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AUGUST 1999 NO. 80



TIM **DAVE**
MATTHEWS
REYNOLDS

Backstage with acoustic rock's power duo

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- Dave
MATTHEWS

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ON THIS CRISP SPRING AFTERNOON outside the Berkeley Community Theater, there's no mistaking the preparations for the ritual called the Big Rock Show. Roadies are unloading a truckful of gear through the closely guarded stage door, and teen- and college-age fans—some of whom have traveled from several states away—are milling around, hoping for a glance, an autograph, or a photo op with the Big Rock Star known as Dave Matthews.

Inside the theater, though, any suggestion of a hyped-up "show" vanishes. On the stage sit only five acoustic guitars, a chair, and a few mics, boxes, and cords. The crew is casual but focused, and when Matthews arrives, he greets everyone with a familial friendliness. With his short hair, athletic frame, cotton sweater, and khakis, he looks less like a rock star than a fraternity brother from up the hill at the University of California. His duo partner, Tim Reynolds, makes quite a contrast—short, wiry, and a bit scraggly all in black from punker boots on up, he's ready for underground clubbing.

The show tonight marks the end of Matthews' and Reynolds' latest

acoustic tour, following the release of their double CD *Live at Luther College*, recorded in 1996. With two acoustic guitars and Matthews' alternately wailing/whispering voice, this duo brings to life the knotty, intense songs that have made the Dave Matthews Band such a compelling and surprising force in contemporary rock. The DMB is em-

phatically a band, democratically balancing acoustic guitar, sax, violin, drums, and bass (the sole electric instrument) in expansive arrangements full of harmonic and rhythmic jags. But it's amazing how much of that richness and variety comes across in these duo shows. It's a testimony to the depth of Matthews' vision as a songwriter and guitarist, and to

Reynolds (left) and Matthews warm up at the Berkeley Community Theater in California.

Reynolds' range as an accompanist, from subtle doubling to delay-based atmospherics to pure shredding.

As Matthews and Reynolds grab guitars and sit down with me to talk and play music, it's immediately clear that despite their surface differences, these are very close friends and partners in crime. Reynolds has played on all the

DMB albums and frequently joins the band on stage, in addition to pursuing his own projects in freewheeling solo guitar improv, rock, and funk. In conversation, Reynolds and Matthews feed off each other's kinetic energy and quick humor (sly and urbane one moment, locker-room adolescent the next), and when Matthews starts playing some-

thing on guitar, Reynolds locks in with him in a microbeat.

I've heard that you two met when Tim was playing in a bar in Charlottesville, Virginia, and Dave was the bartender. Is that a true story?

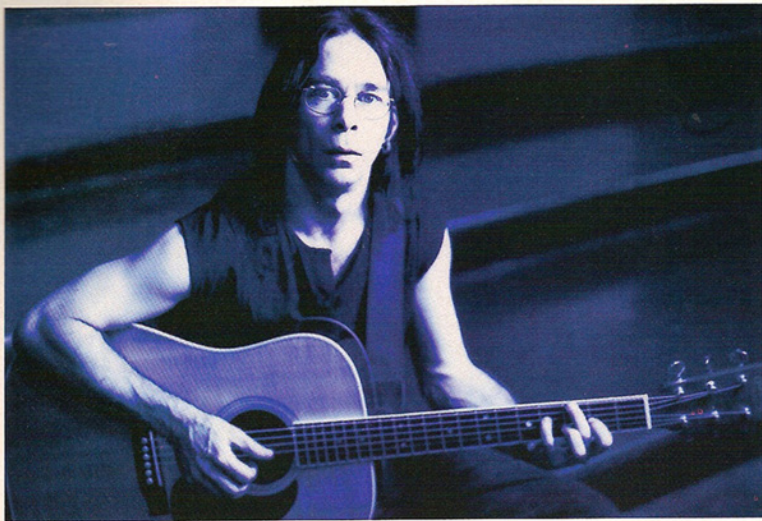
MATTHEWS Mmm, sort of. I think we met before I started working at Miller's.

BAND IN A BOX

Backstage with acoustic rock mavericks
Dave Matthews and Tim Reynolds

By Jeffrey Pepper Rodgers

PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILIP HARRIS FOR ROLLING STONE



We lived in the same town, and I love watching music, and Tim was one of the Charlottesville musicians—

REYNOLDS —posers.

