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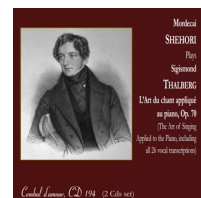


## Dr John, The Night Tripper - The Sun Moon & Herbs - Speakers Corner Records

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by Audiophile Audition | Oct 6, 2020 | [Jazz CD Reviews](#), [SACD & Other Hi-Res Reviews](#) | 0 comments

**Cembal d'amour**

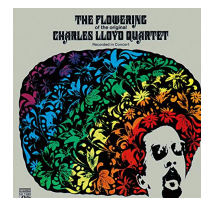


**Dr John, The Night Tripper - The Sun Moon & Herbs - Atco Records ATCO SD-33-362 (1971)/Speakers Corner Records (2020) 180-gram stereo vinyl, 38:59 \*\*\*\*1/2:**



It has always been difficult to accurately describe the music of Malcolm John Rebennack Jr. Known commercially as Dr. John (The Night Tripper), he forged a unique trailblazing career as a songwriter, performer, session player and cultural icon. More importantly, Rebennack channeled the multi-faceted New Orleans mystique with a daring mixture of blues, rock, jazz, boogie woogie and funk. He achieved mainstream crossover success with singles like "The Right Place" and "Such A Night".

**Pure Pleasure / Speakers Corner**



**Cedille**



Rebennack recorded for over three decades. His personal life (with legendary rebellious outlaw stories and innuendos) only fueled his larger-than-life persona, as did his live performances. He remained faithful to his New Orleans roots.

Speakers Corner Records has released a re-mastered 180-gram vinyl of Dr. John's seminal album, *The Sun Moon & Herbs*. This album was recorded in 1970, while Rebennack was stranded in England. Originally part of a triple-disc, Dr. John assembled his own New Orleans musical posse with an all-star "Delaney & Bonnie" band reunion (Eric Clapton, Bobby Whitlock, Carl Radle, Jim Gordon, Bobby Keys) to create a murky, atmospheric conjuring of *Storyville* culture. Side One opens with "Black John The Conqueror". Intermingled with a funky slow-hook blues piano (Walter Davis Jr.), the tale of a local shaman is expressed as a mystical testimonial with gravely lead vocals. As with many of Dr. John's arrangements, there is a hypnotic, long repeat chorus (voiced by Whitlock and Doris Troy) that comes off like a soulful litany and scintillating horn accents. The musician's palpable homesick musings are front and center on "Where Ya At Mule". This ultimate longing for NOLA is expressed with shuffling *second line* cadences and specific imagery ("... gumbo cooker, alligator hooker..."). A key change is ear-catching before the final "There's no place like home" refrain that will not remind any listener of *The Wizard Of Oz*. The swampy vibe (which permeates the record) is invoked throughout "Craney Crow". A complex assortment of Caribbean chanting and a processional funeral march frame the weird (even by Dr. John standards) track.

Side Two is different and more cohesive. On the compelling "Familiar Reality-Opening", a tight Memphis-soul groove is established. As Dr. John relates his "I've been here before" storytelling, he contributes rolling piano runs. There is an organic musical feel with a talking verse in translating the existential to anecdotal reflection. It is the most accessible ensemble cut on *The Sun The Moon & Herbs*. The sequencing of the songs on this side coalesces with the spirit of "Familiar Reality". "Pots On Fiyo (File Gumbo)/Who I Got To Fall On (If The Pot Gets Heavy)" is an exotic Crescent City allegory (in two parts) that expresses itself with local food references (okra, sausage, oysters). The contextual eclecticism is mysterious. There are considerable jazzy inflections in Davis Jr.'s piano. Conga (Calvin "Fuzzy" Samuels"), a nimble key shift and brief free-from music lead into obscure chanting of Louisiana imagery. A closing verse in French enhances this moody tapestry. With a tuba and mournful acoustic guitar lines, "Zu Zu Mamou" is a menacing reverie that grabs the listener, and never lets go. In particular a whispering dialogue (Dr. John and Doris Troy) feeds the overall ambiance. A refreshingly brief (1:53) finale ("Familiar Reality-Reprise") provides an explosive soul-drenched end to this flamboyant excursion.

