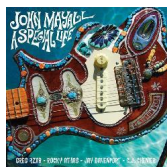


John Mayall - A Special Life (2014)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 23 May 2014 16:08 - Last Updated Friday, 12 March 2021 20:40

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01 – *Why Did You Go Last Night* 02 – *Speak Of The Devil* 03 – *That's All Right* 04 – *World Gone Crazy* 05 – *Floodin' In California* 06 – *Big Town Playboy* 07 – *A Special Life* 08 – *I Just Got To Know* 09 – *Heartache* 10 – *Like A Fool* 11 – *Just A Memory* John Mayall - Clavinet, Guitar, Harmonica, Organ, Piano, Vocals Rocky Athas - Guitars C.J. Chenier - Accordion, Vocals Jay Davenport - Drums Greg Rzab - Guitar (Bass), Percussion

John Mayall has been doing this blues thing now for over five decades (he released his first single in 1964), exploring the form in all of its incarnations, from gutbucket country blues to the more urbane jazz side of things, and amazingly, he's always sounded pretty much like John Mayall, a blues everyman who has always surrounded himself with the best bands and players, a big part of the reason he is still a successful touring act in his eighties. Mayall's put out 60 some albums since 1964, and while he's slowed down a bit in recent years, he's still good for a new album or live set every couple of years or so. *A Special Life*, recorded in November 2013 at Entourage Studios in North Hollywood, features Mayall's current band -- guitarist Rocky Athas, bassist Greg Rzab and drummer Jay Davenport -- with singer and accordion player C.J. Chenier sitting in on a couple of tracks. It's a typical Mayall album, featuring a couple of classic blues covers (including Albert King's "Floodin' in California" here) and several Mayall originals (most of which unfortunately fall lyrically into the generic), all punctuated by piercing harmonica runs and solid ensemble playing. The opener, a cover of Clifton Chenier's "Why Did You Go Last Night," is one of the highlights, a Jimmy Reed-like shuffle given warmth, poignancy, and depth by Clifton's son C.J.'s accordion swells. Although it is built on a fairly generic blues progression in D, Mayall's own "World Gone Crazy" stands out because of its subject matter, which pretty much puts the responsibility for war at the feet of religions, most of which are rigidly intolerant of other religions. It's certainly not one's run of the mill blues theme. This is what Mayall does. He plays blues right down the middle of the road, never straying too far from the classic Chicago blues model, but he adds embellishments now and then, and when they work, he gently bumps the blues into an interesting side alley. ---Steve Leggett, allmusic.com

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