



Christmas show ends big year for Darlene Love

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The greatest female rock 'n' roll singer ever? You'd be hard-pressed to top [Darlene Love](#)--that is, if you know who she is to begin with.

But as she prepares for her annual Christmas shows more and more people are learning the name of misidentified singer of such Phil Spector-produced 1960s classics as "He's A Rebel" and "(Today I Met) The Boy I'm Gonna Marry," not to mention one of the rock era's most prolific backup singers. And with her recent Rock and Roll Hall of Fame nomination and an upcoming biopic, it seems certain that one way or another, more will become Love-struck next year.

Love was nominated—finally!—on account of her lead vocals on hits by Spector groups including The Crystals ("He's A Rebel") and Bob B. Soxx and the Bluejeans ("Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah"), her own Spector-produced songs like "(Today I Met) The Boy I'm Gonna Marry" and "Christmas (Baby Please Come

Home)," and background singing for everyone from Sam Cooke to Elvis Presley to Cher. And while she's not in yet, she brought the house down on the first of the two recent Rock and Roll Hall of Fame 25th Anniversary Benefit Concerts at Madison Square Garden, when longtime fan Bruce Springsteen brought her out to sing the Spector hits "A Fine, Fine Boy" (one of Springsteen's favorite Love songs) and "Da Doo Ron Ron" with his E Street Band.

"People were saying, 'Who's this?' and 'I never heard of her!' and then I came on stage and they went, 'That's who she is!'" says Love, who also led the big night's all-star finale "(Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) Higher and Higher."

Comparing the E Street Band with Spector's famed "wall of sound" productions, she adds: "I've sung with the biggest stars on the planet, but nothing has the excitement of singing with Bruce Springsteen. I told him offstage that it had been many years since I worked with the 'wall of sound'—which is what it was like with the magic and energy of everybody on stage with Bruce and all the instruments. But he told me 20 years ago that as far as he was concerned, the 'wall of sound' was the start of rock 'n' roll."

While the The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame voting process continues, Love looks ahead, too, to the production of a feature film based on her 1998 autobiography *My Name is Love: The Darlene Love Story*.

"I'm meeting this weekend with the producers and writers, and they're locking me in a room for two days!" she relates, laughing heartily. "It will be the book plus a little more that's happened since."

As for casting the central character, she returns to a previous observation.

"A lot of people know who Darlene Love is--but they don't know her face," she says. "That opens it up to a whole world of people we can use, who don't have to look like Darlene Love!"

But Love's first order of business is her Christmas show.

"We have quite a few gigs this year before the big one at [Englewood, New Jersey's] Bergen Performing Arts Center on Dec. 20—with a choir and dancers," she says. She'll perform "the regular" version at B.B. King's in New York on Dec. 13. It will be her first time doing the Christmas show at the comparatively smaller venue—which does offer one big advantage.

"People go to the bigger shows that have a lot of guests and say how much they like it—but that they really came to see me," she says. "So you'll hear more Darlene Love at B.B.'s, because it will be a smaller show."

Though not as many as at Bergen, there will be some special guests at B.B.'s, and while she won't reveal who, she mentions that past Christmas shows have starred the likes of Ben E. King, Cissy Houston, and Springsteen's guitarist Little Steven Van Zandt.

"It's a matter of giving a little bit of everything," she says of the show, which is also certain to focus heavily on the songs of the recently reissued *A Christmas Gift For You From Phil Spector*, the producer's monumental Christmas album, of which Love's "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)" was the only original song. It's also the song that brings her back just before Christmas every year to *The David Letterman Show*.

Sure enough, Love is set to perform it again on Letterman on Dec. 23. Also an actress who appeared on Broadway in *Hairspray* and as Danny Glover's wife in the *Lethal Weapon* movies, she then goes Down Under to star in an Australian touring production of *Fame*. Her plans, however, could be interrupted if she is rightly inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in March.

"Bruce Springsteen is my champion," she says. "He introduces me as 'a one-woman wall of sound' and says, 'We couldn't hear rock 'n' roll without her and it's a travesty she isn't in the Hall of Fame—and we intend to do something about it!'"

If further proof of her credentials is desired, a Darlene Love "best of" CD compilation is set for release early next year.

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