

Concert Review: Teena Marie W/ Zapp At Devos Hall Grand Rapids, MI 8-17-08



Resting on thirty years of funk individually [Zapp](#) and [Teena Marie](#) put on a show that had the comfortable feeling of a backyard Bar B Que. Both acts started their recording careers within a year of each of other in '79 and '80 and share the responsibilities of carrying on legacies deeply connected to funk innovators [Roger Troutman](#) and [Rick James](#). Troutman lead his family's band with a talkbox and a sound that continues to travel through hip-hop most famously mocked by artists today like T.Pain. Starting their set with "So Ruff So Tuff" the brothers and company transported the audience back to the '80's and provided sufficient grooves despite the painful absence of their late frontman. Terry Troutman's dancefloor dexterity defied time and revealed a man still excited about his family's brand of funk. The performances of "Do Wah Diddy" and "More Bounce To The Ounce" were energetic and musically complete. Emcee [Bigg Robb](#), who has been a part of the show since the '90s came to the stage looking like a Boosty Collins version of Biz Markie offering humor and hype before plugging his blues CD. The climax of the show was [Shirley Murdock's](#) first of many appearances on the crowd assisted "Computer Love."



After a twenty-minute intermission Lady T took the stage and introduced herself with the heavily sampled Lyn Collins' "Think (About It)" even offering some James Brown type footwork to remind everyone that she is the original vanilla soulchild. Her superior nine-piece band matched her trademarked spate of

emotion with authority to play through some of the most definitive songs of her career.



The familiar bass thump of "I Need Your Loving" written by the diminutive singer was extremely fuzzy and loud but loved by the crowd anyway. Fan favorites "Portugese Love" and "Deja Vu" inspired passionate sing-alongs at which time the singer touched hands with her eager audience. Unfortunately the show did not receive the proper promotion and the funk soul goddess told the crowd for the first time in her career she was not compensated for her intense stage show. She explained to the audience her intentions as a musician and not a personality and how the show was about the five-hundred grateful people who did make it to their seats. There are many performers of 15-minute fame status who have cancelled gigs that were not sold out because of ego-oriented issues. A brief tribute to Rick James included the less popular but vigorous "Love Gun" and the obligatory "Fire And Desire." Dressed in gold shimmering material the singer resembled a formal member of the P-Funk mob even bringing the healthy-looking Murdock back out to sing and adlib on "Deja Vu." What might have been a total loss for Grand Rapids was salvaged by the graciousness of a premier songstress and that aspect of the night was priceless.