

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

AUG 2001

DAVE ALVIN Shows

with The Guilty Men

8/16 San Diego CA at Casbah
8/17 Santa Barbara, CA at Lobero The.
8/18 Long Beach CA at Blue Cafe
8/31 Seattle, WA at Bumbershoot Fest
9/3 Detroit MI at United Auto workers
(w/ only Rick and Brantley)
9/05 Saratoga, CA at Carriage House

BLASTERS Shows

8/12 Hot Rod Show
8/13 Los Angeles at Mayan Theatre
9/16 Lake Cafitas CA at Big Lake Run
10/6 Long Beach CA at Blue Cafe
11/24 Long Beach CA at Blue Cafe

Chris Gaffney Shows

8/30 Austin TX at Continental
8/31 Austin TX at Ego's
9/1 San Antonio TX at Has Beers

The "Original Four" Blasters Reunite For One Show



Photo: Steve Joseph

-- **Latest news** -- Dave Alvin recorded the August Santa Barbara and Long Beach shows for a future live release. -- Dave Alvin's schedule for the fall is clear of tour dates. He plans on writing the songs for the next studio album to come out sometime in 2002. -- In August Dave Alvin will

be producing sessions for Christy McWilson's new album. -- Dave had an extensive tour of the midwest and east coast scheduled for late July and early August 2001 that was cancelled. The cancellation resulted from losing an important festival in Duluth, MN. Without that anchor show the tour would have lost money. The promoter was at fault and legal action is being taken. -- **Dave Random recordings** -- In the spring Dave recorded a duet with Syd Straw due for release on her next album. -- Due out in September on Back Porch Records is The I-10 Chronicles Vol. 2: One More For The Road including — Dave's version of Merle Haggard's I'M A LONESOME FUGITIVE. -- Dave recorded a song called NOVEMBER for a tribute CD to the poet Ernest Noyes Brookings. It's on the Gadfly label. Brookings was a poet and Dave set one of his poems to music. Dave, "He was an old man in a nursing home. (((cont. on page 2)))

In this Issue: The Original Four Blasters Reunite. Dave Alvin on: A Pilgrimage to Mississippi, a good will trip to Cambodia, and playing guitar for Sun Records Legends.

Latest news (((*cont. from page 1*))) : He wrote bizarre poetry. David Greenberger has done about 5 CDs of musicians putting music to Ernie's weird poetry. I do a song using a poem he had called November 11, which is my birthday." WWW.GADFLY RECORDS.COM ---- Due in September is Los Straitjackets new album on Yep Roc Records featuring guest vocalists. Dave Alvin does CALIFORNIA SUN. Another track Dave recorded with them is being saved for a Los Straitjackets limited release single. Los Straitjackets will be out on tour with Big Sandy in the fall. Watch the California dates: Dave may make some special appearances at their shows to sing some songs. -- Dave played guitar on Mark Insley's new album called Tucson. Rick Shea also plays on it. -- On August 6, Dave went into the studio to record a new original song called HIGHWAY 99 for Kathy Robertson's third volume CD in tribute to Roy Nichols (Merle Haggard's legendary guitar player).

Dave in print -- Dave has contributed some quotes for an Al Kooper box set coming out on Sony Legacy this fall. They interviewed Dave because he was a friend and neighbor of Al's. Dave brought Kooper in to produced a movie soundtrack song and one song for X. Both songs are unreleased — Look for a photo of Dave with the surf band Los Straitjackets in Random Notes in Rolling Stone magazine soon. It will be promoting the new Straitjackets album in which Dave sings lead vocals on one track. -- "Only A Hobo music promotion" in Italy has released a beautiful booklet of Dave Alvin lyrics. The 18 page book is printed in Italian and will be available for only a limited time. Inquire at record.runners@recordrunners.com -- Incommunicado press (publisher of Dave Alvin's book of poetry) has run into some financial trouble, which raises doubt that they will still be in business when Dave finishes his long awaited second book of poetry. -- Dave has a feature interview in the August 2001 issue of Vintage Guitar magazine. The article is titled "X Blaster, Grammy Winner."

