John Mayer squares off, circles country



John Mayer's never really seen himself on a television screen. Sure, there has been the occasional appearance on late night Trised singer-songwrite the "the screent favorite. St. Patrick's Diger songwrite the screent favorite screent favorite. St. Patrick's Diger songwrite the screent favorite. St. Patrick's Diger songwrite the screent favorite. St. Patrick's Diger songwrite the screent favorite favorite. Backleant Diger songwrite the screent favorite. Backleant Diger songwrite the screent favorite. Backleant Dis bach

gonna be a great opportu-nity to be known as a musician." Don't let the face fool you. John Mayer might look young, but his thought-provok-ing and inspiring songwriting makes him sound light-years ahead of himself. Ho's a natural. Music was a no-brainer. Mayer couldn't avoid it if he tried. "There was always a pinon in the house," he said. "Since I was born. I was always around an instrument. It made a lot of sense to me." The idea of playing piano, of playing music, offered a feeling of freedom. Though, he a dmits, he never took piano as his instrument of choice, Mayer was captivated by golitar." I ended up getting a guitar. My father rented it from a music store." That was an unforgettable Monday night in January, 1991. Apparently the instrument made a tremendous impact. To this day, he can't write a song without one. 'Ive always tried to write my own stiff," said Mayer. 'I lovo improv. All of thia is improv. It happens before the audience hears it." To Mayer each song is a miniature movie, a freeze-frame of existence. That comes out vividly in My Georgia, the glo-rious childhood reminiscence of 33 and the melanchely beauty of Love Song for No

month's video releases for No Such Thing, he's bound to become a familiar face and name. A former student of Boston's Berklee Cologe of Music and an Atlanta trans-plant, Mayer found his own way and his own following. With a voice that's earned comparisons to Dave Matthews and a sound that blends unlikely elements such as a Hammond organ or cello with pop-based melodies, this singer-songwriter isn't easy to pin down. "Everyone listened without any proju-dice," he said of the recording. ("We asked) what do the songs ask for? What do I want to hear here?" Sometimes the answer was jingle bells. Sometimes violin. There were no bound-arise. *Room for Squares* was recorded with produce? John Alagia (Ben Folds Five). Mayer found solace in Atlanta audiences who were willing to give his own words and music a chance. "It made sense to me to play songs people wanted to learn and great breeding ground."

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states. "This is the best tour I've ever done,"

John Mayer

said Mayer. He hasn't lost track of his whereabouts — Mayer was in Virginia when we spoke. And that's impressive considering he's expected to cross the country three times this year on tour. He likens the experience to the television show Quantum Leap. You're around new people, new charac-

this year of its in the transformation of the capacity of the its of the i

Lawrence from page B1 that began with an underdraw-

that began with an underdraw-ing. The catalogue is really signif-icant because Jacob is the first African American artist to have a catalog raisonne completed on his art, "and Mercer. The exhibit includes his famous series on migration and John Brown. They're gouache on paper and so fragile. They'll only be shown in Detroit. This is the first time they'll be shown since be shown in Detroit. This is the first time they? Ib shown since 1978 after the DIA acquired the series. Curators thought it should rest. Graphic arts curator Ellen Sharp worked with Lawrence to execute silk screen prints of the series for loan when museums wanted to borrow them. the

"His series are famous. The Migration series was very per-sonal to him and received a great deal of attention. Jacob did a thorough job of telling that story over time."