MATTHEWS Posers. I just loved Tim's playing, so then we just got to know each other. The cool thing was that people like Tim had [the trio] TR3, he was doing his solo thing, he was playing jazz gigs, he had tons of gigs. All the musicians were sort of wrapped up together. Carter [Beauford], who's with [the Matthews Band] on drums, played

in Secrets and Tim was playing in Secrets, and they probably crossed paths in a lot of different situations.

And two of the guys who sat in on this last album [*Before These Crowded Streets*] were also old friends of ours from Charlottesville—Greg Howard [Chapman Stick] and John D'earth [string arrangements].

Tim, were you playing free-improv acoustic guitar at that time?

REYNOLDS At that point I was probably doing electric, but that evolved.

I did that gig for over ten years. It started out solo electric guitar with effects, and somewhere I started playing sitar and did that for a long time, and then I started playing acoustic.

MATTHEWS Monday night at Millers . . . I remember coming in, it was electric for a while, and then all of a sudden violin, and then all of a sudden cello, and then sitar. And then he'd even play drums for a while—it was cool.

REYNOLDS I learned to play a lot of instruments on this gig. And that kind of led to the acoustic guitar as encompassing all the earlier stuff. I got way into that with the effects.

MATTHEWS And then he'd play a lot of Eastern-sounding scales

and weird drums on the guitar.

When you first started playing together, were you doing Dave's songs?

MATTHEWS Not really, not for a while. We started recording stuff in my basement or over at his house. I remember Joseph, his son, playing the drums with the balls on the end of the sticks. We'd do some silly recordings. It was open because we hadn't yet been defined.

We had fun together, and then I, sort of at the [suggestion] of Tim and a few

WHAT THEY PLAY

The Dave Matthews and Tim Reynolds acoustic tour crew arrives with a truckload of road cases, but it's almost entirely PA and recording gear; the actual stuff used on stage would fit easily into the back of a Honda. At sound check, Matthews' longtime friend and guitar tech Monk Montgomery even apologizes about the simplicity of the stage setup as he walks me through it.

Reynolds plays two Martin D-35s, a '96 and a '93. Both have Martin's standard Fishman pickups, which run into a Morley volume pedal, a Boss digital delay, and then a Countryman direct box. The little Boss stomp box is the source of all of Reynolds' electronic trickery. "There's one backwards mode—it plays infinite, and you can mess with that," Reynolds says. "And there are delay modes that you can go infinite. There are a lot of cool little things."

For these duo shows, Matthews' main ax is a Martin HD-28, also Fishman equipped (the Gold Plus Natural 2) and running straight into a Countryman DI. "Even on the big tours we use Fishman," Montgomery says, "because it's really bright, and the way he plays so hard and a lot of low notes, it's the only thing that really captures the sound." Both Matthews' and

Reynolds' guitars are miked (with a B&K 4051-A and an Audio-Technica 4021, respectively), but the signal only goes onto the night's board tape, not to the house. The Matthews crew (as well as fans) are inveterate tapers, and their archives are the source of releases like *Live at Luther College* and the DMB's *Live at Red Rocks*.

Matthews' backup six-string is a Lakewood M-32, which has its own integrated AER pickup system. And for a handful of songs—"Wild Horses," "Spoon," and "The Last Stop"—he picks up a Martin D12-28 12-string. (For "The Last Stop," it's tuned down a half step.)

All these guitars are strung with D'Addario lights. No funky tunings, and no capos or other gizmos except for Reynolds' slide. "Sorry, that's it," Montgomery says with a shrug. "I sit in that chair all night."

For band tours, Matthews has long been playing a Gibson Chet Atkins model that has been modified with Fishman electronics and runs through API preamps, Meyer CP-10 EQs, and Eventide harmonizers. The Chet's thin, feedback-free sound, Matthews says, helps to cut through the dense band mix.

other people, started the Matthews Band. A couple of songs had been written before the band, but we worked

and then doubled it—like four acoustic guitars playing the same thing.

up, I'm surprised. It's amazing how suddenly you're just like [makes wailing rock lead sounds]. Yeah, I know

Matthews: "I grew attached to how portable the acoustic guitar was. And when you're 16 and you can play 'Father and Son' by Cat Stevens, all of a sudden you're making out."

them up and started playing them. And it was only really after that that Tim and I got together and started playing acoustically. Remember we did the Prism [coffeehouse] thing? That was the first time the two of us played two acoustics together.

