

Jimi Hendrix: Listening/Reading/Watching

LISTENING:

The Studio Albums:

Are You Experienced? (MCA, 1967). The stunning debut album by Hendrix redefined the parameters of what was possible on electric guitar, incorporating feedback, sustain, fuzz, extreme volume, the works. It shouldn't be overlooked, however, that Hendrix was also a first-rate singer and songwriter who mixed sensitive and thoughtful concerns with his psychedelic musings. Includes (in its expanded CD form) the classics "Purple Haze," "Hey Joe," "The Wind Cries Mary," "Foxy Lady," and "Fire." The original US and UK editions of this were slightly different; the CD sensibly has all seventeen of the songs that appeared on one or the other, including all of the tracks from first four UK singles.

Axis: Bold As Love (MCA, 1967). The Experience's second album wasn't as striking as their debut or *Electric Ladyland*, though it was a big hit. In part that's because it doesn't have nearly as many songs that are judged classics, without as many memorable guitar riffs. Still, it did have a few tracks that are considered among his core best, particularly the delicate "Little Wing," the crunching freakout "If Six Was Nine," and "Spanish Castle Magic." Other numbers saw him going in a more soul/R&B-like direction, while "Up from the Skies" has a nice soul-jazz groove.

Electric Ladyland (MCA, 1968). Hendrix's third album, a double LP in its original release, was the last studio album he'd complete in his lifetime, although he wouldn't die until about two years later. Here he went deeper into jazz-influenced improvisation, mutated blues, and tracks of epic length than on his first two LPs, though it also includes the concise classic "Crosstown Traffic" and his acclaimed Dylan cover "All Along the Watchtower." Given the space to stretch, he came up with a few of his most acclaimed sprawling epics, "Rainy Day, Dream Away/1983" and the fifteen-minute jam "Voodoo Chile," reprised in a more accessible form with the five-minute "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)."

First Rays of the New Rising Sun (MCA, 1997). Hendrix never finalized what would have been his fourth album, although there have been a few posthumous attempts to simulate what it might have included, starting with 1971's *The Cry of Love*. This is the best such attempt, including all ten songs from *The Cry of Love* and adding seven others, among them notable compositions like "Room Full of Mirrors," "Dolly Dagger," "Stepping Stone," and "Izabella." Although this lacks the unity of the three albums (all reviewed above) he recorded with the original Experience, it suggests he was gradually rediscovering his songwriting skills without abandoning his technological wizardry. There's a more upbeat mood than you might expect given the reports of Jimi's anguish during his final days, the standout being "Angel," which has a soaring spirituality.

Live Albums:

There are many official Hendrix concert albums, all but one of them released long after the group broke up—often decades later. I've divided this listing into the ones that are the best and/or most historically interesting, and the more notable ones that are more for completists and the most serious fans.

The Best:

Band of Gypsies (Capitol, 1970). The only proper live album to see release during Jimi Hendrix's lifetime, recorded at the Fillmore East on January 1, 1970. There aren't many tracks, and two of the half-dozen are written and sung by drummer Buddy Miles. On the whole the songs were slight and undeveloped by Hendrix's very high standards, the playing powerful but not as imaginative or combustible as Hendrix at his best. Elemental blues-rock riffs a bit short of compelling drive much of the material, and the constant basic lyrical urges toward love and brotherhood, admirable as they are in principle, get a little wearisome over the course of the album. All was redeemed, more or less, by the inclusion of "Machine Gun," which was both one of Hendrix's most impressive later songs and contained some of his most startling guitar work.

Live at Monterey (MCA, 2007). Recorded on June 18, 1967, this is the first commonly available full-length Hendrix concert. While it

might seem a bit rawer and less adventurous than much of what was subsequently taped at Jimi's live gigs, that's part of its considerable appeal. Perhaps because he was unknown to the Monterey audience, Hendrix might have played it a bit safe in terms of song selection, devoting half of his set to covers. Yet the presence of those covers actually makes it more interesting in a sense, as several of them weren't included on his studio releases of the time. Particularly galvanizing in that respect is the hyperkinetic charge through the opening track, Howlin' Wolf's "Killing Floor," which in the Experience's hands becomes a *rock* song, not a blues one. The amiable ramble through "Like a Rolling Stone" testifies to Jimi's skills as an interpreter; B.B. King's "Rock Me Baby" revisits his blues roots; and the closing "Wild Thing" to his capacity for sheer outrageousness. All of his previous major UK hit singles are here too, including "Purple Haze."

BBC Sessions (MCA, 1998). Two-CD compilation of Jimi Hendrix Experience BBC sessions—mostly taken from five radio sessions the group did in 1967. Many listeners will find the BBC renditions of familiar tunes relatively inessential, both because they're usually not too different from the more well-known studio versions, and because they're lacking the edge and audience feedback of genuinely live concert tapes. But there's still an engaging looseness to standbys like "Stone Free," "Fire," and "Foxy Lady" that the more committed Hendrix fan will appreciate, even if they're not as finely tuned and penetrating as their studio counterparts.

The chief pleasure is the presence of many songs Hendrix didn't put on his studio releases or even attempt in the studio, especially cover versions of classics from several of his heroes. Here some such highlights include a romp through Elvis Presley's "Hound Dog"; a high-spirited take on the Beatles' "Day Tripper"; and an homage to Dylan via a rendition of his relatively obscure non-LP mid-'60s single "Can You Please Crawl Out Your Window?" There's also some hardcore blues on Muddy Waters's "(I'm Your) Hoochie Coochie Man," "Killing Floor," and, more unexpectedly, three versions of the burning instrumental "Driving South. There's even a rudimentary instrumental cover of Stevie Wonder's "I Was Made to Love Her" with Wonder himself (who just happened to be waiting to be interviewed for the BBC on the same day) on drums. It also has the

audio tracks to one April 1967 and three January 1969 BBC television performances, most notably their famous off-the-cuff version of “Sunshine of Your Love” that caused so much consternation when the Experience launched into it without warning on Lulu’s variety show.

Live at Winterland (Rykodisc, 1987). Culled from three concerts at San Francisco’s Winterland from October 10-12, 1968, this might be the best official live representation of the band during this period. Some aficionados might be mildly disappointed at the absence of much post-*Are You Experienced?* material. But these are pretty satisfyingly high-voltage, even occasionally raw, versions of standbys like “Foxy Lady,” and “Purple Haze,” with “Fire” given an almost punkily speedy arrangement. He’s also stretching out on those old chestnuts at least a little, lengthening them (especially “Hey Joe,” here lasting almost seven minutes) without quite going overboard.

For those in search of something a little more exotic, there’s a cover of Cream’s then-recent blockbuster “Sunshine of Your Love”; a very heavy “Spanish Castle Magic,” the only item from *Axis: Bold As Love*; an eight-minute “Killing Floor,” with Jefferson Airplane’s Jack Casady guesting on bass; and an eleven-minute “Red House,” which as Jimi notes had at this time yet to be issued on vinyl in the US. The cover of Hansson and Karlsson’s “Tax Free” (learned from a Swedish act who supported him in Copenhagen in early 1968), alas, anticipates some of the turgid jamming that would often cloud his final two years. (A hard-to-find 1992 special edition of this release added three bonus tracks on a CD single: “Are You Experienced?,” “Voodoo Child (Slight Return),” and “Like a Rolling Stone.”)

Live at Woodstock (MCA, 1999). While it forms a significant part of his legend, this festival-closing set from August 18, 1969 isn’t Jimi at his best, due less to the quality of his own playing and singing than the band in which he was playing and the uncertainty over his future direction. This was the highest-profile gig of the few shows mounted by the ad hoc ensemble Hendrix dubbed Gypsy, Sun & Rainbows, though frankly you have a hard time hearing anyone but Jimi and drummer Mitch Mitchell, with the rhythm guitarist (Larry Lee) and percussionists (Juma Sultan and Jerry Velez) hardly

audible. This isn't so much a problem on the straight songs, where you're essentially listening to the Hendrix-Mitchell-Billy Cox trio that became Jimi's last stable band in 1970, though they're a little rhythmically ragged, perhaps feeling overwhelmed by the task of trying to coordinate with three less experienced (even superfluous) players.

But the three instrumental jams are largely lacking in even rudimentary melody, meandering as if Hendrix is trying to cover up the absence of a roadmap by simply jamming in heaps of notes, effects, and volume, heedless of a purposeful destination. While he did play a few songs he had yet to put on record ("Message to Love," "Lover Man," and "Izabella"), even these were liable to too much flash and sheer surplus length. From the let's-get-this-over-with way he speeds through "Fire," there's also the sense of frustration at revisiting some crowd-pleasing classics, though Jimi didn't seem to have yet come up with an alternative satisfactory to both him and his fans. This is, however, where Hendrix gave his most famous performance of "Star Spangled Banner," transcending the problematic setup to deliver a rendition unencumbered by the underrehearsed accompanists.

Live at Berkeley (MCA, 2003). The entirety of the second set on May 30, 1970, by which time the Experience—as Jimi's band was again now billed—had Hendrix flanked by Mitch Mitchell and Billy Cox. While to be blunt this isn't as exciting as the "other" Experience, clearly by this time the three are becoming more comfortable playing together, and Jimi more at ease mixing new material with the crowd-pleasers like "Hey Joe," "Foxy Lady," "Purple Haze," and the set-closing "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)." Granted the new material isn't as strong as those relative oldies, but at least this gives you the chance to hear some fairly underexposed tunes, such as the tight blues-rock of "Lover Man" (even if it sounded kind of like a hybrid of his old stage faves "Killing Floor" and "Rock Me Baby"), the rather muddled blues-rock of "Pass It On (Straight Ahead)," and the jazzy questing-toward-who-knows-what "Hey Baby (New Rising Sun)." There's also a welcome appearance of "I Don't Live Today" ("I know for goddamned sure I don't live today" he spews at one point).

Jimi Hendrix, *Live in Maui* (Legacy, 2020). If you've seen the ridiculously awful film *Rainbow Bridge*, you know its only redeeming feature is the 17-minute segment in which Hendrix, accompanied by Mitch Mitchell and Billy Cox, play live to an audience of a few hundred in a field in the Maui hills. It's something of a miracle that a good-sounding album of the July 30, 1970 concert is now available, since the environment wasn't too conducive for good fidelity. That's evident in the film, where you see foam covering the microphones to cut down on the wind. But this two-CD set has reasonable sound and enthusiastic, if somewhat loose, performances. Since it's one of the final US concerts he gave before dying less than a couple months later, it's also of significant historic value.

