

**ISSUE #40**

# American Music

## The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

**Nov. 2003**

## 3 New CDs on the way from The Blasters and Dave Alvin

### **Blasters shows**

**(Phil, John, Jerry, Keith)**

11/21-22 W. Hollywood CA at HOB

11/23 Anaheim CA at Doll Hut (benefit)

### **DAVE ALVIN Shows**

12/6 Santa Cruz at The Catalyst

1/10/04 Pasadena CA at Throop Church

(Dave, Rick, Brantley, Chris)

5/8 Ospel Holland at Moulin Blues fest

(Guilty Men) more Euro dates TBA

**Latest News:** The Blasters (Phil, John, Jerry, and Keith) have completed a studio album and are shopping it to labels. The Original Blasters have a live DVD on the way with a companion live CD of the same show. Dave Alvin is currently recording his next solo studio album. --

On 8/13/03 The Original Blasters played their last reunion show in Santa Ana CA at the Galaxy Theatre. The show was taped for a January 2004 DVD release. The Blasters played a long show with special guests Sonny Burgess, Billy Boy Arnold, and the Calvanes/Medallions backing vocal group. -- Look for Dave Alvin interviewed on a TV show called "Temples of Rock" on the Travel Channel on November 30, 2003 from 9 PM to 11 PM. The show explores famous Rock n Roll locations around the US. Dave talks about Sun Studios, The Whiskey A



**John Bazz and Marine body guards at Ali Al Salem Air Force Base.**

***In This Issue: The Original Blasters film for a DVD release, John Bazz reports on his trip to Iraq with the Bruce Willis band, and some of the Blasters remember the great Johnny Cash.***

Go Go, and Motown Tune in on time because a Dave Alvin comment opens the show. -- Dave Alvin will sing a Memphis Jug band song called STEALIN' on the next James Cotton CD. James has had voice troubles and is recording an album with guest singers such as Doc Watson and Odetta. -- Rick Shea has a new album of duets with Patty Booker called Our Shangra LA on Tres Pescadores records [www.coldhardfacts.com](http://www.coldhardfacts.com) -- Gene Taylor's self titled new 2003 solo album is now out on Pacific Blues Records, featuring guests Bill Bateman and James Harman and all the artwork by Phil Alvin. [www.Pacificblues.com](http://www.Pacificblues.com) -- Fiddle player Amy Farris has two projects involving Dave Alvin. 1). She is putting together a various artist CD to raise money for the fight against Parkinson's disease. Dave has contributed his song THE MAN IN THE BED. The CD called Parkin Songs is due out January 2004. 2.) Amy Farris's new album called ANYWAY is produced by Dave Alvin. Dave played and co-wrote three songs on there. Due out in February on Yep Roc. -- Wanda Jackson's Heart Trouble on CMH records is out. -- The Johnny Paycheck tribute should also be out in January. -- The Blue Shadows have recorded a 4 song EP that they are selling at their shows. -- L.A.'s 'Rock City News' has named The Blue Shadows the best blues band of 2003. -- Tom Russell's Web site ([www.tomrussell.com](http://www.tomrussell.com)) reports he has completed the manuscript for a book with the tentative title of California Bloodlines: The Letters of Charles Bukowski and Tom Russell. Tom Russell writes: "Look for it at the end of this year. Dave Alvin wrote a wonderful intro."-- Dave Alvin wrote a song with Louis Perez for Los Lobos next album. It will be a duet between Dave and David is called SOMEWHERE IN TIME. . ~~~~AM~~

### **COUNTDOWN TO THE NEW DAVE ALVIN SOLO ALBUM**

Dave Alvin is scheduled to go into the studio in early December with Greg Leisz producing. Dave: "I hope to have it released sometime in May or June. Tentative title is Ash grove. That kind sums all the songs up and fits the mood. Right now, before a note of music has been recorded, I think it'll be closer to Blue Blvd than Blackjack David, but ya never know until you're finished." Here are some songs Dave has been trying out in his live shows: SINFUL DAUGHTER. - Dave: "That's a work in progress as far as lyrically. It's mostly like a folk standard." EVERETT RUESS - "Is about this character Everett Ruess's kid, who was a genius and was an artist and poet. He started going to the high Sierras alone, living up there for three months at a time. He started going further and further and one day he said that 'One of these days I will disappear and no one will find me.' And he finally did. So this is him 60 years later telling the story." DOWN THE RIO GRANDE - a song written with Tom Russell. THE MAN IN THE BED - about Dave's Dad. BACK TO THE ASH GROVE - about the legendary Los Angeles blues club. SOMEWHERE IN TIME - "A song I just wrote with Louis Perez from Los Lobos for their new record. I'll probably cop it for mine. David wrote the music and we did the lyrics and it came out really nice." Dave will release his second book of poetry at the same time as the CD.

# BRUCE WILLIS AND THE ACCELERATORS: 'TOUCH OF HOME' TOUR

**Bruce Willis & The Accelerators play for the Troops in Iraq --By John Bazz**

Bruce Willis is one of those guys that always supports the troops, the PD, the Fire Department, and even the girl scouts. He wanted to go and entertain the troops in Iraq and planned a week-long tour that took us into the United Arab Emirates.

On an Accelerators tour in the summer at the House Of Blues in Las Vegas, Bruce called the whole band into the dressing room after the show and told us that there was an opportunity to go to Iraq to play for the troops. He said he would understand if any of us didn't want to go, because of the danger and lack of pay. We all raised our hand and said we would go.



I didn't know what to expect, but I knew we were not gonna be in the streets and if we're with the USO, with Willis then the military would have it all together.

