

The Jimi Hendrix Experience - Winterland (1968/2011) [Single CD Edition]

Written by bluesever

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*01. Fire 02. Foxy Lady 03. Like A Rolling Stone 04. Hey Joe 05. Hear My Train A Comin
06. Sunshine Of Your Love 07. Little Wing 08. Are You Experienced 09. Manic Depression
10. Voodoo Child 11. Purple Haze* Bass – Noel Redding Drums – Mitch Mitchell Vocals,
Guitar – Jimi Hendrix

'Winterland' is clearly the centerpiece of the most recent wave of Jimi Hendrix re-issues, capturing the legendary guitarist and the original Experience at the height of their powers across a three night and six show October 1968 residency in San Francisco.

The long out of print, single-disc 1987 edition of this record has been expanded to a four CD (or eight LP) set that is smartly sequenced so as to both replicate the highlights of every show and still make sense in a single, if extended, listening session.

Most songs are performed twice, and staples such as 'Purple Haze' are performed up to four times each. But what shines through is how successful Hendrix, drummer Mitch Mitchell and bassist Noel Redding were at constantly emphasizing different aspects of these songs, altering the original riffs, tempos and rhythms just enough to make each performance its own unique creation.

In the extensive liner notes for this collection, which is filled with beautiful photographs of Hendrix in action, much is made of the idea that the timing for these concerts simply couldn't have better. The Experience has been together for almost exactly two years and grown nearly telepathic with one another on the concert stage.

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Further, after a barrage of one-night stands in venues that frequently had poor P.A. systems, the band were thrilled to be able to stay in one place and stretch out with a series of shows in a venue with much better equipment. The fact that this all went down in San Francisco, the de facto center of the musical counter-culture movement, with audiences eager to follow the band down any path they chose couldn't have hurt, either.

Jimi and his rhythm section certainly rose to the occasion, delivering a series of strong and surprise-filled performances consisting largely of classics like 'Hey Joe,' 'Red House' (check out the 15 minute version from the opening night) and 'Foxy Lady.' They also made time for special setlist additions -- particularly on the later show of each night, according to the notes -- such as the rarely played 'Manic Depression' and a sneak peak at 'Voodoo Child (Slight Return),' which would come out as part of Hendrix's final studio album, 'Electric Ladyland,' a week later.

Much like the also recently expanded and re-released 'In the West' live collection, 'Winterland' betrays absolutely no signs of barrel-scraping. Near the end of the liner notes, Hendrix is quoted as saying that he was focused on "playing more of a pure-type thing, exactly what I feel at the particular time." His ability to do so repeatedly in a live concert setting, together with the fortunate circumstances and timing of this particular weekend, make 'Winterland' a fantastic listening experience. ---Matthew Wilkening, ultimateclassicrock.com

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