

ISSUE #29

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

NOV 2000

DAVE ALVIN TOUR DATES

with The Guilty Men

11/25 Santa Monica CA at McCabe's
11/28 L.A. CA The Troubadour (benefit
for Folkscene's The Larmans)
12/28 Phoenix AZ at Rhythm Room
12/29 Tucson AZ at El CasinoBallroom
12/30 San Diego CA at Casbah
12/31 Long Beach CA at Blue Cafe
1/12 Pasadena CA Neighborhood Church
1/13 Pasadena CA Neighborhood Church
2/3 Media Pa at Media Theater
3/10 Blue Highway Fest. Utrecht Holland
4/22 Houston Inter. Festival Houston TX
5/6 Beale Street Music Fest Memphis TN

MIKE ELDRED TRIO

Opening for Brian Setzer Orchestra

11/17 San Juan at Coach House
11/19 Solana Beach at Belly Up

BLASTERS DATES

11/22 Irvine CA at Crazy Horse
12/2 Pittsburgh Pa at The Attic
12/23 San Francisco CA at Slims
12/30 Long Beach Ca at Blue Cafe



The east coast version of the Dave Alvin acoustic band.

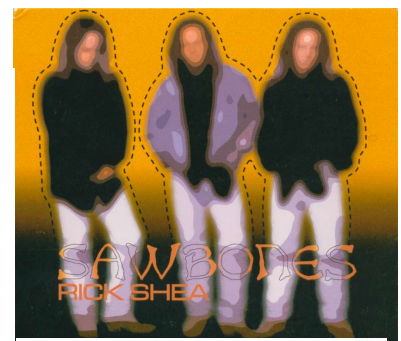
Latest News: Rhino Records has acquired the rights to Slash records catalog for reissues. Everyone hopes this could lead to the reissuing of the Blasters' albums. Unfortunately, some sources say that the Blasters' rights are possibly held by another company and complicated legal actions would be needed to free them. The Knitters' CD was reissued in October and more Slash issues will follow in 2001. -- The Blasters are scheduled to record some live material performed at the Musicians institute in Los Angeles in late November. The Blasters haven't commented on whether or not the recordings will see a release. -- WYEP-FM in Pittsburgh has a two-disc live on-air CD set with two Dave Alvin songs, and it's only \$20 plus shipping by mail order. www.wyep.org -- September. Dave played on Bierson L.A.'s new album sessions. The thrill of it was that Dave played rhythm while surf guitar legend Dick Dale played lead on three songs. -- September. Dave sang lead vocals on Los Straitjackets' new album. The album will have various vocalists. Dave sang CALIFORNIA SUN and I THOUGHT IT OVER. -- Dave had a great time playing at the Muddy Waters tribute at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. He played NEW HIGHWAY, DON'T LET YOUR DEAL GO DOWN, TWO TRAINS RUNNING, and CLOSE TO YOU. Charlie Musselwhite played in Dave's set; then Dave was invited to play with Vernon Reid in his set. -- WMNF radio of Tampa Florida has released a compilation of artists including Dave and the Guilty Men, Richard Thompson, Iris Dement, and Robert Earl Keen. Dave does a great version of \$30 Room. -- Sometime in 2001 Virgin records will issue a compilation called Interstate 10 Chronicles Vol. 2 for which Dave recorded a Merle Haggard song called LONESOME FUGITIVE. -- (((continued on page 2)))

In this Issue: Dave Alvin's east coast Public Domain tour; fiddle player Brantley Kearns is interviewed; and Marshall Crenshaw on Dave's Wanda & Duane.

The Blasters plan for a new album may include a song that will feature all of the guitar players from Blaster history. Unofficially, all the guitar players have showed interest in participating. Hollywood Fats (deceased) will be represented with a sample from an old recording. -- Dave and the Guilty Men will play a festival in Holland in March with Gaffney and Robbie Fulks. They will follow with ten days in Italy and other possible European dates. -- Dale Hawkins has a new album issued in Finland called Fool's Paradise. He covers the Blasters' song complete with the original Blasters arrangement with saxophones and that Bill Bateman beat. Legendary guitar player James Burton plays on the disc. -- Dave Alvin is featured in the December issue of Guitar Player magazine. The article features a great color picture of Dave. The title: 'Dave Alvin - A "blues guy with country influences" transforms early American folk songs' -- Dave Alvin & the Guilty Men have contributed one track, MOBILE BLUE to Frisco Mabel Joy Revisited: To Mickey Newbury. The album was released in Germany on Glitterhouse Records. On October 10, 2000 Appleseed Records released it here. Visit the web site for secure on line ordering. www.appleseedrec.com/mickeynewbury -- October 3, 2000 Dave recorded a duet with Peter Case on MONDAY MORNING BLUES for a Mississippi John Hurt tribute album. -- Dave Alvin has been contracted to do music for a PBS Documentary based on the history of a small town near San Diego and the border. The story centers around a racially motivated killing of a Mexican by some kids. Sound recording will begin in December and January. -- WWW.DAVEALVIN.COM Dave says, "Stop by the web site and check out the new pictures I've added. You'll see me and Phil as teenagers. Phil looks like he's 33, he aged young. I look like I haven't even had my first pimple yet (laughs)." -- Dave Alvin will be taking a lot of time off in December and January to relax and write some new songs. -- Kelly Joe Phelps will spend November and December writing and recording his new album scheduled for a 2001 release. -- Keith Wyatt has been writing an informative series of profiles for Guitar World magazine. Most recent have been on Scotty Moore, James Burton, Chet Atkins, and Lonnie Mack. Warner Bros has released a book/CD version of Keith's instructional video: Jump Jive and Swing. Keith has working on a new guitar instructional web site called truefire.com. It will have downloadable lessons. -- When not touring with Dave Alvin, Joe Terry and Bobby Lloyd Hicks have been keeping busy. Both of them and the rest of the Skeletons backed up Dallas Wayne on his very fine HighTone album Big Thinkin. The Morells have anew album in the works and will be touring this winter. Joe Terry just finished a three-day session for the new Robbie Fulks album.

