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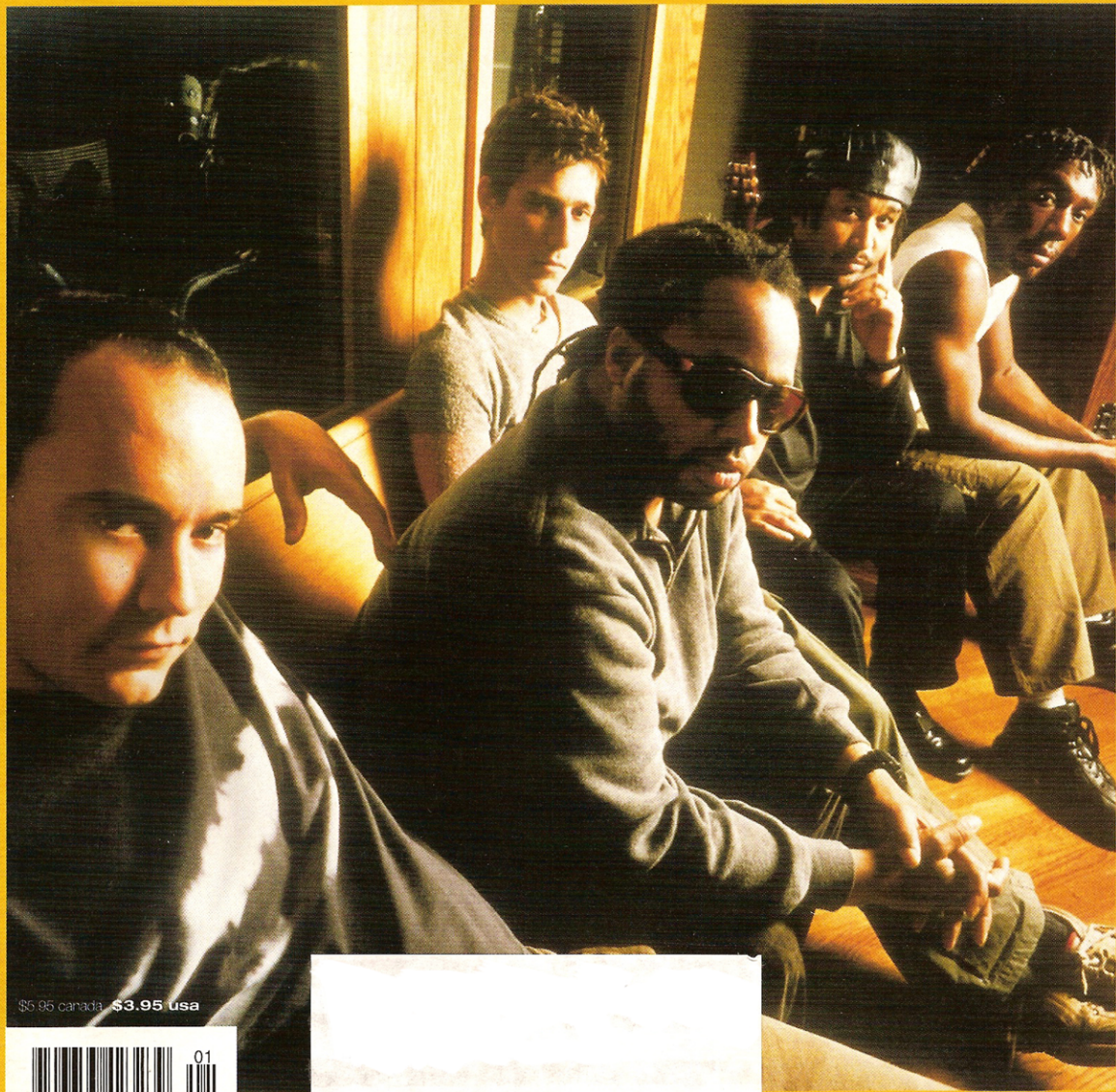
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## New Frontier

Dave Matthews Band teams up with super-producer Glen Ballard

ON FIRST BLUSH, IT WOULD SEEM to be an unlikely pairing: the **Dave Matthews Band**, the down-to-earth, Virginia-based, rootsy jam band, and **Glen Ballard**, the producer/songwriter/keyboardist responsible for Top 40 hits ranging from **No Doubt** to **Michael Jackson** and, of course, **Alanis Morissette's** explosive career. But a pairing they are, as Ballard finishes up producing *Everyday*, the DMB's highly anticipated new RCA release, firmly scheduled for February 27. And how did it go? "This is the most fun I've ever had making a record," Ballard tells **ICE**. "Period."

The DMB – **Dave Matthews**, vocals and guitar; **Stefan Lessard**, bass; **Carter Beauford**, drums; **Leroi Moore**, saxophone; and **Boyd Tinsley**, violin – have built a devoted fan following based on eight years of relentless touring (over \$200 million in ticket sales since 1992). Ballard is the studio impresario responsible for co-creating works like Morissette's monster-selling *Jagged Little Pill* and the follow-up *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie*, more challenging melds of intricate pop craftsmanship and technological studio tweaking. Even most of the output on Ballard's own Java label has included items like the recent *Clubland* and *Titan A.E.* soundtracks, decidedly more electronically based works than one would normally associate with the grassroots following of Matthews and his clan.

Ballard describes the result of their marriage thusly: "It's got a certain focus to it, and a kind of conciseness, that I think hasn't necessarily been associated with their music up until now."

