

# American Music

## The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

August '98

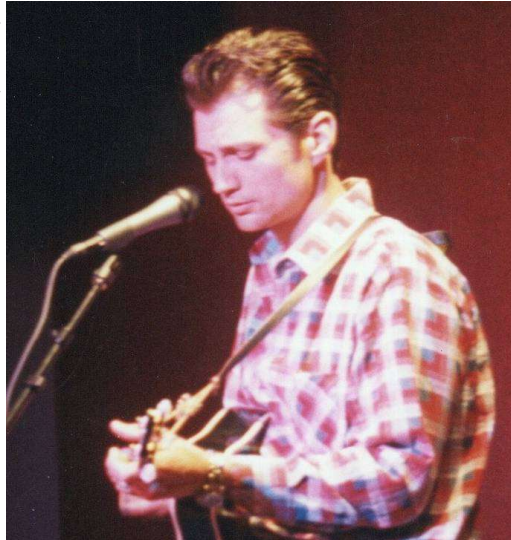
### DAVE ALVIN TOUR DATES

#### With the Guilty Men

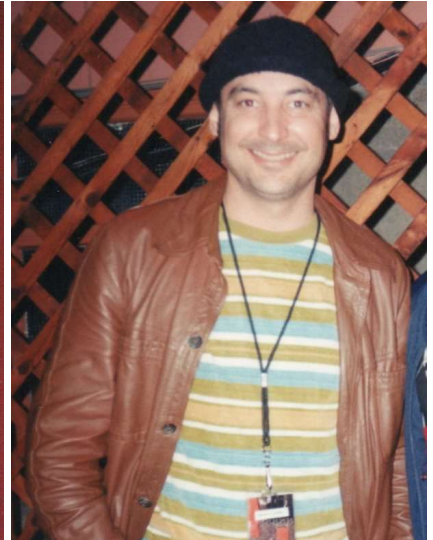
8/1 San Diego CA at Casbah  
 8/4 Reno NV at Peppermill  
 8/6 Portland OR at Blue Lake Park  
 8/7 Seattle WA at The Pier 62/63  
 8/8 Eugene OR at Good Times Café  
 8/9 Independence OR at Lenora's  
 8/12 Salt Lake City UT at Zephre club  
 8/14-15 Cenral City CO at Miners Fest  
 8/15 (nite) Denver CO at Blue Bird  
 8/19 Long Beach CA at Museum Arts  
 8/20 Davis Ca at Palms  
 8/21 San Francisco at Slims  
 8/22 Los Angeles Ca at Jacks  
 9/6 Escoheag RI at Roots Fest  
 9/10 Pisa Italy  
 9/11 Chiari Italy  
 9/17 Sesto Calende Italy  
 9/18 Codevilla Italy  
 9/19 Rho Italy and more TBA  
**DAVE SOLO ACOUSTIC**  
 10/1 Fort Worth TX at TBA  
 10/2 Oklahoma City at TBA  
**BLASTERS TOUR DATES**  
 8/8 Santa Barbara at The Bowl w/ X,  
 and The Brian Setzer Trio  
 8/15 Chicago IL at House of Blues  
 (opening for Joe Ely)  
 9/12 San Diego Ca at Street Scene

## The Blasters Ex-Guitarist issue

Photo: Ed Lee



**James Intveld**



**Smokey Hormel**

### **LATEST NEWS:** : -- Black Jack David is selling really well. Sound

Scan showed that the album sold 8000 copies in the first few weeks. In the first week, BJD sold more copies than any other single HighTone release in a single week. -- Dave has recorded a track called THESE TIMES WE'RE LIVIN' IN for a tribute album to folk singer Kate Wolf titled Treasures Left Behind (Red House) due out August 18. Dave plays with Rick Shea on the track. Other artists on the album include Nanci Griffith, Lucinda Williams, Emmy Lou Harris, Greg Brown, and Kathy Mattea. -- Dave and the Guilty Men plan to do another swing around the US in the fall. Dave: "The plan is to get back out for a month to hit the little places we missed and to play towns where we played festivals." -- Dave and the Guilty Men will be touring Italy with Joe Ely. The Sesto date will be a festival with: Dave, Victoria Williams, Joe Ely, Chris Gaffney, Michelle Shocked, Ruth Gerson, and Chris Whitley. -- Foil records has released The Best Of Hootenany: A collection of live performances from the famous music festival in Irvine California. The Blasters track ALL YOUR FAULT is included. Hootenany may be taking its show out nationally. The line up seen on July 4<sup>th</sup> may tour the west and south mid-west starting Sept 17. (((((( Continued on page 2 )))))

***Inside: Interviews with former Blaster guitarists Smokey Hormel and James Intveld.  
 Also Billy Zoom returns to X, and John Bazz rates the Blasters' guitar players.***

Plans have not been finalized.

