

James brown was an american singer thesis sample

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Who was James Brown? He was known by several monikers that paid tribute to his talent and contributions to the world of American music. Many have heard the term “ God Father of Soul” or “ the hardest working man in show business.” Of course, no one is sure as to whether “ hardest working” is a description for amount of times spent in practice and musical development or how passionately he danced. James Brown was an American singer.

James was the originator and chief pioneer of the style of music known as funk. Thus, he deserves credit for its complicated grooves or pocket rhythms and disciplined musical composition. James almost used a big-band styled stage ensemble. For much of his career he performed with two trap drum set drummers, a string and horn section and several back-up singers. He perhaps was also the originator of the complex stage show. Dance routines, precise rhythmic singing and emotional stage play helped James Brown to fill stadiums, coliseums, concert halls and ball parks.

One of the most under-spoken feats of James Brown’s career is the fact that he performed over 330 shows, with his band, over the course of one year. Most of these performances were one-nighters; no, long stays in one city for a tour. He traveled with his entire team by bus from city to city. James Brown delighted his fans for over the course of six decades. A quick calculation of stage performances times 60 years of hard work approximates an astounding 19, 800 performances. Note: he performed until the year of his death; and he passed at the end of that year.

James Brown was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986. He was also inducted into the Song Writer’s Hall Fame in 2000. These two accomplishment are worthy tokens for such a hard-working performer.

James Brown was born December 3, 1933 in Barnwell, South Carolina. He died shortly after his 73rd birthday (Dec. 3, 2006) on Christmas day of that same year. One interesting fact about James Brown is that he claimed to have Chinese ancestry. He was born a Junior to his own father but would later drop the junior from his name. This may signify a rift from his father. His childhood was marked with deep and extreme poverty. Perhaps this explains why he worked so hard on show business. Because of his stage performances and the frequency of them he was nicknamed the hardest working man in show business.

James Brown lived under the difficulty of having been abandoned by his mother and father by the age of six (his mother at the age of two).

Unfortunately, his father would turn him over to his aunt at age six who ran a brothel. James eventually would find a life in the streets and drop out of school at approximately 12 years of age. He would “hustle” by performing menial tasks to provide his own care. He would perform street dances and singing routines for money. Hard times as a child would forge James Brown into the performer he had become later in life.

James Brown came of age in the early 1950's. This means that he grew up during the 30's and 40's. This means that he would have grown up during the early Rhythm and Blues era of African American musical history. He may or may not have listened to Jazz and he would have been familiar with Big Band and country music. This is probably where he was influenced in his use of a large stage band. His most noted influence was Louis Jordan, a Rhythm and Blues and Jazz entertainer of the 1940s. Here he was inspired to break into show business and make a living of it.

The social pressure of the 1930's hadn't come full circle and the black community was still dormant with the embers of change on the inside. Having grown up in the South, James Brown would have experienced segregation on some very intense levels. This would impact him deeply and later catalyze some of his most famous music.

James took to serious performance in 1945 when he was 12 years old (the point at which he had dropped out of school). He formed his first singing group. The group was called the Cremona Trio. His small talent group would win local talent shows and win gigs at several army bases and high schools. He fell into trouble and was convicted of armed robbery when he was 16. While serving his prison sentence, Brown would build again and begin performing in juvenile detention. Here he would actually perform with instruments made of items to be found in a prison cell: hair combs, pieces of paper and even wooden boxes. Here was discovered by a Bobby Byrd, whose family had influence in the music industry. Bobby admired James' ability to gather, wow and dazzle a crowd. Thus, James would secure a conditional release from prison which included terms that he would continue to sing for the Lord.

As stated James Brown would build a music career on hard work and grittiness that reflected his rough childhood. He would perform, be asked to perform more and then fail only twice in his career. After initial failures as a Gospel singer he would move on to secular fame and stay that course for the rest his life and career.

This brought him a break in show business 1952. He was 19 years old. For a season after this he would play semi-pro baseball and get into boxing. He

suffered a leg injury and would turn his attention to music. In 1954, James attempted to make good on his promise to continue singing Gospel music. The name of his group was called the Ever Ready Gospel Singers. When he failed to get a record deal, he returned to Toccoa.

Upon hearing of his failures, his friend Bobby Byrd would ask him to replace a lead singer in his own group. The Avons, as the group was so named, followed the styles of singing groups such as the Orioles, the Five Keys and Billy Ward with his group. They primarily toured the south. They changed their name to the Toccoa band to strike uniqueness because of other groups named " Avons."

