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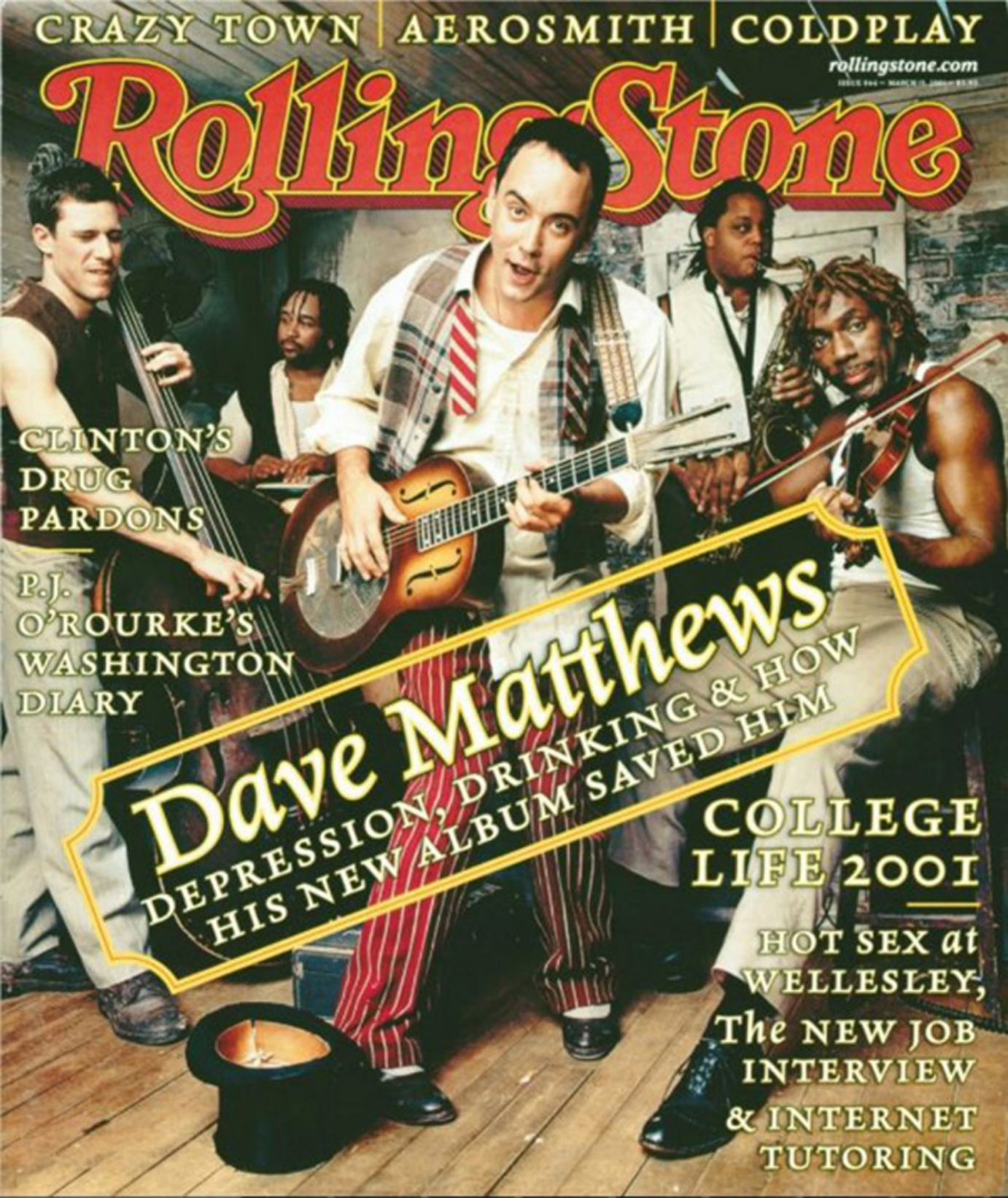

CLINTON'S DRUG PARDONS

P.J. O'ROURKE'S WASHINGTON DIARY

Dave Matthews

DEPRESSION, DRINKING & HOW HIS NEW ALBUM SAVED HIM

COLLEGE LIFE 2001

HOT SEX *at* WELLESLEY, *The* NEW JOB INTERVIEW & INTERNET TUTORING

The Salvation of Dave Matthews

STORY BY
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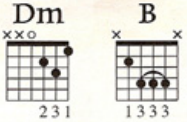
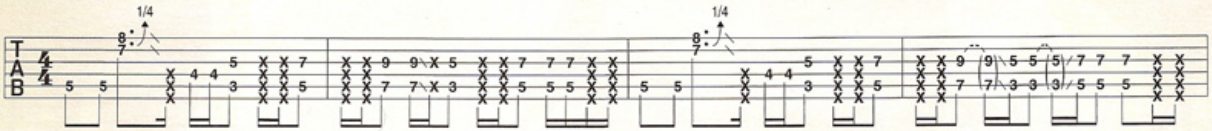
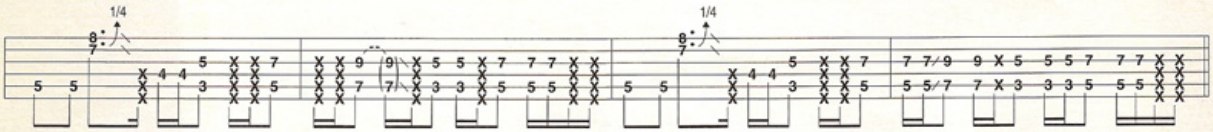




He was at the end of his rope, struggling with an album full of gloom.