((Latest News from Page 1 ))) -- Dave Alvin will produce Katy Moffatt in December or January for HighTone records and then Chris Gaffney in Feb. or March. — Dave got lots of press recently being featured in No Depression (www.nodepression.net), and Guitar Player (full page profile. Sept issue.) as well as many newspaper write-ups. . . Dave made the cover of 3<sup>rd</sup> Coast Music, Country Standard magazine, and The Italian rock mag Buscadero (July). -- Dave Alvin is planning on buying a laptop computer to help in completing his next book of poetry called The Crazy Ones. Rumors said that Dave was going to change the title when an Apple Computer ad used the phrase in their advertising. Dave says he is committed to that title and is hoping to have it out by spring of '99. -- Gretsch guitars is planning on putting out a Billy Zoom signature model guitar. -- NEXT ISSUE WATCH FOR A FULL REPORT ON THE BLACK JACK DAVID ALVIN TOUR — ~~am~~

## SMOKEY HORMEL INTERVIEW Part 1 By Billy Davis

*Greg “Smokey” Hormel was the 4<sup>th</sup> guitarist in the Blasters history, holding the position from 1988-92. He has gained the most success of all the former Blaster guitarists recently by joining the band of pop singer Beck. He started as the guitar player for the touring band and has also contributed to Beck’s soon to be released album Mutations. This interview with “Smokestack” as Beck calls him, was conducted in New York City on 6/8/98, a day after Beck played New Jersey’s Giant Stadium to a near sell-out crowd. This is part 1 of the interview.*

**American Music:** Tell me about your early involvement in music.

**Smokey Hormel:** I was born into a musical family. My mother was a ballerina, and her grandfather was a classical pianist. My dad played piano as did his brother, who is the guy who invented Spam, They were the sons of the big Hormel food company. My uncle was a jazz pianist/recording pioneer. He was one of the early multitrack experimenters. He owned a recording studio called the Village Recorders. It became big in the late 70’s. Steely Dan recorded there, The Band mixed The Last Waltz and Fleetwood Mac did Tusk. So I fell into playing drums and guitar. I got into the blues through the Beatles and the Stones. I barely finished high school because I was only interested in music. By the time I was 18, I had a full blown cocaine addiction and that took me away from music. I moved to New York to study acting, and I worked as a waiter. I was there from 1980-84 and then I moved back to L.A.. I did a lot of theatre, but breaking into movies was a lot harder than I thought.

Now rewind back when I was 15; I wanted to learn jazz like Miles Davis and Coltrane. So my Dad suggested calling Barney Kessel for lessons. I did, and he referred me to Jimmy Wyble, who



Photo: Charlie Gross

### Beck and Smokey Hormel

played with Benny Goodman, Bob Wills, Spade Cooley, and Red Norvo. I took some lessons from him and he introduced me to Western Swing and Charlie Christian. To me, Hendrix and Christian are the two greatest guitar players. There was nobody my age to play with, so it was untapped for years.

Fast Forward to L.A. in 1985; I’m a frustrated actor who meets Paul Greenstein who has a western swing band called The Radio Ranch Straight





Shooters, and he asks me to join. Before we knew it, we were getting great gigs opening for X and The Knitters. I first met Dave (Alvin) at a Knitters gig. It was a premiere for a western movie

called The Bad Day. I was playing pure Charlie Christian. Dave and I have always been friends, but there has always been a competitive element there. I was totally in awe of him, so I would always talk to him about guitar playing, thinking he was some big hero and he never seemed to feel that he was a great guitar player. Dave asked us to open for them in 1986.

That is where (Blasters drummer Bill) Bateman saw me and decided he wanted to be in this band. We had a 15 year old drummer named Joey Waronker; it was his first band, and he was just incredible. He was a neighbor of my parents, and I became his friend. He was so young that we couldn't play clubs with him. So Bill was asked to join the band. It's a funny twist that I'm playing with Joey now in Beck's band.

So in the winter of '86 Bill was telling me all about Hollywood Fats (Blasters' guitarist at the time) and how great he is. Then suddenly he dies, and Bill is all freaked out because Fats was going to save The Blasters. Bill gets the idea that I could be in the band, so he tried to train me. He totally educated me on blues. He started playing me all these 78s. (ed. Note: *meanwhile, Dave Alvin returned temporarily to the Blasters to fulfill a commitment to a European tour in January and February 1987*)

By the summer of '87, Phil had asked Billy Zoom to join and they did that European tour. Bill was still trying to get me in the band, and we formed a band called The Stumble Bums. Johnny Ray Bartel was playing bass, and Pat French was playing harmonica. We ended up getting a lot of gigs around town and backed up Bo Diddley, and it was a lot of fun. Billy (Zoom) retired from music (July '87) and as he said "I'm rehabilitated." A few months after Billy, left I got an audition. I had already jammed with Johnny so he was already on my side. So I auditioned, and Phil was into it. Our first tour was in

### **SMOKEY TOUR TALES # 1**

*The flying cymbal stand incident* - There was a moment we were playing OKEE DOKEE STOMP on stage in Italy. Bill and I were fighting about that song because Bill would try and push the song while I felt he wasn't giving me enough space to play. So on stage, I got so angry I knocked over his cymbal stand. Next thing I see, the cymbal stand comes flying across the stage right over Lee Allen's head. It almost hit him. That turned into a huge brawl backstage. That's what would happen with music that we were so passionate about.

