

John Mayall - Talk About That (2017)

Written by bluesever

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01. Talk About That 02. It's Hard Going Up 03. The Devil Must Be Laughing 04. Gimme Some of That Gumbo 05. Goin' Away Baby 06. Cards on the Table 07. I Didn't Mean to Hurt You 08. Don't Deny Me 09. Blue Midnight 10. Across the County Line 11. You Never Know
John Mayall (vocals, keyboards, harmonica and guitar) Rocky Athas (guitar) Greg Rzab (bass) Jay Davenport (drums) + John Walsh on tracks 3 and 6

There are an awful lot of 'Grandfather of the Blues/Rock/Jazz/Funk' figures around but none are more the true progenitor of our modern Blues/Rock scene than John Mayall and this album, including the Bluesbreakers and live sets will be around release number 60 – the first being in 1965.

The amazing thing is that he doesn't sound like a man whose first album was over 50 years ago and who has been, as they say, 'through the mill'.

The songs on this album are powerful, evocative and steeped in the many forms of Blues that Mayall has been a part of. His vocals are gruff but clear and his piano and keyboards and harmonica are as good as they ever were.

The link up with another legend in Joe Walsh on *The Devil Must Be Laughing* and *Cards On The Table* reminds you of just how many great guitarists he has led over the years – Eric Clapton, Peter Green, Mick Taylor, Harvey Mandel, Walter Trout, Coco Montoya, Buddy Whittington – and what great music he made with them.

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The 'house band' for this album includes Rocky Athas, a guitar band leader of repute from Texas, Greg Rzab, ex-Buddy Guy, on bass and percussion as well as Jay Davenport on drums whose CV includes Sugar Blue, Junior Wells, Valerie Wellington, Pinetop Perkins, John Littlejohn, Jimmie Johnson and a stack of Chicago stalwarts.

So you might think that this is a band of superstars and you'd be right. You might also think that they are just 'earning a buck' playing with a wizened old has-been and you couldn't be further from the truth.

The whole album has a sense of completeness about it. The songs are great, some of Mayall's best work in ages, and the playing is respectful and loaded with passion. Even on a track such as Jimmy Rogers' Goin' Away Baby which is pretty well stock Chicago Blues the song has a groove and swing that lesser artists couldn't get close to.

There are so many high spots on the album, including Mayall's piano on It's Hard Going Up against some divine horns or The Devil Must Be Laughing where his Hammond underpins Walsh's guitar to create some real depth – it is very close to one of Walter Trout's darker moments and chilling as a description of the world today – but the funk of the title track or Blue Midnight make the album worth buying for those alone and add in the New Orleans strut of Gimme Some Of That Gumbo and I found myself dancing with sheer joy.

Mayall has never really been away but this came out of the blue and as a starter for 2017 it is brilliant. --- Andy Snipper, Music-News.com, vintagevinylnews.com

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