

# Brown plays Massey Hall to a tune of 3,000 fans

by Herman Surkis

James Brown is a first class showman; this was the man that forestalled riots after Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination, the soul brother of the world, the indisputable master.

The audience of 3,000 loved

him, and considering the number of times he has appeared in Toronto I was surprised at the number.

The show started with his 18 piece orchestra (they are beyond being called a band) playing sev-

eral numbers to warm up the audience. Presently Brown came on, spoke to his soul brothers for a while and opened with "My World." The audience was at his mercy from the moment he appeared on the stage.

He was backed by several trombones, trumpets, cymbals, organs, bass-tenor and alto sax, two drummers and three violins. The group was so good that they could have carried the whole show with only a minor riot if Brown hadn't appeared.

The alto and tenor saxophonists took turns doing solos and came out with the occasional exciting jazzy moment but who expects jazz from an R and B group.

A go-go dancer came on in a bikini and bumped her way through a couple of numbers. Some of the guys near me were starting to develop eyestrain.

A girl singer, Marva Whitney, with a beautiful voice sang several slow, soft songs and then blew it all with a couple of hard R and B numbers. That voice was never meant for the harsh grating sound of commercial blues.

After the intermission Brown came back, surged on with "I'm a Soul Man", followed by another rendition of "Say so Loud", and "I'm Black and I'm Proud". At this point you could not have paid anyone to leave, at double their ticket price.

The 34-year-old Brown did choreography dance steps and movements with the energy of a teenybopper but this is in low gear compared to the man of a few years ago — he sang, shrieked and moaned through his numbers. The band pounded out the beat forced the audience to participate.

## Who is James Brown?

James Brown is a black man, and the world's number one soul brother.

His formal education ceased at the seventh grade. Post graduate credits include four years in reform school. His first job was shining shoes.

At an age when most middle-class Americans were selecting their wardrobes for junior high school, Brown was shining shoes on the steps of an Augusta radio station, a station he now owns.

It all began in Augusta, Georgia, where young James contributed to the family finances by singing and dancing for the soldiers at nearby Camp Gordon.

Until 1956, his life was a nightmare, four brutal years in a Georgia reformatory, then a day to day existence which depended on the nickels and dimes tossed to him by the soldiers.

Then he got his first break. Brown formed a trio, went to King Records, recorded, and had a hit. From that time on it was a succession of hits.

To date, 24 of Brown's singles and one album have sold more than a million copies each. The song titles tell a great deal about the world of James Brown. "Cold Sweat", "Money won't Change You," "Don't be a Drop Out" and, "Say It Loud. I'm Black and I'm Proud."

But it's on stage that he really takes over. From Harlem's Apollo Theatre to Evansville, Ind., Mr. Dynamite puts on a show that is unmatched in its explosive quality.

Two drummers and two standbys thunder home the soul sound. Brown drops to one knee. The crowd surges to the stage and the police form a ring around him. Then two aides come in from the wings, and draping a velvet cape over Brown's shoulders, help him slowly, painfully off-stage. The crowd cries for James, but the man is gone. The show is over.

Brown's greatest moment was not on the concert stage. It was during the riots that followed the senseless assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. He went on television in Washington and Boston, and with simplicity and conviction told the audience: "Get off the streets, go home. Nothing can be gained by looting and burning, only sorrow and misery. Give the kids a chance to learn."

It worked!

Brown's background explains his music, and strangely, his optimistic attitude towards life. Everyone takes a crack at defining soul music, but Brown's definition has the ring of truth: "Soul is all the hard knocks the black man has had, all the punishments, and it's all the unfulfilled dreams that must come true."

## Liz a bomb without Dick

by David McCaughna

Director Joseph Losey, achieved artistic and critical success with his two excellent films, *The Servant* and *Accident*. Unfortunately, he has degenerated from the terse chilliness of those two films into the mediocre depths with his two latest efforts, *Boom!* (Burton and Taylor).

*Boom!* was a campy send-up of some old Tennessee Williams dud which even Burton and wife (breathe deeply) couldn't rescue.

*Secret Ceremony* is also in the Tennessee Williams syndrome, with sick, neurotic people playing games in a vast, baroque London mansion. Lugubriously directed, it is a murky melodrama with few redeeming features.

Mia Farrow, an insane recluse living in the huge church-like mansion, is unable to accept the death of her mother. But, then, lo and behold, she spies Liz Taylor, a sleazy whore, on a bus and the resemblance is so great between Taylor and Mia's dead mother that Mia takes Liz for her mother.

Liz, the basically good

whore that she is, accepts the role, moves in with Mia and plays at being a lady of position. There are numerous complications, like Mia's two thieving aunts, and her stepfather that comes over from the States to claim her.

It just so happens, naturally, that Liz is really a whore with deep sensitivities, and she feels for poor little Mia, and Mia reminds Liz of her dearly beloved drowned daughter. So the arrangement works our fairly well until nasty Robert Mitchum (the stepfather) screws things up and breaks down the illusions.

Mia, her rationale regained, kills herself. Liz kills the wicked stepfather and returns, presumably, to whoredom. Ho hum.

The film is crooked and absurd. Apparently the director was trying for deep psychological drama, but the film is so over-directed, so abstruse, and so stilted that what comes off is a pretentious, extremely contrived tale without meaning or drama.

Mia Farrow proved how bad she could look in *Rosemary's Baby*. But in *Secret Ceremony*

she goes one step farther. With stringy black wig and anemic face she looks like death warmed over. And her acting consists of a pouty stare.

Elizabeth Taylor, fat and clumsy, isn't much better. I'm afraid that I must agree with Wilfred Steed who, in a recent *Esquire* article, "Burton and Taylor Must Go", said of Liz, "...her acting closed shop long ago, as one's handwriting does or one's walk, she cannot do anything with it, short of contortion and shrillness."

Admittedly in *Secret Ceremony* she is burdened with a doltish script and direction, but she never shines through and manages to over-act her way without style.

There are a couple of laughs in the film, and even the glimmer of suspense now and again, but aside from that it is hollow and boring.

And there is nothing in the last 12 minutes to justify the titillating advert, "Because of the unusual ending no one will be admitted during the last 12 minutes." Few people should want to be admitted to any of it, let alone the last 12 minutes.

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