

John Mayall & The Bluesbreakers - Road Dogs (2005)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Road Dogs* (6:03)
02. *Short Wave Radio* (5:06)
03. *So Glad* (4:05)
04. *Forty Days* (4:07) [play](#)
05. *To Heal The Pain* (5:17)
06. *Burned Bridges* (4:34)
07. *Snake Eye* (4:02)
08. *Kona Village* (4:53)
09. *Beyond Control* (6:35)
10. *Chaos In The Neighborhood* (5:10)
11. *You'll Survive* (4:41)
12. *Awestruck & Spellbound* (3:58)
13. *With You* (4:38)
14. *Brumwell's Beat* (3:58)
15. *Scrambling* (3:40) [play](#)

John Mayall (vocals, guitar, harmonica, piano, electric piano, synthesizer)

Buddy Whittington (guitar)

Eric Steckel (guitar)

Dale Morris Jr. (violin)

Tom Canning (piano, organ)

Hank Van Sickle (bass guitar)

Joe Yuele (drums)

During the course of his forty-year career, John Mayall has endured some fallow periods, but the British-born bluesman put himself into a creative stride when he renamed his band the Bluesbreakers back in 1984. Using the name which had gained such fame when including Eric Clapton, Mick Taylor, and John McVie, among others, this seemingly cosmetic change brought

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Mayall to an elevated level of creativity that continues to this day, in the form of a brand new, self-produced studio album with his current lineup.

Mayall and his band excel on Road Dogs through a range of styles. With keyboardist Tom Canning having exited the group following the early 2005 recording of this disc—sessions and mixing, all within a month!—Mayall's prompted to think outside the box of the standard quintet: as in the past, when Mayall has had to find his way through personnel shifts (many of his own making; see The Turning Point), the result is new inspiration in various forms of composition as well as arrangement. Accordingly, the standard blues progression of "Short Wave Radio gives way to the jazz inflections of "So Glad. A terrific sound production by Mayall himself with the band reveals the contrast between Mayall's piano (he remains an elementary but effective player) and drummer Joe Yeule's brushes on "forty Days. The mournful violin supplied by Dale Morris Jr. on "To Heal the Pain and "You'll Survive plays off against Hank Van Sickle's upright bass, with electric piano highlighted in the mix as well. Mayall plays synthesizers on the title song and "Chaos in the Neighborhood with judicious restraint. Songs such as that topical tune haven't always been Mayall's strong suit as a composer, but, as with "To Heal the Pain, his avoidance of generalities keep the songs free of truisms. John is much more effective writing from a personal emotional standpoint, as he does on "With You, because its simple, straightforward approach sounds most natural. "Scrambling might be purely mundane in the hands of a performer less forthright than Mayall: the bittersweet wail of his harmonica undercuts the proselytizing, emphasizing instead his humility. His obvious affection for his current Bluesbreakers lineup doesn't always evince itself effectively, however. Buddy Whittington's guitar work is never so intense as when he's also lead vocalist, as he is on his self-composed "Awestruck and Spellbound. But that track, as well as the band-composed instrumental "Brumwell's Beat, might well be left to live showcases from the stage, since neither adds much to the momentum of Road Dogs as a whole. This new John Mayall doesn't contain a truly superlative piece like "Mists of Time from its predecessor, Stories, nor is it innovative enough to qualify as an absolute essential in the man's lengthy discography, Still, the CD is a worthwhile addition to the legacy of the Godfather of British blues because of the consistently high level of performance in such a variety of blues-based styles.

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