They would again change their name to The Famous Flames and remain under that moniker until the 1960s. During this time they would compose and perform " Going Back to Rome" and the more famous " Please Please Please." Consequently, Little Richard would perform in that area as well. When he broke for fame with " Tutti Frutti," the Flames would fly under his shadow as his opening act.

" Please Please Please" would become a hit solo under Federal Records. The Famous Flames would go on to enjoy their own successes. James Brown was the stand out of the group which caused some alienation and group break down. James went on to have the group built around he himself. James would Sky Rocket into Fame as he would be asked to fill in for Little Richard as he had left show business to follow his true calling in the Lord. Richard had enough left-over dates to catapult James Brown into superstardom.

As a political and social agent of change, Brown did nothing in these years as his influence small and he was still a relatively less-influential performer.

Significant events in black history at that time would include the entry of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and the beginning thrusts of the Civil Rights movement.

Brown did experience some segregation in the music industry as the label he was under when he produced the hit, " Do the Mashed Potato." The label, Federal Records, would force the song to produced and performed under the pseudonym Nat Kendrick and the Swans. This may have been to make James' music and appeal less " black sounding" than the Famous Flames and more appealing to white, and better paying, audiences.

The mild success of late 1950s was capped by commercial exposure in the early 1960s. With full control of who was in his band and the style of music, James would change his style to a more Jazz-like sound. Records under this style would include the hit such as " Think." " Think" of 1960 was James Brown's first solo recording album. After success under a solo name, Brown would go onto to become an even bigger success. Perhaps his biggest hit was an album that touched the number two spot on the music charts. That album consisted of collection of live performances. The name of the Album was " Live at the Apollo."

This album demonstrated Brown's tenacity and forthrightness as he faced the adds of the historical difficulties of albums performed live and on stage. Brown made his second appearance at the Apollo one of the biggest hits of his career. Brown would also set his own record label called Try Me. He would help produce songs by some of his former Famous Flames band mates and a few others.

After he witnessed Ray Charles achieve success as a Rock and Roll artist,

Brown would dabble in some “ crossover” work of his own. “ Crossing over” was a term coined by black artists of the day who were identified as having departed from traditional or popular music of the black community to appeal to a wider audience. He produced and performed “ Prisoner of Love” in 1962 which was a stray from his Jazz and Rhythm feel.

In regard to political activism, Brown decided on a totally different influence in the 1960s. After reflecting on his own drop-out status, Brown decided to work toward a more positive image and influence children not to drop out. He noted the spiraling effect of a lack of education on the black community and then wrote “ Don’t Be a Drop-Out.” Later, he would correct his position as a glorified drop-out and note that he was forced out of school for not having sufficient clothing, as some reports state.

Brown had actually received accolades from Lyndon B Johnson in the form of a citation. This was awarded to him as President Johnson noted him as a positive black influence. The pop singer had an interesting career as political activist and agent for social change. While he produced and created such great hits as “ Say It Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud” and “ Don’t be Drop Out,” he was also a staunch Republican. He openly supported Richard Nixon (twice) which drew criticism from the black community. This led to some protests from his shows by black liberal activist groups.

In spite of these seeming contradictions, James Brown enjoys some spotlight in the annals of contribution in the struggle for Social change in the 1960s. He landed “ Say It Loud” in 1968 and created an album under the same name in 1969. In spite controversy within the black community in years following this album, James brown would still hold the “ title” for the most

noted black-power anthem of the 60s and the years following. To note the influence of this song, children born years after the album was released, that were attuned to totally different styles of music, will dance and appreciate shouting, " I'm Black and I'm Proud!" to the famous music made by James Brown. While some argue that he did this to tap greater revenue and procure greater fame on the cusps of a burgeoning, and at that time in-vogue social movement, the hit has the effect of a papa encouraging self-confidence in his children. Perhaps he was influenced by the death of Dr. Martin Luther King and its effects on the black community of that same year.

His album names reflected a return to performing music primarily for the black community. " Soul Brother No. 1" was a hit album. The name of the album is a pull-up of " soul brother" from a street; a term denoting a personal authentic carry of the mannerisms of the black culture. His following album " God Father of Soul" would carry the same effect.