**September 23** -- We all came from different parts of the world and met in Frankfurt, Germany. There we met the official from the USO who briefed us in a meeting. Bruce told them, he wanted to do everything and meet as many people as possible. He said, "I normally shield myself from autographs, handshakes, and photographs. I want to wake up in the morning and have breakfast with the soldiers, I want meet them and do everything. I'm gonna give all of myself to you guys this week. Use as much of me as you can." They really ran him ragged.

We flew to the Abu Dhabi air force base in Kuwait. There were only a few times when we were out in public and that was in Kuwait. We traveled on the freeway to an army base, which was as big as a small city - more soldiers than I've ever seen in my life. We had a car escort in front and back. They tailgated like you wouldn't believe to keep anyone from cutting in.

**September 24** -- We left Abu Dhabi on the C 130 transport plane traveling 3-plus hours to Mosul. Everywhere else in Iraq and Kuwait we traveled by helicopter. The helicopters fly very low to the ground. Every time we went over a village, we could see the people. I saw some destruction in the bigger cities. It's hard to say how it had happened, but our imaginations were running a mile a minute. Going through the desert we saw tanks dug in to the sand. Each had a horseshoe shaped wall around it and you could see the tank tracks into it. They were all over the place. Some we saw were wind swept and looked 100 years old. We were told that some were left there from the desert storm conflict in 1990.

In Mosul, it was an army camp. We saw locals training alongside US military in what they call the new Iraqi army. We saw a lot of private citizens on the base who had jobs there. So that was all the contact we had with local people.





Photo Courtesy: John Bazz

## John Bazz and a U2 Spy Plane

There was a flight back from Mosul where we were shot at. We didn't find this out until the next day when we got on the same C 47 Chinook helicopter. One of the soldiers told us he had observed some tracers coming towards our helicopters that night. We were told: "Don't worry. These are not professional soldiers shooting at you. At night they're just shooting at a sound."

We then traveled by helicopter to an undisclosed airfield from which the U2 reconnaissance aircraft stages. We saw the U2 spy plane. Bruce and a couple of the guys suited up in a pressure suit and flew at 60,000 feet.

Typically a day went like this: Wake-up, breakfast with the soldiers, get a little tour, meet & greet soldiers, go to another base, tour, meet soldiers, then a third base and lunch. We would do a show late that day, then

spend the night at that base or fly to the next stop for the following morning's events.

**September 25** -- We flew to Telefar, which is about 35 miles from the Syrian border. We visited the soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division.

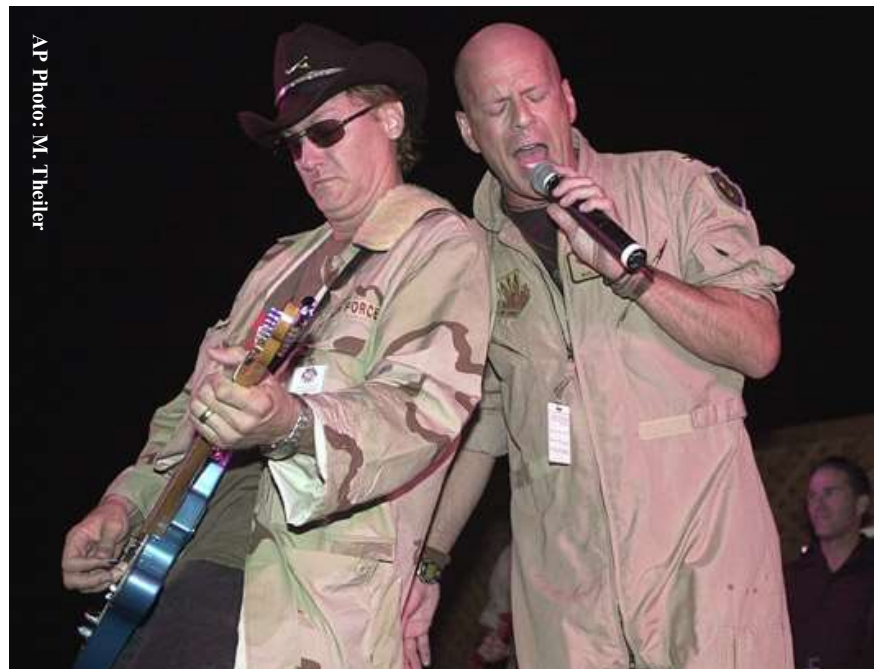
Bruce told them "I wanted to sign up and fight with you guys, but they told me I was too old." Willis also used some colorful language when describing what he would do if he had "four minutes with Saddam."

We got to fly around the division's area of operation in a CH-47 Chinook helicopter to meet the "Screaming Eagles." We did a few night flights in the CH 47 and the soldiers passed around the night vision goggles. That was awesome. While in the helicopter in flight, our guitar player, Miles, looked behind and could see the other helicopter that was following us. None of us could see that with the naked eye.

One thing that amazed me; was to think that: you're out in the middle of nowhere on a long flight and you see a clump of houses - like a village and you wonder if these people know what's going on. Did they know that Saddam Hussein was their leader? They are so far out and way from everybody and anything. They are completely unaffected by any form of government. They have no electricity, no roads, no communications, or newspaper or mail. It's bleak and a huge country.

We finished the day with a concert for a few hundred of the soldiers. One thing that I thought was touching was between songs he told the soldiers: "I just play a soldier, but you guys do the real thing." That really affected the troops and really hit home. Bruce did a lot of talking to the guys between songs. After the show we flew back to Mosul.

We stayed in what was once an Iraqi hotel that was taken over by the army. This hotel was gutted. When the fighting part of the war ended, the locals stripped the hotel of all of its interior. They stole the tile, the carpet; they took the wire out of the walls. It was surreal staying there. The army took it over and uses it for traveling military.



