

= Voodoo (D 'Angelo album) =

Voodoo is the second studio album by American recording artist D 'Angelo , released on January 25 , 2000 , by Virgin Records . Recording sessions for the album took place during 1998 to 1999 at Electric Lady Studios in New York City , featuring an extensive line @-@ up of musicians associated with the Soulquarians musical collective . Produced primarily by D 'Angelo , Voodoo features a loose , groove @-@ based funk sound and serves as a departure from the more conventional song structure of his debut album , Brown Sugar (1995) . The album features lyrical themes regarding spirituality , love , sexuality , growth , and fatherhood .

Amid heavy promotion and an anticipated release , the album was released to commercial and critical success . It debuted at number one on the US Billboard 200 , selling 320 @,@ 000 copies in its first week , and spent 33 weeks on the chart . It was promoted with five singles , including the hit single " Untitled (How Does It Feel) " , whose music video garnered D 'Angelo mainstream attention and controversy . Upon its release , Voodoo received general acclaim from music critics and earned D 'Angelo several accolades . It was named one of the year 's best albums by numerous publications .

D 'Angelo promoted Voodoo with an international supporting tour in late 2000 . While successful early on , the tour became plagued by concert cancellations and D 'Angelo 's personal frustrations . Voodoo has since been regarded by music writers as a creative milestone of the neo soul genre during its apex . It has sold over 1 @.@ 7 million copies in the United States and has been certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) .

= = Background = =

= = Debut and writer 's block = =

Following the success of his debut album Brown Sugar (1995) , D 'Angelo went into a four and a half year absence from the music scene and releasing solo work . His debut album presented a musical fusion of traditional soul and R & B influences with hip hop vocal and production elements , serving as fundamental elements for the neo soul sound . With its single @-@ oriented success , Brown Sugar earned considerable sales success and defied the contemporary , producer @-@ driven sound of the time , while earning popularity among mature R & B audiences and the growing hip hop generation . Prior to its release , neo soul itself was undefined by a major artist or musical work , and was developing during the early 1990s through the work of artists such as Tony ! Toni ! Toné ! , Me 'Shell NdegéOcello , and Omar . The album also earned D 'Angelo recognition for producing a commercial breakthrough for the genre and giving notice to other neo soul artists , including Erykah Badu , Lauryn Hill , and Maxwell .

After spending two years on tour promoting Brown Sugar , D 'Angelo found himself stuck with writer 's block . On the setback , D 'Angelo later stated " The thing about writer 's block is that you want to write so f---king bad , [but] the songs don 't come out that way . They come from life . So you 've got to live to write . " During this time , he generally released cover versions and remakes , including a cover @-@ collaboration with Erykah Badu of the Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell duet song " Your Precious Love " for the soundtrack to High School High (1996) . D 'Angelo also covered Prince 's " She 's Always in My Hair " for the Scream 2 soundtrack (1997) , as well as the Ohio Players ' " Heaven Must Be Like This " for the Down in the Delta soundtrack (1998) . He also appeared on a duet , " Nothing Even Matters " , with Lauryn Hill for her debut solo album The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill (1998) . He also spent the time lifting weights , smoking weed , and making music .

= = Inspiration = =

In 1998 , he was inspired to write music again after the birth of his first child , Michael , with fellow R

& B singer and then @-@ girlfriend Angie Stone . He also traveled back to the South , spending time in South Carolina and in his hometown of Richmond , Virginia , while reconnecting himself with the African @-@ American musical history that had originally inspired him . Shortly after his son 's birth and the release of his first live album Live at the Jazz Cafe (1998) through EMI Records , he began preparation for the recording of songs for Voodoo . In several interviews after its release , he cited his son 's birth as an inspirational source and creative muse for him . A dedication to his son Michael and daughter Imani was included in the album 's liner notes , which were co @-@ written by D 'Angelo and writer / musician Saul Williams . In a press video accompanying the release of Voodoo , D 'Angelo suggested that he was attempting to create a new sound for him that was in transition .

In a February 1999 interview with music journalist Touré , D 'Angelo discussed the album and elaborated on the events that had preceded its release , explaining how he had no initial plan for a follow @-@ up . He also discussed his attempt to focus on his original inspiration to produce music , stating " The sound and feel of my music are going to be affected by what motivates me to do it " . On his visit to South Carolina , D 'Angelo stated that he " went through this runnel , through gospel , blues , and a lot of old soul , old James Brown , early , early Sly and the Family Stone , and a lot of Jimi Hendrix " , and " I learned a lot about music , myself , and where I want to go musically " . In the same interview , he cited the deaths of rappers Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G. as having a great effect on him during the period . In another interview with Touré , D 'Angelo said that he had lost his enthusiasm after Brown Sugar 's reception and " was gettin ' jaded , lookin ' at what go on in the business " . On his purpose for returning , D 'Angelo stated " I had to reiterate why I was doin ' that in the first place , and the reason was the love for the music " .

= = Conception = =

D 'Angelo was dissatisfied with the direction of R & B and soul music when conceiving the album . In an interview for Jet , he said that " the term R & B doesn 't mean what it used to mean . R & B is pop , that 's the new word for R & B. " He also found contemporary R & B to be " a joke " , adding that " the funny thing about it is that the people making this shit are dead serious about the stuff they 're making . It 's sad ? they 've turned black music into a club thing . " In the liner notes for Voodoo , Saul Williams examined the album 's concept and echoes D 'Angelo 's dissatisfaction with the mainstream direction of contemporary R & B / soul and hip hop , noting a lack of artistic integrity in the two music genres . In an interview for Ebony , D 'Angelo said of his role and influences for Voodoo , " I consider myself very respectful of the masters who came before . In some ways , I feel a responsibility to continue and take the cue from what they were doing musically and vibe on it . That 's what I want to do . But I want to do it for this time and this generation " . In the album 's EPK , D 'Angelo said that Voodoo is " like a funk album . The natural progression of soul , the next step to soul is funk " .