### **SMOKEY TOUR TALES # 2**

*The 1991 Scandinavian Tour Ferry Incident--* We almost missed the ferry between Sweden and Finland. It might have been Me, Phil, and the tour manager. It was incredible; we were driving through barricades going down one way streets the wrong way, and we were the last car on the boat. Phil was sweating and he was so freaked out that he decided he was going to get drunk on the boat. Phil didn't do that too often, but when he did, his feet grow about three sizes. He gets really clumsy and very animated at the same time. We were doing shots of vodka, and Phil was ranting and raving. There was this group of Finnish priests at a table near by and they were totally entertained watching us get hammered. At one point, Phil went into the lounge where they had a polish guy dressed as Garth Brooks doing American country music. Phil managed to get to play. Phil was telling the Finnish people that, "Cowboys didn't have guitars. Hollywood created cowboy music!" He was totally ranting and raving in English, sweaty in this shirt that he had been wearing for three days and drunk off his ass. Meanwhile Bill had been drinking with these Finnish rugby players and this guy was outside the cabin door saying, "Bill, I love you! Bill I want to fight you!" (laughs) It was really funny. When we arrived in Finland or Sweden we were really drunk

spring of '88.

**AM:** Did the Radio Ranch Straight Shooters do any recording?

**Smokey:** We had a song called THE NEXT BIG THING on a compilation called The Hollywood Round-Up (New Grange, 1987). It has all country songs on it except for our western swing song. We also did a score for a David Lynch film for

European TV called The Cowboy And The Frenchmen. We just played on the film score. It starred Harry Dean Stanton. We also appeared on the MTV show The Cutting Edge.

**AM:** How did you work out learning the material in the Blasters?

**Smokey:** Basically, I just studied the Rollin' Rock record and the first Slash record. I just learned to play Dave's parts. It was a challenge because I was a swing guitarist. I didn't know anything about surf and knew nothing about Link Wray. But I got all the records and got into it. I was having these sessions with Phil, where he would play me records and tell me the history of recorded music. There was so much to be learned. The Blasters come from the school of mimicking exactly what was on the records. We would listen to, like a Frankie Lee Sims song LUCY MAE BLUES, and we would have arguments after looking at it under a microscope - almost with fist fights! Now, I really appreciate having been really specific and looking at it with such focus. Musicians don't do that anymore.

**AM:** Wasn't OKEE DOKEE STOMP considered your signature song?

**Smokey:** That became my signature song because it was one of Phil's favorite guitar solos.

**AM:** Another great song the Blasters did at that time was PRECIOUS MEMORIES.

**Smokey:** Oh yeah! That is a great song. There was a Carl Perkins song that I used as a model for the guitar riff. I was disappointed that we never demoed that song. We did a session on my birthday December 15, 1989, that was unproductive. We were gonna start to work on the new album, but a lot of fights started especially between Phil and Bill. We had a few songs like the FIRE OF LOVE and two Dave Alvin songs; DRY RIVER and BROTHER, and one that Phil wrote called 4-11-44. I was already familiar with one of those Dave Alvin songs (BROTHER). In the summer of '87, I went to Austin, Minnesota, where the Hormel meat packing plant had been on strike. A friend from my acting days got me involved. He was a playwright, and knew Dave Alvin when he did music for a play called Lady Beth. It was a documentary play where workers would tell their own stories, about steel mills in L.A. that were shut down. Cass Alvin (Phil & Dave's Dad) was directly involved with that. So the guy's next project was this Hormel strike, which is a funny connection again. So I was doing music for the show, and one song was Dave Alvin's



The Blasters 1991 - Lee, Smokey, John, Bill, and Phil

BROTHER ON THE LINE.

**AM:** The Blaster version was much different than Dave's?

**Smokey:** I liked it slow, but Phil wanted to rock it out.

**AM:** You toured Europe a few times with the Blasters, didn't you?

**Smokey:** In '91 we did two tours of Europe. The last tour wasn't fun because I was frustrated because we hadn't recorded anything and with Gene (Taylor) there, Bill was being really belligerent. I love Gene's playing. I was really hanging a lot with Lee. Any free time I had, I would spend with him trying to find out more information about the past. I loved touring Europe with them. I had never visited Europe as a musician before. It was great to have that kind of respect. Our popularity had gone down in the states, but in Europe they had a big following especially in Italy and Scandinavia.

**AM:** I heard Lee Allen had jam sessions at his house to train you in the blues?

**Smokey:** He would invite me down to these jam sessions at his friend George Mason's house. George was an old transplanted New Orleans musician. They would just get together on Wednesdays to play. I tried to get Bill down there, it was too bad, because they had some amazing drummers. They have this unique way of swinging that relates to that New Orleans spirit. Lee used to say to me, "Greg I'm gonna relax you."

The Blasters are so close to Little Richard - just this raging band with fast, fast songs one after another. Lee would play these simple little pretty melodies that sort of floated. His whole thing was

that if you think of something pretty, you can let the band do all the raging. Lee was trying to teach me to hold back a little bit. I think it sunk in because later on it became really handy.

**AM:** How did leaving the Blasters come about?

**Smokey:** As Lee Allen got sicker and couldn't make some of the tours, I was frustrated myself, because I felt we should have been making records and Phil was so picky and such a procrastinator. I had a long talk with my friend Ry Cooder, and he convinced me to move on.

**AM:** At that point Phil was calling the band the Phil Alvin Quartet.

**Smokey:** Yeah, they should have called the band the Phil Alvin Quartet when Dave left. I saw the Blasters play once with Dave. They got together to play a benefit (*ed.- probably the Barbara Boxer benefit*) and that's the real band right there. That is what the Blasters are. When Bill left, I felt it shouldn't be the Blasters anymore. I was playing in other bands and just got too busy.