Rick Shea releases SAWBONES

Rick Shea reports on his new album. "Hi everybody, My new album "Sawbones" is out this week. It's a collection of 12 new songs and one of my favorite Lefty Frizzell songs, SAGINAW MICHIGAN. The album is on Wagon Wheel Records and is available through Tower Records and online at Miles of Music, Borders and Amazon.com. Other record stores carrying the disc are Rhino Records in West LA and Canterbury Records in Pasadena. You can get it from me direct by sending \$15 plus \$1 postage to: Rick Shea, PO 294, Covina, CA, 91723 I'll be touring this fall with Dave Alvin and will be opening the shows in Nov. on the west coast. Hope to see you all somewhere soon. Thanks for all your support."



Rick Shea

---Doug Young at KRCL Radio in Salt Lake City said: SAWBONES is like sitting on the back porch with an old friend, the songs recall your roots while remaining new and intriguing. Solid writing, instrumentation and production make this album a joy to listen to. I just got this last night and it's on its third play-thru this morning.

---Chris Morris at Billboard said: "Sawbones" has the bluesy underpinnings and bold swing of classic California country along with Folk oriented and acoustic instruments and calls it, 'strikingly written and played.'

---Dave Alvin says, I've known Rick for ten years and I am still constantly amazed at what an incredible and intelligent musician he is. Plus, he has an angelic voice that I'd kill for."

The Brantley Kearns interview:

Dave Alvin expands his band to include another instrument

Brantley Kearns, fiddle player extraordinaire, can be heard prominently on Dave Alvin's new Public Domain album, through his fiddle playing and fine vocal harmonies. A trained stage actor as well as a musician, he spent many years playing in the Dwight Yoakam band in the mid-'80s. He extensively toured with David Bromberg as well as Billy Joe Shaver. He's done arguably his best studio work in his 30 years in the business on Dave Alvin's last two albums, 1998's Black Jack David and the recent Public Domain. Brantley and Rick Shea have struck up a partner ship playing as a duo around L.A. and teaming on session work and on Rick Shea's solo albums. Now Brantley has become a member of the Dave Alvin band and will spend most of the year on the road promoting Public Domain: Songs From The Wild Land. This interview was conducted in a moldy smelling basement below the Mercury Lounge in New York City on 10/27/00 - - - Billy Davis



American Music: I hear you first met Dave Alvin here in New York City many years ago while you were touring with Dwight Yoakam's band?

Brantley Kearns: Yes. It was here in NY. We played an upstairs Italian/American social hall. A neat old building. It was late '84 or '85 and we did three or four shows where we opened for the Blasters or they opened for us.

AM: Tell us how you got into the music business.

BK: I took a bus all the way from North Carolina to Oakland when I moved there in the mid sixties. I majored in drama at San Francisco State and I worked theatre in the late 60's in San Francisco doing alternative, and off, off Broadway and guerilla theatre type stuff. I got busted during the strike and everything and it was part of my education. In the theatre one of my best friends was Jack Nance. I moved to L.A. with an acting group I was with and then I dropped out of acting to play just music because I was getting so many calls to play in bluegrass bands. I played with David Bromberg from 74 – 76. He found me through people in the San Francisco folk music society, through Pete Kessler. Bromberg called me and I came to NY in 1974 to play. I loved it here; it was so energizing. I played with him for almost three years. In '76 I left because I felt I wasn't the musician he was looking for. Some songs I thought I was faking -- like the Irish tunes. I was used to traditional southeastern American fiddle and string band music. I learned it that way. To really play traditional Irish music you have to grow up playing it; it has to be in your blood. I felt I didn't do that very well. So I moved back to L.A. and worked into getting known and playing with bands there.

In the late seventies and early eighties the Urban Cowboy trend hit. There were country music clubs all over the place. I started playing in a 6-piece electric country band. I played in that band for two years and it was one of the steadiest gigs I had in that time.

If your band was well liked, you could get two weeks straight at a club.

Through that circuit I ran into Pete Anderson. He was playing in a band called the Blue Monkeys. He was playing blues-country. Every once in awhile in '82, I would sit in with those guys. In '84 Pete auditioned me for a guy I never heard of before. Pete had been playing with him on and off for a year or so. It was Dwight

Yoakam. I liked what he was doing. It was high energy stuff. We put together the band that included me, Pete, J.D. Foster on bass, and Jeff Donovan on drums and of course Dwight. We recorded a 6-song EP on Oak records. Later we recorded six more tunes and that became the Guitars Cadillacs Etc. Etc. album (Reprise records 1986).

AM: Any particularly memorable moments with Dwight's band?

BK: One of my favorite gigs was opening for Los Lobos on New Years Eve in '86 going into '87. It was terrific. We were really on and we played great. Then Lobos came out and did about 20 minutes of songs from acts that had played the Fillmore -- back in the 60's and 70's like Cream and so on. That was great. I sat in with Los Lobos one time in Palo Alto on a couple of Cajun tunes. It was a real nice gesture.

Years earlier, we went down to Austin in May of '84, making our out-of-California debut at an old theatre called the Austin Opera house opening for the Blasters. We were driving in Dwight's old Cadillac with it over-heating all the way. Thus the album title Guitars Cadillacs Etc Etc. Things really took off from there to national exposure.

AM: How did you come to leave Dwight's band?

BK: In 1988 Dwight made some changes in the band and I had kind of 'run my distance.' Those are the words he used. So I left. From 1988 on into the early 90's I played with Heather Myles and that's how I met Rick Shea. Rick was in her band. I was on her first two records. In 1992, we four-wheeled it around Scotland and England with Heather. That was fun. Then in '95 and '96 I played fiddle and electric mandolin in Billy Joe Shaver's band. (ed. Rick Shea walks in and says, "What decade are you up to? (Laughs)." I say, "It's about the period that you come into." Brantley says, "Heather Myles and all that stuff." Rick says "Oh yeah, great. I'll be here if you need me (laughs)." Brantley: "Yeah if I need a prompter (Laughs).") Billy Joe is a big admirer of Dave Alvin. He thinks he's the greatest writer in the world. Of course Dave turns right around and says the same about Billy Joe. It was about that time that I got reacquainted with Dave as he was in the middle period of his self-realized solo career.

AM: At what point did you first play a gig with Dave?

BK: In '96 I played with Dave at a few on-off gigs like at the Palomino in N. Hollywood. But in '94 he called me after remembering me from playing with Dwight. I recorded on the track WHAT AM I WORTH, which was a duet Dave did with Syd Straw (King Of California 1994 HighTone). I don't think the fiddle sound was included in the final mix.