As a record, however, it's not all that different from a couple live albums taped a month earlier (*Live at Berkeley*) and a month later (*Live at the Isle of Wight*). The set list is pretty similar, though this has a few songs ("In from the Storm," "Hear My Train A-Comin,'" "Villanova Junction") that aren't on *Live at the Isle of Wight*. Like that previously available live material, it shows Hendrix starting to ease back toward more focused songwriting on tunes like "Dolly Dagger," but also prone toward sprawling improvisation. While it's not too noticeable, purists should know this doesn't present the show in its entire unvarnished state. Back in 1971, Mitch Mitchell overdubbed drums on the songs featured in *Rainbow Bridge*, and the original tape did not capture a few numbers in their entirety. These CDs are packaged with a Blu-ray documentary, *Music, Money, Madness...Jimi Hendrix in Maui*.

Blue Wild Angel: Jimi Hendrix Live at the Isle of Wight (MCA, 2002). This set from the Isle of Wight festival on August 30, 1970, represents the last time he was captured on both tape and celluloid in decent professional quality. Some critics feel Hendrix was in somewhat tired and uninspired form at this event, and if you compare these cuts to his best performances, there's some validity to those claims. But heard in isolation from the tense and sometimes depressing circumstances of this final tour that have since been documented in numerous discographies, it's really not that bad at all. If he's less ebullient than he was back in the original Experience days, the Hendrix-Mitchell-Cox trio still plays with reasonable power. The over-the-top soloing has been reined in to

some degree, and isn't as much of a hindrance here as it is on some of his other latter live recordings.

Most notably, he was finally spicing up his set with some new material and items from his official releases that hadn't been done to death in concert. "Dolly Dagger" and "Freedom" were highlights among the songs that wouldn't have been familiar to the audience from discs. It's also good to hear "All Along the Watchtower," which was featured far less in concert than one would expect, though the version here is kind of unpolished (and "Machine Gun" is marred by what sound like security announcements through walkie-talkies). Note that this is available in both complete form on two CDs, and as a shorter one-CD set that omits seven songs. Also note that the DVD isn't quite complete either, missing a couple tracks present on the full CD version.

The Rest:

Miami Pop Festival (Legacy, 2013). Well-recorded May 18, 1968 show is straightforward without standout surprises. Includes staples of his early repertoire "Hey Joe," "Fire," "Purple Haze," and "Foxy Lady"; some overlong jamming on "Tax Free" and "Red House"; and the less obvious choices "Hear My Train A Comin'" and "I Don't Live Today," the latter of which might be the set's highlight.

Live at Woburn (EDagger, 2009). The Hendrix Experience's July 6, 1968 performance at the Woburn Music Festival was their only live concert in the UK that year. Much, though not quite all, of it is contained here on this soundboard recording, issued on the Hendrix specialist label Dagger. Like other Dagger releases – and the label is quite upfront about this in the packaging and sleeve notes, so it's not deceptive – it isn't quite up to par with Hendrix's standard official product soundwise. Owing to equipment problems at the event itself, there's some crackling and high-pitched noises emitting from the amplifiers, and much of "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" is missing, as is the end of "Tax Free" (which nonetheless still lasts ten minutes). Those factors aside, the sound and performances are pretty good, though the availability of some of the songs ("Fire," "Red House," "Foxy Lady," and "Purple Haze," the last of which starts with almost three minutes of squealing and howling distorted

effects) in so many other versions mark it as something for the completist. Of greater interest, if only because they're less usual fare, is the instrumental "Tax Free," which points toward the more meandering jamming Hendrix would frequently favor over the next couple of years, and "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)," performed here three months in advance of its first official appearance on record (on *Electric Ladyland*). The packaging is excellent, with lengthy liner notes from Hendrix historian John McDermott.

Songs for Groovy Children: The Fillmore East Concerts (Legacy, 2019). This five-CD box presents, for the first time, everything from all four of the sets at the Fillmore East on December 31, 1969 and January 1, 1970. Just six of the tracks were used back in 1970 on *Band of Gypsys*. Much of this has come out on an assortment of releases, but sometimes only on concert film, or in edited versions. Seven of the tracks haven't been available anywhere. So for these reasons alone, it's an historic document. But despite the skill of the players, plenty of the tunes meander or go on too long.

Best-ofs:

Smash Hits (Track UK, 1968; Reprise US, 1969). The first and still, for all its imperfections, most beloved Jimi Hendrix best-of compilation was a bit premature when it was issued in the UK in spring 1968, though in its favor it did include a bunch of A-sides and B-sides that had yet to appear on British LPs at the time. The US version the following year was logically geared toward the American market, adding his two most popular post-*Are You Experienced?* tracks ("All Along the Watchtower" and "Crosstown Traffic"), as well as the three songs from the UK debut LP that hadn't yet appeared Stateside ("Red House," "Remember," and "Can You See Me"). Three B-sides and "The Burning of the Midnight Lamp" were lost in the transition, but musically the US mutation actually made for a stronger collection. The most crucial tracks are on the more comprehensive greatest hits anthology *Experience Hendrix: The Best of Jimi Hendrix* (see below).

Experience Hendrix: The Best of Jimi Hendrix (MCA, 1997).

An improvement on *Smash Hits* in length and chronological breadth, *Experience Hendrix: The Best of Jimi Hendrix* is **the best of the Hendrix best-ofs**, even if it has one of the blandest covers of any major Hendrix release. A few selections (“Night Bird Flying”) and omissions (“Spanish Castle Magic,” “Machine Gun”) might be questionable. But almost everyone would agree this is a fine summary of his career highlights, though it lacks, by necessity owing to space limitations, the very long tracks from *Electric Ladyland*. Ultimately it serves well as either an introduction to Jimi or a sound choice for those who want just one Hendrix disc in their collection. Concise track-by-track annotation in the liner notes also give a good basic history of the songs and recordings.

Box Sets:

The Jimi Hendrix Experience (MCA, 2000). At a glance at the song titles, this four-CD box set looks like a gargantuan anthology offering relatively little that can’t be found elsewhere. Further investigation, however, indicates that **much of** it’s previously unreleased, the familiar titles being represented by unfamiliar live recordings and alternate takes. It’s a fine trawl through much of the cream of his rare and unreleased material that’s both educational and enjoyable, especially if the standard versions of these songs are so familiar to you that you’ve pretty much committed them to heart. Heavy on songs and light on jams, it’s also, unlike many Hendrix bootlegs that concentrate on lengthy instrumental improvisations, highly listenable start to finish, providing in its own way a detailed look at his artistic evolution, albeit one that takes an alternate route than most of the Hendrix product on the market.

West Coast Seattle Boy (Legacy, 2010). While in no way a match for the material in his core discography, serious Hendrix fans welcomed this five-disc box of rarities, the bulk of them previously unreleased. The wealth of outtakes and alternate takes included different studio versions of a few songs from *Are You Experienced*, along with a previously unissued version of Bob Dylan’s “Tears of Rage” and a 1970 home demo. Also on board was an hour-and-a-half documentary, *Voodoo Child*. Of perhaps most historical interest, even if it was musically the weakest component, was a disc of ‘60s soul/R&B sides (all but two predating 1967) on which Hendrix

played as a sideman, giving an insight into his formative years in the shadows. Even though only ten years have passed since its release, it's gotten hard to keep track of what might have subsequently appeared somewhere else, particularly among the live cuts. Still, on its own this is worth hearing, and certainly some of it can only be found on this package. (The fifth disc is an hour-and-a-half DVD documentary, *Voodoo Child*.)

Electric Ladyland Deluxe Edition 50th Anniversary Box Set (Legacy/Experience Hendrix, 2018). Four-disc expanded 50th anniversary has the original *Electric Ladyland* album; a disc of rare/unreleased demos and outtakes; a disc of the Experience's Hollywood Bowl concert on September 14, 1968; and a Blu-ray documentary on the making of *Electric Ladyland*. Everything's encased in a mini-coffee table-sized 48-page hardcover book with liner notes, photos, memorabilia, and reproductions of some of Jimi's handwritten lyrics, as well as his instructions (not completely followed) for the LP's original artwork.

About half of the second CD is devoted to home demos Hendrix recorded as *Electric Ladyland* was taking shape. Although the liners state these were made with a small amplifier, the sound's soft enough that it seems almost as if he could have been playing an unplugged electric, like he's making sure not to disturb other hotel guests. In large part because of the solo, almost unplugged setting, these show a more sensitive side to the man than his celebrated noisefests do. The standout among the studio outtakes is "Angel Caterina," an early version of "1983" with Noel Redding on bass and Buddy Miles on drums.

The sound quality's a bit on the rough side on the Hollywood Bowl disc. Still, a clearly excited Experience deliver a fairly good, if a bit rough set that's not as predictable as some of their others from the era. On documentary on the fourth disc has been long available as part of an hour-long-or-so episode of the *Classic Albums* series since the late 1990s, but this version adds almost forty minutes.

Other compilations:

Blues (MCA, 1994). *Blues* wasn't just any old excuse to regurgitate stray cuts tied to a loose theme in new packaging, as eight of the eleven tracks were previously unreleased. Heard in one shot, this group of cuts testified to Hendrix's skills as a blues player and singer, with the influence of Muddy Waters in particular coming through strongly via originals like "Voodoo Chile Blues," the traditional "Catfish Blues," and the funky cover of Muddy's own "Mannish Boy." This also has the version of "Red House" that appeared on the original UK edition of *Are You Experienced?*. The downside is that, even with Jimi unpredictably twisting the blues template with his frenzied riffing, there's far less variety here than on the average Hendrix disc. And while one wishes he'd done more acoustic blues a la the opening version of "Hear My Train A Comin'," the guitar on that track certainly seems imperfectly tuned.

Examining a similar theme, in a manner that some might find more accessible, is the 2003 collection *Martin Scorsese Presents the Blues: Jimi Hendrix*, released as part of the series issued in conjunction with the seven-part TV program *The Blues*. This, however, offered just two previously unreleased cuts, the rest (including the relatively well known "Red House" and "Voodoo Chile") being selected from studio albums and compilations.

