

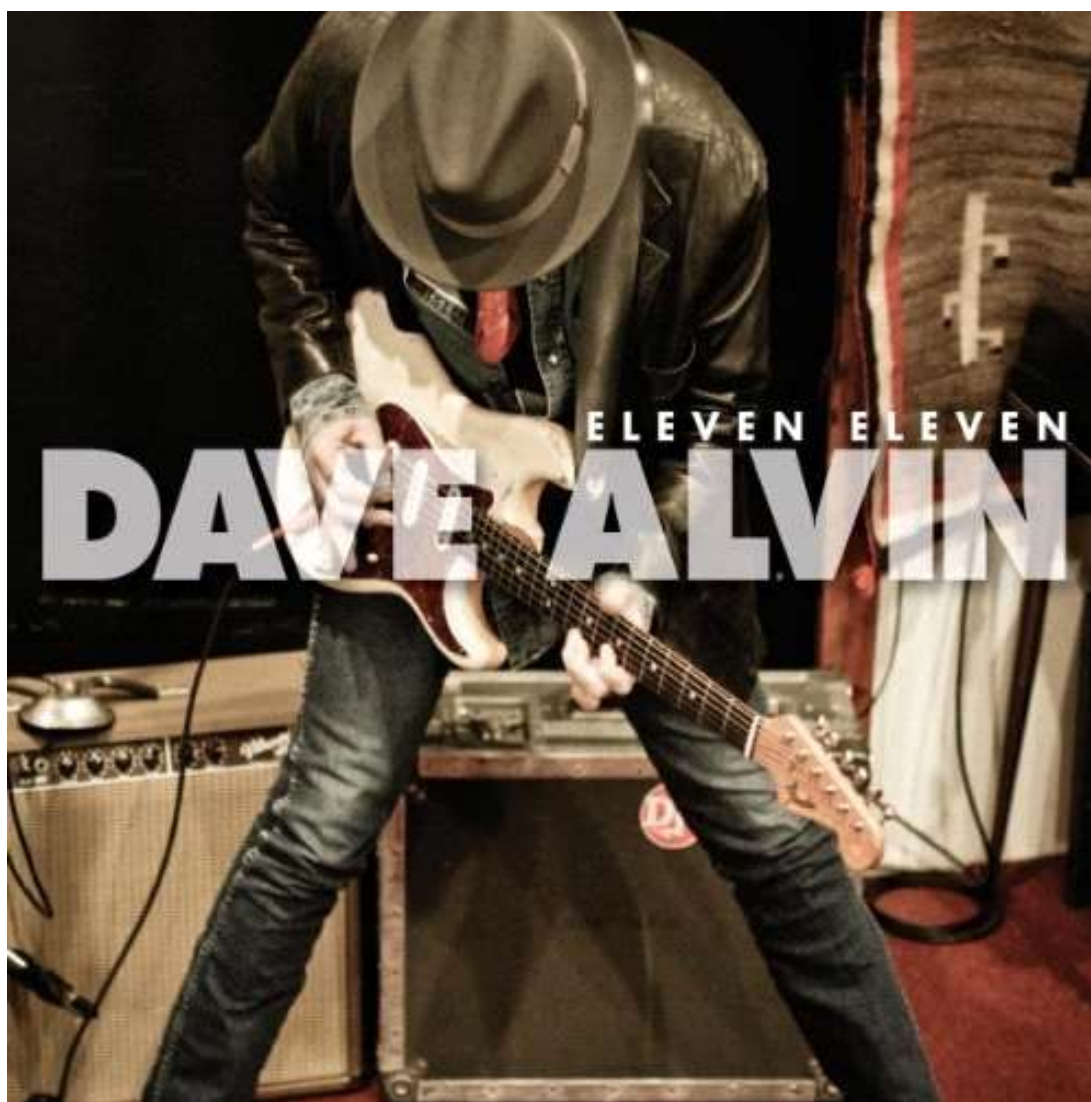
ISSUE #64

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

11-11-2011

Dave Alvin's new CD **Eleven Eleven**



*In This Issue: Dave's new CD, new band,
and summer tour coverage.*

Blasters shows (Phil, John, Bill, Keith)

(tentative dates—please check www.Blastersnewsletter.com for updates)

11/30 San Diego CA at the Casbah
12/1 Phoenix AZ at The Rhythm Room
12/2 Tucson AZ at Rialto Theater
12/3 Hollywood CA at Troubadour
12/4 Redondo Beach CA at The Brixton
12/5 Ventura CA at Ventura Theater
12/6 Las Vegas NV at Country Saloon

