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rock superstars

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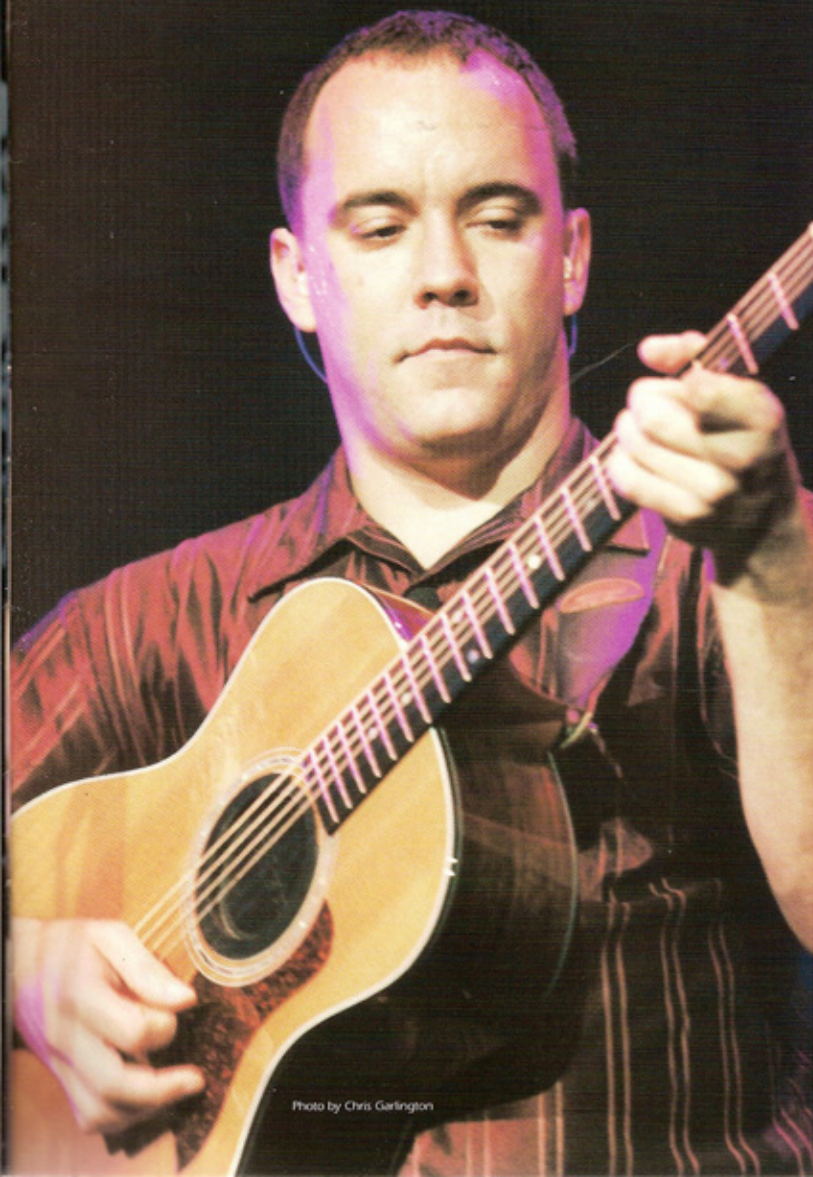


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The Dave Matthews Band

BAND

on the



RUN



By Tom Johnson and David Fantele

The Dave Matthews Band Story

The Dave Matthews Band Story

How did an obscure band (led by a South African-born singer/guitarist) operating quite independently of the music industry's hype machine, become rock 'n' roll's Cinderella story? Dave Matthews, for one, probably couldn't give you a straight answer. It's all much too bewildering.

