

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

FEBRUARY 2002

BLASTERS Shows

3/6 San Diego CA at 4th and B
3/7 Santa Anna CA at Galaxy Theatre
3/8 Los Angeles CA at House of Blues
3/9 San Francisco CA at Slims
3/10 Petaluma Ca at Mystic Theatre

DAVE ALVIN Shows

With Rick Shea and Chris Gaffney
4/19 Austin TX at Texas Union theatre
4/20 Conroe TX at Crighton theatre
4/21 San Antonio TX at Casbeer's bar

Avalon Blues Tour with
Peter Case and Chris Smither

6/13 Minneapolis MN at Cedar Cultural
6/14 Chicago IL at Old Town School
6/21 Norfolk VA at private party at
North Shore Point House Concerts
6/22 Vienna VA at Wolf Trap
8/30 Yosemite CA at Strawberry fest

With The Guilty Men
7/4 Chicago IL at Fitzgerald's
7/6 Lincoln NE at Zoo Bar Blues fest
7/19 Maine at TBA
7/20 Greenfield MA at Green River fest

With Rick Shea & Brantley Kearns

6/16 Santa Barbara at Live Oak Fest

CHRISTY McWILSON with
DAVE ALVIN, PETER BUCK

3/29 Portland OR at St. Johns Pub
3/30 Seattle WA at Tractor Tavern
4/3 Minneapolis MN at Dez's 400
4/4 Madison WI at Club Tavern
4/5 Chicago at Schuba's

4/6 Chicago at Fitzgerald's
4/7 Pittsburgh at TBA

4/8 Arlington VA at Iota
4/9 NYC at Mercury Lounge

CHRIS GAFFNEY shows

3/15-16 Austin TX at SXSW

James Intveld shows

3/14-17 Austin TX at SXSW

The Original 5 Blasters To Play Five California Shows



Latest News -- The Blasters consisting of Phil Alvin, Dave Alvin, John Bazz, Bill Bateman, and Gene Taylor will reunite for a handful of shows in California in March 2002. John Bazz comments on the possible reunion: "I am really torn, because this is a tale of two Blasters bands. I feel bad for my comrades in the current lineup who don't get to play, both Jerry and Keith. They both understand what's going on with the old guys getting together. The tour can't not happen, with the Rhino release happening. Even though the current Blasters might be the best version of -- ((continued page 2))

In This Issue: The Blasters Testament: The Complete Slash recordings CD, Dave Alvin's Mississippi John Hurt Tribute shows, and Bruce Willis and the Accelerators 2002 tour.

Latest News -- ((cont. from pg. 1)) the band from a performance standpoint, the original band is THE original band. This is a wonderful opportunity to play again with Dave, Bill, and Gene: the guys that I grew up playing with, and that I thought I would never play with again.” -- March 5, 2002, is the date to celebrate as Rhino records releases all the Blasters Slash recordings in a set called Testament: The Complete Slash Recordings. -- **Dave Alvin** will release a live album on HighTone in May. It will contain songs recorded from two August 2001 shows with the Guilty Men: Santa Barbara’s Labarro Theatre, and The Blue Cafe in Long Beach, and an acoustic show with Rick Shea from January, 2002 at Pasadena’s Neighborhood Church. Dave spent time in February mixing the album. -- Also in February, **Dave Alvin** played on and produced a new album by **Rick Shea & Brantley Kearns** for Tres Pescadores Records. Expect release of that in the early summer. -- **Christy McWilson’s** CD, Bed of Roses will be released on HighTone on March 19. Dave produced and played on the CD. Peter Buck of R.E. M. plays on the album also. Dave and Peter Buck will back Christy on an April promotional tour for Bed Of Roses. Joe Terry and Bobby Lloyd Hicks will also be part of the band. -- In early February, **Dave Alvin** wrote songs with Rod Hodges of the **Iguanas** for inclusion on the next Iguana’s album. -- **Jill Olson** of Red Meat has a solo album coming out in May called My Best Yesterday. Dave Alvin produced the CD and played bass on it. -- Joe Terry will tour with **Robbie Fulks** on his U.S. and European tour in March and April. -- Smokey Hormel has joined up with singer Miho Hatori (from the New York art-pop band Cibo Matto) to form a duo they call Smokey & Mino. They play Brazilian and bossa nova music. ~~**AM**