Speakers Corner has done an outstanding job in re-mastering *The Sun Moon & Herbs* to 180-gram vinyl. The overall mix is crisp, but maintains the density and atmospheric murkiness. Dr. John's evocative, gritty vocals are captured with vibrancy. The hi-gloss gatefold album packaging is top-notch. All of John



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John Miller's surreal art design is a visual treat.

**Performing Artists:**

Dr. John - piano, organ, vibes, percussion, vocals

Tommy Ferrone - guitar; Eric Clapton - guitar

Bobby Keys - tenor saxophone; Chris Mercer - saxophone; Jerry Jumonville - saxophone

Ed Hoerner - trumpet; Jim Price - trumpet; Kenneth Terroade - flute

Vic Brox - pocket trumpet, organ; Ray Draper - tuba percussion, background vocals

Walter Davis Jr. - piano; Ronnie Barron - organ

Jessie Boyce - bass; Carl Radle - bass; Steve York - acoustic bass

John Boudreaux - drums; Calvin "Fuzzy" Samuels - percussion; Freeman

Brown - percussion Fred Stahle - trap drums; Jim Gordon - percussion, conga;

backup vocals - Mick Jagger, Doris Troy, Shirley Goodman; Tammi Lynn; P.P. Arnold; Bobby Whitlock

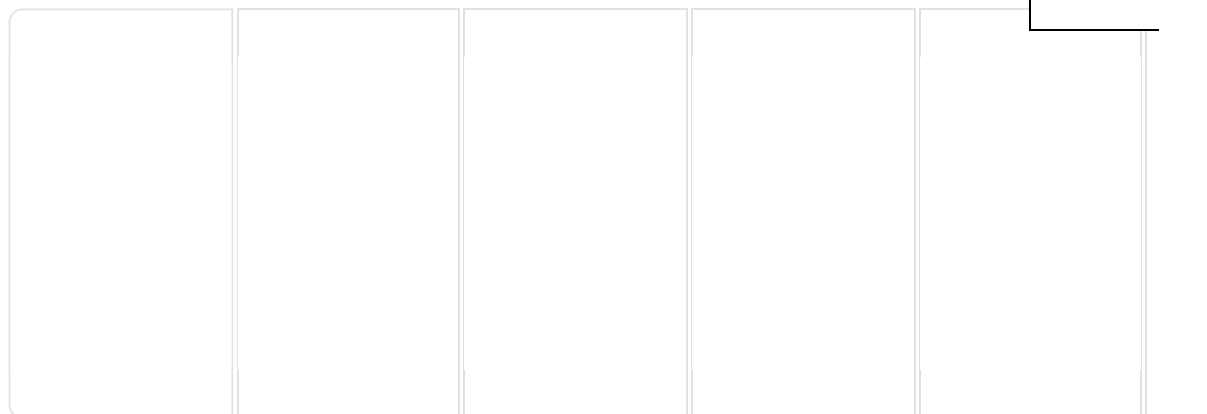
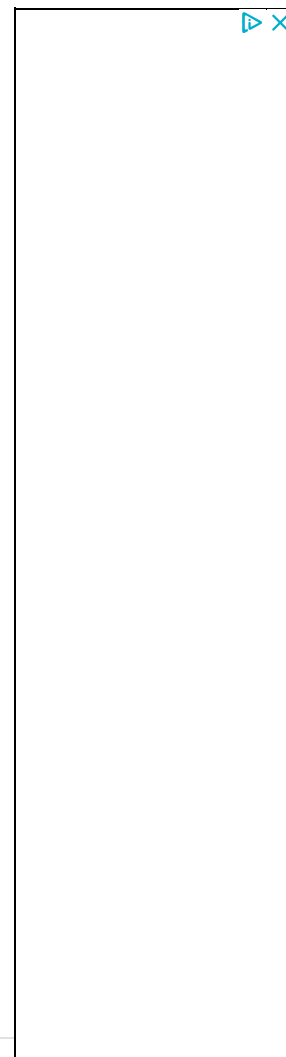
**TrackList:**

Side One: Black John The Conqueror; Where Ya At Mule; Craney Crow

Side Two: Familiar Realty-Opening; Pots On Fiyo (File Gumbo)/Who I Got To

Fall On (If The Pot Gets Heavy); Zu Zu Mamou; Familiar Reality-Reprise

-Robbie Gerson



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