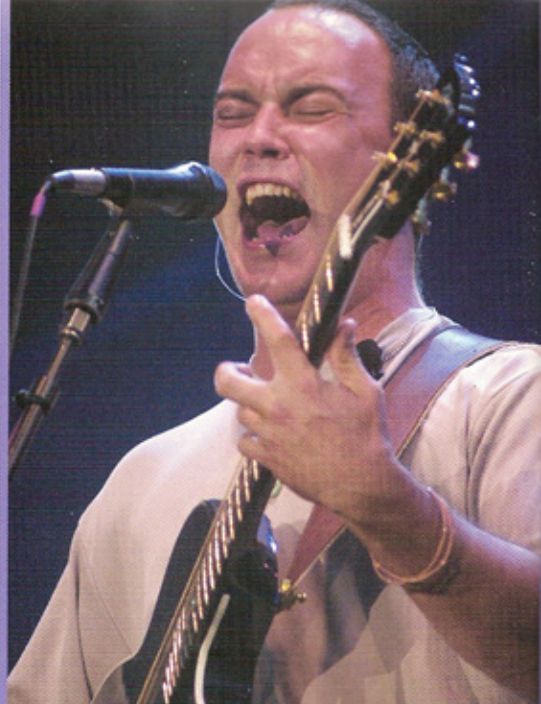
The Dave Matthews Band formed in Charlottesville, Virginia, in early 1991, has marched, according to writer Tom Moon of Knight Ridder Newspapers, from obscurity to ubiquity to become a staple of modern rock radio ... the band critics love to hate ... the rare act whose appeal is equally strong among men and women.

One thing's for sure: after years on the road, hauling from theaters to small arenas to major amphitheaters, the band has now mushroomed into a major stadium draw. According to Rock on the Net, The group's mix of rock music and worldbeat sensibility has made it one of the most refreshing and intelligent new music successes of the 1990s.

"Let's face it, I'm not your typical rock singer," says the 32-year-old Matthews. "We [the band] don't have a guitar hero. And the musicians come from all over the place stylistically."

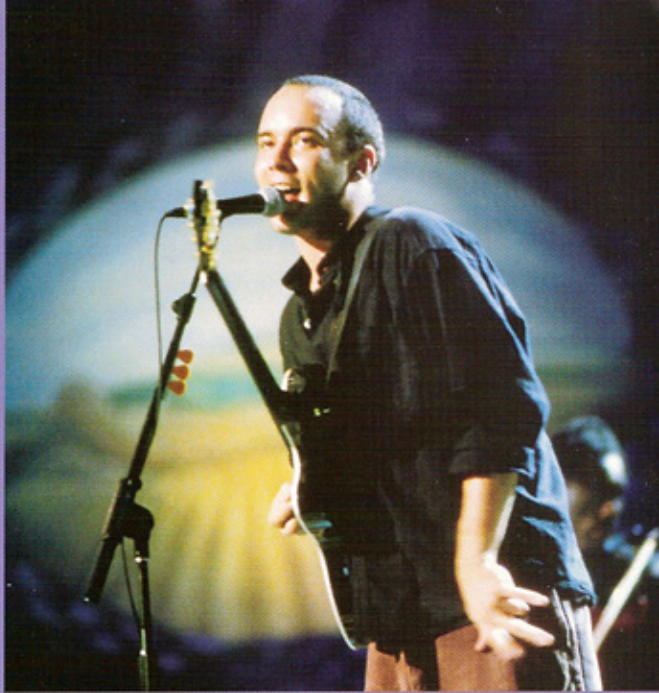
So, how did a dude who's been described as the polar opposite of the self-obsessed rock star – the kind of sleepy-eyed guy you encounter at the hardware store – become the front man for one of the hottest bands around?

Things started to roll when, in 1991, Matthews decided to put some songs he had written on a demo tape. Instead of simply recording himself with a guitar, he opted to bring in some instrumental help to give his musical ideas more depth. Although Matthews was only a bartender when he decided to form a band and record the demo, the largely self-taught vocalist and guitarist knew he could draw from many of



the folk traditions of world cultures for his complex rhythms and songs.

Dave found assistance in drummer Carter Beauford and saxophonist LeRoi Moore, who were both accomplished jazz musicians in the local Charlottesville music scene. Based on the recommendation of distinguished local jazz guru John D'earth, 16-year-old musical prodigy Stefan Lessard came on board to play bass. Completing the band was keyboard and harmonica player Peter Grieder (who left the band in 1993) as well as the talented and classically trained violinist, Boyd Tinsley. Indeed, Tinsley quit his band, the Boyd Tinsley Band, to join forces with Matthews. Tim Reynolds plays guitar on many of the band's albums and sometimes tours with the group when he isn't gigging with his own band, TR3. ➤



The Dave Matthews Band celebrates its Grammy win in 1997. From left: Dave Matthews, Carter Beauford, Boyd Tinsley, Stefan Lessard and Leroi Moore.