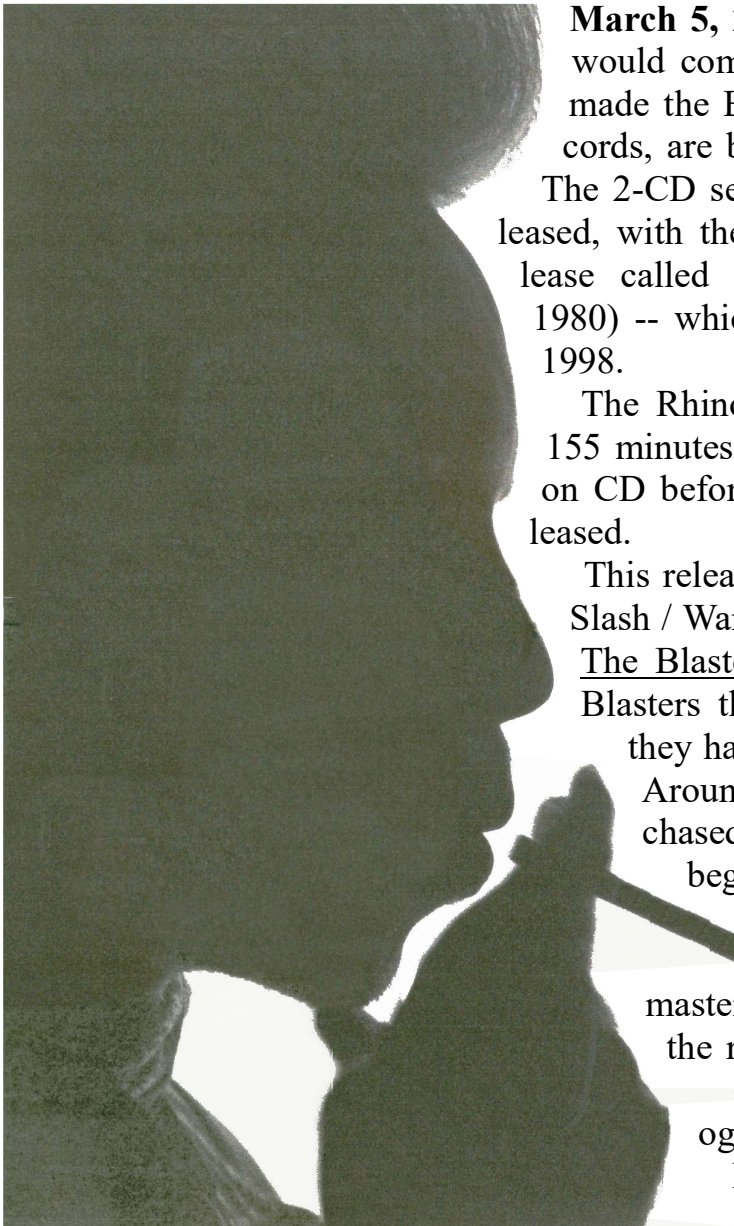
Art Fein Report on Bill Bateman’s 50th Birthday Party

Sunday, December 16th, 2001 there was a surprise party for the Blasters’ ex-drummer Bill Bateman at The Ledge in Atwater (L.A.). All five original Blasters were on hand, plus numerous other local lights. I felt like I was backstage at ‘The Whisky’ in 1981. Party favorite Bateman, was utterly surprised when the crowd screamed “Happy B-day” as he entered. “Surprised” is not sufficient: “terrified” is more like it. He looked like a deer caught in the headlights. Maybe you don’t do this to people over 30, lest they keel over. *From Art’s monthly column on the web called Another Fein Mess. Check it out at <http://oversight.com/soFein/>*

Photo by Gary Leonard



The Blasters Testament: The Complete Slash Recordings (1981-1985)



March 5, 2002 -- Well, the day that we never thought would come is approaching fast. The recordings that made the Blasters famous in the 1980's on Slash Records, are being released officially by Rhino Records. The 2-CD set includes everything the Blasters have released, with the exception of their debut independent release called American Music (Rollin' Rock Records 1980) -- which was re-released on CD by HighTone in 1998.

The Rhino release contains 52 songs, logging in at 155 minutes total. Thirty of the songs have never been on CD before, and seven of them are previously unreleased.

This release was a long time in the making. In 1991, Slash / Warner Bros. released a greatest hits CD called The Blasters Collection. In the years following, the Blasters themselves couldn't locate their masters as they had been sold off to an undisclosed company. Around 2000, the Slash back-catalog was purchased by the popular reissue label Rhino. Rhino began releasing discs by Los Lobos, X, and the Knitters. This prompted rumors that they had purchased the rights to the Blasters masters as well. In early 2001, Rhino confirmed the rumors and approached the Blasters for co-operation in releasing a Blasters anthology package.

It was learned that Rhino could go ahead with a release without the Blasters' permission, but they decided to consult the band knowing their blessing would make it a better package. The project managers had the difficult task of locating the master tapes. After an extensive search, they found them along with a bunch of bonus tracks.

Here is the final track listing of Testament: The Complete Slash Recordings (1981-1985). It will include all of the three officially released LP albums on Slash records. They are: The Blasters (1981), Non Fiction (1983), and Hardline (1985). All have been remastered from the original tapes.

The original 6 songs heard on the Over There: Live at The Venue EP will make the 2-disc set as well as four more live songs from that same concert: WHAT WILL LUCY DO is a song that appeared as a bonus track on the Over There EP cassette tape pressing. CRAZY

BABY is a killer rockabilly song that the Blasters first recorded on their 1980 Rollin' Rock album. Also included is the blues song GOT LOVE IF YOU WANT IT, and a great version of the Lee Allen showcase: WALKIN WITH MR LEE.

