

VH1 Rock Docs presents: "The Night James Brown Saved Boston"

NEW YORK, NY, March 18, 2008 " On April 4, 1968, the day Martin Luther King was assassinated was one of the most tragic moments in American history. Riots quickly erupted in many cities across the nation and many of America's inner cities quickly began to go up in flames. Boston's heavily-black Roxbury neighborhood was no exception and word on the street was that it was about to get a lot worse.

At Boston's City Hall, Mayor Kevin White was trying to keep the fragile peace. One reported idea was to cancel the day's biggest gathering " a long-scheduled James Brown concert at Boston Garden. But a call from one of Boston's most influential R&B DJs to the lone black city councilman pointed out the danger of that decision. Simply, he said, "If the concert is cancelled, Boston might have the biggest uprising since the Boston Tea Party." And so, faced with the grim reality of making the wrong decision, the mayor and his team turn it around. Rather than cancel the show, they asked "Is there something James Brown can do to help?"

Mayor White came up with the idea to televise the concert live and have James encourage his fans to stay home and watch the concert on TV. In not so many words, the mayor was saying, "If you'll allow this concert to be on TV tonight, your fans in Boston will stay home and the night will be peaceful." Meaning that unlike what is happening in so many other cities around the country, Boston wouldn't erupt in flames. James gave his blessing to the idea then turned out one of the best shows of his career and Boston remained virtually riot free.

Finally, 40 years after that remarkable and historic moment, VH1 Rock Docs presents "The Night James Brown Saved Boston," a film from David Leaf Productions. Through rarely seen footage of the concert and with the personal reminiscences of James Brown's band members, colleagues (including long-time manager Charles Bobbit), awe-struck concert-goers (including Newsweek's David Gates), Boston city government officials and the pointed commentary of several distinguished observers of African-American history (including Dr. Cornel West, Dr. Andrew Young, Rev. Al Sharpton) "the dramatic and emotionally-riveting story unfolds.

For more information please log onto vh1.com.

"The Night James Brown Saved Boston" is directed by David Leaf, whose most recent feature documentaries include the Grammy-nominated "Beautiful Dreamer: Brian Wilson & The Story of SMiLE" and a previous VH1 Rock Doc, "The U.S. vs. John Lennon." Arlene Wszalek, David Leaf, Eric Kulberg and Morgan Neville are producers and Toby Byron and Richard Foos are executive producers. Mark Anstendig is supervising producer for VH1 with Shelly Tatro, Brad Abramson and Jeff Olde serving as executive producers.