

DINU LOGOZ

JOHN MAYALL

The Blues Crusader

John Mayall World Tour

*(All world tour dates on
www.johnmayall.com):*

22.9. Hannover
23.9. Ennepetal
24.9. Berlin
25.9. Hamburg

21.10. Zürich
22.10. Thun
23.10. Amriswil
24.10. Dornbirn
26.10. Graz
27.10. Salzburg
28.10. Wien
3/4/5.11. Ronnie Scott's,
London

EDITION OLMS







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JOHN MAYALL
The Blues Crusader

His Life – His Music – His Bands

EDITION OLMS ZÜRICH



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Eric is God and the Beano album

The Bluesbreakers with Eric Clapton, 1965–66

Mayall remembers: “Eric had the magic touch. On “Got to Hurry” it was all definitely right there, irresistible. It just gave me chills. There was something there that cut right through me. To have such mastery and feel at that age is pretty remarkable; it’s scary, actually! So the fact that he left the Yardbirds was perfect timing.” “Got to Hurry” was a bluesy guitar instrumental in the Freddy King idiom, with stunning, stinging guitar lines played through a Vox amp, cranked up full with plenty of buzz, sustain and crackle. Clapton recalls: “John Mayall called me up about two weeks after I’d left the Yardbirds. It suited me fine because it was a blues band. For me, in those days, I didn’t like anything else. What I saw was a frame I could fit into. And I was very grateful that someone saw my worth.” While many British groups started as blues or R&B bands, and rapidly became mainstream thanks to chart success (the Rolling Stones, the Kinks, Manfred Mann, the Animals, Spencer Davis, the Pretty Things and the Yardbirds), Mayall and the Bluesbreakers remained true to the blues. Mayall was immersed in his music, the complete anthesis of a pop star, and something of a blues purist himself. Mayall let Eric move into his house in Blackheath, London, in early April 1965, where he was given a tiny room of his own. Eric mostly stayed there, practicing and listening to John’s vast collection of blues records, probably the finest in England at the time. Having finally found a guitarist who really knew how to play the blues was manna from heaven for the 31-year old Mayall. He also found a soul mate in Eric’s character. As Clapton remembers: “I think that until I came along, Mayall had been quite isolated in his musical tastes, and now he’d found someone just as serious about the blues as he was.” Clapton had just turned twenty and was looking for sanctuary. In Mayall he had found someone he could relate to who was also a strong bandleader in the Muddy Waters tradition. And not only that, but the Bluesbreakers also had a great rhythm section. What Clapton says about Mayall speaks for itself: “He was very good in that he’d listened to me about music, one of the first people who did. We would lis-

ten to a lot of blues, and pick songs that were right for the stage. He was easy company, older than me, but keen to draw me out and find what I thought. It was most unusual, a very important band for me. I did flower a lot during my time with John Mayall. He had a hell of a lot of responsibility on his hands. I mean, he used to take care of everything: bookings, everything. He was a good father figure. And he never gave me terms like you can't leave this band: once you get good, you're staying with it. It was more like once you've got on your own two feet, make your own way."

Clapton made his first live appearance with John Mayall's band on Tuesday, 6 April 1965. "There were no rehearsals," drummer Hughie Flint recalls. "I first met Eric on the street outside my house. We got in the van and went off to his first gig, wherever it was, and Eric played just like Eric can play." McVie remembers: "Eric came in like a powerhouse, very strong and intense. He was almost unreal." Clapton was still using his trusted red Fender Telecaster from his Yardbirds days. Clapton's impact on the band was immediate. Not only did he win over existing fans, but brought his own substantial following with him. His stunning technique and style, coupled with his anti-hero stance, ensured that within weeks people were flooding in to see him play. Clapton's chops were influenced by Freddie King and Buddy Guy; he was louder and more aggressive than anything that had been heard in England before. He would often play with his back to the audience, as like this he could achieve better feedback-fuelled sustain. On stage, his physical presence was striking. He stood stock still, often with his eyes closed in a world of his own, refusing to put on any sort of show. His devastating technique and deep soul seemed somehow ill at ease with his quiet but friendly, unassuming character. Thanks to the new guitar player, Mayall's career blossomed as well. Clapton enabled his boss to reach a much wider audience, as crowds filled the clubs to catch a glimpse of the new guitar hero. Flint commented: "It was the Eric Clapton show, it wasn't John Mayall's Bluesbreakers: there were more people coming along to see Eric!" Producer Mike Vernon remembers: "Eric's joining the band changed it totally. With Clapton, the band had two focal points, and the power of the band was so much greater with him in front, playing in this really strong Freddie King, or B.B. King, kind of style. I think it was a real shock to people who'd only seen him play with the Yardbirds. He'd stepped into different shoes altogether; it was like he came from another planet. I was very impressed, particularly by the aggression of his playing and the toughness. When Eric joined the Bluesbreakers the audiences grew at an alarming pace."