The archival consultants in the project wanted to include the only other remaining rare song from the original London Venue tapes called THESE ARMS OF MINE (written by Otis Redding), but the 3rd reel of the original master tape of the concert couldn't be located; only the two track mixed master was found. Since all the other live tracks would be remastered, it was decided that one song derived from the two-track master would not match up in quality to the other tracks. So it was left off.

Other interesting things were found in the vaults, but not used for the CD collection: master tapes for a Westwood One radio show taped at the Country Club in Reseda, CA, in 1982. They also found an old tape box containing some pages of possible album cover designs by Dave Alvin and John Bazz for the first album.

The search began for suitable outtakes and rarities for the new anthology CD. One they used is called LEAVE MY MONEY ALONE. Originally recorded by Lonesome Sundown, the Blasters did it at the Non Fiction album sessions as John Bazz remembers how it came about: "It was one of those impromptu songs. I think Phil called for that one. We recorded it and then forgot we did it"



Those sessions tapes also revealed second-time-for-the-band recorded versions of FLAT-TOP JOINT and BARN BURNING. Both were recorded first for the 1980 Rollin Rock LP and stayed in the band's repertoire through those early 80's years. FLATTOP will appear on Testament and Dave Alvin tells us why BARN BURNING will not: "the later version is no different than the Rollin' Rock one and simply because we were running out of space on the CD." One of the tapes has some banter between songs with Phil Alvin and Bill Bateman who argued: "What kind of record are we making? John Coltrane or Bo Diddley?"

From the 1984 Hardline sessions are several outtakes; one that will be included in Testament is a song called CAN'T STOP TIME. It was a shot at a commercial hit but when completed, it didn't feel right to the Blasters. John Bazz remembers, "When David wrote that, he imagined -- he heard it being played more soulfully. We never got that right." So they brought in John Melancamp to help them write and produce a hit -- COLORED LIGHTS. John Bazz: "We only had a half-day to record that. John Mellancamp's philosophy was: You record it in the first half of the day, and then overdub and mix in the rest of the day. I was playing along with Bill and David making what is called a scratch track and I couldn't get my part so for the sake of expediency we had producer Jeff Ehrich play the bass and it was perfect. I couldn't get the chord changes on that -- I was a blues player and it was a pop song. I took a cassette home and learned it in a few days. I truly think I put my bass back over it in an overdub, when we were fixing other stuff later. That was February, 1984."

From the Hardline sessions a few rare songs were found. Dave Alvin comments on one called JUNGLE SOLDIER: "That is the worst song I ever wrote and the only tape of it we could find was an awful 80's rough mix with 'big drums.' Perhaps, if the original master tapes

are found someday it'll come out. A great Lee Allen solo, though!" Another song that will remain unreleased for a while is a longer version of DARK NIGHT with an extra verse. If you listen carefully to Blasters live versions of DARK NIGHT in 1985, you will hear Phil sing that extra verse.

Three bonus tracks from 1991's Blasters Collection CD that appear again are JUSTINE, featuring Phil and John Doe in a duet vocal, a hot Blasters version of the Elmore James song CRY FOR ME, and a Dave original called KATHLEEN. They also came across an extended jam of KATHLEEN, which will remain unreleased in favor of the previously released 5-minute version. Though these three were previously released as bonus tracks on that 1991 release, nevertheless they are just as rare for this set due to the Blaster Collection's out-of-print status and its \$35 - 40 price tag on the collector's circuit.

The much-coveted tapes produced by Nick Lowe were found, considered for release, but then were turned down as unfinished songs. The vocal track on the two songs was what's called a 'scratch track.' It's a recording made for the sake of being a guide for other musicians to follow, and not intended for the finished product. In a lot of cases, the singer may not sing the lyrics completely or he may cue chord changes to the listening musicians who are overdubbing their parts.

Here is the story on these Nick Lowe tapes: In 1986, after the Blasters finished their nation wide tour to support the Hardline album, the band went into the studio to start a new album with Nick Lowe producing. The band tracked two Dave Alvin songs with Phil Alvin on vocals: 4TH OF JULY and BROTHER ON THE LINE. The band wasn't in agreement on the direction of the sessions and it led to, among many other reasons, the departure of Dave Alvin from the Blasters. From that day, those tracks have not been heard until recently when the search for songs for the Anthology began. It was imagined over the years, that the songs were better than the recording quality actually revealed.

The Blasters movie soundtrack work for Streets of Fire is included in the new anthology: ONE BAD STUD and BLUE SHADOWS. MCA records still has the original soundtrack in print, and the movie is out on DVD.

To finish the 2 CD set, the record company reached out to Blasters fandom to find a rare live song only in the hands of Blasters collectors. The song is the only known recording of Phil and Dave Alvin playing together as a duo. They play a Jimmy Reed song called TAKE SOME INSURANCE ON ME. There is sentimental significance to the recording because it took place on the Blasters last national tour, before the original lineup of the Blasters with Dave Alvin broke up. The quality of the recording is sub-par, but its historical significance outweighs the flaws. The song was recorded in October 1985, at a club called Folk City in New York City. It was an off-night on the Blasters tour. Phil played an evening of solo acoustic blues at the legendary folk club. Dave Alvin was in the audience and joined Phil on stage for the song.

