

Battle Studies embodies the mature side of singer Mayer's colorful personality explodes onto CD canvas

Chris Terzic — Sports Editor

John Mayer — what a curious case. As a pop personality, the guy is a barrel of laughs. He's a tabloid fixture who wears his celebrity with a wink: modeling Borat's onesie swimsuit, starring in goofy YouTube videos, and generally disarming, with wit and self-deprecation, the millions inclined to hate a starlet-shagging guitar player. But then Mayer steps into a studio, and the fun gimmick stops.

It's as if Mayer is burdened by his status as heir apparent to the Sting- tradition of classy pop-

rock classicism.

There's no doubting the man's chops. *Battle Studies* is a real study in craftsmanship and understated guitar. But the solemnity is suffocating. On "Heartbreak Warfare," Mayer delivers U2-style guitar and strained war metaphors: "Clouds of sulfur in the air/Bombs are falling everywhere." That bust-up with Jennifer Aniston was bad, but was it really like the firebombing of Tokyo?

Battle Studies is terrific when Mayer drops the seriousness, pondering, and sending up his reputation as a rake. On "Half

of My Heart," with Taylor Swift, Mayer plays the guy who kisses with one eye open, scanning for his next conquest. Then there's the folk-pop single "Who Says," the confession of a dope-smoking roué: "I don't remember you looking any better/But then again, I don't remember you."

Turns out loose, funny Mayer isn't just good for publicity. It's good for art.

If you're a Mayer fan through and through, this CD will not blow you away, but for a casual fan, it won't disappoint.

FINAL GRADE: B-

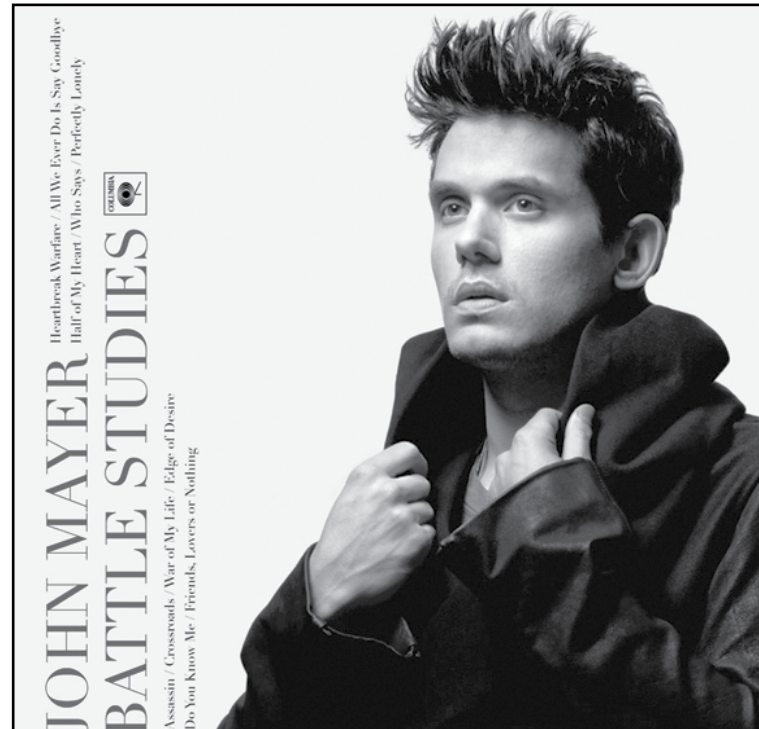


Photo courtesy of Columbia Records online
John Mayer's fourth studio album, *Battle Studies*, was released on Nov. 17, 2009.

Old classic meets modern day animation

Dicken's heartfelt story of a greedy mans adventure to change his lifestyle goes 3-D

Hailey Vraney — Photo Coordinator

Get ready to see *A Christmas Carol* in a new light. Disney's version of this classic heartfelt tale comes into theaters in 3-D. Featuring the voice of Jim Carrey as all five scrooges (old and young) and all the ghosts, *A Christmas Carol* puts a modern twist on the classic Dickens tale of Ebenezer Scrooge.

The movie takes you on a journey back to the Victorian-era to follow the life-changing trip of an old and bitter miser who must change the future to change his life for the better. Scrooge must face

the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future in order to find the true meaning of Christmas. The ghosts take Scrooge's cold heart and fill it with kindness.

The movie begins with the death of Scrooge's partner, Jacob Marley. He later comes back as a spirit to tell Scrooge of the weight he must bear in the afterlife if he doesn't change.

This begins the mysterious and magical encounters Scrooge has with the three ghosts of Christmas.

The only problems in the movie so far is that Marley is at times hard to understand and hear. In many instances, the sound of

the chains overpowers his voice, leaving you only able to hear a few words of what he says. The Ghost of Christmas Past has similar problems. His voice is so raspy that at times you can't understand anything he's saying. His voice is annoying and breathy. It makes you want to shut your ears whenever you hear him talking.

The scenes with the Ghost of Christmas Present are perhaps the best in the entire movie. You get a downward view of the town as Scrooge and the ghost view the scene of the town in Scrooge's room. This Ghost is a happy, cheery fellow who seems to love everything about life. His death,

however, is extremely spine-chilling.

The view direction you see is striking and shows you different areas of the town, such as churches and workers cleaning out chimneys. The 3-D aspect makes these scenes even better, and it almost seems as if it is snowing in the theatre itself. It gives you a more real life perspective of the thrills and terrors Scrooge experiences with each ghost he encounters.

The Ghost of Christmas Past was perhaps the worst, and scariest, part of the film. Part of it doesn't make any sense.

It begins with Scrooge running from a horse drawn carriage led by two demon-like horses with red eyes. This event takes up most of the scene. You hardly see the ghost until Scrooge is thrown out of his maid's house.

The plot goes back to Dicken's original story at the grave yard. When the ghost uncovers his veil and shows his face, the sight of it will send chills down most childrens' spines.

Scrooge then returns to his house just in time for Christmas Day. He sends a turkey to his long-suffering employee, Bob Cratchit, and donates money to charity.

He also goes to his nephew's Christmas party, a party he had never before had the desire to attend.

The movie helps audience member see the moral behind the story: a person can change oneself no matter who you are.

The movie helps send the messages of the true meaning of Christmas, and after seeing it, you will be left with a feeling of joy and a lightness of heart.



Photo courtesy of www.disney.go.com

The Ghost of Christmas Present (left) tells Ebenezer Scrooge (right) that the present is just as important as the past and future. Carey voiced six of the characters in the movie including Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Present.

FINAL GRADE: A-

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