

ISSUE #23

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

MAY 1999

DAVE ALVIN TOUR DATES

With Rick Shea

- 6/4 Fresno CA at Fred's
- 6/5 San Francisco at Golden Gate Park

Acoustic Band (Dave, Rick, Gregory, and Brantley Kearns)

- 6/25 Santa Monica CA at McCabes
- 6/26 Sebastopol CA at Kate Wolf Fest
- 6/27 Davis CA at Palms Playhouse

With the Guilty Men

- 7/3 Irvine CA at Hootenany Fest
- 7/8 Richmond VA at Museum of Arts
- 7/9 Raleigh NC at Brewery
- 7/10 Baltimore MD at Artscape
- 7/? Pittsburgh Pa at TBA
- 7/14 Phil PA at Weekly Concert Series
- 7/15 Boston MA at House of Blues
- 7/16 Providence RI at Lupo's (co-headlining with John Mayall)
- 7/17 Greenfield MA at Green River Fest
- 7/22 Des Moines IO at Simon Theatre
- 7/24 Chicago IL at Old Town roots fest
- 7/31 -8/1 Seattle WA at Womad fest (Solo acoustic)

- 8/27 Reno NV at Rollin' On the River
- 8/28 Las Vegas NV at Clark Concerts
- 9/3 Yosemite CA at Strawberry Festival
- 11/7 Houston at Satellite (private party)

BLASTERS TOUR DATES

- 7/17 Long Beach Ca at The Blue Cafe

RICK SHEA TOUR DATES

- 6/25 Santa Monica CA at McCabes
- 6/27 Davis CA at Palms
- 6/28 Hollywood CA at Jack's Sugar
- 9/2 Yosemite CA at Strawberry (with Brantley Kearns)

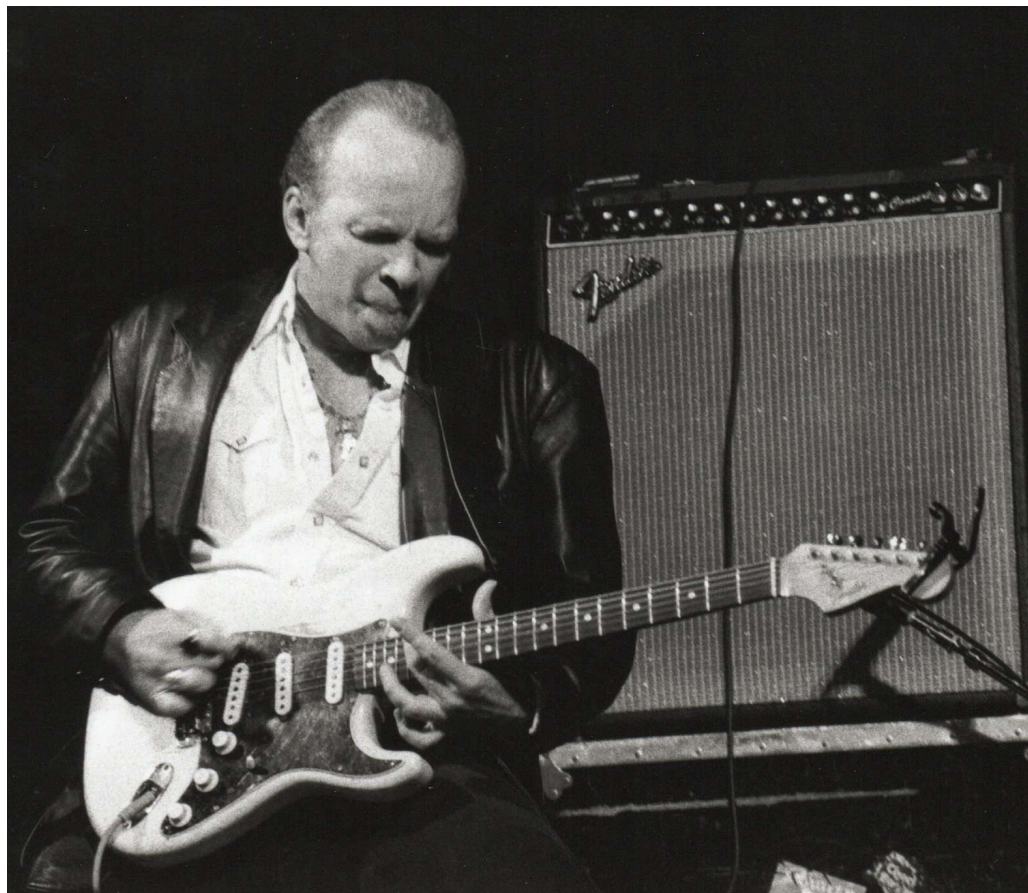


Photo: Josh Lewis

LATEST NEWS: : The Blasters tribute CD called "Blastered" on Run Wild Records is available at Borders Books and Music stores all over the nation.

You can preview the CD at the stores' listening posts. Get this disc as soon as you can. Run Wild Records will let the disc go out of print by summer. -- In April, Dave recorded with blues legend Little Milton in Alabama. The "Mussel Shoals Sound Studio" is famous for recordings by Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones Exile on Main Street album. Dave wrote a song with Rick Estrin called NEVER TRUST A WOMAN. Estrin is the lead vocalist and harp player in Little Charlie and the Nightcats. (Dave also wrote another song with Estrin called WHEN YOUR WOMAN IS GONE. Both are heard on Little Charlie and the Nightcats' CD Shadow of the Blues (Alligator 1998). At the Mussel Shoals session, Dave sang a duet with Little Milton. Dave played lead guitar on the track as well as rhythm guitar on another song. Malacco records will release it in the fall. Dave said it was a real thrill to be in the studio with Little Milton, ((continued on page 2))

Inside: Smokey Hormel interview part 2, Tom Russell on songwriting with Dave, Dave Alvin's "Acoustic Guilty Men" show, and stories and photos from the road.