South Saturn Delta (MCA, 1997). *South Saturn Delta* isn't tied to any particular era, style, or concert. Instead, it's something of a catch-all grouping of outtakes, jams, and live performances that don't quite manage to fit anywhere else. Here's the place to find the weird 1967 psychedelic B-side "The Stars That Play with Laughing Sam's Dice" and his most elusive Bob Dylan cover, "Drifter's Escape" (actually a different version than the one first available on the *Loose Ends* LP). Here also are early demos of "Angel" (of which the track titled "Little Wing" is actually an instrumental version) and a Band of Gypsys studio recording of "Power of Soul." And the title track instrumental, recorded with an actual horn section, might be as close as Hendrix came to credibly meshing rock and jazz. A few classics ("Little Wing," "All Along the Watchtower," and "Angel") are represented here by alternate versions.

True, there are also rather average blues-rock numbers like "Look Over Yonder" and "Here He Comes (Lover Man)." There are also

instrumentals that are more like sketches than fully-formed songs, or even fully-formed instrumental songs. But that's just part of the territory when you dig a little deeper into Jimi Hendrix's repertoire than the best several dozen compositions and covers he recorded—a liability most fans of the man now accept for what it is, rather than wishing such material would somehow be more than what it is.

Valleys of Neptune (Legacy, 2010). There are two ways of looking at this collection of previously unreleased studio recordings, largely recorded in the first few months of 1969. One is that it might be considered a valuable supplement to the mere three studio albums he released during his lifetime, especially by committed fans. The other is that it's indicative of his lack of direction and productivity as he felt out possibilities for what to do after *Electric Ladyland*. Some of these are inferior, funkier remakes of early songs ("Stone Free," "Fire," "Red House"); others are covers ("Sunshine of Your Love" and Elmore James's "Bleeding Heart"); and there are better versions of a few others elsewhere. There's a generally bluesy, jammy vibe that might have been enjoyable for Hendrix to work with in the studio, but doesn't count among his top achievements, particularly in the songwriting department. The same could be said, to varying degrees, of two other outtakes collections that would follow, *People, Hell and Angels* and *Both Sides of the Sky* (see reviews below).

People, Hell and Angels (Legacy, 2013). Some of Hendrix's less indulgent ventures from 1968 and 1969 outside of the format he'd used on his first three albums, with a bent toward fairly upbeat, funky blues-rock. There are few Jimi fans who approve of the *Crash Landing* and *Midnight Lightning* LPs' use of overdubs by session musicians, and it's good to hear some different recordings of tracks from those records that weren't subjected to that dubious practice, including the spacey "Hey Gypsy Boy" (which evolved into "Hey Baby (New Rising Sun)") and "Crash Landing" itself. The version of "Izabella," one of the stronger and more thought-out songs, is different from the 1970 single. Elsewhere "Somewhere," the earliest recording (from March 1968), has the unusual lineup of Hendrix, Buddy Miles, and (on bass) Stephen Stills. The May 21, 1969 version of "Hear My Train A Comin'" holds some historical interest as it's,

according to the notes, the first session with Billy Cox and Buddy Miles.

But almost all of these sides sound rather casually bluesy and tossed off in the songwriting department. There are naturally passages of inspired guitar playing, like the repeated circular figures in the jazzy detour in the midst of "Somewhere," and the meditative, almost spiritual figures on the short (less than two-minute) version of "Villanova Junction Blues." You wouldn't hold any of these up as examples of Jimi's finest compositions, even from the time when he was drifting toward a blues-funk sound; there's nothing here on the order of "Machine Gun," for instance. This is best treated as a supplement to the best work he did without the Redding-Mitchell lineup, not a document of where he might have eventually landed without it.

Both Sides of the Sky (Legacy, 2018). The third of a trilogy of albums intended to round up the best and most significant studio recordings from the vaults, mostly from the 1969-70 era when Jimi was struggling to concoct a studio follow-up to *Electric Ladyland*. These find Hendrix working with varying lineups of musicians (though most played in either the original Experience or the Band of Gypsys), and struggling to some degree to find some direction. The tunes are often, though not always, bluesier on the whole than his Experience recordings, and a couple ("Things I Used to Do" and "Mannish Boy") are covers of actual blues classics. But although Jimi's instrumental prowess remained awesome, his songwriting and arrangements lacked the focus that had characterized his first three albums.

The best songs on *Both Sides of the Sky* tend to be the ones that have been available in different versions. The one here of "Lover Man" from December 15, 1969, with Band of Gypsys rhythm section Billy Cox on bass and Buddy Miles on drums, is a clear highlight. Dynamic and propulsive, it has the razor-sharp bounce of the best blues-rock, along the lines of the cover of Howlin' Wolf's "Killing Floor" that kicked off his Monterey Pop Festival set. Along the same bluesy lines, though less impressive, is "Hear My Train a Comin'," the sole number here to feature all three members of the original Jimi Hendrix Experience (from their penultimate recording session

on April 9, 1969). Stephen Stills is heard on a unexpected version of “Woodstock,” and the spooky 1968 instrumental “Cherokee Mist” features only Hendrix and Mitchell, and an instrumental version of “Angel” from 1968 is also nice.

BOOKS:

Biographies:

Hendrix: Setting the Record Straight, by John McDermott with Eddie Kramer (Warner Books, 1992). Though it might be more weighted toward the music than the man (in part because of the participation of Eddie Kramer), this remains, more than fifteen years after its publication, the best place to start for a general overview of Jimi Hendrix’s life and career. Highly readable and extremely detailed, it has the best balance between coverage of his recordings; his prowess as a concert performer; his technological and studio innovations; his business difficulties; and his personal strengths and failings. Though Kramer was an insider in Hendrix’s circle as his favored recording engineer, the book isn’t blind to Jimi’s weaknesses, and takes a lot of angles into account when examining his triumphs and failures. There’s been much subsequent research since its 1992 publication that’s unearthed more, but much of it’s been done by McDermott and Kramer themselves for numerous Experience Hendrix CD/DVD/book projects, and can be found in the text to those releases.

Room Full of Mirrors: A Biography of Jimi Hendrix, by Charles R. Cross (Hyperion, 2005). For those who want more on Hendrix the man, this much more recent bio gives much more attention to his inner conflicts, contradictory behaviors, and personal relationships. As a longtime Seattle-based rock journalist, Cross was especially well positioned to research Jimi’s boyhood, and this volume has by far the most in-depth coverage of his pre-Army years, drawing upon first-hand interviews with many friends, relatives, and neighbors. It also has the most detailed rundown of his 1961-66 struggles to establish himself as a professional musician, and if only the critiques of his music and creative evolution after moving to London were as thorough, this would indisputably be the best Hendrix biography. There’s still much to

learn from in the sections on Hendrix the star, Cross steering clear of both harsh judgment and forgiving idolatry in his assessment of Jimi's character and achievements.

Jimi Hendrix: Electric Gypsy, by Harry Shapiro & Caesar Glebbeek (St. Martin's Griffin, 1995). While there's some overlap with the slightly better (and better written) books detailed above, and has (like McDermott & Kramer's bio) had some of its findings superseded by subsequent research, *Electric Gypsy* remains a highly worthwhile Hendrix biography. Like *Setting the Record Straight*, it's more recommended to fans of Hendrix the musician than to those looking for insight into Hendrix the human being, though it's not lacking in that quality. At about 750 pages, it's certainly comprehensive, and if some of the more technical information might not be for everyone, it's valuable to have. The inclusion of unusual photos and some handwritten letters/lyrics are good bonuses.

Jimi Hendrix: An Illustrated Experience, by Janie L. Hendrix & John McDermott (Simon & Schuster, 2007). While the basic bio forming the text of this 64-page coffee table book is a serviceable overview of Jimi Hendrix's life, the real attractions are the photos and, above all, some inserts of scrapbook-like memorabilia. Those include reproductions of childhood drawings; letters and postcards to his father; gig posters; the handwritten lyric to "Purple Haze"; and his handwritten instructions for the *Electric Ladyland* cover artwork. As you'd expect from a book co-written by Jimi's stepsister and copyrighted to Experience Hendrix, it's not too critical of the late musician, and even with all the perks it's overpriced. Fans will like the rare mementos, though, and the inclusion of a bound-in CD with more than 70 minutes of interviews and rare music (mostly recorded at a March 1968 concert, though there's also a long November 1969 Hendrix-Buddy Miles studio jam) helps ease the pain.

The Recordings:

Ultimate Hendrix: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Live Concerts and Sessions, by John McDermott with Billy Cox & Eddie Kramer (Backbeat, 2009). Written by the leading Jimi Hendrix

authority (McDermott) with two people (Cox and Kramer) who were often there, this day-by-day guide to Hendrix's recording sessions and concerts is a necessary volume for anyone seriously interested in his music. It's not just a reference as to what was done when, though much of that information's here; it's written to be *read*, with many comments from musicians and technicians involved in cutting the tracks, as well as much entertaining description and commentary about the music and processes that lends insight into Jimi's creativity. The only substantial criticism is one that can't be held against the authors – some of the information about, and session tapes of, the recordings seems to have been unable for scrutiny.

Jimi Hendrix and the Making of Are You Experienced, by Sean Egan (A Cappella, 2002). An excellent, passionate 200-page volume on the genesis and realization of what's ultimately – though many fans might hotly dispute it – Hendrix's best and most influential album. Egan interviewed plenty of people, both central and peripheral, for fresh insights, including Noel Redding, engineer Chkiantz, musical device-maker Roger Mayer, girlfriend Kathy Etchingham, early Hendrix champion Linda Keith, Monkee Micky Dolenz, and even Philip Jose Farmer, who wrote the science fiction story that helped inspire "Purple Haze." Egan not only covers the recording of the album itself, but also the formation of the Experience and the stories behind the songs, also offering opinionated track-by-track analysis (of all cuts from both the US and UK versions) that isn't afraid to go against conventional critical wisdom. One wishes there were similar volumes for *Axis: Bold As Love* and *Electric Ladyland*, and there is indeed a much smaller one on the latter (as part of Continuum's 33 1/3 series of mini-books on classic rock albums) by John Perry, though it's more oriented toward aesthetic criticism than historical research.

