Dr. John – The Sun Moon & Herbs (1971)



01. Black John The Conqueror - 6:20 02. Where Ya At Mule - 4:55 03. Craney Crow - 6:40 04. Familiar Reality-Opening (Rebennack/Jesse Hill) - 5:25 play *05. Pots On Fiyo (Filé Gumbo) / Who I Got To Fall On (If The Pot Get Heavy) - 5:48 06. Zu Zu Mamou - 7:59 07. Familiar Reality-Reprise (Rebennack/Jesse Hill) - 1:50*
- Dr.John - vocals, piano, organ, guitar, vibes & percussion - Kenneth Terroade - flute (01,03,05,06) - The Memphis Horns - horns (01,02,05) - Walter Davis Jr. - piano (01,03,05) - Chris Mercer - saxophone (01,02,07) - Graham Bond - alto saxophone (01,05,07) - Bobby Keys - tenor saxophone (02,07) - Bobby Whitlock - backing vocals (01,02,07) - Doris Troy - backing vocals (01,02,06,07) - Carl Radle - bass (02,07) - Jesse Boyce - bass (03), percussion (06) - Freeman Brown - percussion (03,05,06) - Steve York - acoustic bass (05,06) - Calvin "Fuzzy" Samuels - congas (05) - Jim Price - trumpet (05,07) - Jim Gordon - congas (02,07) - Ron Johnson - guitar (04) - John Boudreaux - drums (04) - Ronnie Barron - organ (04) - Jerry Jumonville - saxophone (04) - Edward R. Hoerner - trumpet (04) - Joni Jonz, Mick Jagger, P.P. Arnold, Shirley Goodman, Tammi Lynn - backing vocals - Freddie Staehle - trap drums - Eric Clapton - slide guitar - Vic Brox - pocket trumpet & organ - Ray Draper - tuba, percussion & backing vocals The Memphis Horns: - James Mitchell - baritone saxophone - Andrew Love, Ed Logan - tenor saxophone - Wayne Jackson, Roger Hopps – trumpet

This classic recording sees Dr John's transformation into the persona of the Night Tripper fully complete. Richly textured and sumptuous, this is a CD that must be owned.

Opening with Black John The Conqueror, wait for the thrill as the gospel-like tones of the backing singers and stabs of the brass lay down the framework for this recording. Where Ya At Mule follows and is perhaps the only weak point. A little light. A touch too whimsical. Fear not, for Craney Crow takes us firmly back into Night Tripper territory with its fusion of jazz, psychedelia and pseudo-Southern black magic. We are then propelled into Familiar Reality, and for me, one of the best intros ever. Something to enjoy. Again and again.

File Gumbo seamlessly picks up where Familiar Reality left off, before we journey into the loose jazz of Who I Got To Fall On (If The Pot Get Heavy) only to be transported back into Night Tripper territory and the excellent Zu Zu Mamou ... Then, just as the party seems to be over and you're left wanting more, solace can be found in the form of Familiar Reality (Reprise).

A monumental recording, in the dark days of vinyl you had to hunt this one out. On CD, nothing is lost, save perhaps the sleeve notes, where small print addicts could read the guest list that reads like a celebrity call-out that includes Eric Clapton and Mick Jagger. Second, one no longer has the thrill of a Side One and Side Two and the excitement of turning the record over and wondering if the opening to Familiar Reality really is as good as the last time that you heard it. --- "minto2000", amazon.com

Originally intended as a triple album, The Sun, Moon & Herbs was chopped up, whittled down and re-assembled into this single-disc release, and while Dr. John never liked this version much, perhaps the single disc is testament to the "less is more" theory. The seven cuts are all quite lengthy and the spells Dr. John and his consorts weave are dark and swampy. "Black John the Conqueror" comes from old Cajun folklore which the good Dr. has modernized and given a beat. The swampy "Craney Crow" is the younger sibling of his earlier "Walk On Guilded Splinters" and has a similar effect on the listener. "Pots on Fiyo (Fils Gumbo)" combines Latin American rhythms with lots of Cajun chants and spells. The vocals are nearly incomprehensible and actually serve as another instrument in the mix. "Zu Zu Mamou" is so thick that you can almost cut the music with a knife. Here, the atmosphere takes on a whole other meaning altogether. The Sun, Moon & Herbs is best listened to on a hot, muggy night with the sound of thunder rumbling off in the distance like jungle drums. Dr. John was definitely onto something here, but just what is left up to the listener. --- James Chrispell, allmusic

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