Ballard was quick to share credit for the happy union with veteran RCA Records A&R executive Bruce Flohr. "He had this vision that we would do well together," Ballard says. The producer flew out to see DMB in Hartford, CT in late August, hung out with the band for a few shows and witnessed what he describes as "the whole phenomenon of Dave Matthews." He was amazed that over three consecutive nights of sold-out shows, he saw most of the same audience members in attendance every night.

During this period, Ballard got to spend time with the band members, hitting it off with each of them from the outset. They discussed music, both in terms of what they all liked, and how they would approach a

collaboration. "I told them I would like to make a record where we really moved fast," he recalls, "where every day we got something really accomplished. The title *Everyday* is meaningful on a lot of levels, but in terms of our specific process on this album, every day something important got done."

Matthews, in turn, journeyed out to Los Angeles to work on a few initial ideas with the potential new producer. According to Ballard, "It was an explosion. I've never had this kind of songwriting collaboration, with the possible exception of Alanis. We had nine days set aside to write one or two things, and within that nine days we wrote 10 songs. And made very credible demos of every one of them. And suddenly it was like, 'Oh... I guess maybe we've got some new material for the band here!' It was strictly Dave's decision as to what songs we did – and he wanted to do all the new stuff."

Execs at RCA were similarly enthused. As Hugh Surratt, Senior VP of Artist Development and Creative Services for RCA, tells **ICE**, "I've never seen the band more excited and generally pumped up than they have been doing this record – and it shows in the music."

Ballard, unable to contain his enthusiasm, concurs: "It's been such a beautiful collaboration. I feel like I've known him all my life – musically and personally. It's so similar [to my Alanis relationship] in that there was this instant rapport, an understanding of what we wanted to accomplish. You can't write 10 songs in nine days and not be on the same page."

The band then gathered at Conway Recorders in Hollywood and began fleshing out the songs which Matthews and Ballard had written in their brief session. We asked Ballard how he managed to blend his style into the DMB culture. "For me," he says, "it was a matter of taking all the components of the band and using them in a fresh way. I did add some keyboard work of my own, but I always tried to make it part of the landscape of what they do. I think it's a little more contemporary and modern on some level."

Although DMB is known as a jam band, "I think you'll find the album is more a collection of four minute-ish songs than any really long pieces," RCA's Surratt says. "They're songs that certainly will lend



• dave matthews band

themselves to the traditional live treatments by the band, where they really get in a groove and a four-minute song can turn into a 10-minute one. But, on the album itself, most of the songs are timed out at about four, four-and-a-half minutes. That's something that's a little different."

The complete track list for *Everyday*: "So Right," "I Did It," "When the World Ends," "Space Between," "Sleep to Dream Her," "What You Are," "Angel," "Dreams of Our Fathers," "Everyday," "Mother Father," "If I Had It All" and "Fool to Think."

Ballard encouraged the band to try new things, trying to tap into each individual member's musicality. Stefan Lessard, for example, tried out different basses, including one made entirely from wood derived from a ship that had remained sunken at the bottom of Lake Superior for the past 200 years. According to those who have heard it, the one-of-a-kind bass has a sound unlike any other.

Aside from playing baritone, alto and tenor sax, Leroi Moore plays flute, contra-bass clarinet and sings background vocals. Carter Beauford played vibraphone and percussion, in addition to his usual back-up singing and drumming duties. Ballard added a wah-wah pedal to Boyd Tinsley's violin, manipulating the sound so that it was frequently no longer identifiable as a violin. Boyd also sings on the album.

But the biggest surprise came from Matthews himself. Ballard tells **ICE**, "One of the most exciting things is that Dave is playing electric guitar on this record on at least half the songs. I put a Jerry Jones baritone guitar in his hand, and he fell instantly in love. We immediately wrote three or four songs with that as the predicate. I think it was like opening a whole new door for David as a guitar player, and we just ran with it."

In regards to that, RCA's Surratt is excited about the possibilities of the band's upcoming U.S./Canadian tour, which begins in April. "I can't wait to see what happens out on the road when he straps that sucker on," he says. "I was joking with a couple of the guys, comparing it to when **Bob Dylan** [went electric] at the Newport Folk Festival. I think there'll be a little bit of a surprise factor with the fans, but listening to the record, it is unquestionably a Dave Matthews Band album."

But a diverse one. According to Ballard, "Every time I go through and listen to the 12 songs, I'm struck by how much diversity there is between the songs, and yet it all sounds like the same band. It's a pretty modern record. If there are any retro elements, they go way back... either to '50s jazz or '60s English pop. It's an unusual hybrid of those kind of elements: a little bit of **Miles Davis**, a little bit of **The Beatles**.

"I think it's an enormously commercial record," he adds, "but on its own terms. I think it communicates, and for me, that's what a commercial album is. *Jagged Little Pill* was a commercial record, but it wasn't like anything else that was out there. This is that kind of record."

Speaking of commercial success, RCA is turning special attention toward breaking the DMB internationally with this album, a goal that's

"I can't wait to see what happens when he straps that sucker on," says one RCA exec. "I've been jokingly comparing it to when Dylan went electric at the Newport Folk Festival."

proved elusive so far. "These guys have sold nearly 20 million albums in the U.S.," Surratt says with frustration, "but we've never really broken through [overseas] at all, shockingly. The nature and sound of this record is such that we really think now is the time for us to let the rest of the world know what the hell's going on with this band."

And once Ballard has put the finishing touches on *Everyday*, he'll turn his attention to perhaps the most challenging task of his career: overseeing the debut album by – and breaking open the new career of – one **Lisa Marie Presley**. ■

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