Tim was also involved in the band's first album. Dave, what were you looking for him to bring into those sessions?

MATTHEWS Tim and I had been playing acoustic gigs, and it just made sense to bring Tim in, to have some of that spirit, the vibe we had together.

Tim, did you play more acoustic or electric on the early band albums?

REYNOLDS A lot of acoustic. I'd spend about two months playing acoustic and three days playing electric.

MATTHEWS It was us sitting next to each other, strumming madly. It was so much fun.

REYNOLDS We sat in the studio just like this [moves chair right in front of Matthews] with a glass thing [between us], and that's how we did the whole first record. The band was all on the second floor.

MATTHEWS And then they'd inevitably turn his acoustic guitar way up and mine way down! That's [producer Steve] Lillywhite—I'm not saying whether he was right or wrong, but he'd say [affects British accent], "OK, let's turn David down and Timmy up" [laughs]. I love how with the last album, he said, "David, you don't really feature on this album at all, but don't tell anyone." We'd learn it, we'd all play, and then he'd turn me down.

Were you playing the same parts?

REYNOLDS On the first album we played the same part

MATTHEWS And it made it sound really huge.

REYNOLDS I would just overdub a little bit. I did more electric overdubs as the albums went on.

MATTHEWS The last one has a lot more production. We still recorded the rhythm section live—guitar, bass, and drums—but then much more stuff went on top. Oh, put Stick there, piano . . . it doesn't matter if they're not in the band. We had a lot of other people. And Tim taped his face up and played lots of electric overdubs [laughs].

Dave, have you always played exclusively acoustic?

MATTHEWS I never really played electric. Sometimes when I pick one

what that feels like now! And then I put it down, and I just sit back down with an acoustic.

What drew you to playing an acoustic in the first place?

MATTHEWS I think in the first place it was a percussive thing. Also it's lighter and there are less things you need with it, so when I was younger and just traveling around, doing a lot of walking, it was always easier to have an acoustic. So I sort of grew attached to how portable it was. And when you're 16 and you can play "Father and Son" by Cat Stevens, [sings] "It's not time to make a change . . ." all of a sudden you're making out.

Continued on page 58



Crash into Me

Words and music by Dave Matthews

"Crash into Me," perhaps Dave Matthews' best-known song, is the title track of his band's second RCA CD and also appears on Matthews' and Reynolds' *Live at Luther College*. The simple, majestic guitar part puts a circular bass line under ringing B and E notes on the top strings. Holding down the second and third strings like this requires some stretching (Matthews

has sizable mitts); the payoff is avoiding the usual open-E chord and cutting out the third (G). Tim Reynolds, whose part is shown in the second system on page 55, adds to the ringing trebles while thickening the texture with an E-to-F# move on the first string.

—Jeffrey Pepper Rodgers

Intro

♩ = 100

C#m7 Asus2 E/B E E/G# Asus2 E/B E
Guitar 1 (Dave Matthews)

Verse

C#m7 x21340 Asus2 x01340 E/B x11340 E 011340 E/G# x21340 Asus2 x01340 E/B x11340 E 011340

1. YOU'VE GOT YOUR BALL YOU'VE GOT YOUR CHAIN TIED TO ME TIGHT TIE ME UP A-GAIN

C#m7 x21340 Asus2 x01340 E/B x11340 E 011340 E/G# x21340 Asus2 x01340 E/B x11340 E 011340

9 WHO'S GOT THEIR CLAW'S IN YOU MY FRIEND IN TO YOUR HEART I'LL BEAT A-GAIN

C#m7 x21340 Asus2 x01340 E/B x11340 E 011340 E/G# x21340 Asus2 x01340 E/B x11340 E 011340

15 1. SWEET LIKE CAN-DY TO MY SOUL SWEET YOU ROCK AND SWEET YOU ROLL
2-5. See additional lyrics.

