











TEDDY PENDERGRASS - IF YOU DON'T KNOW ME

A Documentary Film by Olivia Lichtenstein

106 Mins

This is the story of legendary singer, Teddy Pendergrass, the man who would have been the biggest R&B artist of all time. The story of a childhood in a Philadelphia ghetto; of the murders of his father and first manager; of sex, drugs, money and global fame; of the triumph against injustice; and of the tragic accident that changed his life forever at the age of only 31.

His was a life where, despite poverty, racism, and violence, he managed to become one of the first African-American artists to go multi-platinum over and over again. A man who actively championed the rights of black artists when discrimination was rife. A man who in the years after becoming quadriplegic, overcame depression and thoughts of suicide and resumed doing what he loved best - making music. A man who left a priceless legacy after his death, with the music he had made and the people he touched.



With revealing and exclusive interviews from the people who knew Teddy best, a soulful soundtrack, and rarely seen archive, it's a story that all too few really know and which is crying out to be told...

Hammersmith Odeon, London, February 3rd 1982. It's a cold night and fans – almost all of them women - are swarming at the entrance eager to see their idol, the biggest male R&B artist of the time, even bigger then than closest rivals, Marvin Gaye and Barry White.

Teddy Pendergrass – the Teddy Bear, the 'Black Elvis' - tall and handsome with a distinctive husky soulful voice that could melt a woman's clothes clean off her body! 'It took Teddy eleven seconds to get to the point with a girl that would take me two dinners and a trip to meet her parents,' says Daniel Markus, one of his managers.

In the early '70s, Teddy was the lead singer for Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes, famous for hits like 'Don't Leave Me This Way,' and 'If You Don't Know Me By Now.' He joined the band as the drummer, but when Harold Melvin heard him sing, he pushed him to the front of the stage (while placing his own name firmly in front of the band's billing.) In 1971, the group signed a record deal with legendary producers, Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff, the inventors of the Philly Sound.

After global success with the Blue Notes, Teddy left the band to launch a solo career and hit after hit followed – Love TKO; Turn off the Lights; Close the Door. For many of us, his voice was the soundtrack to our youth, urging us towards intimacy with the teenagers with whom we slow-danced cheek-to-cheek, clockwise.

Shep Gordon, Teddy's manager, soon noticed that the majority of Teddy's audience



was women. So, in the late '70s, Shep came up with a new concept for Teddy's next tour – he would play solely to female audiences, starting a trend for 'women only concerts'. The concerts drew screaming, ecstatic crowds who would fling teddy bears and lingerie onstage. In later years, Teddy would say he was a little embarrassed by those shows. 'As outgoing as I am, I'm still a country boy,' he told The Philadelphia Inquirer in 2002. 'It was complimentary, but it was also hard to handle.'

But Teddy was no mere crooner. At the time, black artists were taken advantage of by just about everybody, from concert promoters to record labels. Teddy stood up to them, notwithstanding death threats and strong-arm tactics to silence his demands that black artists received fair treatment at the hands of the industry. 'He risked his life to make it easier for African-American artists after him,' says Shep.

By the end of the 1970s, Teddy was riding right on the very crest of the wave

of superstardom - the first black male singer to record five consecutive platinum albums in the US, he now drove a Rolls Royce and lived in a large mansion just outside his hometown of Philadelphia.

But on the night of March 17th, 1982, Teddy's life changed forever when he lost control of his Rolls Royce Silver Spirit and crashed into a tree. He and his passenger, Tenika Watson, a transsexual nightclub performer, were trapped in the wreckage for 45 minutes. Watson walked away with minor injuries, but Teddy suffered a serious spinal cord injury.

Just 8 days before his thirty-second birthday he was left quadriplegic, paralysed from the chest down.

The crash was allegedly due to mechanical failure and Teddy would later receive compensation from Rolls Royce, but some thought his car may have been sabotaged. 'He didn't know who his friends were and who his enemies were,' says longtime friend, Linda Wills.

Abandoned in hospital, shunned by former friends and colleagues, the subject of salacious gossip, and having to cope with terrible life-changing injuries, Teddy faced his darkest days. He disappeared from public life for three years.