Dave Alvin & The Guilty Ones

11/11 Rockland ME at The Strand Theater
11/12 Somerville MA at Johnny D's
11/13 Fall River MA at Narrows center
11/15 Sellersville, PA at Sellers Theatre
11/16 Alexandria VA at The Birchmere
11/17 Pittsburgh, PA at Club Cafe
11/20 Charleston WV at Mountain Stage
11/22 Bay Shore, NY at Boulton Center
11/23 New York City NY at City Winery
12/8 San Antonio TX at Sam's Burger
12/9 Austin TX at Continental
12/10 Houston TX at Continental

2012

3/10 Valparaiso IN at Memorial Opera
4/28 Indio, CA at Stagecoach Festival

Dave Alvin solo acoustic

11/18 Columbus, OH Grand Valley Dale
11/19 Marietta OH at The Adelphia

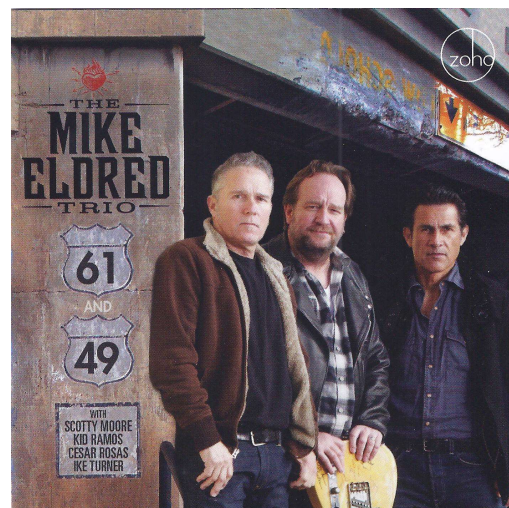
2012

1/21 San Diego CA at Acoustic Music
2/3 Berkeley CA at Freight and Salvage

Latest news: Dave Alvin's new CD Eleven Eleven was released on 6/21/11. — The Blasters are in the studio in November, 2011, recording an 8-song CD for Rip Cat Records. -- Dave Alvin and the Blasters are mentioned in the book Rockabilly: The Twang Heard 'Round the World - The Illustrated History, published by Voyageur Press.

The book features an introduction by Sonny Burgess, who played with the Blasters on their Going Home CD and DVD, and

essays by such writers as Peter Guralnick, Robert Gordon, and Greil Marcus. One photo in the book of Dave Alvin is identified as Phil Alvin. (ed. - Some things never change.) -- Tom Russell has released Don't Look Down, a new DVD that features an interview with various artists, including Dave Alvin. It is available from Village Records at www.villagerecords.com. -- Rosie Flores, who co-wrote and sang on GOOD-BYE AGAIN on Dave's King of California CD in 1994, has raised more than \$16,000 to release the final album by rockabilly singer Janis Martin, who died of cancer in September, 2007, at age 68. The 10-song album features a version of Dave's LONG WHITE CADILLAC that is sung in the third person instead of first person. A snippet of the recording can be heard at RosieFlores.com/cms/ -- Dave Alvin is planning a spring 2012 tour of Europe including Italy, The Netherlands, and England. — The Blasters are playing some european festivals in June and July of 2012. — The Mike Eldred Trio has just released a new CD called 61 And 49 on Zoho Roots Records (www.Zohomusic.com) The band is led by guitarist/vocalist Mike Eldred, with Blaster John Bazz, and former Blaster Jerry



Angel. The CD features guest appearances by Scotty Moore, Ike Turner, Cesar Rosas, and Kid Ramos. — **AM**

Dave Alvin Eleven Eleven Contest

In promotion of the Eleven Eleven album, Dave Alvin and his web site have claimed that this is his 11th solo album, though you can count 16.

They are telling us the truth.

Can you pick out which eleven albums count as “solo albums” from the list on the right?

Send in your entries to davistb@aol.com. 1 winner will be randomly drawn from the correct answerers and will receive a rare Dave Alvin CD. Contest ends January 15, 2012.

The answer will be published in the next issue of American Music.