Black Gold: The Lost Archives of Jimi Hendrix, by Steven Roby (Billboard, 2002). A guide to the vast hoard of unreleased Jimi Hendrix recordings – in and outside of the studio – that's known to exist, or even speculated to exist, going all the way back to his teenage years in the late 1950s. Like *Jimi Hendrix Sessions*, this has more to offer the Hendrix fan than the less obsessed listener might guess, written not just to detail what exists and where and when it

was recorded, but also with descriptive analysis offering insight into Hendrix's music that might not be available through standard sources. It's true that you probably wouldn't want to hear all the jam sessions this describes unless you're a serious devotee. But it's certainly interesting to read about all the people he played with at one time or another, as well as the numerous odd/ambitious projects that were unfinished, such as the *Black Gold* concept album of sorts that gives this book its name.

Jimi Hendrix: The Complete Guide to His Music, by Peter Doggett (Omnibus Press, 2004). While this hand-sized volume is on the slim (160-page) side, it's an extremely handy reference for weeding through the jungle of Hendrix's discography, especially if you're overwhelmed by its sheer size and just want a grip on where to find what. Veteran British rock historian Doggett offers succinct rundowns not just on the main studio and live albums, but also the mass of reissues, compilations, and posthumously released material that's flooded the market. Includes not only the high-profile releases, but also some "gray area" unauthorized discs and off-the-wall limited-edition collector-oriented productions, taking care to note differences between various editions of the same album. Refreshingly, it's not a dull facts'n'figures book either, Doggett making quite sharp and witty critiques that aren't afraid to take labels to task for not doing things right.

Jimi Hendrix Gear, by Michael Heatley (Voyageur Press, 2009). A guide to the guitars, amplifiers, and effects devices Hendrix used that doesn't get overly technical, and can be read by general fans. Still, musicians and gearheads will get the most out of this volume, dominated by descriptions and pictures of the many guitars Hendrix used in his lifetime. The other equipment he used is also discussed, with small sections on the basses of Noel Redding and drums of Mitch Mitchell. All of the gear is placed within the context of Hendrix's career, and not simply described from physical and technical angles.

Hendrix as Musician:

Jimi Hendrix Musician, by Keith Shadwick (Backbeat, 2003). What better title, indeed, for a book focusing on Jimi Hendrix the

musician? Actually it's a superb, near-coffee table-sized, 250-page examination of Hendrix's artistic evolution in all departments, though particularly as instrumentalist and recording artist. There's a lot of off-the-beaten track information here, especially on the pre-fame years and his formative influences, with a good third of the text devoted to the period predating his move to London. While this might be a little more musician-oriented than most other Hendrix books, it's by no means exclusively for players or gearheads. It's clearly and accessibly written so that anyone interested in Jimi will get a lot out of it, with plenty of stories you might not have come across elsewhere. Lots of fine photos and excellent layout/design, too.

Hendrix as Songwriter:

Voodoo Child: Jimi Hendrix: The Stories Behind Every Song, by David Stubbs (Carlton, 2003). While this doesn't quite cover every song Hendrix recorded (even if you're only looking at major official releases), it does cover most tracks most listeners would consider to be a significant part of his canon, including all of his originals (and covers) from the discs he released under his own name during his lifetime. Stubbs doesn't just cover the specific circumstances that motivated/inspired Jimi to write his tunes, although plenty of these are noted; he also delves into vivid descriptions of the tracks themselves, as well as how the themes reflected events in both Hendrix's life and the overall times and society in which he lived. His style won't be to the liking of everyone at all times, occasionally lapsing into smugness, and he's not afraid to aim some stinging putdowns at tracks some fans might hold dear, calling (for instance) "Highway Chile"'s opening riff "horribly prescient of Deep Purple at their most weedily portentous." Still, it's a well-done guide to Jimi's *songs* -- an essential aspect of his craft sometimes overlooked by those who focus on his amazing guitar work and wild image -- covering the tracks from not only the major three studio albums and *Band of Gypsies*, but also most of the major posthumous releases.

Jimi Hendrix: The Ultimate Lyric Book, compiled by Janie L. Hendrix (Backbeat, 2012). This goes beyond what lyric books usually offer, including many taken from scraps of notebook paper,

hotel stationery, and even airline stationery. There are also a *lot* of lyrics you won't hear on the records, as well as many fine well-selected photos. More than 130 Hendrix songs are represented, the real treasures being the reproductions of lyrics done in Hendrix's own handwriting, for both released and unreleased songs. Sometimes the alterations are significant, like "Purple Haze," originally titled "Purple Haze, Jesus Saves", with references to "fetus sunburns," and an opening line "Purple haze...beyond insane, is it pleasure or is it pain." A song titled "Here Comes the Sun" that does *not* seem to be the George Harrison composition is given over mostly to extremely detailed descriptions of which strings and chords should be played and how. Some other unreleased songs are also elaborate, like 1968's "Give Me Some Room," dated January 15, 1968, with a good half-dozen or so verses, with notes for the keys in the margins, as well as instructions for when "drum + voice" should be used (once before this intriguing lyric: "King Kong and his three sisters, they tryin' hard to cut me down").

The unreleased songs often have a despairing, wary tone of a man feeling chased and confined by the blues, women, and other dark forces at work ("Kiss the Sunshine" being a notable exception). A lengthy bulletin from May 18, 1969 is even titled "I Escaped from the Roman Coliseum." It's certainly tempting to read "Honey Bed" as a veiled screed against manager Mike Jeffery with its accusation "you got chains attached to my head," though the following line gets pretty sexual in flavor ("you spreading magic honey all in your head"). Written on July 19, 1969 as tensions between him and Jeffery were magnifying, it's nonetheless hard not to think he might have sending a message to Michael when he (would have presumably) sang "so instead of trying to make me your slave, why don't you just...call it a day." The ending chant warns "Ball and chain...for sale. New Day come...Master's gone to Hell." We'll never know, but here's guessing that "chant" (as Jimi describes it) would have sounded mighty sinister.

Other discoveries bring up more fascinating unanswerable questions. "War Child" is prefaced with "Note: To go on 'war' side of LP": does that mean he might have been thinking of a concept album of sorts with a "war" side and a "peace" side? And in the midst of it all, he slips in some surreal humor: what to make of the line

"Lemon, Lenin, looks like skim milk" in "Catch That Bug," or "The World's a T.V. and hangups are commercials" in "Sippin' Time, Sippin' Wine"?

While the final section is devoted to 27 "Unfinished Rough Sketches," some of these definitely seem like pretty thought-out songs that are well on their way to completion, both in length and detail. One oddity that would have likely been called "I am your trash man" takes up fourteen pages of New York's Hotel Elysées's stationery; another occupies eleven pages of an National Airlines pad. Those eleven pages seem likely to be part of his uncompleted circa-1969 cartoon-like concept album *Black Gold*, and that's not mere conjecture, as it starts with the words "Black is Gold is pure"; the "kingdoms and fables" of "Black Gold" are mentioned prominently in another sketch (which, for what it's worth, has a phone number for "Steve Stills"). If just half of these rough sketches were real songs, that's another unreleased album right there.

The only serious criticism of *The Ultimate Lyric Book* is some fuzziness over the sources of the unreleased items. Sometimes the printed lyrics for unreleased material differ from the handwritten ones. Does this mean that the material exists in recorded form with different words? It doesn't say, and explanatory notes would have been appreciated, or at least an introductory note explaining the differences (or, for that matter, how some of the handwritten drafts were discovered and preserved).

Memoirs:

Jimi Hendrix: Inside the Experience, by Mitch Mitchell with John Platt (Harmony 1990). Some readers might have been wishing for something more comprehensive, and perhaps more controversial, in Mitchell's account of his experience days. Presented in close-to-coffee table format, it linked extended Mitchell quotes with text outlining the basic progression of the Experience, embellished by numerous pictures and poster productions. Yet on the whole it's quite entertaining, with lots of good road stories and some studio recollections, and not a little insight into the musical dynamic of the Experience (with both Noel Redding and Billy Cox). It's also quite even-tempered, upbeat, and balanced in its views of

the Experience's ups-and-downs and its members personalities – and, in all those regards, quite a contrast to Redding's own memoir detailing largely the same journey (see below).

Are You Experienced: The Inside Story of the Jimi Hendrix Experience, by Noel Redding & Carol Appleby (Da Capo Press, 1996). While Noel Redding's autobiography is more detailed and more of a standard tome than Mitchell's, it's frankly much more of a slog, if not without its redeeming qualities. The first half of the book is the better part, and if the detailed remembrances (aided by Redding's diary) might be a little on the dry side for some readers, at least his meticulousness ensured more accuracy when retelling the events years later. Even during the Experience, however, Noel seemed by far the most prone of the three to dissatisfaction, particularly with management and money matters. After he left, those frustrations multiplied, and the last sections of the book get quite exasperating as Redding dives deeper and deeper into the legalese of the many ways he got screwed financially by the music business. Many of those complaints are justified, but it doesn't make them any less exhausting to read, ultimately making it a chore to finish the volume.

Miscellaneous:

Hendrix on Hendrix: Interviews and Encounters with Jimi Hendrix, edited by Steven Roby (Chicago Review Press, 2012). This 340-page book might not have every interview Hendrix gave (whether represented by Q&As or stories with quotes). But it sure has a lot of them, spanning 1966 to 1970. It's an interesting way to experience Hendrix's idiosyncratically chatty, somewhat spacy way of expressing himself, and includes some opinions about society and life in addition to lots of musical observations.

Jimi Hendrix: The Ultimate Experience, by Johnny Black (Thunder's Mouth Press, 1999). A sort of day-by-day guide to the life of Jimi Hendrix, detailing the major events of his career in chronological order, though most of this 250-page book covers the four years immediately preceding his death. Not a mere list of dates and occurrences, it's punctuated by tons of direct quotes from many of his associates and acquaintances, quite a few of which are

hard to find elsewhere. For that reason, it actually makes far better conventional sit-down reading than you'd think, packed with lots of interesting stories. It's marred, however, by lack of attribution for the specific sources of many of the quotes, many of which are taken from interviews other than those conducted by the author.

The Jimi Hendrix Companion: Three Decades of Commentary, edited by Chris Potash (Schirmer, 1996). A little more than 200 pages of articles written about Hendrix from 1966 to the mid-1990s, encompassing record reviews, concert reviews, interviews, essays on specific aspects of his craft, and more. The sheer scope of this anthology ensures that very few people will enjoy everything here, but also guarantees that everyone will find at least a few pieces that interest them.

The Rough Guide to Jimi Hendrix, by Richie Unterberger (Rough Guides, 2009). Basic overview of Hendrix's career, written by the instructor of this course. This also includes sections on his albums, best songs, films, influences, and other Hendrixology.

