

Voodoo Juice is Good for the Soul

by Skoot Larson

Scott Martin's Latin Soul Band has served up another heaping helping of their very special blend of Latin jazz, and this may be their best CD yet! On this album, **Organic Voodoo Juice**, Scott's regulars, including the Martin Brothers Horns, are nicely complimented by the Hammond B-3 organ of Joe Bagg.



Scott contributes five new compositions on Voodoo Juice, along with three tunes from guitarist Rick White, and a trio of punched-up popular standards. The strong web of rhythmic support is provided by the driving bass of René Camacho, along with percussionists Ramon Banda on drum kit, Joey DeLeon's congas and Warren Ontiveros adding vocals and cow bell. The Martin Brothers Horns are Andy Martin on trombone and brother Stan on trumpet joined by Scott's son Tyler adding bottom on baritone sax. Scott shines on all the saxophones and even provides vocal backing on some tracks. Guitarist White shares lead singing duties with special guest Derek Bordeaux.

The title track sends the ball right-out-of-the-park from note one. Bagg's organ assumes the lead with a solid horn choir at his back. Stan's fluid trumpet jumps in for the first solo choruses moving easily across full octaves runs and intricate harmonic patterns. The funk gets thick and deep as Scott's alto spreads the jam. If this piece had been around in the 60s, Martin's sound would probably be major label jazz easily crossing over into chart topping pop airplay.

As a bari player, I was naturally impressed by the tune "Dave, Doc and Milt," a father and son fortress of baritone badness. The two big horns roll-out over some interesting pedal effects from White's guitar. Scott's low sax tones and Bagg's organ do the honors before Tyler's big axe joins them to sew up this bag of soulful *élan*.

Another stone favorite here is Martin's arrangement of the Leiber-Stoller standard "Love Potion #9." Although it has been recorded many times before, I believe this to be the best offering ever made of this popular anthem. Guest Artist Derek Bordeaux steps in for the vocal on Love Potion and the tempo puts some heat under the familiar words he sings. The group contributes emphasis with a backing of voices against the melody. Scott's alto soars and Ontiveros' cowbell rocks behind White's guitar solo.

Bordeaux also delivers a roaring performance on the Kupka-Castillo ode, "Soul with a Capital S" as the horn section adds a strong, crisp bottom call-and-response to Bordeaux's shout. Camacho's bass weaves a fabric of strength behind the line emphasizing that soul is just what the band is delivering, like a large musical helping of grease, grits and greens.

On the CD's one ballad, Martin's "All Things Pass," Bagg provides a gorgeous churchy intro for Scott's pure, mellow alto sax lament. With just a hint of vibrato, Scott moans and bends his blue notes, simmering this hymn-like offering to perfection. For his own moment in the spotlight, Joe Bagg pulls out some new stops on Louis Hammond's invention for a sweet, bubbly tone that truly compliments to Martin's easy and romantic composition.

For a straight ahead sound with an island beat, "Bernie's Tune" feeds the changes to Scott and Joe Bagg as they dance over Camacho's bass line and DeLeon's timbales.

Guitarist Rick White proves himself a strong singer with the popular "More Today than Yesterday," and his own creation "The Beginning of the End."

All 12 entries on this fine collection are strong enough to stand on their own for radio airplay or single release hits. There are no tricks or gimmicks on **Organic Voodoo Juice**, just easy, comfortable jazz and blues with a Latin touch to start your body swaying and your feet moving. Scott's Latin Soul Band leans a little toward the popular music sound, but these musicians never sacrifice their strong jazz roots. Rather, Martin's band employs improvisational musicianship to enrich and enhance their popular Latin and rhythm-and-blues sounds. When you buy **Organic Voodoo Juice**, I'll bet it will keep finding its way to the top of the stack of your favorites. Organic Voodoo Juice is available on www.cdbaby.com, Amazon.com or at Scott's website, www.latinsouljazz.com, in regular compact disc format and in MP3.