Look for a hidden segment after the last track. In searching the archives, a mysterious tape box from the Non Fiction sessions titled "Instrumental: LITTLE PHIL" was found. On it was a 30 second sound snippet where piano player Gene Taylor walks across the studio hard wood floor, flips open the piano key cover and plays an ending refrain of a barrelhouse blues song. Cool stuff.

Don Snowden wrote the liner notes. He was around L.A., when the Blasters first hit the scene, playing bass for Phast Freddie and the Precisions. John Bazz: "He knew us all, and he

has the whole perspective and understands the whole vibe of the band. He has a sort of Kerouac style of throwing ideas on the page. He covers a lot of bases with the formation of the band, what created the sound, but from his perspective. It was interesting.”

So line up at your local record store because March 5, 2002, will be the day that Testament: The Complete Slash Recordings (1981-1985) becomes the definitive Blasters musical document for “all time.” ~~*AM*

Bruce Willis and the Accelerators **2002 US TOUR**

By Billy Davis

Bruce Willis - superstar actor, has a secret passion. Just like any other kid from New Jersey, he always wanted to be in a band. For the last 12 years, he has had his own blues band called The Accelerators. The blues band was formed to play openings to his chain of restaurants called Planet Hollywood.

Wisely he has surrounded himself with stellar musicians, making his shows entertaining, as well as musically challenging. On bass guitar is John Bazz of the Blasters, who has been in the band since its formation ten years ago. Drummer

Stephen Hodges has played with the Fabulous Thunderbirds, James Harman, Charlie Musselwhite, Dave Alvin (Museum of Heart, 1993), and John Hammond's Wicked Grin and Tom Waits band. The dual guitars are handled by two excellent string-slingers Miles Joseph and Doug Hamblin.

John Bazz tells us about the formation of the Accelerators: “The first time I played bass for Bruce Willis, I was sub-ing for Jonny Ray Bartel in the Red Devils at a Aspen, CO, gig that Bruce had hired the Red Devils for. It was one of those star-studded events - Stephen Stills, Billy Idol, Al Di-



John Bazz, Stephen Hodges, Bruce, Doug Hamblin, & Miles Joseph.

meola, and the Red Devils. Bruce was confronting the band with Lester Butler (Harmonica player from the Red Devils.) Bruce really loved Lester's playing and his whole vibe. Bruce and the Red Devils played the New York City Planet Hollywood opening in October 1991. I wasn't there, but that was when the Red Devils blew up and half the guys said they didn't want to play for a movie star anymore. They thought the Red Devils were too good for that.”

“Bruce Willis asked Lester Butler to put together another band. Half were Red Devils, and half were new guys: Stephen Hodges and

Smokey Hormel. We played the very next Planet Hollywood opening in Costa Mesa, CA, in late 1992. Lester again co-fronted the band with Bruce. We were busy for a few years, until Planet Hollywood locations started going out of business.”

A major addition to the band came in The Accelerators second year, when Bruce came across a great slide guitar player at a blues club and decided he had to have him in his band. Enter Doug Hamblin. Bazz: “Doug plays slide guitar really well. We already had Smokey on guitar, who is so well rounded, but he didn’t play slide. Because Bruce loves slide guitar, getting Doug finalized his band for him.”

In the late 90’s the band wasn’t as active. In May of 1998, Lester Butler died of an overdose and Smokey left the band in 1996 to play in Beck’s band. Miles Joseph was added on guitar to complete the current Accelerators lineup. Doug Hamblin: “Miles and I complement each other. When we needed to add a player back in '96 he immediately came to my mind. We’d played together in some impromptu situations in L.A., so it was easy. That counts for a lot with me, especially in this outfit. You gotta have someone who can saddle up and go, and not need a whole lot of time to pussyfoot around with figuring out stuff. We work things out on the spot mostly. It’s kind of instinctive, staying out of each other’s way, finding the right voicings -- it’s pretty apparent who’ll do what on a tune. We have different strengths. Miles has that great SRV and 70s soul thing happening and I am a little more from roots music, and rock and roll.”

Fast forward to 2002. Bruce Willis and The Accelerators hadn’t done more than two gigs outside of Planet Hollywood openings in the band’s 10-year history. But in January of 2002, they lined up a tour of fifteen shows across the country.



It all came about for less than obvious reasons. John Bazz: “Bruce has a few homes. One in L.A., where the band always practices. We named it Uptop because it’s on the top of a hill. A guy named Gary Gold, who traveled with the band, was a drummer and studio engineer, talked Bruce into getting a full studio up there. Bruce wasn’t always around at the house, so Gary decided to start recording projects. One of those projects was (Aaron’s son) Ivan Neville. What Ivan does is not pop music. I would call it old school R & B. The market place for that kind of music is very slim. Bruce liked what he heard they recorded, and started his own label called Uptop records. Bruce said that he really believes in Ivan and it’s a great recording (Saturday Morning Music, 2002).”