C#m7 x21340 Asus2 x01340 E/B x11340 E 011340 E/G# x21340 Asus2 x01340 E/B x11340 E 011340

17 LOST FOR YOU I'M SO LOST FOR YOU OH WHEN YOU COME -

To Coda (after Verse 5)



bass notes on sixth string:
G# A B-



21 CRASH IN - TO ME AND I COME IN - TO



25 YOU WHEN I COME IN -



29 TO YOU IN A BOY'S DREAM



35 IN A BOY'S DREAM

Guitar 2 (Tim Reynolds)

35 riff continues

000 2	000000 2	000
555 5	555555 5	555
444 4	444444 4	444

⊙ Coda



39 COME CRASH IN - TO ME LA - DY



42 CRASH IN - TO ME CRASH

42

121212121212121212121212	121212	000 2	000 0 0 0 9	0 0 0 000 2	000 0 0 014	0 0 0
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E/G# 2x1340 Asus2 x01340 E/B x11340 E 011340 E/G# 2x1340 Asus2 x01340

IN - TO ME CRASH IN - TO ME

E/B x11340 E 011340 E/G# 2x1340 Asus2 x01340 E/B x11340 E 011340

OH YOU KNOW WELL

E/G# 2x1340 Asus2 x01340 E/B x11340 E 011340 E/G# 2x1340 Asus2 x01340

I'M THE KING OF THE CAS - TLE YOU'RE THE DIR - TY RAS - CAL CRASH IN - TO ME

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repeat ad libitum



with ad-lib vocals till end

1. YOU'VE GOT YOUR BALL YOU'VE GOT YOUR CHAIN
TIED TO ME TIGHT TIE ME UP AGAIN
WHO'S GOT THEIR CLAWS IN YOU MY FRIEND
INTO YOUR HEART HEARTBEAT AGAIN

SWEET LIKE CANDY TO MY SOUL
SWEET YOU ROCK AND SWEET YOU ROLL
LOST FOR YOU I'M SO LOST FOR YOU
YOU COME CRASH INTO ME
AND I COME INTO YOU
I COME INTO YOU
IN A BOY'S DREAM, IN A BOY'S DREAM
2. OH, I'LL KISS YOU JUST SO I KNOW
ALL IN YOUR EYES, LOVE, IT GLOWS SO
I'M BARE-BONED AND CRAZY FOR YOU
WHEN YOU COME CRASH INTO ME, YEAH
BABY, PLEASE COME CRASH INTO ME
IN A BOY'S DREAM, IN A BOY'S DREAM
3. IF I'VE GONE OVERBOARD THEN I'M BEGGING YOU
TO FORGIVE ME IN MY HASTE
BUT I'M HOLDING YOU UP, GIRL, CLOSE TO ME

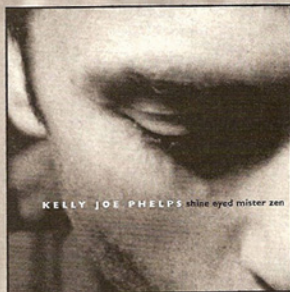
- AND YOU COME CRASH INTO ME, YEAH
BABY, AND I COME INTO YOU
4. HIKE UP YOUR SKIRT A LITTLE MORE
AND SHOW THE WORLD TO ME
YEAH, HIKE UP YOUR SKIRT A LITTLE MORE
AND SHOW YOUR WORLD TO ME
IN A BOY'S DREAM, IN A BOY'S DREAM
 5. OH, I WATCH YOU THERE BY THE WINDOW
AND I STARE AT YOU, YOU WEAR NOTHING
BUT YOU WEAR IT SO WELL
TIED UP AND TWISTED THE WAY I'D LIKE TO BE
FOR YOU, FOR ME, COME CRASH INTO ME
YEAH, COME CRASH INTO ME LADY

CRASH INTO ME (3 times)
- YOU KNOW WELL I'M THE KING OF THE CASTLE
YOU'RE THE DIRTY RASCAL
CRASH INTO ME

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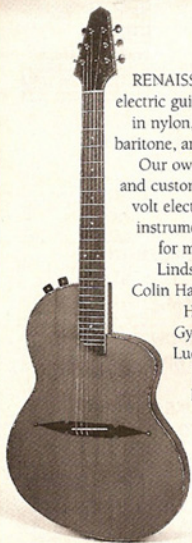
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It's interesting that you've always played an acoustic, because you hardly ever play standard acoustic guitar open-position chords. Instead, you favor closed positions and up-the-neck things that are more typical of electric playing. How did that style evolve?