((cont. from page 1)) who recorded for Sun Records in the fifties; he was present in the studio singing with Dave and threw a lot of pointers Dave's way on how he wanted the vocals. Also in April, Dave sang two duets on Ramblin' Jack Elliot's new album sessions. -- Red House Records has issued a \$2.98 sampler CD called Root Awakening (RHR CD 123) which contains Dave's Kate Wolf tribute song, THESE TIMES WE'RE LIVIN' IN. — The Derailers' new album that Dave produced is due out on 7/13. — On Rosie Flores new Dance Hall Dreams CD, on the song TWEEDLE DEE '59 she sings, "Were turnin' up the radio. Original Blasters. Go Dave Go." -- Chris Gaffney will be coming out again on tour with Dave in the summer to assist with merchandise and equipment. He will join the band in their encores. -- On March 22, 1999 Dave was interviewed for Acoustic Guitar magazine for a future issue. — Blackjack David was released in January in England. The UK magazine Mojo (3/99) has a great review of BJD naming it the "Americana album of the month." Recently the Sunday London Times had a great review. Dave: "That was a stunning little thing because we never even got a review in the London Times with the Blasters." In other UK news, BLACKJACK DAVID was included as a track on a CD sampler distributed with the UK's Uncut magazine in April. -- Dave produced a 4 song session for Christie McWilson (from the Picketts) for a yet-to-be-named label. — Dave played on Buddy Blue's new album sessions. Buddy reports, "Last weekend Dave Alvin played a mean-assed guitar solo on MILKY WAY BLUES, and we did some inebriated acoustic things that'll probably show up as hidden tracks. I know I say this every time I make an album, but I gotta tell ya: I think this will be the best one yet!" — In mid-May, Dave will produce Katy Moffatt's new HighTone album. -- Chris Gaffney is set to release a CD re-issue of his 1986 Road To Indio EP. The CD will include live bonus tracks recorded in March of '99 by Chris and his band The Cold Hard Facts. Rumors have surfaced that Dave Alvin will produce Chris's next HighTone album in the fall. Chris Gaffney has a web site <http://home.earthlink.net/~amigoagogo/> -- In the latest issue of Gig Magazine (May '99 with Little Feat on the cover), there's an article entitled "Avoiding Burnout;" and it has a few quotes from Dave and a photo of him. — Keith Wyatt, Jerry Angel, and John Bazz can be seen playing on Keith Wyatt's new Swing Guitar instructional video. John plays upright bass. — Jerry Angel has recorded an album with The Devil Dolls. Negotiations to release it on Arista Records are continuing. -- Dave's Austin City Limits episode aired on April 10 along with an appearance by Loudin Wainwright III. Some stations that carry ACL have not yet run that episode. Watch your local listings or check the ACL web site to find your local carrier. -- Amazon Books is taking preorders for Dave Alvin's next book The Crazy Ones, even though the book isn't finished. It may be completed by August, I repeat, maybe. — Harold Dubinski reports on Syd Straw's show in Hollywood, CA, at Largo's: "Syd had a few special guests perform with her including Rickie Lee Jones and Van Dyke Parks. Rick Shea was in her band. In the encore, Dave Alvin got up there and said, "Ten years ago nobody would give me the time of day except Country Dick Montana and Syd Straw, and for that I'll be forever in your debt, Syd." They played a great version of WHAT AM I WORTH, during which Dave said, "Syd, I've known you a long time, but I've never seen you in a dress like that. If I had, maybe your name would be Mrs. Alvin." — Look for a new book called Working Man's Blues by Gerald Haslam. It has a chapter on Dave Alvin. Dave, "He's (Haslam) mainly known as a fiction writer in stories about California. He's great - one of my favorites." — Dave is making some special recordings for a sampler CD being released for his publishing company, BUG Music. Dave will be re-recording LONG WHITE CADILLAC, DON'T TALK ABOUT HER, and WHY DID SHE STAY WITH HIM for a section of the CD being billed as Dave Alvin 1979-99. The songs are acoustic versions accompanied by Rick Shea. The CD won't be available in stores. The publishing company uses these CDs to promote its artists' songs for movies and cover versions. — On May 9, Dave Alvin accompanied by Rick Shea in taping the E-Town radio show in Boulder Colorado.

~~*AM*

AMERICAN MUSIC —editor: **Billy Davis** editorial assistant: **Craig Frischkorn**

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Rare Acoustic band performance for Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men

Philadelphia PA at Tin Angel 2/25/99 --Billy Davis

This show was booked and advertised as solo acoustic, long before a full east coast tour was scheduled around the Philadelphia date with Dave's electric band, the Guilty Men. The plan was that Dave would play the show accompanied by possibly one other musician. The venue has a small stage and generally hosts folk and solo blues acts, but it rarely hosts full rock bands. Because of the odd scheduling, the audience would be treated to something very unusual.

The band was running late traveling from the previous night's show in Pittsburgh as snow covered most of the roadways. Dave made a late change and to the nights format by calling into the club. -- All the Guilty Men would



Photo: Mike Lynann

L to R: Rick, Dave, Bobby, and Joe. Chris (far right) can be seen in the Arizona shirt selling t-shirts and lurking near the bathrooms.

be on the stage in an acoustic setting. This time, it would turn out to be a chemistry that had not been seen before in other Guilty Men shows. This became Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men Acoustic.

Chris Gaffney was along on the trip helping with merchandise and equipment and selling T-shirts. For those who aren't familiar with Chris Gaffney, he's a singer/songwriter who plays accordion and guitar. He lives in CA but is originally from Tucson, AZ. He has had three albums out, the last 2 on HighTone records. Dave Alvin produced his last album.

When Dave and the Guilty Men hit the stage, it was interesting to see their set up. Dave played acoustic guitar, Bobby Lloyd played just a snare drum and a high hat, and Rick played lap steel, mandolin, and electric guitar (no pedal steel tonight). Most interesting of all was that Joe Terry was playing accordion. He normally plays keyboards and picks up the accordion for just a few songs. Here he adapted his keyboard parts to the accordion and it brought something totally different to the arrangements. Gregory played his electric bass, while seated, as Dave said, "Playing subtle bass." The whole band sat on chairs on the small stage.

They started with NEW HIGHWAY. Near the end of the song, Dave broke a string. He finished the song and mentioned trying to kill time as it might take a few minutes to change. Someone yelled out, "do a polka" and Dave, with one string broken started a polka feel rhythm. The rest of the band picked it up and played a solid minute, drawing applause and laughter. Dave still had to change the string, so he introduced the band and suggested Rick Shea sing a song. Rick sang LONG BLACK VEIL as the rest of the band joined in. MARY BROWN was next, followed by what Dave claimed was a song that they don't play often. It



was LITTLE HONEY; it was a great version dominated by Rick's lap steel. The audience was getting into the show, but I'm not sure how many people knew they were witnessing something completely different from the regular style of the Guilty Men.

