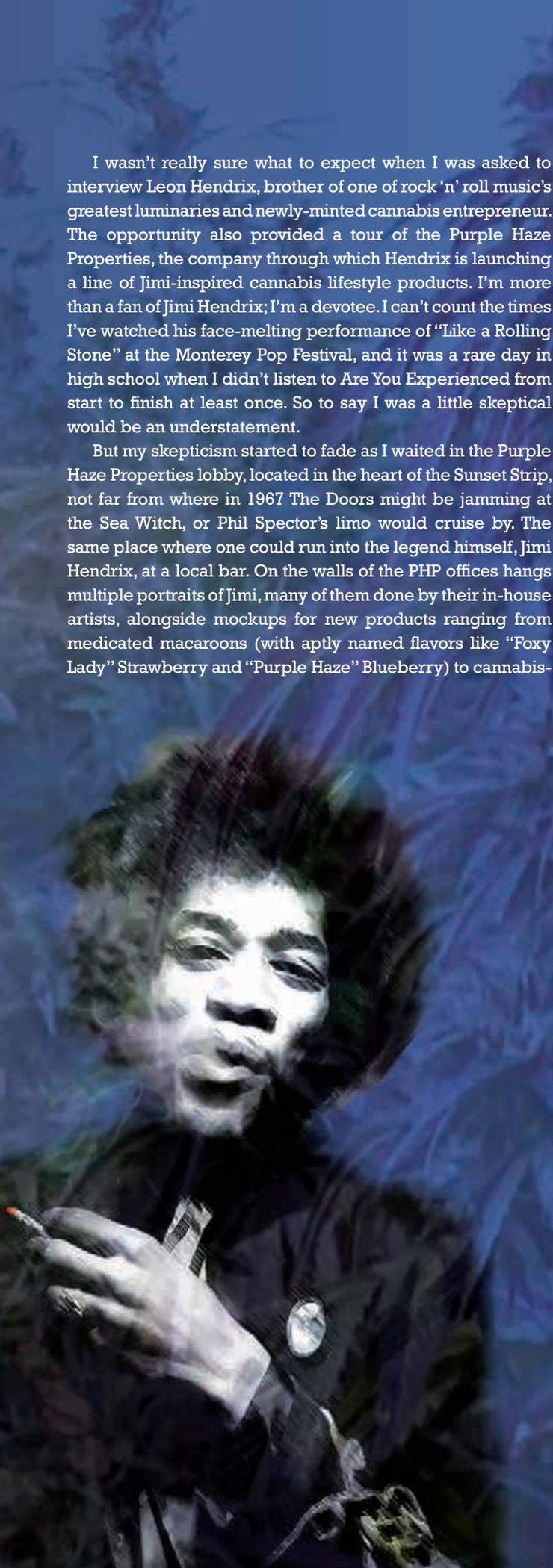


Purple Haze

**Jimi Hendrix's
Legacy Lives on
in his Brother ...
and Medicated
Macarons**

BY BUSTER BLAKENEY





I wasn't really sure what to expect when I was asked to interview Leon Hendrix, brother of one of rock 'n' roll music's greatest luminaries and newly-minted cannabis entrepreneur. The opportunity also provided a tour of the Purple Haze Properties, the company through which Hendrix is launching a line of Jimi-inspired cannabis lifestyle products. I'm more than a fan of Jimi Hendrix; I'm a devotee. I can't count the times I've watched his face-melting performance of "Like a Rolling Stone" at the Monterey Pop Festival, and it was a rare day in high school when I didn't listen to *Are You Experienced* from start to finish at least once. So to say I was a little skeptical would be an understatement.

But my skepticism started to fade as I waited in the Purple Haze Properties lobby, located in the heart of the Sunset Strip, not far from where in 1967 The Doors might be jamming at the Sea Witch, or Phil Spector's limo would cruise by. The same place where one could run into the legend himself, Jimi Hendrix, at a local bar. On the walls of the PHP offices hangs multiple portraits of Jimi, many of them done by their in-house artists, alongside mockups for new products ranging from medicated macaroons (with aptly named flavors like "Foxy Lady" Strawberry and "Purple Haze" Blueberry) to cannabis-

infused olive oil (naturally punned "Burning the Midnight Oil"). The atmosphere is one of business, to be sure, but there's also an essence of Jimi that, while not tangible, is certainly palpable.

And then I meet Leon.

He greets me in a manner reminiscent of the way Jimi spoke interviews.

"Hey man. What's your name?"

"Buster," I tell him, expecting a laugh or the double take, a response I've come to expect.

Instead, his eyes go wide.

"That's my brother's name" he exclaims. "He never answered to James."

He's referring to Jimi's confusing history of endless name changes. Jimi was born Johnny Allen Hendrix, but his father, upon return from the Army, changed it to James Marshall Hendrix.

"Johnny was my mom's boyfriend's name," Leon tells me. "My dad couldn't stand it."

But Leon and Jimi's respite from relative poverty in Seattle came from the local movie house where, for a nickel, the brothers would watch *Flash Gordon* serials starring Buster Crabbe. Jimi decided then and there that his name would be Buster, and upon returning home, wrapped himself in a blanket for a cape and promptly jumped out a window.

