

**2025 re-print and expanded edition**

# AMERICAN MUSIC

The Blasters Newsletter

Issue #18 Feb. '98

## The Blasters On Tour

### DAVE ALVIN TOUR DATES

With Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Tom Russell, and Chris Smither - acoustic  
4/7 Seattle WA at The Tractor  
4/8 Portland OR at Aladdin Theater  
4/9 San Francisco CA at GAMH  
4/10 Santa Monica CA at McCabes (2)  
4/11 Houston TX at Mighty Duck (2 sets)  
4/13 Austin TX at TBA  
4/15 St. Louis MO at Off Broadway  
4/16 Chicago IL at Fitzgerald's  
4/17 Alexandria VA at Birchmere  
4/18 Phil PA at Tin Angel (2 shows)  
4/19 Phil PA at Tin Angel  
4/20 NYC at Bottom Line (2 shows)  
4/21 Boston MA at Scullers (2 shows)  
**BLASTERS TOUR DATES**  
2/24 Anaheim CA at Bogie's



Photos: Billy Davis

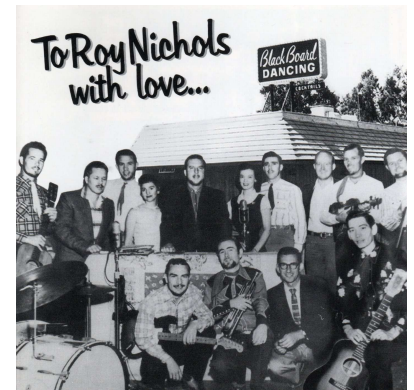
**LATEST NEWS:** : --The Blasters are rumored to be working on a deal with HighTone records to release a new Blasters album. There hasn't been any official

word or confirmation from the record company, but in January the Blasters began rehearsals to work out new material. -- Dave will be in the studio recording his new album all through out February. A song called BLACK JACK DAVID, the only cover song, will also be the title track. You may remember it from the tours with Kelly Joe Phelps. Dave will take the Guilty men out on the road in June to support the album. Dave may take along a pedal steel/mandolin player named Rick Shea, who will play select dates with the band. The album is scheduled for release in June. -- In April, Dave will join Tom Russell, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, and Chris Smither on an acoustic tour called 'The Monsters Of Folk.' HighTone will release a CD EP for radio stations to promote the tour with tracks from the four artists. Dave recorded 3 new songs for that special release: a Big Bill Broonzy song called HOW DO YOU WANT IT DONE, an old folk song called RAIL ROAD BILL, and a new Dave song called NEW HIGHWAY BLUES. -- Dave Alvin has been nominated for a Grammy award for a contribution in writing. Dave wrote an essay for a Ray Charles 50th Anniversary box set (Rhino Records). He and a few other people who wrote for that box set are all nominated. They will be going up against the writers of the liner notes for the Anthology of American Folk Music. Watch on February 25, 1998. (Dave's essay is reprinted in this issue.) Dave will produce new albums by Red Meat in March and Katy Moffatt in May. -- Dave just played guitar on a track on Chris Burroughs' new album. -- Southern California's Folkscene Radio Show will be releasing a CD compilation of live tracks from their shows; it's due out in May on Redhouse Records, and Dave's live

***INSIDE: Report on the Blasters East Coast weekend, Phil Alvin's Musician to Be Remembered, Dave Alvin's Grammy nominated writing and Scot Kleinman's Web Site report.***



BARN BURNING will be included. -- Just released on January 13, 1998 is a new CD by the Ray Campi Quartet called Train Rhythm Blue (w/ Dave Alvin, Stan Ridgeway, D.J. Bonebrake and Tony Gilkyson) on Mouthpiece/Rounder Records (pictured left). Dave plays on a few songs and recites lyrics on one track--Country singer Kathy Robertson has just released a CD called To Roy Nichols With Love on Cowgirl Records (pictured right). It's a tribute to the legendary country guitarist. She is



joined by many other musicians including James Intveld singing on 3 tracks and Rosie Flores on 2 others. Miles of Music mail-order is carrying the CD. -- Per Ake Persson of Sweden reports: The MARIE MARIE Swedish version with lyrics by Per Gessle (of Roxette) has now been covered by Sven-Ingvars, a band that have roots in Swedish dance hall music. Lately, they are now enjoying both critical acclaim and still sell records. -- The Blasters are rumored to be working on a tour of Finland and maybe Sweden in the summer. -- James Intveld has released his solo CD here in the U.S. on Innerworks records; it available from Miles Of Music. — Am

## THE BLASTERS EAST COAST WEEKEND TOUR

Thursday, December 18, 1997

by Billy Davis

*The Ram's Head Tavern, Annapolis Md.* — The first of a three show east coast tour. The Ram's Head performance room was small: Only 225 seats at 57 tables and no standing is allowed. Keith Wyatt's mom lives only a few blocks from the venue and had never seen Keith perform with a band, so tonight was a big homecoming for him. Keith moved away from Maryland 20 years ago to pursue his musical career in L.A.

The opener, Jumpin' Jupiter was a pretty good band. The singer and drummer were definitely greasers with that rockabilly look. They had a stand-up bass player and a competent Travis picking style guitarist. They did straight rockabilly, but maybe too many cover songs. They will probably go places when they build a repertoire of original songs.

The Blasters brought along a supply of T-shirts and their own cassette tape to sell at the show. The tape was professionally recorded at Keith's school, The Musicians Institute in L.A. It features 13 songs, some of which they would be performing tonight.

The Blaster set started off with the signature tune AMERICAN MUSIC and on to a slew of old Blasters favorites. It had been the first time I had seen the band since March in Chicago and it was now apparent that Keith Wyatt was fitting perfectly into the band. It was reaffirmed when I was asked by a few old Blasters' fans, "Who is this new guitarist? He's great!" With a fluency in the Blaster repertoire, Keith has become looser on stage and has shown a lot of movement. All I can say is that the band is really tight



The Blasters on-stage at The Ram's Head

Photos: Janne Kurunsari





right now and everybody sounded like they have been playing together for years. Keith Wyatt definitely deserves his fair due. As reported before, the band still hasn't had a full band rehearsal, so throughout 1996-97, Keith had to use Blasters' performances to hone and define his guitar parts on the Blasters' arrangements. He has arrived!

A pleasant surprise in the set was the song TROUBLE BOUND, which is a Blaster song originally recorded in 1985. The

### Phil back-stage at the Ram's Head singing Little Jimmy Reed

band hadn't played it while James Intveld was the lead guitarist between '93 and '95. It's a pleasure to have it back in the set. Another 2 songs that Keith Wyatt had not played until recently with the band were FIRE OF LOVE and COUNTY FAIR, two songs that became regulars during the James Intveld period. Keith gave COUNTY FAIR a bit of a different treatment in the solos, and I believe it was the first time Keith played the song on stage. After the song Phil looked over to Keith and joked, "Just wait until we have a rehearsal!" Phil stuck to most of his regular generic dedications and song intros through out the set. It should be noted that those intros that we have been hearing word for word for years is actually Phil's cue to the band as to what song is next. Phil's set list is totally off the cuff. He thinks it up as he goes along. In fact the band doesn't even know what the opening song is until Phil addresses the audience, and then gives the band the cue.

Phil dedicated SLIP OF THE TONGUE to Keith's Mom and continued to grin at her when reciting lyrics throughout the song. Phil put on the charm announcing to the crowd, "Thanks to Keith's Mom for coming down here and bringing everybody. . . and if only I were twenty years younger." At one point Jerry signaled Phil to let the audience know about T-shirts and tapes for sale. Phil stated, "Doctor Jerry, the medicine man, reminds me that we are selling snake oil tapes and T-shirts. I'm not proud, but I actually don't have an angle now to play on. . . but I'll tell you to go buy them with all my heart." (Prompting laughter from the crowd.)

A song that fans have called HEAR ME CRYIN' was introduced by Phil; "This song is called the BIG F CHORD." The song is titled that on the official Bootleg tape also. I'd like to know the story behind that title. For



Phil in Hall Of Fame records in Annapolis Maryland

years fans have called this song HEAR ME CRYIN'. They finished the set with a fast version of ONE BAD STUD and then did their encore of LOVE IS MY BUSINESS and the Cab Calloway song, I'M GLAD YOU'RE DEAD YOU RASCAL. The finishing song was a real surprise. I had heard the Blasters occasionally pull that one out in encores but I had never seen it performed live. It must have been a while since the band had last played the song. Phil turned his back on the crowd and demonstrated to Jerry the type of beat he wanted before they started. Phil pulled out his harmonica and into the song they went. Phil took all the solos on harp and the 2-beat song ended the set.

It was interesting to see the Blasters at a sit-down club where you can clearly hear the music and nothing else. But there is definitely a different energy at a stand-up club where the crowd has room to move and sweat. The band was excited about playing Tramps in NYC the next night which is one of those stand-up clubs.

Backstage Phil talked to the opening band about his Kay guitar; He was happy to remind everyone that it was a model made famous as Jimmy Reed's favorite guitar. Phil then launched into singing a Jimmy Reed song accompanied by his unplugged electric guitar. Wow! A performance seen by only 6 of us. I don't know the title but it wasn't one of Reed's more popular songs.

Later I met a guy who owns the record shop next store called Hall Of Fame Records. We talked about record collecting and he told me that Phil had been in the store earlier and looked at some 78s. It was 1 AM and he offered to open the store for us to check out his collection. Soon after, Phil followed us in to pick out his 78s, two by Wynonie Harris and one by The Five Royals. I saw the owner cringe a little when Phil held up one of the 78's and started to bend it, knowing that this particular record company was using a flexible vinyl for their pressings. In the shop all the cheap records are out in front and all his old rare stuff is in the back. He took us in the back and showed us a rare James Brown, some Bo Diddley albums that go for \$150 each and a few Bob Wills records from the 50's. Pretty impressive!