DVDs:

Concert films:

The Jimi Hendrix Experience: Live at Monterey (MCA, 2007). Although technical difficulties prevented one song ("Can You See Me?") from being captured satisfactorily, the rest of his Monterey set is here. It's incredibly exciting in all visual and musical respects, culminating in Jimi setting fire to his guitar for the finale, "Wild Thing." There are also documentary segments before and after the concert footage, including interview material with Hendrix, Mitch Mitchell, and Noel Redding; a look at the festival itself with its co-founder, Lou Adler; and, not least, the earliest known live Experience footage (of "Like a Rolling Stone" and "Stone Free," in somewhat primitive, lo-fi black-and-white), from February 1967. The disc is also available as part of a highly recommended three-DVD *Monterey Pop* box set that also includes the original film, a whole DVD of outtakes from performances by other artists, and various other extras.

Live at Woodstock (MCA, 2005). All of the complete songs that survive from Hendrix's Woodstock performance, which amount to the great majority of the set sequence. It adds up to well over an hour of brightly colored footage, very skillfully shot and edited though the film crew was almost running on empty by the time Hendrix went onstage (and nearly missed "Star Spangled Banner" when they reloaded their cameras). Though said "Star Spangled Banner" dwarfs everything else here, Hendrix was actually in pretty good, energetic form. The problems were more in the too-big, somewhat disorganized backup band, and it's a little surreal to watch the sextet and pretty much only be able to hear Hendrix and Mitch Mitchell. There's some undisciplined jamming (especially on the lengthy instrumentals), but if you're stacking it up against the two DVDs featuring 1970 performances, it's more historic than *Jimi Plays Berkeley*, and not as much of an endurance test as *Live at the Isle of Wight*.

The 2005 DVD release is a two-disc set, the first of which presents the principal feature, with some additional interview material with some of the participants providing some opening and closing context. The second disc features a black-and-white video amateur videotape of much the same material that's relatively inessential, but interesting for the diehards for its different angles and the inclusion of one song, "Hear My Train A Comin'," not on the main program. The second disc also has footage from a September 3, 1969 Harlem press conference and interviews with Billy Cox, Larry Lee, and engineer Eddie Kramer done specially for this package.

Jimi Hendrix: The Dick Cavett Show (MCA, 2002). Even with the addition of a 55-minute documentary produced especially for this DVD, this disc is kind of skimpy, coming close to being a "for-fans-only" release. It has the entirety of both of Hendrix's appearances on Dick Cavett's US network TV chat show (in July and September of 1969), but that only adds up to about a half hour even counting Cavett's opening comic monologues (in which Hendrix didn't participate). Since much of that footage is repeated in the documentary (which peppers the snippets with latter-day retrospective interviews with Cavett, Billy Cox, and Mitch Mitchell), it leaves the impression of something that's been padded pretty heavily to pass muster as a full-length production.

Still, for the more serious Hendrix fan, it's a nice opportunity to look two of his few major US television spots, in which he comes off as a wittily hip if somewhat nervous and exhausted figure (especially in the September 1969 clip, where Cavett acknowledges that Jimi's left early after complaining about not feeling well). There's also some live music too, though Jimi's not at his best on the July '69 performance of "Hear My Train A Comin'" (in which he's backed, incredibly, by the Cavett show's house band) and the September '69 versions of "Izabella" and "Machine Gun" (backed by a slightly ragged unit of Mitchell, Cox, and percussionist Juma Sultan).

Jimi Plays Berkeley (MCA, 1971). The very first film to feature Jimi Hendrix as its principal subject, *Jimi Plays Berkeley*, shot at two concerts on May 30, 1970, is a bit of a disappointment these days. First, at 49 minutes, it's not exactly a full-length production; back in its day, it was sometimes shown on a double bill with *Rainbow Bridge*. To flesh it out to a nearly-hour-long length, the filmmakers resorted to cutting in some mildly distracting, out-of-place scenes of Berkeley political protests, one of which shows a small gang picketing the outrageous (\$3.50; actually a very high price by 1970 standards) prices of tickets for the then-new *Woodstock* movie. But though the actual performance footage takes place on a rather dimly lit stage, Hendrix acquits himself pretty well, though he's not quite as animated as he'd been in his slightly younger days. Certainly the charge through Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode" is a highlight, both for the rarity of its presence in his set and the genuinely fine rendition. "I Don't Live Today," "Machine Gun," and "Star Spangled Banner" are also fine, and nothing in the set's a turkey.

Note, however, that what you hear on the film soundtrack is *not* the same as the CD titled *Live at Berkeley*. That presents the second set of the night in its entirety, including some songs not in the film; the film mixes performances from both nights, and has some songs (including "Johnny B. Goode") not on the CD. If you want it all in one place and have the equipment to hear it comfortably, the DVD thoughtfully adds the recordings from *Live at Berkeley* as an audio-only bonus.

Rainbow Bridge (Rhino, 1971) Jaw-droppingly awful in a stranger-than-fiction-like way, this incredibly disjointed, amateurishly acted/improvised scenario of hippies dropping out to get it together in Hawaii does nonetheless qualify as a Jimi Hendrix concert film by the barest of margins. For its one redeeming feature is the seventeen-minute segment in which he, Mitch Mitchell, and Billy Cox play live before a few hundred free spirits in the windy Maui mountains. Well, almost live; Mitchell had to re-record many of his drum parts later because of technical problems. But Hendrix does manage a credibly energetic performance in spite of the chaos, highlighted by “Foxy Lady” and a clip in which a sluggish “Hear My Train A Comin’” revs up into “Voodoo Chile (Slight Return).” (Some entirely different Hendrix studio recordings are heard throughout the rest of the film on the soundtrack.)

Unfortunately you do have to sit through most of the movie before you get to that point, an ordeal elongated by the 2000 DVD version, which restores the film to its original 125-minute length. Jimi also has a small “acting” part in the film in which he “raps” with some of the local hippies. He’s mediocre and incoherent in his “role,” but here’s where the abject quality of the surrounding film turns out to be a blessing in disguise, as he doesn’t so much stand out as an amateur as fit right in.

Music, Money, Madness...Jimi Hendrix in Mau Music, Money, Madness...Jimi Hendrix in Maui (Legacy, 2020). How did Hendrix end up giving his second-to-last American concert to a few hundred hippies, for free, in the hills of Maui on July 30, 1970? It’s not an easy question to answer in just a couple sentences. This hour-and-a-half documentary does a good job in explaining the circumstances, especially as some of the key figures are long gone a half century later. But some are interviewed here, including bassist Billy Cox and several figures involved in the performance’s preservation, the concert’s staging, and the production of the movie for which some of the show was filmed, *Rainbow Bridge*. This is supplemented by archival interviews with drummer Mitch Mitchell and *Rainbow Bridge* director Chuck Wein, as well as quite a few clips from the concert itself.

Basically, Hendrix and his manager Mike Jeffery needed money to finish Jimi's studio, Electric Lady. A complex deal was arranged where half a million dollars were secured from Reprise Records to finance a film to which Hendrix would create a soundtrack. The film, *Rainbow Bridge*, was a disastrous mix of amateurishly scripted (or non-scripted) hippie life and philosophizing, and Hendrix died before he could construct a soundtrack. Its one asset was the seventeen minutes of footage of Hendrix, Cox, and Mitchell performing the somewhat impromptu concert, in conditions so windy that huge pieces of foam had to be placed over the microphones.

Although a few people involved in *Rainbow Bridge* (notably Wein himself) speak positively about the film, most agree, in humorous detail, that the movie was both chaotically produced and a mammoth artistic failure. The movie's poor reception and its aftermath, in which a deceptive album of unreleased material titled *Rainbow Bridge* (which didn't include any recordings from the Maui concert) was assembled to capitalize on the film, are also covered. It's amazing that a large company like Reprise (part of Warner Brothers) could be sort of suckered into the deal, so half- (or less) baked was the film's story and setting. It makes for a good tale of hippie-era excess half a century later; in fact, it's a good deal more entertaining than *Rainbow Bridge* itself.

Also valuable are the bonus features of all the existing 16mm color film from Hendrix's two performances on Maui that day. These include some not used in *Rainbow Bridge*, though unfortunately the cameras weren't running all the time and missed a good deal of the show. Indeed, sometimes they weren't running all the way through some songs, and still photographs fill in some of these gaps. This Blu-ray is packaged with a two-CD set, *Live in Maui*, which has recordings of both of the sets Hendrix played this day.

Blue Wild Angel: Jimi Hendrix Live at the Isle of Wight (MCA, 2002). Much has been made of Hendrix's tormented state of mind near the end of his life, and certainly some of that does come through on his onstage manner throughout this almost exhaustively long disc. But considering the less-than-ideal conditions, it's a fairly well-filmed, well-played document of the Hendrix-Mitchell-Cox

lineup—the last such one ever made, though they did play a few more shows after this. Jimi does consciously seem to be cutting back on his showmanship much of the time—when he suddenly breaks into his usual routines for “Foxy Lady,” it’s almost as if he’s clicked a “give the people what they want” button for a few obligatory minutes.

Otherwise the camera catches him introducing new material like “Dolly Dagger” with a certain grim determination, and there are some really long solos throughout the program that will test some less devoted viewers. His displeasure with the way things were going (through probably primarily with the sound problems) catch up with him at the end, when he mumbles, “peace and happiness and all that other bullshit” before disgruntledly dropping his guitar onstage as he takes his leave. Note that the DVD, as long as it is, doesn’t quite include the whole concert, missing three songs that appear on the CD. It does add some context-setting interview material with Mitchell, Cox, and others in the introductory segment, as well as a bonus feature interview with Murray Lerner.

Documentaries:

A Film About Jimi Hendrix (Warner Home Video, 1973) Simply titled *Jimi Hendrix* when it was first released in 1973, this nearly two-hour documentary has fielded its share of criticism for not probing deeply enough into the man’s complexities, not having paid proper enough props to all his multidimensional talents, not being too slickly filmed or edited, etc. Yet now that it’s not the primary source of Hendrix on film either in terms of historical analysis or concert footage, it holds up as a valuable if flawed overview of his life and music. Its chief strength is its wealth of interviews, not only with key associates like Mitch Mitchell, Billy Cox, Buddy Miles, and Eddie Kramer, but also with important secondary figures in the Hendrix epic like Linda Keith, Fayne Pridgeon, Pete Townshend, and a wildly entertaining Little Richard.

