



**PERFORMERS**

# DAVE MATTHEWS BAND

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THIS MUSICAL COLLECTIVE HAS BUILT  
A MASSIVE AUDIENCE THROUGH THEIR POWERFUL  
PERFORMANCES AND BEST-SELLING ALBUMS.

BY HERB POWELL





**Dave Matthews Band: Dave Matthews, Carter Beauford, Boyd Tinsley, LeRoi Moore, and Stefan Lessard (from left), 1995**

**T**he meaning behind the Dave Matthews Band lies in the mysterious meaning of music itself. In that grand mystery of sound meeting brain, songs meeting heart, and grooves meeting body is contained the essence and explanation of the band's significance.

In the eclectic live music culture of Charlottesville, Virginia, drummer and backing vocalist Carter Beauford,

lead vocalist and guitarist Dave Matthews, saxophonist LeRoi Moore, bassist Stefan Lessard, and violinist and backing vocalist Boyd Tinsley found one another. Matthews was bartending at Miller's, a sacred cathedral for musicians. The South African-born guitar player was also developing a unique rhythmic finger-picking style. When he became acquainted with skillful guitarist Tim Reynolds, he started to hit his stride as a singer/songwriter.





Carter Beauford and LeRoi Moore – neighbors during their formative years – were already fixtures on the Charlottesville jazz scene. Often playing at Miller’s, both musicians had the reputation of being “the cats.” Beauford, a musician of prodigious skill, had been hooked on drums ever since his dad took him as a very young boy to see virtuoso drummer Buddy Rich. Moore was a true woodwinds man – that term used in certain jazz circles for someone who played every version of saxophone, flute, and other wind instruments. In 1991, Beauford, Matthews, and Moore became a trio.

As a testament to the tight Charlottesville musical community, when the new trio needed a bassist, trumpeter John D’earth – who played in a quintet with Moore – recommended teenager Stefan Lessard. Since the talented-beyond-his-years Lessard was only 16, the newly formed Dave Matthews Band (DMB) often had to sneak him into nightclubs right before they hit the stage.

This first iteration of DMB soon began to record demos. During the sessions, the song “Tripping Billies” lacked a spark. On a whim, Matthews invited violinist

Boyd Tinsley to the studio to play an overdub. They knew each other because Tinsley was in a band that played – where else – at Miller’s. Tinsley’s contribution to the track was enchanting. Although it would be some months before the violinist officially joined DMB, the template was set – a sound featuring long, intricate solos, nontraditional rock & roll instrumentation, and unique time signatures, with the charismatic Matthews up-front on lead vocals and percussive guitar work.

It’s more than appropriate that the environmentally minded quintet’s first major show was at Charlottesville’s Earth Day Festival on April 21, 1991. As the newcomers on the bill, they kept getting bumped to later and later in the fest, eventually going on last. Of that initial gig, Matthews told the *Washington Post* in 1998, “When we got up and played, right away all of us noted that by the middle of the first song, there were more people dancing than there had been during the whole day when there were thousands of people there.”

For decades, the members of DMB have said that at first, they really didn’t know what they had musically.





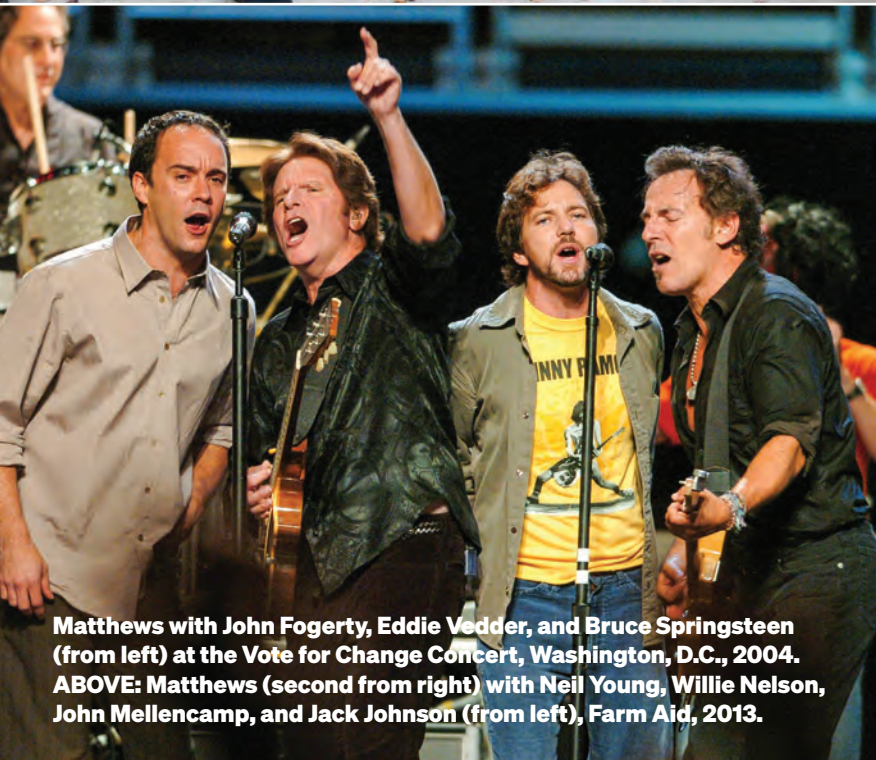
**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: DMB at CBGB, 1992; backstage at Redbirds Stadium, Louisville, 1995; Matthews at Farm Aid, 2001; Moore in 2007.**