**AM:** Any memorable gigs with the Blasters?

**Smokey:** We did a gig at the Palace in Hollywood when I first joined the band. I remember I was really excited because Dave Alvin and Tony Gilkyson came up to me afterwards and were really congratulatory. That felt really good. Billy Zoom was very encouraging, too. He eventually sold me one of his amplifiers that I used in the later part of my tenure with the Blasters. It was such a great opportunity for me to be in the band at that time because Phil was really into music. I wasn't from Downey, and I was a little bit younger, so it was a learning thing for me. As Lee Allen got sicker and couldn't tour, Phil seemed to not have a reason to keep it together. I've always felt good about my relationship with Phil. I



don't feel like we had any animosity between us after I left. In fact, I played with the Blasters again two years ago and it was a lot of fun. (*ed.-- 4/96 Smokey did 5 gigs just before Keith Wyatt joined*) All the old songs came right back to me.

**AM:** I heard you were going to put out a single with Lee Allen called OLD ROCKIN' CHAIR?

**Smokey:** Actually it was going to be a whole album. I didn't get it together. I recorded about 8 songs with him. Top Jimmy sang on it and it's really good. I started it by recording some rhythm tracks with Larry Taylor from The Hollywood Fats Band and James Cruz, a drummer with J.J. Cale. We recorded a bunch of rhythm tracks; then I got Lee to come over and overdub sax parts. We all went in to the studio and did three more songs - An original of mine called DRINKIN' ALONG, and two jump blues. One slow blues that is awesome; I named it BLUES FOR TINY for obvious reasons (Lee's wife's name). I have to take the time to finish it, and hopefully It will come out as an EP or something.

**AM:** I heard there was supposed to be a big tribute concert for Lee?

**Smokey:** When Lee was sick, I had a club lined up to do a big benefit for him. He was still alive and needed the money. I wanted to call it a tribute gig because Lee is very proud. The club agreed and it was booked for his birthday at the House Of Blues. We were gonna get Dave Bartholemew and his band and Little Richard. Then the House Of Blues totally fucked me over. They weren't advertising the gig. I called them and they said, "We couldn't do a benefit if we didn't advertise it as a benefit." So they decided not to do it at all. I was heart broken. It was a shame because he died a couple of months later. The last time I saw him, he was in bed and he kept calling Tiny into the room and she would say, "What?" And he would say, "Nothing. I just wanted to look at you." He was very romantic.

**AM:** How did you get in Beck's band?

**Smokey:** Joey Waronker (Joey's Dad was Lenny Waronker, Vice-President of Warner Bros. Records) and I had a band called The Lotus Eaters and we were gonna do this ambitious thing of playing as an improvising ensemble that would accompany spoken word artists. We did a few performances and then Joey left with Beck. I auditioned for Beck in '95 for Lollapalooza, but I was booked for a Bruce Willis tour of Planet Hollywoods. Beck couldn't make up his mind in time, so I just left with Bruce Willis. Beck's hit song LOSER (from Mellow Gold on Bong Load records, 1994) was already a million seller but





the Bruce Willis gig was in Chakarta which was a really exotic place I wanted to see. I think Beck wasn't able to take his music seriously yet. I think he was intimidated by good musicians. He felt like I was a really good musician. At the time I thought he just didn't think I was good enough. It worked out, because that tour was a disaster for Beck. So in the following year, he decided to use me.

**AM:** How was it different going into Beck, which is an alternative band when you were always in traditional bands?

**Smokey:** It was as much of challenge as it was going from Swing to Rockabilly. Playing with John Doe, I was beginning to experiment more. I always loved the feedback thing because I grew up on Hendrix. Beck is surprisingly traditional in his musical mind. He comes from a country blues back ground. When he was a kid, he taught himself to play like Mississippi John Hurt. He listened to a lot of Jimmie Rogers, so we have that in common. In fact, we recently did a couple of country gigs where we had J. D. Manis playing steel and Billy Pane from Little Feat playing piano. So I wasn't very familiar with the experimental guitar players like Sonic Youth, which Beck was into, but I learned what to play by copying it off the record. Beck likes things a little off and sloppy. On some songs, I'll even de-tune the guitar to get that vibe, approaching it like a non-player.

**AM:** How about your equipment. Did that change?

**Smokey:** It's a whole new ballgame. With the Blasters I had a few foot pedals. I used a wah-wah, a

delay, and a tube screamer. They didn't want any pedals, but I pushed it. With John Doe, I started using a lot of different pedals to try to get extreme sounds. Now with Beck, I have a rack of effects and I have a midi foot controller which has them preset. I have about 15 or 20 effects to send my signal through. My guitar tech made my amp. He started a company out of Minnesota called Savage.

**AM:** It must be really loud like yesterday in Giant Stadium?

**Smokey:** We've been trying to keep the stage volume down because there is so much going on with all the samples. We played about twice as loud in the Blasters.

**AM:** Are you on any Beck recordings

**Smokey:** We just did a record called *Mutations*, and I'm on a lot of it. Beck's a really good guitar player himself, so I'm not really needed in the studio that much. I did get a couple of good solos on there. This album is more acoustic than he was planning and will be on an independent label. Then, he wants to follow it up with a pop album for Geffen Records.