But then he picked up an electric guitar, and his life was saved by rock & roll

IN THE STARK, cinder-block basement of the First Union Center in Philadelphia, Dave Matthews is not feeling well. He has a fever of 104. His voice is ragged, his eyes bloodshot, his face sagging with exhaustion. Sipping tea with honey, he wanders into the backstage production office. There, despite his grippe, he goes into his standard pre-show psych-up – a kind of free-associative, spontaneous comic rap. Studying his ever-narrowing widow's peak in the mirror and rubbing his ever-expanding belly, he says, "I don't know, I just don't have that boy-band look." He makes a couple of jokes about the state of his bowels ("Things feel . . . I don't know. Loose"). He imitates a sputtering German despot, then observes, "I once heard the saying 'Germans don't make any mistakes – except the big ones.' " Then he strolls from the room, down a corridor – and onto the stage, where a capacity crowd of 10,000 awaits him.

For the next ninety minutes, Matthews and his band produce their uncategorizable and unlikely blend of acoustic guitar, bass, drums, sax and fiddle music – a sound that has earned comparisons to everything from folk-based Sixties bands like Fairport Convention to Peter Gabriel to fusion jazz to African world beat to Pearl Jam. Over the past decade, this hybrid sound has made the Dave Matthews Band one of the top touring acts in the country and helped it sell some 20 million records. But tonight, with Matthews growing ever weaker at the mike, the band cuts short its famously long sax and fiddle jams to plow through a set of crowd-pleasers and then quickly quits the stage.

Matthews disappears to lie down. His band mates sit in the dressing room and post-mortem the show. Saxophonist LeRoi Moore, a taciturn, Buddha-shaped man of sometimes terrifying self-containment, makes his feelings known by simply turning his back to the room and seating himself inches from a TV screen, where a football game is in progress. Violinist Boyd Tinsley, whose explosive onstage performance is belied by his offstage shyness and the stammer that edges his speech, drops silently onto a couch, failing to remove his shades. Drummer Carter Beauford, the band's jovial diplomat, is saying that he could see that Dave just wasn't able to take things over the top. "He kept trying," he says, shaking his head, "but every time, the illness would pull him down again." Bassist Stefan Lessard, the band's ashram-reared youngest member at twenty-six, who, as usual, is dressed in the skate-punk garb of an oversized hip-hop sweat shirt and cargo pants, says, "I just hope the fans didn't notice. . . ."

Unfortunately, they did. Later, in the hallway of my hotel near the arena, I encounter a couple of Daveheads who drove up from Virginia in the midst of Christmas exams just to see the show. Knowing nothing of their hero's illness, they wonder why the performance was so lackluster. "In the past I've seen them do weird gospel songs and stuff," says one of the girls. "Tonight, there were no surprises."

In fact, the band did have a surprise up its sleeve, but one that it elected not to reveal until now,

Above: FIRST EIGHT BARS OF "I DID IT," TRANSCRIBED BY MATT SCHARFGLASS

[*Cont. from 51*] walk up to me and say, 'Sing. Just play. Don't dig a ditch, don't wade through this.' "

By the end of their first day together, the duo had written and recorded an entire song, the inspirational, gospel-inflected track "Everyday," which emerged from a simple groove and drone Ballard played on his keyboard, blended with the guitar figure from an old Matthews song called "36." After more than six months of creative drought – "of trying to shit a watermelon," as Matthews puts it – he had dashed off one of his finest songs in a few hours. "I felt as though my self-imposed weight of the world, my burden, had been taken off. I started feeling powerful again, feeling the power that we all have. The nearly squashed flame was eagerly burning again."

Indeed it was. Over the next ten days, Matthews and Ballard would write a staggering eleven more songs – twelve in all, an entire album's worth of material: a brace of punchy, sexy, rocking, supremely confident outpourings that could not differ more from the tentative, downbeat numbers Matthews had labored over at home. Ballard imposed no limits. Unaware, or unconcerned, that Matthews had always been an acoustic player, Ballard did not hesitate to put an electric in his hands. "He walked in my studio," Ballard recalls, "and the first thing I handed him was a baritone guitar, which is tuned lower than a six-string electric and higher than a bass. It was love at first touch. You could see that he was having a visceral experience with this guitar. I could barely wrench it out of his hands."

Many of the album's songs grew directly out of his riffing on the electric – including the first single, "I Did It," with its dirty opening figure, which happened to emerge one morning in the studio. "Boy, I loved playing that," Matthews says. "I was like, 'Goddamn it, I did it. That's nasty.' It was almost a joke when I first did it. It's so ugly and so beautiful at the same time. It's so middle-finger-lifted 'Fuck you.' "

Not only were riffs and melodies pouring out of Matthews at an unprecedented rate, so were words. "We would get a track cut from the demo in the day, then he would go down on the mike and he would sort of phonetically sing a lot of the lyrics," says Ballard. "He would be coming up with huge bits and pieces of the song that were just flowing through him. Then we would sit there and decipher it, and a lot of it would be intact – it was remarkable that he was able to just channel. Then I would help him connect the dots from there and, occasionally, came up with a line or two. But it was appearing to him on some other level. The only other time I've seen that happen is with Alanis."

