



# BBC SESSIONS

THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE **BBC SESSIONS**





## THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE: BBC SESSIONS

Jimi Hendrix was an American. Everyone knows that. His blues roots were deep and real, and his incredible craft was honed by years of working on the chitlin' circuit backing artists from Little Richard to the Isley Brothers. But it wasn't until he came here to Britain, in the autumn of 1966, that he became a star in his own right and the full extent of his genius began to be realised, let alone recognised.

There were many factors that contributed to his swift success in this country. His English manager, Chas Chandler, was well-placed to help Hendrix put a sensational band together and secure a recording contract. His early live shows were like a bomb exploding in the heart of "swinging" London, and word of mouth among the tightly-knit English guitar-hero fraternity - including Pete Townshend, Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page and Eric Clapton - was quickly converted into supportive press coverage. And when Hendrix first appeared on the British TV shows *Ready Steady Go!* and *Top Of The Pops* singing "Hey Joe" in December 1966, the impact was instant and nationwide.

But one piece of the jigsaw, which has often gone unremarked, was the role of BBC radio, the state-owned, publicly-financed national broadcaster, in promoting, and more especially nurturing, such a radical talent.

It would be nice to report that, even back then, the BBC took an enlightened view of rock music, recognising its significance both as an artistic phenomenon, and as an articulation of the newly emerging youth culture. In fact, the most venerated broadcasting corporation in the world was initially baffled by pop music and unsure of what to do about it. It was only in response to the success in the mid-1960s of pirate radio stations such as Radio Caroline and Radio London, broadcasting non-stop pop music from ships moored outside British territorial waters (in order to exploit a loophole in telecommunications law) that the BBC was reluctantly persuaded to set up its own pop station, Radio 1, which came on air in 1967, after the pirates had been outlawed.





This was born the concept of *needletime*, which referred to the strictly limited number of hours of music on record which the BBC (and other broadcasters) were allowed to play per day. It was allocated by a rights-negotiating company called Phonograph Performance Limited (PPL) representing the record companies, who had an agreement with the MU as to how many hours broadcasters were entitled to have. To give an idea of how limiting this was, when the newly-formed Radios 1 and 2 first went on the air in 1967, the two stations were allowed just seven hours of *needletime* between them, per day. Incredibly, the *needletime* system was not abandoned until 1988.

In order to circumvent this situation, the BBC would record its own sessions; or in other words hire musicians to come in to its own studios and quickly record a batch of songs which could then be played on the radio (albeit only twice) without using up precious *needletime*. Most of these sessions were simply an expedient way of gaining access to the popular jazz, swing or light orchestral music of the day, but in the hands of the rock specialists they quickly became a means of discovering and exposing new talent. As far as John Peel was concerned, the brief of his programme *Top Gear*, was "to look beyond the horizons of pop," and the session gave him the perfect tool for doing just that.

Often rock artists would record a BBC session before they had recorded their first album, and sometimes even before they had signed a recording contract. Hendrix's first two sessions for *Saturday Club*, recorded on February 13, 1967 and March 28, 1967, both took place before he had finished recording *Are You Experienced*, and for him and other future superstars such as Fleetwood Mac, David Bowie and Genesis, a BBC session was the first chance of exposing tracks other than hit singles to a mass audience.

But although a session at the BBC was an important step to take, it was not a place where a performance had to be cast in stone. Artists were encouraged to regard the session as an opportunity either to try out new songs, or rework old material in fresh and surprising ways, or simply to have a bit of fun. The best sessions, in other words, were those that brought a sense of occasion or were in some other way unique to that specific programme. As Ken Garner wrote in his book *In Session Tonight* (BBC Books, 1993): "Whatever it is, when you tune in and catch a new session, somewhere deep in the back of your mind, you know you are hearing something extraordinary; something you would not otherwise have heard were it not for the BBC, Radio 1 and DJs like John Peel."





