



## Darlene Love's Christmas show is a veritable Love-in

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*Darlene Love in her dressing room after her Christmas show at B.B. King's.*

Jim Bessman

We all love [Tina Turner](#) and Aretha Franklin, longtime [Darlene Love](#) fan Steven Van Zandt told the SRO B.B. King's crowd Sunday night, "but as far as I'm concerned, this is the greatest singer in the world!"

Love then came out and proved him right.

Her first gig on her own at B.B.'s (she'd previously appeared with her contemporaries Ben E. King and Gary "U.S." Bonds), Love, who claims to be 68, looked decades younger in white suit and red top and a voice that's lost nothing in five decades of singular service to rock 'n' roll.

After establishing her church roots with the gospel classic "Please Be Patient With Me" and the Christmas spiritual "Go Tell It On The Mountain," she shifted to "moldy oldies"—her words—that are anything but moldy when she sings them.

First was "Wait Till My Bobby Gets Home"—one of her many Phil Spector-produced hits—and "Da Doo Ron Ron," The Crystal's big Spector hit. With two keyboardists, two percussionists, four stellar backup singers, and one guitarist, bass guitarist, saxophonist and drummer, she brought along a "wall of sound" smaller in structure than her bigger Christmas shows, but no less solid.

A six-song string of Marvin Gaye hits was a nice touch and notably included the Ashford & Simpson compositions "You're All I Need To Get By" and "Ain't No Mountain High Enough"—since backup singer Clayton Bryant sings with Ashford & Simpson and is a regular at their [Sugar Bar](#). A return to the Spector catalog featured Love's earthier take on Ike & Tina Turner's immortal "River Deep, Mountain High," and her own No. 1 hit with The Crystals from 1962, "He's A Rebel"—after which she acknowledged that without such Spector songs, maybe she wouldn't still have a career today.

Then again, she probably would. After all, the vivacious vocalist enjoyed a huge career as a backup singer and later acted in the *Lethal Weapon* movie series and did three years on Broadway in *Hairspray*—with that musical's inspirational "I Know Where I've Been" providing a concert high point: Love got down and wailed on the song about racial struggle, then, after "White Christmas" from the legendary *A Christmas Gift For You From Phil Spector* album and her Spector hit "(Today I Met) The Boy I'm Gonna Marry," she choked herself up—and the entire room—with a memorial to the late Patty Darcy.

The beloved Darcy, who died two years ago, was long one of Love's regular backup singers. After noting such backup credits of her own like Frank Sinatra, Sam Cooke, Dionne Warwick and the Beach Boys, Love introduced her longtime backup singer Ula Hedwig and fellow New York vocal stars Margaret Dorn, Catherine Russell and Bryant, and together they sang Walter Hawkins' gospel song "Marvelous," a Darcy favorite.

She closed, of course, with the Spector Christmas album's only original, her "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)," which she sings annually on The David Letterman Show (she'll do it again on Dec. 23). "I give all the love I have to you--and you give it back to me," Love said, and it was a Love-in indeed—and hopefully a harbinger of her belated induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

(The Examiner wrote the CD liner notes to the new reissue of *A Christmas Gift For You From Phil Spector*.)