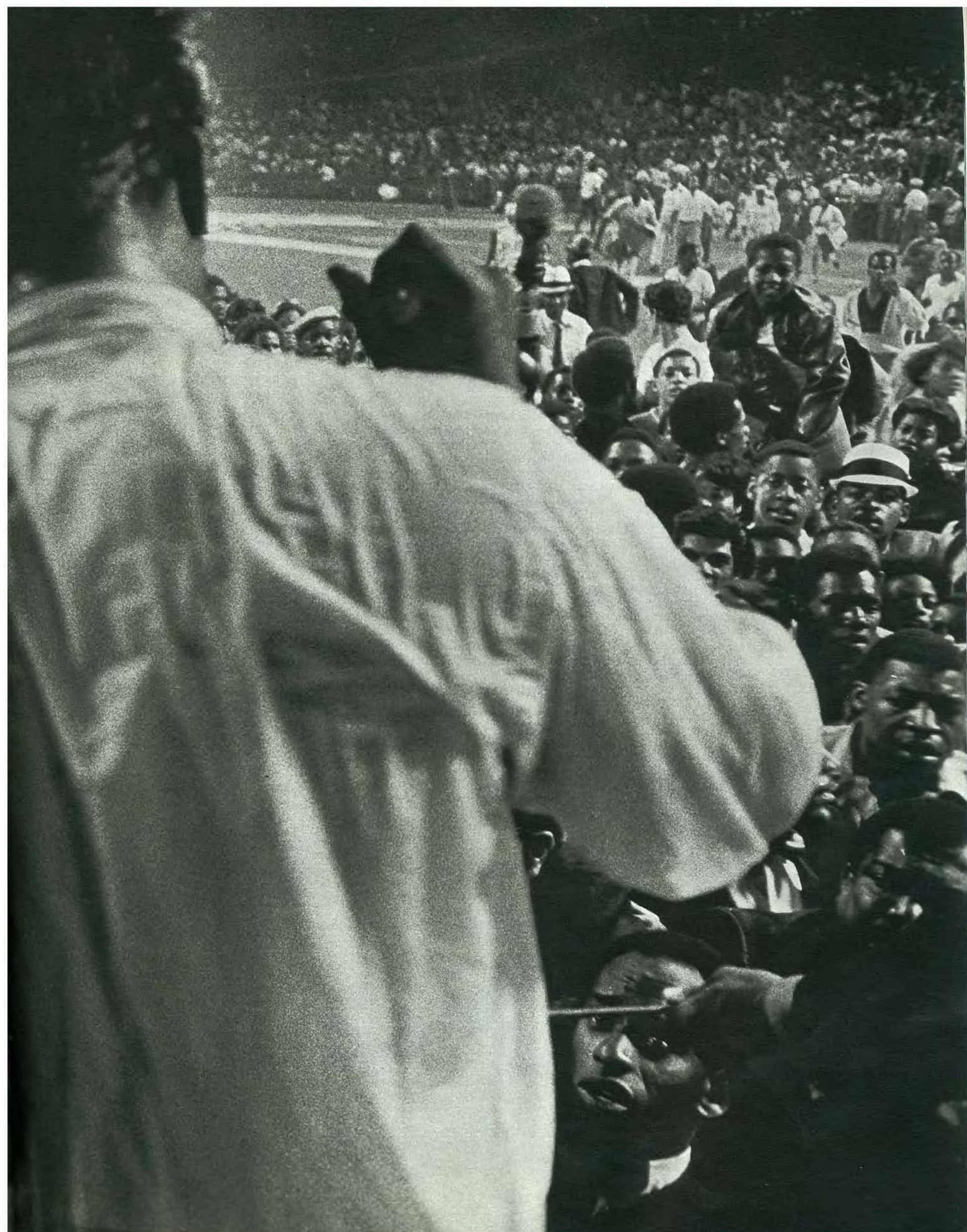




YANKEE STADIUM:  
HOT NIGHT, HOTTER SHOW  
AND—HEY, JAMES!—A SOUL-IN









# "NO COUNTRY CAN BEAT US IF WE GET THE RACE PROBLEM FIXED."

MR. BROWN CONTINUED



In New York: "I'm 25 percent talent, 75 percent business."

James Brown is an entertainer, and more. As a performer, he is part acrobat and part exorcist, luring his audience into a shrieking, handclapping frenzy of participation. (Sample lyrics: "A man can make everything he can . . . but a woman makes a better man." "Can't stand it . . . UH . . . OW . . . Good God! Can't stand your love.") In business, he is the black Horatio Alger, preaching and living hard work, punctuality and correct behavior. To his people, he is a poet, philosopher, benefactor and possible Messiah. "All the kids are crazy about him," says Frank Half-acre, a former disc jockey from Youngstown, Ohio. "To me, personally, he represents what Malcolm X represented—he makes a black person feel like a man."

Brown's fans are loyal because they feel he has never left them. Unlike other successful Negro singers, from Ray Charles to Diana Ross and the Supremes, Brown has never "gone commercial" in style or audience. When this happens, a subtle barrier is created. Charles himself admitted last summer that "My being at the Coconut Grove [in Los Angeles] or the Copacabana in New York means nothing to other black people who are looking for dignity, decent housing, an education and a job."