The recording of these sessions was, of necessity, a quick, low-budget affair. At the height of its music recording activity in the 1960s and early 1970s, the BBC had fourteen studios at its disposal, most of which were converted theatres or cinemas. The Playhouse Theatre in Charing Cross where the Jimi Hendrix Experience recorded at least one of their *Top Gear* sessions (October 6, 1967), has since been refurbished and has become a fully functioning West End theatre again. The Camden Theatre in Camden Town is now an established live venue called the Music Machine. The most famous BBC recording facility, and the only one still in use for that purpose today is Maida Vale, a purpose built rock recording studio in North West London.

The sessions were conducted in two, three-and-a-half-hour stretches with a break of an hour in between (from 15.00 to 23.00hrs, all told), during which all equipment would have to be set up and miked, and five songs recorded (or so it was hoped; frequently only four songs would actually be completed). The sophisticated, multi-track recording equipment of today was barely dreamt of.

"We used to record a backing track, in mono," recalls former engineer Bob Conduct. "and that track maybe didn't have vocals or a guitar solo or whatever. Then you'd play the track back to the band, usually via very small communications headphones - high quality cans just didn't exist - and you couldn't vary the mix in any way at all, either for the band or for yourself. That was also copied onto a second tape and mixed live with whatever the band were adding to it which might be a first layer of backing vocals and a keyboard overdub. There was no chance to go back and alter the mix so you simply had to get it right in the first place. That process could happen up to a maximum of three times, after which you lost quality enormously."

Half-way through the session, the musicians, producers and studio personnel would all repair to one of the local pubs, perhaps The Sherlock Holmes in Northumberland Avenue or the tiny Ship & Shovel under the arches at Charing Cross. "People don't believe me now when I tell them I went for a drink with Jimi Hendrix," Conduct says, wistfully. "But you've got to remember we were all quite young and it was really very relaxed and informal."





It is that never-to-be-repeated combination of youthful bonhomie and carefree sense of adventure which defines the special magic of the Jimi Hendrix Experience BBC Sessions which have been collected in their entirety for the first time on this album.

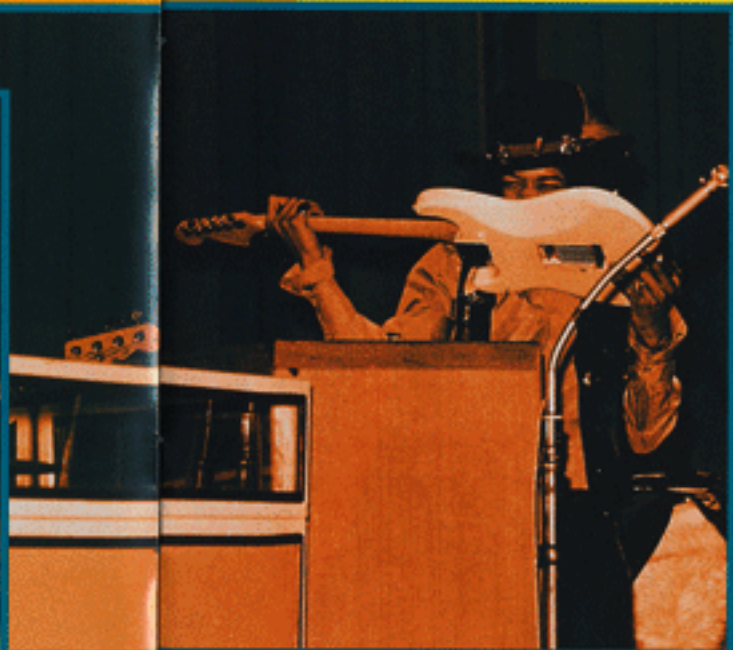
Take the day the group showed up at the Playhouse Theatre to record a session for Peel's *Top Gear* and found Stevie Wonder hanging around, waiting to be interviewed for another programme by Brian Matthew. As Noel Redding recalled, writing in his book, *Are You Experienced?* (Fourth Estate, 1990), "When Mitch nipped off to the loo, some enterprising person suggested an informal jam between Jimi and myself, with Stevie on drums. We jammed two segments of an old R&B song ["I Was Made To Love Her"] with Stevie, of course, they forgot to turn the tape machines off."

"It's not that wonderful," recalls engineer Pete Ritzema of the recording. "But it is one of those legendary things; Stevie Wonder did jam with Jimi Hendrix and it's there on tape."