**AM:** What do you remember about Lester Butler?

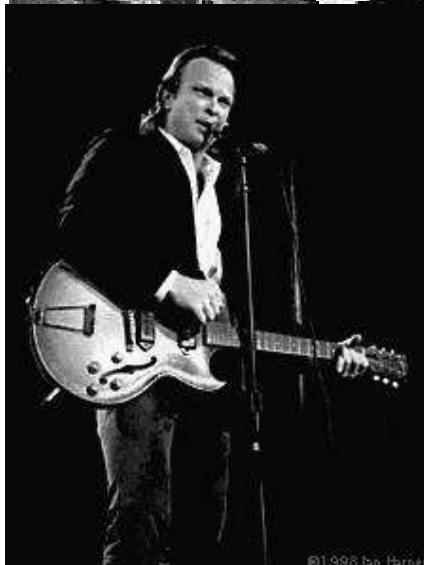
**Smokey:** Lester and I were really good friends. He took advantage of me in a lot of ways with the Red Devils. Originally they got me to fire the piano player, and then they blamed me. We stayed friends and were always calling each other up. I'll always miss him. I will put him up there with Phil as being an important singer. He was confused at what his strengths were. In the last six months, he was sober and he was a great guy. I was hopeful for him and thought his career was going to have a second renaissance. But when I heard he overdosed, I wasn't surprised. He had this weird idolization of Hollywood Fats, and that's where he developed his drug habit. They always hung out together and he said he was going to go like Hollywood Fats, and he did. I do remember him fondly.

**AM:** What are your thoughts on your Blaster years?

**Smokey:** I feel really fortunate that I got to spend those few years with Phil. He is a great singer and a talented guy. Just hearing him sing every night was great. Beck is the opposite of Phil. What he lacks in technique he makes up for in fearlessness and willingness to go for it.

*Next Issue part 2 of the Smokey interview. Smokey talks about his solo work, playing with John Doe, The Red Devils, Johnny Cash, and The Bruce Willis Band. Stay Tuned. The complete interview can be viewed at [http://members.tripod.com/~beck\\_mellowgold](http://members.tripod.com/~beck_mellowgold)*

# **The Blasters   Oakland CA   at The Omni   July 1, 1988**



**Photos by Ian Harper**

# James Intveld signs with INNERWORKS records

*James Intveld has steadily paced his solo career since leaving the Blasters in December of 1995. He has been touring extensively, going as far as Scandinavia and Moscow. Recently, James had the opportunity to join Kim Richey on her tour of the US. James opened the show with an acoustic set, armed only with a mandolin and his voice. Doing double duty, he also played bass in Richey's band. The Richey trio was composed of Kim, James, and his guitarist Eddie Perez. The tour was good exposure to some new fans. James played a few new songs titled **LIVING WITHOUT YOU**, and **IF TEARS COULD TALK**. Both will be included on his second Innerworks Records LP due in January of '99. James is still excited about the recent re-release of the Introducing... album in the USA on the Innerworks label. James spoke in Philadelphia on 5/21/98 to Billy Davis*

**AM:** How did the re-release of your German album Introducing... (Bear Family, 1995) come about here in the US?

**James:** The record was out on Bear Family and a few companies were interested in putting it out here. I did some shows in Nashville and the guys from Innerworks were really interested. We did some

too. So we started talking about putting out another album. We'll make it in October, and it should come out in January.

**AM:** What can we expect from the new album?

**James:** A lot more instrumentation—a few fiddles maybe. Some songs I've written are kind of, not country, not rockabilly, not folk, and not rock. It's somewhere in between all those things. I'm really happy with the songs and I'm looking forward to making the record. I really want to establish my style. I think it will show a lot of what my direction is. A lot of people think of me as a rockabilly guy. I think the stuff I'm writing now is a lot more serious. But it still has a lot of the elements of what I've always believed.

**AM:** Who is currently in your band?

**James:** Eddie Perez plays guitar with me, and we've had different rhythm sections for a while because of touring different places. We've had Denny Croix on bass and Kip Dabs on drums in Los Angeles. In Nashville, we used Tom Lewis on drums and on bass, either Lorne Rall or Dave Rowe. Dave is Johnny Cash's bass player. Also we've used this guy Jason Brown, who plays with Hank

Williams the third.

**AM:** The songs differ between the Bear Family and the Innerworks CDs. How did you choose the songs?

**James:** I thought the Bear Family album was a little laid back, so I added **STANDIN ON A ROCK** and **MY HEART IS ACHIN FOR YOU**. People wanted a few more up-tempo songs. I tend to write more ballads than fast songs, so that's just part of my



Photo: Ed Lee

shows in L.A. for Innerworks and they then said, "We definitely want to do it." It's really cool because they really try to get you out on the road and get airplay. They have really good distribution with a company called EMD. You can get this record anywhere. We did a tour of part of the USA a few months ago, and we made the Americana charts for 6 weeks at number 13. We were on the AAA charts





personality.

**AM:** I heard your song SAMANTHA was used on the TV show Melrose Place?

**James:** They have a girl named Samantha, and they wanted to use that song in an episode. They played the whole song. I didn't see the episode because I was on the road.

**AM:** Have you done any soundtrack work lately?

**James:** I did a few movies for Tom Berenger. (1996 movies, The Substitute doing CRYIN' OVER YOU and Occasional Hell doing YOUR LOVIN'.) I wrote 4 new songs for the movie and a remake of the song THE GREAT

PRETENDER for a movie called The Fanatics. I'm not sure if there is a soundtrack for it or if the movie has been released yet. There are a few other movies I have songs in. PERFECT WORLD is in Clay Pigeon starring Joquin Phoenix and BARELY HANGIN' ON is in The Break-Up starring Brigitte Fonda. The other day I got an offer to put three songs in a new movie. I've been working again with John Coinman (co-writer on 4 songs on Introducing...) on some new songs.