1. Romeo's Escape (Epic) 1986
2. Blue Blvd (HighTone) 1991
3. Museum of Heart (HighTone) 1993
4. King of California (HighTone) 1994
5. Interstate City (HighTone) 1996
6. Black Jack David (HighTone) 1998
7. Public Domain (HighTone) 2000
8. Out in California (HighTone) 2002
9. Outtakes in California (self released) 2002
10. Ashgrove (Yep Roc) 2004
11. Great American Music Galaxy (YRPS) 2005
12. West of the West (Yep Roc) 2006
13. Live From Austin TX (New West) 2007
14. Best of the Hightone Years (Shout Factory) 2008
15. Dave Alvin and the Guilty Women (Yep Roc) 2009
16. Eleven Eleven (Yep Roc) 2011



Dave Alvin song-by-song on the CD ELEVEN ELEVEN

I know nothing about numerology. Some folks tell me that Eleven Eleven is fraught with significance. They could be right. I don't know. I do know that this is my eleventh solo album, it has eleven songs and it's being released in 2011. (ed.note-- Dave Alvin was born 11/11/55) -- Dave Alvin

Concept: I was just writing songs while out on the road. Christy McWilson would drive, and I'd sit shotgun and be able to write songs. I normally don't write songs while on tour, but I tried it, and it was fun. Along the way, I would call up Craig Parker Adams at the Winslow Court Studio in L. A. and go in for a session. I'd call up friends who might have been available, like Greg Boaz, Bob Glaub, or Don Heffington or Gene Taylor. It all came together like that. It wasn't until the recordings were almost finished that I started thinking this was an album. I was looking for a title, and it didn't feel right to name the album after a song. Then it dawned on me that my birthday was Eleven Eleven in 2011.



HARLAN COUNTY LINE: "I was writing this thing and along came the offer from the TV show to include it. The song, like the show, is set in Harlan County, Kentucky. The guy in the song is kind of a Dave Alvin character." Might it be the character in 30 DOLLAR ROOM? Dave said: "Maybe. We're checking in on him again to see how he's doing."

Dave Alvin on FX TV's Justified -- Dave Alvin debuted the song HARLAN COUNTY LINE on the FX TV network show Justified on February 23, 2011 (episode 3 titled: The I of the Storm). The song was specifically written for the show, and is the opening track on Dave's Eleven Eleven CD. In the TV show, Dave Alvin is seen in an out-of-the-way roadhouse performing the song. Star Timothy Olyphant, as Deputy Raylan Givens, is joined at the bar by a guest who asks what he's doing, he responds, "I'm waiting for Dave Alvin to go on." Sure enough, there's Alvin tuning up and then launching into the song HARLAN COUNTY LINE, backed by guitarist Rick Shea and Steve Mugalian.

The show's creators are longtime Alvin fans themselves, so they decided during the second season to write him into the show. "I have been listening to Dave Alvin since his days with The Blasters," said Justified executive Producer/Writer Graham Yost. "Our star, Tim Olyphant, is also a big fan, as are executive producers Sarah Timberman and Michael Dinner. Greg Sill, our music supervisor, and I discussed ways of working Dave and his music into the show. Dave wrote HARLAN COUNTY LINE for fun, sent it along, and we just flipped for it. We decided to create a scene in a roadhouse where we could have him play it. In editing, we saw that it worked so well that we had the song continue on into the next scene. Having Dave Alvin on our show has been one of the highlights of the season."

JOHNNY ACE IS DEAD: "That was one of the earliest songs I wrote for the album. I was sitting in the van and just started writing it down for the hell of it. I started thinking, 'this isn't bad,' so I kept writing and writing and it became a song. I called some former Guilty Men into the studio: Greg Boaz, Steve Mugalian, and Greg Leisz, and we cut it." Many fans have been asking how long time Guilty Man Gregory Boaz is doing lately. Dave replied: "Both he and Joe Terry got tired of being on the road. Gregory lives near the beach with his girlfriend and every morning gets up and goes surfing. He's happy."

"We had a few versions of the song that were kind of "jammy," so I cut out the jams, and it became what you hear. After the recording, I thought it was really good, but didn't yet know what to do with it. This was before the Eleven Eleven album idea came about."

Johnny Ace's Death – On Christmas day 1954, Johnny Ace performed at the City Auditorium in Houston, Texas. During a break between sets, he was playing with a .22 cal revolver. Members of his band said he did this often, sometimes shooting at roadside signs from their car.