Given that such connections often happened, perhaps it is not surprising that rumours have long abounded that the back-up vocals on "Day Tripper," a barnstorming version of the Beatles song recorded for a later Peel session, were sung by John Lennon. In fact it was Redding, rising to the occasion with his best Lennon impersonation. In that same session Hendrix came up with a jingle for Radio 1. Making it up on the spot, he responded by singing, in a giggly drawl, "Radio 1 you stole my gal but I love you just the same," surely the most off-the-wall station ident in the history of broadcasting.

There are other entertaining instances of Hendrix's humour at work, as on a version of the Elvis Presley hit, "Hound Dog," which comes complete with ludicrous howling and barking noises in the chorus. And clearly, if the party sounds in the background of "Hear My Train A Comin'" are anything to go by, Hendrix had a ball making these tapes.

It wasn't all plain sailing, however. When Hendrix turned up to do his first BBC session for *Saturday Club* the group was allocated S2, a tiny studio in the Broadcasting House sub-basement, three floors below street level. Producer Bill Bebb was aghast at the volume - "We could hear Jimi through the soundproof glass, and we could see the glass moving," he said - and he remembers fielding a complaint from the Concert Hall two floors above where a string quartet performance going out live on Radio 3 was being interrupted by the faint but unmistakable sound of Hendrix's guitar.







But along with the larking around and occasional volume crisis, the BBC Sessions also coaxed vintage performances of many Hendrix classics - "Hey Joe," "Purple Haze," "Foxy Lady," "Spanish Castle Magic" and "Stone Free" - alongside some blistering, off-the-cuff workouts of blues standards such as Muddy Waters' "(I'm Your) Hoochie Coochie Man" - featuring BBC presenter Alexis Komer on slide guitar - and Howlin' Wolf's "Killing Floor" taken at Hendrix's preferred breakneck pace.

Four tracks in particular stand out as an absolutely essential part of Hendrix's recorded legacy. "Drivin' South," a hefty instrumental groove, conjures astonishing performances from both Hendrix and Mitch Mitchell, while "Wait Until Tomorrow" and "Burning Of The Midnight Lamp" (with its neat new ending) are both exceptional performances of songs which the Experience hardly ever played live.

But perhaps the most exciting prospect of all is the version of "Love Or Confusion" recorded for *Saturday Club* on February 13, 1967. This was a particularly complicated song that Hendrix rarely attempted to play live, and here, although there has been some double-tracking, the recording exposes the bare bones of the song - Redding's lumpy bass riff clinging on for dear life to Mitchell's mutant-Latin drum pattern behind the solo - in a way that is both fascinating and incredibly dramatic.

While Hendrix's recordings for BBC radio make up an essential alternative portfolio of his best work, the legacy of his many appearances on BBC TV were not, generally speaking, of such intrinsic



value. Often, as on programmes such as *Top Of The Pops*, he would either sing live vocals over a backing track or else mime to the record, and these appearances were nearly always to promote his latest single. There were, however, live performances of different material, such as the occasion on the *Dusty Springfield Show* when he sang an endearing duet with Dusty Springfield of the Charlie & Inez Foxx song "Mockingbird." Sadly this has been lost, along with recordings of many other TV appearances which have either been wiped, stolen or in some other way gone missing over the years.

But not everything has disappeared, and as a bonus, *BBC Sessions* also includes some of Hendrix's most memorable appearances on BBC TV. One is a version of "Manic Depression" played completely live on *Late Night Line-Up*, an arts discussion programme which had little, if anything, to do with high-voltage rock'n'roll.

"It was recorded in Studio B," recalls the show's producer Michael Appleton, "which was basically a studio that was built for the continuity announcers to sit in and say their links between programmes. It was basically made for one person and a camera and a vase of flowers. When Jimi came in, we did the session and it filtered in from Floor 4 all the way through to the ground floor, and there were complaints about the sound in the studio directly below us."