In 1985 he made an emotional return to the stage at Live Aid.

Shep Gordon remembers it well, 'Teddy said, "I don't think I can do this." I said, Teddy, I'm wheeling you out there, you don't have to sing, but you're going to be



there.' The footage of this moment is almost unbearably poignant – Teddy paused, opened his mouth and sang and the audience received him with rapturous applause. The show was beamed around the world and seen by 1.5 billion people. Ashford and Simpson's, Valerie Simpson, recalls the moment, 'I'd never heard so much applause in my life.'

After extensive physical therapy, Teddy resumed his recording career and had Top Ten R&B hits and gold albums into the '90s. His voice was less muscular but still recognisable, as he was forced to substitute nuance for lung power. He recorded 'Love Language,' a gold album that included an early appearance by Whitney Houston on the album's hit single, 'Hold Me.' In May 2001, he performed his first solo live dates in almost 20 years in Atlantic City, which were

followed by concerts all over the US.

Teddy became an advocate for people with spinal cord injuries and in 1998 formed the Teddy Pendergrass Alliance, a nonprofit group to help them. In 2007, 25 years after his accident, he appeared at 'Teddy at 25: A Celebration of Life, Hope and Possibilities,' a benefit concert for the group in Philadelphia.

He died in hospital in Philadelphia following respiratory failure on January 13, 2010, aged 59.

His influence is widely felt amongst a large number of musicians today and current artists who've sampled him include: Kanye West; Jay Z; Usher; Snoop Dogg; J-Lo; D'Angelo; Justin Timberlake; Kendrick Lamar; Lil Wayne. His songs have been covered by The Communards; Simply Red; Seal; John Legend with The Roots; Nicole Kidman and Ewan McGregor (Moulin Rouge) and he also provided the inspiration for Lenny Henry's parodic singer, Theophilus P. Wildebeeste.

Teddy was huge in the U.K. and played his last concerts before his accident in London in February 1982. He was (and is) also popular in Japan; Germany; Australia; Canada; Jamaica; New Zealand; Rep. Korea; South Africa; Belgium; Denmark; Finland; Netherlands; Sweden; Thailand; Taiwan.

BACKGROUND

Theodore DeReese Pendergrass was born on March 26, 1950, the only child of Ida Pendergrass, who is now aged 100 and still living in Philadelphia. She appears in the film to share her memories of her son. Teddy was her 'miracle baby' after repeated miscarriages, but by the time Teddy was born, his father, Jesse, was no longer part of their lives. Teddy met him just once when he was 11. A year later Jesse was murdered in a brawl with a drinking buddy. The fact that his father was murdered in his own house by someone he knew and trusted, haunted Teddy for the rest of his life and left him with a legacy of loss and distrust. It also made him a committed father to his own three children, Teddy Jr, Tisha and LaDonna all born in 1974 to two different women.

Teddy first sang in public when he was two years old, standing up on a chair at a storefront Holiness Church. Mother Ida remembers it well; the two of them got up and she mimed so that everyone could hear Teddy's voice on its own, but he stopped and entreated, 'sing, Momma, sing.' Growing up in North Philadelphia, he was nourished by both gospel and soul music. Church was an important part of his life and at the age of 10, he had a religious experience that led to him being ordained a minister. As he grew up, he was increasingly drawn to the Uptown Theatre, which presented top performers on the R&B circuit. When he was a teenager, Ida gave him a set of drums, and he quickly taught himself to play. He and his friends would also stand on street corners and sing; wrapping harmonies around every song they could think of, from songs of the '50s to the latest Motown hit. Teddy's first cousins, George and Petey appear in the film sharing their memories of Teddy outside the house he grew up in in North Philly's 'badlands' - the street remains largely unchanged.

Teddy experienced poverty and racism but did all he could to stay out of trouble. However, one night, aged, 14, as he walked along a street near his house, he saw two black youths robbing a white drunk. The police picked him up and charged him. He was sentenced to the Youth Study Center in Philadelphia for four months. His crime? Being in the wrong place at the wrong time... and being black. 'I saw what the establishment will do to you; I saw what the police will do to you, I saw what white people will do to you,' says Teddy.