Dave always lets the audience throw requests his way, but when someone suggested MR. LEE, Dave laughed and sarcastically said, "Oh yeah were gonna do that." He turned to Joe and said, "Do you feel like handling that?" (laughing) It's funny because that song has the very "jump blues" piano which can not in any way be duplicated by the accordion. A treat was seeing Dave perform the rarely heard FROM A KITCHEN TABLE. It's a real somber song and sounded perfect with Rick's mandolin and the accordion. Bobby and Gregory sat out, and it was a good choice. The song is perfect with a certain sparseness.

Next Dave did 1968 and said, "This is a song I wrote with a good friend named Chris Gaffney who just happens to be lurking by the bathrooms, as he normally does in bar rooms.....(laughs) selling T-shirts." Dave again looked to the audience for requests. He stressed he wanted "an odd

ball" song. Somebody yelled a song title from Dave's first solo album. Dave satisfied the fan by playing the first verse of I WISH IT WERE SATURDAY NIGHT, then admitted it was his attempt at writing a Neil Diamond song, "I wanted it to be the B-side of Neil Diamonds first 45." The accordion was really sounding great and was dominating the sound. Dave said to Joe, "You're just getting better and better." Joe said humbly, "I want to go home and get my piano....I live in Missouri." They launched into DRY RIVER and played a rousing version, then finishing with 4TH OF JULY.

For the encore, Dave brought Gaffney to the stage to sing using this intro: "The past few years I've had the great privilege and opportunity to produce a lot of artists that I admire, respect, and enjoy - that I can tap my foot along to. People like Tom Russell, Big Sandy and the Flyrite Boys, Candye Cane, and the Derailers. I'm proud of all the records and the other ones I've done, but the one that I'm proudest of is a record called Loser's Paradise. One of the world's great singers is from Tucson, AZ; he's one of my best friends, and he's been standing back there selling T-Shirts all night long. Please bring up Mr. Chris Gaffney!" The band started an old Intruders





song from the early 60's called COWBOYS TO GIRLS. Chris recorded this song for his Loser's Paradise album on HighTone records. It was cool to hear Dave play R & B leads on the acoustic guitar. As the song finished, a fan yelled out, "The Intruders have nothing on that." Dave came back to the compliment: "But they couldn't sell T-shirts." (prompting audience laughter) With limited time left, Dave finished with his signature song, KING OF CALIFORNIA.

The musicianship was exceptional, considering that the band had never played in this formation. Bobby Lloyd Hicks played with a snare drum and a high-hat. He used the limited gear to its fullest. To get different sounds, he used the hi-hat as an accent or crash cymbal; also he used brushes and sticks, sometimes playing on the rims for different sounds. It was interesting to watch Bobby's right foot. He didn't have a kick (or bass) drum there, but his foot tapped as if it were there. Old habits never die. At one point, he put a tambourine under his foot so the right foot was of some use other than just keeping time. Bobby's one of the great ones!

The second show started, and Dave made a conscious effort to play almost all different songs, except for a few staples. They started off with RAILROAD BILL, a song that Dave recorded solo acoustic for the rare promo CD, The Monsters of Folk Sampler. Next was EVERY NIGHT ABOUT THIS TIME and then NEW HIGHWAY. Dave then commented to the crowd about Joe Terry's accordion playing: "He gets better each set on that thing." Joe humorously replied, "I want my piano back!" Dave came back with, "No, No, Joe. As Bob Dylan once said, 'Even the president of the United States must stand naked,' and that includes you."

Later on, after the show I talked to Joe Terry about his left hand technique on the accordion, and he explained that he doesn't use the accordion's black buttons, which are actually chord voicings. He remembered playing shows in Europe and saw some of the accordion players purist attitude showed through when someone in the audience snarled at his playing. They weren't happy with Joe's "Faking it" playing without using the left hand buttons. A few days later I would talk to Chris Gaffney about this. (Chris is an accomplished accordion player). Chris said that Joe, who had learned the instrument only a year ago, had made a tremendous improvement and said, "He's gonna be a big player." Chris indicated that Joe has great technique and he really likes his playing style.

Through the set, we were treated to a few acoustic rockers that would probably never be played if it were just Dave himself. OUT IN CALIFORNIA and LAUREL LYNN. Another rarely played live song was THESE TIMES WERE LIVIN IN from the Kate Wolf tribute album. It's interesting to note that Rick Shea played on original recording of the song, his first

recorded output as a member of Dave's band. The live version was exactly like the original as Joe, Bobby, and Gregory sat this one out.

Some songs like DRY RIVER, ABILENE, and FOURTH OF JULY that are usually heavy on the keyboard sounds came through nicely on Joe's accordion. A personal favorite of mine from the show was the rendition of BUS STATION. Shea played mandolin, Bobby played the tambourine, and Joe of course played the accordion. It was a great combination of instruments.

It was a unique show because of the different arrangements. The band enjoyed the "winging it" approach to the songs they regularly play. Dave Alvin keeps the fans' interest up by touring with different band configurations such as solo acoustic and electric band. Now he has another option: Dave Alvin and the Acoustic Guilty Men. ~~~*AM*



Photo: Mike Lynam

SMOKEY HORMEL INTERVIEW Part 2

Greg "Smokey" Hormel was the 4th guitarist in the Blasters history, holding the position from 1988-92. He has gained the most popular and commercial success of all the former Blaster guitarists in recent years as guitarist for Pop singer Beck from 1996 in his touring band. He has also contributed to Beck's 1998 album MUTATIONS. Part 1 of this interview appeared in issue #20, Smokey talked about the Blasters, Lee Allen, and Beck. Here is part 2.

By Billy Davis

AM: What other projects were you involved in after the Blasters?

Smokey: As soon as I left the Blasters, I became John Doe's guitarist, and we played together for the next 3 or 4 years until the Beck gig came along, so I had to leave. The duet stuff John and I did was a lot of country stuff. John would play acoustic and sing lead, and I would play electric and sing harmonies. We did X songs and John's original songs; we'd also cover some country songs and Knitters songs. It was really fun.