MATTHEWS I think one of the biggest inspirations was John D'earth. He's a

trumpet player and a great teacher as well; he did the string arrangements on the last album. But he once said to me, "Guitarists always write everything in E or A or D." So I started playing as many things as I could that were a half step away.

Do you come up with those closed-position patterns by hunting and pecking?

MATTHEWS A lot of things that I do come out of trying to find circular motions. I'll just go around and around with something—unlike Tim. I think one reason we're complementary is that I can play the same five notes in the same order for an hour and find it absolutely satisfying. And Tim can swim around; I don't know if Tim ever repeats himself. So then the two of us kind of land comfortably together.

One of your signature guitar parts is the staccato "Satellite" riff, which opens up a lot of possibilities for Tim to play more sustained or legato types of things. It's not like playing over a big strum.

Dave Matthews' Rhythm Style

Like Richard Thompson, Ani DiFranco, and other top songwriter-guitarists, Dave Matthews has developed a potent and highly individual guitar style that is inextricably linked to his songwriting. He sticks to standard tuning, with an occasional sixth-string drop to D, but uses a chord vocabulary that is anything but standard. During the course of our interview, Matthews demonstrated the rhythm parts from numerous songs, and some clear stylistic patterns emerged.

First, Matthews is far less bound by open strings than most acoustic players, which is one reason why he never uses a capo. He's as comfortable playing in a key like G ("Satellite"), without using even a single open string, as in the usual E, G, A, and D. The same goes for his drone-oriented parts. While "Minarets," for example, is in the open-string-friendly key of E (played up in seventh position to get octave E's on the fifth and sixth strings), he plays an equally driving drone in "Warehouse" in the key of B (also up in seventh position) with no open strings. Even when he tunes to dropped-D, it isn't necessarily for playing in the key of D; in "Crush," he tunes down but plays in Bm and never hits the sixth string open in the entire song. So why retune? To facilitate off-the-beaten-track fingerings.

Matthews' preference for closed chords means, of course, using plenty of barre chords, often reduced to two- and three-note modal voicings (without the third, neither major nor minor). Watching him navigate through numerous progressions, I was struck by how economical his parts are; typically, he goes to one position and stays put, making whatever stretches are necessary to reach the notes rather than moving around the neck. "Satellite" is a case in point: the main riff is a little circle of notes played on the bottom three strings while his index finger stays planted at the fourth fret. (Tim Reynolds, by contrast, plays the same riff by moving down the neck.)

By steering away from garden-variety open chords and keys, Matthews sets his songs apart from most guitar-based music right from the downbeat. There are other advantages to this style: Closed positions allow more control over string percussion, which he uses heavily, particularly in the duo with Reynolds. And when Matthews does opt for an open chord, it makes a dramatic contrast—an instant lift for a chorus or a bridge.

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REYNOLDS Yeah, exactly. It's clearly different, especially where there are just two guitars. With a band you can come up with a really simple part, because everyone else is laying down a lot of other stuff. But with two acoustic guitars, you have to be more aware of [the other guitar part].

Tim, do you come up with the guitar melodies you play in "Satellite" and other songs when you're jamming?

REYNOLDS I just come up with it in the studio, and Steve, the producer, says, "Stick with that." And that becomes the theme. It becomes part of the song.

Reynolds: "When you play songs as much as we do, you don't give them life if you play them by rote; they have to change every night."

