

Jazz



**TURTLE ISLAND
 STRING QUARTET: A
 LOVE SUPREME: THE LEGACY OF
 JOHN COLTRANE.**

Telarc 80684.

During the past 22 years, the upstart Turtle Island String Quartet has established itself as a crossover force, bridging the gap between jazz and classical genres. In that time, the TISQ has incorporated straight-ahead jazz, Latin jazz (with Cuban-born reedman Paquito D'Rivera), bop, third stream, rock, bluegrass, Delta blues, and even South Indian ragas. Last year, the quartet's album *4 + Four*, with the Ying Quartet, won a Grammy Award for Best Classical Crossover Album.

A Love Supreme: The Legacy of John Coltrane, an obvious tribute to the sax giant, is the quartet's most satisfying outing to date. It kicks off with a cover of "Moment's Notice" from Coltrane's 1957 classic *Blue Train*, and concludes with the homage "Song for John." In

between, the ensemble tackles the "A Love Supreme" suite, "Round Midnight," "Naima," and "Favorite Things."

In addition to charting improvisational space, TISQ captures the modal melodies, complex harmonies, and exotic rhythms that characterize Coltrane's work. The foursome accomplishes a remarkable amount without a rhythm section, using occasional taps and staccato chops to replicate percussion. Summer's brilliant pizzicato cello technique contributes a natural sense of swing and driving bass, while Balakrishnan, Price, and Tolling never fall into the trap of trying to match Coltrane's stratospheric delivery, choosing instead to deliver a skillfully blended and dynamically appealing string sound.

Sonically, the strings are beautifully blended, with rich, woody tones. Summer's cello is especially resonant, contributing to a full-bodied bass sound that never overpowers the soprano and alto voices. **GC**

Further Listening: Turtle Island String Quartet: *Danzon*; Paquito D'Rivera: *The Jazz Chamber Trio*



