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Teddy Pendergrass - If You Don't Know Me

Storyvault Films' inspiring feature-length documentary about 'soul's sexiest superstar' & his extraordinary triumph over adversity

Teddy Pendergrass - If You Don't Know Me the powerful and moving story of R&B star Teddy Pendergrass (Theodore DeReese Pendergrass), who was on the brink of global super-stardom when tragedy struck, will premiere in the UK at the BFI, Southbank, London on February 19th before a national theatrical release at selected UK cinemas from February 21. Film director Olivia Lichtenstein will host a Q&A session directly after the BFI screening alongside Teddy's former drummer, James Carter and his keyboard player, Cecil Du Valle.

The London premiere follows the film's triumphant world premiere as closing night film at the Philadelphia Film Festival (Teddy's home city), where it was nominated for the Pinkenson Award, and won the Audience Award; a screening at DOC NYC and at Minneapolis Sound Unseen Film Festival.

A compelling tale with surprising twists and turns, the film is an intimate portrait of one of the greatest singers of his generation. It also tells how Teddy fought for the rights of African-American artists in a 1970s music industry prejudiced against black performers and reveals how, aged just 31, Pendergrass overcame terrible tragedy to get back on stage against all the odds.

BAFTA award-winner, Olivia conceived, researched and directed the film, which reveals Teddy's meteoric rise from his tough childhood in Philadelphia to become the lead singer of Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes. His was the voice of worldwide hits, *Don't Leave Me This Way* and *If You Don't Know Me by Now*.

Olivia recalls: "I grew up listening to soul music and I'd just started listening to Teddy again when I saw a documentary about Shep Gordon, the legendary artist manager who worked with everyone from Blondie to Alice Cooper – and Teddy. It included a little bit about him working with Teddy Pendergrass and it made me realise that I didn't know what had happened to him. I had a really strong sense that I had to make a film to tell his story."

Olivia contacted Shep Gordon, who agreed to join the project as an executive producer, along with Michael and Katherina Saunders. A short trailer was enough to sell the idea to BBC Films, who stepped in to co-finance the production with Wasted Talent. The 106-minute documentary includes magical and rarely seen original footage of Teddy's performances as well as intimate and candid interviews with

co-performers, friends and family. They include Teddy's ex-wife Karen and mother Ida – now 100-years-old, all of whom co-operated fully with the production, as did Teddy's widow, Joan Pendergrass.

Lichtenstein, who is a partner and director of Storyvault Films, which produces programmes for all the major UK broadcasters and top digital channels added: "This is an extraordinary, human story that feels almost Shakespearian – it's much more than just a music biopic, it's an intimate portrait both of Teddy and of the extraordinary times in which he lived. We really get to know him because we hear from so many people who were close to him. It almost feels as if he comes back to life to let the world hear him sing again."

Two of Storyvault's best-loved shows are *Portrait* and *Landscape Artist of the Year* for Sky Arts. *Portrait Artist of the Year 2018* recently scooped the prize for Best Popular Factual Programme in the Broadcast Digital Awards 2018. Both *Portrait* and *Landscape Artist of the Year* series have been sold to countries around the world. Other recent productions include *Vive La Revolution!* (BBC4) and *The Football Club (Channel 4)*.

Producer Ian Flocks of Wasted Talent said: "We were committed to this film and extraordinary story from the start, especially given our roots and unique experience in the music industry before expanding into film, theatre and digital media, so it was the perfect fit for us."

Producer Piers Tempest of Tempo Productions adds: "Teddy's story is an important and ultimately inspiring one and we are delighted to help shine a light on the man and his music".

Following the BFI premiere and theatrical release through Moviehouse Entertainment, ***Teddy Pendergrass – If You Don't Know Me*** will air on Sky Arts and on the BBC in the UK. Kew Media Distribution, part of Kew Media Group, has secured International rights to the feature documentary.

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For a preview of Teddy Pendergrass - If You Don't Know Me, interviews with Olivia Lichtenstein and film clips please contact Lisa Moore [lisa@eyeptr.co.uk/07540 142354] or Kerry Milliken [kerry@eyeptr.co.uk/07799 714006]

Caroline Turner: Caroline@hyperactive-publicity.com: T: 0208 741 7343/07767 778114

[THE FULL PRESS KIT, INCLUDING THIS PRESS RELEASE, BACKGROUND DOCUMENT AND PHOTOGRAPHS AVAILABLE HERE:](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5o08xll0jlikyx9/AADV8GTO_WTjYJhkaXwai2-ra?dl=0)

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5o08xll0jlikyx9/AADV8GTO_WTjYJhkaXwai2-ra?dl=0

Teddy Pendergrass - If You Don't Know Me production credits:

BBC Films and Wasted Talent Present a Storyvault Films and Tempo Entertainment production

Executive Producers: Michael and Katherina Saunders

Executive Producers: Shep Gordon, Daniel Markus, Allan Strahl

Executive Producer: Jo Bamford

Executive Producers: Joe Oppenheimer, Michael Wood

Produced by: Ian Flooks, Piers Tempest, Olivia Lichtenstein

Co-Producer: Nick Bedu

Director of Photography: Richard Ranken

Sound: Kuz Randhawa

Film Editor: Riaz Meer

Director: Olivia Lichtenstein