The Blue Shadows -- - The Blue Shadows are currently in the studio recording a full album of songs. The band will be using more instruments in the recordings than are heard in their live show arrangements. Kid Ramos and Gene Taylor will be playing on the album. Guitarist Mad Dog has left the band because of his busy schedule working on movie special effects (most recently the Planet Of The Apes movie).

Others -- Katy Moffatt's new album due out September 15 on Western Jubilee records includes Katy's a capella version of TEXAS RANGERS. Dave recorded that song last year on Public Domain. —~~Am~~

Update: Rhino Records Release of The Blasters Anthology 2-CD Set

August 2001 -- Unconfirmed rumors are circulating that the contracts have been signed and the Blasters 2 CD Anthology will be released in February 2002. Gathered from various sources, the track listing will most likely look like this:

All the songs from the original release albums; The Face Album, Over There: Live at the Venue EP, The Non Fiction album, and the Hardline album. Bonus tracks are: ONE BAD STUD and BLUE SHADOWS from the Streets of Fire soundtrack, JUSTINE, CRY FOR ME, and KATHLEEN from the Blasters Collection CD, WHAT WILL LUCY DO, CRAZY BABY, GOT LOVE IF YOU WANT IT, and THESE ARMS OF MINE from the Live at the Venue EP recordings. Two out-takes from the Non Fiction sessions will be FLATTOP JOINT and LEAVE MY MONEY ALONE, and from the Hardline sessions, YOU CAN'T STOP TIME. Closing the album will be an as yet un-named rare and never heard live track from the last days of Dave Alvin's tenure in the Blasters.

YE OLDE BLASTERS

The Original Four Blasters reunite
on stage in Long Beach, California Saturday June 23, 2001

It was Sunday Morning on June 24 when I got an e-mail from L.A. record company guy, and Blasters aficionado Steve Joseph. It read, "When did the original Blasters play their last gig? Saturday the 23rd of June, 2001 at the Blue Cafe in Long Beach!" That was last night! I was shocked. I'm sure Los Angeles was buzzing about it that morning as I was reading that e-mail.

It all started with a series of weird coincidences on a night that was expected to be a normal Blasters show

with current members doing their thing. But first, current Blasters drummer Jerry Angel didn't show up for the gig and show time was getting near. The band called and couldn't locate him. The band plays so infrequently lately that it's understandable that someone might forget about a gig. Second coincidence: It just so happened that Bill Bateman, the original Blasters drummer was in the house. Bill: "I showed up down there to set up a meeting with Phil about the Rhino records re-release of the Blasters albums. Phil's drummer Jerry Angel never showed up and didn't call. I always have my drums in the trunk of my car, so the guys got together and asked me to play both sets."

There was a rumor that Dave Alvin was somewhere in the house. Could that be a third coincidence?

The first set started like any other high energy Blasters show as the Blue Café MC announced "I'm gonna turn it over to the boys from Downey: Phil Alvin, Johnny Bazz, Keith Wyatt and Bill Bateman." Phil started off the set with some kind dedications to some recently departed friends: Top Jimmy and John Lee Hooker playing ALL YOUR FAULT. He finished the set dedicating AMERICAN MUSIC "to all you guys (the audience) and to my brother David."

The Blasters normally don't take an encore at the end of their first set at the Blue Café