As a joke I quickly flipped through some cheap albums looking for a heavy metal record to give Phil and see what he thought of it. I pulled out a Scorpions album with a screaming face on the cover and Phil held it up to his head with a perfect impersonation. What a laugh that was.

### **Friday, December 19**

*Tramps, New York City* — They played here twice before in 1995 when James Intveld was the guitarist. Johnny and Jerry had a table set up to sell T-shirts while the opening bands played. The first of the three bands was an all-instrumental surf band called The Human Tornadoes. They seemed like competent musicians, but there didn't seem to be any high points to their set. Next came the Swingin' Neckbreakers, who are somewhat a garage and rockabilly band. I didn't really grab on to their style, but I heard from a lot of people that they have a lot of potential and will be going places for sure. They already have a record out that I saw was being sold at the front counter.

As Blasters show time arrived, there was a big crowd and everybody gave a rousing ovation as they hit the stage. There was definitely a feeling of energy when the Blasters opened with THE BIG F CHORD. Phil had some troubles with his guitar amp which might explain the band starting with this song an unusual choice: It's a song that Phil plays harp on and not guitar. The song worked well as a set opener. During Keith's solo, Phil picked up his guitar and



they followed quickly with AMERICAN MUSIC. One thing is for sure: They were definitely louder than the other shows. One song that has really come around as a show highlight is DARK NIGHT. Keith really shows off on guitar on this and the band shows how really tight they are in their playing. It's one of those songs that is so much better when played live and loud. The same goes for DADDY ROLLIN STONE. The band rolled through their regular set. Most of the songs were familiar to everybody from previous tours. Keith's solos and rhythm playing was the thing that differed. It added a freshness to the familiar songs. Keith's playing has a bit more of a rock edge to it than the previous Blasters guitarists. He's great at phrasing his guitar riffs. He also seems to pay a lot of attention to his guitar tone. That must



From the stage John Bazz took this photo of the Tramps audience before starting their set.

be attributed to choice of guitars his custom pickups.

It was real cool of Phil to announce before TROUBLE BOUND, "This goes out to Billy Davis." It was nice to get a dedication in my town. The band finished the set with the traditional pairing of MARIE MARIE and ONE BAD STUD. For the encore the band played COME ON IN THIS HOUSE dedicated to "My good friend Marcus Johnson...from Chicago." They finished again with I'M GLAD YOU'RE DEAD, YOU RASCAL as Phil dedicated it to Cab Calloway and Harlem... what a show...my ears were blown out.

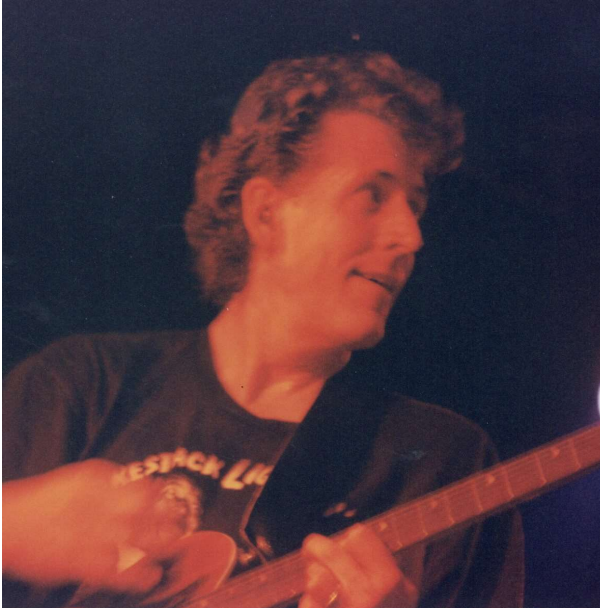
### **Saturday, December 20**

*The Birchmere Alexandria Va.* — When the Blasters last played the Birchmere in March of '95, the club location was a few blocks down the road. Now they have relocated to a new complex complete with a restaurant, performance hall, movie theater, merchandise shop, and a big lobby. Upon entering, we noticed pictures and concert posters framed on the wall showing the many legendary performers who have played the old Birchmere. This sit-down club has a stage backdrop that looked like a red brick studio wall with a stage door complete with a hanging single-shaded light bulb over the door and over the drummer's platform. The ceiling lighting rig was definitely new and lit the performers perfectly. The stage had a nice new carpet of which cigarette



Photos: Jamie Kunusari

**Jerry Angel at Tramps**



**Keith Wyatt at Tramps**

smokers on stage were warned not to extinguish their cigarettes on the carpet. The owner was adamant about this.

The band was ready to go on and the stage manager asked Phil when he wanted his introduction? Phil stated he will walk on stage, then face his amp and set up. When he turns around to face the audience he would be ready. Phil did just that and as he turned around he yelled out, "I have turned around." The audience, of course, didn't know why Phil said that. He then realized he couldn't move more than a few feet from his amp because the guitar cord was all tangled. Bazz had to run over and uncoil the cord as Phil announced, "Good evening ladies and gentlemen. This is my cord. We are the Blasters. I bought this thing and it was curled up. Now for the students of

topology. Don't applaud for that, please. It would make it very easy to continue." The audience started off laughing and it loosened the audience up. They then launched into COUNTY FAIR.

The great thing about attending all three of the east coast shows was that the band really changed the set list each night. Every night had a different opening song and of the 25 different songs played in 3 shows, each show had a different order or played songs that weren't heard on other nights. DARK NIGHT was introduced in a way I haven't heard Phil say, "Let he who did not immigrate throw the first stone." In the breaks between songs, Phil kept flipping his drinks up in the air as if he expected nothing to spill out. Of course, it spilled all over the place including the stage carpet. The club owner must have been having a heart attack. In SLIP OF THE TONGUE, Phil confessed, "I missed the ash tray. I can't smoke and play at the same time"

Later Phil made a request to the bar for a pineapple juice and water half and half, so a fan in the audience went to get it for him. Phil joked calling the drink a "Joe Turner's on the Wagon." Actually Phil finds this mixture good for his voice. Jerry kept yelling up to Phil, trying to get him to mention their merchandise for sale. Finally Phil acknowledged, "Jerry Angel reminds me that we have bootleg tapes and T-shirts outside. It is the Christmas season so don't buy them for yourselves, buy them for a friend. But since we're all friends, you can keep them anyway." The audience laughed, but it paid off because the T-shirts would sell out before the show was over and a lot of fans started asking me if the Blaster newsletter was going to offer them for sale. My answer was, "Of course!" (see elsewhere in this issue.)

In SO LONG BABY GOODBYE John Bazz broke a bass string and it was funny to see him start laughing and cursing to himself. So he changed to his spare bass and picked up in the middle of the song. Phil dedicated TROUBLE BOUND, "This goes out to low riders in Finland. Believe me they are there and they are big."

After playing the normal songs to finish the set. Phil came back and played SAMSON & DELILAH. Then he announced to the band through the microphone, "Let's do MY BABY'S A JOCKEY AND SHE TEACHED ME HOW TO RIDE in the key of C by Joe Turner." A big



surprise! I've never heard the band do this. The first 2 verses were true to Joe Turner's version although Big Joe was known to record many different versions of the same song. The original song I've heard on Rhino record's Big Joe Anthology is called MY GAL'S A JOCKEY. The first half of the Blasters' version sounds like the original, but in the ending Phil sang the lyrics to ROLL 'EM PETE along with that real up tempo ending like ROLL 'EM PETE on the Live At The Venue al-



Photos: Janne Kurunsari

Phil Alvin onstage at The Birchmere

bum. A great jump blues song to end the set and the tour. I think they must have prepared the song or played it before, because Keith seemed to have an intro to the song and I didn't see anybody give each other cues as to when the lyrics came in. Or maybe the Blasters are just that good at improvising.

It was a fun tour. Definitely the best I have heard the Blasters sound in the 90's. I hope this lineup sticks and they can get an album out. The reactions from the east coast Blasters' fans were all positive. It was the first time that people in the east were seeing the Blasters with Keith Wyatt as the guitarist. Everybody I was in contact with asked who he was, because they were very impressed. The Blasters seem to be on the right track. —Am



Photos: Janne Kurunsari

Keith Wyatt at The Birchmere

**BLASTERS CONTEST #3-** Name 8 songs from the Blasters new American Music CD/2 LP vinyl HighTone album, that were later re-recorded by the Blasters or Dave Alvin for another release. List the 8 songs and their respective albums. 3 Winners will receive and an American Music album promo flat autographed by the current Blasters. Deadline for entries May 1, 1998. Send answers to Blaster contest 80-16 64th Lane Glendale N.Y. 11385



# A MEETING WITH THE MAN

by: Dave Alvin

(from the Rhino CD Box Set: Ray Charles: Genius & Soul the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Collection)

I rode in a freight elevator once with Ray Charles. It was several years ago in San Francisco, where an odd variety of artists from Lou Rawls to Ed McMahon to George Burns to my band at the time, The Blasters, were performing at some beer company convention. The only other person in the elevator was Ray's road manager, who nodded his head silently as I got on. His serious, businesslike demeanor seemed to say, "That's right, kid, you're standing next to THE RAY CHARLES, and he doesn't care to hear or make any small talk, because he's only here to sing AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL, get paid, and split. So be cool and we'll let you ride with us, and you can tell your grandkids about it when you get old."