**Matthews with President Barack Obama, Farm Aid, 2005.**  
**BELOW: Matthews with James Brown, New York City, 2002.**



**Matthews with John Fogerty, Eddie Vedder, and Bruce Springsteen (from left) at the Vote for Change Concert, Washington, D.C., 2004.**  
**ABOVE: Matthews (second from right) with Neil Young, Willie Nelson, John Mellencamp, and Jack Johnson (from left), Farm Aid, 2013.**



But right out of the box they won over an enthusiastic fan base. Building its local following, the band drove seventy miles every Wednesday night for two years to Richmond, Virginia, to play a nightclub called the Flood Zone. Their impassioned fans would record their shows on cassettes, copy those cassettes, and send them all over the country – primarily to friends at college campuses. Eventually, DMB would release *Remember Two Things* on their own Bama Rags label. They were beginning to make it the old-fashioned way: After becoming more than a regional phenomenon, they had that proverbial word attached to them, “buzz.” When record companies came calling, they chose RCA.

You cannot appreciate the DMB story without taking into account the musical era during which they rose to fame. When their 1994 debut album, *Under the Table and Dreaming*, was released, grunge and hip-hop were turning the ears of the music business. It was also the age when Janet Jackson, Guns N’ Roses, Whitney Houston, MC Hammer, Madonna, and Boyz II Men reigned over the charts. So if someone said that an interracial band, anchored by a jazz drummer, which also included a violinist, would soon sell millions of albums – and sell out

arenas – their sanity would have been questioned.

But Dave Matthews Band had their own party going, which they captured during the recording of *Under the Table and Dreaming*. With veteran producer Steve Lillywhite, the band took the energy from the stage into the studio, retaining its spontaneous magic. Most of the album tracks were already well known to DMB fans. But the band had to face the fact that it would be the first time a much larger audience would hear its compositions. The singles “What Would You Say” and “Ants Marching” gained airplay, and the album was off to a great start. Then the standout “Satellite,” with its rare quality of being a ballad with pronounced intensity, became the perfect vehicle for the band’s introduction to the world.

In October 1995, the band entered the rural Bearsville Studio outside Woodstock, New York, to record its sophomore effort, *Crash*. The 1996 album would be their breakthrough. “So Much to Say” earned the band its first Grammy (for Best Rock Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal), and “Crash Into Me” became a bona fide radio hit, reaching the Top Twenty. *Crash* hit Number Two on the *Billboard* chart and would eventually go seven times platinum.





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Matthews with Nelson, Farm Aid, 2010; with Dave Grohl, Phoenix, 2023; singing “This Land Is Your Land” with Pete Seeger (left) and Young, Farm Aid, 2013.



Early the next year, playing at one of President Bill Clinton’s reelection inaugural balls, the band teased out its political outspokenness – which has since escalated. DMB’s all-encompassing activism has continuously kept the band at the forefront of environmental issues as well. In 2001, Matthews joined Willie Nelson, Neil Young, and John Mellencamp as a board member of Farm Aid, the nonprofit that advocates for family farms and puts on a fundraising concert nearly every year. DMB also partnered with the Nature Conservancy and in 2019 was named a United Nations Environment Goodwill Ambassador.

The band’s third album, 1998’s *Before These Crowded Streets*, showcased its musical diversity. The sweeping and far-reaching effort included such guest artists as the classical group the Kronos Quartet, banjoist Béla Fleck, and alternative megastar Alanis Morissette. The album would be their first to debut at Number One, starting a streak that would last through seven consecutive releases.