Producer and drummer Ahmir " Questlove " Thompson issued an essay in 1999 that discussed the album 's creation and analyzed its songs . He described the project as a " vicarious fantasy " , a " new direction of soul for 2000 " , and " the litmus test that will reveal the most for your personality " . He addressed the inspiration behind Voodoo , saying " It was a love for the dead state of black music , a love to show our idols how much they taught us [...] I hope you enjoy it . Just have an open mind to new shit . Just give us that . " Questlove discussed his expectations of a reaction from music listeners to the concept , saying in an interview for Entertainment Weekly upon the album 's release , " We knew this album would be a hard pill to swallow . People may want D to play into their R & B love @-@ god fantasies ? wearing Armani suits , singing something sweet in your ear ? but he made a conscious effort to shake people up , to take a chance . It 's not a middle @-@ ground record ? you 're either going to love it or hate it . "

In an interview for USA Today , D 'Angelo said of the album 's title and its meaning , " the myriad influences found on it can be traced through the blues and back deeper in history through songs sung ? in religious [voodoo] ceremonies . " In an interview for Jet magazine , he stated that his intentions for recording the album were to express the power of music and artistic respect for it . The

theme is illustrated in Voodoo 's liner photography by Thierry LesGoudes , which depicts D 'Angelo participating in a voodoo ceremony . Voodoo 's press release discussed D 'Angelo 's concept , stating " Lyrically , D 'Angelo offers that much of Voodoo is personal reflection : touching on subjects like spirituality , sexuality , growth , and in particular , becoming a father . Musically , as he puts it , Voodoo is ' definitely groove @-@ based ' " . D 'Angelo also said that " My inspiration was just to go farther . To get to that next level . To push it even further . To work against the floss and the grain and to get even deeper into the sound that I 'm hearing ... and the thing is , I 'm just looking at Voodoo as just the beginning . I 'm still developing and growing and still listening to that sound I hear inside my head ... So this is the first step " .

= = Recording = =

= = Electric Lady sessions = =

Beginning in 1996 , Voodoo evolved from nearly four years of sessions and featured an extensive roster of R & B , hip hop , and jazz musicians and recording technicians . Drummer and producer Ahmir " Questlove " Thompson of The Roots was D 'Angelo 's " co @-@ pilot " during the session . He and his crew studied bootleg videotapes of classic R & B artists such as Marvin Gaye , James Brown , and Jimi Hendrix , along with reruns of Soul Train , at Electric Lady Studios , the Manhattan @-@ based recording studio built by Jimi Hendrix . After watching a tape , they played a certain artist 's album or catalog , jam , and recorded for inspiration . Touré of Rolling Stone observed , " One night they played Prince 's Parade until they flowed into a new groove that became ' Africa ' " . On several occasions , D 'Angelo listened to Sly & the Family Stone 's There 's a Riot Goin ' On (1971) , which had an influential production . The crew recorded numerous hours of unreleased , original material , as well as covers of their influencers ' material . Collectively referred to by D 'Angelo as " yoda " , these influencers included soul artist Al Green , funk artist George Clinton , and Afrobeat artist Fela Kuti .

During the initial recording sessions , D 'Angelo also worked with personal trainer Mark Jenkins , who was hired to help him get into shape . As Questlove recounted , " Money was definitely overweight by ' 96 , so they got him a drill sergeant physical trainer Mark Jenkins . This guy didn 't take no shit . I cannot see D running in Central Park , but he did [...] Push @-@ ups , weight room , sparring every day for three hours . He wouldn 't take no shit . "

Following the birth of his son , D 'Angelo composed the album 's first song " Send It On " in 1998 at a recording studio in Virginia . Shortly afterwards , he felt ready to begin the recording for Voodoo . D 'Angelo wrote most of Voodoo 's material at Electric Lady Studios , as opposed to his method of composing outside the studio as he did for Brown Sugar . Recording sessions for what ended up on the album began in 1998 and continued through to 1999 . On the sessions ' environment , Touré wrote " What started as the follow @-@ up to D 'Angelo 's 1995 platinum debut , Brown Sugar , became five years of study at Soul University , complete with classes , pranks , gossip and equal amounts of discipline and laziness . " D 'Angelo and Questlove have compared the environment to school . Music writer Trevor Schoonmaker examined D 'Angelo 's and Questlove 's initial recording approach , stating " In the endless sessions for the record , the two spent hours trying to conjure the elusive ' vibe ' necessary to provoke the album 's creation , which included listening to hours of black music that escaped strict classification . Some of that found itself played out in ghostly ways on Voodoo . "

= = Soulquarians and guests = =

Production for the album was conducted in a generally informal manner and took place at Electric Lady Studios simultaneously with recording for Erykah Badu 's Mama 's Gun (2000) and Common 's Like Water for Chocolate (2000) . This led to impromptu collaborations and a distinctive sound that is featured on the three albums . Frequent visits to the studio were made by fellow neo soul and

hip hop recording artists associated with the Soulquarians collective such as Erykah Badu , Q @-@ Tip , Talib Kweli , James Poyser , and Mos Def . Voodoo 's sessions also had visitors not associated with the project , including record producer Rick Rubin , comedian Chris Rock , and rock musician Eric Clapton . D 'Angelo previewed songs for them , which they found impressive .