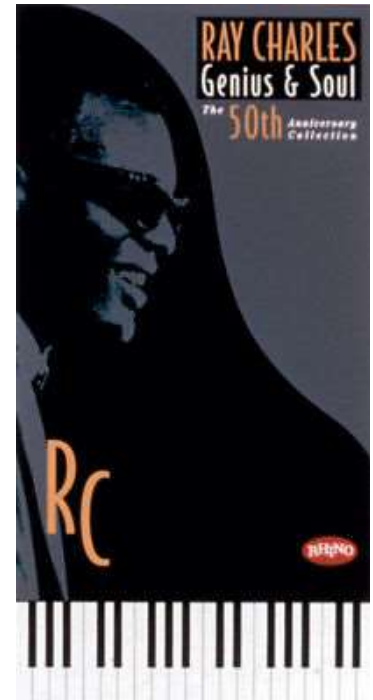
Awestruck, I stood staring at Ray, who was smiling and softly humming a melody to himself. I tried to think of something original to say, but what could I possibly tell him that he'd never heard before? "Gee, Mister Charles, I'm your biggest fan!" or "Hey, Brother Ray, what's shakin' baby?" I don't think so.

Maybe I could've told Ray about when I was 14 in 1970 and the corner drugstore was selling cut-outs of his old ABC albums for 69 cents, and how I bought two or three a week until I owned them all. No, nobody wants to hear about their records being in cut-out bins, but maybe I should've told him how much I learned about American music and songwriting from listening to his records and reading the writers' credits. How he made me see that the same tough blue soul in a song written by Percy "the Poet of the Blues" Mayfield could be found in one by country singer Buck Owens or by Broadway's Harold Arlen. How, more than anyone else in the history of American pop music, he had bulldozed the walls separating blues, gospel, country, jazz, R&B, Tin Pan Alley, and show tunes (what other artist could claim to have made records with Milt Jackson and Betty Carter as well as George Jones?). And he did it without changing his unique vocal style, which was based as much in the church as in the juke joint. Would he really care that I based my approach to songwriting on his eclectic philosophy and how much solace I got from his example when people tried to pin me down to playing or writing in only one style?

Did Ray Charles really need some stranger in an elevator telling him how much of a revolutionary he'd been in a country so musically, culturally, and racially segregated? Or how his music represents everything many of us believe American is ideally supposed to be: open-minded, compassionate, independent, adventurous---willing to explore the new without discarding what was good in the old. I just kept my mouth shut and listened to Ray's humming.

Should I have told him about driving my family and neighbors crazy on my student tenor sax, honking and screeching, trying to learn the alto sax intro to "(Night Time Is) The Right Time"? Maybe he'd relate to how I sat up until sunrise night after heartbroken adolescent night listening to "I Can't Stop Loving You" over and over after my first girlfriend dumped me? What difference would it make to him that when I turned 21 and walked into an air-conditioned bar on a miserably hot afternoon the first thing I did after buying my first legal drink was play his version of "Ruby" on the jukebox and make a silent toast to adulthood and to Ray for thing there to initiate me?

The elevator doors opened, and before I'd said a word, Ray and his road manager were out the door. I followed them out watching as they were immediately surrounded by smiling faces and out-stretched hands, everyone saying things like, "Mister Charles, I am your biggest fan." I still kick myself for not saying anything to him, but I also like to think that Ray knows and understands what he's meant to me, and what he's meant to all of us, and, oh yeah, I'll definitely tell my grandkids.



## **The Blasters/Dave Alvin Web Site Report      by Scot Kleinman**

I think it was March of 1996 when I walked into my local record store and saw on the 'Upcoming Releases' board an entry for a new Blasters album. Thrilled, but confused, since I hadn't heard anything about it, I asked the staff for more information. No one knew anything, but since the date was only a week away, I decided I could wait. I came back exactly a week later and there was no new album and still isn't, by the way. Again, no one at the store knew anything. "The web," I thought, "surely will have some information." So I went back to work and fired up Netscape and searched for the Blasters. After sorting through a million entries on Sound Blaster Audio cards, I found very little about our Blasters. A mention in an X page and a Los Lobos site (whose links I now have in the link section of my site). But nothing devoted in any substantial manner to either the Blasters or ex-Blaster, Dave Alvin.

Since I had just gotten back from a trip to the VW factory in Wolfsburg, Germany, and was anxious to put my pictures on the web, I decided this would be a good time to learn HTML and start my web page. Besides the VW stuff, I thought, I could put a little section about the Blasters and Dave Alvin and see if anyone is interested in a place to gather information about the bands. Well, it didn't take me long to realize the Blasters and Dave Alvin sections of my page were immensely more popular than my VW section. Blasters-related e-mail pours in daily with people's comments, questions, and general good wishes. It was great to find so many people as excited as I was about American Music. While the response is sometimes overwhelming, I do try to respond or take action on all incoming mail. Having taken some time off for the holidays and then moved from So Cal to Ames, Iowa, I am far behind my updates and replies and apologize to everyone. I will be working hard soon to catch up again.

I've met Phil and Dave and the guys before, but I never introduced myself as the Web guy, because it seemed kind of strange that I should have their web page. "Hi, I'm Scot and I have your web page." I thought it would be pretty weird if one of these guys had a web page about me! However, of late, band members and their supporting staff have started to come on-line and have given me their support, so before leaving Southern California, I decided to 'fess up and meet both Dave and The Blasters in Hollywood shows and introduced myself as "The Web Guy." Dave was first (at one of the "un-announced" gigs at Jack's Sugar Shack) and was genuinely supportive and excited about the pages. I think Dave introduced me to everyone who happened by, while we were talking. Also I made contact with Gregory Boaz who had just moved a few miles away from me only a month or so before I was moving away, so I never got the chance to ask him about bass lessons.... Dave and I exchanged phone messages for the next month as we tried to arrange some time to get together to put some work on the pages. One of his comments went something like: "I heard a rumor you have a scanner now. Ooooh, this could be dangerous!"

Unfortunately, we never managed to meet again before I moved, but we'll be trying again long-distance and you may see some directly-Dave-inspired changes in the pages coming soon.

It was probably only a week or so later when I heard from Johnny Bazz that the Blasters were going to be at the Hollywood House of Blues. Expecting snow that night in the mountains where I lived, I put the chains in my car and drove down for the show. Got a spot front and center for the show and went backstage afterwards to meet the band. Phil and I talked about his mathematics work and pondered ways to use fractals for image compression. Doing a little research the next day, I discovered this was indeed a standard technique, but had been supplanted recently by even more efficient wavelet compression schemes. Did anybody say, "A day late and a dollar short"? Johnny and Jerry were both very interested in the site and are involved in getting the T-shirts and "official bootleg" tapes for sale from the pages. I'll be posting the address for these orders. It should happen soon, so stay-tuned.

I get much of my information from Billy who has his share of sources, some direct contributions from band members and various publicity people, and from e-mailed comments from those on-line. If you know a concert date that I don't have, or went to a show and want to send a few words about it, or saw Phil at the furniture store, send me a message and I'll get the info into the pages.

Well, I think I've carried on long enough, but let me conclude by saying thanks to everyone for dropping by, sending encouraging notes, and for being patient when I get behind my updating and e-mail responses. And if you haven't been there yet, check out the pages at

**<http://bullwinkle.as.utexas.edu/~sjk>**. That's my homepage and from there, you'll find links to both the Blasters and Dave's pages. (You'll also find a link to the pictures from my VW trip, but you can skip that; I won't mind.)

## MUSICIAN TO BE REMEMBERED *of the month*

-by Phil Alvin

There are so many musicians that I enjoy and at any given month or time, but I will choose one. Part of the reason that I want to point a finger at musicians, is that there is an unfairness in the amount of fingers being pointed at others and not them. This will be ladies month for me. There is one woman who is one of the great American singers of all time. She is ruthlessly powerful. Her name is Big Maybelle ( A.K.A. Mabel Smith/Mamie Webster). She is a great blues shouter in the tradition of Bessie Smith. She had the first recording of *WHOLE LOTTA SHAKIN' GOIN' ON*. I had an album of hers on the Savoy label (1956-59) that was very rare. The biggest hit nationwide was called *CANDY*. Etta James and Ruth Brown were very influenced by her. *She was born in 1924 and sang in the local Sanctified Church in Jackson TN. She played the Piano and was known to sing in 4 different languages and recorded first for the Decca label in 1944 and soon after did successive tours with Tiny Bradshaw, Jimmy Witherspoon and Leroy Kirkland. She recorded for many labels throughout her career; she spent most of the 60's playing Harlem's Apollo theatre. She died in Cleveland, Ohio, of a diabetic coma in 1972.*



Another woman in the early seventies who seemed safe but dropped out was Lil' Green . She was influential to Peggy Lee and was the most popular in the 30s with a song called *ROMANCE IN THE DARK*. It's the *TWO STEPS FROM THE BLUES* of the 1930s. That was a Bobby Blue Bland song -- a very heavy song. Songs don't generally strike me as sexy, but that one does. She was extremely influential. She recorded for Victor (1946-47) and Big Bill Broonzy played a lot with her on Blue bird (1940-45) and wrote songs for her. Lil' Green was like Esther Phillips; little and tiny. *Born 1922 and orphaned at 10, Lillian started work outside of music. She later played clubs, then did her first recorded work with Big Bill Broonzy on the Bluebird label. She toured with Broonzy and Tiny Bradshaw and later recorded for Victor, Aladdin, and Atlantic. Famous songs: KNOCKIN MYSELF OUT and NOW WHAT DO YOU THINK. She died at 35 of bronchial pneumonia in Chicago.*

