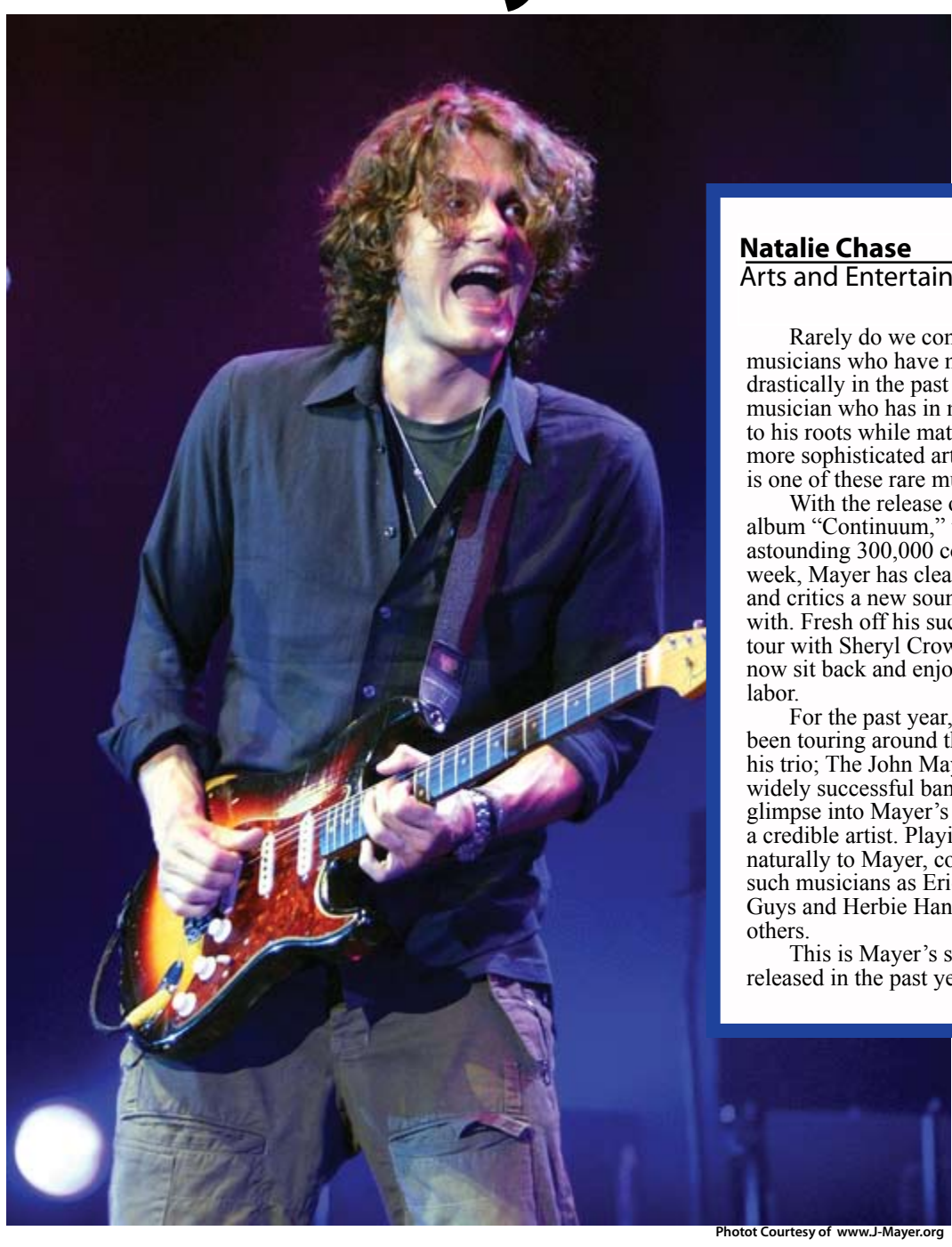
John Mayer Reaching a New Deep



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Natalie Chase
Arts and Entertainment Editor

Rarely do we come across musicians who have matured so drastically in the past five years. A musician who has in many ways stuck to his roots while maturing into a new, more sophisticated artist, John Mayer is one of these rare musicians.