AM: I recall first hearing about you and Rick being added to accompany Dave and Kelly Joe Phelps at a gig in San Francisco called the Noe Valley Ministry (11/29/97).

BK: Yeah that's when Dave brought me into the fold to do more of an acoustic thing. Kelly Joe opened and Dave played with us; then we left the stage and Kelly Joe came up, and then we all played.

Dave has a dynamic style that he communicates readily on the stage. I like playing with him because it's easy to get inside his music because he is so inside of it. You can read his dynamics with little signals or a feeling of what he's gonna do. He communicates this in a band. His form has fluidity. It's an honor to play with him and he honors good musicians. He gives them the opportunity to work and stretch out . . .

AM: In Dave's recent shows he has been introducing you by saying. "You may have heard him with David Bromberg, or Dwight Yoakam, and Billy Joe Shaver. Or more recently with Dr. Dre and Eminem. It's true. I kid you not." Okay it's time to confess.



Brantley in 1986

BK: In early '99 I signed with an talent agency. They asked if I would put together a demo to see if they wanted to handle me as talent. I did a country tune, a western swing tune, and a lesser known Frank Sinatra tune that really swung. They were mostly interested in my vocal. Later from that, I got a call from Andre Young who was working with Dr. Dre. He said, 'Hi. We got your name from the Bobby Ball agency and were looking for someone who can sing country and get kind of a yip in his voice.' (laughs) People have accused me of sounding like Mr. Haney at times. So I sang a little bit and he liked it. Then Dr. Dre called me and I auditioned for him too over the phone. He told me they were working on a song for the Wild Wild West movie. Dre and Eminem were writing a song called HEROES ONLY DIE. I sang a chorus that went, "You ride like a cowboy in the sun, it ain't no fun being on the run." I did it in two octaves.

I liked Dre. Eminem was pretty wired up. But Dre was cool, he was engineering my singing. I didn't receive credit on the album, which was a drag, but I was well paid. The session lasted about two or three hours because they were still writing the song. There was one line I liked, (Brantley starts rapping) 'I pulled my gun and I aimed it at his lung, and he say. . .and I never did find out what he say.' (laughs) It was a trip. I liked Dre. He was having fun and his posse was there. I liked it.


AM: Tell us about the partnership you and Rick have carried on after being in the Heather Myles band.

BK: I played with Rick prior to his album The Buffalo Show (Major Label records '96). There's a club in Burbank called Viva Fresh which is booked by a guy named Cody Bryant. Rick and I worked on a duo band with him and a bass player. We were doing cover songs. I would do Bob Wills songs. Rick would do Johnny Cash and Merle Haggard. I played fiddle and mandolin. Rick's handling most of the mandolin stuff now because he has plugged the mandolin into Dave's sound so well, no pun intended. Recently I played (fiddle) on his new Sawbones CD (Wagon Wheel). On the song MAGDALENA, I play mandolin.

AM: Have you ever considered solo projects?

BK: I've thought about putting out a solo album, but it seems like a lot of trouble. Other things always take me away from it. I should start thinking about it because I have another birthday coming up. ~~~*AM*

the blasters
Austin's Favorite Party Band
**END OF
SCHOOL PARTY!**



INTRODUCING FROM L.A., DWIGHT YOAKAM
AUSTIN OPERA HOUSE
Wednesday, May 22nd, 8PM

ON SALE NOW and available at Hastings Books and Records at
 Barton Creek Square Mall, Northcross and Guadalupe Malls,
 Waterloo Records, and the Opera House Box Office.
CHARGE BY PHONE: 443-2722
Start your summer off right with the blasters

PRODUCED BY FACE CONCERTS AND SHAMROCK PRODUCTIONS

American Music Newsletter goes online !!

— *From the editor* — Yes, this newsletter will now be available in a text only version available for free via e-mail. You can choose one or both of the following options: **1.)** E-mail. Text only (no photos). Free membership. Send your e-mail address to Davistb@aol.com **2.)** Print newsletter (regular mail). Printed stories with accompanying photos, contests to win autographed items, special event admission lotteries, and periodic special fan club merchandise. \$10 world wide yearly membership

DAVE ALVIN EAST COAST ACOUSTIC TOUR 2000

BY BILLY DAVIS

Dave occasionally does stripped-down acoustic tours with one accompanying member. This time, in supporting his acoustically flavored Public Domain album, Dave toured with Rick Shea playing electric guitar, mandolin and lap steel. Brantley Kearns on fiddle, and Joe Terry on keyboards and organ. Chris Gaffney was along on the trip selling merchandise, and he would hop on stage for the encores to sing lead vocals and play accordion.

October 21, 2000 Annapolis, MD at The Rams Head Tavern -- It was the first night of the New York Vs. New York Subway Series World Series. Nevertheless, without a worry of the crowds not coming out, the venue was sold out. The band members sat backstage gearing up for the show by watching the first four innings of the baseball game as Mark Erelli opened the show. When Dave hit the stage he commented first, "Thanks for coming to the beautiful Rams Head on the first day of the World Series." Dave went right into a hot version of OUT IN CALIFORNIA. It looked a little tough for Dave because he is used to letting loose on his electric guitar. He stuck to the acoustic (as he would for the whole tour) and the song rocked even without drums on stage. MARY BROWN came next followed by a song that fit in the Public

Domain theme perfectly, NEW HIGHWAY. A high point came when Dave played DRY RIVER. The song starts with a bluesy guitar riff by Dave that doesn't follow the melody of the song. Then suddenly Dave plays the familiar riff from the song and the crowd applauds for the old favorite.

The vibrating drone of Rick's lap

steel propels the song to a rising point in the set. Dave's intro says it all for the next song: "This is about a woman I used to know. Down in Austin Texas they called her Laurie. In Salt Lake City they called her Mona and in Portland, Oregon they called her MO. They might have had a name for her in Annapolis, but to me she was always ABELINE." A great version of the popular song off of Black Jack David. Brantley Kearns' fiddle adds a new dimension of sound to the familiar Dave songs. At this point in the show, Dave introduces the first of his Public Domain songs. RAILROAD BILL is first. This song has been familiar to Dave's set for a few



Rick, Dave, and Chris

years, and I must say he has developed the definitive version of the song. Joe Terry's traditional piano sound is just that – traditional. And Brantley Kearns' fiddle makes this song a real foot tapping song. Rick Shea continues the traditional sound with his playing on mandolin. Rick is featured on electric guitar on the next two PD songs: DARK EYES and SHEN-ANDOAH.