I was also playing with a boogie-woogie piano player called Rob Rio. Then there was this blues band with Bill (Batemen) called The Blue Shadows. I was the one who got them the gig at the King King (famous L.A. blues club.) I had pushed Bill into hiring Les-

ter (Butler) as the harp player. It was a traditional, "old-style" blues band, not too loud - like farmer blues. They got signed to a major label deal. Bill had a falling out and the emphasis became sounding like Led Zeppelin. They asked Johnny Ray's brother to play rhythm guitar in the band. I was upset because now they weren't even consulting me about personnel changes. I left the band and they changed the name to the Red Devils.

AM: Did you get to record with the Red Devils?

Smokey: I was on about a third of the sessions with Mick Jagger. (ed- The Red Devils recorded a full album's worth of blues songs with Mick Jagger that remains unreleased.) It's available on a bootleg CD in Japan. That was a wonderful experience. We did a session

with Johnny Cash, too. It was a day in the studio when they were trying different bands for his American Recording album (American, 1994). We played some Jimmie Rogers songs like T FOR TEXAS. He would sing these songs, and we would feel our way through. It was an amazing session. I remember trying not to mess with the integrity of Johnny Cash. I was trying to go with the Luther Perkins sound. I don't remember Lester doing very much on the sessions, but he was there. Johnny Ray played a lot of standup bass. Johnny Cash was such a sweet man. He kept apologizing for not singing well, because he had a sinus infection, but I didn't notice anything! His wife was there, and she was really talkative and great. She came up to me right away and said, "Is that a Gretsch guitar? My momma had a Gretsch guitar." And that was it, stories just came rollin' out.

AM: What was next after leaving the Red Devils?

Smokey: Steve Hodges and I started a band that played at the King King called the Road House Rhythm Kings. It was a goofy band with guitar, bass, drums, and tenor sax. Lee (Allen) would

sit in when he wasn't too sick. When the King King shut down, a lot of things happened at once for me. Lee got too sick, and my older sister got cancer. So I dropped out of everything in '93. I spent 6 months just taking care of her. After she died, the thing with John Doe took off doing a movie called

Georgia, and a project called The John Doe Thing. There are 2 CD's out of that. In fact that had the drummer from Beck's band. (ed- John Doe Thing CD's – Kissing So Hard on Rhino, 1995 and For the Rest of Us on KRS records, 1998).

AM: How involved were you in Georgia and

was there a soundtrack release?

Smokey: Yes. There was a Georgia soundtrack (Discovery, 1995). The movie stars Jennifer Jason Leigh. We play a Seattle bar band sort of like a like Velvet Underground cover band. We're in a lot of it. I did an arrangement of MIDNIGHT TRAIN TO GEORGIA that I'm pretty proud of. Also a cover of Elvis Costello's ALMOST BLUE. I've done some work for David Lynch. I played on some of the Twin Peaks Movie. And I worked on a project of his called Fox Bart Strategy. He would recite poetry and have the band play behind him.

AM: How did you wind up playing in Bruce Willis' blues band?

Smokey: He had hired the Red Devils to do the first Planet Hollywood opening in NY. Bruce fell in love with Lester's playing and tried to

mimic him and his whole character. Bruce put together another band with Steven Hodges, Johnny (Bazz), and me. I played about 15 openings all over the world. That was a good experience.

AM: How did you wind up leaving his band?

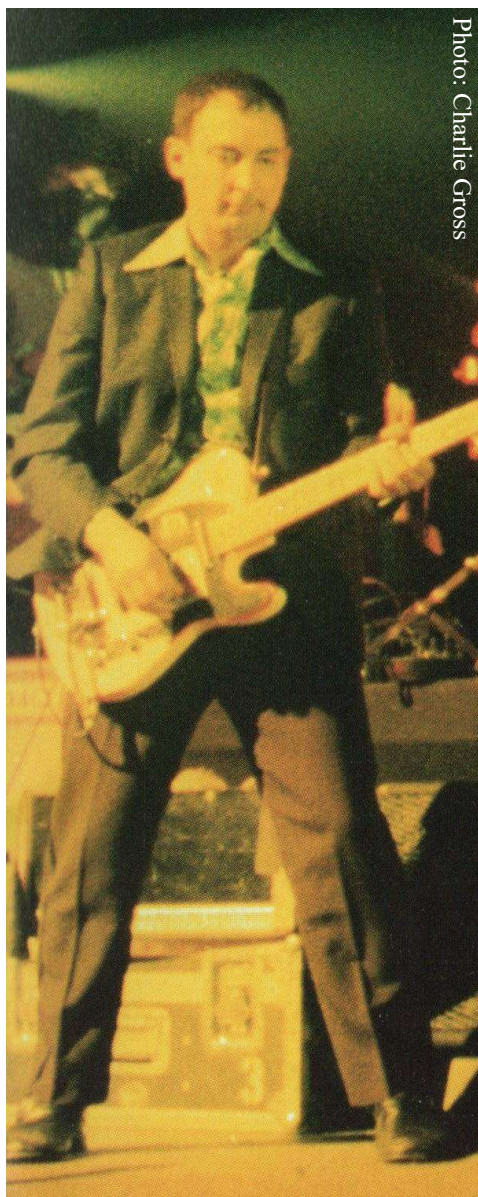


Photo: Charlie Gross

Smokey on the Beck tour



It's a Latin Jazz and Cuban band. It's been 10 years since I started with the Blasters, and I've been working steady ever since. I've been really lucky.

AM: Have you ever worked with Dave Alvin?

Smokey: We've jammed together at the King King where we did a tribute night to Little Walter. I'd love to do something with him. I think Dave is really special. I would love to do a country record with Dave and John Doe. I think that would be amazing. Actually I was on the Merle Haggard tribute that Dave did (Tulare Dust on HighTone, 1995). John Doe and I were on there. I played a guitar that I faked to sound like a pedal steel. I'm good friends with Greg Leisz and he is on Beck's new record (Mutations) and on Beck's Odelay (Geffen, 1996).

AM: What aspirations do you have for the future?