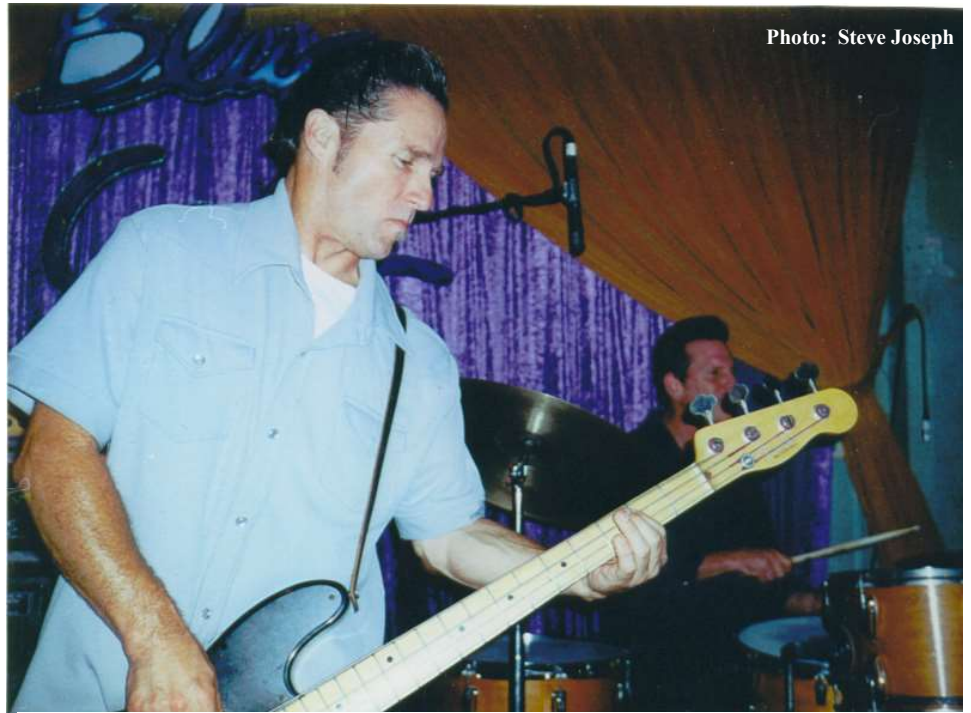


Photo: Steve Joseph

John Bazz and Bill Bateman

shows, but tonight Phil had a surprise. He announced, "Somebody told me that my little brother David is around here. Can we get him up here to play?"

Dave came up and the crowd went crazy. Here we have it - an impromptu reunion of The Original Four Blasters -- a surprise to everyone. Keith Wyatt took a break from the stage and lent Dave his guitar. Dave remembers how they chose the songs: "We just called out songs and that's how the set list worked."

Some fan in front was yelling the song LONE WOLF so Dave just went right into it as their first song. - Talk about a rarity - that song was a bonus track on the re-



Photo: Steve Joseph

Dave Alvin playing Keith Wyatt's guitar



Photo: Steve Joseph

Phil Alvin

release of The American Music Rollin' Rock album by HighTone records. The last time they played the song was about 18 years ago. Next they played FLATTOP JOINT, also from the Rollin' Rock album. Dave didn't remember the solo, so they ended the song right at that break, still a great rendition. They finished the first set with MARIE MARIE. Dave took the long extended solo in it like he does when playing his version with the Guilty men. The original four played the song with all the sweat splattering guitar chugging like the early days. As the song ended the crowd went berserk and Phil calmed them by saying they would be back for a second set.

The Original Four reunion was over. Everyone felt lucky to have witnessed it, and coaxed a few rarities out of them. The second set started as Keith returned to the stage-right guitar position, bringing the starting lineup back together to start the second set.

They played a few Blaster songs from their planned set list then a two-fer tribute to John



Lee Hooker; a song called I GOT MY EYES ON YOU and a Phil-Alvin-enhanced-lyric version of SMOKESTACK LIGHTNIN'. Those are two songs I've never heard the Blasters play as a full band. Phil has played the former title only in solo acoustic shows. So that was a special treat.

It was still early in the set and Phil Alvin called for ONE BAD STUD, which is usually a closer song. It was an end of sorts. Once again, Phil called Dave up and more of the "Original Four Reunion" was coming. Hard to believe!

Keith Wyatt once again stepped off the stage. Dave, "I watched Keith and he is a real good guitar player. He was nice enough to let me use his amp." This time Dave brought his famed 1964 Stratocaster to the stage, another coincidence that Dave had his guitar with him in his car.

They started with TOO TIRED and the band sounded perfect - almost as if they had rehearsed. Dave took a long blues solo and it was a standout song in the set. Next was the rockin' CRAZY BABY, one that can only be played by Bill Bateman. He just drives this song along. Dave said, "I

just started playing that lick and everybody followed in."

Next was a great tune that is often forgotten from "The Face" album, I LOVE YOU SO. What a rocker that was. Some of the audience said they could feel the building shaking and the ascending ending of that one. Following that, Dave tried to coax the band into MYSTERY TRAIN and nobody followed him. The crowd suddenly started chanting over and over "NO OTHER GIRL, NO OTHER GIRL." The band obliged and it brought the house down once again. Dave, "That threw me for a loop because I had never taken a solo on that song. Gene always did in the old days."