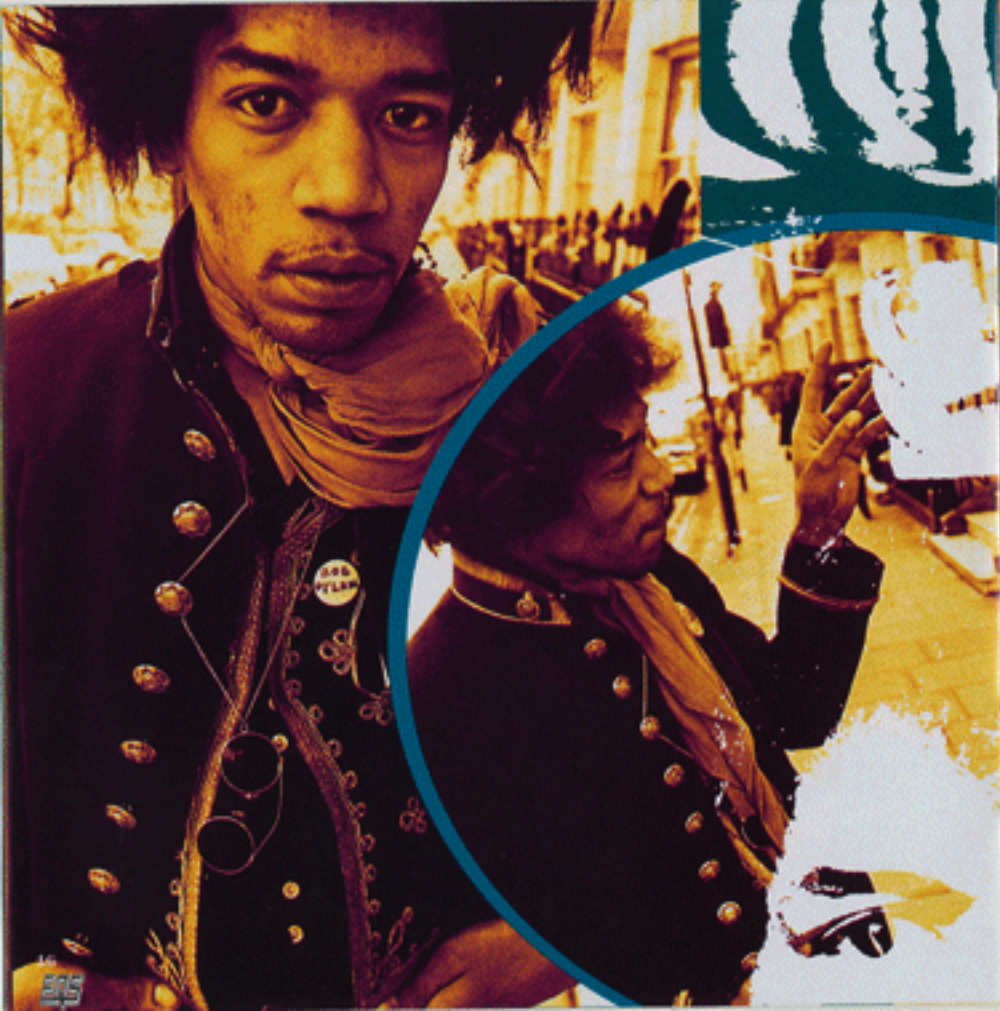
Hendrix's appearance on *The Lulu Show* caused even more havoc, only this time intentionally so. Lulu, having seen Jimi on her rival Dusty Springfield's show, had invited the Experience to appear on her show, but wanted to play safe by having the band simply trot out "Hey Joe." Hendrix had other ideas and as soon as she had announced the band he took off on a long, free-form "introduction" that was nothing like "Hey Joe," or anything else for that matter.

The show was being broadcast absolutely live and the producer and floor manager were growing increasingly agitated when, eventually, the first verse of "Hey Joe" emerged from the melee and the song settled into recognisable shape. Hendrix was in peak form, even tuning up his bottom E string on one of the verse turnarounds and giving Mitchell a wink of cheerful disbelief at his own audacity.

Then he suddenly abandoned the song altogether and announced that the band were instead going to play a tribute to Cream, who had recently decided to split up. The Experience launched into an unscripted instrumental version of "Sunshine Of Your Love" while behind the scenes pandemonium broke out, as the production team saw their carefully-planned and timed-to-the-second schedule spiralling out of control. The last thing you can hear on "Sunshine Of Your Love" is Hendrix calling out "We're being put off the air..." the perfect end to one of the most fondly-remembered live television appearances in the history of rock'n'roll.







