

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2007

Dave Alvin Releases Exclusive Digital Singles on DaveAlvin.net

• Blasters shows

(Phil, John, Jerry, Keith)

• 9/29 Malibu CA at Malibu Inn

• 9/30 San Diego CA at Adams Ave Fair

• Dave Alvin & Guilty Men

shows

• 9/26 Boise ID at Live After Five

• 10/2 Santa Cruz CA at Moe's

• 10/3 San Luis O CA at Downtown Brew

• 10/4 Fresno CA at Club Fred

• 10/5 Crystal Bay NV at Crystal Bay Club

• 10/7 San Francisco CA at Golden Gate

• Park Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Fest 4 PM

• The Knitters shows

• 10/6 San Francisco CA at Golden Gate

• Park Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Fest Noon

Photo: Elise Thompson



The Original Four Blasters reunited this summer for a few songs at a Bill Bateman tribute show in Hollywood. The full story inside this issue.

Latest News – Dave Alvin's 9 Volt XM radio show has been renewed for a second year through 2008. -- Dave Alvin may be releasing a new "Only available at shows" CD which may consist of acoustic performances from his annual Neighborhood Church shows in Pasadena. – Gene Taylor will be reuniting with Bill Bateman for a bunch of shows in Belgium Sept. 27 – Nov. 21. Gene will also be in Los Angeles from December 4 – Jan. 5 gigging in various formats possibly with Bill Bateman and John Bazz. – The Flesheaters may be doing more shows in December. – Dave Alvin reports that his Great American Music Hall DVD that has been talked about for the last two years, is close to release. It will be made available on Yeproc.com and DaveAlvin.net -- Rhino is releasing The Very Best of Mick Jagger on CD on Oct. 2. It will include an unreleased track from the session he did with the Red Devils in the early 1990s. The following is taken from a Rhino press release: Meanwhile, as they were making Wandering Spirit, Rick Rubin suggested that Jagger spend a day recording with The

(Continued on page 2)

In This Issue: The Original Blasters play at the Bill Bateman tribute show, The Blasters summer 2007 tour, Jerry Angel's photo gallery, and Dave Alvin's new digital single releases.

Red Devils, a torrid L.A. blues band. "The difficult decision I was faced with when listening to the tracks I recorded with the Red Devils, and having to choose only one, reminded me what a great band they were," says Jagger. One of the results of that session is Jagger's previously unreleased rollicking version of Sonny Boy Williamson's CHECKIN' UP ON MY BABY. -- Wounded Heart of America, the latest CD by Tom Russell, includes versions of Tom's songs by other other artists and four songs by Tom. Dave Alvin's version of BLUE WING and OUT IN CALIFORNIA from King of California is included. A rare version of HALEY'S COMET by the Texas Tornados is also on the CD. -- The combination DVD/CD for the documentary Camp Burlesque is expected to be released on Oct. 30 on the Bird Song label. Dave Alvin performs PASSION POOL on the CD. The CD/DVD is available for preorder at www.parasol.com. --Am

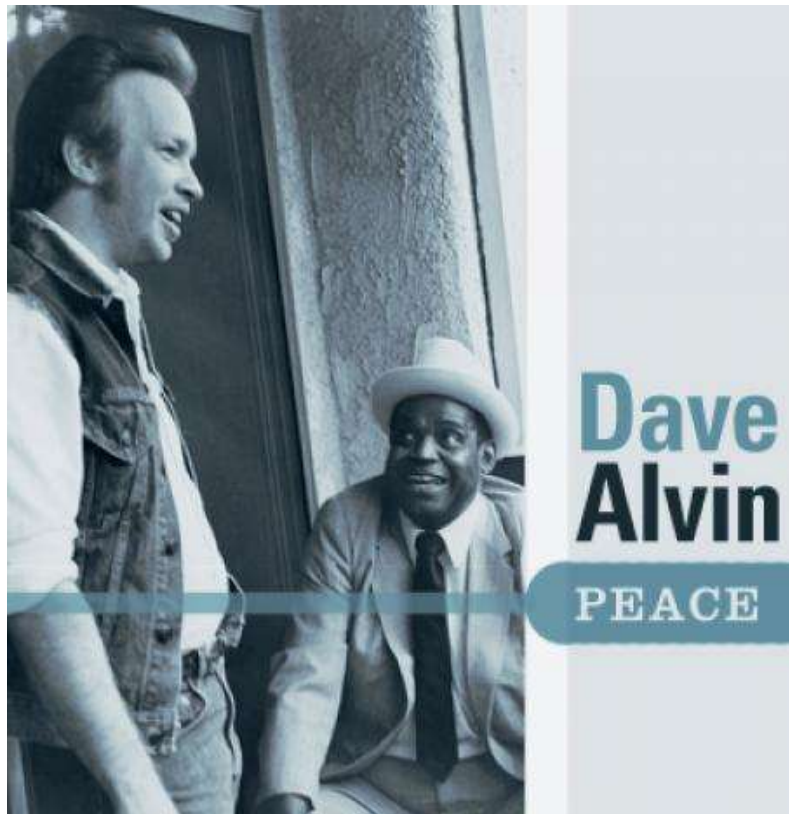
Dave Alvin & Yep Roc Records are pleased to announce the beginning of a new series of exclusive digital tracks

Throughout his career, Dave Alvin has periodically paid tribute to songwriters/performers that have inspired him by recording his favorite songs by these artists. Dave has many of these and other self penned gems hidden away in his personal archives. He is happy to now have the opportunity to make some of these tracks available to you exclusively through yeproc.com and davealvin.net. To accompany each song's release, Dave has a few words for us about why he felt compelled to record it.