A Rooftop Gig

According to band's official Web site (www.dmband.com), the first official gig for the newly conceived Dave Matthews Band (DMB) was May 11, 1991, at a private rooftop party in Charlottesville. Its first public show was at the city's 1991 Earth Day Festival. Local weekly gigs soon followed, and within a few weeks, word of the band's contagious new sound spread like wildfire throughout the region. Clubs started to fill up, tours began to cover more territory, and the fan base grew at an incredible rate.

On November 9, 1993, DMB released its first album, "Remember Two Things," on its Barna Rags label. The album was recorded live at The Muse Music Club on Nantuxkat Island, in August 1993. The album debuted on college charts as the highest independent entry, and went on to be certified gold by the RIAA – a significant accomplishment for an independent album. Meanwhile, the band kept touring and its fan base continued to grow. By allowing fans to tape shows for their personal use, DMB created a highly interactive community that continues in spirit today.

Tale of the Tape

The band's Web site states: "We feel that each show is unique and want to offer our fans the opportunity to recreate the live experience through the audio reproduction of our shows. At all authorized performances, tapes can tape from any ticketed seating location in the venue. Also, for many of these performances tapes are able to purchase tickets for a specially designated taping section, normally located immediately behind the soundboard. Selling any recording is illegal and will jeopardize everyone else's taping privileges."

Unfortunately, as the band's popularity increased, they found that their



Photo by Peter Dinklage/RedUX LLC.
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The Dave Matthews Band Story



consideration of the fans resulted in live bootlegs being sold for profit in music stores. The band originally attempted to find the sources of the recordings and initiate lawsuits, but then decided against it. Instead, the band has made officially released live recordings available (i.e., "Recently" and "Live At Red Rocks") at retail prices significantly lower than bootleg prices.

During the first part of 1994, Dave Matthews Band recorded its RCA debut, "Under the Table and Dreaming." Just before the album's release on September 27, 1994, Dave Matthews Band hit the road for its first official national tour. The tour lasted well over a year and included

sold out theater dates across the country, a trip to Europe, and two summers playing on the main stage of HORDE. By the fall of 1995, when the band returned to the studio to record its next album, "Under the Table and Dreaming" had been certified four times platinum by the RIAA selling over five million copies in the U.S.

In addition, the band became a rock and pop radio hit with its first hit single from the album, "What Would You Say." The album also went on to generate other hit singles such as "Satellite" and the band's live staple, "Ant's Marching." The album is dedicated to Matthew's eldest sister, Anne, who was murdered by her husband in South Africa. ➤

Photo this page: Mike Kline/WildShots LLC
Photo right page: Frank Miccotta/Corbis Outline

THE DAVE MATTHEWS BAND CD COLLECTION



Remember
Two Things
(1993)

Under The
Table And
Dreaming
(1994)



Crash
(1996)

Live At
Red Rocks
(1997)



Recently -
EP
(1997)

Before
These
Crowded
Streets
(1998)



Listener
Supported
(1999)

