

Teena Marie – First Class Love Rare Tee (2011)

Written by bluelover

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CD1: 01 – *First Class Love* 02 – *More Love* 03 – *Wasn't I Good To You* 04 – *Love Just Wouldn't Be Right* 05 – *You Got Away* [play](#) 06 – *Oh Love duet with Ronnie McNeir* 07 – *Betcha I'll Prove duet with Ronnie McNeir* 08 – *My Baby Loves Me – Ronnie McNeir with Teena Marie* 09 – *White Soul* 10 – *Can You Do It* 11 – *Why Can't I Get Next To You* 12 – *Co-Pilot To Pilot* 13 – *Hey Boy* [play](#) 14 – *Don't Turn Your Back On Me* 15 – *Wasn't I Good To You (1983 mix)* 16 – *Love Just Wouldn't Be Right (1983 mix)* 17 – *You Got Away (1983 mix)* 18 – *Oh Love duet with Ronnie McNeir (1983 mix)*

CD2:

01 – *First Class Love (acoustic demo)* 02 – *Don't Turn Your Back On Me (acoustic demo)* 03 – *God Has Created (acoustic demo)* 04 – *Wasn't I Good To You (acoustic demo)* 05 – *Why Can't I Get Next To You (acoustic demo)* 06 – *Happiness Is In Your Soul (acoustic demo)* 07 – *Make You Surre (acoustic demo)* 08 – *The Greatest Love Of All Time (acoustic demo)*

First Class Love: Rare Tee, a double-disc compilation of previously unreleased recordings, could be seen as a way to cash in on the tragic, early passing of Teena Marie. It could also be viewed a way for Motown and Hip-O Select to capitalize on Teena's unremitting popularity; from 2004-2009, Teena released three Top Five R&B albums for different labels. However, Lady T, as documented in Brian Chin's liner notes, "proclaimed the music a gift to her long-standing fans." Just as critical, no shortcuts were taken with the packaging. There are extensive quotes from those who were part of Teena's personal and professional lives during her protracted incubation process with Motown, along with several archival photos (including a couple where she looks like a folk artist, nothing like a budding funk queen). A handful of these 26 tracks were scattered on compilations and reissues. The majority of them will be brand new to the hardcore fans. An album's worth of material recorded in 1976 with Ronnie McNeir leads off disc one. These sessions featured Funkadelic's Billy Nelson (bass) and top-tier session musicians Ray Parker, Jr. (guitar) and Ollie Brown (drums), with McNeir playing his typically lively keyboards while providing background and duet vocals. Certainly not developed as the material *Wild and Peaceful*, these songs nonetheless could have made for a decent release on Motown subsidiary

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Prodigal, where McNeir released a 1975 LP. What's remarkable is how Teena had that voice, even at the age of 20. There are two songs from a later 1976 session with Winston Monseque, who produced Tata Vega's Full Speed Ahead (1976), an album featuring a song co-written by Teena. These are decent, self-written funk grooves that point toward "Behind the Groove" and "Square Biz"; "White Soul" even pays respects to her inspirations à la the rap in the latter. A four-song 1977 session with Kenny Kerner and Richie Wise (Gladys Knight & the Pips, Kiss) yields "Why Can't I Get Next to You," an elegant, laid-back number that could have been a minor hit. Four McNeir remixes, put together in 1983 for a shelved project, incorporates drum-machine overdubs and sound chintzy compared to the muscularity of Robbery, Teena's 1983 album for Epic. Disc two consists of an eight-song acoustic demo session produced by Berry Gordy. If anything, these raw versions -- just Teena and her guitar -- make it apparent that she could have laid down a spectacular career-spanning Unplugged-type release. ---Andy Kellman, allmusic.com

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