

DR. JOHN, THE NIGHT TRIPPER 'GRIS-GRIS VINYL RECORD' (ATCO RECORDS/SPEAKERS CORNER RECORDS/GERMAN IMPORT)

DR. JOHN is a legendary American musician, who sadly died in 2019, but his voice and music had an enormous influence. He might perhaps not be that well-known among the regular music fans, but rest assured that modern day musicians such as SEASICK STEVE and THE BLACK KEYS are obviously influenced by this man's work, and of course the people who look a bit further than the standard pop/rock music will be familiar with him. Gris-Gris is the debut album of DR. JOHN, and right from the start you can hear how original this man was at the time, but also nowadays the record sounds extremely refreshing. DR. JOHN's original name was MALCOLM JOHN REBENNACK JR and the debut album Gris-Gris was released in 1968. It was the era when psychedelic rock became prominent and experimentation was the name of the game here in the music business. THE BEATLES, THE BEACH BOYS and FRANK ZAPPA had released a few groundbreaking records around that time and basically the whole world wanted to follow in their footsteps. DR. JOHN stretched it a bit further, which was more or less also due to the fact he became interested in voodoo. The resulting first album reflects that very clearly, and now 53 years later it has been fully remastered by using pure analogue components only and re-released on vinyl by SPEAKERS CORNER RECORDS. Besides DR. JOHN on vocals, other involved musicians were Harold Battiste (Bass, Producer), Bob West (Bass), Mo Pedido (Congas), John Boudreaux (Drums), Lonnie Bouliden (Flute), Ernest McLean (Mandolin), Richard Washington (Percussion), Plas Johnson (Saxophone) and Steve Mann (Slide Guitar). 7 songs were on the album, of which some quite lengthy. Opener Gris-Gris Gumbo Ya-Ya is a slow smokin' LOU REED ish tune, with this cool relaxing 'joint' bluesy vibe. Following Danse Kalinda Ba Doom is completely different, because this fantastic uptempo experimental voodoo like song introduces World Music and all kinds of other influences from especially Africa, sounding very original at the time, because it was recorded all the way back in 1968. As original as FRANK ZAPPA at the time, DR. JOHN went a bit further perhaps, which is also due to his unique one-of-a-kind raspy bluesy vocals that really worked with the African tribal music influences he crossed with western bluesy rock, which you can hear very clearly during the following songs Mama Roux and Danse Fambeaux. Side-B opens with the superb hypnotical Croker Courtbullion that combines jazz, psychedelic rock, blues and strange kinda voodoo jungle noises to an unbelievable original sound, and even now 53 years later nobody sounds more original than DR. JOHN did on this song! Jump Sturdy is a short psychedelic, almost Muppets kinda tune, while the LOU REED/VAN MORRISONish I Walk On Guided Splinters closes the album very nicely in a slow bluesy direction, with again that interesting dangerous voodoo psychedelic kinda vibe. Concluded, DR. JOHN immediately showed how talented and original he was and despite his future records would go in a more soul/funk direction where he dropped all the weirdness from this debut album, he continued to deliver quality music. However this debut album was clearly something exciting and original at the time, but even nowadays no record sounds like it! The vinyl album is available through: <https://www.jpc.de/?lang=en> (Europe) and <http://www.acousticsounds.com> (USA).

(Points: 8.7 out of 10)