Decorated with songs such as " Cold Sweat" and " Funky Drummer," these albums were the original bringers of the funk. They noted a change in James' music and a change in music in general.

The songs featured syncopated riffs performed succinctly and simultaneously by the entire band. These riffs locking in with James' dance routine helped to further build his reputation as a superior artist.

In mentioning his dance routines James Brown is perhaps the single greatest influencer in black entertainment. While many may argue, and rightly so, that Michael Jackson was perhaps the single greatest dancer, James Brown held the greatest influence. Case in point: Michael Jackson copied such moves as the Moon Walk directly from James Brown. James Brown has kept

his influence as one of the greatest performing dancers of all time; he continued his influence as that well into the 1990s. Rappers MC Hammer and Big Daddy Kane both cite James Brown as having positive impact and helping to develop some of their dance moves.

James experienced some decline in the late 70s and 80s due to the fading popularity of funk music, the compounded effects of a lifetime using illegal substances and a jail stint. Also noted in his decline was a dispute with the IRS. The music of the black community had also become the music of the streets during that era and disco would begin to top the Rhythm and Blues charts. As Brown continued to experience declines in record sales, he would go on to fade out of the main spotlight in musical performance in general.

In spite of this decline, James Brown would make noted cameo appearances in movies. One of these movies would catapult him back into musical prominence with the hit single "Living in America." He performed this in a cameo appearance of Rocky IV at Apollo Creed's (Carl Weathers) last fight and Rocky Balboa's (Sylvester Stallone) fight against the same fighter Ivan Drago (Dolf Lundgren). As the movie landed in 1985, James would get a second shot at superstardom. He wouldn't drop the ball again.

Although he would never again achieve the success and prominence of the 1960s, he would continue to top the charts with hits such as "Static." This brought him some fame and recognition by the generation of his children's children.

Hip Hop was built on the back of James Brown's hard work. Sensible rappers and hip Hop historians don't deny it; in fact, they proudly admit it.

Brown's respect and influence would reach into the Hip Hop world as he was

cited as a single greatest influence by a number of rappers. Such noted artists include MC Hammer, Big Daddy Kane and iconic pioneer of Hip Hop music, Kurtis Blow. Hip Hop being the music of samples in its early (but not the earliest) days.

Rappers and Rhythm and Blues singers that sampled James Brown climb close to 3, 000. He may be the most sampled artist of all times. A short list (very short) of James Brown songs sampled in Hip Hop include “ How Ya Like Me Now?,” performed by Kool Moe D; “ Night Train” performed by public enemy; “ I’ve Got Money” performed by Will. i. am; and “ Funky Drummer” performed by James Brown.

Because Hip Hop is Rhythm based music, the fact the James Brown holds a considerable place in the sample count of that particular genre, demonstrates that he helped to build rap music into what it is today. As an influencer his music continues to be sampled and enjoyed to this day by fans from all over the world.

As a final note, James Brown is also an unfortunate example of drug abuse amongst black entertainers in the record production industry. One sad fact is that Brown strictly prohibited the use of drugs by his band members. He would fire some noted names in a few of his ensembles on a few different occasions. Brown would fall into illicit drug abuse later in his career which would lead to his decline and some jail time. He was indicted on a drug charge after a PCP induced breakdown in the early 80s. This may have lead to his further decline.

Drugs, especially Heroine, were notoriously used by black artists of the 40s, 50s and 60s. Brown’s amazing examples as a drug-free band leader perhaps

lead to his image as a positive role model. His decisions in this were perhaps influenced by his outrageously difficult early childhood and troubled teenage years. Brown was determined to be successful on every level. He reached pinnacles never before reached by black artists in the 60s. But he began to do drugs. This may have distracted him and taken his mind away from being successful.

Some argue that successful individuals often vigorously climb the ladder of success only to find emptiness. Perhaps Brown met that emptiness and decided to fill with drugs. With a musical career that extended solidly through six decades, Brown would go from Gospel to Hip Hop iconic mogul. His first attempt at "making it" was a rendition of "His (God's) Eye is on the Sparrow"; and his final spurt was "Killing is Out, School is In." James Brown's life in general was a mix of excruciatingly negative to extremely positive and successful. In his heart he desired success for all as he himself had lived in the throes of abject poverty for his early.

Brown never relapsed into the examples set by his parents. While he did have some marital drama of his own, he would keep a good career and have a mostly positive impact on African American culture.

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