Rhythm for the eye

Rhythm for the eye Children playing in the streets outside brownstones, Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad, Lawrence paints these scenes with one purpose in mind. "He was focusing on the expe-rience of his people. His inten-tion was to educate his people about their history, to instill pride and self-estem," said Mer-cer. "He really informed the pub-lic about the humanity of his people. He thought of a series as one big painting, a cohesive group and began by making sketchce. Rhythms of shapes and patterns of forms balanced. He would note where he would

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from page B1 use ochre in each. He was inter-ested in them being united around arhythm for the eye. "His work is very accessible to children as well as adults, tho colors. He utilizes his great skill as a storyteller to convey those rich historical events. He was such a human artist. You can see that in the accessibility of his art. Images also tell you about himself in the Coast Guard during the war, his ner-yous breakdown. Some of the work reflects the period he's in a manitarium in Queens. While there he does beautiful artwork. Over the next years he develops (whether because of therapy) a maturity, an introspective. He's philosophic in approach." Some of the most dramatic works in the exhibit deal with the bombing of Hiroshima at the end of Worl War II. "He very well conveys the hor-

end of World War II. "He very well conveys the hor-ror of that," said Mercer. "He wants us to know this could hap-pen again, The face is a bone-like structure. There were no nace specifications. He wants us to know this could happen again, I was very moved by thesc. They're very powerful. It shows how he developed his sense of compositional design.

how he developed his sense of compositional design. The significance (of the exhib-it) lies in his ability to portray the African American experience but universal issues as well -freedom, war and peace. He had an optimistic vision for America. In his Builders series you see black and white, women and men working together, con-structing something."

Harlem from page B1

located in Harlem. We're family from Harlem which has a rich history and culture. We have our own rhythm and feeling uptown.

Lights and tights

Lights and tights "When I choreographed Return in 1999, I was trying to find a new choreography style for myself. It unites neoclassical with social and urban dances. The dancers are ballet dancers so it was difficult to got them to move their heads. It's a lot of fun. It's pure movement, what They call put lights and tights. The first movement incorporates the Horlem or Unitown Shake.

fun. It's pure movement, what they call just lights and tights. The first movement incorporates the Harlem or Uptown Shake. It's just a shimmy with a pop-beat. It's first he company, most of who are in their 20s and grew up on MTV." Founded in 1969 by Arthur Mitchell and the late Karel Shook, Dance Theatre of Harlem continues to follow its original mission. Mitchell made a com-mitment to the people of Harlem after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to bring dance uptown for the purpose of all ages and backgrounds." "It's the popularization of fine arts to make fine art accessible for everyone, not just the elite

STA

STUART TOWNSEND

THE MOTHER OF ALL VAMPIRES

Variety of programs Variety of programs Like Dance Theatre of Harlem, variety is key to pro-gramming at the Detroit Opera House. For its sixth dance sea-son, director David DiChiera is spotlighting the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago and American Ballet Theatre in addition to Dance Theatre of Harlem all in the next sight works.

Theatre of Harlem all in the next eight weeks. "We have three grent Ameri-can companies," said DiChiera. "I always like to balance the pro-gramming. ABT is presenting a major full-length ballet with orchestra, *La Corsaire*. It's a lav-ish aspect of dance. Joffrey Bal-let is an exciting company, and Arthur Mitchell's Dance Theatre of Harlem which achieved his goal and mission to have a mul-ticultural neoclassical ballet

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company. It's preceded by a week of residencies in 10 in the European mold, a home schools, two a day for five days.
big scale. I saw the opera house in the European mold, a home schools, two a day for five days.

Theyre a wonderful kind of role panelines. said Dichiera. 'My first model for students of every priority was to put together a cae."
for opera and great dance combo to bring all the great ballet companies of the great ballet companies of the 2002-2003 as this senson.

DiChiera is just as excited with the when the Bolshoi Ballet house in 1966 I wanded it to be a house for opera and dance on a House in November.
DiChiera will continue to do just that when the Bolshoi Ballet companies of the mathematication of the science of the sci

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few," said Garland. "We use all aspects of the theater to touch they are and possibly expose them to something new. "We have a history of updating ballets to make them accessible. *Firebiri* is an old halte, a hodge-podge of fairy tales. It's a story for young people with super heroes, a bad guy, good guys, and a pretty girl. For children it's bet-ter than Lord of the Rings." Variety of programs