The label’s motto is: “To cultivate an in-

road to the marketplace, so that the listening public will not have to digest only the 'disposable' music that is provided by pop culture. We want to provide a platform for music that is 'born of necessity.'"

The next logical step was to get Ivan out on tour and have Bruce Willis tour with him. With Bruce on the bill, all the venues were sold out and gave Ivan great exposure. John, "Bruce probably lost money, but secretly his alter ego has always wanted to have a band and play gigs. The Planet Hollywood tour was such a rarefied setting, not like a proper gig. So, I think Bruce loved this tour. Everywhere we went was a big city, and when we played the gig it was always a lot of fun. That's what Bruce is all about -- having fun. And when the music is done, it doesn't stop, he keeps going."

The Tour started in Atlanta and ended up in Las Vegas. The second from the last stop on the tour was at BB Kings Club in New York City for two sold-out shows. The second NYC show proved to be the most memorable of the tour.

BB King's Club, New York City, 1/30/02 -- Ivan Neville and his band played a full opening set and, as he did in every city, consistently won over the audience with his exceptional band. But, Bruce Willis was what led the crowd in.

The excitement mounted as the Accelerators came to the stage led by Doug Hamblin's old-timey slide playing of KOKOMO BLUES on his '39 National steel guitar. Bruce Willis emerged from the darkness in a black pullover cap tossing confetti in the air from an endless stash in his leather jacket pockets. The crowd started going wild as he started singing. Bazz: "That song was a very dramatic opening. It's a very low-key swampy blues piece. Just slide guitar, Bruce, and the harmonica player Bruce Damatio playing."

Bruce Damatio is a harmonica player who is a long time friend from the days that he and Willis attended Montclair State University in New Jersey in the 70's. He handles a lot of the harmonica playing, freeing Willis to play harmonica sporadically and sing. Damatio had a certain shtick going on, or let's call it 'comic relief.' He wore a Krispy Kreme donut uniform and hat. Bruce Willis called him the "College of Donut Knowledge," and claimed that he was the founder of the company. Bazz tells a funny story: "Every show we had to have four dozen donuts on hand. He would start handing them out to the audience, then tossing them, then throwing them! In Boston, someone threw the donut back at him (laughs). -- These are two unrelated events we tied together. -- Girls have been throwing their underwear on stage. So we took donuts, loaded them into the cups of the bras, and sling-shot-ed them back at the audience. They didn't go far but it was a good visual. (laughs)."

The second song of the night featured the full band assault on Bo Diddley's WHO DO YOU LOVE. Making it a special night in New York, Willis brought another harp playing buddy to the stage, John Popper from Blues Traveler. Popper stayed on stage all night as Bruce Willis took somewhat of a back seat to the dueling harps of Popper and Damatio. No matter who joins the band on stage, Bruce Willis still controls the direction. Bazz: "Bruce is very much in control, even if he is not calling the breaks and the interaction between the players. Bruce, more than any other leader I've worked with in a musical situation, really knows what he wants, knows how to get it, and he really speaks to musicians. He might not tell you it's the bridge, but he'll sing you the part. I've seen him work with horn sections. We have in the past traveled with as many as 12 pieces - background

singers and a horn section. At the Cannes Film Fest, we did a Tower of Power tune and didn't have an ending. Bruce and the horn section wrote the ending and it was great."

Doug Hamblin echoes the same about the guitar parts. Doug: "Bruce has great instincts, a real good ear, and usually has opinions on stuff. He knows what he wants to hear. But he will leave it to me to get it, generally. If the tune calls for a Chicago type thing, a Texas blues, or a Dick Dale surf vibe, whatever the tune seems to need. It's part of the gig...coming up with different colors, because we cover a pretty broad range of stuff. One tone ain't gonna cut it!"

For most of the set at BB King's, the band ran through blues cover songs with loose interpretations and extended jams. At one point, Bruce told the crowd, "It's all-star night here in New York City. I like to bring up some friends." Opener Ivan Neville with his band came to the stage to sing and play his Hammond B 3 organ, and Cyndi Lauper and Phoebe Snow came up to help on vocals. Both Cyndi and Phoebe showed exceptional range singing blues lines to the song FEVER.

These guest appearances happened all over the tour. Actor and 'Blues Brothers' man John Goodman, followed the tour jumping on stage to sing at the New Orleans, St. Louis and Chicago shows. At the Studio 54 Club in Las Vegas, Bruce brought up a few actors from his new movie Hart's War for the big finale song, where everybody bangs on pots and pans. The sound crew also came on stage for that final show of the tour.

For the ending of the show at B.B. King's, Bruce called for Bernard Collins of Ivan Neville's band take vocals for WILD HORSES. Another guitarist joined the stage from Neville's band named Kat Dyson, a hot guitar player in the style of Jimi

Hendrix.

This NYC show was the longest of the tour, spanning two and a half hours. They just didn't want to leave the stage. The stage got more crowded as more celebrities were invited on the stage for COME TOGETHER, then War's I'M A GYPSY MAN. In the grand finale song of Spencer Davis's I'M A MAN, Bruce filled the stage with members of the David Letterman Late Show Band. Letterman band drummer Anton Figg stole the show playing drumsticks on a table set up with old pots and pans.