AP Photo: M. Theller

Photo Courtesy: John Bazz



**John Bazz: BW and troops at sound check in/at Tel Afar.**

It was amazing to see bullet shells and large artillery shells lying all around. The soldiers near the border had hand Grenades on their waist belts. When I first arrived in Iraq, a soldier in Abu Dhabi, which is far from any danger, told me that Abu Dhabi is like 'Club-Med' and if you see any soldiers that have hand grenades on their belt, you are in hell. So, I guess we were in hell.

The temperature was about 115 degrees. At the same time we were there, the Shiite Muslims had been attempting to enter the country on a religious pilgrimage to the Iraq holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. Because relations between Iraq and Iran have not stabilized, pilgrims often enter the country illegally, walking for days through the desert. Some of these people were near death. The U.S. Army set up a triage area to help get these people medical treatment and then would try and send them home. Later we flew back to Mosul in the Apaches, taking a briefing from US forces in one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces. Then we took the C 130 to Kuwait City to the Ali Al Salem air force base.

**September 27** - We stayed at Ali Al Salem for two and half days and flew out to Camp Fox and Camp Arifjan for concerts.

While staying in Ali Al Salem, I noticed these gigantic bunkers off the side of the runway that had big holes in the roofs.

In 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait, they took over the airbase. Smart bombs were sent in and didn't damage the bunker to the point of collapsing, but only put a hole in the roof for the smart bomb to blow up the aircraft in side. It was amazing to see that because I remember seeing on the news these smart bombs blowing up bunkers.

I was really impressed with the caliber and professionalism of all the soldiers we met. They were super intelligent and they knew about the people's customs and their duties. We, in the band, all agreed it was one of the most amazing experiences we ever had. Because we were with Willis, we had full reign. Whatever specialty a camp had, it would be on proud display for Willis to inspect. Because we were part of the entourage, we got to climb in tanks, and on refueling planes and jets.

The general consensus of what we observed is that the Iraqi people are happy that the US Troops are there - and they like what the US has done. At the same time, they also are frustrated in the lack of progress in the recovery of Iraq after the war.

When leaving for home, we were saying goodbye to the four marines who were assigned to protect us. Suddenly, there was a fifth marine that they introduced us to. (see photo on cover) We found out that he had been with us the entire time, but we never saw him. He wasn't necessarily protecting us, but was protecting his marines. He was the biggest and baddest marine of them all. . ~AM

I heard gunshots that night. We had a sniper to protect the building, who was three rooms down and he fired off a shot.

It's not nearly as well protected as the military base, even though it had a perimeter and guys protecting it. We were right next to the highway, which is next to the Tigris river. The hotel was hit by a rocket five days before we arrived there. Five hours after we left the next day, it was hit by a mortar.

**September 26** -- We flew in Apache helicopters and visited a remote desert outpost near Iraq's border with Iran (about 85 miles north-east of Baghdad) and met members of the 4th Infantry Division's 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry who were training Iraqi border guards.

# JOHNNY CASH REMEMBERED By the Blasters Guitar Players

**Keith Wyatt:** I guess what I got from him mostly was the simplicity and directness of his delivery. That's what I look for in blues, and he had the same quality. Whatever he sang instantly became a Johnny Cash song, regardless of its origin. That kind of muddies that whole black/white thing with regard to what's blues and what's country - like Phil always says, "you mean that black man over there yodeling and playing the ukulele?"

**James Intveld:** I first met Johnny Cash in 1985 in Memphis at a recording session at American Studios for this album called The Class of 55.

I was there with my brother Rick and Rick Nelson, because they invited Rick Nelson to be part of the recordings. I told Johnny Cash that I had covered a song that he had written called YOU'RE MY BABY which was recorded by Roy Orbison on Sun Records. I asked him if he had sung it at any point or if there was a recording of it. He said he wasn't sure, but that he was writing a lot of rockabilly type songs back then but didn't feel they were really right for him to sing. That's when he told me he had written GET RHYTHM for Elvis. Well, Elvis didn't record it, but thank God Johnny did. Talking to Johnny Cash was like talking to your next-door neighbor - he was that down-to-earth. Even though he was one of my idols, I didn't feel nervous talking to him because he was so humble.

**Smokey Hormel:** I first met Mr. Cash in '94. I was brought in to play guitar with Lester Butler's band, who was signed to Rick Rubin's label. We spent the better part of a day in the studio with him, recording old Jimmy Rogers' songs. I remember putting on the headphones and hearing that voice. It was so distinctive. It had such a presence. It was the voice of a God.

They didn't end up using any of those takes. I think there were problems with the drums. (ed. - on 11/25/03 American Records releases a Johnny Cash 5 CD set called Unearthed which in-



cludes 64 unreleased songs - some of which are from these sessions)

The next time I saw him was the spring of 2002. Rick asked me to come and play on When The Man Comes Around. It turned out to be the very last album released while Johnny was still alive. It was an intense experience all the way around.

