

Paradise found 迷途知返

John Mayer has shrugged off some predictable celebrity blunders to produce a fine album that should appease even the harshest critics, writes Dorothy So

Dorothy So認為，John Mayer擺脫與女明星的緋聞後，推出可令最嚴苛的樂評人也心悅誠服的音樂專輯

Before he became synonymous with celebrity rebound romances, John Mayer played the part of an idealistic soul searcher with a guitar strapped to his back. But if unflattering paparazzi stunts with Jennifer Aniston and Taylor Swift have injured his credibility as a sensitive singer-songwriter over the years, then his latest studio release, *Paradise Valley*, is a welcome reminder of the talent that propelled him into the spotlight in the first place.

The album is Mayer's most sophisticated effort yet following his foray into blues and country after his second offering, *Heavier Things*. Breezy guitar riffs and campfire claps abound in the opening track, *Wildfire*, while shades of Hank Williams filter through the beautiful drifter melody, *Badge and Gun*. Even when Mayer steps down from his songwriting role to cover JJ Cale's *Call Me the Breeze*, he injects new soul into the familiar tune and showcases some virtuosic 12-bar blues guitar work designed to win over his toughest critics.

Now in his mid-30s, Mayer also uses this album to chart his personal maturity. He hints at a desire for domesticity in the heartfelt and hopeful *Waitin' On the Day*, and makes an even bolder farewell to his commitment phobia by penning and performing *Who You Love* with his current squeeze, Katy Perry. The resulting duet is part apologia about his tabloid-ridden past, part celebration of his current stage of life. It's this sense of blissful peace that drives the best parts of *Paradise Valley*. Mayer is finished with the media circus. Now, it's all about the music.

近年來，John Mayer與荷李活女星的緋聞不絕於耳，令人幾乎忘記他曾經也是一個背著結他、追尋靈性滿足的理想主義者。誠然，狗仔隊對他與兩位前女友Jennifer Aniston和Taylor Swift的貼身追訪，有損這位唱作人的形象，但其最新專輯《Paradise Valley》卻能喚起樂迷的記憶，重新欣賞他當日賴以成名的音樂才華。

新專輯是Mayer繼第二張大碟《Heavier Things》後，主打藍調及鄉謠音樂的最精采力作。開碟第一首歌曲〈Wildfire〉以輕快的結他旋律伴以人們圍著營火隨音樂拍掌的聲音；〈Badge and Gun〉旋律優美，營造出飄泊的情懷，頗具Hank Williams的風範。此外，Mayer還翻唱了JJ Cale的名曲〈Call Me the Breeze〉，不但為這首耳熟能詳的歌曲注入新生命，還一展身手，以結他彈奏藍調12小節，即使是最嚴苛的樂評人也不得不對他另眼相看。

現年30多歲的Mayer，這次亦透過音樂專輯記錄自己的成長，溫情又滿懷希望的〈Waitin' On the Day〉透露了成家立室的想法；與現任女友Katy Perry合唱並作曲的〈Who You Love〉更明確地表示自己已不再害怕承諾，告別單身主義。這首合唱歌曲還對過去「花花公子」的形象表達歉意，以及對現時的人生階段感到的愜意。這種幸福祥和的氣氛正是《Paradise Valley》的精髓所在，Mayer已告別「娛樂圈」，全心投入音樂創作。



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Mayer channels a country look and sound

Mayer不論造型還是歌曲均充滿鄉村風味

