

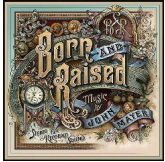
## John Mayer – Born and Raised (2012)

Written by bluelover

Saturday, 23 June 2012 17:09 - Last Updated Friday, 12 March 2021 19:59

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01 – Queen of California 02 – The Age of Worry 03 – Shadow Days 04 – Speak For Me 05 – Something Like Olivia [play](#) 06 – Born and Raised 07 – If I Ever Get Around To Living 08 – Love Is a Verb [play](#) 09 – Walt Grace's Submarine Test, January 1967 10 – Whiskey, Whiskey, Whiskey 11 – A Face To Call Home 12 – Born and Raised (Reprise)

Musicians: John Mayer – vocals, guitars, harmonica, keyboards, percussion, production Sean Hurley – bass Aaron Sterling – drums, percussion Chuck Leavell – keyboards

By now, it comes as no surprise that Mayer shifts directions once more. This time, it's not only the music that has changed, but also his appearance. His new image as the lonely cowboy earned him the "Johnny Depp look-alike" status among fans. But this style switch is not unjustified, since it goes hand in hand with his new music. The pop-blues tunes that fans grew accustomed to are pretty much absent from this record, their spot being taken by folk-rock songs - sometimes tapping into country - focusing on composition, melody and feel rather than virtuosity. So don't expect blistering guitar solos or a flashy production...this time around, there's just John with an acoustic, pouring his heart out to whoever is willing to listen.

Mayer's latest effort starts off with an optimistic vibe, present all over "Queen of California", where he says goodbye to cold, rain, sorrow and shame, and welcomes beauty and wonder. The third track and also the first single, "Shadow Days", which employs a lap steel guitar, does not change the mood, hinting at better times to come: "Now I'm right here, and I'm right now/ And I'm hoping, knowing somehow/That my shadows days are over". "Something Like Olivia" is definitely a toe-tapper, infusing a happy mood and featuring a great solo to top it all off.

As the record progresses, the overall atmosphere changes quite a bit, John being now more bittersweet and heavyhearted. In retrospective, he sings in the title track, accompanied by a

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hauntingly beautiful harmonica: "I still have dreams, they're not the same/They don't fly as high as they used to". "Walt Grace's Submarine Test, January 1967" could be considered the odd track here (probably thrown in for good measure), telling a strange story that could easily fit into one of Bob Dylan's songs.

As autobiographical as the rest of the songs are, John saves the most heartfelt one for the end: "Whiskey, whiskey, whiskey" is a perfect blend of melody, arrangement and lyrics, carefully crafted to make one of the highlights of the whole album. Although he confesses: "The stage was set, the words were mine/I'm not complaining", the chorus – "Whiskey, whiskey, whiskey/ Wake up, shake it off/ And repeat" over some well-chosen chord changes – brings a whole new dimension to the song, suggesting a routine that slowly drains the life out of the idolized pop-star.

All of Mayer's favorite singers could be viewed as influences here, from Dave Matthews to Sting, from Ryan Adams or David Gray to Bob Dylan. Production-wise, Mayer and Don Was made a clear, straight-forward mix for a straight-forward record. Just like with "Room for Squares", his other acoustic guitar-driven album, there are some tracks that don't really stick. But the fact that John Mayer matured is undeniable...or so it seems. --- Mihnea Sechely, [mayerreviews.blogspot.com](http://mayerreviews.blogspot.com)

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