The songs and sentiments were pure Matthews – passion springing from the ashes, the need to seize life's joys before they fade – but now recast in songs of unbridled confidence and motion. It was immediately decided to shelve the songs recorded with Lillywhite and to release the twelve new songs as the band's fourth album.

Meanwhile, back home in Charlottesville, the rest of the group was receiving regular reports of an orgy of songwriting taking place 3,000 miles away. But nothing could have prepared the band members for the actual experience of hearing the tracks when they flew out to L.A. to record them. "There were some tears," says Tinsley. Beauford remembers marveling at the sound of the electric guitar parts. "I thought it was Carlos Santana," Beauford recalls. "I said, 'Dave, who the hell is this playing guitar? Is this Carlos?' And he looked at me and shook his head with this smirk on his face. I had to hug him."

When it came time to record the finished tracks, Ballard used the band members essentially as studio-session musicians – a sharp departure from the methods of the past, and one that Lessard and Beauford both admit was, initially, threatening. Ordinarily the band jammed out on songs, finding their parts through improvisation. Now Ballard was presenting them with finished demo "sketches," with their parts already roughed-in on drum machines and synthesizers. Says Lessard, "My first thought was, 'OK, what am *I* going to do? There's already bass on it. Can I go home now?' " Beauford says he shared this discomfort: "Before, Dave would come up with a groove and say, 'Guys, check this out,' and then we'd all get together and tighten it up and shape it. He'd come with the clay and we'd use our hands to mold it. That didn't really happen this time."

But the band soon fell in with Ballard's method. Searching for rigorous "focus" of the album's musical ideas, Ballard had written out charts and arrangements for each member, and he nixed long solos. Ballard reminded them that they could embroider the songs when playing them on tour. "I kept saying, 'Look, we're making a movie, and when you guys go out on the road, that's a stage play,' " Ballard says. But while in his studio, Ballard was unbending. "If a Dave Matthews Band song is usually going to take six minutes to get there," he says, "my challenge to them was, 'Let's see if we can do it in half the time, and see if we can get as much music in there that's meaningful.' "

"As soon as we started recording," says Lessard, "it was like, 'Forget about it.' This was the best thing ever. . . . He'd have me doing the simplest bass punch, just quarter notes – just *bom bom bom*. But it sounds so phat. I listen to a lot of hip-hop. The bass lines are simple, but it's where it's *placed*. That's what people dance on. So I felt like I was in school again. It was a really good feeling." Beauford echoes this. A drummer who can handle any number of complex polyrhythms, he now found himself, much of the time, playing straight-ahead, balls-out rock. And loving it. "John Bonham was running all through my head the whole time," he says. "I've played in so many fusion bands that it's caused me to become busy – all this overplaying. Now I feel more comfortable with simplifying, because Glen has kind of OK'd it, in a way." Moore says the same about Ballard's influence on his sax playing. "Less is more," he says. "Way more." Tinsley praises the "discipline" of the process and how Ballard used his violin in a new, symphonic way, in overdubbed washes or with new textures – such as when he suggested Tinsley pluck the instrument, pizzicato, through a wah-wah pedal on the song "Everyday."

"I GOT MORE INTERNALIZED OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS, AND AFRAID OF WHAT I WROTE. THAT'S WHY THE SONGS GOT REALLY DARK."

To a man, the band says that recording with Ballard has galvanized them. "It just gave me a new sense of hope with our future and the sense that we're still at the halfway mark," says Lessard. "We're not on the plateau, which I've seen a lot of bands at our level get stuck in." Such collective excitement has eased any lingering sense that, as Beauford puts is, "this one is really Dave and Glen's album."

"I HAVE AN IMAGE OF SOMEONE giving me a hand up," Matthews says of his collaboration with Ballard. "That's why I say that what's come out of this album is the result of being saved." He speaks of the album itself with a similar, almost evangelical fervor.

"I think they're the best lyrics I've written," he says. "I've said things more clearly on this album than ever before. It's the best melodies. It's so musical, so thematic and so varied. I would be disappointed, obviously, if it didn't do well, but I would in my heart think it was other circumstances, other things; it would not be that the record is lacking. Because I gave everything I had, as honestly and as clearly as I could. It made a big space in my life. I'm not afraid of whatever happens, as much as I was – afraid of what would happen to me if everything collapsed around me, and left me standing in the middle."

Indeed, Matthews now speaks like a man who craves such a "collapse" of his former world. "I was really growing very tired of the circumstance that I'd gotten myself into," he admits. "I wanted to burn it down. And enjoy burning it down."

