Jimi Hedndrix Are You Experienced Essay, Research Paper

Are You Experienced? The Jimi Hendrix Experience released its first album in early 1967. Popular music had been leaning towards psychedelics for a couple years already and Are You Experienced? came out at about the same time as the Beatles’ Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band. Are You Experienced? far exceeded the Beatles’ triumph in complexity, capturing the essence of the late 1960’s culture. Naturally the newer band did not share the immediate success of the Beatles. But its staying power has been testified to by several generations.

The British version of Are You Experienced? contained a few subtle differences. Most prominent were the absence of “Purple Haze” and the addition of Hendrix standard “Red House”. “Purple Haze” caught fire in America after the Monterey Pop Festival and became Jimi’s signature song. Although it was said to have endless verses, Jimi generally sang only the shortened version from the album (with a few ad lib changes). The single was sent to radio stations with a note: “This song was intentionally distorted. Do not adjust.” Are You Experienced?, as with most of the Experience’s music, sounds heavy no matter how many times you listen to it. In actuality, the stony “Purple Haze” is about as close as they ever come to hard rock. The next song, “Manic Depression” comes in strong with the opening chords and then reveals Mitch Mitchell’s trademark rolling drums. It also contains another of Jimi’s solos worth listening to by any new or Experienced fan.

Chas Chandler chose the quietest song on the album to give the world its first taste of The Jimi Hendrix Experience. Its first single was “Hey Joe”, a song written by turn-of-the-century bluesman Billy Roberts. The first bars of “Hey Joe” leave no doubt that it is being handled by a master. It quickly climbed the British pop charts, topping out at number 2 (behind “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds”). No other song written or performed by Jimi Hendrix had as much success as this one.

When there are other people around, it makes you feel alive. But when you sit alone and listen to the music, every chord catches in your throat. “Love or Confusion” has happened upon me more than once when I was suddenly realizing the dispair of yet another relationship. If the answer to his question is not obvious during the song itself, Jimi answers it for you with his very last whisper. “Love or Confusion” is a wicked twister of emotion. It shakes you up and when you lose your sense of direction, it drops out from under you, leaving you to fall mercilessly to the depths of reality.

That’s when “May This Be Love” enters to let you down easily. Mitch turns on the soft roll. Jimi sings sweetly about his waterfall. The pace picks up, getting hectic for a moment when Jimi recalls the other people in this world, with their plans. But they can do whatever it is that they do. Jimi doesn’t care, and neither do I, as long as I have my waterfall.

“I Don’t Live Today” goes through a couple of lead-in verses, but it wastes little time getting to one of the most psychedelic minutes in rock. At the apex, Jimi cries, “Ah, There ain’t no life nowhere!” When you hear it the statement is oddly comforting. The song leads out with Jimi pleading repeatedly to you: “Get Experienced.”

If a thousand bands haven’t covered “The Wind Cries Mary”, it is out of reverence. Short and simple (okay, I’m not a musician), this song is like a dream. The colorful descriptions (the traffic lights turn blue tomorrow.) are a hint of what is to become Axis: Bold as Love – the Experience’s second album.

“Fire” was one of Jimi’s favorite tunes to play live. Fast paced and funky, it leaves no guessing about Jimi’s desires. The lyrics petrified a million middle class mothers, as it turned on their daughters. A little advice: move over, Rover.

“Third Stone From the Sun” stands alone in rock history as the only instrumental with words. It tells the story of an alien race which comes down to check out the planet Earth (Mercury Venus Earth, get it?). It sees humans for what they are and comes to a natural conclusion. Obviously a case of supreme intelligence. Anyone who is trying to master guitar effects should start and end here.

You’re so foxy, you probably think this song is about you, don’t you? You’re not being paranoid. You are just a “Foxey Lady.” And you make me feel like saying ‘Foxey’.

The album closes with the title song. Once again, Jimi wants to know, “Are You Experienced?” If your answer is no, you’ve been listening to the Hendrix singles. Buy this album and a pair of headphones. It won’t be long now.

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