New publicity photos of the Bluesbreakers taken around this time show a smart looking Eric Clapton sporting a tiny moustache, while John Mayall

holds his newly acquired first solid-body guitar, a Burns with three pickups, that he had cut around, decorated and hand painted, an instrument that he often used as a five-string guitar with open tunings in E or C for slide playing. Mayall had also built himself a harmonica harness with a built-in microphone to free up his hands, so he could simultaneously play organ and harp. He had also upgraded his Farfisa Compact with the more powerful Hammond M100 organ, already popularized in Britain by Georgie Fame, Zoot Money, Graham Bond and Brian Auger. Around the end of May, Clapton found a second-hand sunburst Gibson Les Paul Standard in Lew Davis's guitar shop in Charing Cross Road. The sound was heavier and creamier than anything British beat-boom guitarists had produced thus far, with a rich, gritty, warm, singing tone. Suddenly, Clapton had much more sustain, and his unique, violin-like sound with rich, distorted overtones was to influence generations of guitar players. Eric remembers how he found his signature sound: "It really came about accidentally, when I was trying to emulate the sharp, thin sound that Freddy King got out of his Les Paul, and I ended up with something quite different, a sound that was a lot fatter than Freddy's."

Now Mayall had almost everything he needed, a well-equipped band and the best blues guitarist in all the land. What he didn't have was a record deal, for it was around spring 1965 that Mayall's contract with Decca expired, and after the poor sales of the first three releases, they didn't renew it. Instead, Mayall accepted an offer by Andrew Loog Oldham (who managed the Rolling Stones) to record a single for his newly established Immediate label. As a result, two Mayall originals, "I'm Your Witchdoctor" and "Telephone Blues" were recorded at Pye studios in early June, produced by the highly respected 21-year old session guitarist Jimmy Page. The A-side featured inventive single note feedback solos from Eric, with notes being progressively sustained a little longer at each chorus. The B-side was a slow blues, inspired by a track with the same title by Chicago harp ace George "Harmonica" Smith. Jimmy Page remembers the sessions: "The engineer, who was used to doing big bands and orchestras, suddenly turned off the machine and said: 'This guitarist is unrecordable!' I told him just to record it, and I'd take full responsibility. The guy couldn't believe that someone was getting that kind of sound out of a guitar on purpose." The single was eventually released in October 1965 and was easily the best electric blues single of the year. *Melody Maker* wrote: "A superb disc which deserves to be a hit." Although never chart material, "I'm Your Witchdoctor" was one of Immediate's biggest-selling early releases, and the closest Mayall got to a UK hit. It was re-released in 1967 when Clapton was successful with

Cream, and both tracks found their way onto many compilations and re-issue albums. This track eventually became one of Mayall's most covered songs, with versions by Them and even Motörhead!

Always recognizing a good guitarist, at one point Mayall asked Page if he would be interested in joining, but the latter didn't want to join a touring band as he had too much session work. Even Jeff Beck was asked when Clapton left for the first or second time. Clearly, Mayall always had an eye open for replacements, fully aware that new and talented musicians alter the chemistry, and bring new life to any band. Confusingly, Page remembers further Mayall-Clapton songs being taped at this or later sessions, not only "On Top Of the World" and "Double Crossing Time", but also songs such as Mayall's "So Sorry" and Freddy King's "Someday After Awhile", both mentioned on album liner notes. However, many remain unissued, and due to a cock-up of monumental proportions, virtually all Immediate's master tapes were wiped in error. As a result, several studio-recorded Mayall-Clapton outtakes will never see the light of day.