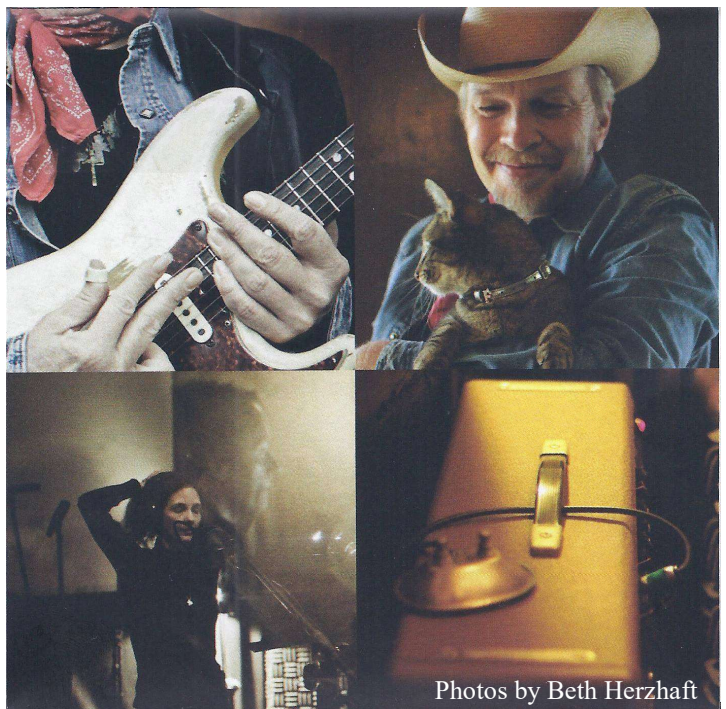
It was widely reported that Ace killed himself playing Russian roulette. However, Big Mama Thornton's bass player Curtis Tillman, who witnessed the event, said, "I will tell you exactly what happened! Johnny Ace had been drinking, and he had this little pistol he was waving around the table and someone said, 'Be careful with that thing...' and he said 'It's okay! Gun's not loaded...see?' He pointed it at himself with a smile on his face and 'Bang!' Big Mama ran outta that dressing room yelling 'Johnny Ace just killed himself!'"

BLACK ROSE OF TEXAS: "I affectionately used to call Amy Farris 'The Black Rose of Texas.' That was something I just had to write about. In hindsight, I'm trying to make sense of the suicide. Johnny Ace's suicide was probably accidental – but still stupid. Amy's was not accidental, as far as we know. It's all tragic.

Amy Farris from Austin, Texas - was a fiddle/violin player who played on numerous sessions for other artists. Her 2004 solo album, Anyway (Yep Roc Records), was produced by Dave Alvin. She was a member of Dave Alvin's Guilty Women band in 2008-2009.

GARY INDIANA 1959: "That's another song we wrote on the road. We recorded it during the December 2010 Gene Taylor Blues Band dates – while Gene was here in the states – he lives in Belgium. We cut an instrumental song together a few years earlier with Gene on piano and I played my National Steel guitar called PERDIDO STREET BLUES (available as a download on DaveAlvin.net)."

"Gary, Indiana, in 1959 was when the steel workers across the nation stood together to strike, and it even affected the defense industry. I was 4 years old, and the strike was one of the biggest ever. I have a memory of that because it lasted a long time, and my old man (union organizer Cass Alvin) was not getting paid. It affected our family, and we lived on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for a while. But really, a lot of these songs have a subtext to them of people having to do things to get by and pay the rent. Like the guy in MURRIETTA'S HEAD."



Photos by Beth Herzhaft

The steel strike of 1959 - was a labor union strike by the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) against the major steel companies in the United States. On July 15, 500,000 steelworkers went on strike for 116 days. The strike shuttered nearly every steel mill in the country. The strike occurred over management's demand that the union give up a contract clause which limited management's ability to change the number of workers assigned to a task or to introduce new work rules or machinery which would result in reduced hours or numbers of employees. The union eventually retained the contract clause and won minimal wage increases. On the other hand, the strike led to significant importation of foreign steel for the first time in U.S. history, which replaced the domestic steel industry in the long run.

Dave on Playing with Blasters Phil Alvin and Gene Taylor -- "We all grew up together. As you get older and a lot of your friends die and things like that, it's just kind of important, at least it's important to me, to not drift too far away. Sometimes when you're younger and you're mad at everybody, you can spend years away. Our hometown has changed so much that when I go back there, just driving through, I don't feel like it's my hometown anymore. It's just another place on the road. But, when I'm onstage with those other guys, I'm back home. It's like nothing's ever changed."