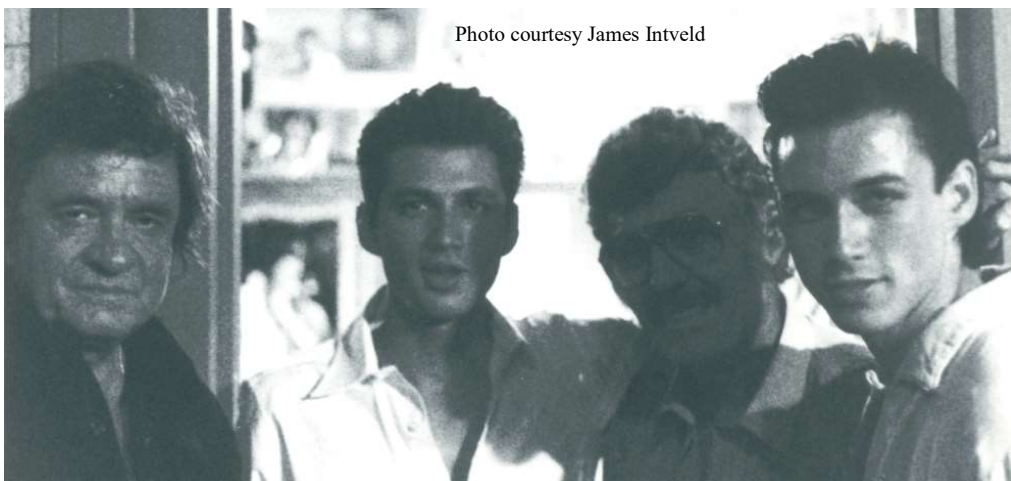


Photo courtesy James Intveld

Cash, James Intveld, Carl Perkins, and Ricky Intveld



There were the duets with Nick Cave and Joe Strummer. I found myself cutting basic guitar tracks and laying down the foundations for songs like HURT, I HUNG MY HEAD, A BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER, IN MY LIFE, and the title track WHEN THE MAN COMES AROUND, among others. Often I was relied upon to decipher the keys and the tempos. On some of the songs I even sang the guide vocals.

I remember one day he came in looking pretty beat up. He said: "You know Smokey, that song kept me up all night." I said: "That's terrible. You don't need to be losing any sleep over this." He replied: "Yes, but I think I've really got it now."

He proceeded to go in and sing THE FIRST TIME (one of the songs I had sung for him). I went and lay down on the floor where he couldn't see me and just listened to the sound of his voice. By the second verse I was weeping like a baby. He was so inside the song. He had made it his song. Every word was coming from deep inside his soul. And I felt as if I was hearing it for the very first time.

As with all recording sessions, there was plenty of down time, so I would ask him questions about Luther Perkins and his days touring with The Tennessee Two. He showed me how he got that freight train sound from his guitar with a piece of paper through the strings. We talked about everything from Elvis, to The Simpsons, to Black Elk's prophecy of the return of the White Buffalo. He was a very intelligent man. He was also one of the most generous people I've ever worked for.

One day, the two of us were sitting alone in the control room after listening to playback. He looked at me and said, "You know, Smokey, I really appreciate all the help you've given me on this record. And I want you to know that I really couldn't have done this without you."

It was one of the nicest things anybody's ever said to me. And I'll never forget it. -Smokey Hormel October 22, 2003 Hoboken, NJ

**Phil Alvin:** It's certainly a loss. I listened to Johnny Cash all my life. One of my cousin Donna's records was I WALK THE LINE that I had, but GET RHYTHM and BIG RIVER were favorites of mine. Some people say Johnny Cash couldn't sing, but he had a really good way of bouncing consonants and sounds. He was obviously affected by gospel music. I never met Johnny Cash. I had a chance to go backstage, but I don't like to meet people like that. I would have liked to have met him in the real world.

**Dave Alvin:** Johnny Cash was in some ways a mythological character that was larger than life. They don't make that anymore. When people like that leave, it leaves a gaping hole, but the records are so timeless it's like he is always gonna be there. He ended his career still making good records.

The first Johnny Cash record I bought was Live at San Quentin in 1968. I had to ask my Mom to buy it for me. I never met him, but I stood next to him. It was at the first Farm Aid in 1985. I was too scared to say anything. I was stunned at how big he was. Bob Dylan was on stage with Tom Petty. The artists could stand in the wings and watch - I had been there like twelve hours. I stood next to Johnny and June and just couldn't think of a thing to say.

*Dave Alvin's Johnny Cash Guitar on American Bandstand in 1984* -- I bought an acoustic guitar from a store in the valley called California Guitars. This fender acoustic guitar was owned by Johnny Cash. It had a beautiful mix of purples, blues, and grays and Johnny's name on the neck in mother of pearl. It cost \$1000, which was a lot. It wasn't a great guitar, but I wanted it



because Johnny Cash owned it. It had cigarette burns in the tuning pegs. I played it a little while, but basically it hung on the wall. When we did American Bandstand the second time, I figured: 'hey, we're lip-synching. It doesn't matter what guitar I used,' so I played the Johnny Cash guitar. After RED ROSE, Dick Clark did the interview thing. He said to me: "Dave, I have to ask you where you got that guitar." I said: "Well, Johnny Cash and I were hitch-hiking across the country and we got a train outside little rock Arkansas and at some point Johnny turned to me and said 'Dave, I want you to have my guitar.'" Phil interrupts: "No, No, No, Dick, that never happened. That's not true Dick; he was never on a train with Johnny Cash." I was just having fun. ~AM

## The "Original Blasters" Going Home to film a DVD Concert at The Galaxy Theatre, Santa Ana, CA

*August 12 and 13, 2003 -- The Original Blasters of 1980-85 did four different legs of a reunion tour from March of 2002 to the August of 2003 - A total of 38 Reunion shows including this final one on August 13, 2003. It was recorded for a DVD concert video release scheduled for January, 2004. Making it even more of a special event is the fact that the Blasters invited a few special guests who influenced them over their career. One was Sun records legendary rockabilly guitarist and singer Sonny Burgess. The other was blues singer Billy Boy Arnold. Also joining them would be a backing vocal group composed of members from the Calvanes and the Medallions.*



Photo: Billy Davis



**Tuesday August 12, 2003 at 2 PM.** -- The Blasters arrived to set up their equipment at the Galaxy Theatre. Some of the staff from the film crew Shout! Factory Productions were preparing lighting lights and the set up of the theatre. This theatre was perfect for the shoot: great sightlines for the audience and for cameras; a big stage lined with beautiful red curtains; and colorful concert lighting.

