

EXPERIENCE THE MUSIC OF TURTLE ISLAND QUARTET

***Have You Ever Been...?* explores and celebrates the legacy of
guitar rock icon Jimi Hendrix in grand TIQ style**

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At the peak of his creative powers in the late 1960s, Jimi Hendrix redefined the potential of not only the guitar but the entire genre of rock. Armed with an unprecedented combination of technical skills and compositional insight, he drew a blueprint that continues to challenge guitarists in particular and musicians of all stripes more than four decades later.

In many ways, Turtle Island Quartet – led by founding violinist David Balakrishnan, a Hendrix fan since his teenage years – has taken Hendrix’s cue in the course of their 25-year career by reexamining and reconstructing conventional genres of music and seeking new permutations of style, technique and composition. This ongoing mission of exploration and innovation was most recently exemplified in their Grammy winning 2007 recording, *A Love Supreme: The Legacy of John Coltrane*, in which the quartet reinterprets the music of one of the most pivotal figures in the history of jazz by injecting it with their own signature rhythmic innovations and multicultural influences.

Three years later, TIQ – whose current lineup includes Balakrishnan along with co-founder cellist Mark Summer, violinist Mads Tolling and newcomer violist Jeremy Kittel – pushes the edge of their stylistic comfort zone a step further with their latest recording, *Have You Ever Been...?*, an exploration of the music of Hendrix coupled with a cross genre twist on an old story, Balakrishnan’s *Tree Of Life*. “...A stellar recording and achievement,” says guitarist Andy Summers, one of the many high-profile heirs to the Hendrix legacy through his work with the Police and beyond, and author of the liner notes to *Have You Ever Been...?* The album is set for release on August 24, 2010, on Telarc International, a division of Concord Music Group.

The genesis of *Have You Ever Been...?* can be traced back to the two Hendrix concerts at the L.A. Forum – one in 1969 and the other in 1970 – that Balakrishnan attended as a teenager. Within days, he was practicing Hendrix guitar riffs on his violin. Decades later, around the time of the release of *A Love Supreme*, Balakrishnan visited the Woodstock Museum in Bethel, New York, and watched a video of Hendrix’s legendary performances at the three-day rock festival in 1969 that defined a generation.

“Watching him reminded me of what a genius he was,” says Balakrishnan. “He was this great icon of that generation, but underneath all that, he was a brilliant and completely innovative composer. He was putting things together that nobody had ever conceived before, and he completely changed the way we think about the guitar.”

The album opens with “Have You Ever Been...?” a four-piece suite of Hendrix songs that includes “Have You Ever Been (To Electric Ladyland),” “House Burning Down,” “1983...A Merman I Should Turn To Be” and “Voodoo Child (Slight Return)”

“To this day, when I listen to ‘Voodoo Child,’ I get chills,” says Balakrishnan. “I never get tired of it, and it’s so much fun to play it as a string quartet. This track is our way of saying, ‘Yes, we can deliver when it comes to playing one of the most hard-driving, blues driven songs Hendrix ever recorded.’”

The Hendrix suite segues into a simmering rendition of “To Bop Or Not To Be,” a piece by guitarist John McLaughlin, who famously jammed with Hendrix the year before he died and followed directly in Hendrix’s footsteps via his work in the Mahavishnu Orchestra in the early ‘70s.

Tree of Life, the four movement composition by Balakrishnan that follows, uses the dialectic between the scientific view of evolution and world creation mythologies as a point of departure to take the listener on a wild journey through exotic musical landscapes and eras. “As *Tree of Life* flows by, musical styles seem to evolve, flowing seamlessly from one to another,” says Fred Child, Host of APM’s *Performance Today*. “I don’t know if I’ve ever heard a piece of music with such a wide range of cultural references that doesn’t sound like a collage. *Tree of Life* sounds wholly integrated—a single musical ecosystem, made from many species.”

“I was so deeply influenced by Hendrix as a kid, in fact it is what inspired me to get ‘off the page’ so to speak,” states Balakrishnan. He explains that this influence has made its way into his own compositions, most notably incorporating the “Hendrix chord” (7th sharp 9) into many of his original works. “*Tree of Life* provides a nice sub theme of **Have You Ever Been...?**” Balakrishnan continues. “Plus, it is strongly conceived through composed music that can serve as an anchor to balance the freer, more pop-styled nature of the Hendrix material.”

Rounding out the album are four additional Hendrix pieces. Vibraphonist Stefon Harris makes a guest appearance on the mystical “Gypsy Eyes,” which Balakrishnan counts among his favorite tracks on the recording. “Stefon really captures the blues essence of Hendrix in the way he’s playing,” he says. “And the rest of the quartet is able to create a psychedelic feeling around that.”

“Hey Joe” is a slow and churning track that “gets into the sexiness of Jimi Hendrix,” says Balakrishnan, while “Little Wing” showcases Summer’s ability to recreate the energy of Hendrix’s guitar solo on cello.

The album closes with a driving rendition of “All Along the Watchtower,” the Bob Dylan song made famous in the version recorded by Hendrix in 1968. The track features Mike Marshall, who delivers a range of dynamics on mandocello – as a melodic instrument, a component of the overall groove, and as a solo voice.

“Translating the music of Jimi Hendrix’s visceral electric guitar music into the vernacular of the classical string quartet seems like an improbable idea,” Andy Summers goes on to say, “Yet on this remarkable recording, the Turtle Island Quartet...has once again hit what at first might seem a difficult target. A salute to the quartet for giving us a vigorous and scintillating reworking of the music of Jimi Hendrix.”

Turtle Island Quartet’s *Have You Ever Been...?* [CD TEL-32094-02] will be available at retail & digitally on Tuesday, August 24, 2010.

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