

## (THE MEDICINE MAN - WITCH DOCTOR)

### GRIS GRIS' GUMBO YA YA

Song and lyrics behind this float comes from New Orleans's Musician and songwriter Mac Rabennack who went by 'Dr. John' on his infamous 1968 album 'Night Tripper' where he epitomized the New Orleans music tradition with his 'Voodoo' Medicine Shows combining psychedelic Rock/R&B with Voodoo rhythm and chants from the Louisiana back bayou country. Though little known, the album was ranked 143 on Rolling Stone's Top 500 'All Time Greatest Albums

*"They call me, Dr. John  
Known as the Night Tripper  
Sizzle a little Gris-Gris in my hand  
Day trippin' up, back down the bayou  
I'm the last of the best  
They call me the Gris-Gris man  
Got many clients  
Come from miles around  
Running down my prescription  
I got my medicine, to cure all your ills  
I got remedies of every description  
Gris-Gris gumbo ya ya  
Gris-Gris gumbo ya ya"*

### DR. JOHN

The Name 'Dr. John' was taken by Mac Rabennack for his act. having been derived from a New Orleans Folklore Character from the 1840's named Dr. John (Jean Montanee). a huge free black man who made a small fortune by selling cures and other materials to various clients, thus amassing sufficient funds to purchase several slaves himself. He alleged that he was a prince from Senegal who had been taken to Cuba and there freed before coming to Louisiana. These multitude of concoctions and charms created or gathered were to either harm or help, and so called 'gris-gris' (small cloth bags containing herbs and amulets) sold to lift or cast curses for a fee.

**Gris-gris** is a Voodoo amulet originating in West Africa which is believed to protect the wearer from evil or bring luck. The practice of using gris-gris, came to the United States with enslaved Africans and was quickly adopted by practitioners of Voodoo. However, the practice soon changed, and the gris-gris were thought to bring black magic upon their "victim". Although in Haiti, gris-gris are thought to be a good amulet in the Cajun communities of Louisiana, gris-gris are thought to be a symbol of black magic and ill-fortune.