RUN CONEJO RUN: "I had to write a Gaffney story. It's only a small sliver of Chris's story. 'Conejo' was his childhood nickname because he was a fast runner. It means 'Rabbit.' I started writing it as a country song, but then I thought Chris would want something pretty rockin'. So I turned it around and made it a Bo Diddley number.

Photo by Beth Herzhaft



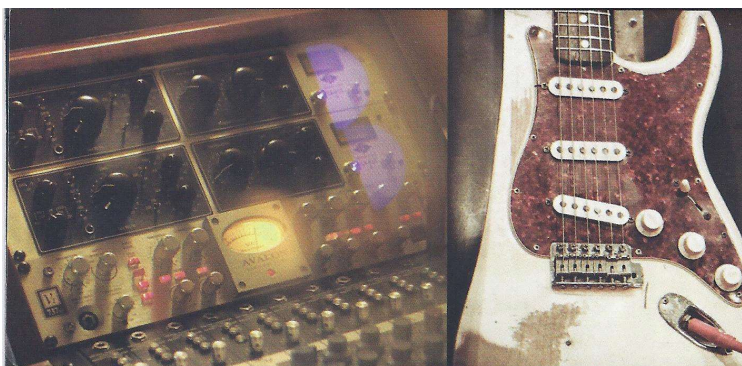
NO WORRIES MIJA: "I used Chris Gaffney's Cold Hard facts piano player Wyman Reese and David Jackson on bass and accordion. David Jackson was trying to channel Gaffney on accordion, and I do think he made it sound like Chris."

"Chris Gaffney is listed as a co-writer; he had written maybe one line. The song was something that was lying around as a fragment, and I finished it." I asked Dave if this is based on a real character. He replied: "Could be, Could be. My lips are sealed."

WHAT'S UP WITH YOUR BROTHER: "I cut that only a few weeks after JOHNNY ACE IS DEAD with the same guys: Boaz, Mugalian, and Wyman Reese. When Yep Roc didn't like my idea of a CD of all of my download songs, I said: 'Okay, let's just make a new album. So that's when I started writing the rest of the songs.'"

"I was in Madison, WI, at a gig. I was in the bathroom two different times and two different guys asked 'What's up with your brother?' So instantly I had a song. I went back to the hotel, wrote it, and called Phil. I said: 'I have a song for us to sing.' He said: 'What's it about?' I replied 'You'll see.' I got back in town a few weeks later and brought Phil

into the studio, and he liked it. It was pretty much sung live. The comedy routine at the end was totally spontaneous. Phil and I were looking at each other about 5 feet away, and I said: 'Good to sing and play with you Phil.' I thought that would be it. No, then he went all-Phil on us (laughs). You can hear me stuttering in the background. It was a lot of fun. We're getting along better than we have in decades."



"We had one argument in the studio when we recorded. It wasn't about lyrics. I've learned to respect certain things he says about lyrics. It was about phrasing - how he was singing it. We went at it on that, but that was standard for us in arranging songs in the old Blasters days."

MURRIETTA'S HEAD: "There are a lot of California songwriters who have written about Joaquin Murrietta. Most told the story from the

'Robin Hood' angle. He may have been that, or he may not have been. I'm telling a story about a bounty hunter. I could have just made up a name because the real story is about a guy who's on hard times, and he's willing to kill someone to get money. That's the real point of my song."

Joaquin Murrietta was - called the Mexican or Chilean Robin Hood or the Robin Hood of El Dorado, he was a semi-legendary figure in California during the California Gold Rush of the 1850s. Depending on the point of view, he was considered an infamous bandit or a Mexican patriot. He was partly the inspiration for the fictional character of 'Zorro.'

MANZANITA: "This is a song Christy and I wrote on the road when we were talking about our childhoods. The Manzanita is a bush with brilliant red bark found in the west from Washington to California. Christy plays piano on that one playing chords in the back ground to enhance the sound. At home she likes to play old 19th century hymns. We've discussed making an album in the future of her singing old hymns and playing the pump organ. We'll get some really good musicians and record in her living room."

DIRTY NIGHTGOWN: "That guitar lick has been in my head for a long time, and I couldn't find anything to go with it because it's pretty heavy. It's a nasty old blues. After all the death and bounty hunting on this album, we needed a good sex song. I haven't written a sex song since maybe HOLLYWOOD BED or NEW TATTOO."

TWO LUCKY BUMS: "I thought, what would be the polar opposite of DIRTY NIGHTGOWN - this song! I took a song off the album to fit this one on there. It's the earliest song recorded for this CD because it was recorded for release as a download in 2007."

