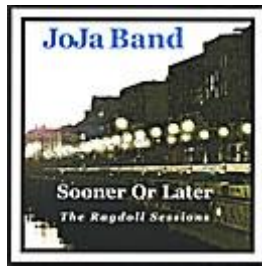


Mp3 JoJa Band - Sooner Or Later



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Southern Rock with R&B flavor, Killer harmonica and Allman Bro-like jams 12 MP3 Songs

BLUES: Rockin' Blues, **ROCK:** Roots Rock Details: Under the sheltering oaks of Bonaventure cemetery in Savannah, four middle- aged men are the only ones left as a coffin is lowered into the sandy Georgia earth. Just some guys who used to be in a band, here to say goodbye to one of their own. The story should end here but in its own scattered way this is where the story begins. The JoJa Band started with humble beginnings and pretty much ended up the same way just a few short years later. Back in the 1970's, there were nowhere near the commercial avenues that bands have starting out today. Not that this band would have taken advantage of them anyway. They played what they wanted to; when they wanted to. They never had a chance. From their inception, the JoJa Band seemed like unchanged men in a changed land - out of step, out of place and desperately out of time. Fortunately for the fans of this style of music something much stronger than a desire "to make it" drove the band to form and play. The JoJa Band proper rose out of the ashes of the Easywalkers. Formed around 1972, the band included Jimmy Maddox and Bobby Hanson, its principal composers and guitarist Steffens Clark. Not long after the demise of the Easywalkers, Maddox and Clark joined forces with singer Howard Jobe, bassist Philip Alaimo, and drummer Danny Williby to form the first incarnation of the JoJa Band. The band traveled the interstates of the southeastern US playing whatever gigs and songs the road had to offer. After Alaimo left and Danny Branson came aboard to play bass the band decided to return to Savannah and concentrate on original material. Old friend Bobby Hanson was added and some of the Easywalker material was resurrected. That and other new compositions ultimately became their first self-produced release, Cold Winds (1977). Cold Winds was a perfect calling card because it realized so completely the JoJa Band sound and style. This is the kind of interplay you can only get from a band with years of

experience on the road. And the rest of the album follows suit. Though the music may have put the band woefully out of step with the times when it was released, every one of these songs, steeped as they are in America's rich, roots-based musical tradition, sound absolutely timeless today, and no doubt will for a long time to come. Once you heard it, you knew exactly where these guys were coming from. Problem was, few people heard it. Without the distribution channels that exist today, it goes without saying that they weren't able to get the album in many stores outside of Savannah, and they certainly weren't getting much airplay for any of the songs off it. Nevertheless, the band soldiered on by playing any and every venue that would have them. In 1979, the band camped out once again in Rocky Evans' Ragdoll Studios in Savannah and laid down the tracks that were to become the City Lights album. This time, they decided to flesh out their already full sound with a horn section and enlisted the help of the so-called Pizza Head Horns. As much the inspiration of listening to the then-popular Southside Johnny and the Asbury Dukes albums as trying to achieve the time-honored big-band sound made famous by Ray Charles, James Brown and countless others, the addition of the horns was a stroke of genius. You really have to hand it to the guys for their ambition, if nothing else. The album represents another set of terrific, timeless classics, with a perfect mix of rhythm and blues, straight 12-bar blues, ballads and even a little taste of rock and roll thrown into the mix. It's evident throughout the album how much more versatile and fluid the band had become since recording the first album. It is fortunate that the band was able to capture their sound on album when they did, because after City Lights was released they never quite managed to build much of a momentum to sell it or shop it to record labels. Not that the band had that kind of savvy or desire in the first place. These guys weren't businessmen, for crying out loud, they were musicians, and they made their decisions accordingly. Unfortunately, these decisions resulted in many poor choices of venues and little to no money to show for their efforts. It's a wonder they stuck it out as long as they did under such circumstances. When asked what kept them going, they shrugged off the question as if to say they had no other option. This was a group of guys who truly loved each other like brothers, and even when their love for each other was being tested, their love for the music and for playing with this caliber of talent never died. Good music, laughs and camaraderie, alas, are not enough to keep a band going, and sadly the JoJa Band split up for good in 1981. Before and since its demise, the band has harbored more than its share of grief. Light man Terry Polston drowned shortly before Cold Winds was released. Danny Williby left for the health reasons that ultimately took his life and was replaced by his cousin Michael

Williby. One night, Michael was killed in an automobile accident between sets at a JoJa Band gig. It is an evening JoJa Band members are still hesitant to discuss. And then finally, in December of 2002 Howard Jobe, the man that most personified the JoJa Band died. The band members each went their separate ways in pursuit of different musical interests. Jimmy moved to Richmond in 1982 and from there he ended up in Nashville where he has played steadily as a session musician (Radney Foster, Tracy Nelson, Maria Muldaur, to name a few), both in-studio and on the road, as well as operating his own music label that sells his collections of boogie woogie piano music. Bobby has found an inspirational outlet for his musical interests and talents by forming and leading the church group at Islands Christian Church in Savannah, Georgia. Freddie has also devoted his drumming talents to his own church group at Coastal Cathedral in Savannah. Howard continued to sing professionally with a variety of Savannah-based bands until his untimely death in late 2002. Steffens moved to California and had little contact with any of his former bandmates until talk of a reunion concert at Howard's funeral brought him back into the fold. And Danny Branson continued to play professionally in the intervening years. It is this classic line-up of the band, along with "Chief," a lifelong Howard Jobe fan and Savannah legend who was recruited to fill in on vocals, that has shocked everyone, new and old fans alike, when they announced plans for a reunion concert. Truly, there is no better way to honor those maintaining an unwavering devotion and have kept The JoJa Band name alive by passing around taped and burned copies of these hard-to-find gems. Their unfailing devotion has served, until now, as the best reminder of the band's lasting legacy and the timelessness of this essentially Southern music. With the release of this recording, people have a true memento of these great times.

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