

Rock Artists and Sustainability ©

By **Connie J. Schlosberg**

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation recognizes legendary performers who have made rock and roll the fury that is part of modern day culture. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation has been nominating and electing these legendary performers and honoring them at their annual ceremony. One of the functions of the Foundation is to recognize the contributions of those “who have had a significant impact on the evolution, development and perpetuation of rock and roll” by inducting them into the Hall of Fame. Artists may become eligible for induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame 25 years after the release of their first record. Qualifications for induction are the influence and significance of the artists’ contributions to the development and progress of rock and roll music.

With that said, there may be a place for a few more qualified artists 25 years from now to have their names inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. John Mayer, Pink, The White Stripes and My Chemical Romance all stand a chance to have lasting power in a volatile industry. These artists not only have good music and star power, but also talent and technique that put them at the top of their craft.

Atlanta-based singer-songwriter, John Mayer has an ear for melody and a discreet behavior unlike many of his contemporaries. His combination of adult alternative and light rock music with literate lyrics reflects charm and honesty. His album, *Room for Squares*, is reminiscent of melancholic college life and finding one’s self. Mayer’s boyish good looks and casual coffeehouse-style help him maintain an audience of women and his guitar virtuoso attracts fans of the blues genre. Even though he is more famous as a singer-songwriter, Mayer considers himself a guitarist. Rolling Stone named him as one of the “100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time.” His first two albums, 2001’s *Room for Squares* and 2003’s *Heavier Things*, have sold a combined six million copies, and his record, *Continuum*, was nominated for five Grammys, including Album of the Year. He is a passionate blues fan citing Stevie Ray Vaughn as his first guitar idol. His playing style includes chord inversions attempting to give a voice to his guitar. He is also a fan of the blues legends such as Buddy Guy, B.B. King and Eric Clapton. “I never practice,” Mayer insists. “I’m always *playing*. I want to write songs people can just jam on.” With this attitude, he is sure to keep making enjoyable music that people can understand. Attracting fans to his shows and buying his albums, John Mayer should be able to maintain longevity.

Pop-rock princess Pink began her career as a sassy teen act, but her talent and punk chutzpah goes much further than what appears. She has proven her musical versatility by performing rhythm and blues, including a fabulous remake of Patti LaBelle’s *Lady Marmalade* with peers Lil’ Kim, Maya and Christina Aguilera. Her single, “Get the Party Started” became her biggest hit to date, climbing into the Top Five. Her accompanying sophomore album, *M!ssundaztood*, quickly went double platinum. She took creative control and boasted a more personal voice and a more eclectic sound,

attracting positive reviews. Her November 2003 album, *Try This*, was a bit more rock-oriented, collaborating with Rancid front man Tim Armstrong on one of the album's tracks. Pink earned a Grammy for Best Female Rock Vocal Performance and was the best selling female artist globally, legitimizing her rock and roll career. Pink's punk appearance and tough girl image personify rock and roll. Her music is only growing and progressing exponentially which should give her sustainment in a rock and roll world.

Detroit rock duo, The White Stripes, consisting of Jack White on guitars and vocals and Meg White on drums, make rudimentary simple rock and roll shine. Giving rock the jolt it needed in the 21st century, their music focuses on garage rock, punk and blues. They are musicians and songwriters and showcase performers. Jack has proven to be one of the best rhythm guitarists of modern times. Meg plays minimalist percussion, drumming only when necessary. Wearing red and white outfits, the former married couple "rewired" the blues for the next generation. The White Stripes can change their musical style with ease from folk tunes to show tunes. They flawlessly incorporate these genres into the mix of their recordings. Jack and Meg use a careful approach to intriguing, emotional, and evocative lyrics not found anywhere else in their style of rock. Their album, *White Blood Cells*, is meticulously crafted. The intensity level of the tracks contained in the album favor a deep, dark, scorched-earth tunefulness. MTV favorites - their "Fell in Love with a Girl" clip was nominated for four MTV Video Awards, including Best Video of the Year, Breakthrough Video, Best Special Effects in a Video, and Best Editing in a Video. Their latest album, *Icky Thump*, which includes songs with bagpipes and mariachi horns, received rave reviews. The White Stripes keep pushing the envelope and at least attempt to fuse new genres of music together. While not everyone's cup of tea, they certainly prove to be warriors of rock's progress and have shown the business perhaps a new way of hearing music.

New Jersey self-proclaimed "screamo" band, My Chemical Romance, performs melancholic punk music that oddly anyone can sing along with. Their music is a hybrid of goth, glam, metal and punk. Lead singer Gerard Way explains, "A big inspiration for us goes back to the glam era, where there was an element of theater involved in rock & roll. We love bands like Queen, where it's huge and majestic, but also bands like Black Flag and the Misfits, who would go absolutely crazy." Influenced by horror films and comic books, their music, lyrics and image have elements of fantasy, storytelling and theatrics. The band's second disc, *Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge*, is about two Bonnie and Clyde-type lovers who die in the desert in a gunfight. In Rolling Stone magazine's ranking of the top 50 albums of 2006, *The Black Parade* was voted the 20th best album of the year. The album is moody conceptual and visibly ambitious. The grandiose first single, "Welcome to the Black Parade," featured an elaborate accompanying video evoking a Tim Burton film and idolizing Queen. The record went platinum by early 2007. My Chemical Romance was nominated for "Best Alternative Group" at the 2007 American Music Awards. While many of their songs are loud, fast, hyper and aggressive, My Chemical Romance's work can also be melodic and "poppy". This band's creative artistry will likely give them the edge for staying power among peers and critics. A musician's band, these guys may have lasting power and change the scope of rock music as it is heard today.

Although predicting Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees is as difficult as predicting the weather considering the ever changing environment of the business, the mentioned artists have the potential to remain chart topping, touring darlings of the music industry. So long as these musicians continue with their creative endeavors and do not succumb to the temptations of the business, their careers shall flourish. However, only time can honestly tell.