Phil called for WHAT WILL LUCY DO and the band started it. This song is another rare one. It was recorded live at the Venue in London for the 1982 Over There EP. It didn't make the EP but was used as a bonus track on the cassette version of the EP and later appeared on a Slash records compilation. Simply put, it's a super rarity. The band played it tonight flawlessly.

I FELL IN LOVE was next after Bill Bateman called that one out to the band. That track was another of the bonus tracks that came out when the Rollin' Rock American Music album was re-released by HighTone in 1997. Bill, "Yeah we were just callin' out songs and doing them. I called out UBANGI STOMP and

1st set encore

LONE WOLF
FLATTOP JOINT
MARIE MARIE

2nd set

SAMSON & DELILAH
TROUBLE BOUND
I GOT MY EYES ON YOU
SMOKESTACK LIGHTNIN'
LONG WHITE CADILLAC
DADDY ROLLING STONE

ONE BAD STUD

2nd set encore

TOO TIRED
CRAZY BABY
I LOVE YOU SO
NO OTHER GIRL
WHAT WILL LUCY DO
I FELL IN LOVE
FEELIN' GOOD
(aka JUMP CHILDREN)

Photo: Steve Joseph



ACTION PACKED but Phil couldn't remember the lyrics."

To finish the show and bring the Blasters history full circle, Phil called Keith Wyatt back to the stage to play with the original four Blasters on a Joe Turner medley called FEELIN' GOOD (JUMP CHILDREN), which is really a bunch of Joe Turner lyrics strung together. Keith and Dave went off on guitar to finish the set. The rising end of the song saw Dave and Keith slamming their guitars. At

one point Phil started singing the final verse but then backed off to let them finish. Hi Ho Silver!

The "Original Four Blasters" reunion on June 23, 2001 is another exciting, historical chapter in Blastory.

"If we would have planned it, it might not have happened." Said Dave, "I thought we remembered the songs pretty well. It was just like back in the old Rollin' Rock days.

Bateman played both sets with the "Keith" Blasters and the reunion set. He sounded amazing." With his trademark modesty, Dave said, "I don't think I played very good but I had a ball anyway." Yeah, right, Dave! We all know better. This performance was Rock n Roll at its best!

One of the big surprises was how well Phil remembered the lyrics to songs he hasn't played in 15 years. Maybe the magic just brought it all back. Also, the whole band just played so well I might suspect there was a secret rehearsal before the gig. Or it was the magic of the Blasters. *Special Thanks to Steve Joseph for providing all the details and photos from this historic event in Blastory. ~~AM*

Photo: Steve Joseph



Dave Alvin Goes to Cambodia

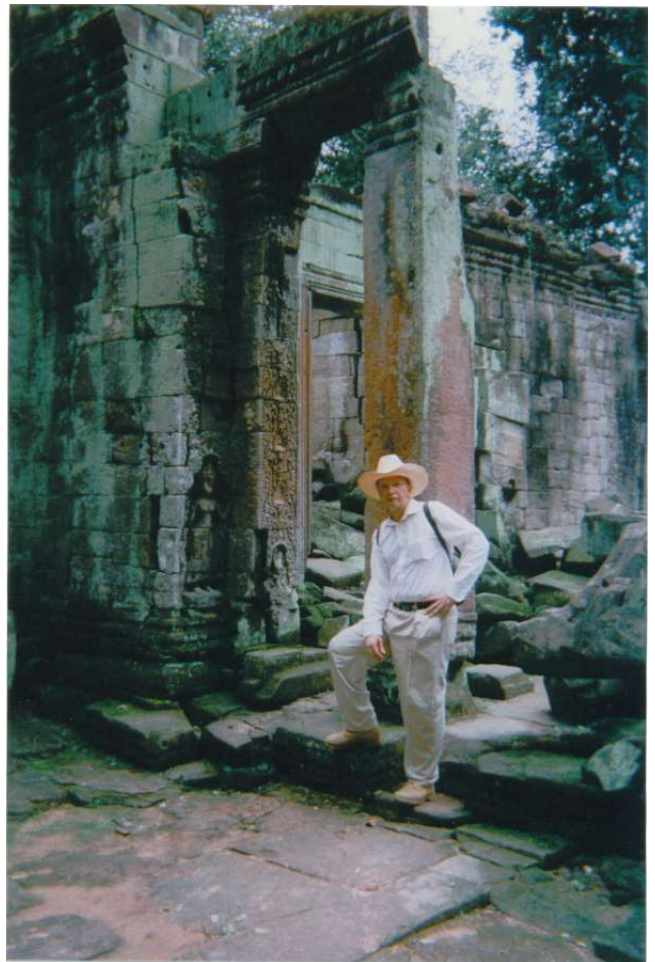
July 2001 Dave: I was asked by Folk Singer Nanci Griffith to go to Cambodia. She is involved in this group called Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation. They run three clinics in Cambodia and one in Vietnam. The clinics treat people who have lost limbs to land mines and have birth defects from Agent Orange. There aren't a lot of hospitals and doctors there, so they treat people, educate them, and help them out.