Bill Bateman arrived first to set his drums up just the way he likes them. Dave Alvin was also there with Chris Gaffney. The Blasters had an actual stage crew of roadies and loaders too who took care of everything. Engineer/producer Mark Linett was set up in a room to the side of the stage to record the audio for the project. He was the one who recorded the Trouble Bound live album.

Dave Alvin, John Bazz, Bill Bateman and Gene Taylor started jamming first to test their sounds. Gene Taylor played a little drums for fun on the first song, a blues jam. Next, they practiced a song that Billy Boy Arnold was going to sing called AIN'T GOT YOU. The filming crew had a few roving cameras capturing the rehearsal - hoping for good DVD bonus footage.



Photo: Kurt Mahoney

(above) Dave and Billy Boy Arnold in rehearsal



Photo: Billy Davis

**The Blasters and Sonny Burgess in rehearsal**

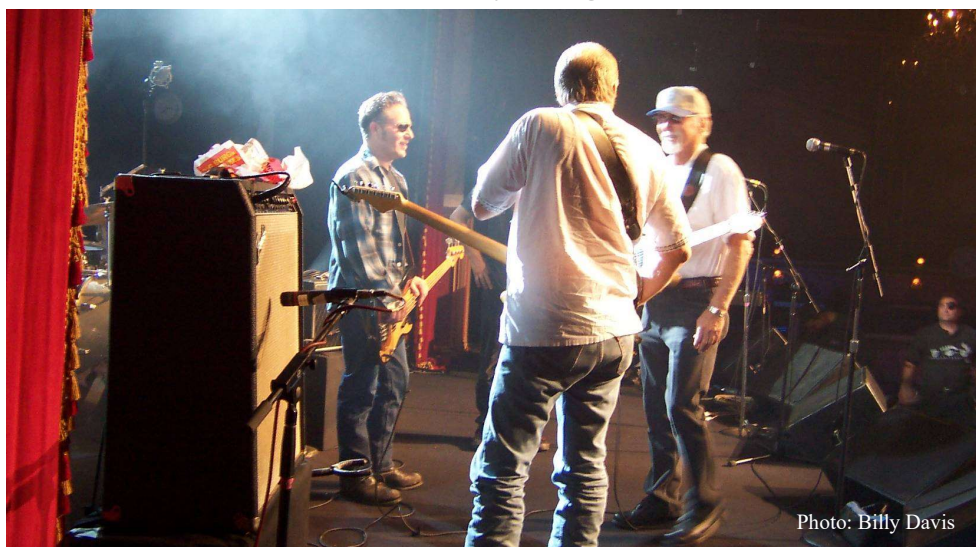


Photo: Billy Davis

**4 PM** -- Phil arrives and joins his band mates on stage. They run through a long blues jam that included vocal parts by Phil from YONDER'S WALL, VOODOO MUSIC and TALK TO YOUR DAUGHTER. Phil showed the rest of the band a song called GONNA WRECK YOUR V-8 FORD which Phil sang with Billy Boy Arnold on Phil's County Fair 2000 record (Hightone 1994). The song didn't seem to be working, so they moved on to ELDERADO CADILLAC with Phil singing the lead vocal. Billy Boy will later sing lead in



the show version of the song. So seeing Phil sing it here is valuable bonus footage.

Among the guests would be vocal group consisting of 2 singers from the Calvanes and 2 from the Medallions. The search was on for the perfect song to play. They practiced a song called HAVE MERCY BABY. Dave said: "That's a song that Phil begged us to do for years and we never did it. When I talked to Fred Willis of the Calvanes about this show (Fred did all the song vocal arrangements), I suggested BUICK '59

which my cousin Donna loved and was a hit by the Medallions. But it's probably 'too cute' a song. HAVE MERCY BABY though was perfect and Fred knew the song."

This day's rehearsal was not for the guests, but for the band to prepare what they would offer the guests to play. The band ran through the song with Phil repeating himself on vocals



Photo: Billy Davis

**(above) The Calvanes and Phil in rehearsal**



Photo: Billy Davis



covering the backing groups parts. As Phil stepped off the stage for a rest, Dave started the Blasters off on an up-tempo surf jam. Gene in a rare move playing with the Blasters, switched his piano sound to a Hammond organ sound. Phil returned, joined in on rhythm guitar and segued the song into the Magic Sam blues song ALL YOUR LOVE.

The rehearsal finished at about 7 PM. The lighting and production people from Shout! Factory productions were staying late to set up their camera equipment. The Blasters seemed still to be in tight form like they were in Europe. Tomorrow's the day.

**Wednesday, August 13, 2003- 2 PM -**

- The Blasters arrived and saw a big mobile video tractor trailer sitting outside the back door of the theater. Five big cameras were in place inside the theatre. It was a surprise to see a big Blasters logo banner hanging on the back drop of the stage - very cool! The filming crew had been there all morning setting up.

Sonny Burgess was there early. Dave, Sonny, and Bill Bateman got onstage to warm up facing each other in a circle to work out the songs. An instrumental shuffle was first, then Gene arrived and joined in as they played Elvis's MYSTERY TRAIN without amplified vocals. Sonny sang loud just for the band close by to hear him as a guideline for the song. Next they practiced one of Sonny's signature songs RED HEADED WOMAN. Gene moved off his piano stool to stand close to Dave and Sonny to add the slap back background vocals to the chorus of the song. Next Dave and Sonny discussed SADIE'S BACK IN TOWN, which the Blasters have been playing in their set for years. Sonny wrote and recorded the song in the 50's and hasn't played it since then.

