



Coldplay's new cd is all about juxtapositions. "X & Y" begins with "Square One" and ends with "Til Kingdom Come", the lyrics are filled with "up so high and down so low" comparisons and the first "side" of the cd is the x side and the "flip" side is the Y side. The associations go on and on. This is Coldplay's 3rd album of original material since their debut in 2000 and it's anticipated as their breakthrough album. This is the one that will make them "better than Mozart" as lead singer Chris Martin recently stated as their ambition...yet another analogy. Well Mozart doesn't have anything to worry about, but "X & Y" is one great album by one of the top bands in the world.

What's up with the x and y side? It's not the rocking side vs. the softer side (they are all pretty soft instrumentally speaking) or acoustic vs. electric, it's more a question of attitude. Each of the first six songs are more pessimistic and sorrowful. They're all about breaking up and trying to fix relationships. While the last half of the cd features songs of hope, love and optimism, kind of a rarity in rock. Perhaps Martin's new fatherhood even inspired the emotional turnaround of the album. It's almost like a pre-kid and post-kid kind of thing

The arrangements are lush and melodic with Coldplay's trademark keyboard heavy mix, punctuated by Jon Buckland's U-2 like guitar and Martin's practically impossible falsetto. The songs are heartbreakingly beautiful. "What if" begins almost as a re-write of John Lennon's "Imagine" until the lyrics turn away from the global message of that anthem with the line "What if you should decide that you don't want me there by your side." "White Shadow" (notice the opposites) is the album's best rocker and they finish with the hidden last track, one of the most moving songs about devotion ever written ("for you I'd wait til kingdom come.") One final comparison: this is one of the best albums of the year.