Our visit was just to raise some awareness. I saw some neat things and some sad things.

One of the nights we went on this little beat-up boat on a cruise down the Mekong River. The beat-up little boat was named MARIE MARIE (laughs). Cambodia used to be a French colony at one time.

Nanci and I did one show in Phnom Penh - just the two of us playing acoustic guitars - swapping songs. It was great. There was a poster that said Rockin' Along the Mekong: Nanci Griffith and Dave Alvin. Le Royale Hotel Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

It's a beautiful country. I saw an area of Buddhist temples built over many centuries called Angkor Wat. As far as man-made stuff, that's one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen.



Dave Alvin in the Angkor Thom Temple.

The scariest thing was going up to Northern Cambodia on the Thai border. We had to take a single engine Cessna plane. We seated 6 people in 4 seats flying over rigorous jungle with lots of turbulence. The morning we left Phnom Penh, two hotels were bombed by what the hotels claim are extortionists. There are so many bombs left all over the place and the wrong people find them.

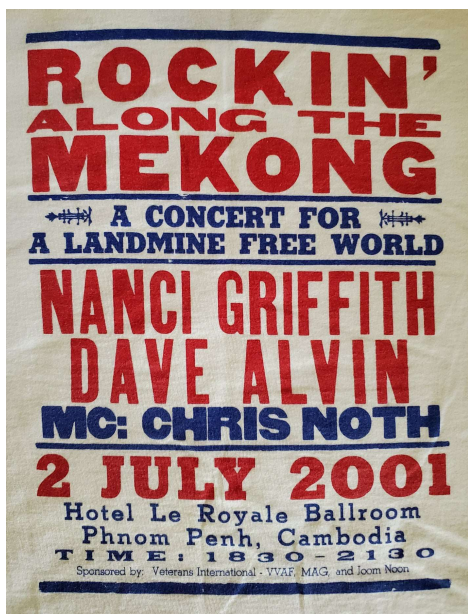


The saddest stuff I saw was going to one of the killing fields. They built what they call a Stupa. Years ago when the mass graves were discovered, they built this shrine. It's four stories tall of just skulls.

The most moving place I went to was a prison / torture camp called Tuolsleng where the Khymer Rouge killed people. When the Vietnamese drove the Khymer Rouge out of power, they left it in tact so everybody could see how insane the Khymer Rouge were. There are bloody handprints on the floor and all the torture devices are still there. It was sad and unbelievable.

It was a very intense trip. It's pretty rugged over there. I was so impressed by the Vietnam Veterans of America that I will do anything in the future that they ask.

~~AM



Dave Alvin plays guitar for the Sun Records legends

7/26/01 Dave Alvin tells the story himself:

Last week I got a phone call from Sonny Burgess. He says, "Dave I'm playin' in Pasadena (CA) at the Ritz Carlton. Can you come down and be my guitar player." I said, "I'll be there!"

He didn't tell me anything else so I go down to the Ritz Carlton hotel and there are posters everywhere that say 'For PBS American Masters series: The Legacy of Sun Records.' I get up on stage and play the set and I didn't know who the bass player, the harmonica player or who the piano player was, but the drummer was DJ Fontana! And the rhythm guitar player was Jack Clement! (Legendary Sun records producer).