PEACE by Willie Dixon -- now available--

I first heard Willie Dixon's PEACE back in the early 1980's, when The Blasters were booked on the PBS music show Soundstage. We had an hour to do whatever we wanted, so we invited Carl Perkins and Willie Dixon to be our special guests. With Carl, we performed various songs dating back to his time on Sun Records and with Willie we backed him up on older material he'd written for Muddy Waters and Howling Wolf. But then Willie wanted to do a new song he'd written called PEACE. It was a minor key blues driven by a typical Dixon hypnotic riff that I really dug. We gladly played the song with him and that was that.

Over the next few years, after I left The Blasters and started my solo career,



Willie and I did a few performances together at various events. After hearing my singing voice for the first time, Willie repeatedly told me that PEACE would be a perfect song for me. Not being comfortable at the time with singing another writer's material, I always respectfully declined. Recently, when The Guilty Men and I had a day off in Los Angeles with nothing to do, I decided to go into Craig Parker Adams' Winslow Court Studio and finally cut Willie's PEACE.

For many reasons it just seemed like the right time. I also added a semi-improvised verse of my own at the end of the song just for the hell of it. I hope Willie doesn't mind too much.

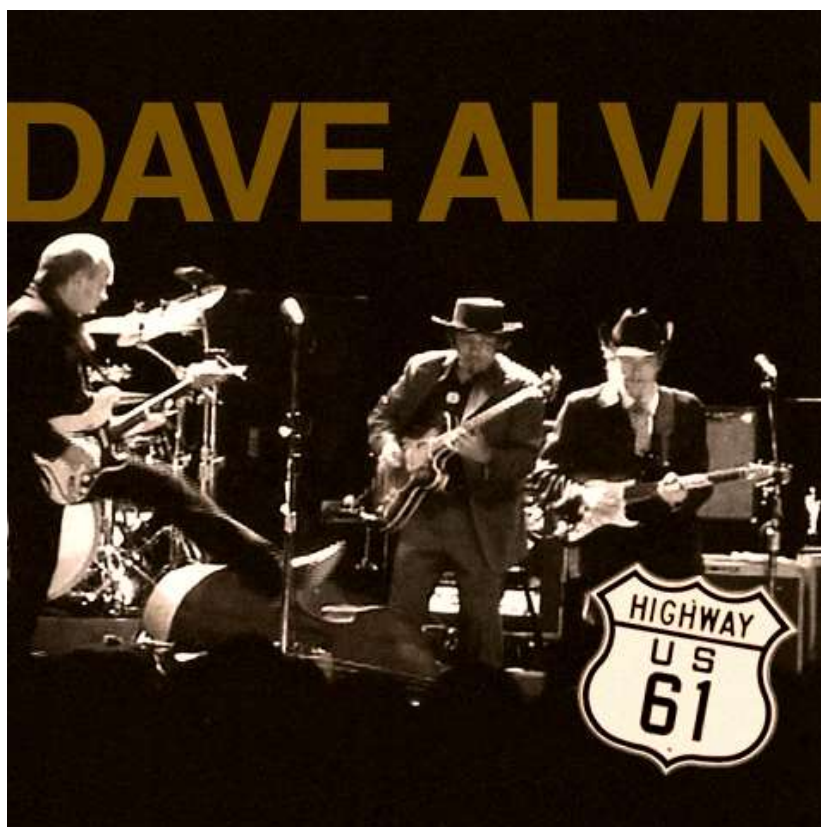
Besides the current Guilty Men line-up on the track (Chris Miller on slide guitar, Joe Terry on electric piano, Gregory Boaz on bass and Steve Mugalian on drums), I was proud to be joined by Dale Spalding on harmonica. Dale grew up in Downey, Ca. with my brother Phil and I and was a big influence on our musical development. Dale, along with his brother Larry, were the guys who told us that if we wanted to see real music we had to get ourselves down to a club called the Ash Grove (Thanks guys!!!). Dale currently plays in Latin jazzman Poncho Sanchez's orchestra and he's featured prominently in another song we cut the same day, "Rumba", that will also be available soon through the websites. - Dave Alvin, July 17, 2007

Highway 61 – Bob Dylan – available September 4 --

Over the years I've crossed paths a few times with perhaps our greatest living songwriter, Bob Dylan. I've even had the great fortune to play music with Dylan a couple of times. I've always felt that he picked up where Woody Guthrie, Robert Johnson, Hank Williams, and Jack Kerouac left off and moved American Music and culture into the future. He's still doing that.