While the group was known as a jam band, its singles occasionally hit the Hot 100, including – from its 2001 album, *Everyday* – “I Did It,” “The Space Between,”

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

 <p><b>Under the Table and Dreaming</b> 1994 (RCA)</p>	 <p><b>Crash</b> 1996 (RCA)</p>
 <p><b>Live at Red Rocks 8.15.95</b> 1997 (RCA)</p>	 <p><b>Before These Crowded Streets</b> 1998 (RCA)</p>
 <p><b>Everyday</b> 2001 (RCA)</p>	 <p><b>Away From the World</b> 2012 (RCA)</p>
 <p><b>Come Tomorrow</b> 2018 (RCA)</p>	 <p><b>Walk Around the Moon</b> 2023 (RCA)</p>





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and “Everyday.” Outside the mainstream music model, however, they documented their onstage electricity via numerous live concert albums on their DMB Live Series. These recordings satisfied their fans’ lust for a continued intimacy – an intimacy apart from their studio album releases.

After ten studio releases, an astounding eighty-plus live albums, and over thirty million albums sold, Dave Matthews Band have continued to hit the road. Additionally, Dave Matthews and longtime collaborator Tim Reynolds – an eventual DMB member – have done several acoustic tours. The grassroots vibe of these performances has only elevated the meaning of the Dave Matthews Band experience. Moreover, they have retained much of the same road crew – almost a miracle in rock & roll and a testament to the collective spirit of the band. Nearly every summer

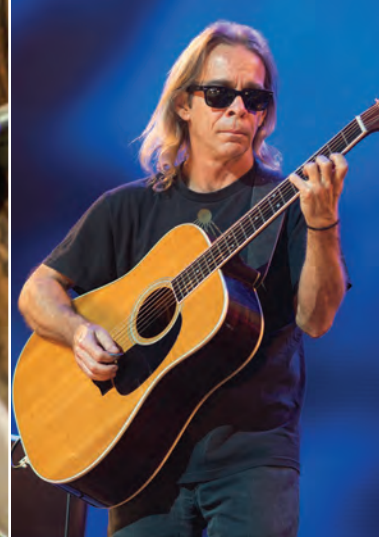
for almost three decades, the band gives its devoted fans what they yearn for: a live experience like no other. Their concerts remain musically adventurous, communal, and, at certain moments, transcendent.

Among the highs of the Dave Matthews Band also came the lowest days and darkest nights with the death of saxophonist LeRoi Moore. The founding member – and, many say, the soul of the band – flipped over his ATV on his Virginia farm in 2008; while the band expected him to fully recover, he sadly passed away later that year, on August 19. The outpouring of love for Moore was made in musical tributes from John Mayer, the Allman Brothers, Kenny Chesney, and others, as well as written tributes by countless contemporaries. All this said much about who Moore was to his band and the music community at large.





**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Matthews live in front of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2005; Tim Reynolds, Saratoga Springs, New York, 2013; Tinsley, New Orleans, 2006; Rashawn Ross (left) and Jeff Coffin, Phoenix, 2023; Lessard, Phoenix, 2023; Carter Beauford, Los Angeles, 2009; Buddy Strong, New York City, 2023.



The philosopher William James said, “The great use of a life is to spend it for something that outlasts it.” Moore’s musical contributions to the life and legacy of Dave Matthews Band are eternal. He and Matthews wrote together, and Moore arranged many of his songs. It was cosmically fitting that Moore’s last show with DMB was in Bristow, Virginia – about eighty miles northeast of Charlottesville, where the purpose and promise of the ensemble began.

With the additions of saxophonist Jeff Coffin and trumpeter Rashawn Ross, the Dave Matthews Band continues to defy category. In 2018, keyboardist Buddy Strong joined the group after the departure of violinist Tinsley. Strong brought an artful soulfulness that has become the perfect complement to DMB’s distinctive sound. Beyond their being labeled a jam band, DMB have brought a sophistication to pop music that isn’t

so easy to discern. But if you close your eyes and listen to the band’s engine, Carter Beauford, you hear that complexity. Because in Beauford, you hear his heroes – those giants of progressive jazz – Billy Cobham, Tony Williams, and Lenny White.

What Matthews told the *Washington Post* back in 1998 holds true today: “The sound is entirely the result of the five of us. After we’d played together only a few weeks, it was very evident to me it was going to be *our* vision, not my vision anymore. It’s a very inappropriately named band.”

It’s in that spirit of the power of the collective that the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame welcomes Dave Matthews, Carter Beauford, LeRoi Moore, Tim Reynolds, Stefan Lessard, Boyd Tinsley, Jeff Coffin, Rashawn Ross, and Buddy Strong as Inductees into the Class of 2024.