Smokey: Well where can you go from Beck? I'm looking forward to writing more film scores. My goal for the rest of the year is to finish the Lee Allen record. (Smokey was on the process of recording Lee Allen when he left us for a Lee Allen solo album. Smokey wants to add the proper instrumentation and release it as a tribute album.)

AM: Please clarify a statement from a previ-

Smokey: I got too busy with John Doe and was doing that Georgia movie at the time. So, Bruce had to find another guitar player. They always left it as an open door that I could come back, but I stayed busy.

AM: Any thing you've done vocals for?

Smokey: Yes. Actually there is something I'm really proud of. On the soundtrack for Trees Lounge (MCA, 1996), which Steve Buscemi wrote and directed. I did a duet with a New York woman named Eszter Balint called COLOR OF YOUR EYES. It was just a demo and they decided to put it on the record as is. I would love to do more singing and I probably will, but nothing planned.

AM: Any other projects recently?

Smokey: I made the 13 record with Lester (Butler) on a little break in Beck's touring schedule. Then this spring I did a gig with Tom Waits. That was a thrill for me. If he calls again, I'll go running. I did a film score called There's No Fish Food In Heaven. They're trying to sell it and get distribution right now. I also played on this film called Hurly Burly with Sean Penn. I played guitar on the score. I was playing in James Intveld's swing band at one time, too. I recorded recently with Juliana Hatfield. I'm also in a band in L.A. called Brazaville.





ous interview in which you suggested that the Blasters had trouble releasing the Hard Line (Slash, 1985) album because the record company believed that “Horns weren’t cool anymore.”

Smokey: That was something that Phil told me. He said someone at the record company said that “Horns weren’t in.”

AM: How did Lee Allen deal with all the controversy in the Blasters?

Smokey: Lee had been through so much that he didn’t let himself get caught up in the drama. He was truly an inspiration to me. When I started with Beck, I didn’t get to play and express myself much, so I was disappointed. Then I would think of Lee. He would have killed to play with these kids and in front of all these people. I don’t think I play as well as I did when I was with the Blasters. Back then, my chops were really up there, and now I couldn’t do it.

AM: What are the most prestigious gigs you’ve played with Beck?

Smokey: One was playing the Grammy awards at Madison Square Garden in ‘97. We did WHERE IT’S AT. That was a thrill to see all the famous people in the audience chanting “Where It’s At.” Another was when we did a recording with Emmylou Harris for Alamo records. It’s a Graham Parsons tribute record. We used Beck’s band with Emmylou. So those were two things, and so was playing

on this new record, Mutations.

AM: I saw the Beck performance on the MTV Music awards. I noticed you and the bassist had some choreography: spins and other moves .

Smokey: Yeah! It’s pretty collaborative. I’ve been bringing in videos of old soul programs. I had Jackie Wilson and James Brown on Shindig. We would work on that. Beck’s a good dancer, and he seems to be getting ready to push that further.

AM: Now where did the nickname Smokey come from?

Smokey: That was Paul Greenstein, the leader of the Radio Ranch Straight Shooters. It’s because I smoke and because of my voice.

Editor: In the summer of ‘98 Beck’s drummer Joey Waronker and Smokey were rumored to have left the band. With Beck being off tour, Smokey played with Sean Lennon, and Joey joined the Smashing Pumpkins. An official statement was issued by Beck’s camp stating that the two had officially left. When Beck resumed touring in the fall of ‘98, the two were asked back into the band. Beck now plans to record a new album in the vein of his multi-platinum Odelay later in 1999. Smokey will be playing in Tom Waits band this summer. He plans to finish the Lee Allen tribute album near the end of the summer. ~~AM



Smokey, Lee and John in Norway, 1991.

Dave Alvin and Tom Russell: Monsters of Collaboration

-- by Tom Wilk

Tom Russell and Dave Alvin have a history of collaboration - on stage as members of the Monsters of Folk, in the recording studio and as songwriters. Tom has written or co-written songs on each of Dave's last five solo albums. They share similar songwriting styles with roots in folk, country and blues. There is a common ground between Dave's KING OF CALIFORNIA and Tom's THE ANGEL OF LYON, two songs about men on a quest.

I first saw Dave and Tom perform together at the now-defunct Ritz club (formerly Studio 54) in New York City in July 1990. Playing solo acoustic, Dave was the opening act for Merle Haggard, and Tom joined him for a few songs. It was a sign of things to come. Four years later, they would collaborate on Tulare Dust, their tribute album for Merle.

During a recent interview to promote his fine new album The Man From God Knows Where (HighTone HCD 8099), Tom Russell agreed to discuss the songwriting process and co-writing songs with Dave. He likes to work with songwriting partners that complement his talents. "Katy Moffatt (a frequent collaborator) is stronger than me melodi-

cally." Tom says. "I like to write alone, but sometimes you're frustrated or hit a wall," he said. "With co-writing, there is a compromise. It's like two people painting a picture together."

HALEY'S COMET -- "I was working as a country singer in a carnival in Puerto Rico in 1981 (chronicled in Tom's song THE ROAD TO BAYAMON) when I saw an article on Bill Haley's final days in Harlingen, Texas, in The National Enquirer." Tom began working on the song ("I carried fragments of the lyrics around for years") but did not finish it until he joined forces with Dave in a New York hotel room. Dave checked some of the facts in John Swenson's (1982) biography of Haley, Bill Haley: The Daddy of Rock and Roll.

Tom recorded his version on the 1990 album Hurricane Season while Dave recorded it on Blue Blvd in 1991. Tom re-recorded it with Dave in a live, acoustic version for his 1997 album The Long Way Around. Doug Sahm, a member of the Texas Tornados, also recorded HALEY'S COMET for a release as a european single. He brings the song full circle by including part of ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK at the end of the song.