Among the biggest changes Matthews has made in his life since finishing the album is his decision to no longer live, at least in the short term, in Charlottesville, the town with which he has so much become associated. His wife has started graduate school in Seattle, and he obviously wants to be with her. At the same time, Matthews admits that a major part of his excitement about the westward move is that it puts him just a quick hop from Glen Ballard in Los Angeles – a city, he says, that he has now come to love. Matthews plans to make frequent trips there to write songs with his new collaborator. As to whether the band will tour with its former frequency, that, too, seems to be up in the air. While there's no doubting his honesty when he says that he still achieves regular highs when performing live, he also admits that the band's rigorous touring schedule is beginning to wear on him. "I think I'm older," he says, and he hints that the regular summer tours have been to satisfy the demands of his manager, Capshaw. "Coran will catch me on a good day and say, 'Would you mind touring for nine months next year?' " Matthews says, laughing. " 'I'd love to!' My manager has a way of asking me the same question over and over until he gets the answer that he wants." But Matthews now states, with some firmness, that he wants to write more at this stage – all part of his new resolve to start putting some of his own interests above those of the organization.

"I wonder," he says, "if maybe my focus has been, for a long time, to protect the interests of people around me, and that means small circles and then getting bigger and bigger, and forgetting about myself inside that." Later he adds, "I love all the people that I work with, or for: the record company, the fans. But if everybody vanishes, if everybody decides tomorrow morning that I'm an impossible ass, then that's fine. You know. If the president of RCA says, 'Fuck Dave Matthews' – great. It would run off my back. I had an awakening like you only get a few times in your life."

When I express some surprise at all this, he insists, almost too vehemently,

Carter Beauford, Boyd Tinsley, Dave Matthews, LeRoi Moore and Stefan Lessard (FROM LEFT), at Giants Stadium, July 2000

DANNY CLINCH

with the release of its new album, *Everyday*. From the opening notes, it's clear this is something different. Rather than hearing the springy acoustic guitar that begins most DMB songs, the listener's ears are assaulted by a truly dirty electric guitar riff. Then comes Dave's voice. Shorn of its Sting-meets-Vedder-meets-Gabriel earnestness, it brims with a concupiscent swagger: "I did it/Do you think I've gone too far?/I did it/Guilty as charged . . ."

The song is only the first salvo in a record that, from start to finish, demolishes all expectations of what a Dave Matthews Band album should be. There are no extended fiddle or saxophone excursions, no seven-minute grooves. Each tune, honed to around four minutes, has a focus, economy and conviction that suggests a band reborn. It is, arguably, its best album, and an amazingly fresh record for a band in its tenth year. But will devotees of the old, acoustic DMB hoedowns embrace it? The group's namesake and nominal leader doesn't know.

And he doesn't really care. By the time he came to write the new record, Dave Matthews had reached such a personal nadir that he had no choice but to make some changes. For him, *Everyday* is far more than another record to fulfill his RCA contract.

"Not to be overdramatic," he says without a hint of irony, "but it saved my life."

TWO WEEKS AFTER THAT Philadelphia show, on an unseasonably warm day in early January 2001, Dave Matthews is strolling around his hometown of Charlottesville, Virginia. A small city of some 50,000, it is also the site of the University of Virginia and a fecund breeding ground for all manner of musical cross-pollination in its tiny bars, pubs and restaurants.

There's a difference to Matthews from when I first met him four and a half years ago. Gone is the latter-day hippie attire, the seashell necklaces and faded T-shirts. Today he's dressed in a pair of expensive wool pants, a stylish zippered black cardigan and a supple black leather blazer. But it's also his mood and manner: He's toned down his former constant high-speed comedic riffing – accents, impersonations, dances, puns, poop jokes. He still ranks among the most disarmingly funny and unpretentious celebrities you'll ever meet (how many multimillionaire pop stars, for instance, drive a beat-up, garbage-strewn 1997 Subaru Outback?), but there's a new sobriety of mood, a seriousness to him. Partly, these changes reflect that he's five years older (he turned thirty-four the day before); partly that he has taken the decidedly adult step of becoming a husband (last August he married Ashley, his girlfriend of nine years). But the changes go deeper than that, as I'm to discover during the next two days in Charlottesville.

On the pretty, brick-paved pedestrian mall, Matthews stops outside Miller's, a modest pub and performance space where, eleven years ago, he used to sling drinks behind the bar.

"I remember working at Miller's," he says, gazing at the illuminated neon sign. "I was very happy there. At that time I couldn't see this. Not in my wildest dreams."

JON COLAPINTO *told the story of Cars bassist Benjamin Orr in RS 854.*

"I was feeling as if I had RUN OUT. And there was nobody around me who could HELP ME in any way."

Little wonder. Back then he was a twenty-three-year-old, ponytailed community-college dropout with little idea of where he was going. Born in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1967, the son of a physicist father and an architect mother, he had a peripatetic childhood – one whose eclectic cultural influences would eventually find their way into his hybrid musical style. At age two, his family moved from South Africa to New York's suburban Westchester County, where his father worked for IBM. Another year was spent in London. But after Dave's father died from cancer when Dave was ten, the family returned to Johannesburg. When he was eighteen, Dave was called up for South Africa's compulsory military service. Unwilling to fight for a racist apartheid regime that the Matthews family had always opposed, he moved back to the U.S., settling eventually in Charlottesville with his mother, brother and younger sister.