If much more has been uncovered by subsequent biographers (and not much is divulged by Monika Dannemann in her brief screen time), these have the advantages of being fresher recollections, done not long after Jimi’s death. The musical footage is oddly

disappointing—even with clips from Monterey and Woodstock, it doesn't come close to sampling the full scope of his work—but that's not such a problem now that so much more is available on other videos. For its DVD release, an additional hour-long film included previously unavailable 1972 interview footage with many of the talking heads featured in the original movie. Also tacked on were a performance of “Stone Free” from the 1970 Atlanta Pop Festival and Eddie Kramer breaking down the mix of “Dolly Dagger.”

Hear My Train A Comin' (Legacy, 2012). Two-hour documentary offers a standard mix of performance footage, photos, and interviews with numerous people who knew Hendrix, including Mitch Mitchell, Noel Redding, Billy Cox, Eddie Kramer, Paul McCartney, Fayne Pridgeon, Linda Keith, and others. It's the most complete and well-rounded of the general Hendrix documentaries, though others are worth seeing. The DVD also includes footage from the 1968 Miami Pop Festival, the 1970 New York Pop Festival, and his final concert in Germany on September 5, 1970, along with a 1967 performance of “Purple Haze” on *Top of the Pops*.

Voodoo Child (Amazon Prime, 2010). This documentary eschews the usual footage-plus-talking heads approach, instead having funk musician Bootsy Collins voice a narration taken from what Hendrix said and wrote. Plenty of vintage performance clips and other footage are seen, as well as many historical photos. It's an unusual way to experience a career overview, but gets the essentials down, though the more conventionally formatted *Hear My Train A Comin'* is more comprehensive. This was first issued as part of the *West Coast Seattle Box* box set, but is now available separately through Amazon Prime.

Jimi Hendrix: Electric Ladyland (Eagle Rock Entertainment, 1997) As part of the long-running “Classic Albums” video series, this is a fine, straightforward hour-long documentary on the making of *Electric Ladyland*. All of the most important surviving contributors to the LP were interviewed, including Noel Redding, Mitch Mitchell, Chas Chandler, Eddie Kramer, and session guests Jack Casady, Dave Mason, and Stevie Winwood. More surprisingly, and satisfyingly, some interesting more obscure characters with a role in the story also get their say, including session organist Mike Finnigan and the

photographer of the notorious UK “naked woman” sleeve, David Montgomery, who tells the story of getting his subjects to bare all for a few extra pounds with rather seedy relish.

Plenty of vintage performance/promo/interview clips (though none of great length) are inserted as well. Audiophiles will particularly enjoy Eddie Kramer’s isolation of certain parts of tracks as he explains how some individual contributions were recorded and refined, as well as the use of (very brief) snippets of unreleased tapes from the sessions on the soundtrack. Plenty of interesting, relatively untold-to-death anecdotes are on hand, like Noel Redding’s smirking revelation that he actually preferred Bob Dylan’s version of “All Along the Watchtower,” or Kramer’s diplomatic recollection of how Brian Jones’s piano part for that same classic track went unused. This is also included in the *Electric Ladyland* 50th anniversary box set, with almost forty minutes of additional material.

Hendrix: Band of Gypsies (MCA, 1999) Like several of the DVDs listed in this section, *Hendrix: Band of Gypsies* has elements of both a documentary and concert film, but is listed here as a documentary since that’s the format the principal section of this approximately two-hour disc uses. Here Billy Cox and Buddy Miles offer a lot of memories and opinions regarding the short lived Band of Gypsies outfit, with others like Mitch Mitchell and Eddie Kramer pitching in as well. Actually there wasn’t much choice *but* to make a documentary considering that the existing footage of the only Band of Gypsies concerts (the ones they did on the last day of 1969 and first of 1970) is in pretty funky technical condition. Much of that footage is seen between the interview segments, which basically tell the Band of Gypsies story from several angles – usually positive, Afro-Centric ones, though space is allowed for those who feel the band wasn’t that workable, or really what Jimi wanted to do, to give their two cents.

As a significant extra, the DVD also offers uninterrupted footage of eight songs, lasting nearly an hour, filmed at the Band of Gypsies concerts. Unfortunately this is in shaky black-and-white, but it does give you the only chance to see the short-lived group in extended action, highlighted by “Machine Gun” and “Foxy Lady.” All told the

Band of Gypsies wasn't the most significant or exciting chapter in Hendrix's history, but this disc covers it about as comprehensively as possible.

Experience (MCA, 2001) The most meager of the major Hendrix DVDs uses as its centerpiece a color pseudo-documentary, *Experience*, apparently originally titled *See My Music Talking* and filmed for a TV programme around late 1967 (the packaging gives away nothing in terms of details). Running a little under a half hour, it combines interview fragments (including some excruciatingly gimmicky bits where Redding and Mitchell ask Hendrix deliberately clichéd questions) and very-of-its-time sequences where studio Experience recordings are used on the soundtrack to accompany vaguely psychedelic images of British life. Fortunately, it *does* have raw (in film technique, not musical proficiency) but acceptably exciting clips of the Experience playing "Purple Haze" and "Wild Thing" in Blackpool, as well as one of Hendrix playing an acoustic version of "Hear My Train a Comin'" solo against a white backdrop.

Fortunately, the 2001 DVD release—using the murkiest cover art of any major Hendrix video product—adds more than 40 minutes of bonus material that's unrelated to the *Experience* film, but puts some good live Experience clips into circulation. Among these are "The Wind Cries Mary" and "Purple Haze" in Stockholm in May 1967; "Wild Thing" in Paris in October of the same year; and, again in Stockholm, "Red House" and "Sunshine of Your Love" in January 1969, by which time there's a palpable decline of enthusiasm in the band.

NOTABLE PEOPLE:

The Jimi Hendrix Experience:

Jimi Hendrix: Born November 27, 1942 in Seattle. Lead guitarist and principal singer-songwriter in the Jimi Hendrix Experience, also leading other bands in 1969-70 before dying in London on September 18, 1970.

Mitch Mitchell: Drummer in the Jimi Hendrix Experience from late 1966 to mid-1969; rejoined Hendrix's group in 1970.

Noel Redding: Bassist, and infrequent singer-songwriter, in the Jimi Hendrix Experience from late 1966 to mid-1969.

Other crucial members of his bands in 1969 and 1970:

Billy Cox: Played bass with Hendrix after meeting him in the Army in the early 1960s; then played bass in Hendrix's groups from around mid-1969 to the end of Hendrix's life.

Buddy Miles: Drummer in the Band of Gypsys, the short-lived Hendrix-led band in late 1969 and early 1970 that also included Billy Cox on bass.

Managers:

Chas Chandler: Shortly before ending his time as bass player in the Animals, convinced Hendrix to move to London after seeing him play in Greenwich Village in summer 1966. Then became Hendrix's producer and co-manager, quitting partway through the *Electric Ladyland* sessions in 1968.

Mike Jeffery: Controversial co-manager (with Chas Chandler) of Hendrix, and previously manager of the Animals. Took over management after Chandler quit, and died in a plane accident in 1973.

Engineers:

Eddie Kramer: Recording engineer for many of Hendrix's studio sessions.

Roger Mayer: Electrical engineer who helped develop equipment like the Octavia and Fuzzface fuzz box that devised some of the special effects Hendrix conjured from his guitar.

Family:

Al Hendrix: Jimi Hendrix's father, and the parent principally responsible for raising him in Seattle.

Janie Hendrix: Stepdaughter of Jimi's father, Al Hendrix, who runs Experience Hendrix, the organization overseeing Jimi's estate.

Pre-Fame Musical Associates:

The Isley Brothers: Soul stars with whom Hendrix played guitar and occasionally recorded in the mid-1960s.

Little Richard: One of the most famous of the numerous soul/R&B musicians Hendrix backed onstage, and/or recorded with, for short stints in the four years or so before Jimi became a bandleader. Others he played or has been reported to have played with include Ike & Tina Turner, Hank Ballard, Jerry Butler, Solomon Burke, Sam Cooke, Slim Harpo, Chuck Jackson, B.B. King, the Marvelettes, Otis Redding, Carla Thomas, Tommy Tucker, Jackie Wilson, Bobby Womack, Don Covay, Joey Dee, and King Curtis.

Curtis Knight: Journeyman New York soul singer Hendrix played with live, and recorded with, in the mid-1960s. Some of those recordings would later be issued to exploit Hendrix's participation.

Ed Chalpin: Producer of the recordings Hendrix made with Curtis Knight. The contract Hendrix signed with Chalpin haunted Jimi when Chalpin took extensive, drawn-out legal action against Hendrix that cost Jimi considerable time and expense.

Arthur Lee: Hendrix did some recording with the Los Angeles singer-songwriter in the mid-1960s before Lee formed the folk-rock-psychedelic group Love. Lee and Hendrix also did a little recording together shortly before Jimi's death.

John Hammond: Blues guitarist in whose band Hendrix played for a time around 1966.

Randy California: Teenage guitarist, then known as Randy Wolfe, who played in Hendrix's band in Greenwich Village that was billed as Jimmy James and the Blue Flames. In the late 1960s, became guitarist in the popular Los Angeles psychedelic group Spirit.

Ellen McIlwaine: Her band was opening act for John Hammond's at the Cafe Au Go Go in New York, and Hendrix sometimes played with her group when he was there with Hammond's band. McIlwaine started a solo career as a bluesy singer-songwriter in the early 1970s.

Lovers:

Faye Pridgeon: Hendrix's most serious girlfriend in the mid-1960s, who did a lot to help support him in New York during that time.

Kathy Etchingham: Hendrix's girlfriend after he moved to London in late 1966. Their off-on relationship continued for a couple years.

Eva Sundquist: Although their relationship was out of the public eye, the son of this Swedish student was recognized as Jimi's heir by a Swedish court, and she eventually received a large settlement from Hendrix's estate.

Monika Dannemann: German figure skater who developed an intermittent romantic relationship with Hendrix starting in early 1969, and was with Jimi when he died in a London residential hotel in September 1970.

Devon Wilson: One of Hendrix's girlfriends near the end of his life, and the inspiration for his song "Dolly Dagger." Died after a fall from the Chelsea Hotel in February 1971.

Almost Experienced:

Aynsley Dunbar: Drummer who auditioned for Jimi Hendrix Experience in late 1966 and came closest to getting the job besides the winner, Mitch Mitchell. Dunbar went on to play with John Mayall, Frank Zappa, Journey, and Jefferson Starship.

