Dmb Red Rocks Essay, Research Paper

Imagine standing on a stage, overlooking 69 tiered rows in what is possibly the most beautiful

amphitheater in the world. As Dave Matthews and his fellow band mates walk on stage, the

crowd cheers wildly. They do this throughout the opening song, Seek Up, and, for the most part,

through the whole show. Recorded on August 15, 1995, this was at the height of the bands

musical talent and at the bottom step of their climb to fame. It was shows like this that left fans

mesmerized by the funky, jazz-infused riffs the band played. It is this live music that keeps the

fans coming back.

Red Rocks Amphitheater is located in Morrison, Colorado, 15 miles west of Denver

(Technical 1). It provides seating for 9600, and some of the acoustics found anywhere. John

Brisben Walker originally produced shows here between 1906 and 1910. He noted its perfect

acoustic setting, and had a vision of major artists coming here one day to play. In 1927, the City

of Denver purchased to area of Red Rocks with a future theater in mind. In 1938, Denver

architect Burnham Hoyt finished the design. The design emphasized the preservation of the

natural beauty of the area. It was finished and dedicated on June 15, 1941 (Technical 1). Since

then it has been home to many concerts and performers. It is a beautiful place, and is the perfect

backdrop for any concert, and especially a live recording, such as Dave Matthews Band’s Live at

Red Rocks.

“No reason to get excited!” shuts Dave Matthews as he finishes the encore with the Bob

Dylan song All Along the Watchtower. His shout is over a barrage of musical riffs, thrown out by

the five very talented musicians that make up the Dave Matthews Band, and guest Tim Reynolds.

It is followed by some thank yous and well wishes. The members that played that night are each

very unique, especially in instruments. This is what makes the music really work.

Dave Matthews provides lead vocals and acoustic guitar, Boyd Tinsley plays the violin, Stefan

Lessard is on the bass guitar, Leroi Moore blows the woodwinds, Carter Beauford plays the

drums and Tim Reynolds guests on electric guitar. Matthews is a very talented musician. He

provides very unique singing styles and an abstract, awkward ability to play the guitar. Tinsley

plays the violin like no other. It is odd to find a band like them with a violin, but he really makes

it work. Lessard, who joined the band when he was only 16, provides funky bass choruses that

fill in the empty spots. Leroi Moore plays flute, saxophone, and clarinet. Carter Beauford lights

up the drums with a talent that few have. Finally, Tim Reynolds is a renowned guitar player;

know for his excellent improvisational skills. He excels in solos on his electric guitar, which are

easily recognizable on this album. These six musicians joined together on the night of August 15,

1995, to play the sold out Red Rocks Amphitheater.

The Dave Matthews Band walks out on stage to a loud sea of cheering. As the acoustic guitar

begins to slowly pick the familiar six notes that make up the introduction to Seek Up, the crowds

goes wild. . As the anticipation grows, the band joins in. They play together for a little bit,

before setting into the actual lyrics. The crowd anxiously awaits the familiar voice of Dave

Matthews on lead vocals. About three and a half minutes into the song, he comes in. His voice is

very unique, and has a large range. He has raspy lows and clear highs. He is a natural.

“Look at me, in my fancy car, and my bank accounts. Oh, how, I wish, I could take it all,

down to my grave, oh, how I’d save and save.” These lyrics basically sum up the entire song.

Seek Up describes the people who live for the riches and power, all of which will mean nothing in

the end. Even if all the money in the world is obtained, one cannot take all of that with him when

he dies. Lyrics such as “Seek up an emotion and your cup is overflowing” suggest that if we

“seek up” emotions and feelings, then we will be “overflowing”; whether in spirit, hopes, love,

and about any other positive feeling or emotion. Instead of focusing all of our energy and life on

the “fancy cars and bank accounts”, we should focus it on making ourselves happy instead of

material possessions.

As Seek Up fades out, Matthews thanks the crowd and begins to play Proudest Monkey. This

song is musically based around a simple acoustic part. This makes it a quiet, slow song. It starts

with Matthews playing acoustic guitar, with Reynolds using his electric guitar for sound effects in

the background. The song picks up in a couple places, but still remains a slower, quieter song

throughout. It features great solos by Moore on the saxophone. It is a very good, quiet song.