**AM:** How did you wind up playing on the Roy Nichols Tribute album To Roy Nichols With Love (Cowgirl Records, 1997)?

**James:** I had known Kathy Robertson (the singer who organized the album) for years and she was friends with Bonnie Owens. Roy got sick and she wanted to raise money for him. I just came in and sang, and then I didn't hear it until it came out. It was kind a nice for me to just see it come out and not put all the extra work in that goes with releasing your own album. I played acoustic guitar and sang on three tracks.

**AM:** Is your swing band Jimmy and the Gigolos still happening?

**James:** I have a small swing band now beside Jimmy and the Gigolos called The Swing

Sinners. It's a cut down 5-piece band. It's a little more upbeat with one horn player. In the Gigolos, we would have 9 or 10 guys and it's hard to keep everybody working, 9 or 10 salaries can be tough. I was going to record an album of The Gigolos. I have some originals that I wrote specifically for that band, so I'd still like to do it.

We did a movie called Men Seeking Women. We did a song called YOU'RE NOBODY UNTIL SOMEBODY LOVES YOU. It took place at the Derby (Hollywood club), and you see us onstage.

**AM:** You did a Kathy Mattea video shoot for a song called ROCKET '88. How did that happen?

**James:** Actually Bill Bateman (former Blasters and Red Devils drummer) called me and said there was a video shoot going on and they needed a band to set up for an audition. Those are things I don't even do anymore, but I figured it would be fun to hang out with Bill. So I went down there, and Bill and I, and Eddie Perez played for the cameras. There were tons of musicians down there. A few days later I got a call that I was picked to be the bass player in the video. Kathy Mattea was great. We had a really good time.

**AM:** How did you get the Kim Richey gig?

**James:** I used Tom Lewis on drums on my last tour. He dates Kim Richey, and when we were in Nashville, she came to a few shows. She asked me to be the opening act on the tour and play bass. She wanted to go with a trio. I thought that was cool to not have to draw crowds myself. And I can play some clubs I haven't played before Later I can play those clubs on my own.

**AM:** What's the latest on your acting?

**James:** The last movie I did was a film called Fis-Mol which means one note. It's a cross road movie where a kid sells his soul to the devil. I play the





devil. It's a modern version of the tale. Johnny Hartman, a German director is supposed to be releasing it over here. It's like a movie short. I'm not concentrating much on acting right now, I'm really gearing up to making this next album. Also touring takes a lot of time away. I've really been on the road a lot. I went to Moscow for 2 weeks with my band. That was really interesting being in Russia. In February it was like 20 or 30 below zero. We then played Paris.

**AM:** Tell us about the sessions you did for Lester Butler's 13 album?

**James:** I had been playing with Lester off and on for a few years. When he was gonna make this record, he wanted me to play bass on all of it. The sessions were gonna last 2 or 3 weeks of total dedication. I was so busy that I couldn't do it. I really dig Lester and dig the music, so I only ended up doing one day of the sessions. Then he asked me to be there for the photo session. I would have done more with him if I had more time. In the past I did a tour of Tahiti playing drums with his band. That was a lot of fun.

**AM:** We recently heard of Lester's death. What do you remember about him?

**James:** When I think of Lester, I think of him laughing and joking. He was always excited about the simplest things. I've had a lot of great memories with him and there have been a lot of intense weird times, too, but it doesn't mean anything because

there was so much more of the good stuff. He was so intense on stage. When you play with someone like that, it makes you go there too. Lester and I were born on the same day: November 12, 1959.

The same exact day and same exact year!! Wow! So we always had a bond, and we'd call each other on our birthday. We really dug being around each other.

**AM:** What do you think when you look back on your years in the Blasters?

**James:** Last month Phil came down to the Dixie Belle club. It's right by his house in Downey. Phil came up on stage and we played HEAR ME CRYIN (THE BIG F CHORD) and a Joe Turner song. I really enjoyed seeing Phil again. I miss playing in the Blasters. You know I was there because I really dug the music. —*AM*



Photos: Greg Seance



Photo: Herman Agopian

**THE JAMES INTVELD official web site**—<http://members.aol.com/IntveldFC/home.html> --James has a fan club that offers a membership kit and 4 newsletters per year for \$15 in the USA (\$20 outside the USA) -- cash, check or money order (in U.S. dollars, payable to: **Jude Caulkins**). to: **The James Intveld International Fan Club**, PO Box 3601, Belmont Shore, CA 90803 USA or e-mail Jude for info at [Intveldfc@aol.com](mailto:Intveldfc@aol.com)

# John Bazz Rates the Blasters' Guitar Players

*John has played bass for The Blasters since their inception. Who's better qualified in rating The Blasters' strings?*

**Dave Alvin 79-86:** I think he epitomizes the Blasters sound since he is a co-creator. A lot of what we did was based around his style. I like the way he plays. It's a real aggressive style. I hear a lot of Magic Sam in his playing whether intentional or not.

**Hollywood Fats 1986:** The best guitarist I've ever played with. He had a certain magic and talent for phrasing. Even black guitar heroes appreciated what Fats could do. He lived with Muddy Waters. He was the guy who when famous guitar players would come to L.A. in the 60's, they would request Fats as their guitar player. His blues playing was impeccable. He shocked me that he could play rock so well, meaning bluesy rock like Hendrix or Stevie Ray. In fact, Stevie Ray was a big admirer of Fats: When he came to L.A. for the first time on tour, he dedicated his shows to Hollywood Fats. A couple of years later, the Blasters were opening for SRV and during sound check, Stevie walked in with a big crowd of people and just broke through the crowd when he saw Fats, ran over and gave him a huge hug.