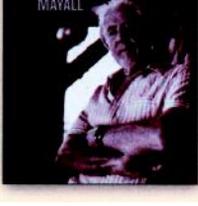
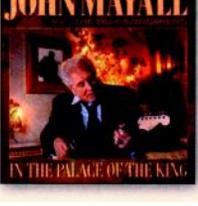
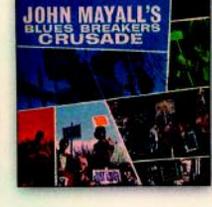
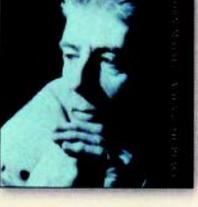
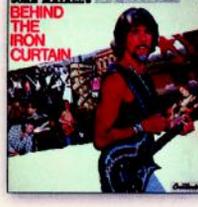
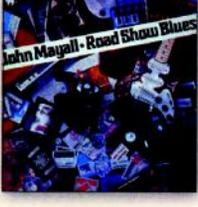
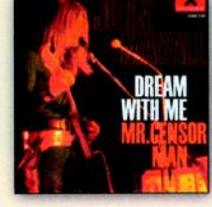
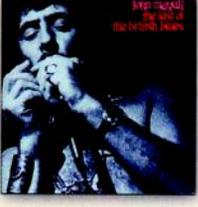
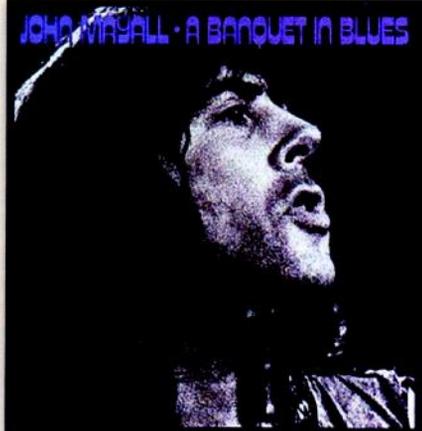
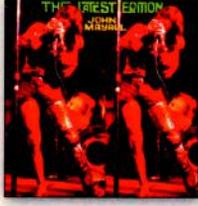
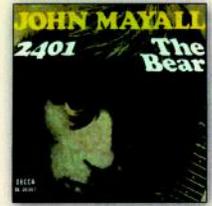
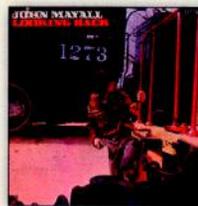
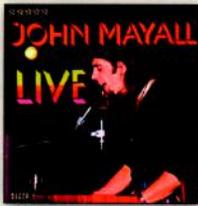
On May 25, the Bluesbreakers played Klooks Kleek, one of Mayall's mainstays from 1964 to 1970. American blues pianist and singer Champion Jack Dupree, now resident in Europe, was on the same bill, and that meant long jam sessions with Mayall's band! A talented young guitarist from Putney, London by the name of Peter Green witnessed these concerts, and raved: "Wonderful, absolutely out of this world. Nothing I had ever seen up to that point was better than Clapton." At this time, the set list included "Chicago Line", "Heartache" and "I Need Your Love", as well as Freddy King's instrumental "Hideaway", Little Walter's "My Baby is Sweeter", "Red Beans & Rice" by Booker T & The MGs, "I Ain't Got You" by Billy Boy Arnold, "Bad Boy" by Eddie Taylor, "My Last Meal" by Jimmy Rogers and of course Ray Charles' "What'd I Say". With Eric, the Bluesbreakers played mostly Chicago Blues, while more jazz-tinged songs, disliked by Clapton, vanished from their repertoire. During one of Mayall's weekly visits to the Pontiac club in Putney, south-west London at summer, Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page turned up to see Clapton play. At one point, Beck and Page were invited up on stage, forming an impressive three-guitar line-up. Several fans clearly later remember that night, although oddly enough Mayall himself has no memory of it.

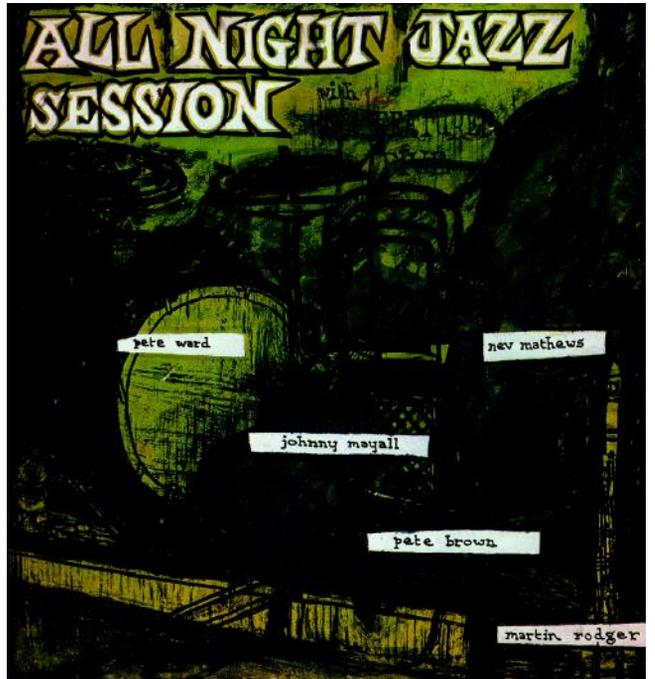
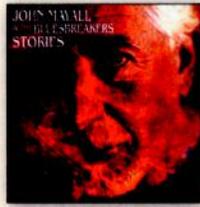
Around this time, the relationship between Mayall and Clapton was becoming tense. Eric could be moody, and had the tendency to pick holes in a situation. Clapton recalls: "I have always found something that isn't right, things that you're slightly ashamed of being in a band for - I mean, just quirks. In this band, it became John Mayall himself. Together with a couple

