

Menudo & Gritz is a Musical Taste Treat

by Skoot Larson

“**Menudo & Gritz**”, the latest offering from Scott Martin’s Latin Soul Band is a multi-generational family affair, and the Martin family once again shows that they are marinated in soul and saturated with musical talent!

The recording’s title could well be a culinary reference to the Martin band’s style of playing: a knocked out marriage of Afro-Cuban and Detroit sounds. All three of the Martin brothers, Scott, Stan, and Andy honed their Latin rhythmic skills playing with master conguero Poncho Sanchez. Scott’s saxophones and flute contributed his own brand of fire to Poncho’s band for more than a dozen years, soloing on many of the Sanchez band’s most memorable discs like “Soul Sauce,” “Afro-Cuban Fantasy,” “Conga Blue,” and “Soul of the Conga.”

On “**Menudo & Gritz**,” Scott is joined by brothers Stan on trumpet and Andy playing trombone. Scott’s son Tyler adds a solid bottom throughout on baritone sax, and their father, Dave “Big Daddy” Martin pours on a little hot sauce of his own.

Scott not only handles all the reeds, but also displays a good singing voice, sharing vocal duties with guitarist Rick White. Chris Barron keeps it all together employing well thought out piano and organ licks that run from solid soulful backing to the rhythmic chant of the Cuban Charanga style vamping.

The title cut, which features solos from all three Martin brothers, brings to mind those wonderful rocking sounds that another master conguero, Willie Bobo, gave us back in the 60s. This band easily projects that same Latin party feel that Bobo’s band made so popular all those decades ago.

The multi-talented Scott adds his voice to such Motown standards as “Sunny” and “Just Don’t Want to be Lonely,” as well as one of Ray Charles signature tunes, “Unchain My Heart.” In fact, Scott Martin did serve some time with Brother Ray in Mr. Charles last years. As Martin told this writer, “I was honored to have recorded with Ray right before he died.”

About Scott’s voice, he displays a pleasant vocal style, with just a hint of a rasp in his pipes. Once again, this CD’s title, as well as solidly pinning the music, also provides a

fitting description for Martin's voice. Martin performs the soul standard and the Ray Charles numbers at a faster tempo than the originals, and with a strong Latin twist for a delightful listening experience.

Some favorites from this recording include "Quarter Moon," a medium tempo selection that shows off Brother Andy's liquid flowing trombone moves against Scott's quick and responsive alto. Andy Martin is one of those rare geniuses that has overcome the awkwardness of his horn's slide to play some licks the experts used to say could not even be done on a slide trombone.

Scott composed half of the songs here in, and while he plays predominantly alto sax on this disc, he has a few very tasty offerings on tenor, soprano sax and flute as well. One of Martin's composition, "Funky Flute," provides another of the highlights of this album. Beginning as a duet line with guitarist Rick White, Martin demonstrates his remarkable ability across all three of the flute's registers, even talking some trash into the instrument for that lovely rough tonal effect reminiscent of Rahsaan Roland Kirk. Martin's flute soars over the frantic backing of Chris Barron's Hammond organ and Rick White's fine guitar work, driven by solid cowbell raps on the first and third beats. The song concludes with a heavy bass riff from Rene Camacho weaving the backdrop for Alfred Ortiz' bongos.

"Stuff," another fine bluesy boogaloo with White's guitar over a strong, open-voice ensemble riff, includes a trumpet solo from the senior Martin, Dave the "Big Daddy." Dave Martin also shows his stuff on the disc's final cut, "Watusi Boogaloo."

Every tune on this fine disc is guaranteed to get your body swaying, your feet moving, and your mind floating off to the land of azure seas, coconut palms, fragrant cigars and smoldering dark-eyed women.

The only disappointment here is that the music on this disc has to end! Every cut is so unique and so right-on-the-mark that one feels let down when the last track finishes, wanting the music to go on forever. Maybe the band's next recording will find young Tyler Martin ready to roar forth with a baritone saxophone solo or two as well.

More information on Scott Martin's Latin Soul Band can be found at www.scottmartinjazz.com, and all the Martin Brothers can be found at

www.MartinBrotherHorns.com. The Scott Martin Latin Soul Band's recordings, including "**Menudo & Gritz**," can be purchased at www.cdbaby.com.