Esther Phillips was married to Johnny Otis and went on to sing with the Dominoes. She had many other R&B hits. I remember I was working the Chinese Theatre in L.A. when *Lady Sings the Blues* came out. I was already upset that Diana Ross was picked to play this full bodied woman Billie Holiday. I was taken away from the Chinese Theatre because so many people were coming to see *Lady Sings The Blues*, so they sent us down to the Parisian room where Esther Phillips was playing. I wanted to tell everybody to come from the theatre and really see Billie Holiday!! Esther Phillips is it. A real singer! *Born 1935 in Galveston TX. Influences: Billie Holiday/Sarah Vaughan/Dinah Washington. Recorded for endless labels, making TV appearances and touring. She played drums, organ, piano, trumpet. She died In Torrance, CA. in 1984.*

### CARL PERKINS 1932-1998

Yes, it truly was a sad day when Carl passed away on January 12, 1998, but his music will live forever. Carl Perkins is one of my true idols in music and also as a person, the way he loved life. I met him the first time in May of '93 outside the Lone Star Cafe in New York City. He was waiting for his sons to get their gear together after they played 2 shows in 2 nights. I had him all to myself for a few minutes and told him how thrilled I was that he came up to New York for the pair of shows. He was just as appreciative that so many people turned out. I had him autograph my copy of the CD *706 Reunion* that he recorded with Scotty Moore. He got a kick out of the fact that I had tracked down Scotty to sign the CD already. He was so nice to me I just couldn't believe it! Later that year, I traveled down to Memphis with my father for Elvis week just to see Carl again. Then in November of '96 he played a show at 'Denim and Diamonds' here in New York. He put on a great show even though it's a line dancing club and his volume was kept low. That same day he did a CD signing for his new book *Go Cat Go* at New York's J & R Music World. Again, he was an absolute pleasure to everybody -- a real treat for people to meet this major figure in music history in an intimate setting. He gave an in-store performance that was legendary—Just Carl and his electric guitar: Awesome! He is truly the Rockabilly King. There was never anyone who was more authentically rockabilly than Carl.

Even at age 61, I knew Carl was still hot and rockin' when I saw him at that Lone Star NYC show. I had brought my father, who was a fan when Carl started out in the 50's. We sat in the front table right in front of Carl and his guitar amp was facing directly at me. If anyone knows how it sounds to be right directly in front of a speaker cone of a guitar amp - its a real crisp sound and you feel that rock n roll energy. I could hear every nuance of his playing. I knew right then - this is not an old man playing! Carl played the rhythm just like on his old Sun records and took all the leads himself!!! A lot of the old guys, let back-up guys take the bulk of their guitar work- but not Carl! He did it all and it just blew me away. Unbelievable! After today, I'll just smile when I think of Carl Perkins. The sadness of his passing will fade, but then we will always have his music to remember him by. --Billy Davis



## New! Keith Wyatt Guitar Instructional Video's From Note Service Music



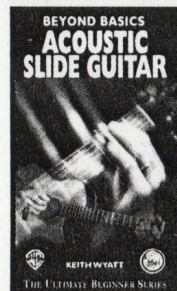
### **Acoustic Blues Guitar** by Keith Wyatt (REH883A) **\$14.95**

*Acoustic blues basics for pick and fingerstyle players.*



### **Solo Acoustic Blues Guitar** by Keith Wyatt (REH884A) **\$14.95**

*An introduction to authentic Mississippi Delta blues.*

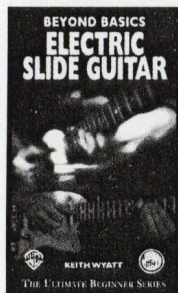


### **Acoustic Slide Guitar** by Keith Wyatt (REH885A) **\$14.95**

*An introduction to authentic acoustic slide in standard and open tunings.*

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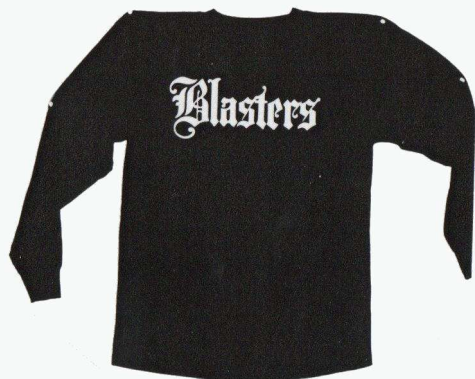
*Using standard and open tunings for blues and rock styles.*



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**Blasters Tour T-shirts-** (a) Mens long sleeve shirts (pictured) have the large logo on the back and a pocket logo on the front. (b) Mens short sleeves are available with the large logo on the back (with pocket logo on front) or (c) large logo on the front and nothing on the back. Mens sizes are only in X-Large. \$12 for Short Sleeve. \$15 for Long Sleeve. (d) Women's tank tops (pictured) come in one size fits all at \$12 each.

**Blasters Official Bootleg tape-** This 13 song live tape was professionally recorded on 7/24/97 at the Musicians Institute in Los Angeles CA. The Blasters have pressed a limited run of cassettes of this performance. The 50 minute tape is \$10.



**Ordering info:** \$3 postage for any size order. Postage outside of the U.S. add an additional \$2. Make checks or money orders payable to "The Blasters." Payment must be in U.S. funds and drawn on a U.S. bank. Send to **The Blasters, PO BOX 7582, Santa Monica, CA 90406-7582**

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The following is a diary I wrote of the time I spent with the Blasters on a 3 day weekend in December 1997. I didn't publish it at the time because it was only intended for me over time to remember the great experince I had with my favorite band. This writing is way too long and maybe too much minutiae for anyone else to read. But what the hell, here it is:

# BILLY DAVIS' THE BLASTERS EAST COAST WEEKEND TOUR DIARY

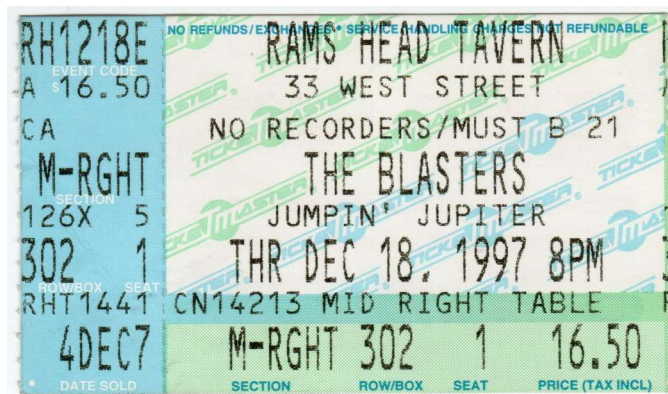
**Saturday December 13, 1997**

Janne Kurunsaari arrived in New York City from Finland. He has been a friend of mine since 1992 when I had really started becoming a big collector of the Blasters. He made the long trip here specifically to see the Blasters east coast tour. He's written a few articles for the newsletter too and he produced those cool Blasters Hard Line T-shirts. He is also a photographer, so I knew he was going to be busy at the shows. We had four days to kill until Blaster mania hit so we spent the time checking out New York City record stores and seeing a few of the New York sites.

**Thursday December 18**

Janne, my wife Triss, and I drove the 5 hour trip to Annapolis, Maryland, arriving at the hotel at 5PM to check in. My wife made the trip down south to visit a friend who had gone to college in New York and had now moved home to the D.C. area.

The Blasters were arriving at BWI airport at about 4 PM. They rented a Mini-Van and drove straight to the club, an hour away. Janne and I left the hotel and drove the 10 minute drive to the Rams Head Tavern where the Blasters were performing that night. We hoped to catch the 6 PM sound check. Not knowing where to go, we walked into this basement restaurant looking for the performance room. The 4 Blasters were sitting at a table having their pre-show meal as I walked by not noticing them. Janne spotted them and jokingly got my attention by saying loudly, "I'd like to introduce you to Billy Davis." We all exchanged greetings and I introduced



set check-out time at noon. Since I knew Phil has trouble getting up in the morning and needs every hour he can get, I said, “Hey Phil I have bad news: Check-out time tomorrow at the hotel is 11AM.” Phil just looked at me and playfully gave me the middle finger. We all had beer and food as we talked about the tour. I had the Chili and it was pretty good. Phil had a new digital camera that he was playing with. He took a few pictures of us sit-



**The Pre-show dinner at the Ram's Head Tavern restaurant.**

Photo: Janne Kurunsaari



**The Blasters on-stage at the Ram's Head Tavern.**

Then guitarist Smokey Hormel was already on the boat when it was leaving. He had to ask the staff to lower the gates to let the other Blasters aboard at the last minute. According to them, these overnight ferry trips are big parties with bars and live music. Phil wound up jamming on acoustic guitar with a Polish lounge piano player after a couple of vodka's. Phil remembers the piano player looking like Dwight Yoakam. Janne interviewed the Blasters the next day in Finland. The band explained that Phil couldn't make it cause he had a hell of a hangover.

Phil left the table before we were finished eating to catch a cab back to the hotel because he never attends sound checks. He always prepares for a show by spending a few hours alone at the hotel. Every singer has certain routines to psyche themselves up for a show. This is how Phil does it. So we finished our meals and talked about the new HighTone album they were planning to record. They said that Bruce Bromberg has been put in charge - not as a producer - but an overseer to try and get the project organized. The band says the problem is they don't have enough original songs. At one point Jerry brought up the idea of Dave Alvin writing some songs. Bazz shot that down insisting that Phil would never go for it after the last CD release debacle of American Music. So they are still looking for songwriters.

Dinner ended with us finding out that Janne and I were being included in the complimentary band meal. Pretty cool! We went into the performance room to check it out.

The main room was small: Only 225 seats at 57 tables. No standing is allowed. The band checked out the amps and equipment that was being supplied by the venue. Actually the amps and drums were property of the opening band called Jumpin' Jupiter. The Blasters only brought their guitars, cables, Phil's harmonicas, and Keith's effect foot pedal. In less than 20 minutes, what would be called a sound check was over.

