

ARTS
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1998 E3



Only Joni Mitchell knows what happened after she and Jimi Hendrix left the party in Vanier that long ago night. But maybe it's all just a purple haze.

Oh what a night!

Jimi and Joni Come Together

March 19, 1968. What a night that was. Jimi Hendrix arrived in Ottawa for two sold-out concerts at the Capital Theatre and Joni Mitchell was playing at L'Hibou on Sussex Drive. They stayed at the Chateau Laurier.

Hendrix kept a diary when he was touring and, although the entries were often brief, the thoughts were clear, revealing and sensitive.

"Beautiful hotel... Strange people... millions of girls..." And Joni Mitchell, coincidentally in town the same night, was "a fantastic girl with heaven words."

The diary is part of a Hendrix collection belonging to the Seattle-based Experience Music Project, whose interactive popular music museum is scheduled to open in two years. One floor will be dedicated to Hendrix and will hold the largest selection of Hendrix artifacts in the world, including 2,000 recordings, guitars he played at the Monterey Pop Festival (1967) and Woodstock (1969), handwritten lyrics and his diaries.

The March 19 diary entry was posted last Sept. 25 on the Experience Music Project website (www.experience.org/vault) and spotted there by Barbara Wheelock, an encyclopedia of information on the fledgling Ottawa music scene of the late 1960s. The Experience Music Project opened the diary randomly for a daily website feature. It was coincidence that the page fell open at the Ottawa entry on the day Wheelock was cruising the site.

Wheelock sent the item to Harvey Glatt, now president of CHEZ-FM and promoter of the Hendrix Capital Theatre concerts back in 1968.

It was more than a year before Woodstock, and Hendrix was a wild, unorthodox persona at a time when the youth counterculture was riding itself of the social strictures of the 1950s and replacing them with anything that spoke rebellion — often one or all of that unholy trinity of sex, drugs and rock and roll.

The Capital Theatre, at Bank and Queen Streets, held 2,300 people. Both of the Hendrix shows were sold out and fans paid \$9 or \$6 a ticket. For each show, Jimi got \$5,000, which he shared with his sidemen, bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell — collectively The Jimi Hendrix Experience. This was a time before stadium shows and even such stars as Hendrix travelled light. Glatt rested the sound and light equipment and Hendrix was clearly happy with it. Nobody seems to remember anyone in the Hendrix

Joni Mitchell, in town next Friday to perform with Sixties icon Bob Dylan, met Jimi Hendrix after he performed in Ottawa 31 years ago. **Chris Cobb** pieces together the story of that night.

Hendrix, then 25, and 24-year-old Joni parlied together after his concert at a motel in Vanier. They parted the next morning with a kiss. And let's not forget Jimi's black hat.

That's a big part of the story too ...

and grateful. I don't have a clue who the girl in the yellow raincoat was. I might have invited her to the party afterwards but I'm not sure."

Hendrix had played two hour-long shows, following the opening act Soft Machine. The songs he played — *Fire, Red House, Foxy Lady, Hey Joe, Purple Haze* and *Wild Thing* — have become rock classics.

After his shows, and before the party, Hendrix arrived at L'Hibou coffee house.

"He was crouched at the side of the stage," remembers Glatt. "He was wearing headphones and adjusting his tape recorder while he was recording Joni's show."

The party, which raged into the early hours, was at the Motel Deville in Vanier, site of one of the city's first discos. Between the invited guests and hangers-on, there were about 30 people there.

Veteran Ottawa musician Bill Hawkins was there. He sang one of his new songs for Hendrix and Mitchell while the three of them sat cross-legged in a corner of the party room.

"It was a song called *Scorpio*," remembers Hawkins. "I wrote songs for every zodiac sign. Jimi asked me why and I told him it was a good way to pick up girls. I was trying desperately

Excerpt from Jimi Hendrix diary

MARCH 19

Arrived in Ottawa. Beautiful hotel. Strange people... Beautiful dinner. Talks with Joni Mitchell on the phone. I think I'll record her tonight with my excellent tape recorder (knock on wood). Himm... can't find any wood... everything's plastic. Beautiful view.

Marvellous sound on first show. Good on second. Good recording. Went down to little club to see Joni, fantastic girl with heaven words. We all got to party OK, millions of girls. Listen to tape and smoked up at hotel.

MARCH 20

We left Ottawa City today. I kissed Joni goodbye, slept in the car awhile. Stopped at a highway diner. The real thing. I mean a real one just like in the movies. Mitch and I discuss our plans for movie. Slight disagreement here and there but it will soon be straightened out. Went to a very bad, bad, bad tasting restaurant. Thugs follo us. They probably was scared, couldn't figure us out. Me with my Indian hat and Mexican moustach, Mitch with his fairy tale jacket and Noel with his leopard band hat and accent. G'rite all.