He soon drifted into his job at Miller's. Eschewing college, he drew and painted, smoked pot and noodled on his guitar, eventually writing four songs – songs it took him two years to get up the courage to play for anyone. When he did, a couple of local musicians and Miller's regulars named John D'earth and Ross Hoffman urged him to make a demo tape. Unsure of his talents, and uneasy about the "display of ego" that performing entails, Matthews was, he says, "running on other people's enthusiasm at that point." Nevertheless, he recruited some musicians he idolized from the local scene: drummer Carter Beauford; sax man LeRoi Moore; a hotshot sixteen-year-old bass prodigy, Stefan Lessard; and a classically trained violinist, Boyd Tinsley. "When we first heard Dave's songs," Beauford says, "we knew right away this guy was amazing." And once Matthews heard the unique melding of the band's instrumentation, he realized that he wasn't just making a demo tape. He was in a band. "When we started playing clubs," Matthews says, "everything changed. There was ambition and motivation. We were aggressive. We weren't looking for anyone to find us – we were going out and preaching."

From packed gigs at Miller's, they graduated to Trax, a local nightclub whose owner, Coran Capshaw, signed on as their manager. A serious Grateful Dead fan, Capshaw emulated the Dead's route to success. Spurning a record deal, he grew the Dave Matthews Band grass-roots-style, fan by fan, booking it first at frat houses, colleges and beach parties across Virginia. Word – and bootlegged tapes of the group's shows – traveled fast. After three years of building a fan base through a punishing tour schedule of 200 nights a year on the road, the band finally signed with RCA Records. Its first album, 1994's *Under the Table and Dreaming*, went to Number Eleven on the *Billboard* 200. Two years later, *Crash* debuted at Number Two. And two years after that, *Before These Crowded Streets* shipped Number One. By the end of the Nineties, they were rock's biggest touring act, selling a staggering 170,000 tickets in two straight SRO nights at Chicago's Soldier Field and packing stadiums from Boston to Los Angeles – feats matched only by the biggest names in rock: the Rolling Stones, U2, Pink Floyd and the Dead. Outed in *Forbes'* 1999 Celebrity 100 as among the biggest earners in showbiz (they were at forty, right behind Will Smith and Metallica), they began to travel to concerts in their own private jet. Their self-owned merchandising arm (run out of a specially built 20,000-square-foot warehouse in the Virginia countryside) ships more than a quarter of a million DMB T-shirts every summer – and grosses an estimated $80 million a year.

But away from the eyes of the public, Matthews was suffering a personal crisis. "I was," he says today, "feeling remarkably alone."

From his earliest days with the band – indeed, from the moment he stepped out from behind the bar at Miller's – Matthews had been grappling, inwardly, with the warring parts of his nature: the good-time entertainer, the self-described "ambitious motherfucker" who wanted to take the band to the top, and the private, solitary songwriter who views his own "massively overfed ego" with true contempt and who, even when ripping it up onstage in front of 75,000 people, can yearn to be, as he once put it in a song, "by myself again."

The magnitude of the band's financial, artistic and critical success, by late 1999, had only intensified the problem. In career terms, Matthews had realized every goal a musician could have. Financially, he never needed to pick up a guitar again. Money, in any case, had never been a primary motivation. He gives away a significant amount of his income as it is. "If I didn't give the money away," he says, "I'd feel like a fucking pig." (He has donated generously to, among others, Nelson Mandela, various friends in need and the University of Virginia, where he is helping to build a research wing in memory of his father, who taught at UVA before Dave was born.) Bereft of any new records to break or *Billboard* slots to occupy, and economically independent, he found himself at a frightening spiritual cul-de-sac. Not that Matthews was letting anyone see it.

"I'm very good at being relatively well," he says. "I don't like to be outwardly troubled. So I don't think people would look at me and say, 'Man, he's pretty bummed out.' " Indeed, Matthews himself did not realize the depths of his malaise until he sat down to write songs for the next album.

Lugubrious, downbeat, emotionally muffled, not a single one had the euphoric musical and lyrical liftoff of his best songs. Not that Matthews' earlier work had ever been mindlessly optimistic. The early loss of his father, and the later loss of his eldest sister in a circumstance that would leave her two infant children parentless (and which Matthews has asked not be revealed until his niece and nephew are old enough to absorb the news), had long infused his words and melodies with a certain melancholy, a memento mori crystallized in the jubilantly sung chorus to "Two Step": "Celebrate we will/Because life is short but sweet for certain." As in that song, he'd always balanced his sense of life's brevity against his bursting sense of its joys and possibilities. But with his new numbers, all hope seemed to have drained away. The titles said it all: "Busted Stuff," "Grace Is Gone," "Digging a Ditch."

Aware of the darkness that had edged into his songwriting, Matthews hoped that some upbeat tunes might spontaneously emerge from jamming with the band – as had happened in the past. In January 2000, the DMB assembled to make its new album. There was every reason to feel optimistic: The band members were comfortably ensconced in the recording studio that they had built in the basement of a large converted house in the countryside north of Charlottesville, and their longtime producer, Steve Lillywhite, was again behind the console. But it was soon clear that Dave's mournful songs about feeling trapped and directionless were sapping the band of inspiration. The atmosphere turned dark.

"We all felt kind of closed in," says bassist Lessard about the six months they spent in their isolated basement studio. "After a while it seemed like we were playing more baseball and riding

"The moment I walked into Glen's life, I was in heaven," says Dave Matthews (LEFT), with "Everyday" producer and co-writer Glen Ballard.

more ATVs, because no one wanted to go into the dark studio and get into this mood." Drummer Beauford also felt the gloom. "We were spinning in our spot and not moving anywhere, musically," he says. "It got to a point, for me, where I was like, 'Man, I need to say something, because I don't know if I can take this!' " Moore agreed, but also hid it. "Everybody else seemed like it was cool," he says. "So, I'm just going to go with the flow. Nobody wants to bring bad vibes and negativity in."