Jimi Hendrix was a musician who changed the face of rock'n'roll, but he was also a personality who left his mark wherever he went. As well as offering many glorious insights into his music, *The Jimi Hendrix Experience: BBC Sessions*, more than any other Hendrix collection, gives you a sense of the man and his group as they really were during that first, heady flush of success, breaking new ground on a daily basis and enjoying every minute of it.

DAVID SINCLAIR

#### A NEW DISCOVERY...

We have recently uncovered another piece of both Jimi Hendrix and music television history. Jimi's August 24, 1967 appearance on the BBC television program *Top Of The Pops* was booked to promote his new UK single "Burning Of The Midnight Lamp." In keeping with strict Musician Union regulations, Jimi was to sing live atop the song's instrumental backing track.

The *Top Of The Pops* presenter announced the Experience, but then "The House That Jack Built" by the Alan Price Set began to play. A few seconds in, Jimi, ever polite, offered an apology, "I'm sorry man but I don't know the words..." As panic no doubt ensued within the studio's control room, the program's flustered presenter apologized and implored Jimi to try it once again.





**Jimi Hendrix:** Guitar, Vocals

**Noel Redding:** Bass, Backing Vocals

**Mitch Mitchell:** Drums, Backing Vocals

#### DISC ONE

- 1. Foxy Lady (2:38)**  
Saturday Club  
Produced by: Bill Bebb  
Recorded: February 13, 1967  
Broadcast: February 18, 1967
- 2. Alexis Korner Introduction (2:28)**
- 3. Can You Please Crawl Out Your Window? (3:32)**  
Rhythm And Blues  
Produced by: Jeff Griffin  
Recorded: October 17, 1967  
Broadcast: November 13, 1967
- 4. Rhythm And Blues World Service (3:12)**
- 5. (I'm Your) Hoochie Coochie Man (5:38)**  
with Alexis Korner-slide guitar  
Rhythm And Blues  
Produced by: Jeff Griffin  
Recorded: October 17, 1967  
Broadcast: November 13, 1967
- 6. Travelling With The Experience (2:22)**
- 7. Driving South (5:31)**  
Rhythm & Blues  
Produced by: Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: October 17, 1967  
Broadcast: November 13, 1967
- 8. Fire (2:42)**  
Saturday Club  
Produced by: Bill Bebb  
Recorded: March 28, 1967  
Broadcast: April 1, 1967

#### 9. Little Miss Lover (2:58)

Top Gear  
Produced by: Bev Phillips, Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: October 6, 1967  
Broadcast: October 15, 1967

#### 10. Introducing The Experience (5:53)

#### 11. Burning Of The Midnight Lamp (3:43)

Top Gear  
Produced by: Bev Phillips, Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: October 6, 1967  
Broadcast: October 15, 1967

#### 12. Catfish Blues (5:29)

Top Gear  
Produced by: Bev Phillips, Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: October 6, 1967  
Broadcast: October 15, 1967

#### 13. Stone Free (3:26)

Saturday Club  
Produced by: Bill Bebb  
Recorded: February 13, 1967  
Broadcast: February 18, 1967

#### 14. Love Or Confusion (2:54)

Saturday Club  
Produced by: Bill Bebb  
Recorded: February 13, 1967  
Broadcast: February 18, 1967

#### 15. Hey Joe (4:02)

Saturday Club  
Produced by: Bill Bebb  
Recorded: February 13, 1967  
Broadcast: February 18, 1967

#### 16. Hound Dog (2:42)

Top Gear  
Produced by: Bev Phillips, Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: October 6, 1967  
Broadcast: October 15, 1967

#### 17. Driving South (4:49)

Top Gear  
Produced by: Bev Phillips, Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: October 6, 1967  
Broadcast: October 15, 1967

#### 18. Hear My Train A Comin' (5:00)

Top Gear  
Produced by: Bev Phillips, Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: December 15, 1967  
Broadcast: December 24, 1967