We did about 5 songs and Sonny says "I'd like to get Mr. Sam Phillips up here." Wow! Sam Phillips is here in California? He was here because this was the wrap party for this PBS documentary. Sam got up there and took the mic, said a few words, then sat down right in front of me. For the next 7 songs I was pulling out every Sun Records guitar lick that I knew from the



blues stuff, to the country stuff, to the rockabilly stuff.

When we finished, I went behind the stage to put my stuff away and I heard a voice say, "Where you goin'? Where you goin'?" I turn around and it's Sam Phillips! He goes, "Boy, you got the feel. I haven't heard anyone playing guitar like that in a long time." I was like, "Tha-tha-tha-thank you Mr. Ph-Ph-Ph-Phillips (shaking)." That was just it! Oh! I was so nervous. I had to tell him that -- when he said in Rolling Stone years ago (1986) that he liked Bruce Springsteen, Merle Haggard, and the Blasters -- that was it for me! So he said, "Oh Yeah!"

Now, to play guitar for Sam Phillips, that was just great! ~~*AM*

Dave Alvin Pilgrimage to Mississippi

February 2001 : Over the years and all the bands I've played in, we drove through Mississippi a million times and I never stopped to pay my respects. So, I decided I wanted to go and pay my respects. So Bruce Bromberg (HighTone Records) and I flew out to Memphis. Bruce knows a lot of people down there and I had contacted various blues historians for locations.

In Memphis, this was the first time I was in Sun Studio. The Blasters and I were there years ago on one of our first tours. We just drove by at 2 am in the morning when it was closed. That's when all the sessions used to go on anyway. So Bruce and I took the tour, and I was just blown away by being in the actual room. All the original equipment is gone but the piano is supposed to be THE piano. It was incredible for me because that place was the center of the universe for me.

Then we went a block away to Sam Phillips International Studios (Madison Ave.). The guy who manages it is Roland Janes (he was the guitar player on all of Jerry Lee's Sun recordings), so we talked to him for a few hours. I asked him all the questions like - What guitar did you play on HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL? He just said, "I don't know! It was one of those Caster things!" It was funny. He told some funny stories about working with Sam Phillips and Jerry Lee. I was just about the happiest guy in the world that day.

We drove into Mississippi down two-lane roads to places like where Charlie Patton or Son House lived. We saw a blues show in Helena Arkansas to see a paraplegic singer, slide player named Sedel Davis. It was a great show. Helena looks like a movie set of a southern town from the 30's and 40's. It's



Photo: Bruce Bromberg

Dave at Gus Cannon's grave.

right on the Mississippi river and it looks untouched.

The next day we visited Stovall's plantation where Alan Lomax first recorded Muddy (Waters). We saw the hotel where Robert Johnson died and the hospital where Bessie Smith died. That was moving. We visited the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale. The coolest thing I saw was a photo taken by Big Bill Broonzy of Elmore James and Sonny Boy Williamson walking down the street in Chicago.

In Jackson, Mississippi, we saw an apartment that Sonny Boy (Williamson) lived in

Photo: Bruce Bromberg



Dave at Elmore James' grave.

style to write the break-through blues song *MEMPHIS BLUES*.)

We saw a lot of graves. Sonny Boy Williamson's was on the outskirts of a town and it was amazing. Elmore James's grave is in a cemetery behind a church in the woods in a really beautiful, peaceful place. Also we saw Mississippi Fred McDowell's, and Ishman Bracey's - he is one of my favorite old blues men. He had a beautiful headstone.

My favorite was seeing Charlie Patton's grave. The wind was howling and the sun was going down. That was just amazing. The last grave we visited was

Gus Cannon's. Every grave I visited, I left a guitar pick. It's a tourist kind of thing - but it meant something to me.

This trip for me was like going to the holy land. Some of it was visually beautiful and some of it bleak. There is a sadness when you drive down a street like Fanin in Jackson, Beale Street in Memphis, or downtown Helena. Because so much has changed since agribusiness took over. The towns are dead. They have nice old downtowns but they are boarded up. But I finally made my pilgrimage to Mecca. ~~~*AM*

and another house from Johnny Temple. His house is like a shrine because everybody stayed with him at some point. Tommy Johnson, Elmore, and various blues singers lived there. We saw Dockery's plantation, which you see in all the blues books, which is where (Charley) Patton lived. The feed storage building was still standing with "Dockery's" painted on it.

