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February 24, 2005

**magazine**  
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1977 - 2005

**"Winn-Dixie"**  
**Co-Star**  
**DAVE**  
**MATTHEWS**  
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## Dave Matthews

### Born:

January 9, 1967 in  
Johannesburg, South Africa

### As A Kid:

*Dave spent a lot of time with his strictly Quaker family taking long hikes through the woods and meditating on sounds like heartbeats and footsteps.*

### He's No Quitter:

*At age nine, Dave picked up his first guitar. Aside from learning a few Beatles tunes he showed no promise on the instrument.*

### Before The "Band":

*Formed the Dave Matthews Band while working as a bartender in Charlottesville, Virginia.*

### Family:

*He and wife Ashley have twin girls, Stella and Grace.*

### Quote:

*"It's nice to be a regular guy now. I never was before I was famous."*

### In The Womb:

*Dave's mother, Val, began playing Vivaldi to her growing belly directly after his conception. To this day he claims to be insane for the classical artist.*

**G**rammy Award-nominated singer Dave Matthews recently took a break from his night job to portray an offbeat pet store employee with an unusual musical talent in the new family film, "Because of Winn-Dixie." But fans needn't worry: the multi-talented, married father of two has no intention of letting his music career go to the dogs so he can become a full-time actor.

"This is not an easy thing," Matthews recently said of working in film. "I'm glad I don't do it all the time."

Asked if the experience of making "Winn-Dixie" is now leading him away from music and in the direction of a Hollywood acting career, he assured: "No. But, everything is a new direction, I suppose. Unless I fell over dead. So, that's how I look at this. It's a little path; a little diversion."

Born in South Africa in 1967, the front-man for Matthews Band moved to the United States when he was two, went back to his homeland to attend high school, then returned to America when he was 18. He began acting in 1990 and performed in several plays in Virginia where he worked as a bartender in a jazz club, however, his passion for music eclipsed his fledgling acting career and it wasn't long before he decided to devote his time entirely to his band, which eventually went on to produce the top-selling albums "Remember Two Things," "Under the Table and Dreaming," "Crash" and "Before These Crowded Streets." In 2000, The Dave Matthews Band ranked as the top-grossing tour band in the United States.

Although his music has been featured on the soundtracks of numerous high-profile movies like "21 Grams," "The Matrix Reloaded," "Mr. Deeds" and "Scream 2," Matthews didn't try acting again until 2003 when he made his big-screen debut with a

small role in the Disney flick, "Where the Red Fern Grows." "Winn-Dixie" marks his first major part in a feature film and to prepare for that role, Matthews said he spent considerable time brushing up on his skills with some dedicated coaches and teachers.

The best piece of advice they gave him?

"Don't act," revealed the singer



who has a voice so gravely even he says it sounds like it comes from the "Wizard of Oz's" Lollipop Guild.

"Try to act as little as possible and then (one teacher) said, 'The closer the camera gets to you, the less you should act. I don't know if I managed to pull it off. But I know that I tried. But it's hard to try NOT to act.'"

Based on Kate DiCamillo's

beloved young adult novel, the movie is about a lonely Florida girl (played by AnnaSophia Robb) whose life changes when she finds an abandoned dog at the local supermarket. Not only does their bond heal the girl's friendship with her preacher dad (Jeff Daniels,) but it also brings together others in her small town, including characters played by Matthews, Eva Marie Saint and Cicely Tyson.

Despite his love of the film itself AND his experience viewing concert tapes and music videos he has made in the past, the popular musician said he still had some difficulty seeing himself perform when he screened the movie.

"It's very difficult to watch yourself," he emphasized. "I have a hard time watching music videos because they are usually pretty awful and some are worse than others and I've managed to become an expert in making bad videos."

But in the film, it's difficult to look at yourself and I thought this was such a sweet story; such a beautiful story about loneliness and common ground that I got over that and enjoyed being involved."

Sympathetic towards all of the wounded people in the story, Matthews confessed he was most keenly able to identify with his character, Otis, a man troubled by his mysterious past who finds comfort in his music and animals.

"The first time that I felt a sort of camaraderie with the character was the first time I read it and I can't remember if it was the book or the script where I really decided that I might have, were the situation slightly changed I might have ended up in much the same position as he was, which was convenient seeing it was my first real adventure into acting," he explained.

"There is a sense of loneliness and being on the verge of or at the

(Matthews continued on page 8)



*(Matthews continued from page 4)*

point of losing faith in life and that simple miracles like a young girl can wake you out of the slumber of sadness and so, I was sort of moved by that idea," he continued. "All these people, who for whatever reason, because they were unkind or because they were evil or because they were too strange or because they were too good, had ended up very lonely and this little girl and her hopefulness had brought them together."

Dealing with a variety of people from different backgrounds and at different stages in their career was nothing new for Matthews, who recently launched his solo debut CD, "Some Devil."

"What I've found in the music that I make and the people that I make it with and the environment that tends to be wrapped around it, is there tends to be a sense of commonality, of common ground," he noted. "We sort of leave our differences outside and then try and enjoy each other. Maybe that's one of the reasons I was drawn to the movie. I think that

it's the things that we have in common that should compel us more than the things that separate us."

Matthews said he also thinks growing up in two countries on opposite sides of the world has given him a unique perspective on the arts, as well as on human nature.

"If you look at the world, if you're forced to, which you would be if you lived in two different places from two angles, in some ways it becomes more three-dimensional," he reasoned, adding that he plans to go to South Africa next fall to introduce his children to some old friends. "I think that my love for this country and the depth of my love for what this country represents comes in the large part from the fact that I arrived here from another land. I think at the same time, I might not be able to have the same faith that some people have in this country if I lived here all my life. I just hope that I can bring some wisdom to the big pool." "Because of Winn-Dixie" is in theaters now.

*By Karen Butler*