



Maceo Parker (left) and James Brown during a 1973 performance. The saxophone in the photograph is on view in the exhibit case Hey America! Image courtesy of Maceo Parker.

Bring on the funk! A new genre of American music, called funk, emerged during the mid-to late 1960s. Musical genius Nathaniel "Nat" Jones of Kinston and other African American musical pioneers from eastern North Carolina helped to create funk when they

joined up with James Brown in 1964. They helped transform Brown into the icon known worldwide as the "Godfather of Funk Music."

At the N.C. Museum of History in Raleigh, an exhibit case, titled *Hey America!: Eastern North Carolina and the Birth of Funk*, will feature seven items associated with Brown and some Tar Heel musicians who worked with him.* The exhibit case will be on view through Sunday, Feb. 28, 2016, in the museum lobby. Admission is free. (*Please note that this is a large exhibit case in the museum lobby. It is not a large exhibit.)

To complement *Hey America!*, Sam Lathan, who played with James Brown and the Famous Flames, and Dick Knight, who performed with the James Brown Orchestra, will present programs in June. (Knight will be joined by Bill Myers.) More than 50 years later, these Tar Heels are still going strong! In August, Tyrone Jefferson, who served several stints as Brown's music director from 1979 through 2006, will lead a master class and give a performance.

The addition of North Carolinians to James Brown's bands began in 1962. When the legendary singer and dancer needed a drummer, he hired Lathan, of Wilson, to join James Brown and the Famous Flames. Two years later, Brown asked Jones, a graduate of N.C. College for Negroes (now N.C. Central University), to join as songwriter and music director for the James Brown Orchestra. In turn, Jones hired Kinston musicians Maceo Parker, Melvin Parker, Levi Rasbury and Dick Knight.

Between 1964 and 1967, Jones led the group and wrote many of the singer's hit records. The director and musicians developed the rhythmic new form of music that combined elements of bebop jazz, soul music, and rhythm and blues. The orchestra, in combination with a performance by Brown, "brought the funk."

"The funk genre diverted Americans from the complex racial issues of the 1960s and brought them together," said Earl James, Exhibit Curator. "Brown's 1964 album 'Grits & Soul' embodied the spirit of the Civil Rights Act and gave African Americans and whites the push to integrate willfully - by dancing."

The exhibit case title, *Hey America!*, was inspired by a Christmas song written by Jones. Learn more about this song and others in *Hey America!*, and see the following items.

- A green jumpsuit, ca. 1970, and Pierre Cardin dress shoes, ca. 1965-1970, that Brown wore during his unforgettable live performances. Both objects are on loan from the Estate of James Brown.
- The saxophone that Maceo Parker played with James Brown in the 1970s.
- The set of drums that Melvin Parker performed with in the 1970s.
- The original 1962 album "Pure Dynamite."
- A saxophone played by Nat Jones.
- A poster featuring a performance by the Nat Jones Orchestra on Aug. 4, 1967. (Jones led this orchestra, as well as the James Brown Orchestra.)

In addition, you can hear eight songs that Brown recorded, such as "It's A Man's, Man's, Man's World;" "Superbad, Superslick;" and "Make It Funky."

Brown's career spanned six decades and earned him the reputation as the "Godfather of Funk Music" and as the "Godfather of Soul." The musician, singer and dancer died in 2006.

Visit *Hey America!* and find out what Maceo Parker meant when he said, "Some music is listening music, while other types of music may be more reverent ... But our music makes you dance to the rhythm and bring the funk!"

Hey America! was inspired, in part, by African American Music Trails of Eastern North Carolina, a guidebook produced by the N.C. Arts Council, an agency of the Department of Cultural Resources. Access www.AfricanAmericanMusicNC.com for more information.

History à la Carte: Drumming Up the Funk! Wednesday, June 10, noon-1 p.m. Free! Bring your lunch; beverages provided. Sam Lathan was one of the many musicians from eastern North Carolina who influenced funk music — and even played drums for James Brown and the Famous Flames. He will talk about his experiences in the early funk music scene and about traveling the world with Brown.

Music of the Carolinas: Two of a Kind: Bill Myers & Dick Knight Sunday, June 14, 3 p.m. Free! During the 1960s, Knight performed with the James Brown Orchestra and with Otis Redding. Don't miss this performance with Knight (who plays trumpet, alto saxophone and flügelhorn) and Myers (who plays piano, saxophone, flute and vibes, in addition to directing, arranging and composing), who are members of the Monitors, a renowned North Carolina-based group that plays jazz, rhythm and blues, soul, and oldies. The performance is presented with PineCone and support from the N.C. Museum of History Associates and Williams Mullen.

Tyrone Jefferson and A Sign of the Times Saturday, Aug. 15 Master class, 4:30-5:30 p.m. Public performance, 6-7:30 p.m. \$5 plus tax per person; \$4 plus tax for museum members (includes either the performance or master class or both); free for high school and college students with ID. Register for the master class by email to kate.betka@ncdcr.gov or by phone at 919-807-7984. Don't come just for a rhythmic eight-piece-ensemble funk performance by Tyrone Jefferson and his band, A Sign of the Times - come early, bring your own instrument, and take part in a master class with Jefferson to develop your own funk music skills. Between 1979 and 2006, Jefferson served several stints as music director for James Brown.

For information about the Museum of History, a Smithsonian-affiliated museum, call 919-807-7900 or access ncmuseumofhistory.org or follow on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+ or YouTube.

Bailey Forbes Named to Honor Roll

Bailey Forbes, daughter of Eric and Melissa Forbes of Wadesboro, has been named to the honor roll at Saint Mary's School in Raleigh, where she is a rising senior.

To be eligible for the honor roll Bailey maintained a weighted grade point average of 3.5 or higher in at least five academic courses while maintaining the status of a student in good standing with the Judicial Board and administration.




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