Temptations – Masterpiece (1973)

01. Hey Girl (I Like Your Style) – 3:19 02. Masterpiece – 13:35 03. Ma – 4:44 play *04. Law Of The Land – 4:51 05. Plastic Man – 3:23 06. Hurry Tomorrow – 4:39*
- Dennis Edwards - vocals (tenor) - Damon Harris - vocals (high tenor/falsetto) - Richard Street - vocals (tenor) - Melvin Franklin - vocals (bass) - Otis Williams - vocals (tenor/baritone) - Norman Whitfield: producer, composer + Instrumentation by The Funk Brothers: - Earl Van Dyke - piano, organ - Johnny Griffith - organ - Robert Ward, Melvin "Wah-Wah Watson" Ragin, Joe Messina, Paul Warren, Robert White, Eddie Willis - guitar - Leroy Taylor, Bob Babbitt, Eddie Watkins - bass - Eddie "Bongo" Brown - bongos, congos - Jack Ashford - tambourine, maracas, sticks - Jack Brokensha - tympani, vibes, bells, gourd - Maurice Davis - trumpet - Ted Lucas – harmonica

Soul legends the Temptations' 1973 MASTERPIECE album and their 1975 SONG FOR YOU are featured on this compilation. MASTERPIECE garnered lesser acclaim for the Temptations, while SONG FOR YOU featured the hit "Happy People."

These two albums are almost perfectly suited to each other, representating the peak of the Temptations' early- to mid-'70s output. A Song for You was a rare Berry Gordy co-production (necessitated by Norman Whitfield's departure from the company) -- Gordy and Jimmy Bowen came up with an album that combined a powerful, funky beat with gorgeous singing (especially by Dennis Edwards) and a range of superb songs. These tapes sound extraordinary on this release, like they're really being heard properly for the first time. Masterpiece was precisely that for producer Whitfield, comprised of just six songs, every one of them a winner, including the epic-length title song, possibly the best extended track ever to come out of Motown Records. The two albums fit together almost seamlessly (though one wishes that Masterpiece's tracks were first on the disc), and the only flaw is that there are no expanded notes or album credits.
--- Bruce Eder, AMG

Norman Whitfield was always the Motown producer who had the most daring creative vision for The Temptations; he was the man who helped them turn psychedelic (well, sort of) with "Cloud Nine" and "Psychedelic Shack", and when the group's career had hit a slump in the early 1970's, he brought them back to the top of the charts with the brilliantly realized "Papa Was A Rolling Stone". After the latter tune had become a smash, Whitfield and The Temptations set out to make their most ambitious project to date, but in many ways, Masterpiece sounded more like a Norman Whitfield solo album with the Temps adding occasional vocals; the album's long, carefully layered tunes, complete with sweeping string charts and cleanly punctuated horn lines, have the widescreen splendor of a big-budget movie, and while it's inarguably impressive to hear, the featured artists often seem to be lost in the shuffle. It doesn't help that while the album is musically impressive, several of the songs are lyrically cut-rate, especially the cliche-ridden "Ma" and "Plastic Man", a ho-hum critique of hypocrisy, and while The Temptations deliver their material with conviction and typically peerless vocal skill, it's not enough to disguise the fact this album overshoots its target. While still better than the average Motown effort of the period, Masterpiece never quite becomes the triumph it obviously wants to be, proving once again that a "Masterpiece" usually occurs as a matter of serendipity rather than careful design. ---Mark Deming, AllMusic Review

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