When Uncut Magazine asked me to record HIGHWAY 61 for their Bob Dylan tribute CD insert, I was scared to death... - Dave Alvin, August 29, 2007

On October 2, Dave will release a song he calls VARIATIONS ON EARL'S RUMBA (a tribute to Earl Hooker) next on yeproc.com and davealvin.net



Hollywood's King King Club Pays tribute to the career of Bill Bateman

On June 25, 2007, the infamous King King club in Hollywood hosted a special tribute to drummer Bill Bateman. Famed skateboarder turned film director Steve Olson has been planning a documentary on Bill and wanted some current footage. The owner of the King King club, Mario, came up with the idea of bringing together some of Bill's old bands to the club and filming the event. Those bands are The Original Blasters, The Blue Shadows, and a more recent and upcoming band – Rumble King.

It was expected to be a special event to bring the Original Blasters together for the first time in 4 years and to reunite the Blue Shadows - a great band that was rolling full steam ahead in 2005 before suddenly breaking up, when the singer relocated to the Bay area to form a new band called HUD.

The night started off with a jam band lead by bass player and singer Gil T. playing old-style blues songs like YOU CAN'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER.

Rumble King were next. Bill Bateman has been a part time player with them when he wasn't out on the road with the Cramps. This five-piece band is described as: "Rockin' Rhythm & Blues band that will get you out of your seats and dancing on the tables." The band features upright bass, piano, and two saxophones. Dave Alvin walked into the club during their set and immediately thought they had the same energy he remembers from the Blasters with Lee Allen and Gene Taylor. Dave: "Rumble King were amazing. I felt like I was walking into a Smiley Lewis gig – really authentic."

Another Bill Bateman band was on next – The Blue Shadows. John Bazz on upright bass, Jack Rudy on Harmonica, and Javier 'Jake' Matos on vocals and slide National steel guitar. This was the first time they were playing together in two years. The Blue Shadows held down a regular Monday night gig at the King King back in 2003 – 2004 when they were bound for great things, then suddenly derailed. Maybe this reunion will bring about a reformation of the band.

Jake sang and played great and you wouldn't think the band had been separated for years. Jake: "The Blue Shadows is the

Photo: Kurt Mahoney



The Blue Shadows

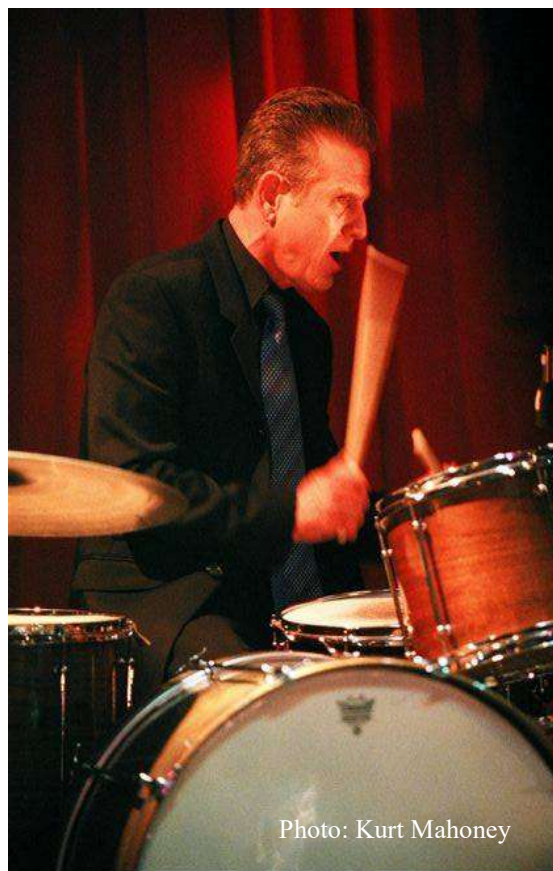


Photo: Kurt Mahoney

Photo: Kurt Mahoney



best band I have ever played in. Not too many bands can play blues like we do. Not the way we play it. There's an honesty there that will probably mean more to people who hear us after we're all dead than while we're living."

One of their best songs is called LITTLE PONY. Jake introed it this night saying: "I wrote this song because I love their (The Blasters) music so much and I wanted to do something of theirs so Bill could have a good time. Bill always has a big smile on his face when he gets to play with Dave and Phil and I wanted to see that big smile when he plays with me. So it's called LITTLE PONY."

Jake later had some kind words to say about Bill Bateman: "Bill is the best musician I have ever played with. He is also one of my best friends... more than that, he's family. I hope that some day we can make a great record and go on the road. We connect on stage. We feel each other's pain and triumph. We understand the blues."