WHAT DID THE DEEP SEA SAY is a definite high point in the set. The four band members sing a four-part harmony on the chorus of the song. It sounds so good that they added an a cappella section on the last chorus of the song. Brantley's fiddle leads the song with a few cool solos. His fiddle leads the band jump-starting the rhythm after each chorus. Throughout the tour Dave has kept the Public Domain songs in a segregated group near the end of the set. DEEP SEA would segue into FOURTH OF JULY. Since Dave is playing only acoustic guitar, Rick Shea takes the electric guitar solo. The spot Dave usually takes his electric guitar solo is usually a peak noise section where Dave fights and loses his resistance to keep from leaping in the air. Maybe here in the acoustic show by giving the solo to Rick, Dave can keep himself in check.

As Dave has a tendency to do, he will often throw in an extra song not on the set list. In Annapolis it was the blues arrangement of LONG WHITE CADILLAC. Of course Brantley's fiddle adds something different to the arrangement. Another new and intense flavor is Rick's vibrating drone on the lap steel. With Dave playing acoustic guitar, the lap steel has more space to dominate the sound. The last section of the song has an extended solo which has an almost jazzy feel to it. The set finishes with Dave signature song KING OF CALIFORNIA



Dave returned to the stage and made the mistake of saying, "So, What do you want to hear?" Many requests were yelled up including a girl yelling, "Delia, Delia, Delia." Dave felt he had to grant that request, but he warned, "We haven't played this often, so there might be a train wreck up here." Of course everybody fell in perfectly and that song was a highlight. Dave next played HALEY'S COMET and EVERYNIGHT ABOUT THIS TIME. Then comes Gaffney Time. Dave: "From Tucson, AZ by way of many other places, Chris Gaffney." There's a pause as Gaffney doesn't appear. Then Dave says, "C'mon you're watching the game, come on out." Then Gaffney appeared with a grin on his face. Gaffney picked up the accordion as Dave sets up the next song, "I'd like to do a song I wrote years ago. There is a family of musicians called the Balfa Brothers from Louisiana. They were a great Cajun group and I thought this was a great song for them. So years later after many interpretations in many bar rooms, a guy by the name of Buckwheat Zydeco recorded it and it became a minor hit. It be-

came a standard in the repertoire of the zydeco bands playing the beer joints east of Houston and west of Baton Rouge. So now when I meet people like Geno Delafosse and tell them I wrote that song, they look at me like, 'Huh?' So this might be the only minor zydeco cajun standard written in Downey, California." MARIE MARIE. What a version this was. Brantley on fiddle and Gaffney on accordion pumped out that zydeco sound. At one point the band quiets the rhythm and Gaff's accordion and Brantley's fiddle chop away at the melody in perfect time -- What a great finish!

When I first heard about this tour, I was told it would include a fiddle player, mandolin and Dave on acoustic. When Joe Terry on piano was added to the tour, I thought it might not carry the same level of traditionalism that I expected. But let me tell you, Joe Terry might have been the glue that held the arrangements all together. With no drums or bass, Joe had to carry the bass line and watch the tempo carefully. He added so much to all of the songs without using any sounds that sounded too modern or overdone. He always produces interesting sounds. He has recently added a modern compact rotating Leslie speaker to his keyboard rig.

October 22, 2000 Philadelphia, PA -- The band arrived in town early so Dave could do a live performance on WXPB radio. Dave had to skip his sound check for the show at the Tin Angel that night. At the radio station, Dave sat in a room with walls lined with records and tuned up as a technician checked the signals. They made the mistake of seating Dave next to the blues section of old records. He couldn't help constantly glancing at the many old blues LP's. He randomly pulled one out of a blues man that was produced in the 60's by HighTone records part-owner and producer Bruce Bromberg. An interesting find.

DJ Gene Shay came into the room and in only a few seconds they went live on the air at 5 PM. Shay talked about the Public Domain album. Dave played two songs live with just his guitar and vocal, DELIA and MURDER OF THE LAWSON FAMILY. It was great to see Dave play these songs unaccompanied, just like the old blues man on the records next to him did. Hearing him here without accompaniment, I could just imagine Dave playing these songs at home for the first time when preparing the songs for recording of Public Domain. Wow! Shay, being a self proclaimed "old-folkie" went on about how impressed he was with PUBLIC DOMAIN. After the 15-minute segment Dave had to rush over to the Tin Angel for the 6:30 show.

The Tin Angel (1st show) -- The early show saw most of Dave's song favorites. He threw a few rarities in there like ANDERSONVILLE. The song was perfect for the Public Domain theme since it's similar in mood to MURDER OF THE LAWSON FAMILY and TEXAS RANGERS and also because Dave's great-great Uncle is pictured on the album in a union soldier's uniform. ANDERSONVILLE is about that uncle in the Civil War. Kearns' fiddle added to the sadness of the song's story of a POW camp. One of the other nights Dave threw Brantley a real compliment saying to the audience, "Maybe you heard him back when Dwight Yoakam had a great band."