When John Bazz arrived they all faced where the audience would be and ran through the songs with the full band. It was real cool to see the Blasters do SADIE with Sonny singing the full vocals for the song. They also showed Sonny a bit of the JOE TURNER MEDLEY which would be the big finale where everyone would be on the stage.

**3:30 PM --** Sonny Burgess left the stage and Billy Boy Arnold came on. First they tried I WISH YOU WOULD, which appeared on the first Blasters album in 1980. Billy Boy wrote and recorded the song in the 50's. It was interesting to see how different Billy Boy plays it with an extended intro on his harmonica. Next, Billy Boy picked up Dave Alvin's spare stratocaster to play a song called WANDERING EYE (from his 1993 Alligator records CD called Back Where I Belong). They spent a lot of time trying to get the arrangement right and ran through multiple

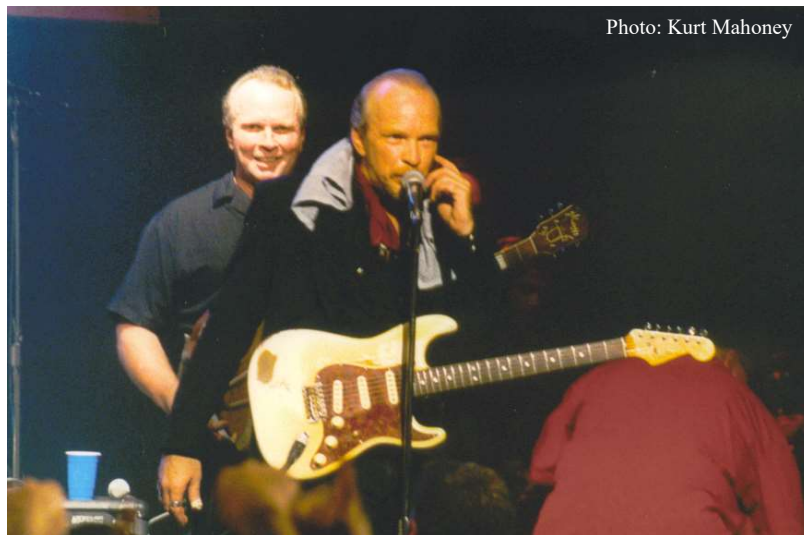


Photo: Kurt Mahoney



Photo: Billy Davis

**(above) The lights go out but they play on.**





takes of the song. Phil Alvin arrived and walked on stage with his guitar in mid-song. In the Billy Boy segment of the show, it appears that Phil will just play rhythm guitar - no singing or harp playing with Billy Boy. It would have been cool to see Phil join in. They also ran through AIN'T GOT YOU and I WISH YOU WOULD which came off very easy for the band.

**4:15 PM** -- The vocal group came to the stage. Phil Alvin stood next to them and directed how they were going to sing with him. They started with HELP YOU DREAM. The 1985 Blasters recorded version on Hardline featured the Jordonaires vocal group. Phil wasn't happy with how the producer arranged the Jordonaires vocals. Now, Phil had the chance of getting them the way he envisioned the song originally. The group definitely put their own style on the song which was fun to hear. Next, Phil worked out a great arrangement for the singers to answer back to his vocal on ONE BAD STUD. At one point Phil started singing bass and it was real deep. They then tried HAVE MERCY BABY which worked easily. Calvanes leader Fred Willis was impressed with Phil's singing on the song and asked where he learned to sing like that. Phil answered: "I was trained by Big Joe Turner." Dave suggested they do the song again working in a walk off exit for the singing group as the band finished the song. It looked cool as the singers danced their way off the stage. It wouldn't be used in the show because the singers wouldn't be on mic for all the song if they danced off. But it was cool to see in rehearsal.

**5 PM** -- The band had 3 hours to rest before show time. Some of the guys went home to change into fresh clothes and rest. Dave Alvin sat down with Phil and the producers and worked out a set list.

**7:45 PM** -- One of the producers came out on stage and explained to the crowd what was happening tonight. He said that the Blasters would play a short 6 song set, they would take an intermission so the film staff could check a play back to be sure it was recording properly. Then the Blasters would come back and play a full-on show with their special guests.

Meanwhile backstage, the Original Blasters posed in front of the backstage wall for photos to be used for the DVD packaging. Because it was the last show, the band seemed loose and having fun. Dave even leaned on his brothers shoulder for the photos. They might even be too loose; the girl photographer couldn't seem to control the session as the guys keep fooling around, laughing, and wandering out of the shot. Johnny Bazz kept turning his back on the pho-



tographer to take pictures of the band with his pocket camera.

**8:15 PM -- ShowTime --** The Blasters come to the stage for their mini-set as Phil says: "Good evening Ladies and Gentleman we're the Blasters." They started with MARIE MARIE and played a bunch of finishing songs that normally would have been played when the band was tired, drenched with sweat, and well worn from their long set. REAL ROCK DRIVE was a surprise, too; they hadn't done that in quite a while. Between the first and second song a fan yelled, "I thought it was gonna be another 20 years," referring to Dave always finishing off a show saying that. Phil quipped back, "Yeah I've been hearing that for the last 6 months." Dave smiled and said something like "Yeah and it WILL be another 20 years."

AMERICAN MUSIC was the stand out song of the set. The band sounded great and Dave



Photo: Billy Davis



Photo: Billy Davis

ripped out a hot solo complete with two leaps in the air. As they walked off from the mini set, Dave said in the mic: "We've got a lot of special guests. Drink some beer, some non-alcoholic beer and we'll be back in a minute."

**Set List Set 1 --** marie marie / real rock drive / hollywood bed / don't lie to me / so long baby good-bye / american music.