Proudest Monkey basically deals with evolution. It starts with a monkey that used to live in

the trees. He “paved a way to the city”. It deals with the problems he faces. But he claims to be

the smartest monkey that he knows, because he is walking tall and living in the city, instead of the

trees. Then he comes to a point where he wants the simpler life, before the big change.

This can be used with anything that evolves. It can be used to look at the human’s evolution

that occurred from the monkeys, or humans over time. It could possibly even refer to a person’s

life, particularly a musician. Looking back on the days before a musician is big, he night yearn to

be back there. This is basically about an evolution.

Proudest Monkey then fades right into the crowd favorite, Satellite. This is once again based

around the guitar of Dave Matthews. It has a very flowing, light melody. The vocals show the

diverse range of Matthews voice. It features great parts of Tinsley and Moore playing together.

This song has a more abstract meaning.

When this song was written, it had a different set of lyrics, but the same music. While keeping

the chorus the same, the rest of the words were all changed. It was previously a love song, and

the new lyrics were about satellites. It talks about satellites and the technology that we keep

conquering. If technology keeps up the pace, where will we be tomorrow? Or ten years from

now? It brings up an interesting meaning and lyrics.

After Satellite, Matthews thanks the crowd graciously and begins to play Two Step. This

begins with Matthews playing the same note over and over, while Reynolds solos over him and

Tinsley plucks his violin. This goes on and builds up, until the rest of the band comes in. This

song features much plucking by Tinsley. This is when he plays the violin similar to a banjo, using

his fingers instead of a bow. It really adds to the effect of the song. It is a great upbeat song.

“We’re climbing, two by two, to be sure these days continue.” These are lyrics in the chorus.

It is referring loosely to the book of Genesis, in the Bible. The “climbing two by two” is referring

to the animals on Noah’s ark. He did this to insure that these animals will survive and carry on

the species. It also takes on a “carpe diem” outlook. “Celebrate we will, because life is short but

sweet for certain” are some other lyrics found in the chorus. These pretty much say that one must

live life to its fullest, because there might be no more tomorrow. Life is short, and one must do

all he wants and celebrate and enjoy life now, while he has it. This is a theme that is commonly

found in many DMB songs.

From Two Step, They go right into The Best of What’s Around. This song shows a lot of

Beauford’s skill. It starts with a drum roll and it has a strong percussion part throughout. This,

like most others features the acoustic guitar as the lead part, with everything around that. Moore

takes an opportunity to play a couple good solos on the saxophone. Reynolds has some very

good parts on this as well. His parts are usually hidden within the other music, so one could only

hear it if he is listening closely. All these parts fit together nicely and make for a good song.

This song has a very good meaning, one that everyone could live by. Basically, it is exactly

what the name of the song is: The Best of What’s Around. If we all made the best of what is

around, there would be a lot more happy people and fewer complaints. The lyrics, “Turns out,

not where, but who you are with that really matters”, greatly emphasizes that point. What that is

saying is that the worse imaginable place can be made better with better people. If we focus on

the good, it can out-weight the bad. These are great lyrics that have a helpful meaning.

Between The Best of What’s Around, and Recently, the next song, Matthews thanks

the crowd again and says that he is going to play a couple old songs. He breaks into

Recently. As an introduction, he sings a portion of John Denver’s Sunshine on My

Shoulder’s. This is a rare intro that has only been done one other time, so that made it

pretty special. From that, he went into the song. The song goes throughout many pace

changes. It has fast sections, then slow, then fast, the very slow. As he goes into the final

very slow part, he plays a great “outro” (opposite of intro). It is called Wine into Water.

It is very slow and finishes the song.

This song is about preferences and relationships. One line sums up the beginning:

“Some people do and some people don’t”. Now, the song deals with a relationship. It is

between two people that don’t care what people think about them. “People stare, and we

just ignore them, just ignore, everything” basically sums that part up. They also are so

wrapped up in each other that they don’t care what is going on around them. They

basically only care about each other. The Wine into Water outro features some great

lyrics, also.

I will give you water, if you will share your wine.

And I will feed you heart, if you promise to feed mine.

And then we will dance together, until the end of time.

What this is referring to is trust and honor. I’ll give you what I have, if you will share

what you have. And I’ll take care of you, if I can trust that you will do the same. And if

we do this, we will be happy until the end. That is such a good ending for Recently.