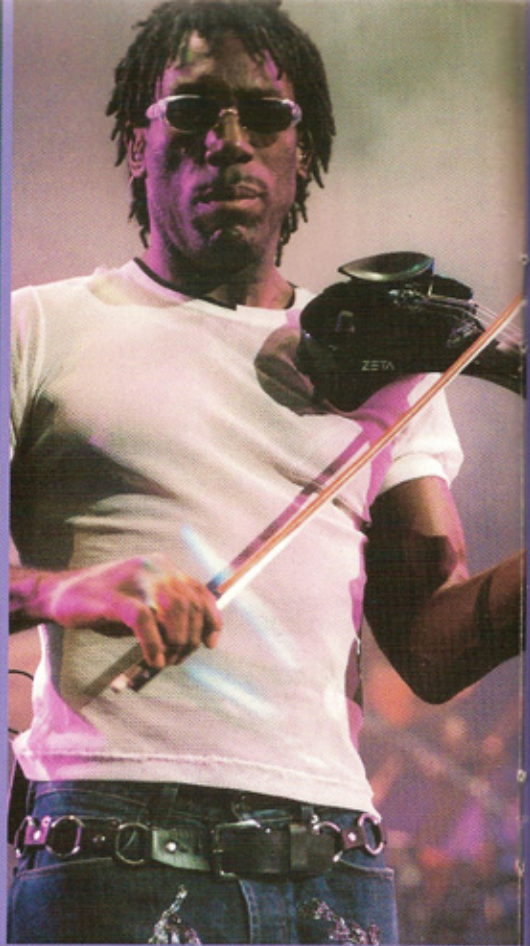
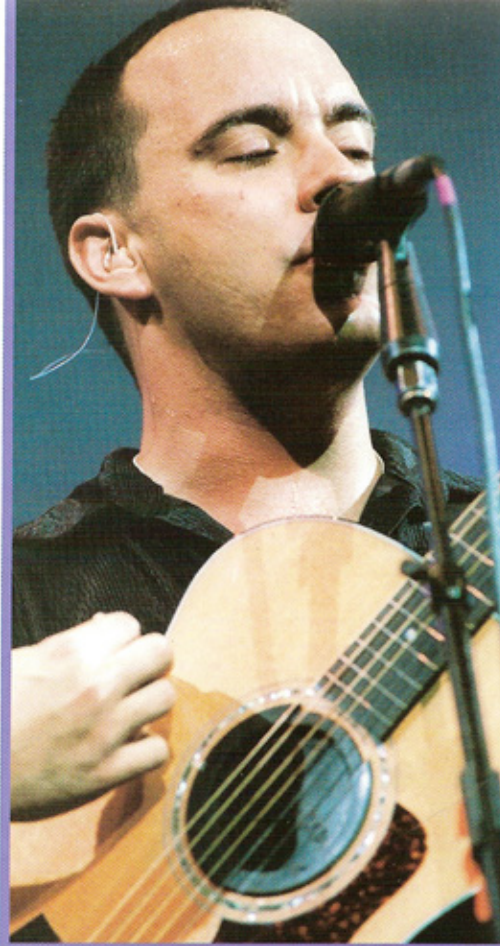
Live At
Luther
College
(1999)



The
Dave
Matthews
Band



Photo by Mike Maitland/AMG



"Crash" Hits Home!

"Crash," Dave Matthews Band's second album for RCA, was released on April 30, 1996, and debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard 200 chart. The album continued the band's mix of musical sounds with more maturity and perfection. Tracks such as "Crash Into Me" and "Say Goodbye" displayed the band's ability to create melodic ballads with a rockin' edge. Also, the singles "Too Much" and "So Much to Say" were hits on the pop and rock charts as well as video favorites with fans.

The album was actually a collection of songs recorded in the studio that the band had been playing live for years. Only "Too

Much" and "Crash Into Me" were new songs. "Crash" went on to sell four million copies in the U.S.

The band continued with a steady schedule of touring throughout 1997, headlining sold-out amphitheater dates across North America. DMB, though elevated to the level of national pop stardom, continued to do things precisely as it had from day one: Organically, with a grass roots mentality.

Sounding Off

Indeed, claims that the band was a Grateful Dead wannabe were dispelled by the differences between the two bands and the developing sound the Dave Matthews Band could claim as its own.



"People definitely write us off as a feel-good band," Matthews says. "We constantly hear from critics that we're not challenging. We've been attacked for staying in one style, when in fact, there are many styles going on. It's almost like people don't want to really listen."

"Another thing they say is we're wonks. We really fight that. I don't want people to have to think too hard. It's fine to have music come from the mind, but for me it has to go through the heart. That's why I have trouble with 20th-century classical stuff: Music that's extremely intellectual is stupid."

On October 28, 1997, Bama Rags/RCA label released an official double-disc live Dave Matthews Band album, entitled "Live at Red Rocks 8-15-95."

Without any marketing or promotion, "Live at Red Rocks" debuted at number three on the Billboard 200 chart and was instantly certified platinum. As the title suggests, the album is culled from a live performance from 1995 and includes such tracks as "Proudest Monkey," "Dancing Nancies" and "Tripping Billies."