D 'Angelo produced songs on Common 's Like Water for Chocolate . Q @-@ Tip was originally intended to contribute a verse to the song " Left & Right " , but was replaced by rappers Method Man & Redman during recording due to creative differences . Questlove has stated that " general opinion was that the song was cool but nobody was feeling Tip 's verse " . According to former A & R @-@ man Gary Harris , D 'Angelo 's manager Dominique Trenier " thought that Tip ? s verse was wack " . Members of The Roots , including Black Thought , Kamal Gray , and Rahzel , also visited the recording sessions in 1997 to 1999 ; the band was recording their album Things Fall Apart (1999) at Electric Lady Studios . That album featured contributions by D 'Angelo , Badu , Mos Def , and Common .

Questlove was the " musical powerhouse " behind several of the Soulquarians ' projects during the late 1990s and early 2000s , including Voodoo and Things Fall Apart . In a 2002 interview , he told critic Jim DeRogatis about his role in recording Voodoo and being a part of the Soulquarians , stating " I tried to do all in my power that I could to bring people together ? to bring Common to Electric Lady , have him record here whenever so that he could record with some of these other artists . You 'd just come into [the studio 's] A Room , you don 't even know who has a session , but you call me : ' Who 's down there ? ' ' Common 's in there today ' . So you come down , you order some food , sit down and bulls ? , watch a movie , and then it 's , ' Let 's play something ' . And I say , ' Who wants this [track] ? ' And it would be , ' I want it ! ' ' No , I want it ! ' " . Questlove has referred to the recording experience at the studio as a " left @-@ of @-@ center black music renaissance " .

= = = Scrapped tracks = = =

According to Questlove , a duet track by D 'Angelo and Lauryn Hill , " Feel Like Makin ' Love " , was planned . Although tapes were sent via FedEx between the two , the collaboration was aborted and the song was instead recorded by D 'Angelo . Questlove later said that the duet failed to materialize due to " too many middle men [...] I don 't think Lauryn and D ever talked face @-@ to @-@ face . " Mistakenly , some critics who reviewed the final track assumed that Hill 's vocals are present in the recording .

During the final days of recording Voodoo , Questlove spent time recording a version of Fela Kuti 's " Water No Get Enemy " , a melodic protest song from Kuti 's 1975 album Expensive Shit . He and D 'Angelo had intended to revamp the composition into a minimalist soul ballad for Lauryn Hill to contribute vocals for . However , Hill declined and the track ended up as a place @-@ holder for the rough mix of the album . A reconceptualized version of the song was recorded by D 'Angelo and guest artists on the charity album Red Hot + Riot (2002) .

= = Production = =

= = = Engineering = = =

Audio engineer Russell Elevado , who recorded and mixed Voodoo , along with Erykah Badu 's Mama 's Gun and Common 's Like Water for Chocolate , used old school recording techniques and vintage mixing gear for the albums in order to achieve the distinct sounds found in classic recorded works . While mainstream recording techniques at the time often involved the use of hi @-@ tech digital equipment , Elevado employed the use of analog equipment , enhancement plug @-@ ins , and a blend of live instrumentation . Notable from the production was that most of it , with the exception of " Untitled (How Does It Feel) " , was recorded live with no overdubbing of its instrumentation , in contrast to contemporary R & B production at the time .

For Voodoo 's sessions , D 'Angelo appropriated most of the instruments on the album 's songs , contributing with drums , electric guitar , keyboards , and percussion . During its recording , he employed amplifiers , microphones , a Fender Rhodes keyboards and organ originally used by musician Stevie Wonder for Talking Book (1972) , and a recording board originally used by Jimi Hendrix . On Voodoo 's recording atmosphere , D 'Angelo stated " I believe Jimi was there . Jimi , Marvin Gaye , all the folks we were gravitating to . I believe they blessed the project " .

D 'Angelo composed all of the bass lines for Voodoo and sequenced them for Welsh bassist Pino Palladino , who he had met after being asked to do a duet with B.B. King at the time of Voodoo 's earlier sessions . Palladino was asked by D 'Angelo to learn and improvise the bass arrangements on his 1961 model P bass . For " The Root " , " Greatdayndamornin ' " , and " Spanish Joint " , guitarist Charlie Hunter simultaneously played guitar and bass sections with a custom eight @-@ string guitar / bass combo , which had three lower bass and five upper guitar strings . It also had separate pickups for each set of strings , as well separate outputs for each pickup . In order to adjust production @-@ wise to Hunter 's intricate playing , Elevado had separate outputs from Hunter 's guitar connected to a separate bass and guitar amplifier . He has said that there was enough separation to manage an adequate sound on both amplifiers , in spite of slight " bleeding into each other " from the pickups in close proximity to each other .

= = = Grooves and beats = = =

D 'Angelo and his supporting personnel constructed several of the songs ' grooves for the album to sit far behind time , directly on top of time , or pressing on the time , making them cluttered and loose in style . Questlove helped design the sparse funk , soul and hip hop beats on the generally groove @-@ based record . In later interviews , Questlove discussed that he and D 'Angelo incorporated much of the distinctive percussive rhythms of Detroit hip hop producer , Slum Village @-@ member and The Ummah @-@ affiliate J Dilla , also known as Jay Dee . A part of the musical collective Soulquarians , Dilla served as a frequent collaborator of theirs . Although album tracks such as " Left & Right " and " Devil 's Pie " help to bring this claim to light , J Dilla himself was not officially credited for production . However , he contributed significantly to Voodoo 's overall sound , specifically the rhythm and percussion .

