

2/27/2007

# THE DAILY ORANGE

## **Continuum Winter Tour '07 Hits Syracuse**

*John Mayer talks about his new album, collaboration, and  
being a control freak*

By Mark Zito

"I could use some more rock star stereotypes."

John Mayer knows his place in the music industry. But that doesn't mean he's not trying to change it. Mayer gave his thoughts on the subject in a recent teleconference with writers from all over the country. The Daily Orange was lucky enough to participate and, sorry in advance, we didn't ask about Jessica Simpson.

"I have the songwriter stereotype. I don't even know if I'd even call it a stereotype, it's more like a side effect for the messages that you're most famous for putting across. I come across as a sensitive bed wetter."

Well, bed wetter or not, Mayer still knows how to play guitar. And it's a safe bet that tonight, as the Continuum tour rolls into Syracuse, the audience will be getting a healthy dose of that. But at the same time, that could be something most don't expect. Because really, when it comes down to it, there are two John Mayers.

One John is the musician that many on this campus are familiar with: ladies man, acoustic guitar player...you know, the guy who wrote "Your Body Is A Wonderland". The other guy is the man who was just named "Slowhand Jr." in Rolling Stone Magazine's list of "The New Guitar Gods". He has shared the stage with guitar legends Buddy Guy, Eric Clapton, and B.B. King.

Most know of Mayer's recent Grammy winning effort, Continuum, as well as his previous studio discs on Columbia Records. But fewer are familiar his work in The John Mayer Trio (with bassist Pino Palladino and drummer Steve Jordan) and their 2005 release "Try!" The Trio effort, while not a commercial blockbuster, was recorded live over the group's 2005 tour and it allowed Mayer the opportunity to really show off his guitar abilities in a more bluesy format.

But which guy is he? Sensitive songwriter or guitar god? After releasing two very different albums in the past two years, Mayer has started to figure it out for himself.

"The Continuum record is kind of the result of having burned off a lot of what I needed to play in the Trio. I'd gone three or four years into a career that I was neglecting a certain side of my playing and thinking and writing, and to go straight into that and to just commit to that, really

when I was done with the Trio, I had been successfully play[ing] pop music and really kind of guitar-based rock music. With both of those things under my belt, I could go into the studio and make *Continuum* in a really genuine way. I had already written the calling card for being a guitar player in the *Try!* record and it kind of made the *Continuum* album very genuine. I wasn't trying to be in any place like, 'Please know I can play the guitar! Please know I can play the guitar!'

While playing in the Trio may have made *Continuum* a more accessible record, the return of Mayer's pop sensibilities doesn't mean that the John Mayer Trio will forever be silent.

"I think I'm in two bands. I think John Mayer Trio will rise again. I think when you're playing with great people and everybody's busy, it's really difficult to get around each other, but we'll do a studio record. I'm sure of it."

While he's waiting for the Trio to reconvene, Mayer can kill time playing with other artists. He contributed guitar to the 2007 Album of the year, The Dixie Chicks' "Taking The Long Way" and he has also collaborated with artists such as Rob Thomas and Kanye West. However, there's one collaboration that peaked our interest. A little known recording session with Justin Timberlake. In 2004, the pair recorded a single called "Done". But we wanted to know, will it ever come out? Or is "Done", well, done? Sadly, Mayer's answer wasn't too promising for a song that pairs two of the hottest talents in music today.

"I don't know. I mean, I've gotten together with several artists informally, just kind of strumming my guitar and singing around on it. "Done" has a good chorus. I don't think it'd be right for it anymore. We've gotten together a couple times. That's the fun thing about music. Sometimes it makes it; sometimes it doesn't. I bet you'd think that if Justin was dying for it, he'd have said 'Hey, I'm going to put that on my record.' But I don't think that it would fit on the record anymore. It's part of an older sound for both of us."

But just because one song isn't coming out doesn't mean there's not more Mayer music on the way. *Continuum* was actually briefly considered as a double disc and Mayer also recorded a string of intimate live shows at Eddie's Attic in December 2005. Still, it sounds like it might be a while before they reach the public's ears.

"With *Continuum* coming out exactly as I want it to be, I just don't want another record that I don't have as much quality control over to be the next record that comes out," Mayer said. "Each time you put a piece of work out, you're indebted to that work by having to put out something as good or better next time. I really believe that. So, I can't have an off pitch live album out there sometimes...I'm a control freak like that."

No matter what he decides to release, Mayer won't be getting off the road anytime soon. There's still a lot of touring to be done on *Continuum* and Mayer is more than aware of that. And although he is getting older, touring on a record makes settling down not really an option for the 29 year-old. But he seems to be alright with the grind, as well as aging and the prospects of "*Continuum*."

"This is a really important record for me," he said. "It's the first record that I've gotten this right. And one of the things that has also happened from getting older is that you can see the 'longview' of things. If something doesn't go right today, I'm going to be around for a while; it's going to be fine."