The album provided fans with a high quality and reasonably priced alternative to the overpriced, ill produced, and illegal live DMB CDs that were beginning to flood the bootleg black-market. The overwhelming success of "Live at Red Rocks," combined with the band's tremendous touring achievements, proved that Dave Matthews Band had grown from a grass roots phenomenon to one of the hottest bands in America. ➤

Sinking the Titanic

On April 28, 1998, RCA released Dave Matthews Band's third studio album, "Before These Crowded Streets." The critically acclaimed recording debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 chart; it was the band's strongest debut to date. In fact, it had the distinction of knocking the "Titanic" soundtrack out of the No. 1 spot on the Billboard charts after 16 consecutive weeks. The new DMB set sold more than 420,000 copies in its first week of release. And the hit single "Don't Drink the Water" was one of two tracks on the album that Alanis Morissette contributed to.

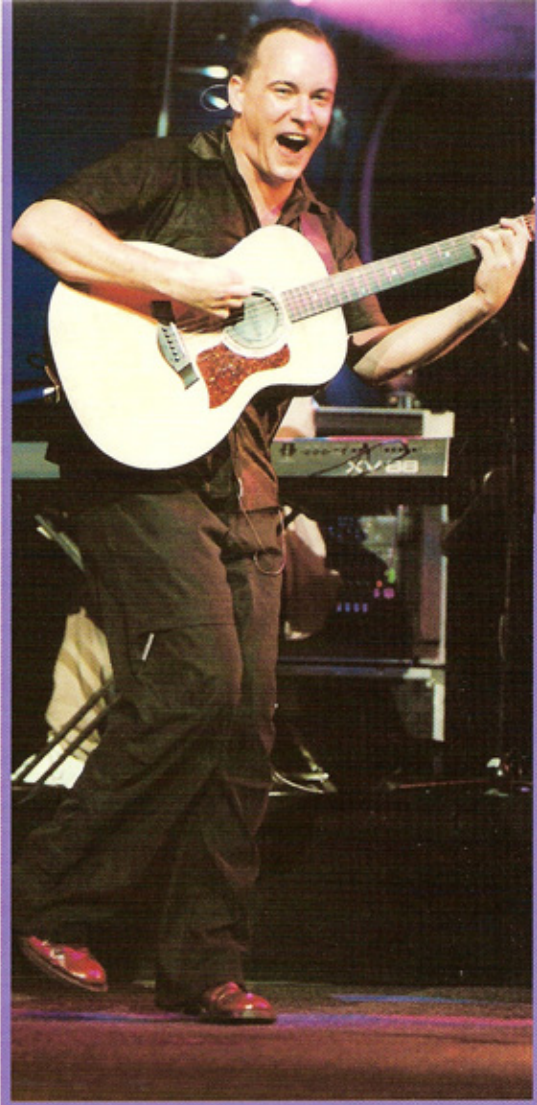
"The songs were all new," Matthews told the San Francisco Chronicle in May. "The other albums were sort of collections of songs we'd already been playing for a while. On this one, things weren't set in stone ... it's leaning toward where, maybe for the next album, we go into a studio with absolutely nothing and just start jamming."

In an interview with Rolling Stone magazine, Matthews said: "There's a looser feel about the music ... for us it was a little reminiscent of when we were first playing together ... it was a great inspiration to sit around and play the guitar in the way I had five years prior to that, just playing and coming up with licks and coming up with ideas. I think there's definitely a darker tone to a lot of the songs. Heavier may be a better word for it."

DMB spent the following year and a half on the road, selling out stadiums, arenas and amphitheaters across the country.

Enter Tim Reynolds

On January 19, 1999, Bama Rags/RCA released "Live at Luther College: An Acoustic Performance by Dave Matthews and Tim Reynolds." Tim Reynolds was a guest guitarist on all of the Dave



Matthews Band albums and toured with the band as a guest musician. Dave Matthews and Tim Reynolds toured as an acoustic duo during the winters of '96, '97 and '99. The second in a series of live Dave Matthews Band-related releases, "Live at Luther College" debuted at number two on the Billboard 200 chart and has since been certified platinum by the RIAA. As with "Live at Red Rocks," the success of this second live album was based solely on word-of-mouth buzz.