We visited the empty old building that was a big music store in the twenties. Back in the twenties the owner had paid Blind Lemon Jefferson to play two nights there in the store. So that blew me away that I was standing outside of a building that Blind Lemon actually played at.

We drove to where "The Southern crosses the yellow Dog" (two railroad lines) and there was nothing there. (Ed. - This location is ground zero for bringing blues to the masses. In 1903 W.C. Handy was in Tutwiler, Mississippi and heard an itinerant musician playing a guitar with a knife blade singing "Going where the Southern crosses the Yellow Dog." In 1909, Handy used that line and the singer's



Photo: Bruce Bromberg

Dave at Mississippi Fred McDowell's grave.

Bobby Lloyd Hicks photo gallery -- March 2001

Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men European Tour

Bobby Lloyd: This photo was taken outside Sala La Imagen, which may be the only nightclub in Pradajon, Spain. It's a tiny village south of Bilbao. I know we stayed at the only hotel in town, which was actually a hostel. Dave and I were on the third floor, sharing the bathroom with a tourist family.

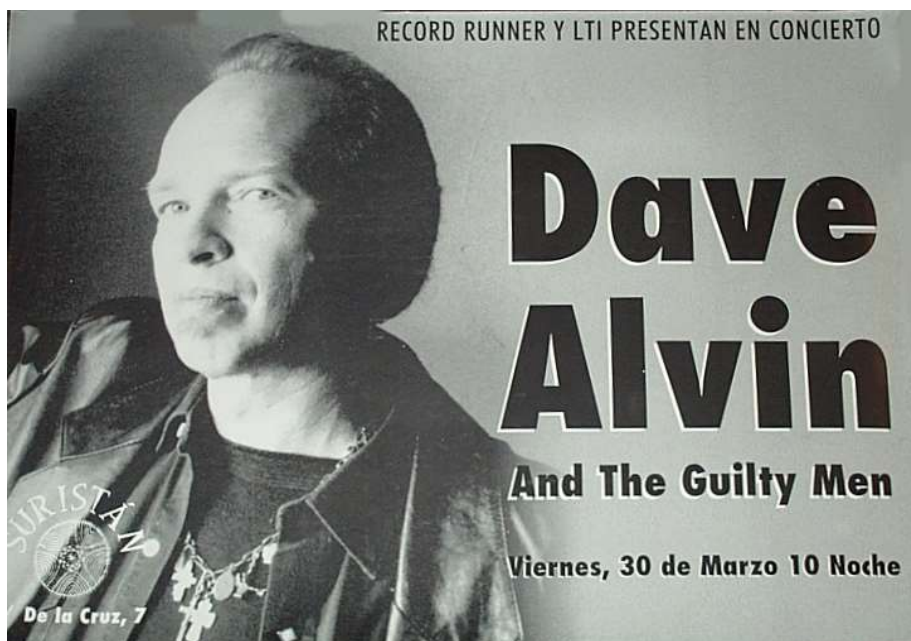
This was our second-to-the-last gig of a month-long European tour. The crowd was a drunken bunch of Blasters fans---rowdy, and yet respectful of Dave. The show was a rock'em sock'em affair with only a couple of downers... the rockabilly kid up front who got so excited that he accidentally sprayed Dave with his beer, and the young lad who was running the monitors managed to get shit-faced at the crew meal before the show.

There was a point when the band was rippin' it up, the crowd was going berserk, and the monitor mix was so bad that Dave just walked over to the side of the stage and played this screaming guitar solo while staring down at this kid who was teetering behind the board with a glassy, blank look on his face...totally oblivious to his surroundings. It was so surreal you had to laugh.