The show was quite a spectacle and Bruce Willis maintained great presence on stage, as he does in his acting career. Because he is an actor, it's easy to under-rate him as a blues harmonica player and singer. But Doug Hamblin explains, "Bruce is a good harp player. I don't know about technically, but he can sure rev up a crowd! By the time we were out for a week or so, he was just playing great. He learned a lot from Lester (Butler) I think, about how to play simply and effectively. And his singing, man! I've got some stuff back in the studio vaults that would surprise the hell out of you! I've been saying he should make a record with this band. He'll do it if he feels like it. Then again, not...but I tell you: I've played recordings I've done with him, quiet back-porch Delta blues type



Avalon Blues Tour: December 2001

Dave Alvin, Peter Case, & Bill Morrissey: A Tribute to the Music of Mississippi John Hurt.

Peter Case has spent quite a few years planning this tribute album to blues man Mississippi John Hurt for Vanguard records. Entitled Avalon Blues, it's billed as an all-star tribute to the music of legendary folk-blues musician Mississippi John Hurt. Performers such as Beck, Ben Harper, Lucinda Williams, Steve Earle, John Hiatt, Victoria Williams, Taj Mahal, Chris Smither, Mark Selby, Geoff Muldaur, Bill Morrissey, Gillian Welch, Alvin Youngblood Hart, and Dave Alvin who participated in a duet with Case, **MONDAY MORNING BLUES**.

The album is nominated for a 2002 Grammy Award in the category of Best Traditional Folk album. Could this be a trend? Dave Alvin has been involved in albums nominated for a Grammy for Best Traditional Folk album two years in a row.

To promote the album, Peter Case, Dave Alvin, and Bill Morrissey played a "string" of acoustic shows in California in December 2001. Later this year, The Avalon Blues tour will hit the east coast of the US with Case, Alvin, and Chris Smither. Dave: "One of the reasons I wanted to do these shows was to play with two guys who I respect and admire, Peter Case and Bill Morrissey. The other reason was an excuse to play some traditional music, which I don't get a chance to do so often."

The final show of the four-show west coast tour was in Los Angeles, CA, at the Getty Museum. The theatre / museum complex stands atop the hills, overlooking West L.A. The trio had

played the first three shows in various "smoky bar" type venues where "the booze was flowing," but this show at the Getty was more of a church-like environment. Basically it was still just three guitar players together in the round exchanging songs.

They started off all together with John Hurt's signature song **AVALON BLUES**. Bill Morrissey took the lead vocals and all three played guitar. Peter Case also played a few harmonica solos on the song and it was a beautiful version. Early in the recording project, Peter Case decided Avalon Blues had to be the title of the tribute album, because of the song's important role in Hurt's legacy.

Specifically, **AVALON BLUES** was an important stepping-stone to Mississippi John Hurts re-emergence to the music world in the



60's. Much earlier, he recorded in 1928 with little success, so he returned to sharecropping in his hometown of Avalon, MS. In 1963, two young blues musicians from Washington, D.C., Tom Hoskins and Mike Stewart, came across the original 78 on Okeh records of AVALON BLUES. They tried to locate Hurt by checking Mississippi maps, but no town named Avalon could be found. However, after locating an 1878 atlas, sure enough, there was an Avalon marked on a rural road running between Greenwood and Grenada. With the help of the old map, they found Avalon with its single gas station/store and inquired about John Hurt.

They were floored to see the attendant point down the road. At 71 years of age, John Hurt was still able to sing and play about as well as he had before. Thus, the rediscovery of Mississippi John Hurt. He became an instant success on the rapidly growing early 60's folk/blues scene. AVALON BLUES is a very fitting tribute to start with that song and name the album after the song.

Next in the show, the three traded off songs from their repertoire. Typically in the Avalon shows each singer played a 20-minute solo set in succession after that first song. Dave felt it was important to focus on traditional songs and choose his own songs wisely. BLACK-JACK DAVID is as traditional a tune as you can find, and DRY RIVER was chosen because Dave says, "I think the guitar part is loosely based on John Hurt's STAGOLEE."

But tonight at the Getty, they were playing a shorter set, so Dave chose a very rare Bo Carter song called ALL AROUND MAN for his solo spot. The song is one of those double entendre songs. Dave lightened up the audience in the middle of the song by quickly saying, "I know it's an art museum but you can laugh." Dave featured some great acoustic blues guitar playing on this song with his newly acquired 1937 National steel guitar.

Next, Bill took lead vocals as the trio played together on Hurt's HOT TIME IN THE OLD TOWN TONIGHT, a real up-tempo foot stomper. More songs from the tribute album were traded off, and a high point came when Dave played a beautiful song called LOUIS COLLINS. Dave: "It's one of the greatest pieces of American art: His (Hurt's) performance of this next song should be in this museum right up there with 'The Great Gatsby', 'Huckleberry Finn', and Ernest Hemingway." Dave did a beautiful job taking vocals, as Bill and Peter backed him up on delicate vocals.