The Original Four Blasters were up next. The band all dressed in black for the special occasion. Phil, though, was wearing jeans and what looked like a fluorescent jacket under the lights. Dave Alvin was using his black strat after his familiar blonde strat malfunctioned just before showtime.

The band sounded great as they opened up with the Carl Perkins song HONEY DON'T. They had played together earlier that day to rehearse about 9 songs. Unfortunately, Phil didn't show up to the rehearsal. AMERICAN MUSIC was next. Phil tried to play different songs from the 9 that were rehearsed, so this caused some momentary confusion. A song that wasn't on the list was Lonesome Sundown's LEAVE MY MONEY ALONE. The band hasn't played that one live in a long time. The song was included as a rare out-take on the Testament complete recordings CD set. Next, Phil recited his "Baha California" dedication to call for BORDER RADIO, but Dave balked. Phil laughed in the mike and announced "Oh? It's not on the list," as Dave started the riff to TROUBLE BOUND. The last song was supposed to be ONE BAD STUD. Phil counted it off and everyone but Dave started playing. The band stopped (assuming it was a false start). Phil joked with the audience: "I said, 'David you're gonna get older than me if you don't take it easy.'" This song was the only one that was a little shaky at the beginning. It probably wasn't on the set list.

As the song ended with a pause, Dave started the opening riff to MARIE MARIE while Phil started singing lyrics to LONELY LONELY NIGHTS. The Alvins were definitely not on the same page this night. Phil kept singing as the band waited. Dave tried the opening riff again to MARIE and this time it took. Phil came in with the proper MARIE MARIE lyrics.

Phil finished by saying: "Thank God for Bill Bateman! We're the Blasters" and they walked off the stage. Dave Alvin wouldn't come out for the encore, so more than a few people in attendance felt that they were wit-

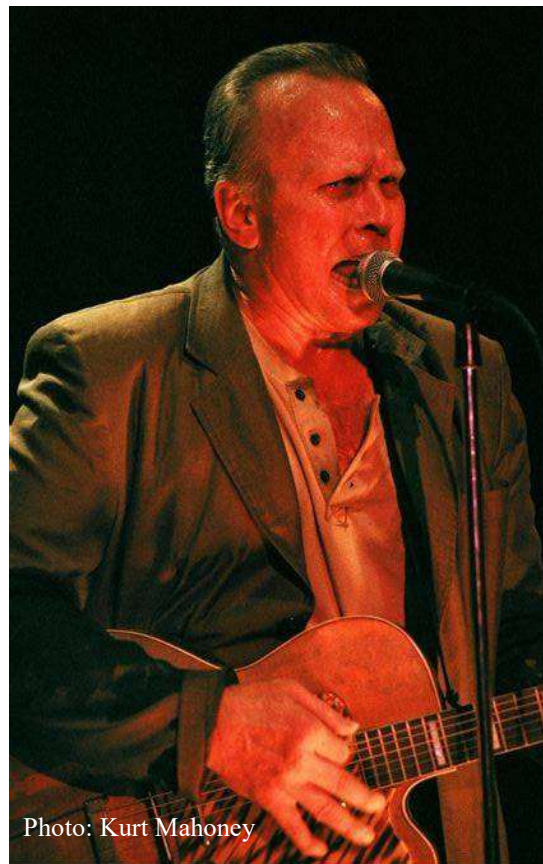


Photo: Kurt Mahoney

nessing another Alvin vs. Alvin spat.

Phil came back to the stage with only Bill Bateman. Whether intentional or not, this configuration made possible the reformation of yet another Bill Bateman band – Phil and Bill. In the pre-Blasters days, Phil Alvin and Bill Bateman used to gig as a duo – Phil on vocal, guitar and harmonica and Bill on drums. The first song of the encore was SAMSON AND DELILAH. Phil then called out “Come on David do one more. Johnny. Brother David. I presumably did something wrong?” The second and last song Phil and Bill did was the Arthur Crudup song MEAN OLE FRISCO.

The apparent disagreement between Phil and Dave probably started with the difference of opinion on the set list. Some say they heard Dave Alvin wouldn’t come out for an encore because the crowd response wasn’t loud enough. The consensus of people around the band said that Dave might not have been happy that Phil missed the rehearsal, came under-dressed, and resisted following the set list.



Photo: Kurt Mahoney

In other bands this would be a black mark, but with the Blasters it only adds to their stormy legacy. The Alvin's always fought. But maybe that volatile nature has helped to make their music so highly intense.

Art Fein wrote in his “Another Fein mess” column that this was “the worst Blasters show” he ever saw. Six songs might not really qualify as a show. Because this was a special event and being filmed, many expected it to be exceptional.

I talked to Phil a few days after the show and he said: “I know David was ‘PO-ed’ but I assume it was something else and not me. I have no idea what it could be. David and I talked on the phone the next day and everything was fine. In fact, David has been really nice to me lately.”