Keith Wyatt's mom lives only a few blocks from the venue and had never seen Keith perform with a band. Tonight, then, would be a big homecoming for him. Keith moved away from Maryland 20 years ago to pursue his musical career in L.A. He stayed at his mother's house that night. The rest of the guys were staying at the same hotel as we were, but they hadn't checked in yet. They didn't know the exact location, so they followed us back there. First we dropped off Keith at his Mom's house, then proceeded to the hotel. I guess Phil found his way there by cab earlier.

About 7 PM we made our way back to the club and Jerry came along with us to check out the opening band. John would stay at the hotel to give Phil a ride to the venue.

We arrived while the opening band was on and we found our seats. The venue has numbered reserved seats at every table. I had talked to Keith days before about this night being his big homecoming and he said for reasons unknown his family they had bought tickets, instead of being put on the guest list. I had

ting at the table; he said he was going to download into his computer. He talked a lot about his computer, but says he isn't hooked up to the internet yet. He said soon he will be on-line.

A lot of the conversation centered around the 1991 trip to Scandinavia and how much fun they had over there. Jerry and Keith weren't yet in the band but this sparked an interest to return. Jerry started discussing with Janne the possibility of the Blasters getting back to Finland or all of Scandinavia. The fact that Janne knows the promoter over there kept Jerry talking about this for the next few days.

Phil and Bazz reminisced about a funny story of the Blasters almost missing the ferry when traveling between Sweden and Finland back on that '91 tour.







Phil Alvin playing harmonica on *So Long Baby Good-Bye*.

investigated this and found that the guest list tables were offered only a limited view. That explained why his family preferred to pay for the good seats, so I followed suit and ordered in advance also.

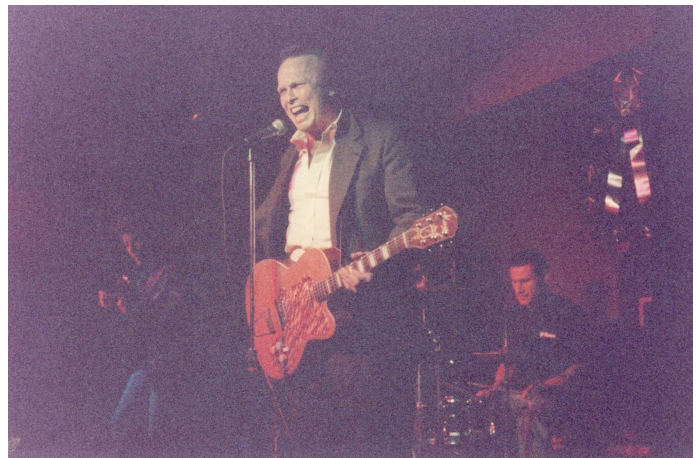
Jumpin' Jupiter was a pretty good band. The singer and drummer were definitely greasers having that rockabilly look. They had a stand-up bass player and a competent Travis-style guitarist. They did straight rockabilly, but maybe too many cover songs. They will probably go places when they build a repertoire of original songs.

The Blasters brought along a supply of T-shirts and their own bootleg cassette tape to sell at the show. The tape was professionally recorded at Keith's school, The Musicians Institute in L.A. It features 13 songs, some of

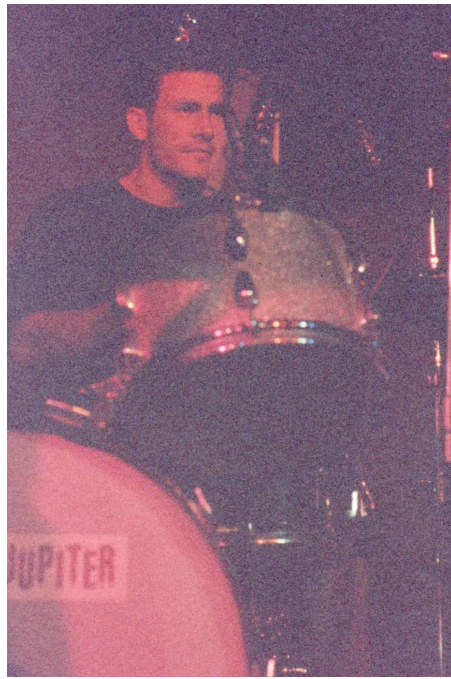
which they would be performing tonight. Phil originally wasn't happy about the idea of the band selling their own bootleg, but he has been warming up to it and he's now been announcing to the crowd that the tape and T-shirts are for sale. The band has realized that there is a demand for Blaster product and figured they would test the market. The Tavern had their own counter where they sold merchandise, so they handled sales for the Blasters and took a percentage of the profits.

As Blaster show time came, Phil emerged from the street entrance exchanging compliments and charm to Keith's Mom who was being treated like royalty. The set started off with the signature tune *AMERICAN MUSIC* and on to a slew of old Blasters favorites. It had been the first time I had seen the band since March in Chicago; it was now apparent that Keith Wyatt was fitting perfectly into the band. It was reaffirmed when I was asked by a few old Blaster fans, "Who is this new guitarist? He's great!" With a fluency in the Blaster repertoire, Keith has become more loose on stage and he has shown a lot of movement. All I can say is that the band is really tight right now and everybody sounds like they have been playing together for years. Keith Wyatt definitely deserves his fair due. As reported before, the band still hasn't had a full band rehearsal so throughout 1996-97, Keith had to use Blaster performances to hone and define his guitar parts in their Blasters arrangements. Nevertheless, he has arrived!

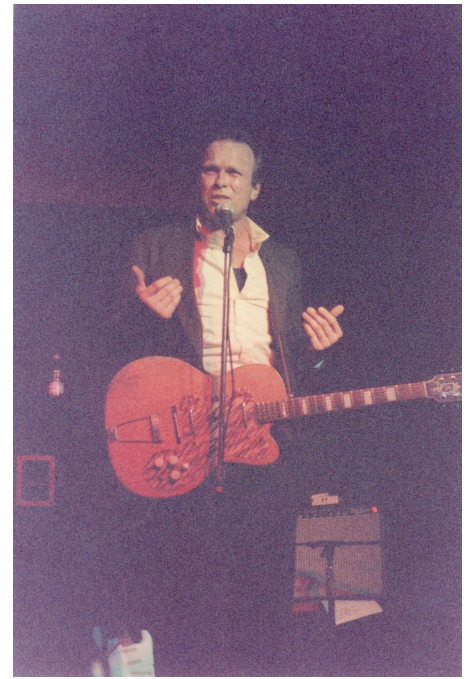
A pleasant surprise in the set was the song *TROUBLE BOUND* which is a Blaster song originally recorded in 1985. The band hadn't played it while James Intveld was the lead guitarist between '93 and '95. It's a pleasure to have it back in the set. Another 2 songs that Keith Wyatt had not played until recently with the band were *FIRE OF LOVE* and *COUNTY FAIR* - two songs that became regulars during the James Intveld period. Keith gave *COUNTY FAIR* a bit of a different treatment in the solos and I believe it was the first time Keith played the song on stage. After the song Phil looked over to Keith and joked, "Just wait until we have a rehearsal!" Phil stuck to most of his regular generic dedications and song intros through out the set. It should be noted that those intros that we have been hearing word for word for years is actually Phil's cue to the band as to what song is next. Phil's set list is totally off the cuff. He thinks it up as he goes along. In fact, the band







Photos: Janne Kurunsari



doesn't even know what the opening song is until Phil addresses the audience and then gives Jerry the cue.

Phil dedicated SLIP OF THE TONGUE to Keith's Mom and continued to grin at her when reciting lyrics throughout the song. Phil put on the charm announcing to the crowd, "Thanks to Keith's Mom for coming down here and bringing everybody. . .and if only I were twenty years younger." At one point Jerry signaled Phil to let the audience know about T-shirts and tapes for sale. Phil stated, "Doctor Jerry, the medicine man reminds me that we are selling snake oil tapes and T-shirts. I'm not proud, but I actually don't have an angle now to play on. . .but I'll tell you to go buy them with all my heart." Prompting laughter from the crowd.

A song that fans have called HEAR ME CRYIN' was introduced by Phil, "This song is called the BIG F CHORD." The song is titled that on the bootleg tape also. I'd like to know the story behind that title. For years fans have called this song HEAR ME CRYIN.' They finished the set with a fast version of ONE BAD STUD and then did their encore of LOVE IS MY BUSINESS and the Cab Calloway song, I'M GLAD YOU'RE DEAD YOU RASCAL. The finishing song was a real surprise. I had heard the Blasters occasionally pull that one out in encores, but I had never seen it performed live. It must have been awhile since the band had last played the song. Phil turned his back on the crowd and demonstrated to Jerry the type of beat he wanted before they started. Phil pulled out his harmonica and into the song they went. Phil took all the solos on harp and the 2 beat song ended the set.

It was interesting to see the Blasters at a sit-down club where you can clearly hear the music and nothing else, but there is definitely a different energy at a stand up club where the crowd has room to move and sweat. The band was excited about playing Tramps in NYC the next night which is one of those stand up clubs. The set tonight was only 85 minutes long. The next 2 shows the Blasters would play for 100 to 105 minutes. Janne spent most of the set moving around the footing of the stage taking photos.