Dave remembers before the tour, coming up with their set list: "Bill Morrissey had done his own 'Grammy-nominated' album of John Hurt songs, so we gave him the first choice to pick songs. I love LOUIS COLLINS, so that's the song I wanted to do." On the tribute album Lucinda Williams recorded it with a different title - ANGELS LAID HIM AWAY.

Bill's interpretation of the song PAYDAY saw Dave take over on backing bass vocal. Dave and Peter did their duet which appears on the tribute album called MONDAY MORNING BLUES. They then finished the regular set with all three trading off on vocals for MAKE ME A PALLET ON YOUR FLOOR.

In the encore at the Getty, Geoff Muldahr came out to sing his contribution to the tribute album called CHICKEN. Then they finished with a spiritual called SINCE I'VE LAID MY BURDEN DOWN. Dave loved the guitar work Geoff played on the song. At the Freight & Salvage show in Berkeley, Tom Russell came up and sang harmonies on the encore spiritual song.

For these shows Dave brought out his rare guitar collection. Dave: "I had my 1957 Martin 0018 strung with high strings (This method gives the guitar a high pitch sound). I played them on different songs, but I think the

high-strung can be heard on LOUIS COLLINS and MONDAY MORNING BLUES. I also had my 1954 Martin D18, but that kind-of got stolen by Bill Morrissey. He put it in a weird tuning and just kept using it. I also used my 1937 National steel guitar. I played that on ALL AROUND MAN and CANDY MAN.”

Dave remembers a funny story about Ramblin' Jack Elliott joining in on one of the Hurt tribute shows: “We played Sweetwater in Mill Valley. Maria Muldahr was there, so we brought her up to sing a John Hurt song. Ramblin' Jack Elliot was there also. I asked him backstage: 'Jack. You do Mississippi John Hurt. Do you want to get up and do one of his songs?' Jack said, 'Yeah,' (Dave imitates Jack

in a gruff voice). ‘I want to do that LOUIS COLLINS song.’ That was the song that I was doing in the shows. So I said, ‘Okay.’ We got him up there, were playing, and Jack sings the first line: ‘Mrs. Collins weeps, Mrs. Collins moan, see her son Louis leave his home, The Angels Laid Him away.’ (Suddenly he stops singing and says) -- ‘Yeah, that’s all I remember. But one time I was up on a fishing boat in Alaska and I asked the captain....’ So, he goes into this whole story while we play Louis Collins (laughs). So that has kind of become a joke.”

The privileged audiences saw a great show. Don’t miss the Avalon Blues tour when it comes to your town this spring or summer. ~~~~AM~~



Report from Rick Shea: Dave Alvin To Produce a New Album by Rick Shea & Brantley Kearns

This will be a Rick and Brantley album. We’re gonna do half new songs and half covers - all on acoustic instruments. There should be a variety of songs. It will be a folk album in that sense. I’ll play mandolin and acoustic guitar. I might play slide, but the plan is to have Greg Leisz play, so if he does, there’s no reason to get my slide out. Brantley will play fiddle, vocals, and maybe some mandolin, too. I’m sure there will be a lot of singing between the two of us.

Brantley will sing LOAFER’S GLORY by Flatt and Scruggs. I’m gonna sing this Jim Ringer song called RACHEL. There will be two instrumentals, but I’ll leave the rest as a surprise. Dave will be producing so were sorting out things about songs and arrangements. We’ll get in the studio and start playing the songs and that’s when things will come together. We will be recording at Paul du Gre’s studio in Burbank starting February 11, 2002. That’s where we recorded Katy’s (Moffatt) record.

We’ll be using James Cruz on drums, Dave Jackson on bass, Don Heffington I’m sure will make a guest appearance, and Chris Gaffney and Wyman Reese will also be on there. Tres Pescadores records will put it out; they did Chris Gaffney’s Live And Then Some album. This will be Brantley’s debut on an album, and it’s long, long overdue. I’m proud to be involved in that. -- Rick

BLASTERS NEWSLETTER.COM

**American Music: The Blasters / Dave Alvin official newsletter
is now an official web site on the Internet.**

**Now you can get up-to-the-minute news as it happens, and
read the American Music newsletters on-line
at BlastersNewsletter.com**

From The Editor -- Hello Friends. I'm really excited because on February 9, 2002, BlastersNewsletter.com went on-line as another official Blasters and Dave Alvin web site. It's 8 years to the month that I started the print edition of the Blasters newsletter back in 1994. My newsletter success over the years is credited solely to the great guys that are the Blasters, Dave Alvin, and all the musicians associated with them. These guys have been so supportive and want to reach out to us, the fans. And you guys, the readers, the fellow fans, the friends who make the magic a phenomenon. The ride continues!

I think this web site will reach out even further to more people. The most important thing is to share the experience of this great music, so please spread the word about Dave Alvin and the Blasters.

Also please keep checking out my buddy Scot Kleinman's Blasters and Dave Alvin pages, as we will be working together to keep American Music flowing through the Internet world. Go to: <http://hello.apo.nmsu.edu/~sjnk/bullwinkle/blasters.html>

To the American Music fans who subscribe to the print newsletter and don't have Internet access, I assure you the print newsletter is continuing. And there will still be exclusive offers and benefits available, that only the intimacy of a fan club membership can offer. Thanks for staying with us for so long.

