

## Jim Morrison, The Doors, and Cal State Los Angeles

**By**  
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Time is measured by more than just clocks. We mark time by experiences and events in our lives. And the music we love and the artists who create this music provide some of the biggest measuring sticks of our lives.

And if you lived in the 1960's, one of the richest and most distinctive sounds from that period belonged to the voice of Jim Morrison and the musical group he was a member of, *The Doors*.



Taken at Cal State Los Angeles/Photo by Daniel Sugerman, Doors Library

Morrison's deep baritone voice had a moody and sensual quality to it. When it was combined with the other members of the group such as Ray Manzarek and his creative keyboard routines, *The Doors* developed a sound that many saw as the epitome of the psychedelic pop music of the late 1960's.

The music of the group and Morrison's short life captured the revolutionary feeling of the anti-establish times and the tragedy of cavalier attitudes toward psychedelic drugs. The group's name was taken from Aldus Huxley's book, *Doors of Perception*.

And the locality around Alhambra, via the courtesy of California State University Los Angeles, carved out a small niche of music history when *The Doors* played Cal State following the "Summer of Love" in 1967.

As *The Doors* worked their way through 1967, they had become one of music's most influential and controversial groups. They had a number one hit song with "Light My Fire", two top selling albums with Elektra Records, and a lead singer in Jim Morrison, who potentially could steal a show anytime with his on-stage antics.

On the Sunday evening of October 8, 1967, the Kappa Sigma fraternity of Cal State Los Angeles sponsored a concert in the Cal State's men's gym to raise funds for the school's athletic department. Headlining the event were *The Doors*. Opening the show were *The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band* and *The Sunshine Company*.

"Jim Morrison, the wiry, screaming lead singer of the group, provided an exaggeration of Mick Jagger that would make Elvis Presley's old gyrations look like those of an old lady," wrote Janice Somple in the Cal State student newspaper, *College Times*, October 11, 1967.

*The Doors* performed "Break on Through", "People Are Strange", and "Light My Fire" in front of a near capacity crowd in the Men's Gym. The crowd's reaction was spirited and warm. The show was emceed by KRLA's Dave Hull and by the end of the concert, security kept "overly enthusiastic fans from mobbing the stage" according to Somple (Courtesy Cal State L.A.'s Special Collections).

Janice Somple went on to describe Morrison as a "long curly-haired creature clad in black leather trousers and jacket, (who) provided more show than music".



For a student organized concert to present a group with the marquee stature of *The Doors* was truly impressive. Morrison himself had taken undergraduate classes at Cal State Long Beach and perhaps felt an affinity to the Cal State System.



The group was rounded out with Robby Krieger playing the guitar and John Densmore on the drums. Keyboardist, Ray Manzarek and Morrison had met at UCLA's film school and after graduation started the group. Morrison wrote many of the songs and truly was a cultural artist and poet.

*The Doors* would have forty-four albums produced of their music (1967-2010), play the *Ed Sullivan Show*, and be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1993.

Jim Morrison's father was Rear Admiral George S. Morrison. Admiral Morrison was captain of the USS *Bon Homme Richard* which was a Essex-class aircraft carrier during the 1960's. Also, the Admiral was the commander of United States Naval forces during the Gulf of Tonkin Incident in 1964 which greatly increased our country's involvement in Vietnam.

The group took its name from a book written by Aldus Huxley that promoted the notion of gaining a more meaningful perception of reality through the use of psychedelic drugs. And here Huxley's message and Morrison's darker side merged.

Huxley's door of perception did not lead Morrison to a more acute view of reality, but rather to a heroin overdose that killed him in Paris at the age of twenty-seven in 1971.

The Doors would perform a few more years without Jim Morrison, but it was never the same and the group disbanded in 1974. But Cal State University Los Angeles gained a small portion of pop notoriety by having one of America's top cultural music groups entertain in its men's gym to help raise funds for the school's athletic department back in 1967.

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