With the release of his new album "Continuum," which sold an astounding 300,000 copies in its first week, Mayer has clearly given his fans and critics a new sound to be reckoned with. Fresh off his successful summer tour with Sheryl Crow, Mayer can now sit back and enjoy the fruits of his labor.

For the past year, Mayer has been touring around the country with his trio; The John Mayer Trio. This widely successful band was the first glimpse into Mayer's bright future as a credible artist. Playing blues comes naturally to Mayer, collaborating with such musicians as Eric Clapton, Buddy Guys and Herbie Hancock, among others.

This is Mayer's second album released in the past year, following his November debut of JM3's "Try!". "Continuum" features tracks from "Try!" such as "Gravity" and "Vultures", both of which are softer in sound and less bluesy than on "Try!". In addition to these phenomenal tracks, Mayer has given us ten more tracks that are equally amazing. Singing about everything from politics to lost love, Mayer gives his audience a wide variety of music to enjoy.

"Continuum" is a huge step forward for Mayer; his previous albums "Room for Squares" and "Heavier Things" come from a different time in his life that represented a younger, less experienced musician who had not yet come into himself as an artist.

Although these albums solidified Mayer as a talented musician, they did help him get labeled as more of a pop artist appealing only to young girls rather than a serious musician who appeals to a wide audience. With "Continuum," Mayer gives his girls what they like but also appeals to a broader, more mature audience by making music that is obviously more adult. With the maturing of himself, his music and fans have followed.

Key tracks on "Continuum" are "Waiting On the World to Change," "I Don't Trust Myself (with loving you), "Slow Dancing in a Burning Room" and "Gravity," a song that Mayer said "Might be the most important song I have ever wrote." These tracks deal with the political attitudes of our generation towards the war to short fuse of love.

So forget what you've heard. This is the album of the year, the one you do not want to miss. Even Mayer's harshest critics have changed their tune, and maybe you will too. Mayer has staying power, and thanks to "Continuum," Mayer's soulful lyrics and ingenious sound is long lasting. Songs like these make you remember the people in your life, experiences you've had and the journey you've taken. "Continuum" has reached a new deep for Mayer and his fans, and perhaps it will reach you as well. John Mayer is taking us on a trip down memory lane, and we're sitting in the passenger seat, ready for the long journey ahead.

This is Music: Punk Rock

Sean Stoto
Staff Writer

What comes to mind when you hear the word "punk?" Spikes? Chains? Ripped jeans? Contrary to popular belief, it isn't all about mohawks and piercings. Before punk became an angst-fueled fashion statement, it was a style of music.

The punk style of music, or punk rock, is minimalist at best, using basic chords and a typical verse-chorus formation. Punk bands often apply distortion to their guitars, use catchy yet simple bass lines, and have untrained vocals. The beat is usually fast-paced and simple, as well, which is just its charm. Punk bands strayed away from the popular rock sound surrounding them in the 70s (and eventually 80s), by cutting any complicated bass lines or lengthy guitar solos. The solos were looked down upon as self-indulgent and unnecessary. Punk rock was anti-pop, anti-establishment rock n' roll music.

Many bands are mistakenly called punk when, in reality, they aren't. It's a common misconception to label mainstream rock bands as punk rock because they make slightly fast-paced music, or because the performers dress somewhat alternatively. There is an irony in calling a modern rock band that is backed by a multi-billion dollar corporate record label punk rock. One example of this would be the popular band Green Day.

The founding bands of punk rock had no intention of getting signed to any record label, let alone a major one. These are the bands that made music for the sake of standing out and doing something new. There was a quirk of fate along the way, and many of these bands are now world-renowned belonging to big-name labels. Some of these bands include The Ramones, The Velvet Underground, Television, and Sex Pistols.

These bands are just part of the first wave. They spawned innumerable other punk rock bands, some of which are still around today, like Bad Religion and Rancid. The genre has gotten so wide and vast that there are multiple subgenres that encompass the varying sounds. Some of the more well known subgenres include anarcho-punk, horror punk, hardcore, and punkabilly.