The show sparked many discussions between the fans on the internet message boards. One fan wrote a letter to Dave on DaveAlvin.com that said: “Are things THAT strained between you guys that it always has to be an issue? Geez, Keith and Mick can mend it up enough to record and tour, the Police are doing it, Glenn Frey and Don Henley, all record and tour. . .are the egos that big?”

I have to give Dave Alvin a lot of credit for answering the fan’s letter. Here is what Dave said: “Well, it ain’t so much egos as it is just being brothers. There’s a line in Bob Dylan’s song TANGLED UP IN BLUE that perfectly captures my relationship with my brother: ‘We always did feel the same. We just saw it from a different point of view.’

Unlike Jagger and Richards and the others you men-

tioned, Phil and I are brothers and, as a matter of fact, get along pretty damn well despite what some people think. But brothers have a different, more complicated dynamic than just band mates or songwriting partners. Some people thought we’d never play together again before we got together for some shows in 2002 and ‘03. And we’ll do it again at some point when it’s right. (Hell, Phil just joined me onstage with The Guilty Men last weekend at the Hootenanny festival). Despite whatever artistic/creative/business reasons we fight or make asses out of ourselves, my brother and I love each other as only brothers can and that will never change.”

If the Alvin's were getting along, that wouldn’t be interesting news. But here I am writing a whole story

on this. Yes, we do find this stuff interesting, but in the end at least we know there isn't really any harm done.

On 7/7/07 The Blasters and Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men were scheduled to play their separate sets at The Hootenanny Festival in Irvine, CA. Dave arrived a few hours early to watch Phil and the Blasters play. Then Phil hung around a few hours later to catch Dave's set. These actions don't support the 'battling brothers' theory that makes headlines. Dave invited Phil up onstage for MARIE MARIE and SO LONG BABY GOODBYE marking the first time in Blasters history that Dave and Phil sang together. ~~ *AM*

John Bazz of the Blasters and Blue Shadows comments

The King King show for Bill was a real treat for me and probably everyone in attendance because, besides being a night that was centered around Bill, it showcased 4 of Bill's bands, all good, but two of which that are my favorites - The Blue Shadows and the old Blasters.

It was great having Javier back in town for the weekend and being able to hear Bill and him play the old songs (and some new ones too) together again.

Just as gratifying was seeing all of Bill's long time friends come out for the taping.

Prior to the Blasters, I knew Bill, and had played in a band of his along with brothers Butch and Dave Carroll, but didn't really get to know Bill until after the inception of the Blasters. After the formation of the Blasters, the four of us spent countless hours together, mostly rehearsing at Bill's. And when not rehearsing, we'd all go see other bands that we thought might be interesting, or who were similar to us.

Those were very formative years. And for me, one of the best times to be a Blaster - sitting around Bill's living room, listening to old records (Phil, Dave and Bill have a stellar record collection), learning songs and hanging-out. I think those months spent at Bill's - more than anything else - truly helped define us as a band.

After the initial success of the band, we toured for what seemed like forever.

What a great time that was too, with all of the great gigs in towns and countries, both here and abroad.

Bill and I stay in touch and will play the occasional gig together, but it's never enough. And it's not like the good old days either. Not even close. But perhaps, if we can get Javier to move back to LA, then possibly we can all sit down at Bill's, learn some new songs, call ourselves the Blue Shadows, and try to make a go of it again. It could happen. -- John

Harmonica Player Jack Rudy of the Blue Shadows comments

Bill called me on Thursday, Jake flew in on Saturday, and we all met with John Bazz for a 30-minute rehearsal on Sunday. Then on Monday night we took the stage for our first show in 3 years. The Blue Shadows have always played with a slightly scary pent-up intensity, and I could feel Bate-man driving it from the downbeat. It was a great joy to be playing together again, making that jangly rollicking racket and marveling along with everyone as it somehow came together in music.

I could see Dave Alvin warming up backstage for the subsequent Original Blasters set, and I couldn't resist playing a piece of SO LONG BABY GOODBYE in my solo on LITTLE PONY. After the set, we all joined the crowd cheering on the Blasters and had a great time. We've always planned to get back together, but the chance just hasn't come up. This film about Bill was that chance, and I'm sure there will be others to come.

In other Dave Alvin news, I joined Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men yesterday for the Hootenanny show. It's the biggest greaser/rockabilly/punk/roots show you've ever seen. I'm pretty sure this crowd could kick any other crowd's ass in a fistfight.

The highlight was a surprise appearance on our final two songs by Phil Alvin. He traded vocals with Dave on MARIE MARIE and SO LONG BABY GOODBYE, and I got to play the "official" harmonica part that I was quoting last week in the Blue Shadows show.

That's the news, so now you know. -- Jack Rudy

The Blasters Midwest / East Coast 2007 Tour

By Billy Davis

Touring bands are always looking for easier ways to get themselves and their gear on and off the road comfortably. The Blasters tried a new plan - Phil's plan - to check their instruments and equipment as baggage on regular domestic flights. Then they rent any additional equipment in their first gig city. This turned out to be more affordable and convenient. What that means for fans is it's now even easier for the Blasters to arrange tours more often in the USA.