John Banks: Another unsuccessful applicant for the drum seat in the Jimi Hendrix Experience. Formerly drummer for the Merseybeats, he apparently got further into the finals than anyone except Dunbar and Mitchell.

Brian Auger: British keyboardist who was under consideration for the Jimi Hendrix Experience, although they decided not to use a keyboard player. Auger had a successful career, more in the UK than in the US, as part of the Trinity with singer Julie Driscoll, and as a bandleader.

Other musical associates of note:

Eric Clapton: Star guitarist in Cream, and the first British celebrity to be blown away by Hendrix when Jimi jammed with Cream at a show in early October 1966, with fellow British rock guitar giant Jeff Beck in the audience.

Johnny Hallyday: French singing star for whom the Experience did their first high-profile shows as a supporting act in October 1966.

Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp: Managers of the Who and founders of Track Records, which would be Hendrix's UK record company.

The Beatles: Hendrix paid homage to them by performing the title track of their *Sgt. Pepper* album just days after it was released at the Saville Theatre on June 4, 1967. Paul McCartney was in the audience, and later cited it as one of the greatest honors of his career.

The Who: Argued with Hendrix as to who would go on first at Monterey. Reportedly it was decided by a coin toss that the Who would go on first. Both acts went over well, but it's often not reported that actually another group played between the Who and the Jimi Experience – the Grateful Dead.

The Monkees: Hendrix supported them for about ten days on a summer US tour, in one of the most mismatched bills in history.

The Soft Machine: British psychedelic/progressive rock group that supported Hendrix on 1968 American tours, as they were also managed by Mike Jeffery and Chas Chandler.

Stevie Winwood: British rock star, first in the Spencer Davis Group and then in Traffic, who plays organ on “Voodoo Chile.” Other members of Traffic, Dave Mason and Chris Wood, also played on *Electric Ladyland*.

Jack Casady: Bassist in Jefferson Airplane, and plays on “Voodoo Chile.”

Mike Finnigan: Plays organ on *Electric Ladyland*’s “Rainy Day, Dream Away” and “Still Raining, Still Dreaming.”

Eire Apparent: Irish rock group managed by Mike Jeffery who sometimes shared bills with Hendrix. Jimi produced their only album.

Cat Mother & the All Night News Boys: Hendrix also produced the debut album by this indistinguished group.

Gypsy Sun and Rainbows: Short-lived group that backed Hendrix at Woodstock, including Mitch Mitchell, Billy Cox, rhythm guitarist Larry Lee, and percussionists Jerry Velez and Juma Sultan.

Alan Douglas: Produced some recordings by Hendrix in late 1969 that were unreleased at the time. After Jimi’s death, Douglas would be the target of a hailstorm of criticism for his overdubs on posthumously released Hendrix outtakes.

John McLaughlin: Top British jazz-rock fusion guitarist who jammed with Hendrix in the studio for a few sessions in the late 1960s.

Gil Evans: Jazz composer/arranger/conductor who said he was supposed to meet with Hendrix in New York on September 21, 1970 to discuss recording new material for an album titled *The oodoo Child Plays the Blues*.

Miscellaneous:

Linda Keith: Girlfriend of Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards, and urged Chas Chandler to see Hendrix play in Greenwich Village in summer 1966.

Fat Mattress: Group formed by Noel Redding around the time he left the Jimi Hendrix Experience. After their psychedelic folk-rock debut LP achieved only modest sales, Redding left the group midway through the recording of their second and final album.

Chuck Wein: Director of *Rainbow Bridge*, the chaotic film featuring a Hendrix performance in the hills of Maui.

MOST NOTABLE HENDRIX CONCERTS:

Cafe Wha?, New York, summer 1966: Where Chas Chandler first saw Jimi Hendrix, his performance (especially of “Hey Joe”) sparking him to ask Hendrix to move to London with Chandler as producer and co-manager.

Regent Street Polytechnic, London, October 1, 1966: Where Hendrix jammed with Eric Clapton and Cream, wowing British rock royalty (including Jeff Beck, in the audience) for the first time.

L’Olympia, Paris, France, October 18, 1966: First high-profile concert of the Jimi Hendrix Experience, supporting French star Johnny Hallyday.

Big Apple Club, Munich, November 8-11, 1966: One of these shows marked the first occasion of Hendrix smashing his guitar onstage, which he would sometimes do at future concerts.

***Ready Steady Go!* TV program, London, December 13, 1966:** The Experience tape their first TV appearance, performing “Hey Joe,” which helps launch it into the British charts.

Bag O’Nails, London, January 11, 1967: Reportedly John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Pete Townshend, Mick Jagger, Brian Jones, Donovan, Jeff Beck, Georgie Fame, Jimmy Page, and members of the Hollies, Small Faces, and Animals were in the show for this

performance, testifying to Hendrix's quick impact on British rock royalty.

Saville Theatre, London, January 29, 1967: After seeing Hendrix here, Cream bassist Jack Bruce came up with the riff for their biggest hit, "Sunshine of Your Love."

The Astoria, London, March 31, 1967: Hendrix burns his guitar onstage for the first time, at the suggestion of British rock journalist/publicist Keith Altham.

Saville Theatre, London, June 4, 1967: The Experience plays the title track to the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* just three days after the LP was released, with Paul McCartney in the audience.

Monterey International Pop Festival, June 18, 1967: Hendrix's first appearance in the US as a bandleader, Jimi burning his guitar in the finale.

Fillmore Auditorium, San Francisco, June 20-24, 1967: The Jimi Hendrix Experience's first standard US concerts. They played for free in Golden Gate Park's panhandle on June 25.

Various locations, July 8-July 16, 1967: Absurd tour supporting the Monkees. The Experience pull out after it's falsely claimed that the Daughters of the American Revolution consider the group obscene.

Olympia exhibition arena, London, December 22, 1967: "Christmas on Earth" event with Pink Floyd, Soft Machine, the Animals, the Who, the Move, and others.

Lorensbergs Cirkus, Gothenburg, Sweden, January 4, 1968: Hendrix arrested for smashing up hotel room during his stay.

Seattle Center, February 12, 1968: Hendrix plays his hometown for the first time since the early 1960s, and sees his father for the first time since he joined the army in 1961.

Hollywood Bowl, September 14, 1968: Headlines the Hollywood Bowl, a gig that can be heard on one of the discs in the *Electric Ladyland* 50th anniversary box set.

Royal Albert Hall, London, February 18, 1969: Filmed and recorded, though the film has yet to be released.

Maple Leaf Gardens, Toronto, May 3, 1969: Hendrix is busted for heroin and hashish possession while going through customs on the way to the concert, though he's eventually acquitted of charges.

Mile High Stadium, Denver, June 29, 1969: The last concert by the original Jimi Hendrix Experience.

Woodstock festival, Bethel, New York, August 18, 1969: Famous for his distinctive interpretation of "The Star Spangled Banner," a highlight of the *Woodstock* film.

Fillmore East, New York, December 31, 1969-January 1, 1970: The Band of Gypsys record their live album at these shows, and all four of the concerts are included on the box *Songs for Groovy Children: The Fillmore East Concerts*.

Winter Festival for Peace, Madison Square Garden, New York, January 28, 1970: Hendrix stops his set and leaves the stage in the middle of the second song.

Berkeley Community Theatre, Berkeley, May 30, 1970: Footage from the two shows served as the basis for the 1971 documentary *Jimi Plays Berkeley*.

Maui, July 30, 1970: Footage from an open-air concert on a Maui field was used in the film *Rainbow Bridge*.

International Center, Honolulu, August 1, 1970: Hendrix's last American concert.

Isle of Wight Festival, August 30, 1970: Hendrix plays before several hundred thousand people for a set that's filmed, though the footage isn't released for many years.

Open Air Love and Peace Festival, Isle of Fehmarn, Germany, September 6, 1970: Hendrix's final concert.

LANDMARKS:

Spanish Castle: Club south of Seattle where Hendrix gave some of his first performances in his high school years, later inspiring his song "Spanish Castle Magic."

Apollo Theater: Harlem's foremost venue for African-American entertainment, where Hendrix won a first-place prize in an amateur night contest around 1964.

Manny's Music: Midtown Manhattan music store where Hendrix bought many guitars and plenty of equipment. It closed in 2009.

34 Montagu Square, London: Hendrix lived here for a few months shortly after the Experience was formed, with girlfriend Kathy Etchingham and producer/co-manager Chas Chandler. Ringo Starr had lived here for a few months in 1965, and John Lennon and Yoko Ono stayed here for a while in 1968.

De Lane Lea Studios, London: Much of the early Jimi Hendrix Experience studio material was recorded here, including some early singles and some of *Are You Experienced*.

Olympic Studios, London: *Axis: Bold As Love* was recorded here, as well as some other Hendrix material. It closed in 2008.

23 Brook Street, London: Hendrix lived here for a while with Kathy Etchingham in the late 1960s. His flat now houses a small but worthwhile museum, with his bedroom reconstructed to look as it did when he lived here. Visits/tours are available through the website of Handel & Hendrix in London (handelhendrix.org), so named because the same organization administers visits/tours to the adjoining home where classical composer George Frederic Handel lived in the 18th century.

Alice in Wonderland Statue, Central Park: Near the East 74th Street entrance, this is where the Jimi Hendrix Experience posted with children for the photos used in the inner gatefold of *Electric Ladyland*, taken by Linda Eastman (later Linda McCartney).

The Record Plant, New York: Hendrix often recorded in this studio in the late 1960s. It closed a couple decades later.

Electric Lady Studios: Greenwich Village studio Hendrix funded, still in operation today as a top recording studio, although Jimi was only able to record there for a few weeks in 1970 before his death.

Samarkand Hotel, London: In the Notting Hill neighborhood, this is where Hendrix died on September 18, 1970. Monika Dannemann took the last known pictures of Jimi in the garden the afternoon before his death.

Greenwood Memorial Park and Cemetery, Renton, Washington: In this Seattle suburb, this cemetery has Hendrix's grave.

ALBUMS INFLUENTIAL ON JIMI HENDRIX:

Blues:

John Hammond, *So Many Roads* (Vanguard, 1965). This approximates what Hammond might have sounded like when Hendrix hooked up with his band for a while in the mid-1960s, with interpretations of songs by classic blues artists like Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, and Big Joe Williams. Future Band members Robbie Robertson and Levon Helm were among the supporting musicians.