He is survived by his mother, Ida, his three children Teddy Jr, Tisha and LaDonna, his grandchildren, his first wife, Karen and his second wife, Joan. Many of them come together in this film to help tell his story.

Others who appear in the film: Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff (legendary producers and creators of the Philadelphia sound); Lloyd Parks (sole surviving member of the original Blue Notes line-up); Jerry Cummings (who succeeded Lloyd as a Blue Note); Tenika Watson (who was in the car with Teddy when he had his accident); Valerie Simpson (sang with Teddy at Live Aid 1985); Dr Gottlieb (Teddy's psychotherapist and fellow paraplegic who staged an intervention that was to save Teddy from suicide). Questlove (Drummer and joint frontman, The Roots.) The Teddy Bear Orchestra - the band members who played and toured with Teddy, who are reunited and play together in the film for the first time since Teddy's accident, 36 years ago.

Philadelphia, where Teddy lived all his life, serves as the leitmotif of the film and archive of the city in the 1950s, '60s and '70s is interwoven with images of Philadelphia today to provide the cinematic backdrop to Teddy's world. Teddy's distinctive, soulful voice provides the

soundtrack for the film, with his songs judiciously chosen to underline and add texture to his story.

The cinematic style is rich and atmospheric with beautifully lit, textured interviews. The film recreates key moments in Teddy's life with (non-speaking) actors and mis-en-scène, shot abstractly.

The film is a rich evocation of the key points in Teddy's life and four main themes lie at its heart. **Love** - as expressed through the narratives of the women who loved and cared for him throughout his life. **Race** - this is also the story of a generation at a time the world was changing both in the USA and the UK; against the backdrop of the American civil rights movement, musicians like Teddy were fighting for parity in their profession. **Music** - Teddy was emblematic of the Philadelphia Sound, a rival to Motown, a sound characterised by funk influences and rich orchestral arrangements, a genre that laid the groundwork for disco. His producers were the legendary Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff. And **Triumph over Adversity** - the astonishing story of Teddy's comeback and his need to reconcile himself to his new reality after his life-changing accident.

With a compelling soundtrack, carefully sourced archive, intimate interviews and real access to those who knew him best, this is a definitive film for all the millions who knew and loved Teddy Pendergrass and for a new generation who will certainly know his voice and the songs he made famous and enduring without knowing much about the life of the man behind them.

KEY CAST

KENNY GAMBLE AND LEON HUFF - LEGENDARY SONGWRITING AND PRODUCTION TEAM

The progenitors of the Sound of Philadelphia in the 1970s, Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff are music industry royalty. In addition to forming their own label, Philadelphia International Records, Gamble and Huff have written and produced 175 gold and platinum records.. They were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2008. Throughout the 1970s, Gamble and Huff wrote and made music that addressed political and social issues faced by the African American community. Their string of hits for artists such as The O'Jays, Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes, The Three Degrees and others was international. 'We had our strengths, and we each knew how to complement the other guy,' says Huff. 'I played piano and had a good sense of music. Gamble played basic guitar, but he had a terrific way with words and themes. We formed a great team. For a time there, anything we did was a smash. That's how it happens if it's meant to happen.' They were excited when they first heard Teddy Pendergrass sing, 'You have to give a voice like that raw meat,' says Gamble.

LLOYD PARKS - SOLE SURVIVING ORIGINAL BLUE NOTE

Like Teddy, Lloyd Parks is from North Philadelphia. He and Teddy attended the same school and used to cut class to harmonise on street corners. He band his music career in music in the mid-1960s performing with various local Philadelphia vocal groups later merging with friends Gene McFadden and John Whitehead to form the Epsilons. The group was managed by Soul Singer, Otis Redding and were soon signed to the Stax Records label. They toured for two years with Redding. In 1971 Lloyd Parks was recruited to join the Philadelphia Doo-wop group, the Blue Notes, which was then reformed and renamed Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes - 'Harold just put his name out front,' recalls Parks, 'we didn't know then that later it would bite us in the butt.' Gamble and Huff signed the group in 1972 and their first hit record was 'I Miss You.' Lloyd Parks was shot while being robbed in Philadelphia and while he was recovering, Harold Melvin replaced him with a young tenor from Washington DC - Jerry Cummings...

