All Smiles. Grace Jones, right, was one of the many celebrities who showed at a recent Manhattan party held by Columbia Records to celebrate the label's signing of Dolly Parton. (Photo: Chuck Pulin)

Talent in Action

JAMES BROWN
The Channel, Boston, Mass.
Tickets: $10.50

I T HAS FINALLY happened. Riding the crest of his umpteenth comeback, the 58-year-old James Brown is slowing down on stage. At this sold-out Jan. 17 show, the Godfather of Soul delivered what might be termed a paced, measured set. Unfortunately, however, restraint does not much befit Brown. When he stepped back to let his band play extended solos (many featuring Brown on keyboards), the predominately white audience went scurrying for the bar and bathroom.

The nearly two-hour set reached its low point a little over halfway through, when Brown slow-danced with several female audience members. What made these mellow portions all the more frustrating were the show's intermittent high points. As always, Brown's 13-piece band (which included saxophonist Maceo Parker, who has been in and out Brown's band too many times to count) was remarkably sharp and punchy. The group came out steaming, introducing Brown over its trademark furious riffing. At the outset, the singer charged through several satisfying versions of cuts from his latest album, "Gravity," before settling back. Nearly an hour into the set, he showed that slower songs needn't always be so boring with a riveting reading of the new ballad "How Do You Stop." To Brown's credit, the show closed in fine fashion with a medley of classics that included "I Got The Feeling," "Jam," and a reprise of "Living In America." It was 20 minutes of what the man is all about. Still, this was not quite enough to bring the show back together—though a good reward for those who fought the urge to leave an hour earlier.

DAVID WYKOFF
ROUGH CUTT
ACALTRAZZ
Fanz
Country Club, Reseda, Calif.
Admission: $8 in advance, $10 at door

HEAD-BANGING RADIO station KNAC hosted this evening, and Niji Management provided its second-string lineup of talent (Ronnie James Dio is the company's point man) for a full night of power rock that certainly gave loyal fans of the genre value for their money.

The unsigned Fanz, winner of a KNAC talent contest, opened this recent show with a brief set of Styx-like, keyboard-heavy material. Vocalist Tom Hardy fronted a select band of predictably pleasing material, although the group's signature tune, "Who Put The 'Lie' in Believer," makes a better pun visually than aural.

Next up was Capitol act Acaltrazz, whose guitarist, Danny Johnson, holds a position once occupied by Yngwie Malmsteen and Steve Vai. Though extremely quick-fingered and graceful in his use of harmonies, Johnson lacks the innovative edge of his predecessors. To make matters worse, the sound mix buried the guitar under Jimmy Waldo's keyboards, undercutting many of his

(Continued on next page)