DISC TWO

- 1. Purple Haze (3:12)**  
Top Of The Pops  
Produced by: Bill Bebb [for Saturday Club]  
Recorded: March 28, 1967
- 2. Killing Floor (2:28)**  
Saturday Club  
Produced by: Bill Bebb  
Recorded: March 28, 1967  
Broadcast: April 1, 1967
- 3. Radio One (1:34)**  
Top Gear  
Produced by: Bev Phillips, Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: December 15, 1967  
Broadcast: December 24, 1967
- 4. Wait Until Tomorrow (2:58)**  
Top Gear  
Produced by: Bev Phillips, Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: December 15, 1967  
Broadcast: December 24, 1967
- 5. Day Tripper (3:25)**  
Top Gear  
Produced by: Bev Phillips, Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: December 15, 1967  
Broadcast: December 24, 1967
- 6. Spanish Castle Magic (3:08)**  
Top Gear  
Produced by: Bev Phillips, Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: December 15, 1967  
Broadcast: December 24, 1967
- 7. Jamin' (3:24)**  
with Stevie Wonder drums  
Top Gear  
Produced by: Bev Phillips, Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: October 6, 1967
- 8. I Was Made To Love Her (3:05)**  
with Stevie Wonder drums  
Top Gear  
Produced by: Bev Phillips, Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: October 6, 1967
- 9. Foxey Lady (3:06)**  
Saturday Club  
Produced by: Bill Bebb  
Recorded: February 13, 1967  
Alternate Take
- 10. A Brand New Sound (5:4)**
- 11. Hey Joe (2:58)**  
Saturday Club  
Produced by: Bill Bebb  
Recorded: February 13, 1967  
Alternate Take
- 12. Manic Depression (3:11)**  
Late Night Line Up  
BBC Television  
Recorded: April 17, 1967
- 13. Driving South (3:22)**  
Top Gear  
Produced by: Bev Phillips, Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: October 6, 1967  
Alternate Take

- 14. Hear My Train A Comin' (5:03)**  
Top Gear  
Produced by: Bev Phillips, Bernie Andrews  
Recorded: December 15, 1967  
Alternate Take
- 15. A Happening For Lulu (2:28)**
- 16. Voodoo Child (Slight Return) (4:08)**  
A Happening For Lulu  
BBC Television  
Recorded: January 4, 1969
- 17. Lulu Introduction (2:3)**
- 18. Hey Joe (2:44)**  
A Happening For Lulu  
BBC Television  
Recorded: January 4, 1969
- 19. Sunshine Of Your Love (3:17)**  
A Happening For Lulu  
BBC Television  
Recorded: January 4, 1969

**BONUS TRACK**

- 20. Burning Of The Midnight Lamp (4:31)**  
Top Of The Pops  
BBC Television  
Recorded: August 24, 1967

*These mono and simulated stereo recordings have been digitally remastered from the original BBC session tapes.*

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"Hey Joe" by Billy Roberts, Third Story Music, Inc. - BMI

"Killing Floor" by Chester Burnett, Arc Music Corporation - BMI

"Can You Please Creep Out Your Window?" by Bob Dylan, Special Rider Music - SESAC

"Day Tripper" by John Lennon and Paul McCartney, Sony/ATV Songs LLC - BMI

"I Wanna Take To Love Her" by Henry Cosby - Lata Handway - Sylvia May - Stanie Wunder, Arbeta Music Co., Inc./Black Bull Music, Inc./Sawmill Music - ASCAP/BMI

"Driving South" by Curtis McNear, PPS Publishing - BMI

"Hound Dog" by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, Gladys Music adm. by Williamson Music Company/MCA Music Publishing, A Division of Universal Studios, Inc. - ASCAP

"Catfish Blues" by Robert Petway, Music Corporation of America, Inc. - BMI

"(I'm Your) Hoochie Coochie Man" by Willie Dixon, Hoochie Coochie Music (BMI) adm. by Bug

"Sunshine Of Your Love" by Peter Brown, Jack Bruce, and Eric Clapton, Drealval Music Ltd. (PRS) adm. by Chappell & Co. (ASCAP) & Eric Patrick Clapton adm. by Unichappell Music Inc. (BMI)

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