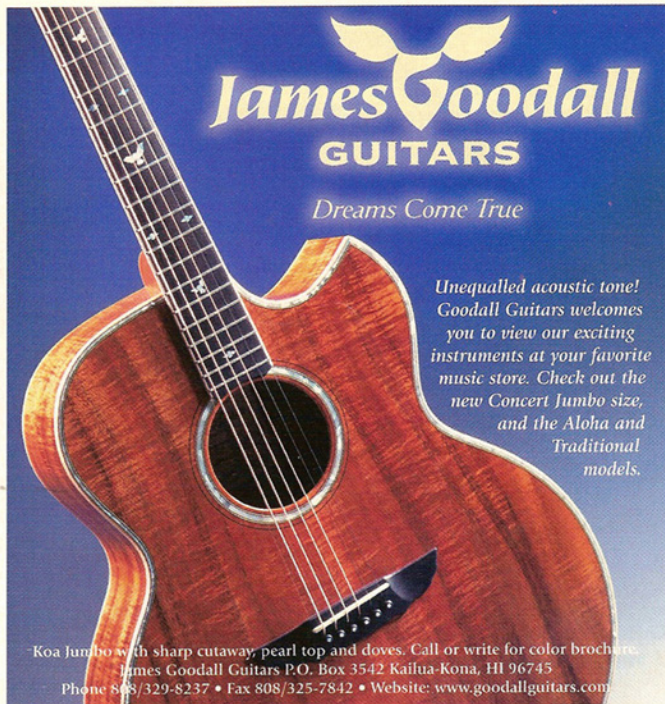
MATTHEWS It really does. And people get excited when they hear that. When the band is live and Tim is not with us, I don't think people generally miss things, but people definitely react [when they hear that guitar line]. With "Crash," when they hear the little signature things that Timmy does, the pull-offs and stuff, they go "Yaaaah!" It's almost more familiar than everything else.

REYNOLDS The [duo] thing is like a band. Because we play with bands, we hear a lot more in our heads than what we play. The psychic vibe of a band comes in, and we just lock in like a band.

MATTHEWS Sometimes I'm amazed by how it locks in, really amazed.

There are a lot of songs on the live record with intense drone parts. I'm thinking, for instance, of "Warehouse."

REYNOLDS Oh yeah, I tune this down [tunes sixth string down to B]. And then I have this pedal that in the backward mode can make it go up an octave or down. I set it so that it will go down. So I get this drone going



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and repeat it and then I make it go down an octave. You can't get too busy with the backwards mode—it starts to pile up. But the chip lets it bleed off naturally, so we turn it off and just stop. You can do a lot of stuff where you play one thing and then it'll repeat a couple of times and you can actually play your next part, so there are two, three things going on at once just for a minute.

MATTHEWS That definitely gets into a nice wall. So by the time we get into the body of the song, when it sucks back, this little window opens.

Tim, do you ever feel limited when you're using effects with an acoustic guitar?

REYNOLDS No, it's the opposite. I play so much electric guitar that I get my yayas out with that, and when I'm playing acoustic, I don't ever feel I need that. I get off on doing both.

I can play acoustic guitar without effects—I practice that way, and I've made records without them, but I like to have more colors. I have lots of records of acoustic guitars, but I don't listen to them as much as I listen to other records that have a lot more sounds. But that's just my own taste, and my tastes always change, so that's only today.

"Minarets," "The Last Stop," and other songs make heavy use of Middle Eastern-sounding scales.

REYNOLDS Yeah. I used to like bebop because it had a zillion chords, but then I kind of overloaded on that concept and got into Eastern music, which is just one chord, and I could relate to John Lee Hooker again. And that opened up a whole different way of improvising, based on sound as opposed to notes, and then mixing them together again. You know, you can play just one note forever [*plays note with slow, watery bend*]. You're just messing around there instead of like [*plays fast bop-style lines*]*—the nervous Western industrial society ap-*



proach. Am I penis yet? [laughter] For hyper people like me, that's a great energy.

MATTHEWS But then Tim can access both of those.

REYNOLDS John McLaughlin is known for going ape shit, right? But with Shakti, he does these beautiful opening bits, the Indian approach. He does these beautiful bends, Ravi Shankar kind of stuff where he bends it so much you can hear him tune the guitar back up during the song.

Dave, what inspired you to explore Eastern territory in your songwriting?

MATTHEWS I get inspired by Tim a lot, but it's also a place that I haven't gone to and have always loved. If you're playing something like [plays rhythmic drone on two strings], eventually, if you don't like it, you're not listening [laughs]. And then after a while, when you go [drops drone down one step] or just a tiny change, it makes it so dramatic.

REYNOLDS With Steve Lillywhite, any time you do any Eastern thing, he goes, "Oh, it's Adrian Belew." Because that's his only reference point for anything like that. You're doing a deep raga and he goes, "Oh, it's Adrian Belew." It's like, "Steve, take your rich ass over to India for a while" [laughter].