One of the characteristics of the drumming style implemented in recording the album is its adherence to human timing , as the tracks were mostly programmed mechanically during recording , therefore resulting in the album 's intentional sloppiness . In a later interview , Questlove discussed the intention and purpose of including imperfection in the album 's sound , stating " we wanted to play as perfectly as we could , but then deliberately insert the little glitch that makes it sound messed up . The idea was to sound disciplined , but with a total human feel . "

Questlove also acknowledged J Dilla 's influence over the recording sessions for Voodoo . He said of Dilla 's unique programming method during the sessions , " He makes programmed stuff so real , you really can ? t tell it ? s programmed . He might program 128 bars , with absolutely no looping or quantizing ... When Q @-@ Tip from A Tribe Called Quest first played me some of his stuff , I said , ' The drums are messed up ! The time is wrong ! ' And when we did a song for D 'Angelo 's record that Lenny Kravitz was supposed to play on , Lenny said , ' I can ? t play with this ? there ? s a discrepancy in the drum pattern . ' And we ? re like , ' It 's supposed to be this way ! ' "

= = Music = =

Voodoo incorporates musical elements of jazz , funk , hip hop , blues , and soul , as well as ambient music with a musical layer shaped by guitar @-@ based funk . It features vintage influences and a looser , more improvisational structure , which contrasts the more conventional song structure of Brown Sugar . Music writer Greg Kot has considered the album a production of the Soulquarians , calling it " the most radical of the many fine records " conceived by the collective 's members . In an interview with the New Orleans Times @-@ Picayune 's Shawn Rhea , D 'Angelo attributed the album 's experimental and jam @-@ like atmosphere to the fact that most of Voodoo

was recorded " live and its first take " . On its eclectic and conceptual style , Rhea commented " [D 'Angelo] seems to have channeled the brilliance of his musical forefathers , living and dead , during the crafting of this album . It is a complex , intricate collection of songs that , like voodoo , is simultaneously secular and spiritual , sensual and sacred , earthbound and ethereal " . Recording engineer Russell Elevado 's analog mixing and old school production techniques contributed to the album 's jazz element and vintage sound . On its jazz influence , D 'Angelo stated " because a lot of the album was cut live and has free playing on it , it was hard not to go in a jazz direction " .

While most musical compositions rely on tension and release , which can be produced by factors such as soft verses and loud choruses , gradual buildup , subtle tension within verses or over the course of the bridge , or harmonic tension in chords that provides space for improvisation , D 'Angelo 's arrangements for Voodoo subdivide the tension into each of the songs ' moments . According to music critic Steve McPherson , the concept results in " no linear way to measure how far off things slide before they pull themselves back ... can 't be measured in beats or fractions of beats in a meaningful way . For lack of a less cliched word , it 's entirely ' feel ' " . This type of syncopation serves as the center for Voodoo , rather than the more conventional method of using it as flavoring or departure from the center . According to New York Daily News music journalist Jim Farber , " In order to counter the slickness of modern R & B , D 'Angelo 's album reconfigured ? and updated ? the adventurous song structures and lowdown grooves of early- ' 70s works like Curtis Mayfield 's ' Move On Up ' , Isaac Hayes ' ' Hot Buttered Soul ' and Marvin Gaye 's ' Let 's Get It On ' . "

The album features aggressive multi @-@ tracking of D 'Angelo 's voice , a technique similar to the production of Sly & the Family Stone 's There 's a Riot Goin ' On (1971) and Marvin Gaye 's Let 's Get It On (1973) . The multi @-@ tracking on Voodoo significantly affected the clarity of D 'Angelo 's vocals . In Voodoo 's liner notes , Saul Williams wrote of its heavy use of multi @-@ tracking , stating " You might respond , ' Lyrics ? Yo , I can 't even understand half the shit that D 'Angelo be saying . That nigga sounds like Bobby McFerrin on opium ' . And I 'd say , ' You 're right . Neither can I . But I am drawn to figure out what it is that he 's saying . His vocal collaging intrigues me ' " . Music writers have also noted the production style and sound of Voodoo as reminiscent of the sound of the P @-@ Funk opus Mothership Connection (1975) , Gaye 's downtempo disco @-@ soul record I Want You (1976) , and Miles Davis 's jazz fusion works In a Silent Way (1969) and Bitches Brew (1970) .

D 'Angelo and his crew also utilized a hip hop production style , which often subordinates song structure to a stable foundation for a rapper 's delivery and flow . This was familiar to D 'Angelo , as his first original recordings were rap demos . Subsequently , most of the songs were performed without a definitive structure , settling into a mid @-@ tempo groove with minimal verse @-@ chorus @-@ bridge progression . This also resulted in an emphasis on texture over both structure and hooks . New York writer Ethan Smith noted this occurrence , stating " most of the songs aren 't really songs at all -- at least , not in the traditional sense " . While not predominant on the album , some tracks incorporate sampling . Most of its production was influenced by hip hop producer J Dilla 's input . On J Dilla 's influence , Questlove stated " He 's the zenith of hip @-@ hop to us . Jay Dee helped to bring out the album 's dirty sound and encouraged the false starts and the nonquantized sound of the record " .

= = Songs = =

= = = Tracks 1 ? 7 = = =

The opening track " Playa Playa " features basketball metaphors and gospel overtones , which accompany the track 's slow funk and jazz vibe . On his bass playing in the song , Pino Palladino recalled " I was thinking about Stevie Wonder in the choruses and P @-@ Funk in the verses " . Rob Evanoff of All About Jazz called the song " an uplifting soul ride " , and stated that it evokes an image of " a musical train seen far off in the distance , slowly getting bigger as it gets closer " .