John Lee Hooker, *The Legendary Modern Recordings 1948-1954* (Flair/Virgin, 1993). Hooker recorded for a lot of labels during this period. But this has the most seminal side of this pioneer of moody, stomping, electric boogie-blues, including his million-selling 1951 hit "I'm in the Mood."

Lightnin' Hopkins, *Mojo Hand: The Anthology* (Rhino, 1993). Two-disc combination of his prolific body of work on numerous

labels spotlights some of the Texas bluesman's best songs in both electric and acoustic settings.

Elmore James, *The Sky Is Crying: The History of Elmore James* (Rhino, 1993). Though not the most diverse of major bluesmen, this has his major songs, including "Dust My Broom," "The Sun Is Shining," and "Shake Your Moneymaker." His slide guitar work in particular was influential on many blues and rock guitarists.

Albert King, *Ultimate Collection* (Rhino, 1993). Although sometimes heavy-handed, this two-CD collection has some of the most popular blues-soul crossover material ever made, including signature tunes like "Born Under a Bad Sign" and "Crosscut Saw." Hendrix would have been impressed not only by King's burning guitar tone, but also by his ability to comfortably mix blues with funky soul, and play it left-handed.

B.B. King, *Live at the Regal* (MCA, 1964). There are many, many B.B. King albums, and this is listed because it approximates how King might have sounded like if Hendrix had seen him during his years as a sideman. One of the most famous live blues albums of all time, it inspired numerous blues and rock guitarists. With staples of the King repertoire, it also captures his easy mastery of working a crowd.

Muddy Waters, *His Best, 1947 to 1955* (MCA/Chess, 1997). The best of the most influential Chicago bluesman in his first decade at Chess Records includes several songs covered by blues-rock bands, like "I Just Want to Make Love to You," "I'm Your Hoochie Coochie Man," and "Rollin' Stone," the last of which gave the Rolling Stones their name.

Early Rock'n'Roll:

Chuck Berry, *The Anthology* (Chess, 2000). Two-CD, 50-song compilation of his most essential tracks from the mid-1950s through the early 1970s, including hits and his most influential non-hits. These include some of the most familiar and most-covered songs in all of rock, important both for the quality of the songwriting and the many classic riffs in tunes like "Johnny B. Goode," "Roll Over Beethoven," "Rock and Roll Music," "Sweet Little

Sixteen," and "Reelin' & Rockin'." The single-disc collection *The Great Twenty-Eight* contains most of his most well known songs.

Duane Eddy, *Twang Thang: The Duane Eddy Anthology* (Rhino, 1993). Duane Eddy's instrumental hits can seem repetitious in one heavy dose, but his low twanging lines were massively influential in establishing the supremacy of the guitar in rock and inspiring younger guitar heroes. This two-CD collection might be too much for casual listeners, but is better packaged than the many single-disc compilations that have appeared.

Little Richard, *The Georgia Peach* (Specialty, 1991). A 25-track compilation of his most popular 1950s recordings, including the big hits "Tutti Frutti," "Long Tall Sally," "Rip It Up," "Lucille," and "The Girl Can't Help It," as well as some worthy lesser known tunes like "Ooh! My Soul," covered by the Beatles on the BBC in 1963. Hendrix would have played some of these songs when he played in Little Richard's band for a while in the mid-'60s.

Elvis Presley, *Elvis at 56* (BMG, 1996). There are numerous compilations of Elvis's early recordings. This one focuses on the most important ones he made in the year he became a huge star, including the hits "Heartbreak Hotel," "Hound Dog," and "Don't Be Cruel," as well as his version of "Blue Suede Shoes." The recordings on this CD were more responsible than any other for making rock the most popular music in the world. Hendrix was a teenage fan, and would cover "Hound Dog" and "Blue Suede Shoes."

Soul:

Booker T. & the MG's, *The Very Best of* (Rhino, 1994). All of their great 1960s hits, including "Green Onions," "Time Is Tight," "Hang 'Em High," and "Hip Hug-Her," as well as cool less-exposed items such as the spy movie-like "Soul Dressing." It's likely the biting economy of guitarist Steve Cropper's riffs found favor with Hendrix, as did that band's overall simmering, organ-laced groove, traces of which can be heard in "Rainy Day, Dream Away" and "Still Raining, Still Dreaming." Whether or not Hendrix or anyone else involved in his early solo career gave it deliberate thought, the

success of the MG's' interracial lineup set a heartening precedent for the Jimi Hendrix Experience.

The Isley Brothers, *The Isley Brothers Story Vol. 1: Rockin' Soul (1959-1968)* (Rhino, 1991). The Isley Brothers' story is difficult to condense into a single-disc best-of as they did quite a bit of label-hopping, and their hits were sporadic. This is a good compilation of their first decade, however, in which they merged gospel and rock with more frenzy than anyone else. Includes "Twist and Shout," covered of course by the Beatles, who also did their earlier hit "Shout" on a 1964 TV program. Hendrix would have played some of their early repertoire during his time in the Isley Brothers' band in the mid-'60s.

Curtis Mayfield & the Impressions, *The Anthology 1961-1977* (MCA, 1992). It's not easy to find a best-of that satisfactorily summarizes the best of the Impressions' 1960s work, as they're either not comprehensive enough or include some post-'60s solo material by leader Curtis Mayfield. This two-CD set is a good compromise, with the first disc largely devoted to the Impressions' sweet Chicago soul, delivering messages of both love and, with songs like "Keep on Pushing" and "We're a Winner," messages of African-American pride. Mayfield's guitar work and songwriting was very influential on the softer and sweeter side of Hendrix's music. The messages and the music got more groundbreaking with his early-'70s solo work, covered on disc two (and covered in a later class on soul during that period).

British Rock:

The Animals, *Absolute Animals 1964-1968* (Raven, 2003). The finest R&B-oriented British band from outside London, this Newcastle combo was most distinguished by Eric Burdon's soulful vocals and a far greater reliance on organ than the usual British Invasion guitars. Most known for their electrification of the folk standard "House of the Rising Sun," which is here along almost a dozen other mid-'60s hits, as well as some psychedelic hits Burdon sang with a different Animals lineup in the late '60s. Their bassist was Chas Chandler, who had a major role in Hendrix's career as his early producer and co-manager.

The Beatles, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (EMI, 1967). Probably the Beatles' most famous album, and still considered the most representative musical document of the psychedelic era. Sound effects, exotic instrumentation, distortion, and grand orchestration were deployed on a remarkably eclectic set of songs that ran from anguished epics to vaudeville, Indian music, chamber pieces, and hard funky rock. Though sometimes described as a "concept album," the concept was loose and vague, and more related to the consistently kaleidoscopic mood of a set whose total effect was greater than the sum of its parts, rather than to any definite story or theme. It made enough of an impression on Hendrix for him to cover the title track live a few days after the album was released, with Paul McCartney in the audience.

Cream, *Fresh Cream* (Polydor, 1966). Most of Cream's work is most properly discussed as part of blues-rock/hard rock/psychedelic rock movements, as their more serious and virtuosic approach helped mark the end of the more pop-oriented, innocent phase of the British Invasion. This was their first album, from the tail end of 1966, featuring both blues covers like "Spoonful" and "I'm So Glad," and originals like "I Feel Free" and "N.S.U." that pointed in a more progressive direction. Cream guitarist Eric Clapton was one of Hendrix's chief rivals when Jimi arrived on the British scene in late 1966.

John Mayall with Eric Clapton, *Bluesbreakers* (Universal, 1966). The cornerstone British blues-rock album, on which Clapton was given his freest hand to play pure blues. Although it was virtually unknown in the US when it was first released, it seems likely Hendrix was aware of it, since he asked Chas Chandler if he could be introduced to Eric Clapton when Chandler asked him to move to London in late summer 1966.

The Who, *Meaty Beaty Big & Bouncy* (MCA, 1971). Fourteen-song compilation includes all their major 1965-70 hits, as well as the beloved "Boris the Spider." Pete Townshend's early use of distortion and feedback was an influence on Hendrix, as was his flamboyant onstage destruction of guitars.

The Yardbirds, *Ultimate!* (Rhino, 2001). It's slightly uneven and missing a few outstanding tracks, but this two-CD compilation covers almost all of the major bases of the group that did much to pioneer both blues-rock and psychedelia. The lineups featuring guitarists Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and Jimmy Page are all represented, as are their big hits "For Your Love," "Heart Full of Soul," "I'm a Man," "Shapes of Things," and "Over Under Sideways Down." No other band did more to innovate rock guitar in the 1960s, and few other than the Beatles were more futuristic and experimental, not only in their guitar work but in their incorporation of improvisation, "rave-up" tempos building to crescendos, electronic distortion, and haunting Eastern melodies and instrumentation. Beck in particular influenced Hendrix with his use of sustain, distortion, feedback, and extended blues-rock soloing. Raven's single-disc, 27-track *Happenings Ten Years Time Ago* has all the key singles and numerous outstanding other tracks, if you don't want to splash for a two-CD set.

Folk-Rock:

Bob Dylan, *Greatest Hits* (Columbia, 1967). Even when limited to pre-1967 recordings, it's hard to boil down the oeuvre of such an influential figure to just ten songs. This does have his biggest hits from that period, though, such as "Like a Rolling Stone," "Just Like a Woman," and "I Want You," as well as pre-rock acoustic folk tracks that became extremely famous, like "Blowin' in the Wind" and "The Times They Are A-Changin'." "Like a Rolling Stone" and the non-album 1965 Top Ten hit "Positively 4th Street" would have been the songs Hendrix would have been most likely to hear when he was starting to think of leading his own band. Hearing the way Dylan sang and wrote helped convince Hendrix he could sing lead vocals, although he hadn't had the confidence to do so earlier. He'd cover several Dylan songs onstage and in the studio, including "Like a Rolling Stone" and "All Along the Watchtower."

Bob Dylan, *John Wesley Harding* (Columbia, 1967). Issued in the final days of 1967, this was the album that came to be regarded as the keystone "back-to-basics" statement turning rock music away from psychedelia and back to earthy country-rock. "All Along the Watchtower" is by the most famous song on what's mostly a very

plaintive and stark record. While sonically this probably didn't influence Hendrix, the songs probably did, especially "All Along the Watchtower," which Jimi made into a hit and one of his most popular recordings.