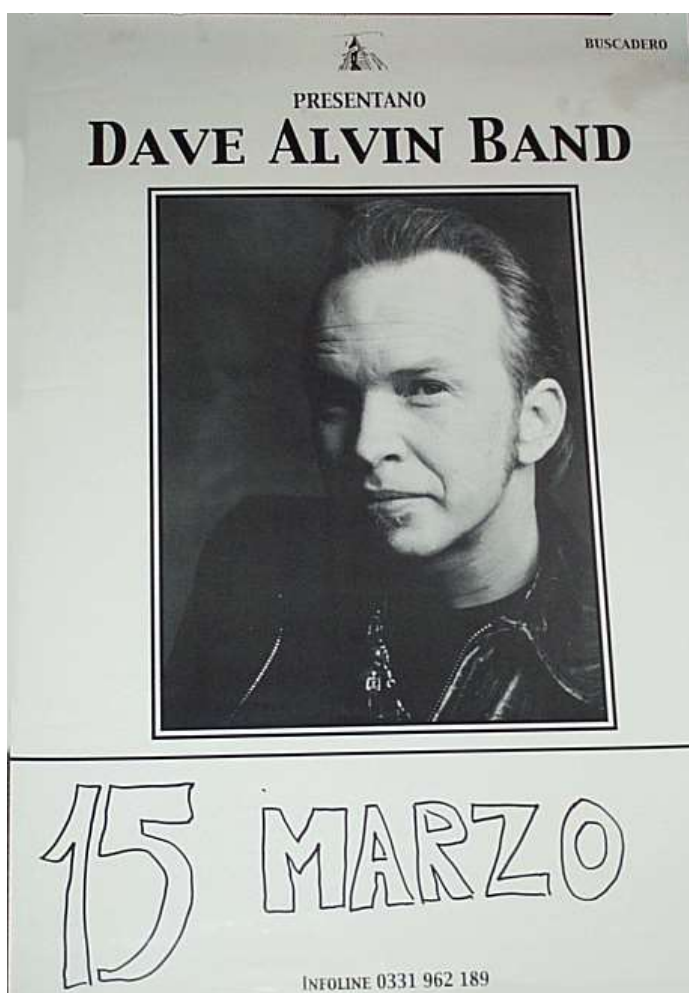
Anyway, I took this picture afterwards, before Dave and I walked back to our "hotel." Desmond Decker is a Reggae singer.

Photo: Bobby Lloyd Hicks





Bobby Lloyd: The gray poster (*far left*) is from Madrid, the white one (*lower left*) is from Italy. This poster was used for all the Italian dates. You'll notice the date is March 15th: The Ides Of March. Ironically, we played in Rome the night before and left the next morning for this gig in Sarzana. As we were leaving the city Dave commented, "This is probably a good day to get out of Rome."



Bobby Lloyd: This poster (*far right*) is from our only date in Scotland in Glasgow at The Grande Ole Opry. This was like a converted town hall. There was this amazing desert mural all around the walls and when the band really got going, they'd flash these neon words that were over the stage - one said, "Howdy." Another said, "Giddy-up." It was a great gig!

Chris Gaffney plays New York City at Lincoln Center 7/18/01

Chris Gaffney and Bill Kirchen teamed up for an outdoor concert at NYC's Lincoln Center Mid Summer Night Swing concert series. The jam-packed crowd was treated to a half and half Kirchen / Gaffney show with a combination of musicians from each singer's backing band.

Gaffney played cover songs through the first half of the set starting with LONELY LONELY NIGHTS. A highlight was THE BEST WAY TO YOUR HEART, which featured the present portion of Gaffney's backing band, The Cold Hard Facts. Bass player Mike Barry took a solo, as did guitarist Danny Ott, who ripped through a hard rock type solo. Chris finished his portion of the set with his adopted signature song, COWBOYS TO GIRLS and then two originals 1968 and SIX NIGHTS A WEEK.

Bill Kirchen finished the show with his popular song HOT ROD LINCOLN. Chris recalls, "Oh I had a blast! I love that city. It was surreal to see New Yorkers line dancing (laughs) or what ever the hell they were doing. I loved one guy who came out and said, 'Could you play a cowboy Cha Cha.' I said what the fuck, this is New York City. You don't ask a question like that. (laughs). I enjoyed it. It was fun to play with Kirchen."

The performance was taped for the PBS TV series "Live From Lincoln Center." Watch your local listings for the date of the airing of that episode.~~*AM*

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