**9:30 PM --** Lee Allen's recording of WALKIN' WITH MR LEE came over the house PA as an announcer said, "From Downey, California, The Blasters." The band came out to a big ovation and started the set. After three songs Phil announced the backing vocal group to the stage, "From the Calvanes; Fred Willis and Herman Pruett. From the Medallions; Billy Forster and Budha Khan." They played great versions of HELP YOU DREAM and HAVE MERCY BABY. The backing vocals added a lot of depth to the songs. Dave was digging it and did one of his trademark leaps at the end of MERCY.

Just before I'M SHAKIN, Phil's



Photo: Kurt Mahoney





Photo: Kurt Mahoney

voice was dry and he said: "How come everybody has drinks?" Phil walked over to Dave's side of the stage and took a drink from one of his beers. In a funny move, Dave walked up to Phil and waved his hand as if to say 'get back over to your side.' Phil came back to his mic laughing and said: "It's not like I have SARS or anything." During the song Phil got to the part where he sings: "Along came Delilah and clipped his wig..." Phil usually takes his hand and makes a chopping motion on the microphone. This time the chord fell out and obviously the vocal cut out. Phil yelled: "What the hell?" while laughing and continued: "I'm working with amateurs." Dave ran over and said: "You got punished for stealing my beer." Phil just laughed and they took the song again from the top. When Phil reached the same lyric with his chopping motion, the crowd gave a big cheer.

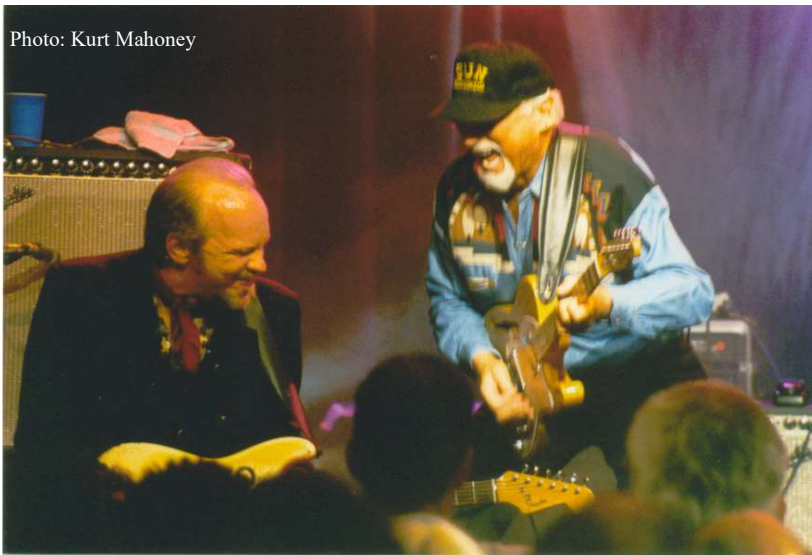


Photo: Kurt Mahoney

It was time now for one of the special guests to come out. Dave announced to the audience: "Sam Phillips was one of the greatest visionaries in American music. He discovered Howlin' Wolf, BB King, Elvis, Sammy Lewis and Willie Johnson, Junior Parker and Little Milton, Billy Lee Riley, Jerry Lee, and Johnny Cash. Sam Phillips just passed away, but one of his greatest discoveries was a man from Newport, Arkansas who made some of the best records ever on the Sun label. His records didn't sound like anybody. He's one of a kind. Mr. Sonny Burgess." Sonny came out and Phil yelled: "The wild man of Memphis!"



Photo: Billy Davis

They had a false start on RED HEADED WOMAN. Sonny took the opportunity to say: "It's a real pleasure to be here with Dave Alvin and his brother Phil: The Blasters!"

Sonny ran all over the stage jumping and spinning around, and walking behind Phil to look at Gene playing the piano. Sonny changed the lyrics of his song: "Red Headed Woman make you never wish you never were born. All I want to hear is Dave Alvin on that guitar." Then he





Photo: Kurt Mahoney

called for Dave to take a solo. Phil and Gene added the response backup vocals on the chorus.

After the song Sonny said again: "It's a real pleasure to play with these guys. The man with the fire in his guitar Mr. Dave Alvin and his brother Phil with the fantastic voice. Let's give them a hand." Sonny continued with this intro to the next song: "Here's a song I played just a few weeks ago with some friends of mine that got me started in this business: Scotty Moore and DJ

Fontana." They played MYSTERY TRAIN. During the song, Sonny took a guitar solo and ran up close to the audience hanging his guitar over the crowd - really hamming it up. Dave started smiling and was loving every minute of playing with one of his rockabilly heroes. Sonny is definitely an exciting performer.

For the next song Dave took over: "You know we used to rehearse in a factory not too far from here and this is a song we always did. Phil sings the hell out of it. Sonny sings the hell out of it. Sonny recorded it in the late 1950s for Sam Phillips and it's always been one of our favorites, so let's try it." Dave turned to Sonny and Phil and said: "You're both gonna sing it together." Phil joked in the mic: "Are we taking orders, Sonny?" Sonny took the second and third verses and had some fun with the lyrics. He sang: "Well, we went out and rode around, rode around old L.A."



Photo: Billy Davis

What a version. They finished off the song with Phil and Sonny singing together.

While Sonny left and the next guest set up, Phil Alvin played a solo blues called BIG ROAD BLUES, the old Tommy Johnson song.

Dave Alvin introduced the next guest: "This guy made some of the most influential records in Chicago blues history. He's always been one of our favorites. Ladies and gentleman Billy Boy Arnold." First they did I WISH YOU WOULD and then AIN'T GOT YOU. Billy Boy explained to the audience that he was the first to record this song, but the Yardbirds made it famous after hearing his record. For the last Billy Boy song, he picked up Dave Alvin's spare electric guitar while playing harmonica on a song called WANDERING EYE.

