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MUSIC REVIEWS

JOHN MAYER TRIO

*Try! John Mayer Trio Live in Concert*

Aware/Columbia



Despite John Mayer's teen-pop image, the 28-year-old heartthrob knows his way around a guitar. If his major-label debut *Room for Squares* owed a bit to Dave Matthews, and 2003's Mom-friendly *Heavier Things* established him as the '80s revival's Huey Lewis, then the new *Try! John Mayer Trio Live in Concert* is his homage to guitar hero Stevie Ray Vaughan (Mayer even has an "SRV" tattoo on his arm).

With bassist Pino Palladino and drummer Steve Jordan, the acoustic balladeer unleashes his electric guitar, even covering icons like Jimi Hendrix and Ray Charles. First single "Who Did You Think I Was" opens the album on a blue note, announcing Mayer's stylistic shift. Mayer's blazing guitar solos on nearly every song are bound to surprise new listeners, and his voice's growing suppleness is apparent on renditions of old favorites "Something's Missing" and "Daughters."

He slows things down for the remarkably soulful "Gravity," as female fans can be heard screaming their affection, and waxes optimistic over a springy riff on "Good Love Is on the Way." The singer's respect for another famous trio shows through on funky "Vultures," where his husky vocals sound more Sting-like than usual. Throughout, Mayer's smoldering playing and witty songcraft help the Trio expand upon its obvious influences, clearing the path for wherever Mayer's guitar leads him next.

-- Marc Hogan