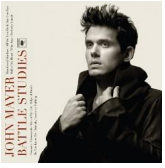
John Mayer – Battle Studies (2009)



01. Heartbreak Warfare 02. All We Ever Do Is Say Goodbye 03. Half Of My Heart 04. Who Says 05. Perfectly Lonely 06. Assassin 07. Crossroads 08. War Of My Life 09. Edge Of Desire 10. Do You Know Me 11. Friends, Lovers Or Nothing John Mayer – vocals; guitars; keyboards; sound effects; percussion; production Steve Jordan – drums; percussion; production Pino Palladino – bass + Ian McLagan – Hammond organ; Wurlitzer electric piano; piano; pump organ, celeste Jamie Muhoberac – keyboards Robbie McIntosh – guitar Waddy Wachtel – acoustic guitars Bob Reynolds – saxophone Bryan Lipps – trumpet Taylor Swift – vocals

It's no secret that John Mayer is a 21st Century Fox, wining and dining women all through the tabloid headlines, so it's about time he delivered an album that traded upon his loverman persona -- and Battle Studies is that record in spades. Retaining more than a modicum of the slick soul-blues undertones of Continuum, Mayer fashions a modern groove album, a record that maintains a smooth seductive vibe so thoroughly it spills into a weird one-man band cover of "Crossroads," turning Clapton's contained Cream masterwork into something about vibe, not virtuosity. Mayer remains a disciple of Slowhand, but he shows an unusual interest in the big AOR stylings of Journeyman, along with Stevie Ray Vaughan's In Step, creating a coolly clean blend of synths and Strats, one that's as much about texture as it is song -- something perfectly appropriate for a make-out album like this. Sometimes, Mayer dips too heavily toward the texture -- not just in the sound sculptures in the bedding of "Heartbreak Warfare," but even the strum-n-croon of "All We Ever Do Is Say Goodbye" -- and his love-as-war metaphors land with the thud of a dud bomb, but he can't resist a good, tight melody and builds the bulk of Battle Studies upon them: the elegant "Half of My Heart," the stoned self-deprecating wit of "Who Says," the softly soulful "Perfectly Lonely." Here, Mayer is effortlessly seductive and somewhat irresistible, and it's easy to see why the ladies love cool John. --- Stephen Thomas Erlewine, allmusic.com

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