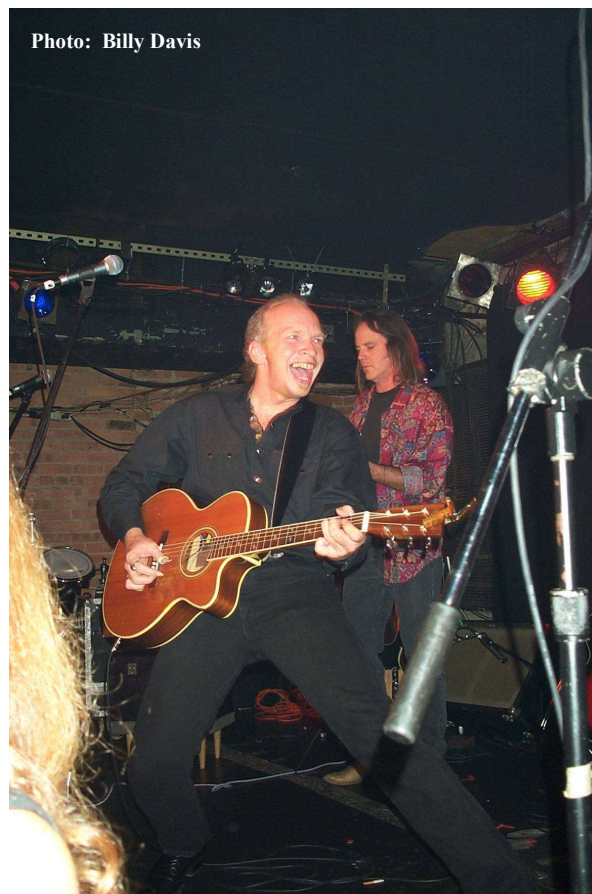


Following this song, Dave lightened things up, in preparation for his Public Domain set of songs: "These songs are the narratives of the murky muck of our collective subconscious... and you can dance to 'em (laughs)." The first of the PD songs, WALK RIGHT IN deserved an explanation as Dave says: "This is a song that everybody grew up hating...or misunderstanding. It started out as a Saturday-night, maybe-a-little-too-much-to-drink, possibly-illegal-number. With many things we do in the American Culture, we took it to the morgue and drained the blood out of it - made it a mandatory campfire sing along, Mitch Miller even got a hold of it. So I tried to pull it out of the morgue and pump some blood back into it." I think they succeeded, and Joe Terry played some great barrelhouse piano on this one.

The Tin Angel (2nd show) -- Dave was really loose this show. He called it; "All-request-Sunday" The phrase said it all. Dave did few Public Domain songs and just tried to play what ever was requested whether common or rare. ROMEO'S ESCAPE surprisingly rocked in an acoustic setting. You could tell Dave again wanted to really let loose, but remember--this is supposed to be an acoustic show without the big back beat of the drums. Adding to the temptation is that Dave stands all through out the show, rather than sitting with his acoustic guitar as he has done on past acoustic tours. Dave commented after the song, "There was a few minutes there where I really missed having an electric guitar."

A rare and unexpected song Dave played by special request was SIGN OF JUDGEMENT, the last song on Public Domain. It's a very slow and low key song similar to the BlackJack David album's TALL TREES. The band had never played the song together since its initial recording. Dave praised the band for playing it perfectly, and also claimed, "That is the weirdest segue that I've ever done from SIGN to WANDA & DUANE. That's the definition of eclectic." Dave hit the band with another surprise coaxed from the audience; FROM A KITCHEN TABLE. Brantley had never played the song and caught on nicely after Dave yelled a few chord changes to him. Once again Brantley's violin added another dimension to the songs.

In the encore Dave invited Rick to sing a song. Rick explained, "This is a song written by the former governor of Louisiana, Jimmy Davis. It's called SHACKLES AND CHAINS." A great old country song which Brantley supplied some beautiful harmonies. Gaff-



ney came up to sing on a song that Doug Sahm was known for called GOIN BACK TO SAN ANTONIO. Dave pointed out that they were doing it as a tribute to Sir Doug, who died last year.

The band had a little time for one last song and pulled out a beauty. Gaffney took the lead vocal on Curtis Mayfield's PEOPLE GET READY. Just listening to Chris sing the song, his voice is the epitome of soul. Gaffney is another talent that is so un-exposed to the music world, it's a real shame. Joe Terry considered it a special moment hearing Gaffney sing that song, he was right. After the song Dave stated, "Too bad it's not earlier, we could do the entire Curtis Mayfield song book." Immediately, Dave went into SHE DON'T LOVE YOU. Gaffney jumped right in, harmonizing on vocals on the chorus, and grabbed his accordion in time to add to the rhythm. Dave sang the song perfectly.

Lastly the band rocked the place down with HONKY TONK, Chris on lead vocal and the rest of the guys on backing vocals. At the mid-point in the song, the whole band took a cue to quite down as Dave went all out--playing his favorite lead licks on the acoustic guitar. Nevermind that he didn't have his electric guitar, he just got lost in it. Then Bang! - The whole band starts playing loud and singing "Honky Tonk all night long." And so ends the All-request-Sunday as a treat for the fans who stuck around for a late show on a Sunday night.

At about midnight the band finished packing up their gear and was waiting by the van for Dave to come out. The street was completely deserted except for an interesting street character who stood for about ten minutes next to the van doing a good imitation of Louis Armstrong. He quickly broke from song saying, "I'm auditioning for your band," then went right back to singing. As he finished with a grand finale to his knees, we gave him a round of applause. He then asked for any spare change. A strange irony occurred to me. This man was singing on the street corner for money to other musicians who were here playing music for a living. Hmmm?

October 24, 2000 Brattleboro, VT at The Hooker Dunham Theatre – A beautiful small town tucked in between the mountains. It was the first time Dave was playing a gig in Vermont. For him that leaves only three states to conquer, Maine, Alaska and Hawaii. The Hooker Dunham Theatre, located in an art museum building, seats only about 150 people and rarely presents big names like Dave Alvin in there, much less multi-piece bands and usually just folk/acoustic acts. It's always thrilling to see the Dave Alvin band rise up to a challenge - The problem: The theatre's limited sound system has inputs for only six electric instruments or microphones to plug in. The first priority was the four band members' vocal mikes. Next, was Dave's acoustic guitar and one for Rick Shea to switch off with his mandolin and an acoustic guitar that they call the 'Red' guitar. Rick couldn't use his electric guitar

Photo: Billy Davis



amp because it would require a separate input from the mandolin. So now Brantley had no plug for his fiddle, and had to rely on the fiddle's acoustic sound being picked up in his vocal mike. Joe Terry's keyboard was now totally out of luck, so he played accordion the whole show, tilting his vocal mike down to it for higher volume. The last time Joe played accordion the whole show, was a few years ago in Philadelphia at the Tin Angel. It was a show that gave birth to the name, Dave and the Acoustic Guilty Men. That was a one-time-only thing.

So when Dave stepped on stage, he joked about the instrument changes and said, "Rick is playing the 'Red guitar', and Joe who normally is our 'ace' keyboard player is auditioning for the accordion. Brantley who is normally the drummer is playing fiddle." That got a big laugh. It was interesting to see the sudden on-the-spot changes in the arrangements. The band was worried about the limitations, but I welcomed seeing it knowing the band would challenge itself to get each song right. I find these situations to be exciting. The band meets a challenge and always comes up aces. And the fans get to see something different that may never be seen again.