The concept of DIY (do-it-yourself) was prominent among punk bands, especially anarcho-punks. Many bands, such as Crass, took it to extremes to the point of making their own instruments. These bands were very heavy into what they did, and could make Sex Pistols look like The Beach Boys.

"London Calling" by The Clash

"Los Angeles" by X

"Ramones" by The Ramones

"Nevermind the Bollocks Heres the Sex Pistols" by Sex Pistols

"The Feeding of the 5000" by Crass

"Everything Falls Apart -and More" by Husker Du

"Machine Gun Etiquette" by The Damned

ALL THE WAY LIVE FROM 215:

Photo Courtesy of www.wikepidia.org

Alex Biles
Guest Writer

For 19 years now, Philly's finest, The Roots, have been holding it down, continually challenging the hip hop status quo, pushing hip hop's boundaries into areas where they've never been before. For those not familiar with the sextet, The Roots are a hip hop group that actually plays their own instruments; a comical thought to the average music listener who would never put the words "hip hop" and "music" in the same sentence unless it included a "not." However, The Roots are far from a gimmick. They have been regarded by many as one of the most consistent musical groups of the past decade, regardless of genre, Rolling Stone and Spin Magazine have both named The Roots one of the top 20 live acts in the world.

Since their obscure, 1993 debut "Organix," The Roots have never been one to follow the crowd or adhere to trends. In many ways, this has hurt the group as they have never been able to capture mainstream appeal, get radio airplay or have a major "hit" despite their Grammy award and their critical acclaim. Their sound has evolved as much as their lineup, from the live horns, no sampling and widespread beat boxing of their early albums to 1999's epic "Things Fall Apart" to the psychedelic rock/funk of "Phrenology". The current lineup includes, original members Black Thought (rap vocals), ?uestlove (drums) and Hub bass guitar) as well as Kamal (keyboard), Captain Kirk (guitar), and Knuckles (percussion). Black Thought, who is, without a doubt, the most underrated rapper of all-time (he is Nas and Talib Kweli's favorite rapper), is known for his clever rhyming and political consciousness. ?uestlove is also considered one of the best drummers in music, and has collaborated with dozens of artists, including John Mayer, Fiona Apple, D'Angelo, Common and The Neptunes, among others.

That is where Game Theory, the group's 8th album comes in. After splitting with Geffen Records after 2004's Tipping Point and signing to Def Jam, The Roots took on a completely different attitude, and it shows. Sonically and lyrically, The Roots have reached a new level.

A dark record, Game Theory is reflective of the political state of America right now. "There was too much going on that we couldn't just sit back and not speak on it,-" says ?uestlove.

Black Thought sounds angry and spits politically conscious rhymes about Hurricane Katrina ("Don't Feel Right"), government surveillance ("Livin' In A New World"), media influence ("False Media"), and the exploitation of hip hop ("Baby"). Rather than gloating about women and riches, he is serious and disturbed in discussing problems: "They say that city makes a dark impression / the youth just lost and they want direction / but they don't get the police, they get the protection / and walk around with heat like they're Charlton Heston." The sonic maturity of the band can be heard as well with the fast-paced funk and booming drums on "Here I Come" and the killer guitar riff and violins on "Long Time." The album closes with an 8-minute tribute to recently deceased musical producer (and Detroit native) Jay Dee aka J Dilla.

The Roots' longevity speaks for itself. While many of today's popular artists will be forgotten and obsolete 5 to 10 years from now, The Roots are still around after almost 20 years, consistently releasing quality music. With Game Theory, The Roots have cemented themselves as the longest lasting hip hop group, as well as one of the most important musical groups of the past decade. Game Theory is not the second coming of Christ, or the best thing since sliced bread, or the best album of all-time. However, in today's watered down, "stick to the formula," boring, trend-dominated mainstream music scene, to see a group, let alone a hip hop group, push the envelope, break all the rules and succeed is a rarity and should be acknowledged. So whether you're a fan of hip hop, a fan of good music in general, or angry with the state of the world today, do yourself a favor and check out The Roots and one of this year's best albums, Game Theory.