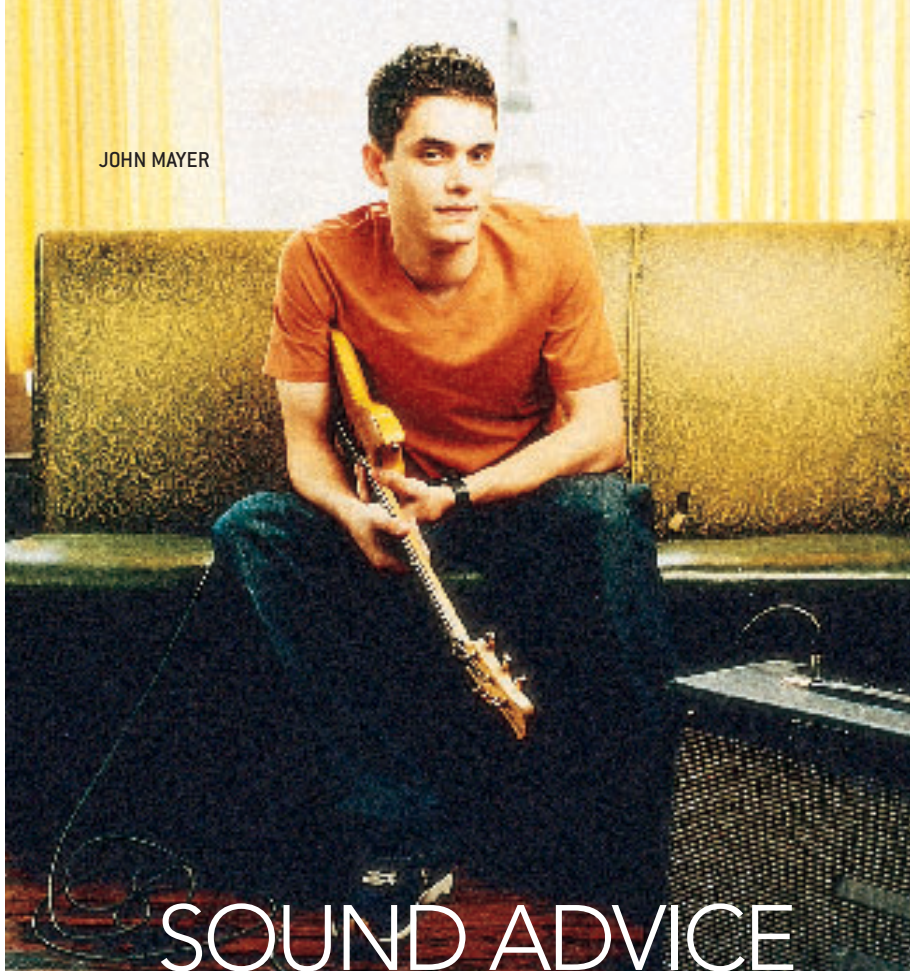


JOHN MAYER



SOUND ADVICE

BY PAUL CHRISTOPHER

Jewel — *This Way* (Atlantic)

Unlike Jewel's 1998 *Spirit*, where Patrick Leonard buried her unrefined folk sound with slick production, *This Way* finds Jewel returning to the rootsy quality that brought her to the mainstream. She has fled the Hollywood music machine in favor of the Nashville tradition of crafting sharp melodies and arrangements. And she has taken all of the elements that made her 1995 debut an 11-time platinum smash, and spruced them up to create a recording that sounds like she is back in the coffeehouse with a microphone, sitting around strumming about the ways of the world.

The songs surge with giddy observations, lush feelings, and a radio-ready dazzle that will ensure they are played on every WB show this season.

One of the most anomalous female pop singers in the modern pop landscape, Jewel can echo the muted longing of Karen Carpenter, yet also summon up the edginess of Pat Benetar. She's a little bit country, a little bit rock and thankfully, exactly like her songs: beautiful, natural, real.

John Mayer—*Room For Squares* (Aware/Columbia)

There are moments on John Mayer's major label debut where his voice so resembles that of Dave Matthews that comparisons may plague him for the rest of his life. Fortunately, Mayer is proficient enough to make each song his own. The songs on *Room For Squares* are instantly pleasing as each captures the essence of a voice discovering love, individuality and direction. "Why Georgia" is just one of the many gems that shifts from contemplative verse into melod-

MAYER'S MUSIC REFLECTS ON LIVING A LIFE AS A DRIFTING SINGLE MAN

ic chorus. Like David Gray before him, Mayer's music reflects on living life as a drifting single man, but the wonder of Mayer's music trades on eagerness rather than angst, awe instead of fear.

Pink — *M!ssundaztood* (Arista)

Trading her R&B grooves and disco boots in favor of becoming a punk rocker, Pink returns with a radically altered sound that keeps her one step ahead of the ever-changing pop market. On *M!ssundaztood*, the 22-year-old drops the tired Destiny's Child-like R&B and gets down and dirty.

The first single, "Get the Party Started," has all the synth-pop glory of a new wave anthem. Though there is plenty of wild-child melodrama, the most striking moment comes on "Don't Let Me Get Me," when Pink declares, "I'm tired of being compared to damn Britney Spears/She's so pretty/That just ain't me."

Pink may be misunderstood, but she proves she's got what it takes to last in the business.

Lotus Lounge, Vol. 2 (Bar None Records/Love Cat Music)

This compilation features works from 12 international artists. The CD gives the listener a seamless mix of world, dance, ambient and lounge music. It also refreshingly offers its audience a rare glimpse at a collaborative effort between the Islamic and Hebrew cultures. The result is an intoxicating international atmosphere filled with some of the hippest contemporary music around.

Although the CD has to be experienced as a journey, and heard from beginning to end, some notable moments are Zino and Tommy's "From India to Spain." The pair handle an impressive amount of Israel's music and sound production and their work has been featured on *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City*. Another memorable track, "China" by Mystica, features an organic blend of electronica with rich ethnic beats. The group comes from Israel, but interestingly enough traces their musical influences back to Morocco, Iraq and Russia. By tapping into an almost metaphysical realm, the CD fiercely delivers with an infectious groove. ♦

— *Lotus Lounge Review* by A. Blair Boone