--Billy Davis

AMERICAN MUSIC --editor/writer: Billy Davis

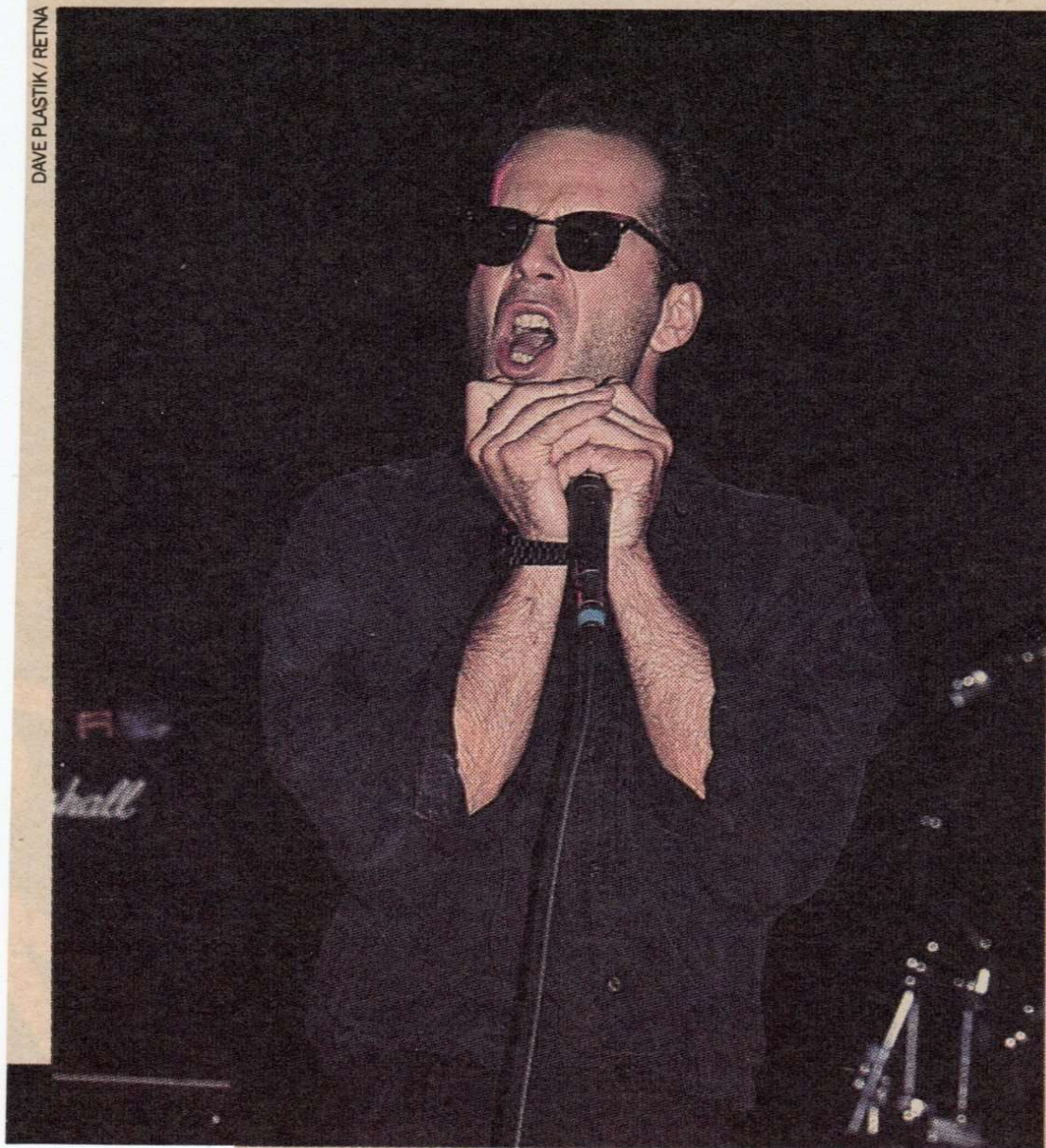
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PRIMAL SCREAM

Bruce Willis's debut album, *The Return of Bruno*, comes out this month, so it was only fitting that he jump onstage with some rock-star pals to test the waters. Which is exactly what he did at a benefit for ailing booking agent **Michele Myer** at the Roxy, in Los Angeles. An "all-star jam" featured Willis, **Dweezil Zappa**, **Charlie Sexton**, **Michael Des Barres**, ex-Duran man **Andy Taylor** (whose first solo LP is due in January), ex-Sex Pistol **Steve Jones** and **Tommy Lee** of **Mötley Crüe** bashing out "Get It On (Bang a Gong)." "It sounded like shit," said Zappa, "but it was great fun."

Bruce Willis, a.k.a. Bruno (above), got onstage at the Roxy, in L.A., and got down with (left, from left) Dweezil Zappa, Andy Taylor and Charlie Sexton.