



James Brown's Stage-Worn Cape

Date

c. 1960s-1970s

Primary Maker

James Brown

Medium

Cloth; Plastic

Description

James Brown's stage-worn, red sequined cape. A polyester cape covered in red plastic sequins. On its back is a red satin circular patch with gold lettering that reads, "JAMES BROWN / GODFATHER / OF SOUL". This cape was worn at various live concerts by James Brown, known as the "Godfather of Soul," in the 1960s and 1970s as part of his "Cape Routine" with emcee Danny Ray. The Cape Routine became a standard part of Brown's act, preformed thousands of times as part of a grueling tour schedule. Ray described the routine in a 1984 Chicago Sun-Times interview: "[In 1962] we started the cape routine in Baton

Rouge. It really began with a Turkish towel. I would stand in the door and add a robe when Brown sang 'Please, Please, Please (Don't Go).' He would drop to his knees (drained of emotion). I would bring out the towel, he would rip it off and rush back to the microphone onstage. The crowd came to expect it, so we finally got a cape and decided to work it into the show. Ray draped this cape over Brown's casket for the last time at his public funeral on December 30, 2006. The James Brown Homecoming Celebration was held at James Brown Arena in Augusta, GA, and was attended by Brown's family, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr., Rev. Al Sharpton, and Michael Jackson among many others. James Brown (1933-2006) was an American singer, dancer, and musician known for his energetic stage performances and gospel-tinged vocals. Brown was credited with founding the funk genre of music, combining his brand of soul, gospel, and rhythm and blues (R&B) into a groove-based, percussive sound. Brown began singing at a young age, appearing in talent shows around his hometown of Augusta, Georgia. In 1954, Brown joined Bobby Byrd's R&B band The Famous Flames, where his gospel vocal style fit with the band's soul-influenced sound. By 1957, Brown had become the leader of the group and its name was changed to James Brown and His Famous Flames. They had several hits in the 1950s including "Please, Please, Please" (which later became part of his Cape Routine), "Bewildered," and "Think." In the 1960s, Brown and the group's sound and stage-presence evolved - moving more in the direction of what became "funk." They recorded Live at the Apollo in October 1962, which sold over a million copies and cemented Brown's star status. By the end of the decade, the

funk sound was born and was present on songs like "Ain't It Funky," "Bring It Up," and "Give It Up or Turnit a Loose." By the 1970s, Brown's sound had fully formed into funk and despite lineup changes to his band, he continued to produce chart-topping songs. His influence waned by the 1980s, but Brown still maintained a heavy touring schedule, speaking to one of many of his nicknames - "the Hardest Working Man in Show Business." Brown's impact on the music industry was profound. He was part of the inaugural 1986 class of inductees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. In 1992, Brown received a Lifetime Achievement Award at that years Grammy Awards. In 2003, he was a recipient of the Kennedy Center Honors, an award celebrating those in the performing arts.

Dimensions

Overall: 56 1/2 x 46 in. (143.5 x 116.8 cm)