JERRY CUMMINGS - BLUE NOTE (REPLACED LLOYD PARKS IN THE GROUP)

In 1974, Harold Melvin brought in Jerry Cummings to replace Lloyd Parks. Now an ordained minister, Cummings lives in Illinois and has recently rejoined the latest version of the group, Harold Melvin's Blue Notes with a hit record, 'No One Compares to You,' which he also sang to Teddy's mother, Ida at her 100th birthday party in May this year. Cummings says, 'Our success came from the mouth of Teddy Pendergrass.' When Teddy left Harold Melvin in 1976 over an argument about the money he was earning, Cummings says, 'Harold was very angry and didn't wish Teddy well.'

QUESTLOVE - JOINT FRONTMAN FOR 'THE ROOTS' WHO ARE THE IN-HOUSE BAND FOR THE TONIGHT SHOW

Ahmir Khalib Thompson, known professionally as Questlove (stylised as ?uestlove), is an American percussionist, multi-instrumentalist, DJ, music journalist, record producer, and occasional actor. He is best known as the drummer and joint frontman for the Grammy Award-winning band, The Roots, who have been serving as the in-house band for The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon since 2014. Questlove is one of the producers of the Broadway musical, Hamilton and has produced recordings for artists including Elvis Costello, Common, D'Angelo, Jill Scott, Jay-Z, Al Green, Amy Winehouse and John Legend.

A native of Philadelphia, Questlove was aware of Teddy Pendergrass and his music from the age of 5. His school was located next door to Gamble and Huff's, Philadelphia International Records office and when Teddy appeared, the screaming of female fans could be clearly heard in the schoolyard. 'Teddy's voice was sexual,' says Questlove, 'black male sexuality is such a threatening issue in America that to present something so in your face and so just blatantly black is risky. But if you look at Teddy's career it worked like gangbusters.'

VALERIE SIMPSON - SONGWRITER/PRODUCER AND PERFORMER

Ashford & Simpson were a husband and wife songwriting-production team and recording duo. Their best-known songs include, 'Ain't No Mountain High Enough,' 'Reach Out and Touch (Somebody's Hand), 'I'm Every Woman,' and Teddy Pendergrass' 'Is It Still Good to You?' As performers, Ashford & Simpson's best-known duets are 'Solid' and 'Found a Cure.' The duo was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2002. When Teddy Pendergrass made his post-accident come back on the stage of Live Aid in 1985, Ashford and Simpson were there with him. They sang, 'Reach Out and Touch (Somebody's Hand).' 'It was the perfect song for the occasion,' says Valerie, 'it was his personal life, you know, he was reaching out.' Appearing in the film to recall that memorable performance, Valerie says of Teddy, 'there is a very dim light on all that Teddy accomplished and that light needs to be a lot brighter because it was a great gift that he had, a great giving that he did. And we need to keep his legacy alive.'

KEY CREW

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER - OLIVIA LICHTENSTEIN

Olivia Lichtenstein, like so many, grew up listening to soul music. She's passionate about telling Teddy Pendergrass' story and bringing his music to a new generation. 'He was an enormous talent and deserves recognition,' she says, 'While everyone knows his voice, all too many have forgotten the extraordinary story of the man behind it, his unique contribution to the history of popular music and his courageous triumph over adversity.'

She has had a long and distinguished career and is one of Britain's foremost documentary filmmakers and has won numerous awards for her work - BAFTA, Grierson, RTS, British Press Guild Award; Cologne Conference Award; Golden Gate Award; cableACE Award...

Olivia started her career at ABC News in their London bureau before becoming a producer and reporter at TV-am. A Russian Studies graduate, Olivia joined the BBC to make the ground-breaking documentary series, Comrades. She won a BAFTA for The Silent Twin: Without My Shadow, and was the editor of BBC television's former flagship documentary strand, Inside Story. She won the Grierson Award for Tongue Tied, her film about John Diamond's journey through cancer (he was TV Chef, Nigella Lawson's first husband.)

