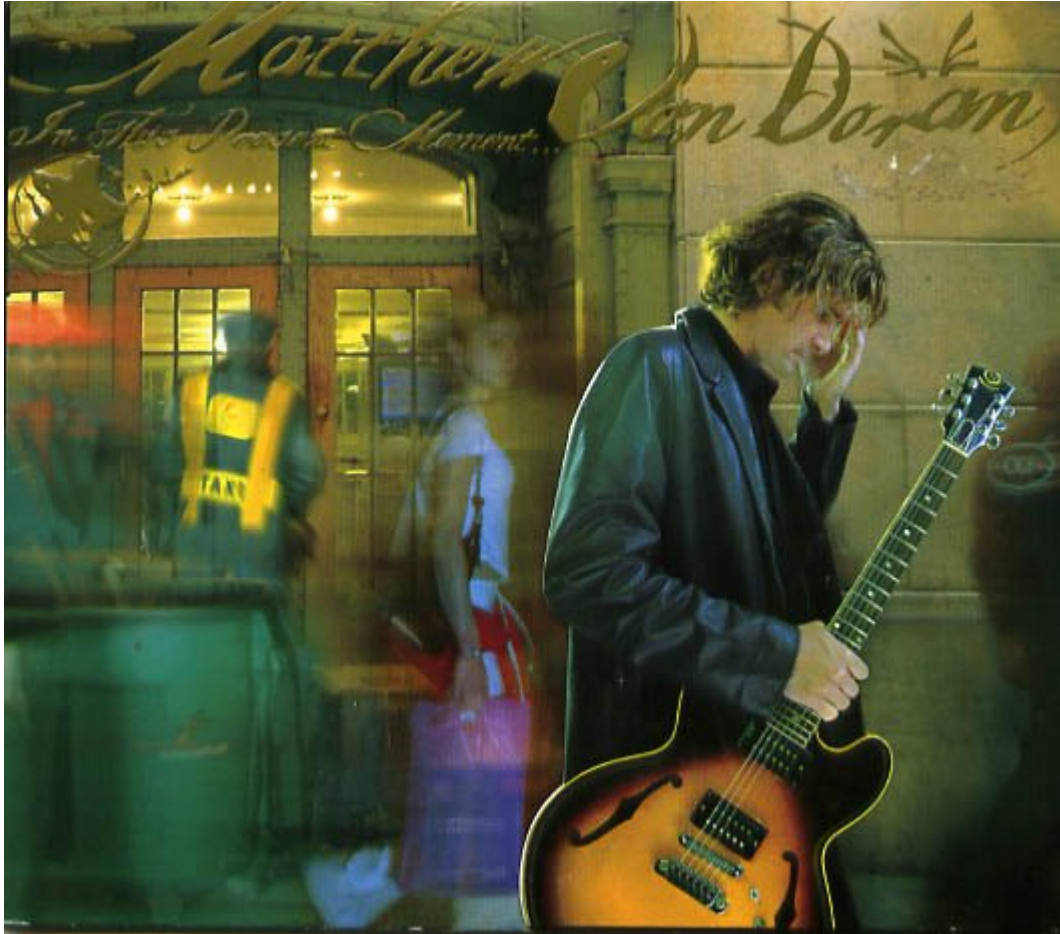


Matthew Van Doran, *In The Present Moment*: a CD Review

By Skoot Larson



Since the British pop music invasion of the 1960's, the guitar sound has become almost a cliché. While there have always been exceptional jazz players on the six strings, there are so many out there that play good but ordinary fretted licks.

Matthew Van Doran breaks all the molds, shattering the concept of "ordinary." Beside his cutting edge improvisational ideas, Van Doran is also a skilled composer, his musical muses right out there with his solo work, and a further gift for choosing sidemen to carry those created works to a higher level. This is even more apparent if you check the line-up on Matthew Van Doran's latest CD offering, "*In This Present Moment*," which adds vibraphone and Hammond organ to the band's mix of guitar, tenor sax, bass and drums.

Van Doran's arsenal of axes includes more than just electric and nylon-string acoustic guitar. On his composition "Trick," he employs an 11-nylon-string fretless guitar, which Van Doran himself compares to the sound of an oud, a variety of Turkish lute. The 11-string lends a decidedly Eastern flavor to Van Doran's "Trick."

While Van Doran does employ some electronic special effects and enhancements, these effects are added discretely, never overshadowing the delicate melodies and harmonies of the band's melodic blend.

Sidemen on this disc include Bob Sheppard offering some very simpatico tenor to blend with Van Doran's guitar. The opening track, "Balance," features a delicately balanced improvised duet between tenor and guitar that sparkles as it swings.

Vibraphonist Roger Burn adds magic on three of the tracks, "Critical Mass," "Vanity Strikes," and "Cable." "Critical Mass" is an up number featuring a tasty bass solo from James Genus along with clever interplay between Burn, Sheppard and Van Doran.

The majority of these tracks use acoustic bass with duties divided between Genus, Darek "Oles" Oleszkiewicz and Jimmy Haslip. Charlie Ewing creates a striking effect with electric bass behind guitar, vibes and marimba on Van Doran's tune "Cable."

The packaging on Van Doran's CD, like the music it contains, is striking as well. While this writer is not usually a fan of cardboard "Digipacs," I am impressed by Van Doran's three-dimensional appearing cover, his own image folding over the background so artist and guitar jump out at you over double-exposed passer-bys.

"In This Present Moment" is one of the finest new artist CD's I've heard. Every track is heavy, interesting music assembled from solid harmonic concepts and a solid rhythmic foundation. Matthew Van Doran is most certainly a voice deserving of greater recognition. Audition this fine CD for yourself and I think you'll agree!