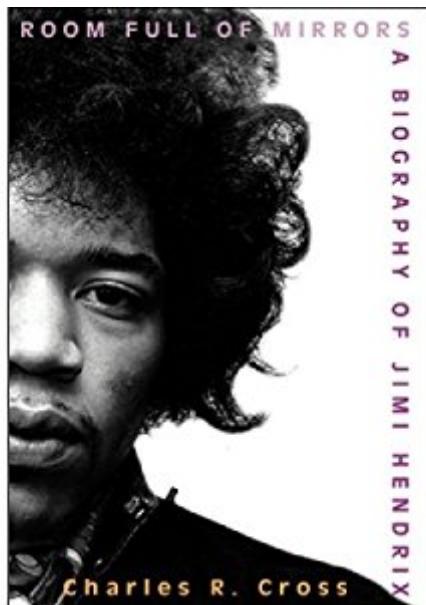


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# Room Full Of Mirrors: A Biography Of Jimi Hendrix



## **Synopsis**

Jimi Hendrix continues to fascinate, and sell huge quantities of albums, even 35 years after his death. Quite apart from his influence on musicians and fans, a large part of the appeal of his sensational life story lies in the thrill of the era whose values he came to stand for. The Sixties still exert a massive pull over pop culture and this is genuinely a book for anyone interested, not only in Hendrix but also in anything to do with the pop culture of the last 40 years. Meticulously researched and sensitively and beautifully written, this is a labour of love that reveals the nuances, foibles and tragedies of the human being behind the iconic image. This is the sweeping, authoritative and colourful biography that Jimi Hendrix deserves and that his legions of fans, young and old have been waiting for. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I don't know what the deal is with all these other reviewers (including the professional reviewing services), who claim this to be the best biography of Jimi Hendrix. That claim is erroneous, and I can only assume these are personal friends of the author or people who have been paid to hype the book. As a biography of Jimi Hendrix, I would rank this book as "good" or maybe even "very good" but certainly not "excellent" or "outstanding." Having read through this book twice, I have backed off of the harshness of my initial review, and I offer my apology to the author. However, the truth is we all get tired of the endless corporate hyping of every new product as "The Greatest" this or that. That is a very hard claim to live up to in this case, given the fact that several well-written bios of Jimi Hendrix are currently available. If this book had been more honestly titled, it would have been called

"Jimi Hendrix - The Early Years" and would have ended with Jimi meeting Chas Chandler in 1966 (i.e. around page 153 out of about 370 total pages of text). In all fairness, the book does have several strong points. It is a pleasant and informative read written from a sympathetic perspective. The author has interviewed an impressive number of people, many of whom have not gone on record before. It includes a tremendous amount of new detail on Jimi's early years (childhood in Seattle, years in the military and on the road, hustling in New York City) than other bios - probably a result of the fact that this author is a resident of Jimi's hometown of Seattle and was able to gain access to his early friends and family members. In fact, the coverage of Jimi's early years is definitely the strong point of the book - it fills in A LOT of holes and clarifies a ton of confusions, misconceptions, half-truths and outright untruths (including some created by Jimi himself) and for this reason is surely worth buying for serious fans of Jimi Hendrix. There are several fascinating and previously unpublished photos from Jimi's youth and his years in the U.S. military. The book also sheds light on a number previously undiscussed personal relationships of Jimi's including several girlfriends from throughout his life who have never gone on record before. The problem is that once the book reaches Jimi's years of fame it thins out considerably and anyone who has read previous Hendrix bios will notice that the majority of core information which ties this book together is lifted (and heavily simplified) from other biographies, articles and interviews (which are quoted but not cited). The period from 1966-1970 is a fairly superficial read which ignores a lot of important musical and biographical details and cannot be considered serious biographical writing about Jimi Hendrix. If you want to compare it to another of the Hendrix bios, it is most similar to the tone of Jerry Hopkins' 1979 "Hit and Run" - but admittedly much less sensationalized and much more tastefully and respectfully written. No disrespect, but with all the other solid Hendrix bios out there, I would not suggest starting here. In my humble opinion, the best written and best researched books about the life and/or music of Jimi Hendrix remain: Kramer/McDermott: "Hendrix: Setting the Record Straight" Murray: "Crosstown Traffic" Shadwick: "Jimi Hendrix: Musician" Brown: "Jimi Hendrix: The Final Days" Shapiro/Gleebbeck: "Jimi Hendrix: Electric Gypsy" McDermott/Kramer/Cox: "Jimi Hendrix: The Sessions" Valkhoff: "Eyewitness 1968," "Eyewitness 1969/1970" Roby: "Black Gold: The Lost Archives of Jimi Hendrix" Potash: "The Jimi Hendrix Companion" The personal accounts of Noel Redding ("Are You Experienced"), Kathy Etchingham ("Through Gypsy Eyes") and Sharon Lawrence ("Jimi Hendrix: The Man, the Myth, the Truth") are somewhat painful reads but also valuable. David Henderson's "Scuse Me While I Kiss the Sky" is flawed but also provides an invaluable glimpse into Jimi's personal life and his African-American context (which most biographers have tended to ignore). And Mary Willix's "Letters from Home" provides a lot of

information on Jimi's youth. Based on the new information about Jimi's early years, Mr. Cross's book would fit nicely into this secondary category.

Well, how to begin? First let's face it, most Jimi Hendrix fans are somewhat obsessive when it comes to him. And we each have our own individual opinions about him, his music, and his life. And it is hard for some of us to accept any deviation from our beliefs. I like to think when it comes to Jimi, all you really need to know about him can be found in his music. His hopes, his fears, his loves, his demons. That being said, I still enjoy reading about Jimi and how he lived and how he made his music. So consequently, I thoroughly enjoyed Mr. Cross's book. While some may criticize it because it does not delve deeply enough into the music and how Jimi made it, I feel that in a round about way it does just that. Jimi's life, all of his childhood experiences, his life on the Chitlin' circuit, his struggle to become recognized as a musician, all contributed in some way to his music and how he approached his career and his song writing. Now this book may not go into a lot of detail when he comes to the technical aspects of his music, but that's okay, because there are several other excellent books about Jimi that do just this. I found this book to be well written and insightful when it comes to Jimi's childhood. It appears that Jimi from the beginning depended on the kindness of neighbors and relatives. I simply cannot imagine living the way he did as a child and I cannot even fathom what it did to Jimi and how it shaped his life. That part of the book was very sad. One thing is apparent, however; Jimi his entire life depended on happenstance or serendipity in his decision making. I guess he knew no other way. He just believed that things would work out eventually. And the author was correct in his belief that Jimi was just as trapped by his music and the life it afforded him as he had been during his childhood and adolescence in Seattle. Music saved him from that life, but I guess nothing could save him later. He had talent, no doubt it. That is talent in music, but no talent in how to change his life even when it obviously became very destructive. I suppose I will continue reading books about Jimi, because there is a part of me that believes if I keep reading, I can figure him out, but that will probably never happen. There will always be a part of Jimi that will remain mysterious and hidden and that is after all how it should be.

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