After the show Phil caught his breath back stage while the rest of the guys packed up their stuff. The opening band was sprawled out all over the couches in the backstage room and Phil had no place to sit. The conversation switched to Phil's Kay guitar, and Phil was happy to remind everyone that it was a model made famous as Jimmy Reed's favorite guitar. Phil then launched into singing a Jimmy Reed song accompanied by his unplugged electric guitar. Wow! It was a performance only seen by 6 of us. Janne of course took the opportunity to take pictures - a bunch of them. I wish one of our us had a tape recorder running. It wasn't one



Photo: Janne Kurunsari





Photos: Janne Kurunsaari



of Reed's more popular songs. Soon after, we all gathered at the bar in the front of the building. I started talking to a guy named Bill Remington, who owns the record store next door called Hall Of Fame Records. The Blasters show was completely sold out, but a friend of his had an extra ticket and last minute he closed up the shop next store to see the show. The subject really centered on record collecting. He's one of those avid collectors who will pay \$200 for a single record. Then he'll go to a garage sale and buy a box of records for \$20 and find a few \$100 records in there. He believes it all evens out. We exchanged a few record collecting stories before he told me that Phil had been in the store earlier and found a few 78s that he was interested in. Bill was holding them for Phil to pick up the next day. It was 1 AM and he offered to open the store for us to check out his collection. I found Janne and we headed over there. Phil can never resist a record store, so he followed us in a few minutes later after finishing a conversation he had going with some people at the bar. Bill's store is a combination barber shop and record store. He makes money at the barber shop to pay for his record collection. You wouldn't realize what he has, if you walked in and looked. He has all his cheap records out in front, throw aways really. But all his old rare stuff is in the back. He really is more into collecting than selling. He took us in the back and showed us a rare James Brown, some

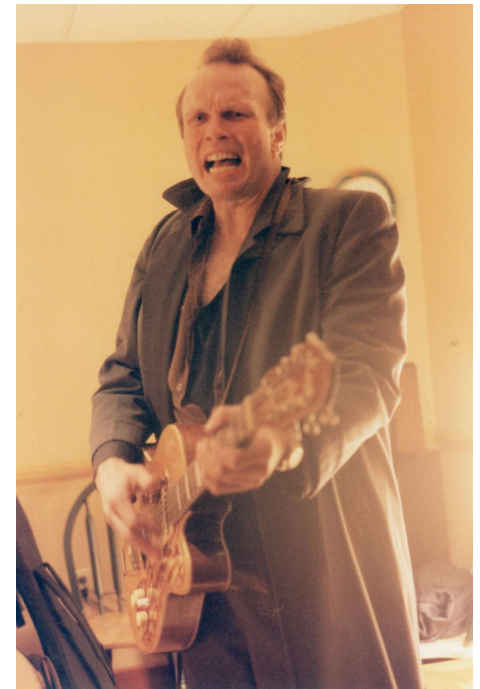


Photo: Janne Kurunsaari

Bo Diddley albums that go for \$150 each, and a few Bob Wills records from the 50s. What ever you asked for he had it. Phil had picked out two 78s by Wynonie Harris and one by The Five Royals. Bill offered to send them to Phil by mail for free and Phil would reciprocate with something he had extra of. I don't think Phil would risk carrying 78s with him on the plane. It was funny though because I saw the owner cringe a little when Phil held up one of the 78s and started to bend it knowing that this particular record company was using a flexible vinyl for their pressings of 78s. It looked like it was going to break any second, but Phil knew how far he could go. The other two 78s were definitely the fragile heavy kind.





Photos: Janne Kurunsari

On the subject of these records, Phil started telling us the history of the two artists. . .but that is what is interesting about Phil. He is a true musicologist and there is so much to learn by hanging around and listening to him rant and rave about music.

As a joke I quickly flipped through some cheap albums looking for a heavy metal record to give Phil and see what he thought of it. I pulled out a Scorpions album with a screaming face on the cover and Phil held it up to his head with a perfect impersonation. What a laugh that was. Janne found a Blasters copy of NON FICTION and Phil exclaimed, “Oh No! Not that fag cover.” So I guess Phil wasn’t happy with the album cover idea.

Phil called a cab and took off as we continued talking records with Bill and flipping through rarities. Soon after, it was time to close up shop and we went back into the bar to say good-bye to everybody. Jerry suggested we get a bite to eat, which sounded like a good idea. We heard there was this one of those 24 hour deli/diners in this small town and finally found our way to it. The place was crowded and we ordered our food with a very perky, but old waitress who seemed to be flirting with Jerry. We got on the subject of the venues Jerry has played at and he told us he had played The Royal Albert Hall with Carol King and Madison Square Garden with Brian Setzer. Pretty impressive, I thought. He’s played with such a variety of acts, ranging from punk to pop and from country to rock including the aforementioned, as well as The Divinyls, Dwight Yoakam, and the Dickies. The waitress heard us talking music and came over to tell us about a trip she made to San Francisco in the late 60s to see Taj Mahal. So I said to her, “You know Jerry here is a rock star!” She just laughed and said, “Yeah Right!!” It is kind of funny to think, why would a musician like Jerry, who has traveled the world, be doing sitting in an Annapolis Maryland diner at 3 AM in the morning? After all the cool experiences Jerry has had, he kept swearing out of excitement to be playing New York tomorrow night with the Blasters. The food was pretty good after a long wait. I had a Philly Cheese Steak sandwich, which of course, they called the Annapolis Cheese Steak. Then it was time to go back to the hotel and go to sleep.

### **Friday December 19**

We got up and checked out at 11 AM. The Blasters must have gotten a late check out because their van was still there after 11. I was trying to arrange for the Blasters to be interviewed on WFUV New York radio in the afternoon. The station is an NPR station out of Fordham University in The Bronx; it is the only station in the New York area that plays anything reasonably close to roots music. The program manager initially was very excited about having the Blasters on. However, at the last minute there was a scheduling conflict and it couldn’t be worked out. I gave John a call to tell him they had canceled on us. Maybe next time.

So we drove back to New York and checked back in at my house. The Blasters were staying in Manhattan at the Gramercy Hotel. They were playing Tramps that evening, so we arrived early just after the doors opened. Johnny and Jerry had a table set up and were selling their shirts and tapes. We hung out there talked to the guys and met up with a few local rockabilly friends. The first of the three bands was an all instrumental surf band called The Human Tornadoes. They seemed to be competent musicians, but there didn’t seem to be any high points to their set. Next came the Swingin’ Neckbreakers who are a cross between a garage band, punk, and rockabilly. I didn’t really grab on to their style, but I heard from a lot of people that they have a lot of potential and will be going places for sure. They already have a record out that I saw was being sold at the



front counter.

Keith had arrived in time to catch the Neckbreakers and it was getting near the time when Jerry and John would have to break down the table to go and prepare for their set. Luckily a friend of mine named Josh Lewis had his girl friend Kelso with him. She had sold shirts for

the Paladins when they were in town, so she offered to do it for the Blasters. By the end of this night she rang up sales of \$400 for the Blasters.

Meanwhile the band had to go down into the backstage to tune up and get ready. Phil hadn't arrived yet. Janne, Josh (who is also an excellent photographer), and I went with the band backstage with the plan of getting a bunch of band group photos. We had to wait for Phil to arrive. In the meantime we all took pictures of the band tuning up backstage. Keith was wearing a cool shirt he had just bought of Howlin' Wolf that said



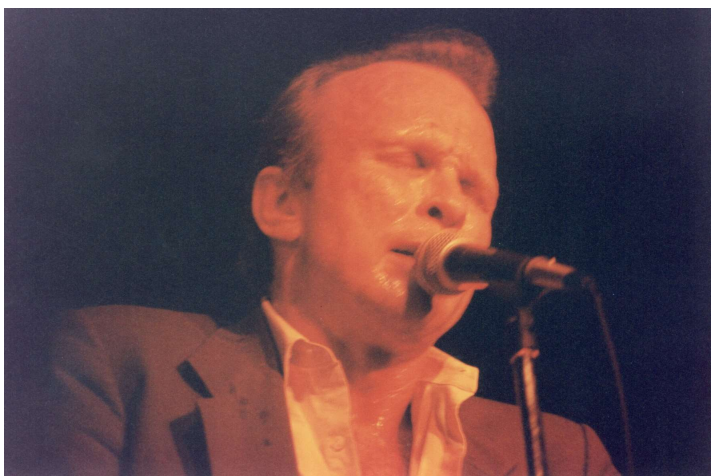
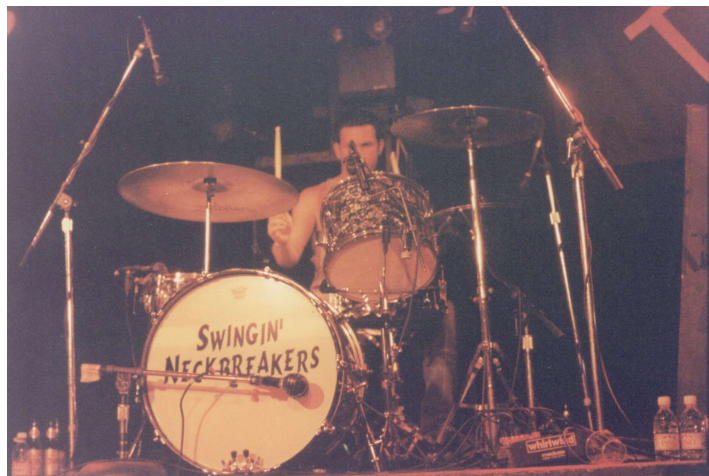
"Smokestack Lightning." I jokingly asked Keith if his mother was corrupted now after attending a Blasters show the night before? He laughed and said she really enjoyed it. He said she's not going to run out and buy any Gene Vincent records but she enjoyed the music.

John gave a call to the hotel and Phil said he was just leaving. About 15 minutes later Phil arrived and went right on stage, and sent the message down to the dressing room that he would wait for the band at the stage. Well, our group photo opportunity was lost. It would have to wait until after the set. So Janne, Josh and I quickly made our way out to the stage and entered the small photographers pit that separates the stage from the audience. Let's just say it's an awesome spot to watch a Blasters show and if we weren't taking pictures, I would still fake it just to have that spot again.

