

The Matt Moran Band

Yankee Doodle's
Simi Valley, CA

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The Players: Matt Moran, lead vocals, guitar; Elliot Turret, lead guitar; Kelley Irelan, vocals, keys, percussion; Leif Pedersen, bass, backup vocals; Tom Galella, percussion, backup vocals

Material: Americana and country that curve in an out of the rock & roll realm, Moran's music is sweet in tune and hip in nature. A little Paul Simon combined with a bit of Hootie and the Blowfish comes across quite well with the band's Simon and Garfunkel-like choruses. Moran's material encompasses everything from slow and chill country to rock & roll that raises your blood pressure a few notches.

Musicianship: Moran's acoustical skills shine, while Turret on the lead guitar lets his fingers fly loose, keeping the music fresh and edgy. Kelly Irelan does a good job on backing vocals and keys while Peredson and Gallela set the tempo and keep everyone in line and on time. They all mesh well with one another, sharing laughs and looks on stage that are usually reserved for old hands with a decade or more of experience together.

Performance: Yankee Doodle's and the Matt Moran Band go hand in hand; fun, country-like and just a plain good time. At this show, the musicians had to share a small stage but they



TOM LAURIE

The Matt Moran Band: Truthful lyrics atop Americana overtones.

played big, showed a lot of heart and soul and left nothing in the dressing room. Moran was the most interesting to watch as he moved about the limited stage area, squeezing every ounce of energy from himself.

to each other—like a country breakfast down on the farm, it just fits. Their lyrics speak of doing the right thing—honesty, truth, integrity. Combine that with Americana overtones and the result is a show with a lot of soul.

—Tom Laurie

Summary: The members of the Matt Moran Band and their material are perfectly suited

Eugene Ruffolo

Rockwood Hall
New York City, NY

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The Players: Eugene Ruffolo, guitar, vocals; Alan Zahn, piano; John Miller, bass.

Material: From the moment Eugene Ruffolo steps out on stage you are immediately whisked into a world of sonic beauty. His guitar-based folk-pop gems exquisitely showcase his sublime tenor voice taking you on a journey of longing and desire. Lyrically thoughtful, mature and often tinged with the bittersweet, many of Ruffolo's songs explore love lost and opportunities missed.

In "When We Were Kings" and "The Hardest Easy" the pain and complexity of relationships is conveyed with insight and self awareness. These themes are deeply woven into fabric of his music, but they take an about face in "Nothing About You Makes Me Sad" which Ruffolo refers to as one of his "happy songs," (eliciting a chuckle from the audience). He also covers the Jimmy Webb classic "Wichita Lineman," which is sheer heaven.

Musicianship: Ruffolo has complete mastery over his voice and guitar work and in combination with his songs they're inseparable. His phrasing is tasteful and highly musical and his polished technique lays a strong foundation allowing the music to flow effortlessly. While the songs are guitar driven, additional color is added by veteran musicians Alan Zahn on piano and John Miller on bass whose support creates a fuller soundscape.



MARK SHWARTZ

Eugene Ruffolo: Expressing complete mastery over his voice and guitar.

Performance: Ruffolo's gentle, nuanced delivery was without guile or vocal trickery. In a world where intensity and oversinging can masquerade as genuine emotion, his reserve was key to his artistry. He was soft spoken and self-effacing at times when addressing the audience but he won them over with his honest self-examination and humor. The preamble to his song "Late Bloomer" was one of those moments. The set was well balanced in the choice of material as well as length. He also played an encore much to the crowd's delight.

Summary: Eugene Ruffolo is a seasoned performer who has paid his dues and then some, and it shows in every aspect of his performance. His songs reflect a maturity and depth of understanding which he expresses with musical finesse and class. His strength as a performer is derived through understatement and gorgeous tonality and it is truly inspiring. Ruffolo has recorded five CDs, toured extensively and has worked with artists like Livingston Taylor, Lori Lieberman, Marc Cohn and many more.

—Ellen Woloshin