Dave Alvin on TWO LUCKY BUMS in 2007 - Out in the lonely, high desert plains of New Mexico is a tiny, semi-abandoned town called Cuervo. Fifteen or twenty mostly dilapidated buildings made of rock, adobe, and wood. My best guess is that they were built around one hundred years ago, but they could be much older. In their current state, the buildings appear not to have been constructed by human hands but to have risen out of the surrounding sand, rock, and chaparral landscape under their own power. That's about all I know about Cuervo.

Now, what does Cuervo have to do with "Two Lucky Bums", a duet that I wrote for myself and my best pal, Chris Gaffney? Well, for many years after Gaffney and I first stumbled on to Cuervo late one night while on tour, he and I have fantasized about buying the quasi-ghost town and moving there, and dragging all our other friends along with us. Of course, we don't have the cash to do it, but it's a nice little dream for a couple of musician/bums. We've spent more than a few hours on various highways and continents making wildly improbable plans for our small desert paradise. Whenever we're driving near Cuervo, we always stop and say something wistful along the lines of, "Someday, Gaffney" or "Someday, Alvin." Eventually, I figured if we ever did find ourselves in the unlikely position of possessing Cuervo, that the potentially ludicrous experience would probably be like an old Bing Crosby and Bob Hope "road" movie. The 'Road To Cuervo,' I guess. And that movie would need some songs -- so I'd better write some. TWO LUCKY BUMS might just be the theme song.

Eleven Eleven

Bonus songs:

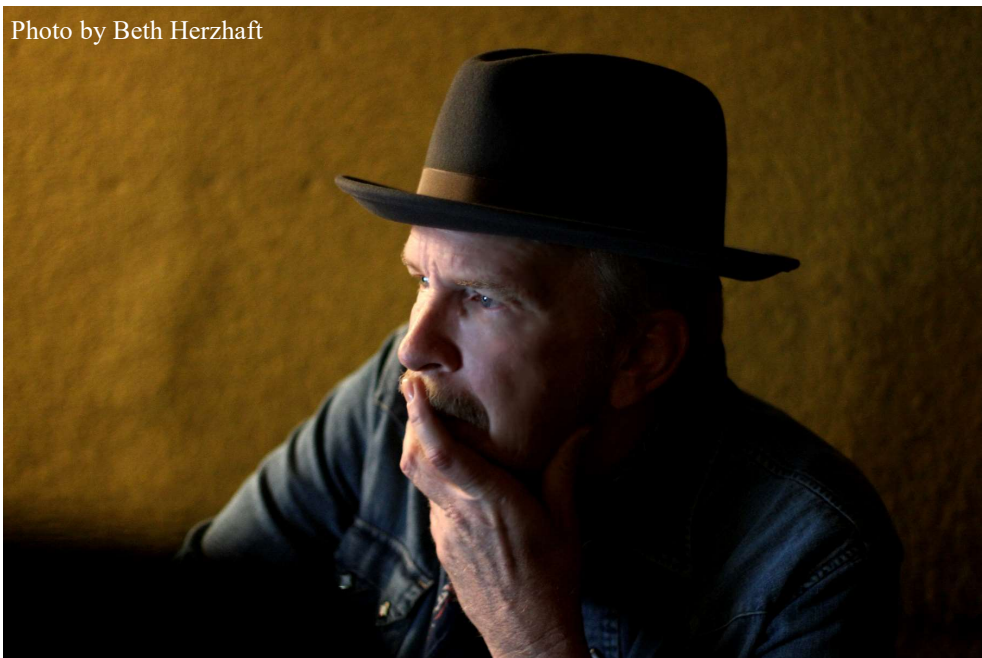
NEVER TRUST A WOMAN:

"That's Candye Kane singing with Danny Ott on guitar and Bob Heffington on drums. I wrote it with Rick Estrin from Little Charlie and the Nightcats."

Bonus song: SIGNAL

HILL: "This is a bonus song to be included next year in a limited edition deluxe package of Eleven Eleven by YEP Roc. It will have a special edition CD of Eleven Eleven with two bonus tracks, a DVD of 'The Guilty Ones' live in Ann Arbor, MI, and a CD of the same show." —~~AM~~

Photo by Beth Herzhaft



Next Issue:

We'll take a look back at "The Original Blasters" 2010 New Years Eve show in Los Angeles featuring some exclusive photos of the event by Kurt Mahoney.