This was easily the best show of the tour. There was a big crowd and everybody gave a rousing ovation when the Blasters hit the stage. There was

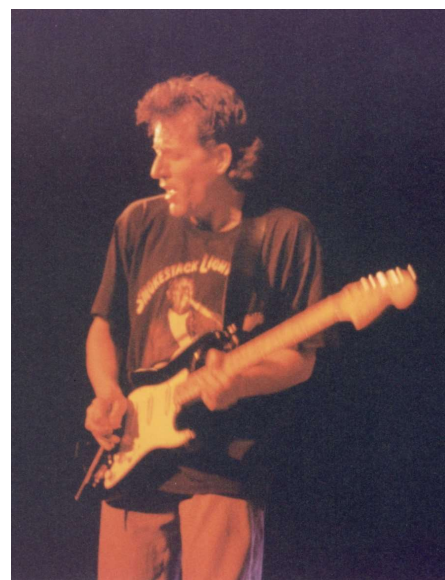






definitely a feeling of energy when the Blasters opened with THE BIG F CHORD. Phil had some troubles with his guitar amp which might explain the band starting with this song: It's a song that Phil plays harp on and not guitar. Although an unusual choice to open up the set with, the song worked great. During Keith's solo Phil picked up his guitar and they followed the opener with AMERICAN MUSIC.

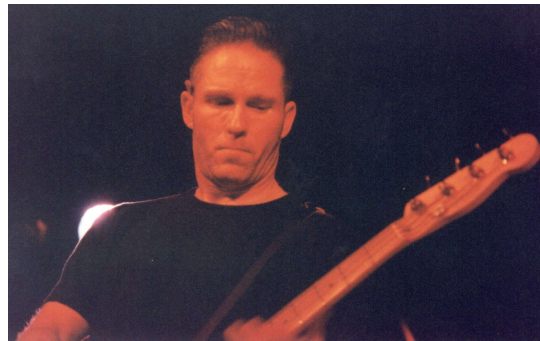
One thing for sure: they were definitely louder than the other shows. One song that has really come around as a show highlight is DARK NIGHT. Keith really shows off on guitar on this



and the band shows how really tight they are in their playing. It's one of those songs that is so much better when played live and loud. The same goes for DADDY ROLLIN STONE. The band rolled through their regular set. Most of the songs were familiar to everybody from previous tours. Keith's solos and rhythm playing was the thing that differed. It added a freshness to the familiar songs. Keith's playing has a bit more of a rock edge to it than the previous guitarists. He's great at phrasing his guitar riffs and everything he plays sounds very smooth. He also seems to pay a lot of attention to his guitar tone. That must be attributed to choice of guitars and his custom pickups.

I was honored when Phil announced before the song TROUBLE BOUND, "This goes out to Billy Davis." It





was cool to get a dedication in my town. I think Johnny Bazz passed to Phil how pleased I was to see that song in the set last night. The band finished the set with the traditional pairing of MARIE MARIE and ONE BAD STUD. For the encore, the band played COME ON IN

THIS HOUSE dedicated to "My good friend Marcus Johnson. . .from Chicago." They finished again with I'M GLAD YOU'RE DEAD YOU RASCAL as Phil dedicated it to Cab Calloway and Harlem. What a show! My ears were blown out.

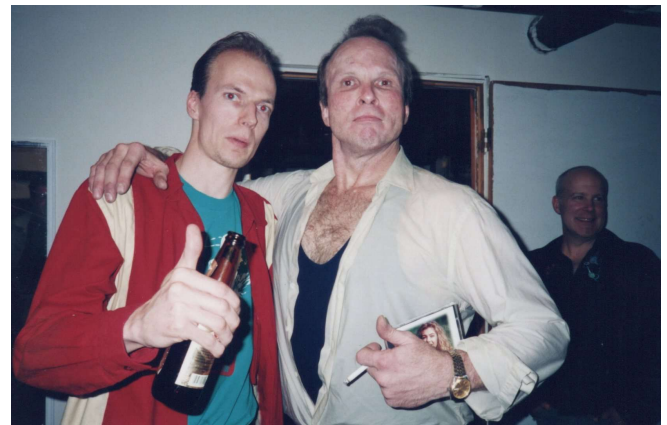
After the set we went downstairs to the dressing room and the band mixed with the fans signing autographs. We were able to get all four band members together to get a few full band photos. Not perfect photo's though; the band showed signs of a long set and lots of sweat. Phil went back to sign autographs and greeting the fans who had come backstage. I went upstairs and brought a few friends who had been at the show down to join in. As everyone gathered around Phil kept rambling on to the owner of Tramps and it never looked like he would finish and get back to signing autographs. I interrupted to ask Phil to pose with me for a picture. Phil made a





joke about it and suddenly was off the subject with the owner and started talking to the fans.

Phil gave a big speech about his plans for the Blasters new HighTone album. He also tried to make us understand the problem of trying to re-release the old albums and that Warner Bros. released the Blasters Collection CD in 1991 in order to keep rights to the masters. Some form of release must occur every 7 years in order for the company to retain the rights. Phil seems to think that DARK NIGHT being included in the From Dusk Till Dawn soundtrack was a continuation of that agenda. It seems the masters have been now sold to a different company and the only way to get them released was by way of a law suit which he said would just cost too much money. He stated that, "Its a conflict of interest of the highest order."

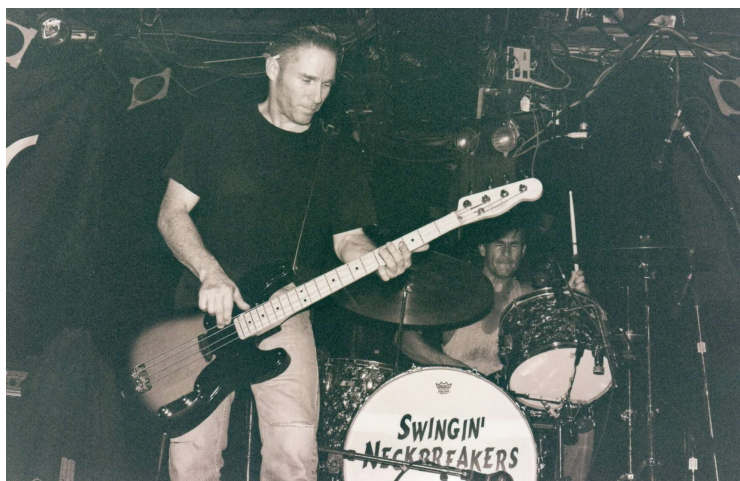
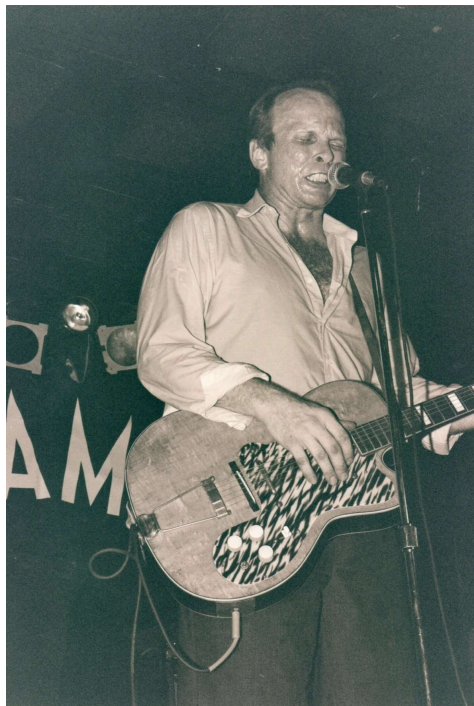


As usual with Tramps. the management had to force Phil and the fans out of the club as it got late. It was about 2:30 am. Phil invited me to meet him the next day here in New York City. He said he had to go shopping down on Park Ave for some more discs for his digital camera. I guess this meant that Phil was going to get a late start driving down to Alexandria for the Birchmere show tomorrow. I had to turn him down on his offer because we were planning on getting up early to get down to the D.C. area and check record shops and do sightseeing. Phil left to go back to the hotel, but the other Blasters weren't ready for sleep, so Kelso invited them to a bar called The Lakeside. Southern Culture on the Skids were in attendance at the Blaster show, so they went along too. Janne and I left so we could get up early enough to get to D.C. to make a day out of it before the show at The Birchmere. Josh would later tell us of a funny story about being mistaken as the Blasters bass player while hanging out with them at The Lakeside.





## Josh Lewis photos: The Blasters Tramps NYC 12/19/97





Saturday December 20



We made the 5 hour drive back to the D.C. area and checked into the Hyatt Regency in Crystal City near the airport. Triss waited for her friends to pick her up at the hotel for some Christmas shopping. Janne and I went out to Georgetown by the college to check out some record stores. One store was a goldmine where Janne found records by Tex Rubinowitz and Evans John.

By now it was 8 PM. The doors at the Birchmere opened at 6 PM for dinner with the show starting at 7:30. When the Blasters last played the Birchmere in March of '95 the club location was a few blocks down the road. Now they have relocated to this new complex complete with a restaurant, performance hall, movie theater, merchandise shop, and a big lobby. Upon entering we noticed pictures and concert posters framed on the wall showing the many legendary performers who have played the old Birchmere. Still as an all sit-down club the seats were first come first served. We entered the seating area but not without a thorough search of our bags by the security. They allow photography without flash, but no recording devices. I guess I used the term "thorough" a little loosely because I was able to get my video camera in (which I wasn't intending to use but I didn't want to leave in the car) and my audio tape recorder, which I did intend to use. Later I would meet a regular Birchmere club-goer who was a tape collector. He became so often seen at the club that the owner would watch for him to try and sneak a recorder in. So he had to stop his recording hobby.