While at the BBC, Olivia commissioned over a hundred single documentaries and was Executive Producer of many documentary series for BBC ONE. She also spent a year on attachment to BBC Drama developing projects before being appointed Creative Director of BBC Documentaries, London, where she oversaw a raft of documentary programming. As a drama director, she made A Lump in My Throat, a TV drama starring Neil Pearson. She has also directed BBC ONE's Holby City and numerous episodes of ITV police drama, The Bill.

She left the BBC in 2002 to become a freelance Producer/Director and writer and her producer/director credits since then include Who Killed Kirsty MacColl? a film about the British singer/songwriter who was tragically killed by a speedboat in Cozumel, Mexico in 2000; Prince Phillip at 90 for ITV1 and The Twins of the Twin Towers for BBC ONE and OWN in the U.S to commemorate the 10th anniversary of 9/11.

Olivia joined well-respected, independent production company, Storyvault Films as a partner in January 2012. In 2014, she made Broadmoor for ITV, two films with unique and exclusive access to Broadmoor Hospital, Britain's high-secure psychiatric hospital. It was the first time anyone has been granted access to the hospital, which houses some of Britain's most dangerous offenders. IN 2014 she produced and directed, Melvyn Bragg - Wigton to Westminster, a highly-acclaimed 75 minute special for BBC TWO about one of Britain's foremost writers and broadcasters.

Olivia is also the author of two novels, Things your Mother Never Told You and Mrs Zhivago of Queen's Park. She was educated at Sussex University and did her Masters degree at UCLA on a Fulbright Scholarship. in 2014, she was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Sussex in recognition of her contribution to film and media.

PRODUCER - PIERS TEMPEST

Piers is the founder and Managing Director of Tempo Productions, the Yorkshire and London based film and television production company and Tempest Partners which advises on media and content creation. In 2004 he produced the feature film *OYSTER FARMER* directed by Anna Reeves, which was nominated for 'Best Picture' in the 2005 AFI Awards. He produced the \$10m *LIKE MINDS* starring Academy Award winner Eddie Redmayne and Toni Collette which filmed in Australia and Yorkshire and was released by The Weinstein Company in the USA, Lionsgate in the UK and MGM in Asia.

Tempest recently executive produced *COFFIN ROCK* for *WOLF CREEK* producer David Lightfoot which was filmed in the Autumn of 2008 and produced *THE CALLER* starring Rachelle Lefevre, Stephen Moyer and Luis Guzman which completed photography in December 2009 and was acquired by Sony for distribution in North America and Universal in the UK.

In 2010, he produced the comedy *KILLING BONO* starring Ben Barnes, Robert Sheehan and Pete Postlethwaite, released by Paramount in the UK in April 2011. In 2012, he produced the Sony released comedy *GRABBERS* which premiered at Sundance and was the recipient of five film festival audience awards.

In 2014, Piers produced the much anticipated Sci-Fi adventure, *ROBOT OVERLORDS* starring Sir Ben Kingsley and Gillian Anderson. He then produced Nick Hamm's *THE JOURNEY* starring Tim Spall, Colm Meaney, Toby Stephens, Freddie Highmore and John Hurt which was selected for the Venice and Toronto Film festivals in 2016.

In 2016 Piers produced *CHURCHILL* starring Brian Cox, Miranda Richardson, John Slattery and Ella Purnell which was directed by Jonathan Teplitzky and was released by Lionsgate. His latest production THE WIFE is currently on general release, starring Glenn Close, Jonathan Pryce and Christian Slater.

PRODUCER - IAN FLOOKS

Ian Flooks started the talent agency, Wasted Talent in 1979 with bands such as The Talking Heads, The Police, The Clash, REM and U2. It rapidly became the biggest talent agency outside of the USA. Wasted Talent now produces movies, which include *CONFETTI*, KILLING BONO and ROBOT OVERLORDS.

In 1990 Ian launched Radioactive Records, whose artistes have sold in excess of 25 million albums to date. He was on the board of directors of Greenpeace Ltd and Greenpeace Inc for 12 years and is now chairman and main owner of Mixmag Media, the biggest dance music/EDM digital publisher on the internet. Mixmag has now also acquired Kerrang! and The Face.