The DMB performed at Woodstock '99 in New York in July and at Farm Aid in




September. In August, more than 40 people were arrested in Connecticut at two DMB concerts after violent clashes with police. In late September the band offered four live tracks available for download with proceeds going to charity (VH1's Save The Music foundation). The tracks were part of the band's September 11 concert in New Jersey which was featured on a PBS special that will not be on its next live album release, "Listeners Supported."

By fall 1999, just six years after the release of its independent album, "Remember Two Things," DMB had sold

over 15 million albums and become the most successful touring band in America.

The DMB heralded the new millennium by beginning work on its next album at their studio in Charlottesville in January. The next month, Dave Matthews and his manager launched their own independent record label - A.T.O. (According To Our) Records. Also in February, Matthews was nominated for a Gibson Guitar Award for Best Rock Guitarist (Male). And just this month, Matthews hit the Top 40 by helping Santana with "Love Of My Life."

No doubt about it, the hits just keep comin'. 

The
Dave
Matthews
Band





Dave Matthews :

The Man Behind

the Band

By Tom Johnson
& David Fantele



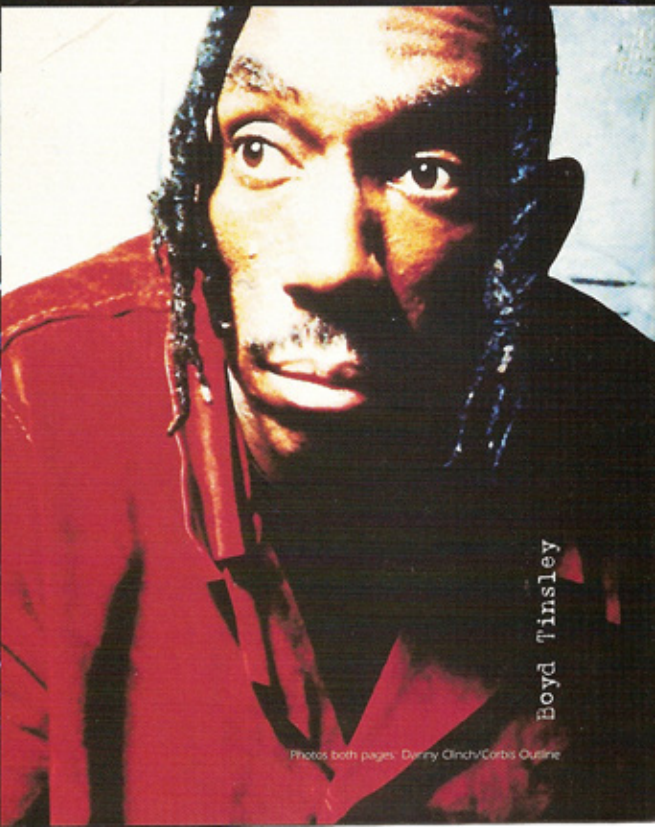
Stefan Lessard




Leroi Moore



Carter Beauford



Boyd Tinsley



ave Matthews has chronicled his life's travels so often that when asked, he can rattle off the details almost without pausing. It goes like this: Born in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1967.

Moves two years later with his family to Westchester County, N.Y., where his dad, a physicist, goes to work for IBM. Then, in the early '70s, to Cambridge, England, before returning to New York — where his dad died in 1977. The family moves back to South Africa in 1980, where Matthews goes to a few different schools and "gets wise about the evils of government, there and in general."

The key move for Dave Matthews Band fans, of course, was when he relocated in 1986 to Charlottesville, VA, where his parents had lived before he was born. Though he also logged time back in South Africa and in Amsterdam, it was in Charlottesville where Matthews — who took piano lessons as a child before picking up the guitar at age nine — became part of the local music community and hatched the idea for his own band.