It was so hard rehearsing with Fats. He was a good guitarist, but there were so many things he couldn't get: timing things and little inflections that are critical to how a song is done. He couldn't even tune his guitar right. I'm not sure that some of these problems weren't intentional, just to fuck with people.

So, our first gig with him was at the Hollywood Palace which was the premier gig for a band like the Blasters. Dave had just left



the band. But here are the Blasters without Dave Alvin in their hometown. We're sold out 2 nights. If you know Fats, he looks like Jackie Gleason in The Hustler with a thin mustache and that night... man, he looked great with a three-piece suit. We opened with MARIE MARIE, and he just ripped note for note. He did David's solo and people applauded and it was great! Here were the Blaster people saying, "He's cool.

We dig him." I don't know of any other guitar player that could have done that.

**Billy Zoom 1987:** He wasn't in the band long, only about 2 weeks. Phil wanted him in the band. Billy retired from music after playing with us. He had had enough. Now I think he just customizes guitar amps. (He just rejoined X for some shows.)

**Greg Smokey Hormel 87-92:** I love Smokey; he ended up being a really good friend. He's off playing with Beck right now, so I never hear of or see Smokey any more. He quit the Blasters, and he and I would do little side projects around L.A. blues bands. He got to be a good friend and very close to Lee Allen.

I kind of watched Smokey develop as a guitar player. He didn't know blues like Dave Alvin and Hollywood Fats. He knew the guitar well; he was schooled on the guitar and a pretty intelligent guy. Coming into the Blasters, he took a crash course on the blues. He would go to Lee Allen's house and Lee and his older buddies would have a jam



session and Smokey would hang and play. He really progressed quite a bit as a blues player.

He was a pretty independent guy. I remember there was a controversy when it would come to Smokey's theme song, THE OOKIE DOOKIE STOMP. He would play it a different way every night intentionally while the rest of the Blasters wanted to do it the same every night. We had a couple of heated discussions. I miss him. He was a great guy to tour with.

**James Intveld 93-95:** Not my first choice at the time, but Phil chose him. James came down to the King King night club when me, Phil, Smokey, and Steve Hodges were doing Monday nights playing the gig for the Red Devils who were away on tour. The King King was the place to go, and this was a crazed version of the Blasters. James jammed a few times and Phil decided at that time that James was the right guy for the band. I think James is the closest to Dave Alvin's style: he plays with a certain intensity that Dave did and that works for the Blasters. He had a lot of other things going on, like his acting.

The live album (Live at The House of Blues) that we recorded (but was never released) was good, but both James and I agreed that the band didn't play good enough to put out a live thing. When you put out a record, it's forever, so we figured we would record another performance. It lacked some of the magic. It was 90% of what we could have done, and in that last 10% is where the magic is. It was sad to see him split from the Blasters.

**Keith Wyatt 96 to present:** I always heard about Keith, but I didn't know his name. Jerry Angel played with him in the Dimebags. So we had an audition, and it was obvious he was the right guy. He brings a lot to the band in his musicality. He's a guitar teacher and probably knows more about the guitar than all of the other guitarists put together. He knows more about how notes fit together, and knows what wave length the Blasters are on. He's helped define the structure of our songs. When it comes to his solos, its like something different: he really stretches out and I like that. —Am

**NEW!! Blasters Bowling shirt** This 50's styled short sleeved shirt (pictured) is available to American Music subscribers in a very limited quantity. The back lettering is a silk screened image of the logo Dave Alvin designed for the original Rollin Rock album cover (read more on that in American Music issue #17). Above the breast pocket is an embroidered patch saying "American Music" in script red lettering. The shirt is dark blue and 100% cotton. Sizes available are: Medium: Chest-Size 106cm/42 inch (Round Measure) -- Large: 122cm/48inch - Extra Large: 128cm/50inch. Sizes all run big. These shirts will sell out, so if possible list an alternate size in the event your requested size is already sold out.

Price is \$45 each plus \$5 for airmail shipping anywhere in the world (shirts will be shipped from the manufacturer in Finland). Allow three weeks for orders to arrive.

To reduce problems of transferring funds over to Finnish currency, I will be collecting US funds for the orders. Send payment to: Billy Davis 80-16 64th Lane Glendale N.Y. 11385. Checks must be in US funds and be payable to Billy Davis

**THE FACE T-shirt** is still available. These white T-shirts with The Face album cover (The Blasters first Slash album, 1981) are printed in Black with a blue Blasters logo. Sizes available are Medium, Large, X-Large, and XX-Large. Price is \$15 plus \$5 airmail shipping. (Postage price can't be combined with bowling shirt orders because of postage weight limitations.) Send orders to: Billy Davis 80-16 64th Lane Glendale NY 11385







C'MON BILLY: BILLY ZOOM, D.J. BONEBRAKE, EXENE CERVENKOVA

Reprinted from Pulse Magazine 5/98  
CHAPMAN DAHLER

## reunited x says: "see how we were"

X guitar god **Billy Zoom**, makes no bones about why he rejoined his old band for a few reunion shows in February—the first two in San Francisco on Feb. 6-7 and the final in L.A. on Feb. 28 at the Hollywood Palladium. "They made me an offer I couldn't refuse," says Zoom, who's been living in the city of Orange in quasi-

obscurity in the 13 years since he left the band. Among the old and new fans turning up to witness him take the stage one more time with old pals **Exene**, **John Doe** and **D.J. Bonebrake** were onetime L.A. DJ and scenester **Rodney Bingenheimer**, who introduced the band, as well as members of the **Circle Jerks**, **Youth Brigade**, the **Go-**

Although Zoom's industry profile has been low since he left X, he's had a hand in a few projects, including production of punkabilly group **Trailer Park Casanovas'** '94 7-inch cover of **Motörhead's** "Ace of Spades" (Behemoth).