So they didn't search that hard when I mentioned I was with the Blasters and being on the guest list helped back that up. We entered and found 2 seats right in first row center where Bazz stands. Pretty good for coming late. The place was almost packed, so we were lucky to get those seats. The opener, Jumpin Jupiter was on stage. I spotted Jerry hangin' out in the back watching the band. He said they had the front merchandise counter selling the shirts and tapes.

Jumpin Jupiter finished their set and the Blasters inconspicuously came out to check the equipment. The stage and decor was really nice in this place; it must have opened up very recently. The stage backdrop looked like a red brick studio wall with a stage door complete with a hanging single-shaded light bulb over the door and over the drummer's platform. The ceiling lighting rig was definitely new and lit the stage perfectly. The stage had a nice new carpet of which cigarette smokers on stage were warned not to extinguish their cigarettes on the carpet.

Phil arrived just before the



Photos: Billy Davis







band was set to go on, so we took the opportunity to go backstage and take one more round of pictures of the band posing together. Jerry laughed, "Billy you gotta have a good picture of us by now." Later, I was able to answer "Yes" when the film was developed. Janne and I, each with our own cameras were able to get a great close up shot of the four. In fact each of our pictures were taken probably only a second apart. Both are great shots! I used my shot on the cover of American Music: The Blaster newsletter issue #18.

The band was ready to go on and the stage manager asked Phil, "When do you want an introduction?" Phil stated he will walk on stage then face his amp and set up. When he turns around to face the audience, he would be ready. Phil did just that and as he turned around he yelled out "I have turned around." but he couldn't move more than a few feet from his amp because the guitar cord was all tangled. Bazz had to run over and uncoil the cord as Phil announced, "Good evening ladies and gentlemen. This is my cord. We are the Blasters. I bought this thing and it was curled up. Now for the students of topology. (the crowd started to applaud) Don't applaud for that. . .please. It would make it very easy to continue." The audience started off laughing then they launched into COUNTY FAIR. The great thing about attending all three of the east coast shows was - that the band really changed the set list each night. Every night had a different opening song and of the 25 different songs played in 3 shows, each show had a different order or played songs that weren't heard on other nights. DARK NIGHT was introduced in a way I haven't heard Phil say, "Let he who did not immigrate throw the first stone." I guess this refers to the story behind the song. In the breaks between songs, Phil kept flipping his drinks up in the air as if he expected nothing to spill out. Of course it spilled all over the place including the stage carpet. The club owner must have been having a heart attack. In SLIP OF THE TONGUE Phil confessed, "I missed the ash tray. I can't smoke and play at the same time"





Later Phil made a request to the bar for a pineapple juice and water half and half so a fan in the audience went to get it for him. Phil joked calling the drink a “Joe Turner’s on the Wagon.” Actually Phil finds this mixture good for his voice. Jerry kept yelling up to Phil trying to get him to mention their merchandise for sale and finally Phil acknowledged, “Jerry Angel reminds me that we have bootleg tapes and T-shirts outside. It is the Christmas season, so don’t buy them for yourselves. Buy them for a friend. But since we’re all friends, you can keep them anyway.” The audience laughed, but it paid off because the

T-shirts would sell out before the show was over and a lot of fans started asking me if the Blaster Newsletter was going to offer them for sale. My answer was, “Of course!”

In *SO LONG BABY GOODBYE* John Bazz broke a bass string and it was funny to see him start laughing and cursing to himself. So he changed to his spare bass and picked up in the middle of the song. Phil dedicated *TROUBLE BOUND* indirectly to Janne, “This goes out to low riders in Finland. Believe me they are there and they are big.”

After playing the normal songs to finish the set. Phil came back and played *SAMSON & DELILAH*. Then announced to the band through the microphone, “Let’s do *MY BABY’S A JOCKEY AND SHE TEACHED ME HOW TO RIDE* in the key of C by Joe Turner.” A big surprise! I’ve never heard the band do this. The first 2 verses were true to Joe Turner’s version although Big Joe was known to record many different versions of the same song. The song I’ve heard on Rhino’s *Big Joe Anthology* is called *MY GAL’S A JOCKEY*. The first half of the Blasters version sounds like the original, but in the ending Phil sang the lyrics to *ROLL EM PETE* along with that real up tempo ending like *ROLL ‘EM PETE* did on the *Live At The Venue* EP - a great jump blues song to end the set and the tour. I think they must have prepared the song or played it before because Keith seemed to have an intro to the song; I didn’t see anybody give each other cues as to when the lyrics came in. Or maybe the Blasters are just that good, to improvise on a song.

After the set, we went backstage. I talked to Keith for a while about his equipment. He is now using a guitar made by Ibanez that has a semi hollow cut out in it, it was custom made. He has a custom-wound pickup and he’s using a guitar cord that is unusually thin. He says it’s some new type of cord that has no soldered joints. If the cord gets damaged, simply cut off the damaged piece and put the rest of the cord into the plug. The cord conversation came up because a lot of guitarists claim that different types of cords affect the guitar tone differently. He is also using a new foot pedal effect made by Matchless. Keith uses it to boost his signal for solos. It has a gain control, bass, treble, and a clean signal volume control. While talking to Keith, I noticed that the Birchmere owner pulled Phil aside and sternly said, “Can I speak to you privately for a minute?” And into the back room they went. I later heard the owner was pretty miffed about Phil’s cigarette burning the carpet on stage and probably the juggling of drinks too. Phil kind of laughed it off. This isn’t the first incident between Phil and this club owner. In ‘95 the band was scheduled to play at the old Birchmere and Phil arrived late. The club is known for its punctual start times. Rumors circulated they would never invite the Blasters back. I guess the Blasters draw a big enough crowd that the owner had them come back anyway.

I had promo flats for the *American Music* CD and had all the Blasters sign a bunch of them to use for contest giveaways in the next issue of the newsletter. Although Jerry and Keith aren’t pictured on the cover, I had them sign it since they are The Blasters now and are the ones promoting the album. I joked with Jerry not to write any mustaches or anything on Bateman’s face and he just said, “I would never do that, Bateman is a friend of mine.” When I got to Phil, he started signing, but kept getting distracted so he said, “Come on let’s go.” And he pulled me into a back room. When we got in there, he said, “Close the door completely or else





everyone will follow us in here.” Phil signed all the flats and then gave me a private talk on the state of the Blasters today. He told me how much he really loves Keith’s playing in the band and how Tommy Kay didn’t work out. He said that his girl friend Audrey coined the phrase “He noodles with the guitar,” when assessing faults in Kay’s playing. Phil leveled with me saying that he really wants to get a new HighTone album out. We rejoined the crowd soon after.

Janne got on a conversation with Phil about his harmonica playing, not knowing that Janne played too. When Phil heard that, he got excited and started talking technique. Again the room was getting loud, and Phil said to come into the other room for a lesson on playing harp. I don’t play myself, but how could I miss out on seeing a great harp player like Phil give a lesson, so I followed on into the back room. Phil demonstrated this song to Janne that is an exercise in playing all the notes in a given scale using all the possible positions that the tongue does in maneuvering the different notes. He gave Janne a few interesting tips and revealed that he uses different brand name harmonicas for different keys he plays in. Not because of his preference of sound, but so he can identify which key a harmonica is when choosing quickly on stage without putting on his glasses.

After returning to the crowd, Janne presented Phil with a bottle of Finish Vodka at about 80 proof. Everyone got a kick out of it and Phil had to show off by taking the ceremonious first swig. The bottle got passed around and we never did see what happened to the empty bottle?

It was getting late so the opening band had arranged for everybody to go to a bar, but we would all go back to the hotel first to drop Phil off. I was very tired and ready to get some sleep; also my wife was probably back at the hotel by now and I didn’t want to get in too late. Check out time in the morning was 11 am and me being the driver, I had to get some sleep. We started heading back to the hotel, so Janne could catch up with the Blasters and go out with them, but as we were heading back, we took a wrong turn and ended up in Arlington. By the time we got back, nobody was there.

### **Sunday December 21**

In the morning we were checking out and ran into Jerry and John. They said that Phil was missing. He didn’t answer his door, and his stuff was still there. They couldn’t leave without him because the airport was an hour away, and John knew Phil didn’t have any money on him. It turns out Phil was in his room very sound asleep. John Bazz remembers a time when the Blasters had to catch a plane and Phil was sleeping so soundly that they had to have the hotel remove the door of the hinges to get in.

Janne bought out a bunch of the Blasters bootleg tapes from Jerry to sell in Finland and we were on our way. Keith had been staying at his sister’s house and would catch an earlier flight. We then headed to a record store in historic Alexandria to check them out. We found some interesting items; then it was on into Washington D.C. to see the White House. On the way back, we stopped to eat at the great truck stop type fast food restaurant - Waffle House. Then on up through New Jersey where we dropped Janne off at Newark airport to catch his flight back to Finland.

It was the most fun I have had seeing the Blasters. Mostly because, my good friend Janne is the only other Blaster fan as crazy as I am to travel all over the place just to see a show. We had a great time. Anyway, it also was definitely the best I have heard the Blasters sound in the 90’s. I hope this lineup sticks, and they can get an album out. The reactions from the east coast Blasters’ fans were all positive. It was the first time that people in the east were seeing the Blasters with Keith Wyatt as the guitarist. Everybody I was in contact with asked who he was because they were very impressed. The Blasters seem to be on the right track. --*Billy Davis*



Photo: Janne Kurunsari