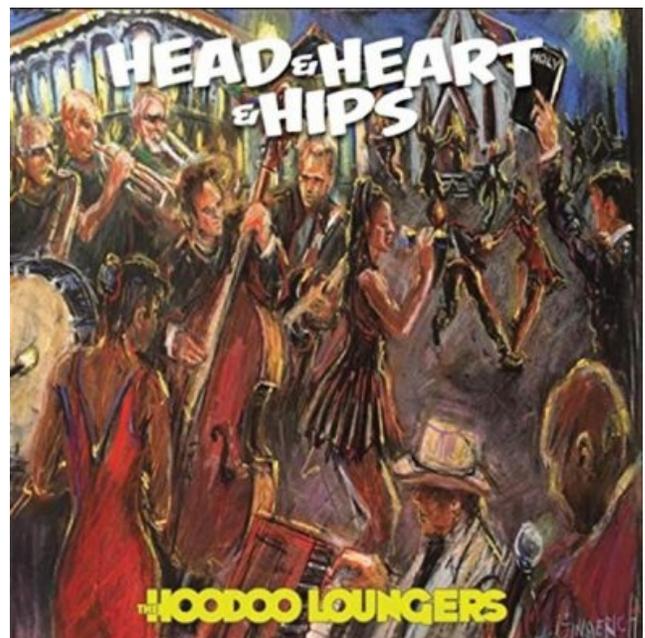


The Hoodoo Loungers, *Head & Heart & Hips* (Independent)

April 22, 2019: by Christopher Weddle

With their latest release, *Head & Heart & Hips*, East Coast-based the Hoodoo Loungers effectively combine many of the musical styles that grace the local clubs (and streets) of New Orleans. Whether it's gospel, traditional jazz, brass band-infused funk, or straight-up rhythm and blues, you'll find it on *Head & Heart & Hips*.

The Hoodoo Loungers waste no time as the gospel-infused rocker “Down, Down, Down” gets things started in a lively Blues Brothers fashion. Michael Schiano’s dreamlike guitar tone kicks off “Louisiana Lullaby” and he is tastefully joined by muted trumpet and piano (David Deitch) which sits in sharp contrast to the no-holds-barred opening track. What is consistent, however, is the killer horn work.



Actually, the entire record is filled with great horn work from John Brierly, Gary Henderson and Mike Rubenstein (trumpet); Bob Hovey and Ed Leone (trombone); Brian Sears and Stefan Zeniuk (sax, clarinet); and Morris Goldberg (clarinet and penny whistle). With a slamming horn section like that it is hard not to have a swinging time.

“Glutton for Punishment” features humorous lyrics describing the work week and it is clear that the Hoodoo Loungers obviously enjoy what they do. “Pallet on the Floor” starts with just Dawnette Darden (vocals) and guest Tom McDermott (piano) before getting the full band treatment that just oozes with the sound, texture and feel of Preservation Hall. Joe Lauro’s bass playing is impeccable and allows just the right amount of space for some cascading clarinet leads. Yeah, this is downright beautiful.

Just when you think you might have this record figured out, the Hoodoo Loungers unleash “The Silliest Man.” If Disney’s *The Little Mermaid* had been set during Mardi Gras under Lake Pontchartrain, this would undoubtedly have been the theme song. “Down in New Orleans” is up next and is highlighted by Dave Giacone’s understated drumming and Lauro’s elastic bass lines. The swaggering yet mellow funky groove will induce toe tapping and head bopping.

Surely to make your next Halloween playlist is “Runnin’ from the Loup Garou.” The imagery conjured with background howls and lyrics describing the mythical creature “prancing all around like Mick and Keith” fits perfectly with the intro that brings to mind ol’ Morgus the Magnificent.

No matter whether music typically moves your head or heart or hips (or any combination thereof) you will find it here. All in all the Hoodoo Loungers have captured the spirit of New Orleans and infused it with their own sensibilities, resulting in a thoroughly enjoyable listen.