Bruce Flohr, the band's A&R man at RCA, was making trips every two weeks from Los Angeles to see how the album was progressing. Or not progressing, as the case may be. He detected, right away, a change, especially in Matthews. "For the first time, I saw Dave burdened by the process," Flohr says. "Dave always approaches things with enthusiasm, whether it's a show or a recording or a video. But there was a heaviness to him, and it concerned me." Nevertheless, Flohr was obliged to tell Matthews that the album needed some upbeat numbers.

"RCA was saying things like, 'Where's that "Tripping Billies"?' " Matthews recalls, referring to the hit song from *Crash*. "I knew what they were saying, but it pissed me off no end. Because what I was saying was, 'Don't you think I'd love to be in a frame of mind to write something upbeat?' But I wasn't. I was feeling as if I had run out. And there was nobody around me – as far as I could see – who could help me in any way."

Trying to take his demons head-on, Matthews moved from his secluded, eighteenth-century mill house south of Charlottesville and established himself in the studio, where he tried to find inspiration. "I was depressed," he admits now. "I lived upstairs in the playroom and really lost . . ." he pauses and resumes. "It was not a good time for me. I usually find that when I'm in one of those slumps, I do the better part of my drinking. I was going out and getting shitfaced. And I was staying in and getting shitfaced. I don't drink alone. But it's always surprising how easy it is to find someone to drink with." Meanwhile, the songs he was writing only grew more despairing.

Matthews' pain was not lost on his fellow band members. "It was obvious," says Beauford. "But nobody wanted to say anything, because we were afraid we were going to detonate something that we couldn't fix, and that would be the end of it. So we left it alone. [But] Dave was at a breaking point. You could see it. We would be in the studio working on a tune, and then, all of a sudden, he would get up and not say anything and just shove his guitar to the side and go outside."

COURTESY OF VAL MATTHEWS

The band finally finished recording in June, three months behind schedule. Flohr flew in from L.A. to listen to the tracks. He was troubled by what he heard. That day, he spoke to all the band members – except Matthews.

"I said to them, 'I'm going to sit down with Dave and I'm going to tell him that I'm not feeling this record as a fan, and unless you feel differently, tell me now,' " Flohr recalls. "Each said, 'I thought I was the only one.' "

Flohr says that he and Matthews then had "a very difficult conversation. I felt, 'This is it.' This is either going to bring us closer together as a label and an artist, or drive us apart."

Initially defensive, Matthews eventually arrived at the conclusion that Flohr, and the others, were right.

"It wasn't that I didn't like [the songs] we recorded with Steve," Matthews explains. "I think 'Grace Is Gone' is one of the best songs I've ever written. I love 'Digging a Ditch.' I like the song 'Busted Stuff.' But they're all a little bit blue." His tone grows emphatic. "I don't want to be someone who writes about how sad I am. I'd rather write about those same topics, but with a little momentum. With some sort of strength. Otherwise, I don't think there's any gift – or offering – being made. I would like to be an inspiring force. I want the music to make people think, but not think, 'What's the point?' I was choking. Every song was about dying. Not about living regardless of the fact we're going to die."

"I don't want to be somebody who writes about how sad I am": Matthews, in April 1973.

The album was postponed so that the band could seek a new producer who might be able to inject the tunes with new life. "That's when I said there was only one guy that they should consider working with," Flohr recalls, "and that was Glen Ballard."

GLEN BALLARD IS ONE OF THE most successful producers and songwriters in pop music, the co-author of Alanis Morrisette's multiplatinum *Jagged Little Pill*, as well as hits for artists ranging from No Doubt to Aerosmith. But for the Dave Matthews Band, the clincher was that Ballard had served an eight-year apprenticeship as Quincy Jones' engineer. "Quincy Jones," says Beauford, with reverence. "That's all I needed to hear."

As well as rerecording the old material, Ballard had been enlisted to co-write a couple of new tunes with Matthews – some up-tempo numbers to alleviate the record's gloom.

Matthews was initially leery at the idea of co-writing. He had not written a song one-on-one with someone in years. He wasn't sure he could do it. "I'd got further and further away from sharing myself," he says. "I got more and more internalized over the last five years, and more and more afraid of what I wrote, so that I was even afraid to present things that were new. It was really ugly. I became sort of paranoid. That's another reason the songs got really dark."

So when he flew out to Los Angeles alone to meet with Ballard, he was not feeling particularly optimistic. That he happened to despise Los Angeles also did not augur well for the partnership.