"Buster busted his ankle," he laughs with a grin at the cherished memory.

Hendrix family history, which seems to be steeped in drama and intrigue more often than not. As I talk to Leon, it becomes clear that regardless of what history, the public, or lawyers say, he believes that he and his children are the closest thing to true descendants of Jimi, who died childless. Even Leon's son, "Little Jimi", who was born on what would have been Jimi's 42nd birthday, believes there's something cosmic tying the whole affair together. Though Little Jimi favors mixing boards to guitars, there's something indisputably similar to his rock star uncle, and I realize that Leon and his family are continuing Jimi's legacy the best way they know how.

But if Leon is the soul of Purple Haze Properties, Andrew Pitsicalis, the company's CEO, is the heart and the brains. Cheery and wide-smiling, Andrew greets me in his offices where a giant LED TV with the Purple Haze Properties logo splayed across it hangs on one wall, and several ornately-blown glass bongos lining another.

"Functional art," he corrects me before taking a rip from one of them that would make Willie Nelson balk. He grins again as he exhales, and for a moment, my brain has trouble reconciling the cloud of weed smoke billowing from the portly, maybe-middle-aged guy smiling back at me like a teenager. Quiet intelligence emanates from his eyes, drawing me in despite the obscurity of it all.

Pitsicalis fires up the TV on the wall and starts to explain that Purple Haze Properties is much more than just a line of Jimi-branded weed paraphernalia and tchotchkes. He backs up this statement via his slideshow presentation on the large flat screen.

He explains the multi-pronged affair in detail. There are three divisions - Jimi's Edibles, Jimi's Genetix, and Jimi's Meds — each

focusing on a different product line and revenue stream. Jimi's Edibles is their culinary division, offering the aforementioned macaroons and olive oils alongside dozens of other products. I scan the designs and the names of each delicious-sounding, cannabis-infused treats: Maui Sunset saltwater taffy, New Rising Sun breakfast bars, Traffic Jam jelly spread, and Whammy Bar Ice Cream Bars. There are even cannabis-oil-infused Kale Chips, for the health-conscious stoner in your life.

I silently resolve to ask Pitsicalis for samples of everything on the list before we move on to Jimi's Genetix, the line of strains influenced by both Jimi's music and the spirit of popular buds of the 60s and 70s. Leon tells me of the popularity of Panama Red, one of his and his late brother's favorites, and possibly the most celebrated pot strain of the rock 'n' roll era.

But Pitsicalis is no stranger to pot history, either, having displayed a green thumb at an early age to go along with his business acumen.

Another grin spreads across Pitsicalis' face as he tells me of his first horticultural endeavor, a backyard affair in the mid 90s when he was still an amateur enthusiast.

"I still got a P out of it," he whoops proudly.

But the evidence of how far he's come is plain to see as he tosses me a pack of prerolleds made from one of their Jimi's Genetix strains. Adorning the pack is a hologram of Jimi waving to a crowd at Woodstock. As kitschy as it sounds, part of me can't help but smile at how awesome the little touch is. It's almost as awesome as the jar of Maui Sunset that Pitsicalis cracks open for me next.

"You really smell those lovely floral, citrusy notes," he swoons with the enthusiasm of a winemaker explaining one of his better vintages. I nod and smile and try to palm a particularly juicy nug.

"You can just have that," he says. I realize that his cheery demeanor isn't entirely independent of the entrepreneur/businessman running a successful brand.

The third division Purple Haze Properties is developing is



Jimi's Meds, a CBD-focused line of cannabis medications for patients such as cancer sufferers and those seeking a safer alternative to system-wrecking pain meds.

Pitsicalis and Leon's demeanor changes as they explain the Meds division, and the air of passionate, giggly enthusiasm is promptly replaced by one of serious commitment to care. Often skeptics hear the term "patient" to describe marijuana users looking to get around the law, but Pitsicalis assures me that a lot of these don't have psychoactive effects.

"That one is just CBDs. Just pain relief," he says, passing me a beautiful pink macaroon.

Other products still are designed to cater to the cannabis-as-superfood market.

"It's like a wellness shot when you go to a smoothie place," Pitsicalis explains. "You pay a little extra for the supplement that calms you or boosts your creativity."

But the crowning jewel in the Hendrix-Cannabis strata is Jimi's Lounge, a planned property on the Hollywood Boulevard strip that will be a live music venue, cannabis lounge, and retail location.

"We've already bought the building," he beams. "It's an awesome location right in the heart of Hollywood, and we've got guys putting up millions of dollars to build out the space."

The space he's referring to sounds like a rock 'n' roll cannabis enthusiast's Mecca. It's no small wonder that his presentation decks project over \$100 million in revenue by year five.

"Imagine being able to check out awesome live music, then step into a medication lounge and being able to pick up some Captain Coconut and light up, hassle-free, then head back in to catch more rock 'n' roll." He's caught up in his vision, and for a minute, Leon and I dream along with him.

"I think Jimi could get down like that," I say.

Leon and Pitsicalis nod knowingly, smiles playing along their faces. 🌿

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