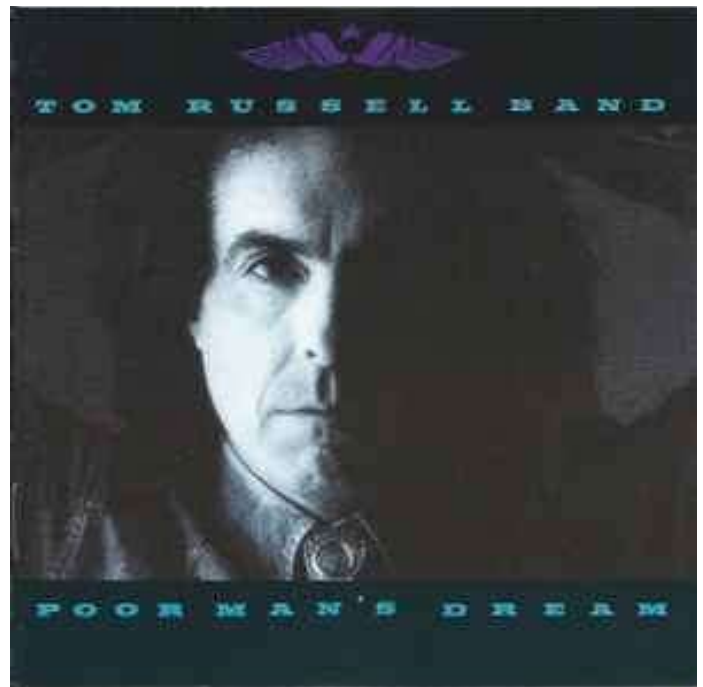
Photo: Billy Davis

Monsters of Folk tour. Dave, Chris Smither, Ramblin' Jack Elliot, and Tom Russell.

BETWEEN THE CRACKS -- "It never blossomed the way it should," Tom said of the tale of a boxer who never made it to the top. "We were trying to hit it out of the park (a musical home run)," Tom explained, adding it fell short of its goal. He did like the double-edge meaning of "Jesus was a poor boy from the wrong side of the tracks. He rose again but not before he fell between the cracks." Tom recorded the song on The Rose of the San Joaquin released in 1995 and Dave's version is on Museum of Heart. Flaco Jimenez, accordionist with the Texas Tornados, recorded a version of the song, but it has gone unreleased, Tom said. It's the first of three songs about California that Dave and Tom have written together.

BLUE WING -- Tom has called Dave's rendition of this song on King of California a great version. "The song owes a lot to my first years performing in skid row bars in California," Tom wrote in the liner notes of The Long Way Around. BLUE WING originally appeared on Tom's album Poor Man's Dream as a country song, and he did it as a live duet with Dave on The Long Way Around.

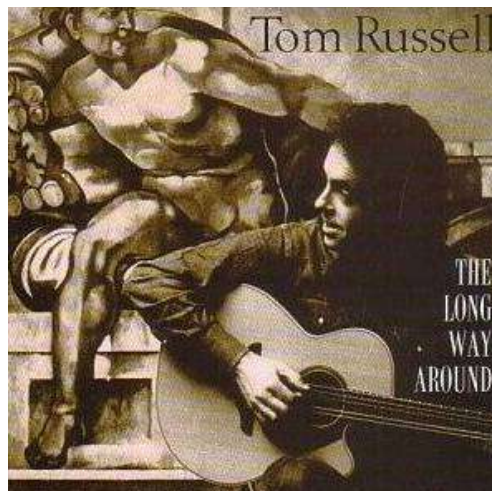
"When I do it in concert now, I do it like Dave's version, in a finger-picking style," said Tom, who attended some of the recording sessions for King of California. "It was an honor for me for Dave to do it."



OUT IN CALIFORNIA -- "I needed an up tempo song for The Rose of the San Joaquin, Tom said. "I had a beer with Dave at a bar in Arizona that had no chairs. It inspired the line about the last bar on Earth. Dave's version appears on his Interstate City album.

RIO GRANDE -- It's the latest collaboration between Tom and Dave, but neither singer has released it. Dave recorded it for Blackjack David but left it off the album. Tom has been performing it in concert this year and intends to include it on his next album. Tom says it is a song influenced by his move to El Paso, Texas. "My heart's in the West and Southwest," said Tom, adding he is writing more songs that echo those regions of the country. "I lived in New York for a while and liked the pace there, but I got tired of it."

Tom and Dave will both be touring this summer. It's a good bet their paths will cross again in the recording studio or concert stage and their fans will be the richer for it. ~~*AM*



Tom Russell on writing with Dave Alvin

Here is a funny story Tom Russell told at a recent show of his at The Palms Niteclub in Davis, California while introducing a song:

Here's a brand new, or a relatively new song that I wrote with Dave Alvin, and it's called DOWN THE RIO GRANDE. When I finally got out of New York, after so many years being stuck there, I bought this little place. I thought what's the opposite EXTREME of New York? -- El Paso. (audience laughter) NOBODY will come to El Paso. But I forgot that Highway 10 runs through there. So a lot of people come through there.

We've got this little....well it's not TOO little -- 3 acres of elm trees and coyotes and stuff -- and an old adobe house. We live near the river, and 5 times a year I get to irrigate off the river, and that's a big deal for me: "Got to go irrigate!" (more laughter from the audience) So I lure people down. I learned this from (Ian) Tyson, too. -- "Come on down, Dave, and co-write."

Then when I'd get him down there, I'd order my irrigation water and make him go out and dig ditches. (laughter) I can still see his sad face out there with a shovel and a baseball cap. And he looked at me and said (Tom's voice drops way down]: "Next time, get Bob Dylan!" (laughter).

So we actually wrote this song in LA. He has an apartment - rare Navajo rugs. And you know you learn these things when you write with different people, because sometimes you get bored writing with yourself ALL the time: so writing with Katy Moffatt, I get to write with someone who's a great singer and melody-maker extraordinaire. And you know Ian Tyson is also a great singer, but he writes about western cowboy things, so we get to do that. I notice he uses a lot of "Ai yi yi" 's. I've been noticing lately, when I write with Dave, somebody always takes their clothes off -- in the song (laughter). IN THE SONG (he repeats and stresses as the audience laughs harder). So I'm going to start putting that into more songs. (laughter). So this is about a guy chasing his girlfriend down the length of the river-that great river that runs from up in Colorado and runs right down to the Gulf of Mexico. And sometimes it runs right onto my property, carrying catfish heads and wind-blown apples. Watering those elm trees.....

— witnessed by Anita Bunter. ~~~*AA*

Dave Alvin contest answer- We have a winner. Steve Buschel of Mt. Kisco, NY, won a framed and autographed copy of Dave's much-talked about cover story on the NY Times Arts & Leisure section. The question was: Name 5 bands that have released albums with Dave Alvin as a member of the band, not including Dave's solo albums. Dave has to be a full member, not just playing on a track or two. ANSWER: The Blasters, X, The Knitters, The Flesheaters, and the Pleasure Barons.