Rick had to substitute instruments in the songs he would normally be playing lap steel guitar on. Fretting an instrument and using a slide are two different techniques. Rick came up with some cool licks replacing the slide sound, using the red guitar on NEW HIGHWAY, and mandolin on DRY RIVER. Joe Terry took an accordion solo on RAILROAD BILL and looked as if he would barely get through it. He was grimacing and later explained that the heavy pumping action of the accordion requires a lot of strength to do it for a whole show. Still, Joe sounded great and the audience gave the solo a big hand. Dave granted a special request for EVENING BLUES explaining, "I rarely do this because it has such an odd tuning." But he added, "I'm



gonna do it for Sarah and her husband (Barry)." Dave was impressed that the couple from Maine had planned their vacation around the east coast tour. One Public Domain song that hasn't gotten enough exposure was ENGINE 143, which features Dave and Brantley in a duet of the old Carter family song. The harmonizing sounded as good as it does on the record. This was a high point.

A fan jokingly yelled out, "Do Free Bird!" Dave responded, "Don't screw with us, we know it now!" This goes

back to a show a week earlier in Virginia when someone yelled it out. It may have been the same guy as tonight. The band gave a disjointed shot at a verse of it for fun. Tonight they got a little better at the verse and everyone had a good laugh. Another great Dave Alvin band show. Brattleboro was a nice place but the nearest place for late night dinner was an all night diner 30 miles away in Massachusetts.

October 25, 2000 Somerville, MA at Johnny D's – Somerville is a suburb of Boston. Barrence Whitfield opened up the show. He played a song he rarely plays but pulled out for the occasion called IRMA JACKSON. He recorded the song on the Dave produced Merle Haggard tribute album (Tulare Dust, HighTone 1995) Dave played a familiar set of songs from the tour.

Dave took some requests as he has been doing on this portion of the tour. Once again someone yelled for FREE BIRD. Who is this mystery heckler who has been to so many shows?

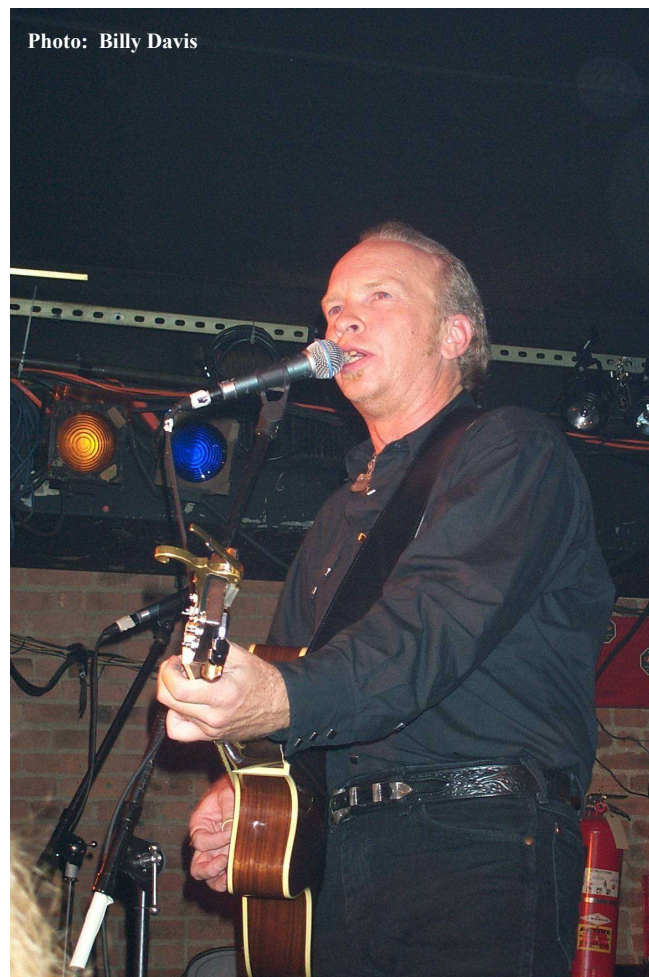
A rare gem was the requested BLUE BLVD. Dave played a little of it and stopped when he said that the band didn't know that one. I have a feeling maybe Dave didn't remember the lyrics, but I recall Rick and Joe having played it on recent tours. When playing ABILENE, Dave coincidentally didn't use his regular intro. He claims that he did not know until after the show that the girl that ABILENE was written about was at the show. Dave is glad to report she is now happily married.

October 26, 2000 Piermont, NY at The Turning Point – This little cafe in a small town on the banks of the Hudson River about 60 miles north of New York City. It could be a perfect Christmas town in the winter - old colonial buildings, enormous trees, and the sound of the wind blowing off the river. Dave has played here a few times before, and they were always great shows. Dave greeted the audience, "Thanks for coming out on a week night, on a school night, on a work night, on a parole night, on a hard-to-get-a-babysitter night, but especially on a World Series night!"

The rare song for the night was MURDER OF THE LAWSON FAMILY. Dave said, "I'd like to do a song that we haven't done on this tour so far...guys (as Dave glanced back at the band hoping they wouldn't show fear). Something about the area around here makes me think of this one." It was done beautifully and you could hear the wind blowing outside during the quiet parts. Perfect.

In the encore Dave brought another fiddle player up on stage named Phil Block of The Piners, for a twin fiddle attack. The first song of the encore was a definite rarity. MOBILE BLUE from the recent Mickey Newberry tribute album (Appleseed records, 2000). A totally-off-the-cuff tune was next when someone yelled out FADED LOVE, the old Bob Wills tune. The twin fiddles were perfect for that one and Dave jumped into it remembering most of the lyrics. Brantley is a big Bob Wills fan, so he knew the solo break and the back-up harmonies. That song was a bonus, I'm sure you'll never hear that again.