The original five Blasters played "AMERICAN MUSIC" next. In some kind of confusion with Bill Bateman on drums, the song ended early in the middle of Dave's solo. Bill thought

that Dave gave him a look to end the song. Dave Alvin threw up his arms and shook his head. Luckily they had already recorded a super version of the song in the mini set. The final song of the regular set was ONE BAD STUD. The Calvanes / Medallions came back out. Fred Willis said to Phil in the mic, "You guys sure work hard."

When "ONE BAD STUD" was over, Dave came out and said: "I love you Gene Taylor, I love you Johnny Bazz, I love Bill Bateman and at times I even love my brother Phil. We've been doing these reunion gigs and it has been fun. Phil take over." Then they launched into "MARIE MARIE."

The Original Blasters had one more song left to do for the reunion. Dave said: "We'd like to bring all of our guests to the stage. All of them legends, all of them national treasures, Sonny Burgess, Billy Boy Arnold, the Calvanes and the Medallions." Suddenly all the lights on the front of the stage went out. Only the back-lighting of the stage was working. We all assumed that this was some effect that the filming crew had planned. No one in the audience could see the



stage but the finale played on through the whole JOE TURNER MEDLEY song. I later heard they lost the power somehow. (In a way, this was strangely prophetic because the next morning I flew home to NY, and just as my plane landed, the whole east coast had a power black out.)

After the song, the lights came back on and they did the finale over. Everybody took a solo and sang and it was a great ending to a fun night celebrating the reunion of the original Blasters. The band loved doing this after having some apprehension. They were tired from the European tour and thought they wouldn't have the energy for this. They did and it came out beautifully.

Well, Original Blasters, Goodbye and we thank you. See ya in twenty years.

**Set List Set 2** -- red rose / trouble bound / no other girl / help you dream (with the Calvanes/Medallions) / have mercy baby (with the Calvanes/Medallions) / crazy baby / border radio / tag along / I'm shakin' / red headed woman (with Sonny Burgess on vocals) / mystery train (with Sonny Burgess on vocals) / sadie brown (with Sonny and Phil on vocals) / big road blues (Phil solo) / I wish you would (with Billy Boy Arnold on vocals and harmonica) / ain't got you (with Billy Boy Arnold on vocals and harmonica) / wandering eye (with Billy Boy Arnold on vocals and guitar) / american music / one bad stud. Encore: marie marie / joe turner medley (with all the guests) / joe turner medley take 2 (with all the guests).

*The 'Blasters Going Home' DVD is due out in January on the Shout! Factory label. Check [www.shoutfactory.com](http://www.shoutfactory.com) for updates. There will also be a live CD companion. . ~AM*

# 'The Blasters Going Home' DVD

**DVD Song List:** marie marie / real rock drive / red rose / trouble bound / don't lie to me (gene vcl) / help you dream (w/ Calvanes) / have mercy baby (w/ Calvanes) / no other girl / border radio / I'm shakin' / so long baby goodbye / red headed woman (w/ Sonny Burgess) / sadie's back in town (w/ Sonny Burgess) / wandering eye (w/ Billy Boy Arnold) / ain't got you (w/ Billy Boy Arnold) / american music / one bad stud (W/ Calvanes)

**CD Song List:** marie marie / real rock drive / border radio / crazy baby / help you dream / have mercy baby / no other girl / don't lie to me / so long baby goodbye / red headed woman / wandering eye / american music / one bad stud / rehearsal jam: J.B. lenoir medley (voodoo music / mama, talk to your daughter / rehearsal jam (all your love) / big joe turner medley (flip, flop and fly) with Sonny, Billy Boy, and the Calvanes.

**Dave Alvin:** Mark Linett and I tried to not repeat too many songs that appeared on the Trouble Bound CD but some ( marie marie/ one bad stud / american music/ etc) were mandatory. We also tried to work in some of the songs people complained about not being on the Trouble Bound CD ( border radio/ no other girl).

My favorites, though, are don't lie to me / red headed woman / have mercy baby / and wandering eye, the two rehearsal jams and the Big Joe Medley. I'm glad we caught all this on tape because the band never sounded better. I'm pretty proud of this. I really liked the Magic Sam song (all your love) and the Surf Medley from rehearsal. What was cool about Sonny Burgess is, he doesn't like to do his songs like he did in the old days. He lives in the moment and what ever happens at that moment is the way it's supposed to go. That's what I love about his style.

Gaffney said one of his favorite moments was to be backstage and watch Sonny who had plopped himself in a chair in front of the monitor to watch us play. When I was flying in the air during CRAZY BABY, you know because jumping was always Sonny's trademark in the old days; he was like a proud father watching his son. Chris thought it was the sweetest thing.

We did the Big Joe Turner Medley twice when the lights went out. In the final mix for the CD, we used parts of both. What amazed me was that you would think there would be a tempo difference between the two - but no, the whole band was right on tempo both times. ~~~**AM**

**From the Editor, Billy Davis:** There has been much confusion as to who are the members of the Blasters and at what show they are appearing. This confusion was a major factor in the cancellation of a September 2003 tour with Reverend Horton Heat. Here is the rule: "The Blasters" are Phil, John, Jerry, and Keith. "The Original Blasters" are Phil, Dave, John, Bill, and Gene. The "Original Blasters" reunion is over. That version of the band will not be appearing together for a very long time. Stay tuned for a ton of coverage coming your way. Next issue is the Ten Year Anniversary of this newsletter. There will be detailed coverage of the Original Blasters July 2003 tour of Europe, also the new Blasters CD, and more.



# The Original Blasters—Santa Ana CA - 8/13/03

## Rehearsals

Photos: Billy Davis











## Photos By Kurt Mahoney



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