The Blasters started off in Omaha, NE at a local blues society show. I believe this was the first ever Blasters show in Omaha which would explain its low attendance. The local Rockabillies were probably in nearby Kansas City that night for a Stray Cats reunion show.

I met up with the Blasters for their second gig in Kansas City at a cool place called Knuckleheads. It's an outdoor venue attached to a bar. They call it a biker bar, but I didn't see any motorcycles parked out front. Behind the outer fence of the venue are freight train tracks and a street crossing no more than 40 feet from the venue. Trains come by every 20 minutes and blow their whistle/horn to warn cars of its street crossing. The horn blows so loud, it drowns out the music.

The Blasters arrived early to be interviewed on film by director Benjamin Meade for the film American Music: OFF THE RECORD – a documentary due out in 2008. It is described on IMDB as “An interrogation of the American music industry. The film covers a great deal of ground from the authenticity of live music to the circumvention of the corporate machine by indie distribution, to the demise of the privately owned music store.” The band sat up in a high outdoor balcony to be interviewed, and Phil played a few solo songs.

In sound check the Blasters had a special guest – probably the youngest Blasters fan - a five-year-old little girl named Lucy-Marie. You guessed it: she was named after two Blasters songs - MARIE MARIE and WHAT WILL LUCY DO. Phil started off playing an acoustic version of WHAT WILL LUCY DO for her. Next, Phil warmed up on I LOVE YOU SO from the Blasters first album. Phil spent some time showing the song to Keith as if they might play it in the show, but they never did. Lucy-Marie sat on the sound-checking stage next to Keith Wyatt; she requested what is probably the heaviest Blasters song - DADDY ROLLIN STONE. How do you like that?

Keith leaned over to Lucy-Marie during his solo and gave her his pick to let her strum the





solo as Keith fingered the correct notes. What an experience for a 5-year-old girl. She'll probably grow up to be the biggest rock star in the world with a start like that. The Blasters finished off with COME ON IN THIS HOUSE featuring Phil's harmonica. Then they did the BIG JOE TURNER MEDLEY and the train came by with its loud horn. When The Blasters finished the song, the sound technician asked how they liked the sound. John laughed as he said: "Good. But a little too much train."

There were a bunch of people at sound check who, as has been reported more than a few times in my past tour diaries, got to see a bonus Blasters mini-set chock full of rare songs in the sound check.

To start the show, Phil said to the near sell-out audience: "I was brought up by Big Joe Turner who told me when I was 18; 'stop embarrassing me and you, and sing in your own voice.' So this goes out to Kansas City and Big Joe Turner." As they played the BIG JOE TURNER MEDLEY, I thought how interesting it is that Big Joe was the one who encouraged Phil to develop a singing style that is unlike anyone else.

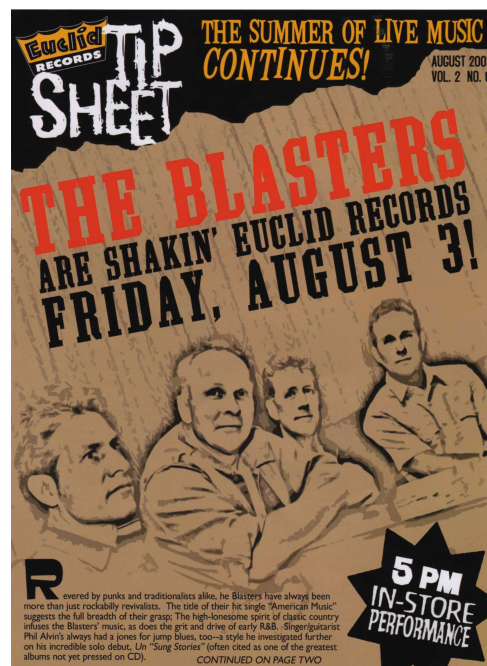
In the show the Blasters were loud, and so was the crowd response. We never heard a freight train in all that time. I'm told a few did come by. I can only imagine we didn't hear it because Phil sings louder than even a

freight train's horn.

Kansas City is a great city. I'm glad I had a few days there and had some great friends to show me around. The Negro Leagues Baseball museum, the Jazz museum, and the Arabia Steamboat museum are really worthwhile. The BBQ was delicious at Gates, Arthur Bryant's, and Winslow's. Don't tell anyone that I ate 4 and a quarter pounds of BBQ brisket in 4 days there. Wow, that was good.

A new song the Blasters have been playing lately is a James Brown song called PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE. Phil sets up the song by telling the audience: "James Brown died around Christmas time. They said on TV that James hadn't had a hit in a while, took drugs, was in jail, and beat up his wife. I remember when I was 10 years old and the Watts riots were going on. Stuff was breaking out all over the country. James Brown took the Governor of California out on the streets and said 'Stop this craziness' and the shit stopped right there. So this goes out to James Brown."

