

The Blue Plaque

Jimi Hendrix

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"I am what I feel", Jimi Hendrix once said, "I play as I feel and I act as I feel. I can't express myself in any conversation. I can't explain myself like this or like that - But when I'm up on stage, it's all the world. It's my whole life."

Thirty five years after his death Hendrix is as much a legend as he was in his own lifetime and memories of his extraordinary performances on stage remain strong. A left-handed player, Hendrix could coax all kinds of sounds from his electric guitar and enjoyed demonstrating his virtuoso skills with such tricks as playing his instrument behind his back or playing it with his teeth.

James Marshall Hendrix was born in Seattle in November 1942 and began his career as a back-up musician to such stars as Little Richard and the Isley Brothers. In 1966 he was playing in a New York club when he was heard by the British bass guitarist and would-be manager Chas Chandler. Chandler persuaded him to visit London and helped him to form a group known as the Jimi Hendrix Experience. The following year was the group's greatest year with three hits – 'Purple Haze', 'Hey Joe' and 'The Wind Cries Mary' - in the first six months and a sensational appearance at the Monterey Pop Festival in the summer.

The final years of Hendrix's life were complicated ones. The line-up of his backing group changed frequently as players came and went. He seemed to lose musical direction and struggled to complete a new album. Legal disputes with management and record companies hung over his head. However, he was still at the height of fame and notoriety in September 1970 when he died of an accidental drugs overdose at the house in Brook Street which now bears a blue plaque in his honour.

On the house next door there is also a plaque to a musician but a very different one - George Frederick Handel, the composer of the Water Music.



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