

## Matt Andersen Bio

With over 2 million views on YouTube, independent sales over 30,000 albums, a 2013 European Blues Award, and winning *Best Solo Performer* at the Memphis Blues Challenge, it appears that the entire world is now discovering Matt Andersen. A powerhouse performer with a giant soul-filled voice and commanding stage presence, Matt has built a formidable following the old fashioned way – touring worldwide and letting the converted audiences and Andersen devotees spread his reputation through word of mouth. Now with **Weightless**, his debut album for True North Records, Matt's music has been captured on record as never before.

With *Weightless*, the New Brunswick native shifts his formidable talents as a blues performer to his song-craft. His reputation as a bluesman won him the 2013 Euro Blues Award for Best Solo /Acoustic Act, three Maple Blues Awards in 2012, and nabbed him 2010 International Blues Challenge in Memphis. "The blues is a big part of what I do, and in my solo show some tunes are straight-up blues, for sure," he says. "But I would never stand beside B.B. King and say, 'I play blues, too.' None of my albums are blues albums—I've won blues awards with them, but I wouldn't say they're blues albums."

That's more than evident on *Weightless*, where Andersen comes out of the gate swinging with *I Lost My Way*, one of two co-writes with Joel Plaskett, where he is singing a soul/gospel melody over a reggae groove. Then he channels Van Morrison on *My Last Day*, before delivering a gorgeous country ballad co-written with David Myles, *So Easy*. With Dave Gunning, Andersen tells the all-too-common tale of Maritimers heading west to work on the oil sands, in *Alberta Gold*. Hamilton's Tom Wilson helps craft a rockabilly ode to a battered rust-belt town, *City of Dreams*, while Andersen's Wolfville, N.S. neighbour Ryan Hupman lends a hand on three songs, including the title track, *Between the Lines* and the spiritual *What Will You Leave*.

"Writing with Joel Plaskett, he's always thinking about the hook and has a real melodic quality. I like having different angles on there. Dave Gunning is a really great storyteller, so the songs I wrote with him have more of a storytelling kind of vibe. A lot of the tunes I wrote with Keith Mullins were more a different groove than I'm used to; he's a drummer who played with me a lot, so he brought a different sense of rhythm and phrasing. Writing with Tom Wilson was trying to play catch-up, because he just keeps writing and writing."

"They're all people I'd hang around with outside of music, so it's more friends just doing what friends do," says Andersen, who adds that he didn't feel any pressure on his first album with fully label supported international release. "It was nice and relaxed, a great way to write. If I write a whole album by myself it sounds like me too much, where every song sounds the same, and I'm always leery of that."

“It keeps it fresh for me; every tune has its own personality, which I really like. I realize I write better when I write with someone, it keeps you from settling for a lyric. I go that extra mile. Going back and forth with these people, we get the best out of the idea we could.”

Something you won't hear on *Weightless*, extended guitar solos: Andersen will let you wait for his live show for that. “It's fun to do, but on albums I want to focus on the songs more. I don't want it to turn into something where every tune is a big wank. There's just enough on the album that you can hear there's some great playing, but it's not a big instrumental feature. I don't put myself out there as a guitarist; I think I'm more known for singing, and then guitar playing after that.”

Andersen's extensive discography boasts seven albums, including one Christmas album, one live album, and two albums with harmonica player Mike Stevens. His most recent album, 2011's *Coal Mining Blues*, was produced by Colin Linden and was recorded at Levon Helm's studio in Woodstock, N.Y. This time out he turned to Steve Berlin of Los Lobos for production duties; not only was Andersen a fan of that band, but he was surprised to find out that Berlin produced his favourite Tragically Hip album, *Phantom Power*. Berlin brought Calgary guitarist Paul Rigby on board, who is best known as Neko Case's right-hand man. Anyone who's ever been wowed by Andersen's guitar chops might wonder why he'd need another guitarist, but he says, “Paul is the kind of guitar player I'm not. He had great melody ideas for arrangements and guitar parts; I had to learn my songs again after Paul was done with them.”

One thing Andersen won't be doing in the near future is learning other people's songs to flesh out his set. (Andersen plays at least 200 shows a year). That's despite the fact that a performance of him transforming Bill Withers's “Ain't No Sunshine” has over 855,000 views on YouTube. “When I first started playing, I did a lot of bar gigs, just like anyone,” he says. “Then when I transitioned into my own stuff, I didn't have a whole lot of original material. And in terms of confidence, when you know what you can get out of a crowd by playing ‘Ain't No Sunshine,’ it's pretty easy to go with that to get their attention. I did that for a while; in retrospect, probably a bit too long. Now that ‘Ain't No Sunshine’ clip is most people's introduction to me, what they're drawn to—which is natural. It's been a struggle, but I've shaken off the easy route and focused more on my own stuff at shows.”

After hearing the instant classic material on *Weightless*, it's hard to imagine any fan of Matt Andersen—old or new—leaving unsatisfied.