The Supremes, the Temptations and other practitioners of the original Detroit "Motown" sound—often called "sweet" or "slick" soul—have also won large white audiences in nightclubs and on television. James Brown, preferring to write and perform his own brand of funky soul, has never appeared in the big nightclubs or, until the past 18 months, on network television. He has been the "king of the one-nighters," traveling 100,000 miles a year to entertain over three million living, loving, undulating fans, among them a growing number of young whites. Last year, they bought 4.4 million of his single records.

James Brown comes from the gaudy gold-lamé-coat, tight-pants and pretty-pompador tradition of rock 'n' roll singers. He still owns much of the paraphernalia that any respectable popular star needs—the legendary 500 to 1,000 suits, 300 pairs of shoes, a silver-and-black Rolls-Royce, a gray Lincoln Mark III, a yellow Excalibur sports car and a \$120,000 Victorian castle in Queens, N.Y.—but the style has been upgraded. He now wears more subdued continental suits, Nehru jackets, dark turtlenecks, loose-fitting

leather coats, zippered jumpsuits. Brown has also switched to a short, natural hairstyle.

Nine years ago, James Brown—at 26—turned life around and began "to take care of business, to save my money and make a career. People were laughing at me." In 1963, the late Ben Bart of Universal Attractions Inc. became Brown's manager as well as booking agent, encouraging him to build up exposure by working promotional dates with disc jockeys and buying advertising time on radio. By 1965, the hit records began to come in. Brown had also met Gregory Moses, a CPA who is now executive vice president of James Brown Enterprises. "Up until 1962," says Moses, "he hadn't always filed tax returns—a very common situation among entertainers, who tend to let personal things go."

Two years ago, Brown bought a \$713,000 Lear-jet, capable of flying him and five passengers from city to city at 550 miles per hour. With a "JB" on the tail, a soft-blue interior, tape deck for music, and dining table, the plane both symbolizes and hurries the successful career of the hardworking singer. It is his traveling home and office, where he may eat an infrequent meal (creamed chicken, ice cream, soft drink), confer with business advisers, grant interviews or just sleep. Often, his guest will be a quiet, dark-eyed girl named Deirdre, a close companion over the past year. Brown is separated from his wife, who lives near Toccoa with their 14-year-old son Teddy. He has built a 20-room house for them.

Brown runs his 35-man road troupe (20 bandsmen, stagehands, personal attendants, comedian, female singer, front-office men) like an infantry platoon. Fines are levied (drinking on job, \$50; shoes not shined, \$25; wrinkled suit, \$50). Everyone is addressed publicly as "Mr." or "Miss." Brown is a stickler for detail. He asks respect from audiences and usually gets it. (Columbus, Ga., policeman C. E. McClung: "One gesture from him is worth 100 cops.") Says Brown: "I want to be 5,000 percent right in what I do. I got to be."

Such straight-arrow thinking occasionally draws private chuckles from Brown's bandsmen, most of whom are in their twenties. It has offended others in the business. But it impressed San Francisco attorney Donald Warden, a Negro, when he first met James Brown in 1964, and led indirectly to Brown's public prominence today.

"I've always felt that the only thing to unite our race would be music," says Warden, who headed an Afro-American self-help program in 1964, "long before it was fashionable." Warden knew many Negro musicians and entertainers "who could be used to raise money, but none with the power and vision to be an actual leader for young people."

Then, Warden met Brown: "I not only admired



TV crew shoots a day in the life of James Brown.



Monroe, La., guards wince as JB fans start to orbit.

how he organized his band, but it seemed to me that James had taken the powerful, cathartic music of Africa and the gospel tradition and captured our youth. I told him: 'If you want to, you can be the next meaningful leader of our race. You can create an atmosphere which could be used educationally.'"

James Brown made his first tour of a ghetto area in San Francisco, in September, 1966, telling kids to stay in school. Soon, he released his "message record," *Don't Be a Drop-Out*, which became a million-seller and brought an invitation from Vice President Humphrey to lead a national anti-dropout campaign. Says Warden: "For the first time, someone had used the cultural music of our race—a big beat and hip language—to get through to kids."

Brown has continued to talk to kids, from the stage and on the streets. His message has always been pragmatic: "Get an education, because all of you can't make it the way I did. If what should be done in this country, be done, you got to be ready."

Privately, Brown gets very discouraged: "This country's gonna blow in two years unless the white man wakes up. The black man's got to be set free. He's got to be treated as a man. I don't say hire a cat cause he's black; just hire him if he's right. This country is like a crap game. I'll lose my money to any man long as the game is fair. But if I find the dice are crooked, I'll turn the table over. What we need are programs that are so out of sight they'll leave the militants with their mouths open. A militant is just a cat that's never been allowed to be a man."

Brown did three things last spring that earned him the title of "Roy Wilkins of the music world" from his namesake, H. Rap: he helped to cool the April riots in Boston and Washington, D.C.; he dined at the White House; and he released a record called *America Is My Home*. The record, another message with a big beat, drew scattered protests in the black community. Brown feels it wasn't understood—"I was talkin' about the land, the country, not the government. There's no country can beat us if we get the race problem fixed. This is home; we can't leave. Never found another nation yet that could make hard ice cream or decent soul food."

At a Black Power conference last fall, playwright-activist LeRoi Jones referred to James Brown as "our No. 1 black poet," adding that what Brown needed most of all was a leader.

At 35, Brown would be a poor follower: "My music tells what the man on the street feels. I haven't had one bit of help from the government, states or local cities. It's been a fight all the way . . . and I'm glad, because when you set the record, you can see what James Brown did for himself, with the help of his people. He made it as a black man."

END