Phil has been doing a song originally by J.E. Mainer called THE YO-DELING MOUNTAINEER. He used to play it solo, but now the rest of the band has learned it and accompanies him on it. A good song for hearing Phil yodel.



In St. Louis the Blasters stopped at Euclid Records for an in-store performance. Today St. Louis in August is near 100 degrees – a heat wave. The store had a nice display of Blasters CDs and a cool looking promotional poster hanging all over the store.

They started with a warm-up song called LOW DOWN DIRTY SHAME, followed by ALL YOUR FAULT. Phil played the YODELING MOUNTAINEER for a bunch of kids who were sitting on the floor at Phil's feet. BORDER RADIO and BONEYARD were next. You could tell the band were trying to play quietly since they were in a small store. When Phil called for BONEYARD, Keith smiled at the challenge. It's a loud song but the crowd loved it. At the mid-song break Keith smiled at Phil and gave the sign to cut off the song. Phil shook him off, and they continued. The last song was the BIG JOE TURNER MEDLEY.

The evening gig was at an outdoor venue called 'Beale On Broadway.' The small stage was set up like a 1800's porch that would overlook the nearby Mississippi River. Behind the stage was the massive Busch Stadium where baseball's Cardinals play. For the second night in a row, we had a train line, this time elevated, running along side the club.

Before any music started, Phil announced: "This is a toast to Lee Allen" and the four drank a shot of Johnny Walker scotch which was Lee Allen's favorite drink. In tribute to Lee Allen, Johnny Walker whiskey is still on the band's contract 'rider' (list of stuff the venue has to provide for the band). Phil, always inquisitive, asked the crowd: "Isn't Beale in another city? Memphis? What's it doing on Broadway?" The band played a good show in the evening heat staying close to the regular set list.

Chicago was next at Fitzgerald's – another favorite club of mine. The staff and people are friendly, and there is a big Blasters / Dave Alvin fan base there. The club was packed tonight. The Blasters started off with DARK NIGHT which roused the crowd. I heard one person excitedly say "Oh yeah, that's the song from the movie From Dusk 'Til Dawn." The BIG JOE TURNER MEDLEY came second and then LONG WHITE CADILLAC. Phil was mixing the set list around some. For a harmonica song, Phil chose COME ON IN THIS HOUSE, a true Chicago blues number. Phil called out for Frank Furillo, who was expected to be at the show but he never appeared.

In the encore, Phil announced: "Barry Bonds tied Hank Aaron's (homerun) record tonight," which brought a round of 'boos.' Phil tried to defend Bonds and said: "I don't care how many steroids he took; he had that swing all his life. He may be an asshole – never confuse the artist with the man. So I have to give this out to Barry Bonds" and they went into ONE BAD STUD. Phil smiled as he sang: "One Bad Stud on Steroids." Later Phil further backed up Barry Bonds adding: "At Candlestick Park (The Giants old baseball stadium) the wind blows in from centerfield making it hard to hit home runs. He has a crazy swing."

The band came out for a second encore, so Phil said: "I'm gonna have to make it up to you for dedicating a song to Barry Bonds. This is for Chicago," and they launched into AMERICAN MUSIC.

Phil was looking good tonight, wearing a nice black button shirt and a new pair of boots. He probably went down to Maxwell Street to do a bit of shopping.

After shows in Milwaukee and Columbus, OH, the Blasters made their way to Bethlehem, PA, to appear on "Little George's" afternoon radio show on WDIY called "The Blend."

The Blasters set up in the radio station in a big room to record a few live songs. The band used a scaled down set-up. Jerry Angel played just a snare drum, tapping it with his fingers. Surprisingly, on the broadcast it sounded just like he was using sticks – a nice touch. In a between-song-break, Phil started playing a blues song called SUGAR MAMA. The rest of the band came in after about a minute; and it came out so good on tape that it was later broadcast at the end of the show. They also recorded MEAN OLE FRISCO and RED ROSE. Then Phil sat down in the broadcast booth with Little George for a live interview. Little George



was cued in that Phil gives long answers and that he may not get to ask all his questions. Phil overheard that and said: "Tell him not to interrupt me if he doesn't want to say anything (laughs)." Phil talked and played a few solo songs accompanied by his own guitar. John Bazz assisted by making funny faces through the soundproof glass. Little George asked about the current Blasters members. Phil said that Johnny Bazz and he started this band in 1967 and that Keith and Jerry have been in the band about 15 years. He added: "And a finer trio to back me up I could not have. They are the most proficient – If you're in the Blasters, you are the baddest at doing what you do." He played BIG ROAD BLUES and STACKOLEE.

This was cool to sit in the small booth and listen to Phil play these songs.

Little George had a really good last question: "You guys were influenced by T-Bone Walker and Big Joe Turner. How does it feel to now BE an influence?" I would have been very interested to hear what Phil had to say on that because the passing of the torch in American roots music is very important. An authentic feel can only be learned from the legends. Phil only said: "I never take credit for music. It was handed to me by great people. To the extent that I can hand it to other people, therein lies any greatness I might scratch at the door of."