"But from the moment I walked into Glen's life," Matthews says, "I was in heaven." Away from what he calls the "stifling" atmosphere of home, Matthews experienced a renaissance that sprang, he says, from his chemistry with Ballard: "I needed to have someone who could [*Cont. on 88*]

TOUR DATES

SPRING AND SUMMER 2001

Charlottesville, VA 4/21
Raleigh, NC 4/28–29
Charlotte, NC 5/1
Greenville, SC 5/2
New Orleans 5/5
Knoxville, TN 5/8
Birmingham, AL 5/9
Houston 5/11
Phoenix 5/15
San Francisco 5/18
Los Angeles 5/22
Las Vegas 5/26–27
Detroit 6/3
Atlanta 6/6
Washington, D.C. 6/9
New York 6/11
Boston 6/16
Buffalo 6/20
Philadelphia 6/22
Chicago 7/6
Boulder, CO 7/11
Dallas 7/15

"What's come out of this album is the result of BEING SAVED. *I think they're the* BEST LYRICS *I've written."*

that none of these changes signal a withdrawal from the Dave Matthews Band itself or the larger DMB family – necessarily. While he is not, he says, unaware of the example of such stars as Sting, who departed from the Police to forge a still more successful solo career, he's not planning any such decampment himself. And he insists that his removal from Virginia is only temporary. "It's my home," he says. "And I'm happy here." Still, I can't help recalling a verbal slip he made when he first told me of his plans to move west. It was in December, at the First Union Center in Philadelphia, shortly before he went onstage. "I have to go where my life is," he said. Then he laughed. "Did you hear that? I mean, where my *wife* is."

"Wife," "life" – whichever Matthews truly meant, one thing is clear. He is embarking on a new path. And he's pumped. "If you try to keep everything the way it is," he says, "you become stagnant. You're not carrying on downstream." Whether his old fans, his band mates, his manager, his record label, his road crew or his merchandising team join him on his new journey is, he says, entirely up to them.

"The way I feel inside is, 'Come with me, I'd love to have you,' " he says. "That's true of every facet of my life. That's the option I'm giving to everybody. I haven't said it to anyone, but that's the way I'm feeling. In reference to people who listen to us, in reference to everything. Like, 'I'm going this way, and anybody who wants to come is absolutely welcome. But I'm going there, with or without you.' " ○

Matthews and company **FORGET THE JAM** and **POUR ON THE POP** on *Everyday*.

By DAVID FRICKE

RECORDINGS

★★★½

Dave Matthews Band

Everyday

RCA

THE OPENING RIFF IS A CRUSTY stutter of guitar that Creed would kill to copyright. A hydraulic piano groove is peppered with zesty sprays of strum and violin flutter. And the lyric hook in the chorus is just three tight syllables – "I did it" – jackhammered into your skull. The first single from the Dave Matthews Band's fourth studio album, *Everyday*, "I Did It" is no-fat monster pop, the kind of hit that will dog you so hard for the next year – on radio, TV and especially barroom jukeboxes, where pickled jocks will bark along like the Molson Tabernacle Choir – that you'll think the song is a CIA tracking device.

After a decade as one of America's hottest cult acts, able to sell out stadium tours with modest airplay, the Dave Matthews Band is about to go *big* – and "I Did It" will be the tune that does it. This is not a bad thing. We're stuck in an age of dull extremes: teen-pop sugar zombies, the steel bawls and fake-blood theater of the new metal. It's so flat and dire in the *Billboard* Top Twenty that the long-gone Beatles whipped the competition silly for two months. Right now, the most radical and exhilarating thing a band can do is shoot right up the middle, dead center through the mainstream.

That's what the DMB has done. Compared with the cheap thrills out there, not to mention the band's own previous records, the meaty classic-rock orthodoxy of *Everyday* – produced by AOR maestro Glen Ballard and written entirely by Matthews and Ballard – is practically a revolutionary act. "When the

ILLUSTRATION BY MARK MATCHO

Parton makes another bluegrass CD.

World Ends," "The Space Between" and "So Right" are all blinding chrome and fat swagger, superbuffed throwbacks to 1980s arena-rock convention. And that sleek buoyancy – a new-century blend of Def Leppard's *Hysteria* and Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.* – perfectly echoes Matthews' mission statement at the front of "I Did It": "I'm mixing up a bunch of magic stuff/A magic mushroom cloud of care/A potion that will rock the boat. . . . Make a bomb of love and blow it up."

The DMB – Matthews, drummer Carter Beauford, violinist Boyd Tinsley, bassist Stefan Lessard and multireed man Leroi Moore – is certainly no one's idea of a threat to social order. Matthews himself is a paragon of equilibrium: a white South African native fronting a band that's three-fifths black; a singer with a deep, even tenor and the comely anonymity of a struggling actor waiting tables; a songwriter working in warm, earthy blurs of folk rock, R&B and non-Western rhythms.

The downside of that quiet ingenuity is that the DMB gets chained to the wrong stereotypes: the genre gumbo of the jam bands, the safe soul of Hootie and the Blowfish. The Afro-Latin surge of Beauford's and Lessard's rhythms and the jazzy poise of Tinsley's and Moore's playing are actually closer to the progressive-rock savvy of Traffic than to the flying-without-a-net legacy of the Grateful Dead. And the full-frontal clarity of Matthews' grainy voice on *Everyday* makes one thing plain: As a singer, he is a damn near identical twin of Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder. That's one reason why so much of *Everyday* works so well, despite the drill-sergeant calculation in Ballard's production. There is just enough sour questioning and irritation in Matthews' delivery to keep the radio candy from melting into raging glucose.