"I didn't really have a vision, or a plan," says Matthews, acknowledging that some of his musical sensibility came from spending time in so many different places as a child. "I'm sure it gave me a little bit of an openness. The most diverse music in the world is in America, 'cause there's so many different cultures here, but what tends to be pushed to the top is often a narrow view of what there really is. So maybe my travels just gave me a wider pool of listening." ➤



Matthews says his principal goal with the band was to surround himself with the best players possible. To this day he remains "amazed" that he was able to recruit and retain the four musicians he rather modestly refers to as his superiors.

"I was just looking for people that I liked," explains Matthews, who feels he's "gotten a bit better" over the years. "Could I play with them was more of the question, I think. We just ended up fitting together. The band wasn't something that I was looking for; it was very much I loved the people I asked to play with me. There was a connection at the beginning, and I think what we've been about is not some grand scheme but more the spirit of everyone, which is why we ended up with this band and why it sounds like it does."


In an interview with journalist Tom Moon of Knight Ridder Newspapers, Matthews says: "A good night is everything feeling on

top, way up energy-wise. And no matter what's going on, I usually find myself standing next to the drum kit, watching Carter [Carter Beauford] in a state of almost total awe. He is amazing. I'm doing the whole pinching-yourself thing, wondering, "How did I get here?"

He talks about his band as if he's grateful simply to be a member. ("I have tapes of us from seven years ago; everybody's great, and I sound terrible.") He has been with the same woman since he was an unknown. He drives a Subaru Outback, and is proud papa to a husky he calls Little Man. Funny, for a guy who's sold millions of albums, Matthews isn't entirely comfortable with the sound of his voice, which can glide over the band's placid atmospheres or roar with derangement.

"I still have a bit of that thing when you first record yourself on tape. ... You hear it and go, 'I sound like that? That sucks.'" ➤

Photos both pages: Mike Kline/WildShots LLC



Dave Matthews On ...

gigging

"The idea is to just play music and have the best possible time that we can. There's a tendency for artists to take themselves desperately seriously, and to be dark and complaining. But I can't find that in myself. I'm much too pleased ... We don't try to be clever with our music. We just want to celebrate the fact that we found each other and that we can make really nice sounds together."

integrity

"It's really important to us that the music sounds honest. I think people can hear that, and it's that spirit that I think is kind of contagious."

women

"The inspiration for most of my writing is my concern for women and the mothers of the world, my absolute love for them. Generally, women, being the vessel of life - they are the inspiration."

possible Hollywood stardom

"I read a lot of scripts and I hope to do something, however minor ... right now, it's fun to see all the scripts and then a year later, see the films ... then I shoot myself because I would like to have at least tried some of these things. But I'll try and do it quietly and do it well."

sexuality in lyrics

"I don't want to talk about nailing someone. I'd rather find something that's genuinely sexy, that has some healthy tension to it. Too often, you know, sex is portrayed as deviant. Our songs are all about worship - you can't shake the hand of God, though you know you'd like to."

his goal to write something as piercingly direct as Bob Marley's "No Woman No Cry"

"I have a thousand words for every song, and Marley could make something honest and moving with ... 30 words."



He lives by a river in a simple 200-year-old converted wheat mill that he describes as "the place I want to die."

Matthews hasn't been home much lately, however, and as he attempts to explain his band's popularity, he comes back to the road as the key. "A lot of our success has happened outside of the normal industry channels. I think there's a reluctance to really do the road on the part of some bands. They think you can get that large audience from television. ... We like that contact, if for no other reason than it takes everybody back to the time when rock 'n' roll had a little bit of renegade spirit."

Still, Matthews is apprehensive about playing stadiums. "I wish I could have seen Springsteen do it. When you talk to the old guys in the business, they get that wistful look when they talk about his stadium shows. He didn't have exploding orifices or anything. He just went out there with his band and took care of business. ... That will be our challenge: to stay focused.

The frame is bigger and more elaborate, but we have to fill the place with music, and not fill it with ego."

For a long time, Matthews battled just to be taken seriously. He formed the band while bartending at Miller's, near the University of Virginia. Surveying Charlottesville's technique-oriented jazz-fusion outfits and heartfelt country bands, he made mental notes of the musicians he liked and formed a kind of dream team, even though he had little experience playing music.