Dave teased a little with a few riffs from the Blasters tune I'M SHAKIN, then called up Chris Gaffney to sing on GOIN BACK TO SAN ANTONIO. Dave explained how he came to do this tribute song: "This has been a rough couple of years as far as people we know and love passing away. Last year a guy who was a lifelong influence and hero, and later became a friend of mine, passed away by the name of Doug Sahm. He was one of the great music genre splitters. To him, T-Bone Walker was the same as George Jones -- was the same as Flaco Jimenez. We'd like to do a tribute to Sir Doug - doing a Charlie Pride song that he



made his own.” This was quite a version with the twin fiddles. It was a wall of fiddle sound, and Gaffney’s voice just rose above it all. Next Gaffney grabbed the accordion expecting the MARIE MARIE finish but Dave surprised everybody calling for BLUE WING. The song got a special treatment having the twin fiddles and the addition of Joe’s piano. Normally, Joe picks up the accordion for BLUE WING leaving out the piano. When Joe realized the song was starting with the accordion in Gaffney’s hands, Joe made eye contact with Gaffney and playfully pushed his lower lip up as if making a sad face about not having the accordion. Gaffney broke out into a big smile, which is rare for him when concentrating on playing. Finally MARIE MARIE finished the set in grand fashion with twin fiddles playing, the crowd stomping their feet and wishing for more.

Oh and by the way, the Yankees won the World Series tonight. Long after the band left the building, a few of us stuck around at the bar to watch the game end and to celebrate the occasion.

October 27, 2000 New York City at The Mercury Lounge – As usual for New York, there was a little more of a rockin’ atmosphere than other places on tour. Dave stuck to a lot of the up-tempo songs because of such a rowdy, loud crowd. HALEY’S COMET was a big crowd favorite. Dave has been singing it with a changed lyric in one spot. Instead of ‘This Cop walks into a pancake house down in Texas,’ Dave sings, ‘This Cop walks into a Waffle House down in Texas.’ I guess that road weary life can’t help spreading deeper into Dave’s songs. Waffle House is a chain of all-night truck-stop diners all over the south USA (they have the best hash browns I’ve ever tasted).

The crowd got real loud and rowdy and started asking Dave questions. Dave answered them all. Asked about his coming birthday (Nov. 11), he said, “I was born on the same day as Laverne Baker, Mose Allison and Kurt Vonnegut.” Somebody then yelled out, “Where’s the web site guy?” Dave responded with great praise for Scot Kleinman and his official Dave Alvin web site, “The web site is done by an astronomer in New Mexico. He’s great to do it because he’s busy with the string cheese theory. He’s a real sweet man to do it.” (DAVEALVIN.COM)



The rare song of the night was from Public Domain. DARK EYES is a very catchy song and has been a popular favorite off the new album. The twin fiddle idea was so much fun last night in Piermont that Phil Block showed up again and joined the band for the encore. They finished with HONKY TONK and MARIE MARIE. The set ran over two hours, the longest of the tour.



October 28, 2000 New York City -- Saturday morning the band had to get up early to run over to The Museum of Radio and Television where WFMU radio broadcasts their Radio Thrift Shop morning show. The band came into the studio and started warming up. An old friend of the band, Syd Straw, was on the air just before Dave and recruited Rick Shea to join her and her guitar player on the radio studio stage for a song.

The radio show is set in a inclined theatre like a small lecture hall on the second floor of the building. The DJ's are seated behind a table on the brightly lit stage on a polished wooden floor. It reminded me of pictures I've seen of the old live country radio shows. This one allowed a live audience to watch the performances and applaud. As Dave warmed up backstage, the stage manager told him he was scheduled to go on after a gentleman who was warming up on the other side of the room. Dave said, "No I can't do that. Can I go on first? He's just too good. He's gonna play all those Lonnie Johnson licks. That's Paul Geremia, I'm a fan of his." Geremia turned around and was flattered. Dave introduced himself and the two talked for awhile. AllMusic.com comments on Paul Geremia saying he is: "One of the best white acoustic blues men working, for his expressive singing as well as his dexterous playing. He was one of the few folk/acoustic blues man



The Dave Alvin band, live on Radio Thrift Shop

Photo: Billy Davis



Photo: Billy Davis



from the 60's who didn't put down the acoustic guitar when Dylan did."

Dave and the full band were called to the stage. Dave was seated with his sunglasses on and acoustic guitar in hand. Rick Shea stood with his mandolin along with Brantley on fiddle and Joe on accordion. They played a fantastic set of acoustic songs from Public Domain: RAILROAD BILL, DELIA, and WHAT DID THE DEEP SEA SAY. The interviewers talked to Dave between songs. Dave broke two strings in the course of playing and publicly stated that he was "over his quota for the day." He promised that if he broke any strings later that night at the Maxwell's show, he would buy everyone a beer. The band said their good-byes to Syd Straw, who promised to visit them at Maxwell's that night, and off they went to sound check.

October 28, 2000 Hoboken, NJ at Maxwell's – This small club has been around for years and always brings in great roots rock acts. The performance room is located in the back of a restaurant and has achieved sort of a legendary reputation. At around 11:30 PM, Dave stepped up to the mike with a beer and a cigarette and without a greeting said, "I haven't been in Hoboken in 10 years. In fact, ten years ago when in Hoboken, I played an acoustic gig with another band on the bill called the Skeletons. That was the night I met this handsome young man--the great Joe Terry, the Skeletons keyboard player. If you see tears in our eyes just play along (laughs)." Then Joe Terry whines in the microphone, "I love you man!" and the crowd breaks up laughing.

Then Dave launched into the opening song OUT IN CALIFORNIA. Later on, ROMEO'S ESCAPE was a stand-out song. In the middle of the song Dave sings, "Tell me baby what you're trying to say, she said. . . ." Normally the band pauses for only about four seconds as Dave continues the lyric from the girl's point of view. This time Dave completely stopped to gulp a beer in total silence.

Photo: Billy Davis



Dave and Paul Geremia

The band didn't know what was gonna happen next in the delay. Dave decided to elaborate in an extended dialog as the band stood silent, "She said, 'I hate to tell you Dave, but we need to talk. We're not communicating like we used to. Where did the fun go? I expected more. I know you don't have an easy lot, but you have to expect that - So do I. But, we all have needs that need to be met.' So I said one last time, trying to be honest, trying to be the man she wanted me to be in every way possible; physically, intellectually, and spiritually, I'm a good guy. Maybe not tonight, but in general I'm a good guy. So I said, 'tell me what you're trying to say.' She looked at me with those eyes that she looked at me with on our first date with truthfulness, love, and.... Oh, I don't know. . ." Somebody in the audience tried to finish Dave's sentence yelling, "With ignorance?" and Dave just looked at him with an evil look and said, "If this were a Blasters show, you'd be dead!" Then Dave yelled back into the song, "She said, 'I hate to tell you Dave, but Romeo was here today and he plays for the Yankees. Romeo!" It caught the band a little off guard but they fell in and finished an explosive end to the song. KING OF CALIFORNIA finished the set but not before Dave broke a string on his guitar.