Evanoff also compared the track 's style to the jam @-@ sound of Pink Floyd , and wrote " it surrounds you with a deep thick infectious groove that , at first , shadows and then envelopes your senses in such a way that is equal bits liberating , intoxicating and hypnotic ? you close your eyes and are transported into another dimension " . On the song 's lyrics , one critic wrote that " D 'Angelo disses all neo @-@ soul wannabes by calmly singing ' Bring the drama playa / Give me all U got ' " . " Devil 's Pie " is a funk and hip hop diatribe with a lyrical theme concerning hip hop excess , and it is accompanied by P @-@ Funk style harmonies and low @-@ key singing by D 'Angelo . It is a bass @-@ driven track produced by DJ Premier , who contributes to its hip hop texture . The song 's theme also incorporates religious imagery into its message of social strife . Questlove has stated that " Devil 's Pie " was written to address the issues of " the money hungry jiggafied state of the world we 're in " .

" Left & Right " is a funky party jam featuring rappers Method Man and Redman , who exchange verses as D 'Angelo sings the song 's verses and chorus . Entertainment Weekly 's Matt Diehl calls Method Man 's and Redman 's lyrics " misogynistic " , adding that it upsets Voodoo 's " organically sensual vibe " . The introspective track " The Line " has a downtempo , spiritual sound with lyrics about dealing with some unnamed adversity . According to one critic , it " could be about his MIA status (' Will I hang or get left hangin ? / Will I fall off or is it bangin ? / I say it 's up to God ') , or about anyone facing doubters with a revolver loaded with talent and self @-@ confidence (' I 'm gonna put my finger on the trigger / I 'm gonna pull it , and then we gon ' see / What the deal / I 'm for real ') " . Music critic Robert Christgau interpreted the lyrics to be " unjudgmental , unsentimental ... in which a young black man lays out the reasons he 's ready to die @-@ leaving the listener to wonder why the fuck he should have to think about it " . Andy Peterson of The GW Hatchet viewed that the adversity is " the price of fame " or " lamenting a lost lover " .

The sparse funk song " Chicken Grease " has lyrics advising against acting " uptight " , and it features D 'Angelo referencing the line " I know you got soul " from Eric B. & Rakim 's song of the same name (1987) . It contains an ambiguous harmony and bass by Pino Palladino , who evokes the playing style of James Jamerson , with spontaneously improvised variations @-@ on @-@ a @-@ theme parts that sit back " in the pocket " . The track was originally intended for Common 's Like Water for Chocolate , but D 'Angelo offered Common the song " Geto Heaven Part Two " as a trade . " Chicken Grease " is named after a technical term that musician Prince used for his guitarist to play a 9th minor chord while playing 16th notes . The song contains background voices , which one writer described as " omnipresent party people channeled in from ' What 's Going On ' and ' Voodoo Chile ' , laughin and carryin on all over " . Co @-@ written by D 'Angelo 's former girlfriend , singer Angie Stone , " Send It On " contains lyrics concerning themes of honesty and faith in love , and features jazz trumpeter Roy Hargrove on flugel horn . Titled after a southern colloquial conflation of the terms " One More Time " and " Again " , the mid @-@ tempo ballad " One Mo 'Gin " has its narrator reminiscing about a former lover . Its introductory sound consisting of soft organ work and dim percussion evokes the sound of D 'Angelo 's " Sh ? t , Damn , Motherf ? cker " (1995) . " One Mo 'Gin " contains strong jazz overtones and a prominent rocksteady drum rhythm played by Questlove . It incorporates Delta blues @-@ style bass and keyboard @-@ driven verses with a melodic hook . The song is introduced with lead @-@ in bass licks by Pino Palladino , who adds musical texture to its sparse composition by using 10th notes and other arpeggio shapes . According to Seattle Weekly 's Tricia Romano , the song 's music actualizes " new skool sensibility with old school soul " .

= = = Tracks 8 ? 13 = = =

According to Questlove , " The Root " , " Spanish Joint " , and " Greatdayindamornin ' " serve as the " virtuoso part of the record " , featuring intricate technical arrangements , no overdubbing , and Charlie Hunter playing both electric and bass guitar . " The Root " is a mid @-@ tempo heartbreak song with the bass line and guitar solo played simultaneously by Hunter on an eight @-@ string guitar . It is about a vengeful woman 's effect on the narrator : " In the name of love and hope she took my shield and sword ... From the pit of the bottom that knows no floor / Like the rain to the dirt ,

from the vine to the wine / From the alpha of creation , to the end of all time " . Miles Marshall Lewis writes of the song 's subject matter , " [it] can actually be digested and emotionally felt , sadly rare for Hot 97 R & B. " Co @-@ written by Roy Hargrove , " Spanish Joint " is a salsa @-@ infused , high tempo track about karma . It incorporates rhythmic Brazilian guitar licks by Hunter , funky horn arrangements by Hargrove , and Latin grooves and fusion instrumentation similar to Stevie Wonder 's " Don 't You Worry ' bout a Thing " (1973) . " Feel Like Makin ' Love " is a cover of Roberta Flack 's 1974 hit of the same name with a low @-@ key , quiet storm sound . " Greatdayindamornin ' " features double rimshots placed behind the beat by Questlove .

Co @-@ written by Raphael Saadiq , " Untitled (How Does It Feel) " is a tribute to one of D 'Angelo 's primary influences , Prince , and evokes his early Controversy period . The similarity of D 'Angelo 's music on Voodoo to Prince was addressed in Saul Williams 's liner notes , as he stated " I 'd pay to see Prince 's face as he listens to this album . " Questlove described the song as " finding the line between parody and honesty [...] In an era of ' the cover song ' , redoing a Prince song was taboo . This is the second best thing " . It follows a six eight signature and features electric guitar interplay throughout , which is reminiscent of the Jimi Hendrix guitar style and " Maggot Brain " sound . The song contains a drum pattern with a uniform dynamic . D 'Angelo 's vocals were overdubbed several times to produce the sound of a choir singing harmonies during choruses , all of which were sung by D 'Angelo . The song 's sexually explicit lyrics describe the narrator 's plea to his lover for sex , as exemplified in the second verse : " Love to make you wet / In between your thighs , cause / I love when it comes inside of you / I get so excited when I 'm around you , baby " It has been cited by critics as the album 's best song .