It was important to him that the musicians came from different worlds: "I was sort of into a folk thing. Carter was all the way fusion. Boyd [violinist Boyd Tinsley] was classically trained, but playing rock. [Saxophonist] LeRoi Moore was into straight-ahead jazz. And Stefan [bassist Stefan Lessard] was still in school. When we first got together ... it was 'Let's not do what I do, let's do what happens.' There was an incredible openness to it."







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Photo by Mike Kline/WildShoes LLC

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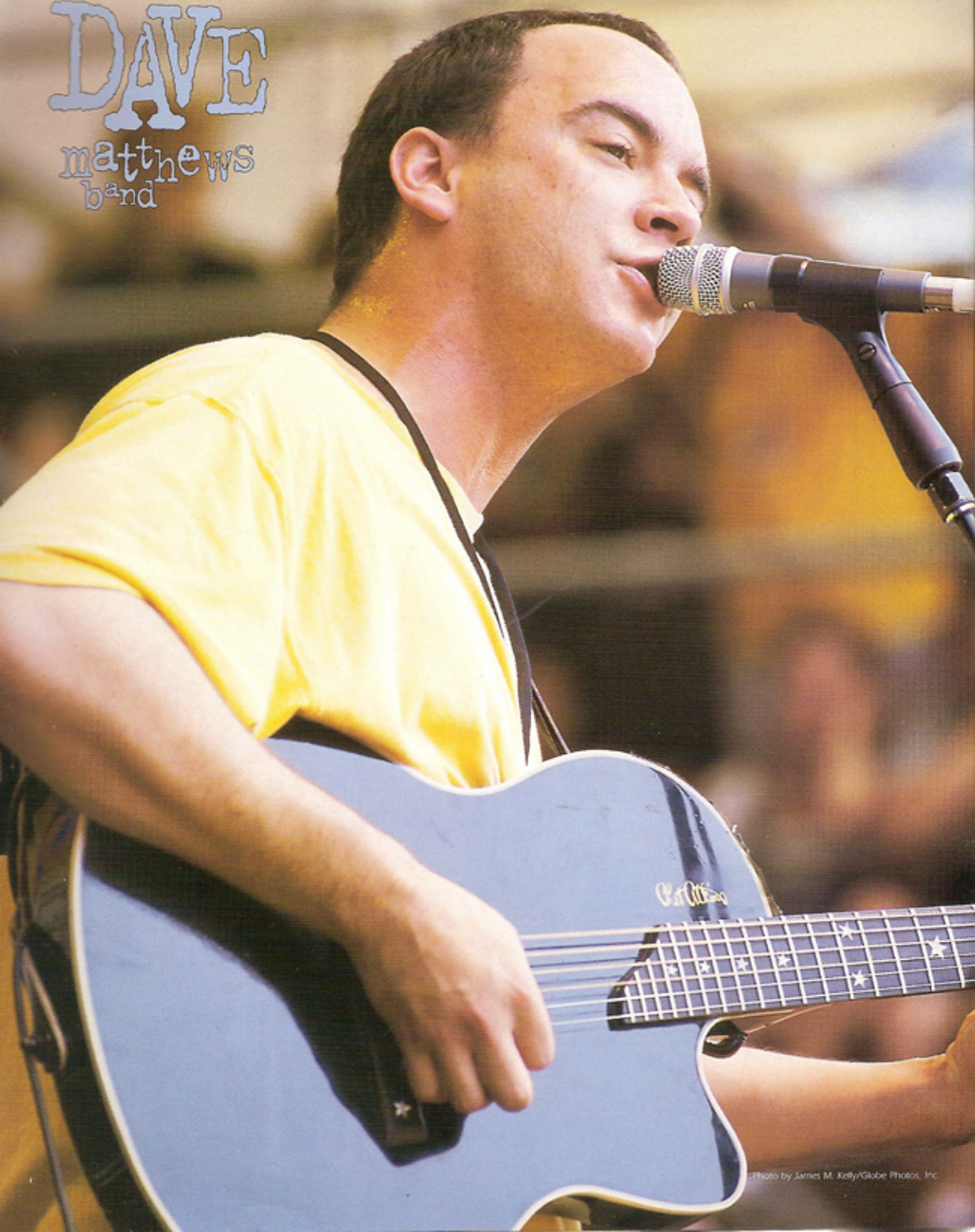


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