Photo at right by Kurt Mahoney



From The Editor: — The Blasters newsletter has discontinued the print edition /snail mail version in favor of a free web version only. There is a limited number of print editions that go out to close out pre-paid subscriptions. No new subscriptions are being accepted.

The Blasters newsletter no longer has an official mailing address as the PO Box in Woodhaven NY is no longer valid. If you need to send something please contact me at davistb@aol.com and I will provide an address.

On a personal note, I apologize for the newsletter not being published on time lately. I have moved the Blasters Newsletter headquarters out of New York City to Long Island and I've been super busy. I expect to be back on a regular quarterly release schedule now. — Billy Davis

AMERICAN MUSIC: The Blasters / Dave Alvin newsletter
editor/writer: Billy Davis editorial assistant: Craig Frischkorn
contributing writer Tom Wilk

Publishing 4 issues quarterly. www.Blastersnewsletter.com

The Dave Alvin and the Guilty Ones

Eleven Eleven summer Tour 2011

Story and photos By Billy Davis

The Dave Alvin Eleven Eleven Tour ran through the summer of 2011 and will continue into 2012. While other artists tour to support a CD, it seems Dave records and releases CDs to support touring. There is no doubt Dave loves being out on the road performing and he is so good at it. He never fails to bring a tremendous amount of energy to each and every performance. For each tour, he reinvents the musical platform he stands on whether it's themed towards hard blues rock with guitars and keyboards, or folk rock with acoustic guitars and mandolin, or country with fiddles and steel. Inside of those themes he mixes in the occasional duet vocals, harmonica player, or singer-songwriter combos.

For 2011, Dave returned to a 4-member format not seen since his 1997 version of the Guilty Men (Alvin, Boaz, Hicks, and Solem). This foursome, called "The Guilty Ones," includes 2 electric guitars, marking the first time since Dave's 1986 tenure in X that he has played in a 2-guitar band (other than the Blasters) where as the guitars are the only lead instruments.

In choosing the 2011 tour set list, Dave had to make some hard choices. With over 300 songs in his repertoire, careful choices had to be made while including new songs from Eleven Eleven. A Dave Alvin show that runs 2 hours has room for 12 to 14 songs. Staple songs such as ASHGROVE, OUT OF CONTROL, and ABILENE run 8, 9, and 10 minutes respectively. That's almost 30 minutes for three songs that have extensive jams and solos in them. With the 2 guitar format, these are perfect fits, but they leave less room for adding extra songs.

Through most of the summer, the set list contained 4 new songs from Eleven Eleven: HARLAN COUNTY LINE, BLACK ROSE OF TEXAS, JOHNNY ACE IS DEAD, and RUN CONEJO RUN.

The Phil Alvin duet song WHAT'S UP WITH YOUR BROTHER was performed only once with Phil at the Troubadour in Hollywood. Dave went on through the show mentioning Phil: "If Phil was here, not that he is,

The Guilty Ones



Dave's new band is a combination of Guilty Women and Guilty Men. The Guilty Women band of 2009-2010 had six to eight members which was costly to keep out on the road. This scaled-down, four-member unit gives Dave the opportunity to tour more often and to have a new musical platform to write songs for. The band consists of Dave on electric guitar, Chris Miller on electric guitar and slide from the Guilty Men, Lisa Pankratz on drums from the Guilty Women, and her husband Brad Fordham on bass. Brad is based in Austin, Texas, has a lot of touring experience. He has played with Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Jerry Jeff Walker, Billy Joe Shaver, and Kelly Willis.

Dave has returned to his harder edged roots – once again he's playing in a 'Guitar Band.' Two guitars to handle all the solos – no steel, acoustics or fiddles. Hold your ears!



Club, he opened up with an old crowd favorite: SO LONG BABY GOODBYE. But it's a good guess that choice was brought on by the appearance of a special guest musician sitting in on piano for just that show: former Guilty Man Joe Terry. SO LONG BABY was the regular opening song in the days of the classic Guilty Men lineup of Alvin, Boaz, Terry, Hicks, and Shea – so it had to be played. It went over so well that Dave continued using it as his opening for the rest of the summer.

At that St. Louis show, Terry also played on FOURTH OF JULY and MARIE MARIE. Bobby Lloyd Hicks also joined in playing maracas on RUN CONEJO RUN and then sang backup vocals on MARIE MARIE.

Throughout the tour, the show often finished with DRY RIVER and ASH-GROVE because of their climactic endings. MARIE MARIE was always a show closer or the last song of an encore. One

but if he was here. . .” Late in the set, Dave played WHAT’S UP WITH YOUR BROTHER through the first verse. Then Phil snuck on stage just in time to sing his part on the second verse and surprise the audience.