The philosophical album closer " Africa " celebrates D 'Angelo 's heritage , while reaffirming his contemporary mission in life . It has been cited by Questlove as his favorite song on the album . The theme of " Africa " concerns the finding of a spiritual home amid geographical displacement , and of passing that sense of belonging on to one 's children . " Africa " was originally written in honor of D 'Angelo 's son , Michael Archer , Jr . , and ended up as a dedication to history , Africa , and God . Opening with a shimmery rustle of chimes , the song contains a drum interpretation of Prince 's " I Wonder U " from his Parade (1986) , which was also utilized for the Ursula Rucker and The Roots track " The Return to Innocence Lost " from Things Fall Apart . Questlove discussed producing the opening chime sounds for " Africa " , stating " we took the cover off the rhodes and mic 'd ' em " . One critic described C. Edward Alford 's guitar work for " Africa " as " backward guitar solos (at least they sound backward) " . Another critic described the song as a " lullaby " and " a gorgeous , opalescent closer ... a prayer of sorts " . Voodoo 's coda , which consists of chopped @-@ up track snippets run backwards , plays at the song 's conclusion .

= = Release and promotion = =

The album 's release was preceded by several delays , which were primarily caused by the folding of D 'Angelo 's former label EMI Records and legal troubles with his management . Originally scheduled for release on November 23 , 1999 , Voodoo was released the following year on January 25 by the Virgin @-@ imprint label Cheeba Sound in the United States , January 18 in Canada and February 14 in the United Kingdom on EMI , awaiting eager anticipation from fans and critics . Voodoo was issued with a parental advisory label , due to profanities and sexually explicit lyrics present on the tracks " Devil 's Pie " and " Left & Right " , and also as a " clean " edited version with an alternate cover . A double LP release was made available in the UK through EMI . When Voodoo was originally presented to Virgin Records executives prior to its release , mixed opinions formulated on whether or not it would be favored commercially , as the project had been heavily financed by the label . In return for the production budget , Virgin executives expected a record with potential for radio @-@ oriented success . However , Voodoo 's unconventional sound proved difficult to translate into singles suited for contemporary radio success , in contrast to the more accessible Brown Sugar .

By the album 's release date , three singles had been released , " Devil 's Pie " , " Left & Right " , and " Untitled (How Does It Feel) " , with only the latter making a significant commercial impact .

The limited success with singles and lukewarm opinions from label executives led to more promotional efforts and a public response made by D 'Angelo 's management through issuing a statement , which cited Voodoo as the R & B musical equivalent of art rock band Radiohead 's acclaimed studio album OK Computer (1997) . While both records feature an experimental edge , in terms of sound and lyrical themes , the English indie rock scene to which the latter had belonged was album @-@ oriented , as opposed to the contemporary R & B scene in the United States , which was more single @-@ oriented at the time . Prior to its release , Virgin launched an extensive , multi @-@ layered campaign for the album , which setup several promotional performances by D 'Angelo in 1999 , including a guest performance on the season premiere of The Chris Rock Show on September 17 , New York 's Key Club , the National Black Programmers Coalition meeting in New Orleans on November 20 , KMEL San Francisco 's House of Soul show on December 10 , and KKBT L.A. 's Holiday Cooldown on December 11 . Following commitments made by the label for the album 's distribution in the UK , continental Europe , Australia , and New Zealand , D 'Angelo appeared at London 's Music of Black Origin Awards on October 6 . Other promotional events included signings and in @-@ store appearances by D 'Angelo at shopping venues such as Macy 's , Virgin Megastore , and Fulton Mall in New York City , which attracted a considerable number of D 'Angelo 's female fans . A remix album , Voodoo DJ Soul Essentials (2000) , was also issued by Virgin .

A press release for Voodoo was issued in January , discussing the album 's experimental edge and the anticipation for its release . It called Voodoo " the CD that D 'Angelo was put on this earth to create " and " quite literally the record that much of the universal soul nation has been feenin for . " A video for " Send It On " included footage from Voodoo 's supporting tour . A music video for " Left & Right " , created by director Malik Hassan Sayeed and producer Rich Ford , Jr . , was anticipated by fans and MTV network executives that had planned special promotions and a world premiere for the clip . However , Sayeed 's concept of a concert video that paid tribute to funk shows of the past expended Virgin 's budget and resulted in a missed deadline for the MTV premiere . As punishment , the network refused to put the final edit of music video in rotation . It was eventually world @-@ premiered by BET on Thanksgiving Day .

The release of the controversial " Untitled (How Does It Feel) " music video prior to the album 's release has often been cited as having the greatest promotional impact . Directed by Paul Hunter , the video features D 'Angelo , filmed from the waist @-@ up , lip @-@ synching in the nude . According to writer Keith M. Harris , it portrayed D 'Angelo 's " discursive play with masculinity and blackness " . The video gained a significant amount of airplay on the BET and MTV networks , and increased mainstream notice of D 'Angelo upon Voodoo 's release , while exposing him as a sex icon to a newer generation of fans . It also proved to contribute significantly to the album 's commercial success . The music video for " Untitled (How Does It Feel) " was also viewed at a promotional party thrown in celebration of the album 's release , which took place in January 2000 at the Centro @-@ Fly nightclub in Chelsea , Manhattan . Douglas Century of The New York Times wrote of the club 's appearance as " packed and sweaty , with decor and soul music out of a 1970 's time warp : multiple video screens playing images of Curtis Mayfield and vintage Soul Train episodes , replete with dancers in Day @-@ Glo bell @-@ bottoms " .