**Go's**, **Rancid**, **No Doubt**, the **Offspring**, the **Vandals**, **Social Distortion** and **Pennywise**.

**Collecting Blasters** – ATTENTION BOB DYLAN COLLECTORS—Dave Alvin played guitar on an unreleased Dylan recording session. Dave himself doesn't have a tape of this, and is in search of it. There is an abundance of Dylan bootlegs out there, so the chances are good. Here are the details that Dave remembers from the session: Recorded April or May of 1986, one day before Dave left on tour with X (anybody have that date?). Studio: Skyline Studios. Dylan album sessions: for the album **Knocked Out Loaded** but unreleased. Notes: Dave wasn't happy with his guitar tone, so it may not sound like him. We should recognize Dave's guitar licks. Cesar Rosas of Los Lobos came in the next day to play as did other big names. Songs: YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE, SAMSON & DELILAH, LOOK ON YONDERS WALLL, GOT LOVE IF YOU WANT IT, ROLLIN & TUMBLIN, ROCK BABY ROCK IT, and other Blues songs.



# Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men

## Backstage photo Session By Billy Davis



Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men were waiting around backstage in Annapolis MD at the Rams Head venue on June 30, 1998 to do their show that night. I asked them to pose for some photos for me to use in this newsletter. They were having a lot of fun making jokes and generally having a good time together. Gregory Boaz insisted on reading the Blast-ers newsletter in the photos.





# Dave Alvin and Rick Shea

## Vancouver Folk Festival - 6/30/98

Submitted by Bob Sheriden and his daughter Amy.



## PHIL ALVIN QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“There have been a lot of weird looking inanimate objects that have been liking me lately.”

**Contest # 4** — Win a copy of James Intveld’s recent first release on Innerworks records. One winner will be randomly drawn from correct answers. Q: James Intveld has been associated with both the Blasters and Dave Alvin. Obviously, James was the Blasters guitarist and is connected to them that way. Now try to name the connection he had to Dave Alvin. It could be a certain project they worked on together. Send answers to 80-16 64<sup>th</sup> Lane Glendale NY 11385 USA. Deadline for entries is 9/15/98.

**AMERICAN MUSIC SUBSCRIPTION INFO:** Publishing 4 issues quarterly. Send \$8 which includes 4 issues and postcard mailings (U.S.A. only) covering Blaster and related tour dates in your region. Overseas rates are \$10 U.S. for 4 issues. Canada \$9. For overseas subscribers wanting tour updates between newsletter mailings send 2 I.R.C.’s per desired response and you will be notified by Airmail letter of regional tour dates. If paying by check, payable to Billy Davis. Mail to :

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**BACK ISSUE COPIES:** \$2 per issue in the U.S. Overseas \$2.50 per issue

#1. Blastory part 1, James Intveld profile.

#2. Phil Alvin interview Part 1, Dave Alvin’s “Museum” tour review, Faultline Syncopaters profile.

#3. Phil Alvin interview Part 2, complete Blasters Discography.

#4. James Harman interview, Blasters 91 Finland tour.

#5. Lee Allen tribute issue, Dave Alvin interview, Lee Allen profile, Phil Alvin Foothill club review.

#6 Rockin Ronny Weiser interview, Bobby Mizzel & James Intveld CD review, “State of the 1995 Blasters” story.

#7. Phil Alvin on the Making of County Fair 2000, an in depth look at Blaster cover songs.

#8. James Intveld interview, The making of ‘Sonny Burgess’ and Dave Alvin’s Tennessee Border CD.

#9. Blasters/Beat farmers ‘95 tour reviews, Intveld Bear Family CD review.

#10 James Intveld ex-Blaster, Dave Alvin on the Knitters, Remembering Country Dick, Q&A for the band.

#11 Gene Taylor interview, Sonny Burgess interview

#12 Dave Alvin song by song on Interstate City, concert reviews.

#13 Drummer issue Interviews w/Angel, Bateman, Hicks.

#14 Keith Wyatt Interview, Pleasure Barons history.

#15 Dave’s poetry mentor Gerald Locklin interview, Dave Alvin/Kelly Joe Phelps ‘97 east coast acoustic tour

#16 John Bazz interview, Blasters visit radio station KUCI, “Influenced by The Blasters” story, Dave Alvin in N.C.

#17 American Music Cd reissue interviews-The Alvins, Bazz, Bateman, Weiser, and Bruce Bromberg

#18 Blasters East Coast tour, Dave Alvin in Jamestown NY, Phil Alvin’s column –“Musician to be remembered”

#19 Dave Alvin song by song on Black Jack David, Monsters of Folk tour report, Q & A’s from Phil and Dave.