

STANTON MOORE FORGES INNOVATIVE GROOVES FROM RICH POOL OF RAW MATERIALS

Groove Alchemy due at retail on April 13, 2010

Telarc CD is culmination of multimedia project

In medieval times, alchemy was a mystical pursuit based on a belief that gold could be created from common raw materials. It's an ancient practice, an idea that has long since been debunked by centuries of scientific evidence to the contrary.

Or has it? Attempts to derive precious substances from lead or tin may have been dismissed by modern-day science as a fool's errand, but the belief that something of great value can come from something common persists. For drummer Stanton Moore, it's just a matter of finding the right groove.

Moore proves his theory many times over with the April 13, 2010, release of *Groove Alchemy* on Telarc International, a division of Concord Music Group. The 12-track set is the culmination of Moore's multimedia project that also includes an instructional book and DVD of the same name. All three facets of the project are designed to explore the roots of funk drumming by examining the work of pioneers like Jabo Starks, Clyde Stubblefield, and Zigaboo Modeliste – each of whom made their mark at different times throughout the 1960s as the engines driving James Brown's and the Meters' legendary rhythm sections – and in turn tracing their influences back to the rhythms coming out of New Orleans in the earlier part of the 20th century.

"I'm showing how to not only understand the roots of funk and the history of funk," says Moore, "but also how to understand the creative processes behind it, and then how to learn from those creative processes so you can begin to make new grooves with the drums out of what was done in the past. With this project, I've kind of lifted the lid off the process that I go through and what's involved whenever I put together a record."

But *Groove Alchemy* is anything but a strictly academic exercise. "If you're just a listener and a music fan, you can pick up the record and totally dig it for the music itself," says Moore. "There's nothing about that experience that has to be instructional. But if you're a drummer, and you want to understand how I came up with these beats and understand the history of the music as I know it, in the hopes that you might deepen your knowledge and come up with new grooves as a result, then you can check out the book and the DVD."

Moore's trio on the new recording includes Robert Walter and guitarist Will Bernard – both of whom appeared on the drummer's two previous Telarc recordings, *III* (2006) and *Emphasis! On Parentheses* (2008). Both musicians contribute heavily to the songwriting on *Groove Alchemy*, but Moore is clearly at the helm on this outing as he takes his trio and anyone within the sound of their collective voice on a journey that twists and turns through and around the funk tradition and digs into the heart of the New Orleans sound that contributed so significantly to its genesis.

The straightforward opening groove of "Squash Blossom" sets the stage for the numerous high points that follow, including "Pot Licker," a piece by Walter that mixes elements of Stubblefield and Starks

into a gumbo that's further enriched by Moore's own sensibilities, and the churning "Root Cellar," a composition by Bernard wherein Moore borrows from the style of Tower of Power drummer David Garibaldi. "Instead of playing it with a really high-pitched snare, I play it with a more slushy snare drum," Moore explains. "I'm adding elements of New Orleans – and elements of myself – to what was essentially coming from Garibaldi. It's a groove that sounds kind of like a second line, but it's coming from Tower of Power at the same time."

Hammering and persistent, "Neeps and Tatties" draws attention to the direct line connecting the work of Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste (The Meters) and John Bonham (Led Zeppelin). "I switch snare drums, so that tonally, it sounds more like one drummer at certain times in the song and the other drummer at other times," says Moore. "I'm just showing how the two drummers' ideas are so similar that you can include them in the same tune and it works."

"Shiftless" derives its exotic groove from the music of the Mardi Gras Indians, a secret society of Mardi Gras and New Orleans Jazz Fest revelers dating back to the mid-1800s and representing an amalgam of African American, Native American and Haitian cultures. "The second-line New Orleans style and the Mardi Gras Indian music are two very rhythmic schools that are emerging down here," says Moore. "They have infiltrated a lot of what's going on musically in this region."

The eerie sounds of "Cleanse This House" were inspired by a series of rituals performed in Moore's house in New Orleans to drive out a few restless spirits. "My wife especially could feel it, and when people brought their pets to our house, the animals would pick up on it," says Moore. "We had a voodoo specialist come to the house and perform a lot of rituals. In the end, it wasn't anything too elaborate, but it worked."

"Aletta" is a melodic and mysterious ballad written for and about Moore's wife by her biological father, Erkan Gursal, a retired Turkish naval officer whom the couple only recently met in the past year. Gursal, an accomplished pianist, wrote the tune during a visit with Moore and Aletta in 2009. "He's been living in Istanbul all these years, but he came to New Orleans and spent Mardi Gras with us," says Moore. "There's just something funny – almost absurd – that my father-in-law is a Turkish naval officer and a piano player."

The set closes with a melancholy rendition of "He Stopped Loving Her Today," a song made popular in the early '80s by country artist George Jones, a favorite of Moore's grandparents when he was growing up. The tune has a rough-edged, down-and-out feeling that reeks of missed opportunities and broken dreams.

Groove Alchemy runs the gamut of emotions – from the upbeat and festive to the broken-hearted and even spooky. It's a cache of precious material that results from the mating of traditional and timeless elements with new and fresh musical ideas. "This is the process I go through with any record I make, although the process has been more in-depth this time," says Moore. "I've explained it in detail so that people can hopefully learn something from witnessing the steps that I go through. I guess what I've tried to do is pull back the curtain a little bit and show what's going on in my mind as I make a record."

###