= = Commercial performance = =

The album debuted at number one on the US Billboard 200 chart , selling 320 @, @ 000 copies in its first week . It entered the Billboard 200 on February 12 , 2000 and remained on the chart for 33 consecutive weeks . Its debut replaced Carlos Santana 's Supernatural (1999) at the number @-@ one spot on the chart . It had sold over 500 @, @ 000 copies within its first two months of release . The album charted for 33 weeks on the Billboard 200 . Voodoo charted on several international album charts , including the United Kingdom , Switzerland , France , the Netherlands , Sweden , Norway , and New Zealand . On February 24 , 2000 , it was certified gold in sales by the Canadian Recording Industry Association , following sales in excess of 50 @, @ 000 copies in Canada . Two months after its US release , Voodoo was certified platinum on March 1 , 2000 by the Recording

Industry Association of America . The album 's platinum certification had coincided with the commencement of Voodoo 's supporting tour . By mid @-@ 2000 , the album had reached sales of 1 @. @ 3 million copies in the United States . As of 2005 , the album has sold over 1 @. @ 7 million copies in the US , according to Nielsen SoundScan .

Despite its success , Voodoo did not achieve his debut album 's sales performance nor generate the single @-@ oriented success D 'Angelo 's label had envisioned . Its first two singles , " Devil 's Pie " and " Left & Right " , peaked at number 69 and number 70 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart . The latter was commercially aimed at R & B and hip hop @-@ oriented radio stations due to the prominence of rappers Redman and Method Man on the track . According to Rich Ford , Jr . , producer of the " Left & Right " music video , both the single and the video went commercially unnoticed due to MTV 's refusal to place the song 's video in rotation , serving as punishment for missing the deadline for its initial premiere . The fifth single " Feel Like Makin ' Love " was less successful , reaching number 109 on the Hot R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Singles & Tracks . " Send It On " , the album 's fourth single , achieved moderate chart success , peaking at number 33 on Billboard 's Pop Singles chart .

The album 's third single , " Untitled (How Does It Feel) " , became its greatest chart success , peaking at number 25 on the Hot 100 Singles and at number two on the R & B Singles chart . The infamous music video for " Untitled (How Does It Feel) " helped in boosting the song 's appeal , as well as D 'Angelo 's . Billboard wrote of the video , " it 's pure sexuality . D 'Angelo , muscularly cut and glistening , is shot from the hips up , naked , with just enough shown to prompt a slow burning desire in most any woman who sees it . The video alone could make the song one of the biggest of the coming year " . It earned three nominations for the 2000 MTV Video Music Awards , including Video of the Year , Best R & B Video , and Best Male Video .

= = Critical reception = =

Voodoo received rave reviews from contemporary music critics. who dubbed it a " masterpiece " and D 'Angelo 's greatest work . In The Village Voice , Christgau called it a " deeply brave and pretentious record ... signifies like a cross between lesser Tricky and Sly 's Riot Goin ' On " , and wrote of D 'Angelo , " he leads from strength " rather than " tune @-@ and @-@ hook " , " a feel for bass more disquieting than bootalicious . " NME praised its diverse sound and commented that the album " represents nothing less than African American music at a crossroads ... To simply call D 'Angelo 's work neo @-@ classic soul , as per corporate diktat , would be reductive , for that would be to ignore the elements of vaudeville jazz , Memphis horns , ragtime blues , funk and bass grooves , not to mention hip @-@ hop , that slip out of every pore of these 13 haunted songs . " Christopher John Farley of Time called it a " richly imagined CD " . Mark Anthony Neal of PopMatters called it " the working blueprint for ' post @-@ Soul ' black pop " . Joshua Klein of The A.V. Club commented that the album " often recalls the muddier bits of Sly Stone 's later works [...] and the much @-@ missed balladry of prime Prince " and stated , " D 'Angelo 's mellow strategy frequently pays off [...] a brave antidote to current pop and hip @-@ hop trends . "

Despite perceiving a " heavy @-@ handed emphasis on groove over melody " and " self @-@ indulgent " song durations , Miles Marshall Lewis of The Village Voice viewed the album as a progression for D 'Angelo and compared it to Prince 's acclaimed Sign o ' the Times (1987) , noting that the latter album was initially perceived by most critics as " uneven " . Greg Tate of Vibe dubbed it " the most daring song @-@ oriented album by a mainstream R & B artist of his generation . " Steve Jones of USA Today wrote that " no other R & B artist today seems to have as acute an understanding of where he comes from as D 'Angelo , and none seems as willing to take risks in exploring where he should be heading " . The Austin Chronicle 's Christopher Gray commented that " Voodoo unlocks the brain 's inner freak like an especially nimble Harry Whodini " . Rob Evanoff of All About Jazz gave it five out of five stars and called it " a record you put on and let it seep in , soaking your essence and one that evolves over subsequent listens ... an aural aphrodisiac " . He found it to be in the tradition of classic jazz albums and wrote of its musical significance , stating :

However , some critics found it inconsistent . Music journalist Peter Shapiro criticized its " loose

playing and bohemian self @-@ indulgence " , stating " Voodoo drifted all over the map in a blunted haze " . Rolling Stone 's James Hunter disapproved of the experimental and loose @-@ sounding structure , and viewed that it does not attain its potential , stating " long stretches of it are unfocused and unabsorbing [...] Voodoo flatters the real at the expense of the thing . The result is superb smoke , but smoke nonetheless " . Jon Caramanica wrote in The Rolling Stone Album Guide (2004) , " D 'Angelo achieves through nuance what some singers with decades of experience and training never achieve : a throbbing , vital presence , that demands attention , even as it shuns it " .

