

TEDDY PENDERGRASS

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With his husky baritone and passionate lyrics, legendary R&B singer Teddy Pendergrass found fame fronting Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes in the early '70s before establishing a solo career that yielded five straight platinum albums.

- The Philadelphia native began singing gospel and playing drums in church. At age 10, he became an ordained minister.
- As a teen, Pendergrass played drums for the vocal group The Cadillacs. His rhythmic skills earned him a spot in The Blue Notes, led by Harold Melvin. In 1970, Pendergrass stepped out from behind the drumkit and became the lead singer.
- In 1972, the rechristened Harold Melvin and The Blue Notes signed with Philadelphia International Records and scored their first Top 10 R&B hit with “I Miss You,” a harbinger of things to come.
- The group is best known for 1972’s “If You Don’t Know Me By Now,” which topped the US R&B chart and peaked at No. 3 on the Billboard Hot 100.
- With Pendergrass at the helm, The Blue Notes also topped the R&B charts with “The Love I Lost” (1973) and “Wake Up Everybody” (1975).
- In 1975, Pendergrass left the group due to a financial dispute. Two years later, he released his self-titled solo debut, a Top 10 R&B hit that achieved platinum sales.
- He received his first Grammy nomination (for Best R&B Vocal Performance, Male) for his seductive 1978 single “Close The Door.”
- Pendergrass made history for being the first Black singer to have five consecutive platinum albums. His streak ran from 1977’s Teddy Pendergrass to 1981’s It’s Time for Love.
- A 1982 car accident in Philadelphia left Pendergrass paralyzed from the waist down and confined to a wheelchair. The singer completed physical therapy and returned in 1984 with Love Language, featuring “Hold Me,” a duet with Whitney Houston.
- In 1998, Pendergrass released his fourteenth and final album, This Christmas (I’d Rather Have Love).
- He died in January 2010 at age 59.