Everyday is, in fact, quite dark beneath the sheen. "When the World Ends" is a kind of holocaust pop – all oily smoke, nuclear radiation and gallows humor ("When the world ends/We'll be burning one, *ahhhh!*") in which the jaunty fuck-this-mess canter of the verse suddenly turns, in the chorus and in Matthews' voice, into a gnarled eroticism. There's more smoke, as well as sorrow and rain, in "Dreams of Our Fathers," an itchy song about anxiety and responsibility in which you can really hear the heavy Vedder in Matthews' voice; with bigger, meaner guitars, the whole track could have sounded like a Pearl Jam outtake.

Ballard, who is credited with "all arrangements" on *Everyday* as well as production and co-writing, has definitely brought new, impressive heft to Matthews' music – at a cost. Just as Springsteen trimmed the R&B theater of the E Street Band on *Born in the U.S.A.*, Matthews and Ballard use Tinsley's violin and Moore's sax mostly as strategic accents. That makes solid commercial sense; "The Space Between" and "So Right" are expert pop, clean, catchy romanticism. But there is little of the band interplay that elevates Matthews' songs in the DMB's live shows (best caught on *Live at Red Rocks 8.15.95* and 1999's *Listener Supported*). Tinsley and Moore don't get to open up until late in *Everyday*, on "Fool to Think" and "Sleep to Dream Her." The only major soloing room on the entire record goes to guest Carlos Santana, who plays on "Mother Father."

Matthews is nobody's puppet here. The surface gloss may be mostly Ballard, but the vocal conviction Matthews brings to this confection shows that he believes that *Everyday* was a record he, and the Dave Matthews Band, needed to make. It was obviously no easy choice. In "If I Had It All," a slow, grim beauty about a guy who has jack shit to his name, Matthews asks himself, "If I were giant size/On top of it all/Tell me what in the world would I sing for/If I had it all."

He is about to find out. ○

★★★★ CLASSIC
★★★★ EXCELLENT
★★★ GOOD
★★ FAIR
★ POOR

RATINGS ARE SUPERVISED BY THE "ROLLING STONE" EDITORS.

★★★★

Dolly Parton

Little Sparrow

SUGAR HILL/BLUE EYE

Parton sparkles without the glitz

ALL THE MAKEUP IS GONE on *Little Sparrow*: After a long spell as a bubbly Hollywood-Nashville celebrity with pop hits and a lot of TV work, Dolly Parton is making honest, uncut mountain music in sparkling acoustic settings. Surrounding herself with the cream of Southern bluegrass musicians – dobro master Jerry Douglas and guitar prodigy Bryan Sutton among them – Parton is by turns reflective ("Little Sparrow"), playful ("Marry Me"), dolorous ("My Blue Tears"), spirited ("I Don't Believe You've Met My Baby") and spiritual ("In the Sweet By and By") on this nearly hour-long modern-bluegrass tour de force. Parton gravitates toward sepulchral tales of doomed lovers and broken families that haunt the hill country – "Down From Dover" and "Mountain Angel" are downright gothic – but she lightens the mood with a near-definitive take of Steve Young's song of the South, "Seven Bridges Road," and a gospel-style recasting of Collective Soul's "Shine" that gives way to a virtuosic bluegrass rave-up. Throughout

Once and Future Kings

★★★

Run-DMC

Crown Royal

ARISTA

THERE ARE BANDS THAT change the world – and then there's Run-DMC, who changed it twice. Their 1984 debut, *Run-DMC*, claimed the album format as hip-hop turf, putting B-boy cool at the center of the pop universe; their 1986 masterpiece, *Raising Hell*, made everything else in rock & roll sound like a sucker's bet, exploding with the musical innovations that inspired hip-hop's late-Eighties glory years. ("Walk This Way" was the fluke hit video, but it was only the fifth- or sixth-best song on *Raising Hell*, and it can't compare with the Britney-and-Justin Super Bowl version.) While the Reverend Run, DMC and Jam Master Jay may never scale those visionary heights again, *Crown Royal* finds them still sticking together through the hard times with a stubborn loyalty that just adds to their admirable mystique.

***Crown Royal* uses the same musical strategy as their minor 1993 comeback, *Down With the King*: guest artists, guest artists and more guest artists. Limp Bizkit's Fred Durst brings the rock, Kid Rock brings the roll and Method Man puts another notch in his mike stand, obviously racing to top Biz Markie as the all-time gratuitous-cameo king. But as on *Down With the King*, Run-DMC prove their old-school mastery without adding anything new to it; the tracks sink or swim depending on what the guest artist felt like bringing to the studio that day. Fans will be grateful for the two real headbangers: "Take the Money and Run" funks up the old Steve Miller Band ditty until it begs for a quick death, complete with "Rock Box" samples and Everlast's singing; "Rock Show" revamps "King of Rock" with production and vocals from – get this – Third Eye Blind's Stephan Jenkins, whose heretofore well-hidden hip-hop affinities shine bright enough to make his life sound semi-charmed indeed. Since it's the rock guests who work hard to salvage *Crown Royal*, maybe next time Run-DMC should just go all the way and make a whole album with some rock band that's looking for a new vocal approach. Pray for Rage Against the Machine; settle for Van Halen.** —ROB SHEFFIELD

Jay, Run and DMC (from left) welcome Fred Durst, Kid Rock et al.

JOHN RICARD/BETNA (RUN-DMC)