Recently flows right into the next song, Lie In Our Graves. This song is a happy, light

song. And begins with mostly Matthews on the acoustic guitar. This is also a great song

to hear Tinsley play his violin. During an interlude between verse and chorus, he really

jams on his violin. It adds a great part to the song. This song has a very cool ending. It

winds down slowly and eventually is very slow. They stop, then forcefully come back in

playing fast and loudly. It has a big impact on the song.

“I can’t believe that we would lie in our graves, dreaming of things, that we might have

been, could have been.” This is using the “carpe diem” attitude again. It is saying that

instead of being dead regretting stuff that we could have had, been, or done, to do them

now. So basically live you lie now, so you don’t wish later that you had done it

differently. Seize the day.

Next, they play Dancing Nancies. This is mostly Matthews and his acoustic guitar,

until the chorus. Then, Tinsley has a wonderful solo again, showing off his skills as a

musician. This is a crowd favorite because of its upbeat nature. Matthews sings the line,

“Could I have been lost somewhere in Red Rocks?” which is applauded by the fans. It is

another upbeat and happy song. After the lyrics are finished the band then jams for a

while, until building up to a large climax, much to the enjoyment of the crowd. The fans

love this song!

This song is about one question: what is something wasn’t the way it is now?

Could I have been a parking lot attendant?

Could I have been a millionaire in Bel Air?

Could I have been lost somewhere in Red Rocks?

Could I have been you little sister?

Could I have been anyone other than me?

Simply changing one decision you make can totally change your whole life. If you choose

to do something, then that will ultimately have a different result of its alternative. Where

would you be if you never pursued school?

Following Dancing Nancies is Warehouse. This is a very powerful song. It has a very

powerful acoustic guitar beginning. It is a very fast paced song. Matthews plays and is

soon joined by Tinsley in an almost violent beginning. IT keeps this up, switching up to a

mellow tone and lyrics in some parts. It is another one that has great tempo changes that

really impact the song. Tinsley is featured a lot on this song, and Moore stands out in

several places. Tinsley uses plucking, similar to that in Two Step. IT is musically a very

good song.

The “warehouse” is referring to a place that has changed. It is about a place that at

one point was great. Now, the place is no longer desirable and he wants to move on.

There are many references to superstition in the song, referring to black cats and ladders.

“The black cat is changing colors. And you can walk under ladders.” These show a

change in how you feel. At one point, you feared the black cat, but now, the cat is a

different color, it doesn’t matter if it walks in front of you. Your view has changed. This

applies to the ladder line as well. This “warehouse” does not have to be a physical place.

The “warehouse” could also be a very mental place, especially a state. Using drugs as

an example, at a certain point, drugs can be very appealing. As usage continues, the user

might become addicted, and it is not near as appealing then. And at that stage, one would

want to escape. Although it was fun, your view on it has changed.

Tripping Billies is the next song. It is a great song to get an idea of the full band. It

begins with everyone playing, and parts are easy to distinguish and hear. It is a happy

song, with a fast, exciting sound. Tinsley and Beauford standout on this song, as does

Matthews’s guitar playing. Tinsley has a big solo that is great. It picks up the song and

raises the intensity. Lessard, although somewhat hard to distinguish from the acoustic, is

jamming his bass, which adds quietly to the song. It is an exciting song.

This song is about taking acid. It is based on an experience that Matthews had in his

youth. It is an exciting song with exciting lyrics, speaking of past events. Some of the

lyrics, such as “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we’ll die” add to the “carpe diem”

topic. Enjoy life now, because soon enough, you will die. Life is too short, so have fun.

Drive In, Drive Out is the song that follows. This song is a showcase of Beauford on

the drums. Lessard really stands out in the chorus. Matthews’s vocals stretch their range

and add a villainous twist in some parts. There is a really good jam, in which Moore has a

good solo. Reynolds adds some great guitar effects at the right places. This song is

Beauford’s chance to shine.

The music to this song was actually written long before the lyrics. The lyrics do not

have any real strong meaning, but there is some. This song is about persistence. “Drive in,

drive out, I’ll come back again.” No matter how many times it takes, he will keep coming

back. As hopeless as he is, he will keep up. He will come and be pushed away until he

succeeds.

Lover Lay Down follows Drive In, Drive Out. This is basically a love ballad. It

remains quiet and features great playing by Moore. A majority of this song is Beauford

and Matthews playing together. Tim Reynolds provides background fill noises to

complete the sound. This is a very sweet, quiet love song.

