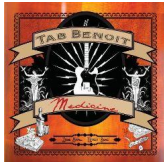


Tab Benoit – Medicine (2011)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Medicine* 02. *Sunrise* 03. *A Whole Lotta Soul* 04. *Come And Get It* 05. *Broke And Lonely* 06. *Long Lonely Bayou* 07. *In It To Win It* 08. *Can't You See* 09. *Nothing Takes The Place Of You* 10. *Next To Me* 11. *Mudboat Melissa* Musicians: Tab Benoit (vocals, guitar) Michael Doucet (vocals, fiddle) Anders Osborne (guitar, background vocals) Ivan Neville (Hammond b-3 organ) Brady Blade (drums).

This is the usually prolific Louisiana guitarist Tab Benoit's first studio album in nearly four years, and although all his releases are top shelf, this one is slightly better. He teams up with New Orleans transplant Anders Osborne, who not only plays second guitar (press notes say B.B. King's famous "Lucille" was used for these sessions) but also co-writes seven of the eleven songs. Other high-profile bandmembers include Ivan Neville, Beausoleil's Michael Doucet, and drummer Brady Blade. In addition, noted roots producer David Z. recorded the project, bringing even more high wattage talent to the proceedings. Since 2003, Benoit has been an active spokesman and president for the Voice of the Wetlands environmental organization so, not surprisingly, the subject matter of some of the material leans toward the state of the bayou. That's especially true in &"A Whole Lotta Soul," where Benoit sings "what you gonna tell the spirit/when the heart of the bayou bleeds" and &"In It to Win It" that leads off with the line "I was born inside this Delta." Musically, Benoit sticks to his patented blend of soul, rock, blues, and Cajun, often mixed in the same song. His voice has attained a lived-in grit, always present but now somewhat accentuated by production that is spacious yet full. The electric set includes one unplugged tune; &"Long Lonely Bayou" features just Benoit on acoustic and Doucet on fiddle. It's a highlight that finds the singer sounding as torn and frayed as the bluesmen who have been such a large part of his influences. He goes pure soul-blues on Toussaint McCall's slow dance classic &"Nothing Takes the Place of You," this disc's Otis Redding-styled '60s entry, and rips into the lyric with tearful regret nearly equal to the original. The lovely and passionately sung Osborne-Benoit tune &"Sunrise" treads similar territory. The closing zydeco rhythm of &"Mudboat Melissa" allows both Doucet and Benoit to open up and solo against a festive, driving Louisiana backbeat. But the album's most riveting moment is arguably its opening title track, where Benoit and band tear into a tough, grinding, stomping blues-rocker that builds tension as it progresses and finds both guitarists unleashing slashing riffs on a song that might

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be Benoit's most powerful recorded performance. While nothing after quite tops it, lots comes close, making this one of the guitarist's finest overall efforts and well worth the extended wait.
---Hal Horowitz, Rovi

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