

World Saxophone Quartet Plays Jimi Hendrix 2005

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01 - Hattie Wall (WSQ Theme Tune) 05.59 02 - Band introduction 01.40 03 - Freedom 07.30 04 - Hey Joe 10.21 05 - The Wind Cries Mary 12.40 06 - If 6 Were 9 07.28 07 - Foxy Lady 04.35 08 - Little Wing 08.06 09 - Machine Gun 16.05 10 - Hattie Wall [reprise] 02.17
David Murray - tenor sax Oliver Lake - alto Hamiet Bluiett - baritone Bruce Williams - alto + Craig Harris - trombone Jamaaladeen Tacuma - bass Lee Pearson – drums London Jazz Festival, Barbican Hall, London Recorded: November 14th, 2005 Re-broadcast: August 25th, 2006

In jazz circles, there is a joke that goes like this: how many jazz singers does it take to perform "My Funny Valentine?" All of them. The point of that joke is that too many jazz artists are paying too much attention to overdone Tin Pan Alley warhorses that have long since been beaten to death. The joke is unfair in that it singles out vocalists -- numerous instrumentalists are guilty of the same thing -- but the fact remains that plenty of jazz artists need to realize that worthwhile popular music didn't end with Tin Pan Alley. Of course, not all improvisers are that shortsighted, which is why explorers ranging from Herbie Hancock to the Bad Plus to British singer Claire Martin have been finding the jazz possibilities in rock and R&B songs -- and it's why the World Saxophone Quartet pays tribute to Jimi Hendrix on *Experience*. This 2003 date isn't the first instrumental jazz release to focus on Hendrix's compositions; bandleader/arranger Gil Evans recorded an entire album of Hendrix gems in 1974. But *Experience* is the first Hendrix tribute by an avant-garde saxophone group, and the WSQ's 2003 lineup (David Murray, Hamiet Bluiett, Oliver Lake, and Bruce Williams) brings an inside/outside perspective to classics like "Foxy Lady," "If 6 Was 9," "The Wind Cries Mary," and "Little Wing." the WSQ's lively, intriguing arrangements are as funky as they are abstract, and the foursome (which is joined by trombonist Craig Harris, violinist Billy Bang, bassist Matthew Garrison, and drummer Gene Lake) has no problem demonstrating that hard rock, heavy metal, and psychedelic rock songs can be successfully reinvented as instrumental jazz. Some die-hard Hendrix lovers might nitpick about the absence of their personal favorites -- perhaps "Purple Haze," perhaps "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" or "Castles Made of Sand"; regardless, *Experience* is an excellent CD that finds the WSQ still going strong 26 years after its formation. --- Alex Henderson, Rovi

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