Dave's songs start with his guitar but take on a different identity when the band arranges them. Is it hard to go back and play them with two guitars and forget about what all the other instruments were doing?

MATTHEWS It's easy to forget about everything else that was going on. Some songs are a bit of a challenge—there are certain songs that we haven't even tried. "Crush" was one that I didn't know if it would work out. For some reason, in the studio [with the band] that song was a struggle. Finally we just said, "Well, let's just play it real straight." Then Fonzi [bassist Stefan Lessard] found this groove that was like Marvin



Against the wall and dreaming: Dave Matthews with bandmates Leroy Moore, Boyd Tinsley, Carter Beauford, and Stefan Lessard.

Gaye, and we were like, "Oh, that's good." And so the song fell in there when the Marvin Gaye came out, at least in the bass.

I just never thought of this song after that as being something that would work without that feel, and it was a really pleasant surprise when Tim and I played it. It was just [snaps fingers]. It's really natural. It doesn't sound forced.

When you're playing with just two guitars, do you find that you play more percussively?

MATTHEWS Yeah. It doesn't come out as much with a band, you know. If I were using one of these [full-body acoustic] guitars, I don't know if it would work. I use a Chet Atkins because it's like [makes sharp sound].

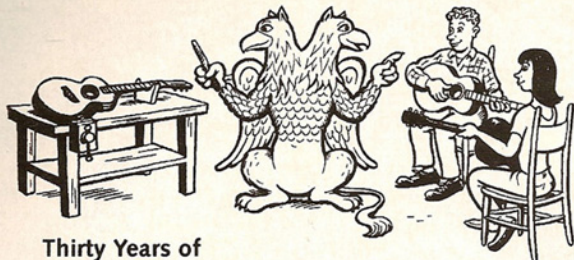
REYNOLDS It's hard for an acoustic to cut through with all the instruments.

MATTHEWS Exactly. That's why it's so amazing when rock bands use acoustic guitars where it's like [strums open A-minor chord; stops and makes wrenching sound]. Stop that, please, Bob!

A lot of times a part like that becomes just a little texture, especially if you throw an electric guitar on top of it. In your band arrangements, you manage to avoid that trap, even though there's a lot going on. Your guitar has its place.

MATTHEWS Yes. But I guess it's also the fact that there isn't an electric guitar all the time. It's not based around that. When we're doing albums or when Tim is playing with the band, it adds, but not everything is built around





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How much arranging do you do for playing as a duo?

REYNOLDS We know these songs almost in the way that someone who's played standards for years plays those songs every night, and can go anywhere with them. In a second you can tell this is the bridge. . . . It's almost like the music plays us, we play it so much. And when you play them that much, you don't give them life if you play them by rote; they have to change every night.

Matthews: *"There's a certain looseness about when the two of us are playing that's really beautiful and really different from the band."*

MATTHEWS I'm impressed when I see bands that just come out and do a note-for-note thing of their album, which is really like classical music. I'm impressed by that, because it must be hard. I would go out of my tree.

REYNOLDS When I was in Secrets, it was a great fusion band and there was a lot of improvising, but 99 percent of the time was all this synchronized tight shit. And that can get really boring fast, 'cause I like to improvise. I realized then that I wasn't cut out to be a fusion guy or anything like that. I had to be much looser.

[Dave's] songs give you an emotional thing, to open different chakras. It's real music, like all the ragas have a different meaning and emotion, and his songs cover all those colors.

How would you compare the whole experience of performing with the band versus the duo?

MATTHEWS I love playing with the band. I really, really love it. But there are more personalities, obviously. . . . There's still the joy, there's still the gen-

erosity, but it's more like there's a choreography about it. You have to be more aware of each other, and there's sometimes the threat of falling a little too much into habit.

With Tim, though, it's so intimate, it's like going out for a candlelit dinner, except we're not eating. And I also feel that to a certain degree, if I was to suddenly go [makes jibberish noises], in this environment, Tim would probably laugh. I don't know if it would be an appropriate thing to do with the band. There's a certain looseness about when the two of us are playing that's really beautiful and really different from the band. I feel like this is real precious, you know. The band, I'm amazed how quiet we can get, but Tim and I can get [whispers] real quiet.