In the encore, Dave brought up Syd Straw: "She is one of my dear friends and is close to my heart." Syd came up and said immediately, "Dave, I'm so proud of you, But I think I heard on the radio that if you broke a string you were gonna buy everyone at Maxwell's a beer?" The crowd roared and Dave quickly came back and said, "I said, I would buy everybody a beer. But I didn't say where. I'm gonna do it over at the Plaza diner in Secaucus later. Then Dave and Syd sang a George Jones song they recorded on Dave's King Of California album in 1994 called WHAT AM I WORTH. Dave says they have only sung the song together live maybe one other time.

It was a great encore to finish the tour, seven songs totaling 25 minutes. Dave finished MARIE MARIE and told the Hoboken crowd, "You guys have been a gas. We'll see you again in about ten years."

What a spectacular tour: You have to catch these guys when they hit your town. Give these guys credit they did 18 shows in 22 days on this eastern half of the US tour with lots of driving. The tour was unofficially sponsored, or should I say fueled, by Red Bull energy drink. Whew!!

With the same appreciation and honor as Dave has cited "Great Americans," I'd like to name Dave Alvin first as a Great Californian. The things he does for California Country music is a credit to the man. Bringing other great singers like Chris Gaffney and Rick Shea with him on the road and letting them sing their own solo songs and sell their solo CDs is very generous. Big ego singers would never risk being upstaged. As Brantley Kearns points out, "It's an honor to play with him and he honors good musicians. He gives them the opportunity to work and stretch out." Dave is always first to recognize other artists. Dave Alvin is the greatest. ~~*AM*

NEW!! PUBLIC DOMAIN QUIZ CONTEST: One winner will receive a beautiful full-color Public Domain Poster autographed by Dave Alvin and the acoustic tour band. QUESTION: When Dave Alvin picked songs to cover for the Public Domain album, he cited particular artists by name as the sources for his version of the songs. Some of those artists are well known blues legends -- name 3 of those men and the song titles. Send answers to the newsletter address. All correct answers will be entered into a random drawing. Deadline for entries February 1, 2001

LAST DAVE ALVIN QUIZ CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED: Two winners, Mary Anagnostou and Nick Cristiano received an autographed copy of Dave's recent L.A. Times Magazine Cover story. They answered the question in a random drawing. QUESTION: Name a musician or singer other than Dave, who has played on the most Dave Alvin solo albums. You must name the musician or singer and name the albums he or she has appeared on. ANSWER: Greg Leisz on Romeo's Escape, Blue Blvd, Museum of Heart, King Of California, Interstate City, Black Jack David, and Public Domain.

WANDA & DUANE & MARSHALL & DAVE

by Tom Wilk

Marshall Crenshaw is one of the finest singer/songwriters to emerge in the last 20 years. He has mixed pop, rock and soul influences on a dozen albums. He played Buddy Holly in La Bamba, the film biography of Ritchie Valens, and wrote the Buddy Holly entry for the Encyclopedia Britannica. He also recorded WANDA & DUANE, a Dave Alvin song from Blue Blvd. Rhino Entertainment recently re-issued Marshall's first album with nine bonus tracks and This is Easy: The Best of Marshall Crenshaw, a collection of 22 songs. In August, he spoke with Tom Wilk, an American Music subscriber and copy editor with The Courier-Post in Cherry Hill, N.J., by phone from his home in Brooklyn.

The Blasters and Marshall Crenshaw were musical contemporaries in the early 1980s. The Blasters self-titled debut album on Slash Records cracked Billboard Magazine Top 200 best-selling albums, peaking at No. 36 in May 1982. Marshall Crenshaw's self-titled debut album on Warner Brothers earned critical praise nationwide and was on Billboard's chart of Top 200 best-selling albums for 27 weeks, peaking at No. 50.

Marshall is best-known as a songwriter but has recorded songs written or popularized by such artists as Buddy Holly, Elvis Presley, Richard Thompson, the Isley Brothers and the Bobby Fuller Four. He has retained an appreciation for good songwriting, both as a fan and a musician. "I bought Blue Blvd. shortly after it came out (in 1991)," Marshall recalled. "I thought it was one of the best singer/songwriter albums in the post-Bob Dylan era or whatever you want to call it."

"In a really compelling way, it holds up really well," he added. What really caught his ear was WANDA & DUANE, the album's Chuck Berry-driven rocker and a tale of two frustrated lovers. "I really dug the shit out of that song," Marshall said. "It reminded me of people I know and the boredom of suburbia." Planning to go on tour in California, Marshall decided to include it in his set list. "I learned it to play in at McCabe's (a club in Southern California)." The audience response was favorable and it remains in his repertoire to this day. "I didn't think I'd be playing the song eight years later," he said. Marshall would later play the song as a guest on Conan O'Brien's TV show. In October 1994 at Philadelphia's North Star bar, Dave Alvin used this intro on stage before playing his version of WANDA & DUANE: "I'd like to nominate a new great American. I'm sitting at home a few months ago and for some reason I'm watching the Conan O'Brien show. Out comes this great songwriter who has written three or four hundred songs. Instead of doing one of his songs he did one of mine. Do you know what royalties are for network TV? Basically this guy paid my rent for three months! So I'd like to nominate to the status of Great American, Mr. Marshall Crenshaw."

When Marshall signed to Razor & Tie, Marshall decided to do a live album as his first release for the label. Live!... My Truck Is My Home, released in September 1994, consists of 14 songs recorded between 1982 and 1994. WANDA & DUANE, recorded at the Bottom Line in New York City in January 1992, is the second track on the album. The album probably holds the distinction of including songs by Dave Alvin and ABBA on the same release. Marshall included his version of KNOWING ME KNOWING YOU after a fan shouted out a request for it at a 1992 show in Newark, Delaware.

Marshall and Dave have used co-writers on song at various stages in their careers. Did he and Dave ever discuss collaborating? "We have talked about it; he asked me at one point during his time in the Blasters. 'I can't get this pop thing,' he told me. But nothing came of it." Later, he sent some melodies to Dave, but that didn't work out. "I can't write a set of lyrics to a prescribed melody," Dave told Marshall. ~~~*AW*