of the other members of the group, we started to gang up on John behind his back. Since Mayall was that much older than the rest of us, and was to our minds a respectable middle-class man living with a wife and kids in suburbia, the dynamics of the band were very much 'him and us.' We saw him in the role of schoolmaster, with us as the naughty boys. He was tolerant up to a point, but we knew there was a limit and we did our best to push him to it. We would take the mickey out of him behind his back, muttering about him not being a good enough singer, and being too flamboyant and eccentric in his presentation. We were giggling when he went on stage bare to the waist. He was a well-built man, and more than a little vain, and we liked to see just how far we could go before he lost his temper. John had many quirks, and we used to really take the piss out of him behind his back on stage. He was amazing; no one was allowed to drink! John McVie got slung out of the bandwagon halfway between Birmingham and London one night because he was drunk, and had to make his own way home. And if we did a gig in Manchester, where Mayall's parents lived, he'd go and stay the night at his mum's and we'd have to sleep in the van. He didn't get us a hotel or anything. So there were disadvantages!"

Mayall was undoubtedly a gifted bandleader but often accused of running a tight ship. He responded thus: "Not a tight ship but a professional ship. If you work seven to nine gigs a week, you have to." In contrast to most blues musicians, Mayall had his life organized down to the last detail. He confirmed that Eric could be moody, and added "By that I mean he'd conjure up these incredibly moods and intensity. The things he did with a slow blues: when he felt like playing a slow blues, he could send shivers down your spine. But it was always awkward dealing with Eric because you could never read what mood would take with him. There were nights when Eric would be on stage and wouldn't feel like playing for one reason or another, and he would stand there and more or less just strum. Mick Taylor had that disease, too. But that was all part of the person. Eric and Mick made up for that with total brilliance on nights when they did feel like playing."

Eric also had quirks, and was not one hundred percent reliable. From time to time he didn't turn up, or was late, to the consternation of his boss. He sometimes preferred to jam with other bands, and it was not unknown for him to be seen playing at the Marquee with Stevie Winwood in the Spencer Davis Group when the Bluesbreakers were booked to appear down the road at the Flamingo. When this happened, the Bluesbreakers appeared as a three piece!





John Mayall on World Tour: This is the first detailed Biography

Dinu Logoz

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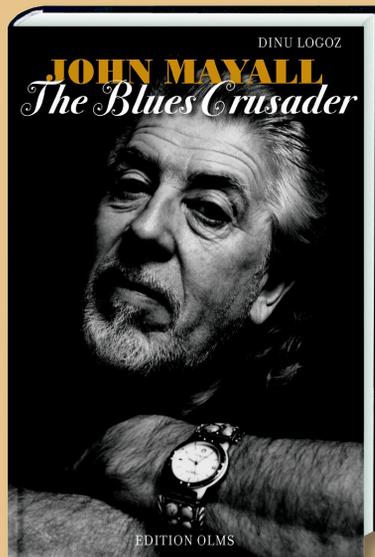
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➔ **JOHN MAYALL** is an icon in the world of blues music and the Godfather of British blues. A pioneering musician, blues promoter and talent scout for over 50 years, his uncanny knack of picking young, talented musicians and then nurturing them in his bands is the stuff of legend. Many young members became huge stars later on, among them brilliant musicians such as *Eric Clapton*, *Peter Green*, *Jack Bruce*, *Mick Fleetwood*, *John McVie*, *Mick Taylor* and drummer *Jon Hiseman*. In Mayall's bands, an incredible 130 musicians have done their apprenticeship and earned their spurs. Top bands like Cream, Fleetwood Mac or Colosseum would never have existed without his inspiration and guidance.

➔ Now 81 and showing no signs of slowing down, **JOHN MAYALL** has an amazing back catalogue totalling some 86 albums, and has played over 5000 live concerts all over the world.

➔ This is the first detailed biography of Mayall, illuminating not only his life and career, but also providing deeper, more detailed insights into the development of his many fellow musicians. It follows the young Mayall from the early days of



jamming in his tree house as a teenager to the vast tours he undertakes today. Even die-hard blues fans will find a lot of undiscovered anecdotes and stories here, as the book covers all phases of the Mayall's career and not just the 60s.

➔ Written by experienced Mayall expert and blues aficionado **DINU LOGOZ**, a Swiss blues musician with an encyclopaedic knowledge of this type of music.

➔ Seine zahllosen Bands wurden zur legendären Blues-Schule und Talentschmiede, in der sich über 130 Musiker ihre Spuren verdient haben, darunter etliche spätere Weltstars wie *Eric Clapton*, *Peter Green*, *Jack Bruce*, *Mick Fleetwood*, *John McVie*, *Mick Taylor* oder *Jon Hiseman*. Top-Bands wie Cream, Fleetwood Mac oder Colosseum wären ohne ihn nie zusammengekommen.

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