CO-PRODUCER - NICK BEDU

Nick was born to a Ghanaian father and English mother. He has worked in television since 1996 and was recently nominated for a 'Back II Black' Inspirational Award held at BAFTA. Family friends with the Tambo family, leaders of the Anti-Apartheid movement, Nick began his career in TV by moving to South Africa and working on Dali Tambo's top-rated chat show. In 2010 Nick founded Fully Focused Productions, a not-for-profit social enterprise that uses the power of film to raise awareness, challenge perceptions and transform lives. Fully Focused trains young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who work on the productions alongside industry professionals and pioneers. The award-winning company is at the forefront of tackling diversity in the UK television and film industry. Nick has a strong track record in music documentaries.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER - SHEP GORDON

Shep Gordon is an American talent manager, Hollywood film agent, and producer. He is one of the entertainment industry's most talented and charismatic personal managers and at one time or another managed the careers of (among many others) Alice Cooper, Blondie, Deborah Harry, Raquel Welch and the Gypsy Kings, as well as being credited as the man who invented the entire concept of celebrity chefs, and who counts the Dalai Llama amongst his long list of personal friends. Shep is the main feature in the 2013 documentary, Supermensch: The Legend of Shep Gordon, which was directed by Mike Myers. He has worked on numerous film productions, typically as a producer; these include *THE DUELLISTS* and KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN. He created the first independent film production company in the U.S., Alive Films. Shep was Teddy Pendergrass' manager.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER - DANIEL MARKUS

Daniel Markus is also a music biz titan and worked at Atlantic Records and then as a talent manager with Shep Gordon. He was Teddy's manager day-to-day (and Luther Vandross', Dr John's and many more). He, like Shep, appears in the film to share his memories of Teddy and life on the road. 'It took Teddy 11 seconds to get to a point with a woman that would take me 2 weeks,' Daniel says, recalling Teddy's irresistible magnetism.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER - ALLAN STRAHL

Allan Strahl has worked as booking agent and manager for many of the key acts of the 20th century. Among them, Etta James, Chuck Berry, James Brown, Janis Joplin, The Doors... He worked alongside Shep Gordon and Daniel Markus for Alive Enterprises Inc, where he was involved in artist development for numerous artists, including Teddy Pendergrass, Alice Cooper, Raquel Welch and others. Allan, in partnership with Daniel Markus, managed Teddy Pendergrass' tours from 2001-2004 when Teddy finally went back on the road to perform a 20 city concert tour after his accident, the first quadriplegic ever to do so.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY - RICHARD RANKEN

Richard Ranken is one of the UK's leading DOPs, with over 25 years of experience of filming for all major broadcasters. He works with sliders, mini-jibs, time-lapse, gimbles, GoPros and drones to add value to his observational camerawork, which is still at the heart of any production. The discipline of listening to the contributor and being able to react instinctively is the key to the craft of good camerawork and this is amply evidenced in his photography. Previous credits include Prince Philip at 90; Prince William's Africa; The Twins of the Twin Towers; Who Do You Think You Are with Alan Cumming; Brooke Shields; Martin Sheen; Patrick Stewart. Lenny Henry's Got the Blues...

SOUND - KUZ RANDHAWA

Kuz Randhawa is a BAFTA award-winning sound recordist and mixer. Based in London, he works throughout the world on film, documentaries and commercials. Recent projects include 'The Hunted' series 1,2,3 & 4 for Channel Four and 'Meghan Markle American Princess' for CBS. Often working with Richard Ranken, Kuz was responsible for sound on Prince Philip at 90; Prince William's Africa; The Twins of the Twin Towers; Who Do You Think You Are with Jerry Springer; Martin Freeman. Kuz is equally at home on location and in studios. He is a vital second ear on any project as much for the quality of his recordings as for his careful listening to ensure the content has been captured to tell the story in hand.

FILM EDITOR - RIAZ MEER

Riaz Meer is a Grierson award winning and BAFTA nominated film editor. He has over 20 years experience working on Feature Films, Television Drama and Documentary. He has worked on numerous authored documentaries on history, travel, comedy, music and the arts for the BBC, ITV and Channel Four. He has also edited many established drama series including, 'Waterloo Road,' 'Casualty,' and 'Holby City.'
