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Turtle Island Quartet to Record Hendrix Tribute

The string group picked Hendrix tracks to celebrate its 25th anniversary

By [Aubrey Everett](#)

The musically diverse and award winning Turtle Island Quartet have chosen a unique way to celebrate its 25th anniversary this month by recording a Jimi Hendrix-inspired album titled *Have You Ever Been...* (Telarc). The group, joined by Stefon Harris and Mike Marshall, will step into the Skywalker Sound studio in California from Feb. 22-25 to lay down the tracks.



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Turtle Island Quartet



In addition to four Hendrix songs off of the 1968 album *Electric Ladyland* including “Gypsy Eyes”, the group will also revisit compositions that are reflective of and inspired by the late performer. The Turtle Island Quartet is made up of violinists David Balakrishnan and Mads Tolling, cellist Mark Summer and violist Jeremy Kittel. The group will continue celebrating their 25th anniversary throughout their 2010/2011 touring schedule. For dates and more information on the group visit [Turtle Island Quartet](#).

Visiting other musical genres is not new for Turtle Island Quartet, who have explored folk, bluegrass, swing, be-bop, funk, R&B, new age, rock, and hip-hop over the years. But this time the group—whose string instrumentalists often work within the confines of jazz and classical—is taking on a unique challenge by tackling the seminal work of an electric guitarist.

The album will include an original Balakrishnan composition that was largely influenced by Hendrix called “Tree of Life.” The solo string quartet version in four movements is adapted from the large form version which included dance, theater and spoken word. The track explores the longstanding controversy that Darwin’s theory of evolution sparked between religion and science. The Turtle Island Quartet, founded by Balakrishnan and Summer in 1985, derived its own name from creation mythology found in Native American Folklore.

“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,” said Balakrishnan in a press release. “‘Tree of Life’ provides a nice sub theme of *Have You Ever Been...* Plus, it is strongly conceived through composed music that will serve as an anchor to balance the freer, more pop-styled nature of the Hendrix material.”

The album’s version of “Gypsy Eyes” will feature Harris on vibes, and Balakrishnan’s “All Along the Watchtower” will showcase Marshall, a long-time Turtle Island Quartet collaborator, on the mandolin. The record will also feature a solo cello rendition of Hendrix’s “Little Wing” by Summer, and “To Bop Or Not To Be” by English jazz fusion guitarist and composer John McLaughlin.

The album coincides with the anticipated release of previously-unavailable Hendrix masters, the re-launch of the Hendrix catalogue by Legacy Recordings and the Experience Hendrix Tour, all of which debut this year.