Spring sweet rhythms dance in my head, slip into my lovers arms…

Don’t be us to shy, for knowing is no big surprise

That I will wait for you, I will wait for no one but you

It is these sweet lyrics that really make the song so great. This is basically about love. It

talks about someone that is so in love; all he wants is his object of affection. He will wait,

no matter what, for her. This song goes into great detail about what he would do for her,

and to be with her. This is the best love song by Dave Matthews Band.

One a different note, Rhyme and Reason is the next song. This features

Beauford and Matthews, once again. This time, however, it is on a faster, harsher song

with negative undertones. Matthews, Beauford, and Lessard dominate the beginning of

this song. Moore and Tinsley come in together in several places and play the exact same

part. It makes for a full sound. Compared to Lover Lay Down, this is on the other end of

the spectrum.

This songs meaning is basically wrapped around drug use. During the whole song,

Matthews pleads for sanity. “My head won’t leave my head alone, and I don’t believe it

will, until I am six feet under ground.” This chorus part basically is him complaining about

the confusion and terror going on inside his head. “Needle to my vain, needle to my vain,

take this needle from my vain my friend.” He is now pleading for someone to take the

drugs away. By taking the “needle from his vain”, it will silence his head and make him

better. This song deals negatively with effects and negative feelings about drugs.

To switch up the pace once again, a happier tune follows. This is the thirty-sixth song

that they wrote, called #36. It starts with a long drum solo by Beauford, which greatly

shows of his percussion skills. After more than two minutes of Beauford’s solo, the rest of

the band joins in. It is a light, mellow song with a floating melody. This song is changed

every time it is performed, so it is mostly improvisational. Much of Matthews’ singing is

mumbled and incomprehensible. That takes away from the predictability of the song.

Having been born in South America, Matthews had always keep close ties with the

nation. This song’s lyrics are originally inspired by the assassination of Chris Hani, an

Anti-Apartheid leader. The band got together the afternoon after his death and came up

with this jam. As mentioned before, the lyrics change every time. “Hani, Hani” has

changed to “Honey, Honey”, as featured on Live at Red Rocks. This song is to celebrate

the life of Chris Hani.

Ants Marching is always a crowd favorite. As one of their hits, most fans know and

sing to this song. On this night, it is featured as the set closer. It provides a lot of energy

that gets the crowd going. It starts with the familiar pounding on the snare drum,

followed by bits and pieces from all the band members. Moore and Tinsley provide a

musical accompany to Beauford’s beat, and Matthews, Lessard and Reynolds fill in the

rest. This is a great example of how the band works together so nicely.

This song basically compares humans to ants. Many people get themselves into a

routine, and never break it. Humans resemble ants in the ways we work and go about

doing things in life. It starts off giving examples of a man, dealing with his wife and

mother. With his wife, they sit and look at each other, never saying a thing. This happens

on a regular basis. With his mother, he always goes there. She feeds him and he forgets

about his problems. This is a good example about how humans deal with life.

Ants Marching finished the set of songs. This is followed by a short break, in which

Matthews returns alone to play a song. Typical Situation is usually a mostly acoustic

song. In this case, it is all acoustic.

Matthews starts to play the initial part, which slowly builds up into a strong chorus.

This pattern continues throughout the song. Typical Situation is a great display of

Matthews’ skill. He can provide the sound of twenty, with just him and his guitar. This

song is a perfect example of that.

Typical Situations displays freedom. It strongly backs the ideas of freedom.

Everybody’s happy, everybody’s free

We’ll keep the big door open,

And everyone will come around.

With freedom, everyone is happy and free. By keeping our minds and arms open, we can

make a big difference. By seeing this, hopefully others will change their policy to

accommodate these ideas of freedom. This song has ties in with Matthews South

American background.

As Matthews finishes up his solo song, the rest of the band joins. Matthews begins to

strum single notes, to form the song, All Along the Watchtower. This song was originally

written by Bob Dylan, and has been covered by great musicians such as Jimmy Hendrix,

The Grateful Dead, Pat McGee and many others. This is a very exciting, powerful song

that is the perfect closer. It starts off quiet, with only Matthews playing. The band joins

and they play the remainder, significantly louder. Towards the end, they do quiet down

long enough to allow Moore and Reynolds an opportunity to show their skill one last

time. The song ends with an abrupt stop. This is a truly exciting ending to the show.

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