How about from your side, Tim?

REYNOLDS Different layers of it are different. In the upper layers, you're playing a different instrument, different size crowds. Acoustic has more subtle things because there's no rhythm section, so you're not competing with more sound. Yet when you have a rhythm section, that allows you a different kind of melodic freedom.

So it's different but it's the same, because the more you get down to the ground layer of where it comes from, we're being played. Music is playing us, and we let it go the way it should go. Even if it's just for a second, that second lasts a long time. Whatever creates that is really the ultimate.

Unlike a lot of people who perform with rock bands, who get sort of timid when they unplug, all the intensity and dynamics are there in your acoustic show.

MATTHEWS I know exactly what you mean, when you go out and watch a band unplugged—especially if they try to bust out some mean electric licks. And it's like, "Don't do any of these, unless it's in humor—the acoustic will not be an electric guitar for you."

REYNOLDS And then someone like John Hammond can rock on an acoustic. It's amazing.

Some of the covers that you do are surprising, like John Prine's "Angel from Montgomery."

MATTHEWS I'd love to do Bonnie Raitt's version of that. We did a Marilyn Manson song last year ["Cryptorchid"]. We turned it into a beautiful song. It was great to play this lovely, sorrow-

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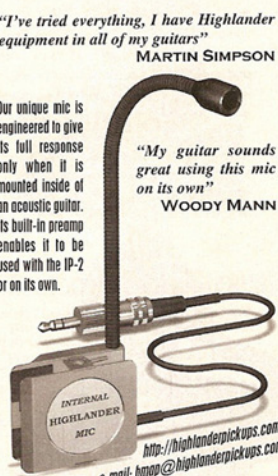
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filled ballad about the arrival of bitterness and sadness and suicidal tendencies; I'd sing it, and then afterwards say, "That's a tune by Marilyn Manson" [laughs].

In your set, it's interesting to hear a song like "Angel from Montgomery," which has a standard folk/country chord progression, next to your songs, which almost never have standard progressions.

MATTHEWS But I love it in other people's tunes. I don't know why I can't write like that. I love tunes like "Wild Horses" or [Lyle Lovett's] "Boat"—what a great song. I can't do it like him—he's got such a great delivery.

When I listen to your songs for the first time, the parts almost always go somewhere other than where I think they're going to go.

MATTHEWS Maybe a lot of that comes from a blatant lack of knowledge. In some ways, I'm freed up by the fact that I don't write—

REYNOLDS —that you haven't had chord progressions shoved down your throat, so you have a different way of looking at them. That's the shit, though, that's what makes it different. That's why most people, after they've learned everything, spend [so much time] unlearning. That's why when I used to play jazz, and I would write songs, I would never write a jazz song, because it would sound like jazz. I always liked it when it was something like an accident. Like John Lee Hooker talks about, "I never do my changes on the four or the eight, because that's what people expect of me. I don't even know what I'm going to do—I just do it the way I like it."

I think of the typical verse/chorus/bridge structure of a song as a little wheel that keeps turning at a predictable speed. Your songs are more expansive than that; their structure is less obvious.

MATTHEWS With some songs, I think about the sections forwards and backwards—like maybe here's the main body of the song, and then there's a sort of chorus, and then the main body of the song, then I'll do the sort of chorus again, but maybe I'll do it twice as long, then I'll have another chorus, then the next one I'll do twice as long. I think of a lot of it



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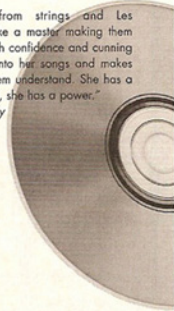
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in math—not clearly in math, but like, “Well, that makes sense. That’s balanced.”

REYNOLDS Music is math without the formulas—

MATTHEWS —without the problem of ascribing. And then I write a lot in patterns. Like “Satellite” I started off as this [plays dissonant fingering exercise]. And we sometimes do that [in concert]—that’s fun. It’s amazing, people recognize it. And then when they’re convinced it’s the wrong song, we play it the right way.

That song sounds a lot more sinister that way. It’s like the satellite that they’ve lost track of over at mission control.

MATTHEWS The one that’s fucking up all the telephones! That’s the one I’m voting for. ■

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