DAVE ALVIN: STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Shedding More Light on Blue Blvd.

In a recent show Dave played his classic song BLUE BLVD in an acoustic band arrangement. Dave added an accompanying narrative dialog as the band maintained the rhythm. It gives a little more depth and vision to a great song. Here is how it went:

DAVE: This is a song that I rarely do anymore and that I rarely do acoustic....but I'm a sucker for requests. This is a song I wrote about my cousin Donna. She's about 10 years older than I am, and she taught my brother Phil and me how to smoke cigarettes correctly. She taught us who Big Joe Turner was... and the Medallions and the Penguins and Don Julie and the Meadowlarks - Carl Perkins and people like that. She was pretty wild for her day. She had a 45 record player in her car. There used to be these streets out in the southeast side of L.A. county like Tweedy Blvd., Whittier Blvd., and Bell Flower Blvd. – where, in my cousin's time, which was in the early 60's, people would spend every night cruising out there. My cousin was that kind of person. She gave us a introduction to rhythm and blues, certain types of white soul music, and country and western. After being married 4 times and having 8 kids she passed away at 43 years old. This song is for her.

*On this empty road in this lonely town, no one's up
when the sun goes down.*

*I'll turn around and cruise once more, by the old park
and the abandoned stores*

Baby, it drives me crazy

*'cuz everyday I work the same old job, waiting for the
night to fall*

*then I'm on this street that once was ours, the street
lights shining just like stars*

Baby, you drove me crazy

*I hung your picture 'round my rear view mirror, but
when I look back, you're not there*

*Every night I remember, we took a drive in my car and I
aimed straight for heaven but I ended up on Blue Blvd.*

DAVE: So the idea of the song was that 25 years later, these streets are all kind of abandoned, and no one does that cruisin' thing anymore. I had an image of a guy who might have had some kind of a romantic affair with my cousin. He shows up 25 years later - driving these empty streets, looking for her.

It runs as far as I can see, but it still ain't far enough for me

With the radio on and a full tank of gas, I'm looking for you baby on every corner I pass.

Baby, you drove me crazy

'cuz I cant find you anywhere. I've spent my whole life going nowhere.

*Every night I remember, we took a ride in my car and I aimed straight for heaven
but I ended up on Blue Blvd.*

I've been searching, down that white line, and I don't know why

'cuz I ended up in the same place

but it's the wrong time and you're not mine You just slipped away -Dave Alvin 1991

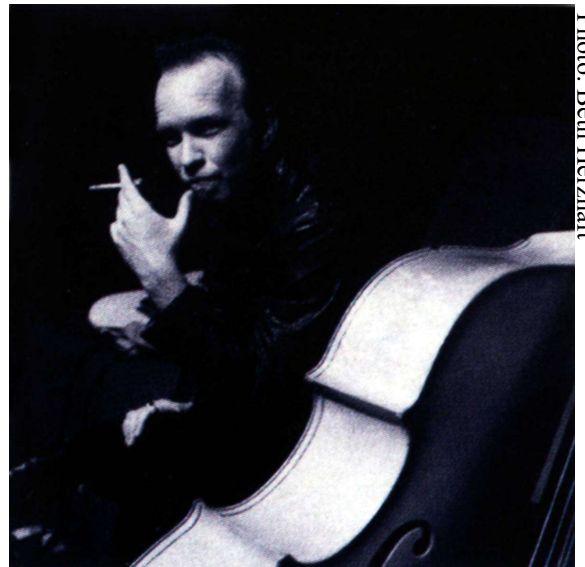


Photo: Beth Herzhaft

Blaster Photo Gallery

by Jerry Angel

The Blasters at the July 4, 1998 Hootenany Festival in Irvine California.

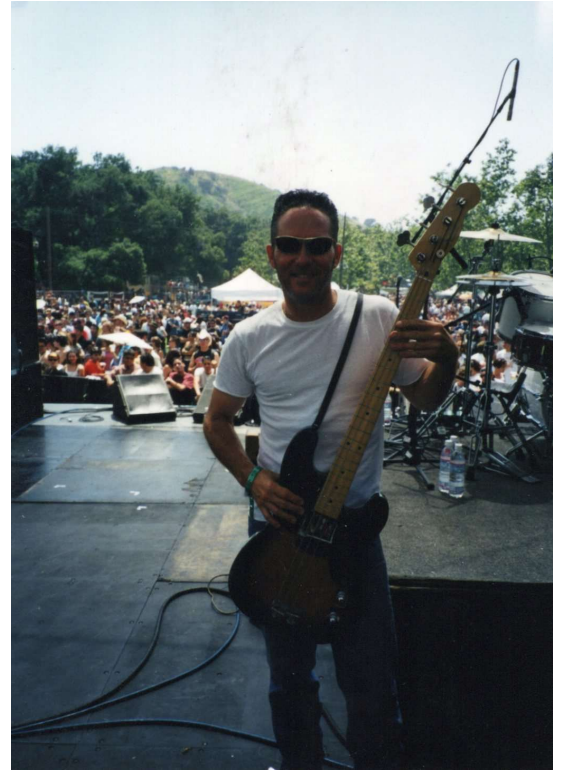
Jerry, "I snapped these off right before the show."

Top left photo – Jerry, "Boys ready to perform."

Bottom left photo – Jerry, "Phil is onstage!!!"

Top Right - Bazz on main stage!

Bottom right photo – Jerry, "Me and Bazz locked and loaded onstage."