Another song from Eleven Eleven that was played only once was GARY INDIANA 1959 at the Las Vegas MGM Grand show for the United Steel Workers Union.

FOURTH OF JULY was frequently an opening song, but would be moved to second on occasion when Dave would change it up with an odd selection to start. At a music fest in Honesdale, PA, he started with BORDER RADIO.

In St. Louis at the Off Broadway



slot in the encore Dave often left open to requests. Because half the band was new, unusual requests were not possible. But enough different requests were yelled out by the audience that Dave could pick one they were prepared for. More often, Dave chose BLUE WING, which is one his personal favorites.

It was cool to see Dave taking more solos now in the 2-guitar band format. Chris Miller still gets his share of solos but also adds some tasty slide guitar on RUN CONEJO RUN and BLACK ROSE OF TEXAS.

Christy McWilson was an occasional Guilty Ones member. She joined in on a few of the northwest dates, like Vancouver, Seattle, and Eugene. With Dave, she sang MANZANITA – a duet they recorded



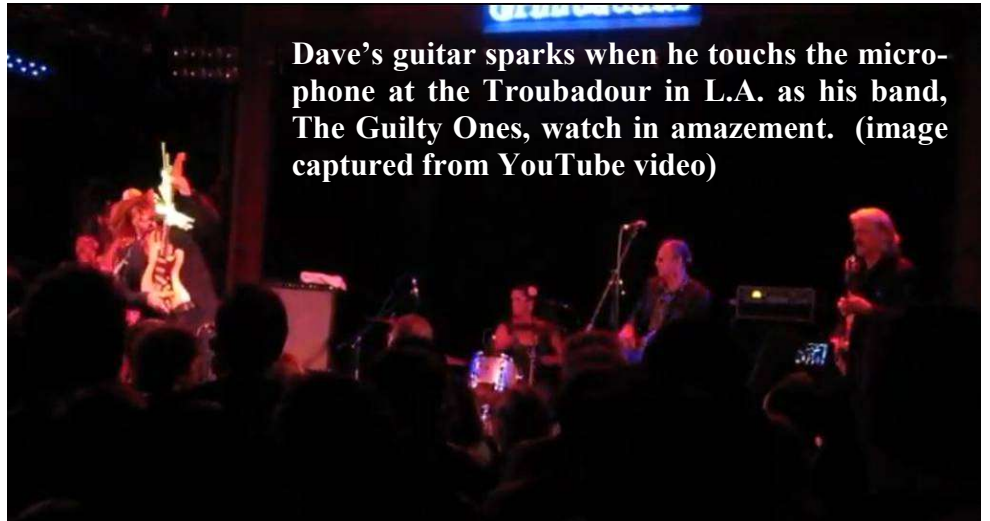
for Eleven Eleven.

The strangest thing to happen on the tour was at the Hollywood show at the Troubadour. Dave started singing in the microphone on the opening song SO LONG BABY GOODBYE and he got an electrical shock. Usually this happens when the power to the amp or microphone is not properly grounded.

Holding the guitar strings with your hand and touching the microphone with your mouth completes a short circuit. After feeling a shock, Dave continued singing but brought his guitar strings up and touched the microphone to test the grounding or lack thereof. Sparks shot out of the strings. Dave tried it multiple times and finally burnt 2 of his strings off. So he had to do a quick string change as the rest of the band played on. (You can view it on YouTube. Search “Dave Alvin at the Troubadour 8/18/11.”

Probably the most requested Eleven Eleven song that Dave Alvin didn’t perform was MURRIETTA’S HEAD. It’s a song that Dave feels would work better in an acoustic setting. But I disagree about the arrangement because the song has a hypnotic bass-and-drums groove that would be perfect in a loud band setting. Expect Dave to stay on tour for quite a while to support this album. That’s the way he wants it, and that’s the way we want it.

--- Special Thanks to Dave Alvin’s Merch Man Will Skinner who shared his recollections of the tour for this article. He’s the man who sees all of Dave’s shows. Please visit him at the Merch table at any Dave Alvin show for a CD or T Shirt and feel free to ask him about all the tour stories. He has a million of them. --- AM



Dave’s guitar sparks when he touches the microphone at the Troubadour in L.A. as his band, The Guilty Ones, watch in amazement. (image captured from YouTube video)

