

The Jimi Hendrix Experience
Electric Ladyland (Reprise)

Lulling, twangy guitar notes ripple above pulling bass lines, both swelling and releasing throughout the ethereal soundscape like soft waves in a calm ocean. Engulfing listeners in prolonging cymbals like drifting tidal currents, mystic flute melodies like salty sea mist swirling through the sky and warped microphone feedback piercing the air like seagulls singing, 13-minute track “1983 (A Merman Should I Turn To Be),” narrates an apocalyptic nautical epic that chronicles the end of one world and the journey to another. This maritime adventure makes for a triumphant high on The Jimi Hendrix Experience’s 1968 final studio album and magnum opus “Electric Ladyland.”

While “Are You Experienced” established the British band’s groundbreaking fusion of cosmic soul with psychedelic rock, “Axis: Bold As Love,” six months later, brought listeners into fantastical worlds through James “Jimi” Allen Hendrix’s lyrics of poetic and colorful imagery. “Electric Ladyland” fiercely pushes all this musical prowess further making the imagery and storytelling more evocative, the musicality more immersive and expressive and the experimentation more innovative.

“Have You Ever Been (To Electric Ladyland)” features drummer Mitch Mitchell and bassist Noel Redding centering the Seattle-born frontman’s sensual, soulful croons on a bed of lush falsetto harmonies reminiscent of the Temptations. Groovy jazz track “Rainy Day, Dream Away” vividly transports listeners to a hazy, mellow afternoon, watching a town soak in a rainy day. 15-minute song “Voodoo Chile,” grits out rugged blues with stinging guitar licks and thunderous gospel organ chords before roaring out largely improvised euphoric instrumental ferocity, setting the song ablaze.

This album radiates ecstasy and magnetism because of how far it pushes musical boundaries. No line captures this album and the left-handed Stratocaster shredder better than the “Voodoo Chile” lyric — “He took me past to the outskirts of infinity.”

☆☆☆☆☆ — *Reya Mosby*

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