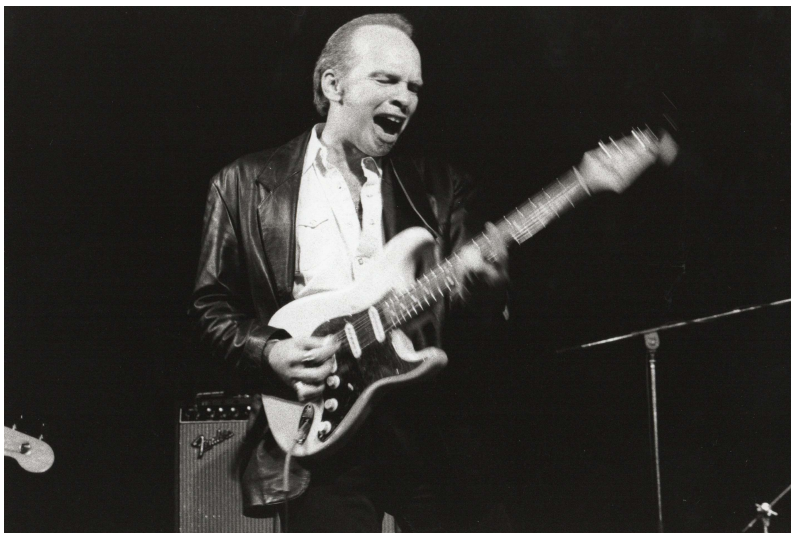
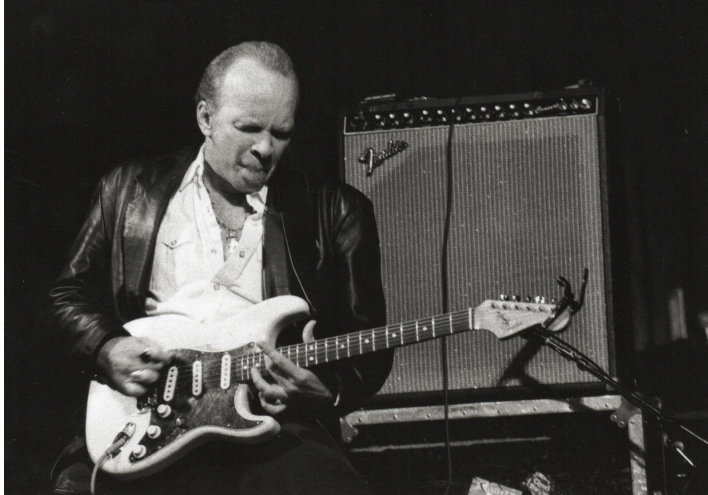


Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men

Bowery Ballroom New York City

February 27, 1999

Photos by Josh Lewis



King Museum
Hiway Black jack
Mary B. 4th
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Bowery Ballroom
2/27/99

Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men

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Dave Alvin and Blasters update mailing — March 1999

— The Blasters have a last minute date added: 4/3/99 Chicago II at House Of Blues 312-923-2000.

— Dave's Austin City Limits episode is due to air on April 10. You can check the ACL web site to check which stations in your region are carrying ACL. <http://www.pbs.org/klru/austin/tvschedule/indexfindstation.html>

In some areas Austin City Limits are running repeats from 1998. So check your listings carefully. This Saturdays new ACL features 'Fastball.' If you tune in, you'll have an idea if your station is running the 1999 episodes.

In the New York City area WLIW is airing episodes on Wednesday at Midnight, these have been the 1998 repeats. They may be switching over to the new episodes this week. Also in the NYC area is WNYC which has just added ACL to its broadcast schedule. It will debut on that channel every Saturday night at 8 PM. They appear to be airing the new episodes.

—Dave said he had a great time on the recent tour. Chicago, New York, and Tampa were great attendance shows. Chris Gaffney will be coming out again on tour with Dave in the summer.

—Rick Shea has now been bitten by the road bug and will probably be joining Dave as an acoustic duo on his summer west coast solo shows. Dave on Rick Shea, "Last year he was fighting the road a little, but now its "Any time, any where -- Lets go!"

—On March 22, 99 Dave was interviewed for Acoustic Guitar magazine for a future issue.

—BJD is just being released in England. The new issue of Mojo Mag has a great review of BJD naming it the Americana album of the month. Recently the Sunday London Times had a great review. Dave, "That was a stunning little thing because we never even got that with the Blasters."

—Dave just played on Buddy Blue's new album sessions. Buddy reports, "Last weekend Dave Alvin played a mean-assed guitar solo on "Milky Way Blues" and we did some inebriated acoustic things that'll probably show up as hidden tracks. I know I say this every time I make an album but I gotta tell ya I think this'll be the best one yet!"

—1st week of April —Dave traveled down to Mussel Shoals Alabama to record with blues legend Little Milton. The "Mussel Shoals Sound Studio" is famous for recordings by Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones "Exile on Main Street" album. Dave wrote a song with Rick Estrin called "Never Trust a Woman" which Dave sings as a duet with Little Milton. Dave played lead guitar on the track as well as rhythm guitar on another song. The album will be released on Malacco records in the fall. Dave said it was a real thrill to be in the studio with Little Milton. He was present in the studio and sang with Dave and threw a lot of pointers Dave's way on how he wanted the vocals.

—Dave has started pre-rehearsals for Katy Moffatt's new album.

—2nd week of April Dave will be producing a 4 song session for Christie McWilson. The Seattle based singer from the Pickets will be looking for a label to release the recordings.

—3rd week of April Dave will go up to San Francisco to record with Ramblin Jack Elliotts new album.

—May 7, 8, 9 — Dave will do a short acoustic tour with Rick Shea

—May 10 — June 4 — Dave is producing Katy Moffatt's recording sessions.

Amazon is taking preorders for Dave Alvin's next book even though the book isn't finished.

Have you heard of these Yahoo on-line clubs? Well I've set one up for the Blasters and Dave Alvin called "American Music."

What it is, is a discussion board where we post messages, news, rumors, and anything else going on with the Blasters and Dave Alvin. We just started this thing and have 21 members so far.

On tuesday night at 10 PM Eastern standard time (that's 7 PM for you west coasters) we have a live chat discussing the up to the minute news. Please stop by. Anyone with internet access can become a member to post on the message board and chat. Below are instructions to get there.

"American Music online fan club established on Yahoo: Goto www.yahoo.com

click on "more" (only if clubs is not listed on main page)

then click on "clubs" enter "American Music" (with quotes) in Search box

club will come up as a match to the search, click on it. In the upper right hand screen will be the button to join.

You'll be asked to create a screen name to use on the site.

You must be registered with Yahoo to join a club. Although it's not necessary just to search through clubs or read posts, only members can post themselves or chat. On the clubs screen will be a link for signing up - then just follow their directions. Don't worry...Yahoo accounts are free.

Any questions contact davistb@aol.com --Billy