

New Music Coming from Late RB Funk Legend Rick James

Written by Robert ID3239

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A dazzling, controversial and inexhaustible musical “Super Freak” to the end, legendary R&B/funk star Rick James may have skipped this mortal coil in 2004, but he left more than just a several decade legacy behind when he passed.

With James’ estate finally settled, his longtime business manager Ron Kramer is excited to announce a new multi-media slew of Rick James projects in 2007—beginning with the release of the never before heard track “Deeper Still,” set to ship to Urban AC Radio in late January.

The grooving single, which features the sultry Spanish language vocals of singer Ivonne Contreras, will be also be included in an as yet untitled album of all new James material, set for release this spring. Both the single and the album will be released on the new independent label Stone City Records.

James wrote and produced “Deeper Still,” along with the other new material, with longtime confidant and collaborator Danny LeMelle, who shared a fascinating history with James dating back to the late 70s, when legendary Motown songwriter Norman Whitfield introduced them.

First working with James in the horn section on the singer’s second Motown release Bustin’ Out Of L7 in 1979, LeMelle’s sax solos are all over James’ 1981 breakthrough hit album Street Songs; most memorably, he plays the memorable solo on “Super Freak” after James says, “Blow, Danny!” LeMelle worked in various capacities (horn section, soloist, co-writer and co-producer) with James all the way through the 80s, and, despite some friction due to James’ notorious drug use, James reached out to LeMelle during his time at Folsom Prison (1993-95).

“He said, ‘I trust you and need someone to believe in me, and when I get out, we still have things to talk about and write together,’” says LeMelle. “The day he got out, we had dinner together, and he was clean, vibrant and ready to go to work. Since his passing, I am proud to be the keeper of his legacy and have vowed to make sure that people are going to know the deeper truths about his brilliant artistry. He was a great songwriter who did so many things well, and our collaborations on these songs we are about to release show an artist very much committed to moving on with his life and being productive once again.”

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Coinciding with the release of the first album project is the April 15 release—from publisher Amber Communications—of *Memoirs of a Superfreak*, an aptly titled autobiography of James' wild life and times whose original text was penned by the star during his two year incarceration at California's Folsom Prison, circa 1993-95.

In addition, *Variety* recently reported that the James estate has given rights to develop a film based on the book, with Sheldon Turner ("The Longest Yard") attached as screenwriter. Kramer adds that Academy Award nominated actor Terrence Howard has shown initial interest in playing the lead role.