That same night the Blasters played the Sellersville Theater. The band got there early and the set up took longer than expected. They got a little impatient and hungry and decided to leave without a sound check. Later when the band played, they all agreed the onstage sound (through the monitors) was excellent and it fueled them to put on an even better show. The sound technician did a super job. Jerry Angel thought this was the best show of the tour.

The sound technicians always ask the band how they would like to be announced to the stage. One of the Blasters found it amusing to be announced as: "From Disneyland. The Blasters." And so it was announced at every show for the rest of the tour.

The audience was very rowdy, yelling out comments and cheering for all their favorite songs. This brought the Blasters to another level. At one point the requests were so heated between two fans, Phil flipped a coin to decide.

Near the end of the show, Phil's guitar strap broke on the neck side of the guitar. We couldn't change straps because on the other side it was screwed directly into the body. Phil had to prop his one leg up for the rest of the show to hold the guitar up. I feel sorry for Phil's Kay 'Jimmy Reed' guitar. It's in such bad shape. It's water-logged from sweat. There is a big hole almost worn through on the back where his belt buckle rubs. It has a grounding problem, so he wraps a steel string from the bridge to the volume pot. Phil's guitar has seen better days but keeps on going like the Energizer Bunny.

The next show was in New York City's Times Square at BB King's club. The weather was nice – a cool breeze after suffering high 90 degree temps in the Midwest. The show was billed as an evening with the Blasters. It was an early 8 PM show with a 9:45 curfew.

They played another solid set. The two stand-out songs tonight were by special request: NEVER NO MORE BLUES and HELP YOU DREAM. Without an opening act, the Blasters finished early which left a lot of time for an after show party at a local bar. That was a lot of fun. Phil even got up the energy to come out of his hotel room and hang out for a while. He usually is so drained from the performance that he has to lie down and rest. We had friends there who traveled great distances from Montreal and Southern California just to see a New York City Blasters show.

It's really cool that the Blasters all hang out with each other. A lot of other





bands don't socialize with each other once they leave the stage, these guys do, so that's nice to see.

The last show of the tour was in the Washington, D. C., area. Glen Echo Park (just over the border in Maryland) is a restored amusement park from 1898 located on the Potomac River. The Spanish Ballroom is a beautifully restored 1933 Mediterranean style art deco building with an old wooden dance floor. There is no heat or air-conditioning - completely old school, just electricity.

The focus of the Saturday night event is ballroom dancing. The Blasters played this gig last year after being booked by one of the dance teachers who was a Blasters fan. It went over so well that they brought them back this year. The evening started with a 1-hour swing dance lesson; then the Blasters played and eve-

ryone, I mean everyone danced to their music. There had to be about 500 people all dancing to every Blasters song. It was funny to see the people dancing to I'M SHAKIN. Every time there was a break in the song, it seemed natural that the dancers should freeze because there is no beat going on, but they kept going as if there was a beat playing.

I was standing on the side of the stage tending to what ever the Blasters needed when Phil (as he does every show) lit up a cigarette during BONEYARD. I recall reading at the front door that they had a strict rule of no smoking in any of the Glen Echo Park buildings. I knew right then that someone in authority was going to approach the stage about the cigarette and I would be the one to have to put out the fire--literally. I know that trying to get Phil's attention while in his mid-song-trace-state is impossible, so there was only one thing left to do - Hide! I stepped back stage and made it look like I was tending to something. I was right: the MC stood in front of Phil and tried to get his attention. I waited until the end of the song and brought a water bottle to dispose of the cigarette - to keep him from stamping it out on the beautifully finished vintage wood stage. Phil always laughs and says that the cigarette is part of his act.

They played LOVE IS MY BUISNESS for the first time on this tour just to add another swing dance tune. Near the end of the show, the MC interrupted the set with an announcement for the audience. He said it was time to 'Dance with the Band.' The crowd gathered in a semi circle as the Blasters started a very unique version of THE BIG JOE TURNER MEDLEY. The best dance teams came out solo in the semi-circle and put on their best moves in 30 seconds - complete with flips in the air and near acrobatics. Then the next couple and then the next again. What made the Blasters song unique was that it became a 10 minute medley of Turner songs like ROLLEM PETE, MY GAL'S A JOCKEY, SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL, HIDE AND SEEK, and SALLY ZU-ZAZZ - BLUES. They finished it off with ONE BAD STUD, a song in the Big Joe style. Keith took a total of 8 solos in the song and Jerry kept up that fast beat for the entire song and didn't break a sweat.

The tour was over. The crowds were great. From touring so heavily, The Blasters are a super tight band right now. I think this band will never get the recognition it deserves, because it will always be viewed in the shadow of the Original Blasters. The truth is that both bands are exciting to hear play live! —Am



Jerry Angel Photo Collection





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