

Janis Joplin Dies; Rock Star Was 27

By Reuters

HOLLYWOOD, Oct. 4—Janis Joplin, the rock singer, was found dead in her Hollywood apartment tonight. She was 27 years old.

The cause of death was not immediately determined, but the police said she apparently died of an overdose of drugs. They said she had been dead for about two hours when she was found shortly after 10 P.M.

Miss Joplin was the second noted American pop singer to die in less than three weeks. Jimi Hendrix, 27, died in London Sept. 18 after taking nine strong sleeping tablets.

Totally Involved

She would stand before her audience, microphone in hand, long red hair flailing, her raspy voice shrieking in rock muta-

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Janis Joplin, Rock Singer, 27, Found Dead in Hollywood Home

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tions of black country blues. Pellets of sweat flew from her contorted face and glittered in the beam of footlights. Janis Joplin sang with more than her voice. Her involvement was total.

She lived that way, too. The girl from Port Arthur, Tex., who moved into stardom by way of the San Francisco rock upsurge, talked openly of the Southern Comfort she drank and of the joys of being inebriated. With the same abandon that she sang, she drove her Porsche through the hills of San Francisco, a fast looking car, decorated with psychedelic butterflies.

Once a reporter asked her what she wanted out of life stoned, staying happy and having a good time. I'm doing just what I want with my life, enjoying it."

"When I get scared and worried," she said at the time, "I tell myself, 'Janis, just have a good time.' So I juice up real good and that's just what I have."

By that time she was riding the crest of rock popularity, having soared into prominence with her rendition of "Love Is Like a Ball and Chain" at the 1967 Monterey Rock Festival. The song, said one critic, "was wrenching out of some deep dark nether region of her Texas soul."

Back home in Port Arthur she had been a misfit. "I read, I painted, I didn't hate niggers," she once recalled. "Man, those people back home hurt me. It make me happy to know I'm making it and they're back there, plumbers just like they were."

She tried college several times, and a job as a computer programmer. She collected Leadbelly and Bessie Smith records, but she never really sang professionally until June of 1966. An old friend, Travis Rivers, had formed a band in San Francisco called Big Brother and the Holding Company. He sent for her and once again she left Port Arthur, this time for the Haight Ashbury section of San Francisco.

It was June of that year and the band was playing the Avalon, a ballroom. She had just arrived and the ambiance of the flailing, gyrating, burgeoning "youth scene" of San Francisco was heady.

"I couldn't believe it, all that rhythm and power," she said. "I got stoned just feeling it, like it was the best dope in the world. It was so sensual, so vibrant, loud, you can destroy your now crazy. I couldn't stay still; I



Janis Joplin

had never danced when I sang, but there I was moving and jumping. I couldn't hear myself, so I sang louder and louder. By the end I was wild. . . ."

There followed performances at the Psychedelic Supermarket in Boston, the Kinetic Playground in Chicago, the Whisky A-Go-go in Los Angeles and the Fillmore East in New York. There was Cheap Thrills, the album that sold more than a million copies. And there was Miss Joplin screaming, "Take another piece of my heart, baby."

There were big money and rock festivals. And the tempo of her private life kept pace with the driving songs. The Southern Comfort distillery gave her a fur coat in recognition of the publicity she gave the company by drinking from a bottle at her concerts.

Her home in San Francisco was decorated in Rococo boudoir style. She shared it with a dog named George and a Siamese fighting fish named Charley whose aquarium was a wine bottle.

Her behavior was explosive. In November, 1969, she was arrested after a concert in Tampa, Fla., for screaming obscenities at a policeman in the audience. She was temperamental and demanded the same dedication of her backup musicians as she herself gave. She split from the Holding Company and formed her own band, the Janis Joplin Full Tilt Boogie Band.

And there were those who said that neither her voice nor her health could stand the demands she made upon them, on stage and off. Her answer: "Maybe I won't last as long as other singers, but I think you can destroy your now worrying about tomorrow."