= = Accolades = =

In 2001 , Voodoo won a Grammy Award for Best R & B Album at the 43rd Grammy Awards , which was awarded to D 'Angelo and recording engineer Russell Elevado . The song " Untitled (How Does It Feel) " won for Best Male R & B Vocal Performance and was also nominated for Best R & B Song . The song was also ranked number 12 on The Village Voice 's Pazz & Jop critics ' poll of 2000 , as well as number 4 on Rolling Stone magazine 's " End of Year Critics & Readers Poll " of the top singles of the year . Voodoo proved to be one of the most critically praised and awarded albums of the year , topping several critics ' and publications ' " end of year " lists , including the number 6 spot on The Village Voice 's 2000 Pazz & Jop critics ' poll . Rolling Stone and Spin magazine both ranked it number 4 on their " albums of the year " lists , while Time magazine named Voodoo as the number 1 album of 2000 . Voodoo was named one of the top ten albums of 2000 by several New York Times staff writers , including Ben Ratliff (number 2) , Neil Strauss (number 3) , Ann Powers (number 2) , and Jon Pareles (number 1) .

In 2003 , Rolling Stone ranked the album number 488 on its list of The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time ; it was ranked number 481 in a revised list in 2012 . In 2009 , Pitchfork Media ranked Voodoo number 44 on its list of the Top 200 Albums of the 2000s decade , calling it " a triumph of hands @-@ on , real @-@ time , old @-@ school soul minimalism " and citing D 'Angelo 's vocals as " maybe the most erotically tactile singing put to disc this decade " . Rolling Stone placed the album at number 23 on its list of the 100 Best Albums of the Decade , stating " The decade 's most magnificent R & B record was also its most inventive ? so far ahead of its time that it still sounds radical " . AllMusic editor Andy Kellman has cited Brown Sugar and Voodoo as " two of the most excellent and singular R & B albums of the past 15 years " .

= = Tour and aftermath = =

Following Voodoo 's release , D 'Angelo embarked on his second international tour in support of the album , The Voodoo Tour . The tour was sponsored by the clothing company Levi Strauss & Co . , and it featured D 'Angelo promoting an end to gun violence . After signing an initiative on June 7 , 2000 at Hamilton High School in West Los Angeles to collect a million signatures by November 7 in support of " common @-@ sense solutions " to end gun violence , the anti @-@ gun violence organization PAX agreed to sponsor the tour . The tour was also set to feature a wall composed of denim by Levi 's , made available for fans to sign in support of anti @-@ gun violence . D 'Angelo was backed by a group of session personnel and other musicians , assembled and directed by Questlove , called the Soultronics . J Dilla 's group Slum Village opened on several dates , while R & B singer Anthony Hamilton sang backup within the Soultronics on occasion .

D 'Angelo 's wardrobe during the tour included tank tops , black leather pants , and boots . Rolling Stone 's Touré commented on one of the outings , " The Soultronics begin each show in all black , but beyond that one requirement , each looks completely distinct . One man is in a deacon 's robe , another in a long cape with a knit ski cap that says FBI . There ? s a feather boa , a few badass leather coats , and Questlove 's mighty Afro . There 's a P @-@ Funkish freaky flair to the Soultronics ' look . " In contrast to D 'Angelo 's performing behind his keyboard when promoting Brown Sugar , his performances were more lively for Voodoo . Tour manager Alan Leeds , who headed James Brown 's late 1960s and early 1970s outings , as well as Prince 's Purple Rain tour in the mid @-@ 1980s , cited The Voodoo Tour as his most memorable gig .

With ticket prices ranging from \$ 49 to \$ 79 , the tour became one of the most attended shows of 2000 . The tour began on March 1 , 2000 at the House of Blues in Los Angeles , while other venues included Paris Olympia , Trump Taj Mahal , Brixton Academy , the Montreux Jazz Festival , and the Essence Jazz Festival in New Orleans . By July , the tour 's first half had sold out in each city . The tour lasted nearly eight months , while performances went for up to three hours a night . The Voodoo Tour was taken internationally , with one of the most notable performances being the Free Jazz Festival in Brazil .

The music video for " Untitled (How Does It Feel) " portrayed D 'Angelo as a sex symbol to mainstream music audiences , which had repercussions on The Voodoo Tour 's second half . During the tour , female fans yelled out for him to take his clothes off , while others tossed clothes onto the stage . As trumpeter Roy Hargrove recounted , " We couldn 't get through one song before women would start to scream for him to take off something [...] It wasn 't about the music . All they wanted him to do was take off his clothes . " This led to frustration and both onstage and offstage outbursts by D 'Angelo , with him breaking stage equipment . Questlove later said , " He 'd get angry and start breaking shit . The audience thinking , ' Fuck your art , I wanna see your ass ! ' , made him angry . " Although some were cancelled due to D 'Angelo 's throat infection during the tour 's mid @-@ March dates , many shows were cancelled due to his personal and emotional problems . D 'Angelo chose on several occasions to not perform on scheduled dates , and delayed others to do physical workouts like stomach crunches . According to Questlove , three weeks worth of concert dates were cancelled , including two weeks worth of shows in Japan . He elaborated on the experience in a 2003 interview for The Believer , saying that :

In the same interview , Questlove also said that he had not been fully compensated for his work on Voodoo , stating " I didn 't get the rest of my check . " Several of D 'Angelo 's peers and affiliates have noted the commercial impact of the " Untitled (How Does It Feel) " music video and The Voodoo Tour as contributing factors to D 'Angelo 's extended period of absence from the music scene after Voodoo .

= = Track listing = =

= = Personnel = =

Credits adapted from album booklet liner notes .

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =