

ISSUE #62

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

JUNE 2010

The Blasters with Dave Alvin will play the Fourth of July American Music Festival in Chicago



In This Issue: The Blasters spring 2010 east coast tour, Rick Shea on his 'Shelter Valley Blues' CD. Stanley Wycoff on his 'Swim Into The Whirlpool' CD, and all the latest news

Blasters shows

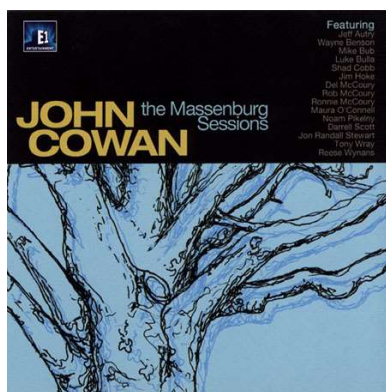
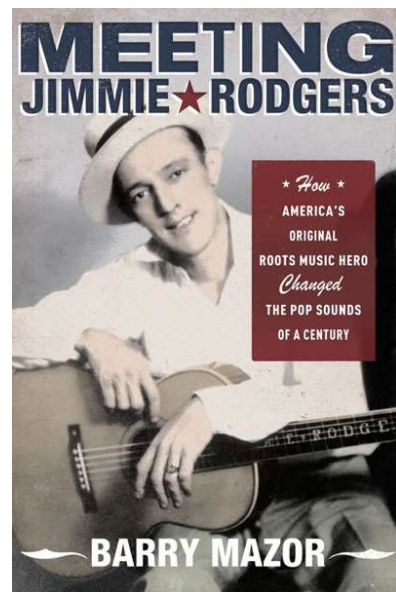
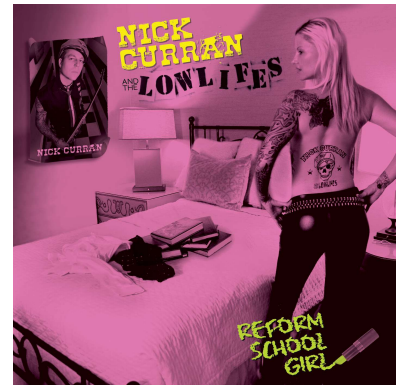
(Phil, John, Jerry, Keith)

6/19 Los Angeles CA at The Echo
7/3-4 Berwyn IL at Fitzgerald's with
special guest Dave Alvin

Dave Alvin & Guilty Women

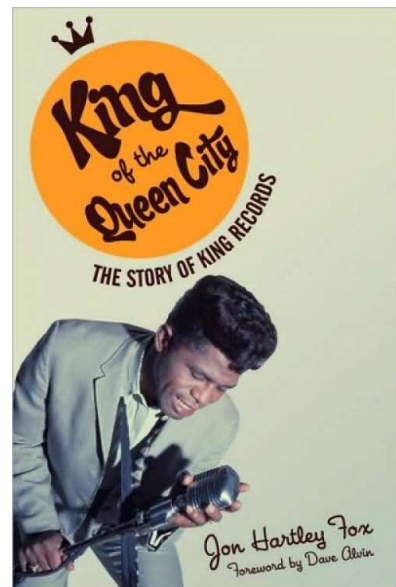
6/12 Palisade CA at Bluegrass & Roots
6/13 Santa Fe NM at Thirsty Ear Fest
7/13-19 Tour of Italy
7/31 Los Angeles CA at Echoplex (with
the Guilty Men)
8/13 Santa Monica CA at McCabes
8/25 Milwaukee WI at Shank Hall
8/26 Oshkosh WI at Waterfest
8/27 Minneapolis MN at Bunkers
8/28 Berwyn IL at Fitzgeralds
8/29 Madison WI at Orton Park Fest
8/30 Green Bay WI at Oneida Bingo
9/1 Pittsburgh PA at Club Café
9/2 Philadelphia PA at World Cafe
9/3 New York City at City Winery
9/4 Northampton MA at Iron Horse
9/5 Charleston RI at Rhythm & Roots
9/7 Toronto Canada at High's Room
9/8 Rochester at Montage Music Hall
9/9 Cleveland OH at Beachland
9/10 Bowling Green OH at Black
Swamp Arts fest (6:20 PM)
9/11-12 Remus MI at Wheatland Fest
9/23 Santa Cruz at Rio Theatre
9/24 Grass Valley CA at Arts Center
9/25 Santa Rosa CA at Earle Fest
9/29 Redding CA at Cascade Theatre
10/1 Crystal Bay NV at Crystal club
10/2 San Francisco CA at Hardly Strictly
Bluegrass (Guilty Women)
10/5 Bakersfield CA at Fishlips
10/6 Santa Ynez CA at Maverick Saloon

Latest news: -- The Blasters with Phil, John, Bill, and Keith are booked with special guest Dave Alvin at Fitzgerald's American Music Festival in Berwyn, IL, on July 4th weekend for two shows. -- Dave Alvin plans to release a new CD in the fall on YepRoc called: Dave Alvin – Downey Boy: A Decade of Rare and Unreleased 2000-2010. It will include 16 of the songs he has offered as downloads on DaveAlvin.net over the last few years. Expect 3 or 4 previously unreleased and / or new recordings, including a duet with Phil Alvin. Dave: "I wrote the song. Phil and I just recorded it (May 2010). It came out really cool. At the end, we include this 'brotherly' argument (laughs)." -- Nick Curran and the Lowlifes have released a new album called Reform School Girl (Electro Groove Records) that includes a duet with Phil Alvin on FLYIN' BLIND. -- Phil Alvin has been playing solo every Monday at the Redwood Bar & Grill in Los Angeles with various guests and jams. It began on April 12, 2010, with a reunion of the Original 4 Blasters. Dave: "That was really a lot of fun. It was totally off the cuff. We did REAL ROCK DRIVE, CRAZY BABY, ONE BAD STUD, MARIE MARIE, and AMERICAN MUSIC." -- Skip Heller wrote a 14-page profile of Dave Alvin for the Spring 2010 issue of Fretboard Journal magazine with many great photos of Dave at home with his guitar collection. -- John Mellancamp's 4-CD box set On The Rural Route 7609 includes a Mellancamp sung version of COLORED LIGHTS with John on vocals and Dave on guitar. This un-earthed version could be from the Blasters Hardline sessions with Mellancamp's vocal added in. No one has yet heard the mix, but we know Dave's permission was asked to use his guitar track. -- Dave is featured in a new book Meeting Jimmie Rodgers: How America's Original Roots Music Hero Changed the Pop Sounds of a Century by Barry Mazor. Dave talks (on page



263) about the Blasters, about Rodgers' NEVER NO MORE BLUES, and about the Blasters opening for Queen. -- Dave & the Guilty Women's version of MARIE MARIE was featured in the Season Two finale of True Blood, the popular HBO series. The band will try to clear their touring schedule in 2011 to record another album. -- YepRoc Records is releasing the 2009 Dave Alvin & the Guilty Women album on vinyl. -- Bluegrass musician John Cowan has recorded a version of Dave's KING OF CALIFORNIA for The Massenburg

Sessions (E1 Music). Jeff Autry sings lead on the song. -- Dave Alvin's introduction to King of The Queen City: The Story of King Records by Jon Hartley Fox can be read online at Google Books. -- Gene Taylor will be in the Southern California area around Christmas 2010. Rumor has it there may be another run of Gene Taylor Blues Band shows. -- James Intveld is filling in on guitar in John Fogerty's band while Billy Burnette recovers from heart surgery. --AM



Blasters East Coast USA Tour—Spring 2010

By Billy Davis

Once again the Blasters came to the east coast to do a go round of their favorite clubs in March 2010. In these tough economic times, even the world renowned Blasters are affected by the economy; they have to keep their road expenses down thus keeping concert ticket prices low for us. Phil said to the crowd each night: “Thanks for coming down and spending your money in a depression.”

Flying in equipment can be expensive, so the Blasters decided to rent guitar amps, and I was able to lend them a drum set from a certain tribute band that I play in at New York city area clubs. The band I cover is similar to the Blasters in that they are both from Los Angeles and started in the early 1980’s. Dave Alvin tells me both bands played on the same bill in about ‘83 or ‘84 in a benefit show for the Zero Zero club. But those similarities are where it ends. The band that I tribute is the thrash metal band Slayer and we’re called ‘Show No Mercy.’

So Bill Bateman was able to transform the drum set with new skins, hardware, and even a few swings of a hammer into a Blasters-sounding drum kit – amazing. My drummer now says he can’t believe how good it sounds. As reported before in The Blasters Newsletter, Bill is a custom drum builder and designer of vintage-style high quality drums. The final touch was a Blasters logo on the kick drum, and it hit the road.

The first show was in New Haven, CT, at Café Nine. Then on to Albany, NY, at Valentine’s, which is where I joined up with them. They opened with the Bo Diddley song I LOVE YOU SO – a great high energy song from the Blasters classic “The Face” album. They played nearly a two-hour set every night on this tour – unusually long for the Blasters. I can only guess because they have added some new songs, Phil has lost count and just added songs without taking away. That’s good for us fans.

In this show, Phil intros the song GLAD YOU’RE DEAD YOU RASCAL like this: “Did you ever wish someone dead? Well, if you close your eyes in this song, I’ll try and make that happen. If it’s me you want dead, at least let me finish the song (laughs).”

I was surprised that first night to hear a newly written song by Phil Alvin called BIPOLAR. The next day I interviewed Phil and reminded him it was the first song in about twenty years that he wrote all himself -- with 4-11-44 being the last in about 1989. Phil: “Yeah. You’re right. I haven’t felt the need to supplement the repertoire, but I know you’re supposed to. Most of the time there is an existing song in culture that is about a certain theme or subject that you want to sing about. So I choose those and sing them. When there isn’t one, then its time to write one - as I did with 4-11-44. That was about gambling. In the case of BIPOLAR, there were no songs about manic depressives - so I had to write one.”

I said to Phil: “You can give me the short answer.” He said: “Billy, I have no short answers (laughs).” So Phil continued: “It seems like everyone has some kind of mental disorder these days (laughs), so it was a song many could identify with.”

Phil: “I had been involved with a couple of women who have varying degrees of this disorder. I found myself in predicaments, not exactly like, but not unlike, where the ethical question is raised: Is it ever all right to hit a woman (laughs)? What do I do? Do I smack you? Do I wrestle you to the ground? (laughs) You’re gonna call the police on me anyway. The last line of the song says, ‘*Although I might be a cheater, does the law let me beat her, if she holds a knife to my throat.*’ Now being someone who is not a girl-hitter, I am not condoning the hitting of women. I’m just proposing the ethical problem of: what happens in a situation when someone just as intelligent as you are, but not physically as strong, but capable of putting equalizers in - like a gun – or a knife - what do you do?”

Phil explains how the writing of the song came about: “At a friend’s house, we were passing the guitar around to play songs. I was examining the structure of Dave Carroll’s country songs.” Dave Carroll was the drummer in the Blasters in 93-94 and brought songs to the Blasters like George Jones WINDOW UP ABOVE and Johnny Paycheck’s PRECIOUS MEMORIES. Phil says: “Dave Carroll listened to old country more than I did and brought those. Same with Jimmie Rodgers stuff. He always listened to that and sang these songs to me whenever we would pass the guitar around at jams. On this night, he sang a Hank Williams Jr.,

The Blasters in Albany, NY



Photos by Billy Davis



song called I OD'D IN DENVER that had a line that sounded like *'The psychic told her I'm probably bipolar.'* It sounded like the line I came up with, so it stuck with me. The next day on the piano I wrote it as a Charlie Rich type of song. Gary Massey (a Downey guitar player in many of Phil's bands) was involved in a line that was cut out. It went *'I'm not trying to deter this - but today is my community service. - And you remember just what that judge said: not one more extension - I'll go to work and cash my pension - if you let me get up out of this bed.'* Phil adds: "The Blasters are working all the little bugs out of the song and it was really good last night in Hoboken."

On an off day from the tour, I drove Phil around New Jersey and looked in guitar shops for a 6-string banjo. Phil wanted it for his upcoming Blue Monday residency at the Redwood Bar and Grill weekly shows. I mentioned to him that I heard something about the Blasters performing AMERICAN TRILOGY at Art Fein's annual Los Angeles Elvis Birthday show. Phil: "Yeah, but we call it THE AMERICAN QUADRILOGY because it includes a fourth part: DO THE CLAM. Which is gonna make me famous for this brilliant idea (laughs)." I immediately asked if he would do it on this tour? I'd kill to hear that. Phil excitedly said: "Oh, Yeah, Yes, we can do it baby. I'll let the guys (The Blasters) know." So I kept it in the back of my mind that I was gonna request that the following night in Northampton, MA, at the Iron Horse Music Hall show. I didn't hold out high hopes though because the band hasn't played it in months – since the January 8th Elvis birthday show.

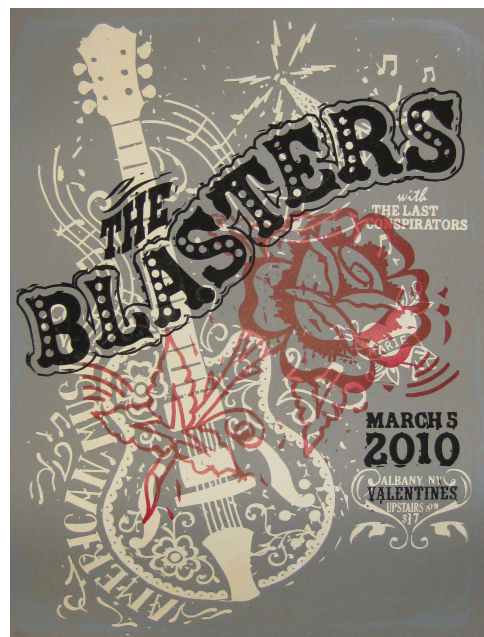
At The Iron Horse, I strategically waited for a point in the set where Phil was warmed up and feeling loose. My opportunity came to call out the request when Phil hesitated trying to think of a song to do next. I yelled it and he said "American Trilogy?" and he immediately went into the song. Of course, he forgot to warn the other Blasters that he might do this song. They straightened up and stared at Phil for cues. It was risky trying a medley like that without any rehearsal, but that's what makes it so exciting.

AN AMERICAN TRILOGY is a song arranged by country songwriter Mickey Newbury and made popular by Elvis Presley. It is a medley of three 19th century songs: DIXIE, a blackface minstrel song that became the unofficial anthem of the Confederacy since the Civil War; ALL MY TRIALS, originally a Bahamian lullaby, but closely related to African American spirituals; and THE BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC, the marching song of the Union Army during the Civil War.

Phil sang the hell out of it, and the rest of the band was perfect in its accompaniment. As soon as the song finished, the audience applauded loudly, but Phil quickly interrupted: "Now, that was the 3 parts. Here is the fourth part to complete THE AMERICAN QUADRILOGY." Keith Wyatt and Bill Bateman immediately started the opening call and response riffs of DO THE CLAM. They played the song completely through perfectly. This was my favorite moment of the tour. What a version of the song! It's an Elvis song from his 1967 movie Clambake -- widely regarded as a goofy cornball song. But seeing the Blasters do it, my opinion changed. It's a damn good rockin' rockabilly song.

The Iron Horse show was an interesting one. When the Blasters came out on stage to start the show, the drums weren't set up to Bill Bateman's liking, so he needed some time to re-set their positions. So Phil pulled out a solo rarity – an old blues song called SUGAR MAMA. The whole band wound up joining in and then the band went back to its regularly scheduled set. Later, another technical difficulty happened, and Phil played another solo blues song TWO DROPS OF WATER.

The Blasters played more shows in Asbury Park, New York City, and Sellersville, PA – all receiving favorable reviews. Each year, the current Blasters are playing more and more dates. Since they're playing more often, their shows are consistently excellent, and we fans are getting even more chances to hear this great band play live.



Blasters Poster by myspace.com/flyersquad

Rick Shea's New CD

Rick Shea, long time member of the Guilty Men is a guitar player, steel guitar, mandolin player, and solo singer/songwriter. He has released his seventh solo album called Shelter Valley Blues on Tres Pescadores Records.

AM: How did 'Shelter Valley Blues' become a song and album title?

Rick Shea: Shelter Valley is in eastern San Diego County, the high desert close to Anza Borrego and the Salton Sea. My brother has been living there the last few years. It's beautiful, remote and desolate. I started thinking that sometimes you can try and hide from your demons and end up in a place where it's just you and them. We're always looking for that place that feels safe and secure, not realizing that it can become its own kind of prison.

I didn't have the song in mind for the title track at first, but my friend Will Seyffert took a liking to it and offered to shoot a video of it. We shot it all around Shelter Valley, Borrego Springs and the Salton Sea.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIPN-9nzdPI>

AM: Is anything different in your approach to this album or differences to previous albums you've released?

Rick Shea: This album was a lot different for me. I recorded most of the album myself at my home studio. Shawn Nourse played drums and we recorded those at his studio with me playing acoustic guitar. I then brought the tracks home and played other guitars, steel guitar and mandolin; I sang and recorded all the other parts. Besides recording the songs myself, it was different being in the studio by myself most of the time. In one way, it was nice because I could spend as much time as I thought I needed, but I also missed having someone else there to give me input and be supportive.

AM: How did things work out recording different tracks at different studios? The Funny thing is, it doesn't sound over-produced but very live. Everything sounds like it was recorded in the same place.

Rick Shea: I'm glad to hear it sounds live and not over-produced. Thanks, that's what I was hoping for. As I said, the drums were all recorded at Shawn Nourse's and all had a good consistent sound. THE HALEIWA SHUFFLE was recorded in Honolulu (except for my steel) along with Sean Thibadeaux's harmony on THE DAY OF MY RETURN, which fit in nicely, as did Cougar Estrada's piano on THE DAY OF MY RETURN, which was recorded at his home studio. I think a lot of the blend is in the mixing and mastering; Brad Cobb did a great job on that.

AM: For the tech-heads out there, what kind of equipment do you use in your home studio Casa De Calora?

Rick Shea: I have an older Pro-Tools rig, DIGI001 that's been modified by Black Lion. It makes a big difference. For effects I use an old G-4 processor. I did some experimenting and I ended up with a Sebatron mic-pre and I had, at the time I recorded this album, a Neumann TLM-103 that I used for all the vocals and fiddle and accordion. I used a Shure SM81 for acoustic guitar and mandolin. I used a Cascade Fathead Ribbon mic for most of the electric guitar and steel; it seemed to be a little smoother than my Shure SM57. The bass was all recorded direct through the Sebatron. The street I live on is Calora St., so Casa De Calora became the name of the studio.

AM: Tell me about the musicians on the album.

Rick Shea: Drummer Shawn Nourse played with Dwight Yoakum and is currently with 'I See Hawks in LA' and has been playing a lot of my shows with me for the last few years. He's very talented and always a pleasure to work with. Also on Drums on SHIN-BONE ALLEY and percussion and harmonica elsewhere is John Palmer - a great musician and a great guy.

Dave Hall played bass and sang harmony and has played with me for more than 15 years, very intuitive and always great to work with.

Tony Zamora, who has his own band 'Tremoloco,' played bass and sang harmony. Tony brought a very cool and funky vibe and approach to the songs.

Vic Koler played upright bass on TY ROBBY and THE DAY OF MY RETURN; and has played with Neil Diamond, Neil Sedaka, and Eartha Kitt among others.

David Hidalgo from Los Lobos played accordion on SWEET LITTLE POCHA. He came by one evening, played the song a couple times and brought it up to a whole new level, very soulful.

Cougar Estrada, plays drums with Los Lobos, played piano and

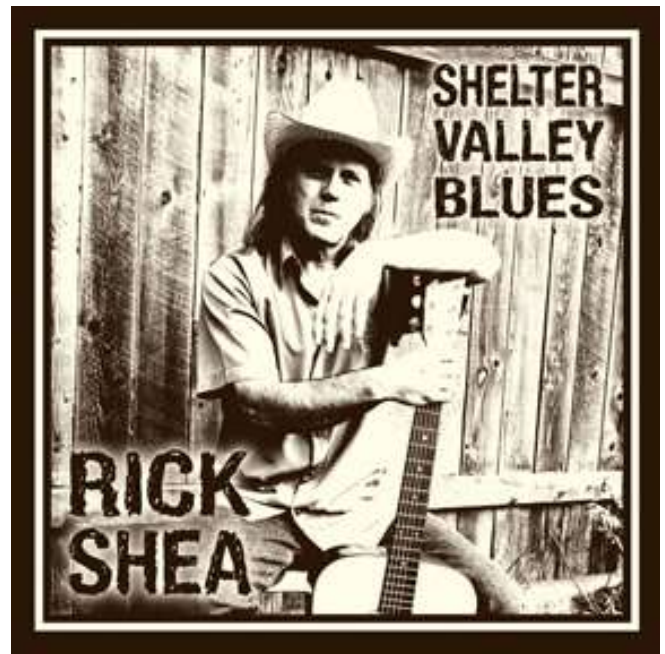


Photo by: Tim Hewett

percussion on THE DAY OF MY RETURN. His piano part is especially amazing. Beautiful!

Choyo Jacques played with 'The Waybacks' and other Santa Cruz area bands. I talked him into playing TY ROBBY in a strange modal tuning and got out a bottle of tequila to see what would happen. He played fiddle on SHELTER VALLEY BLUES the next morning and headed off to visit his brother.

Keith Barry has played with everyone from Woody Shaw to the Red Hot Chili Peppers and brought his Benny Goodman style clarinet to STEADY DRIVIN' MAN.

Russell Scott is one of my favorite rockabilly and R&B singers. He sang the high part on SWEET LITTLE POCHA. Heather Myles sings harmony on NO GOOD TIME FOR LEAVIN'. She's a great singer. Heather and I have known each other a long time. I toured Europe with her in March of this year.

Moiria Smiley is also quite wonderful. She sings with 'Marley's Ghost' and her own group 'Voco'; and brought a bit of the Irish to TY ROBBY.

Sean Thibadeaux sang on THE DAY OF MY RETURN; he also sang and played on and THE HALEIWA SHUFFLE along with Milan Bertosa and James Ganecko -- all wonderful guys and great musicians that I don't get to play with often enough.

AM: How did Sweet Little Pocha come about being written with Rosie Flores?

Rick Shea: I had the idea for SWEET LITTLE POCHA for a few years and started talking to Rosie about it in Austin at SXSW one year. She thought it was a great idea and was really encouraging. 'Pocha' is slang for a Mexican or Latina girl who's a little more Americanized. It describes my wife, Susie perfectly. I ended up writing most of the song myself, but I still wanted to give Rosie credit. I might not have written it if she hadn't been so encouraging. Also, the first part of the guitar lick that starts the song is something I nicked off one of her songs.

AM: Most of your records feature songs with female vocalist duets. How does that process develop. What influences you to write with another singer in mind?

Rick Shea: : I'm a big fan of vocal duets: Merle Haggard and Bonnie Owens; Conway and Loretta; George Jones and Tammy Wynette. I recorded an album of duets in 2003 with Patty Booker

([Our Shangri-LA](#), Tres Pescadores Records), and I have included a duet vocal on most of my albums. Usually I hear someone and become a fan and just decide I'd like to hear our voices together. It's a different style of singing. Of course you have to try and match the other singer, but more than that, the songs seem to take on a life of their own. It has to be the right kind of song and often you'll be singing as much to each other as to the audience. Rosie Flores and I recorded SWEET LITTLE POCHA as a duet for the album, but I couldn't use it for technical reasons and I didn't get another chance to sing it with her.

AM: How did THE HALEIWA SHUFFLE come to be recorded in Hawaii?

Rick Shea: I came over to Hawaii a few years ago to play a couple shows and hang out a bit. The guys that played the show with me were great and I've come back a few times since. I've gotten to play shows with some great traditional artists like Ledward Kaapana, Bla Pahinui, Bobby Ingano and Owana Salazar. Hawaiian music has very deep roots, way beyond what you might hear in the hotel lobbies. It is much closer to true folk traditions than a lot of other more commercial music. I wrote THE HALEIWA SHUFFLE on a trip there in 2006. I knew Sean Thibadeaux and the other guys would be the guys to record it. I sent over a work track and they played to it, sent it back, and then I recorded the steel guitar to that.

AM: Explain your songwriting process. How do you choose what style fits a given song?

Rick Shea: I approach songwriting in a couple of different ways. Sometimes I'll have a guitar part that I like, so I'll try and come up with a song to fit it. Or I'll try and fit it into a song I've already started. It can be a little tricky. You have to be sure it fits and works with the mood of the song. Sometimes I'll have a lyric idea and start working from there. TY ROBBY was like that. The cattle-call refrain is something that just popped into my head. Some songs come quickly. NELLY BLY is a song I thought about for a few years and when I sat down to write it, it all fell into place. SWEET LITTLE POCHA also worked out like that. THE DAY OF MY RETURN and BACK HOME TO THE BLUES both took a bit of time and went through some re-writes. The songs themselves seem to dictate the styles -- although I do try and write a particular kind of song some of the time. The process itself still seems pretty random. I don't write everyday, although I wish I could. I do have ideas all the time and try and keep track of them as best I can. Then, when it's time, I try and pull them all together and see what I've got.

Rick Shea's Shelter Valley Blues album is available on Tres Pescadores Records at trespescadores.com



~~~~~ Stanley Wycoff—Swim into the Whirlpool ~~~~~

Stanley Wycoff's new CD Swim into the Whirlpool is an album of Americana and Roots music that features Grammy award winner Dave Alvin (Guilty Men / The Blasters), John Jorgenson (The Desert Rose Band / Elton John's lead guitar player), the late Chris Gaffney (Guilty Men / Cold Hard Facts), Rick Shea (Guilty Men) and many other celebrated artists. Special notice to Chris Gaffney fans: This album includes the original undubbed version of Chris's last song GUITARS OF MY DEAD FRIENDS (a song that was reworked for Dave Alvin's Gaffney Tribute CD Man of Somebody's Dreams.)

AM: Stanley, please describe yourself and your style.

SW: I am a roots rocker based in southern California, but where most roots rockers take from delta blues and country, I'm rooted in the Young Rascals and more early pop sensitive stuff. Lyrically, I try for the poetic - but I'm a minimal lyricist and like to surround myself with interesting sonic moments. Swim Into the Whirlpool is my fourth record.

AM: I can see you are first a lyricist because you often include 4 verses in your songs. So you always have more to say.



SW: Yes (laughs), but they are short verses because I have to remember them. I don't know how Dylan does that. When constructing a song, I try to work within a formula. If I do a country song, for instance, I respect the boundaries and include fiddle and steel. If it's soul music, it has to have horns. Folk music has to have finger picking.

AM: You seem to be influenced more by literature than songs.

SW: Oh, yeah, I love Charles Baudelaire, Dylan Thomas, Theodore Dreiser, too many to list. I've taught creative writing and comparative literature on the university level. So I'm drawn to this stuff. To condense it into lyrical form and rhyme in song is a lot of fun.

AM: I think it's interesting that you are not just researching literature for your songs, but in a way have explored it in depth in your teaching. I think one of the most important elements of an American Music

songwriter is to develop influences among real people – not like millionaire rock star songwriters who are confined and have lost touch with the real world.

SW: Experience is what it's all about. The thing I'm not crazy about in classic rock albums is that an artist's second album's songs are always about "I'm in my hotel and I miss my baby." It's just not real.

AM: How did Swim Into the Whirlpool begin as a concept?

SW: I go to Hawaii every year. The Hawaiian native kids do this ceremony where they jump off a cliff into the water 70 feet. I would always watch them and finally I did it one time. It was ridiculous. I was 55 years old, and my wife was screaming, and I just did it. But then I forgot to ask the kids how to get out of the ocean. I started swimming towards these rocks and the water was pounding me. They yelled to me: "Swim into the whirlpool, and it will push you towards the rocks!" I thought: 'I just risked jumping off a cliff. I'm 55 years old. I'm not gonna now swim into a whirlpool.' So I kept trying to fight the water. Finally, I got so tired, I swam into the whirlpool, and it threw me to the rocks. I climbed up and then walked onto the sand. I thought, I have to get a song out of this one. Then came the concept that sometimes in life you have to trust and swim into the whirlpool.

AM: Tell us about the great musicians on the album.

SW: John Jorgensen is a genius guitar player who played in the Hellecasters, The Desert Rose Band and Elton John's band. He's more recently making gypsy jazz like Django Reinhardt popular again. He was voted by Guitar Player Magazine as one of the top 100 greatest guitar players ever. Rick Shea is the only steel player on this album – another great player. Dave Alvin, who is always brilliant, is on electric, and Danny Ott on slide guitar is just a virtuoso.

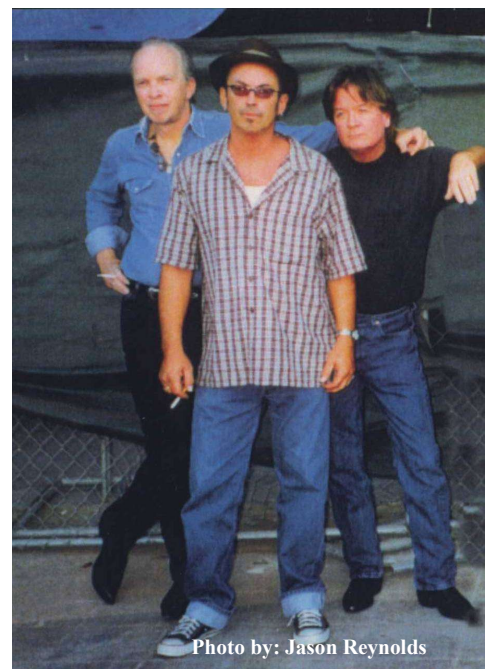
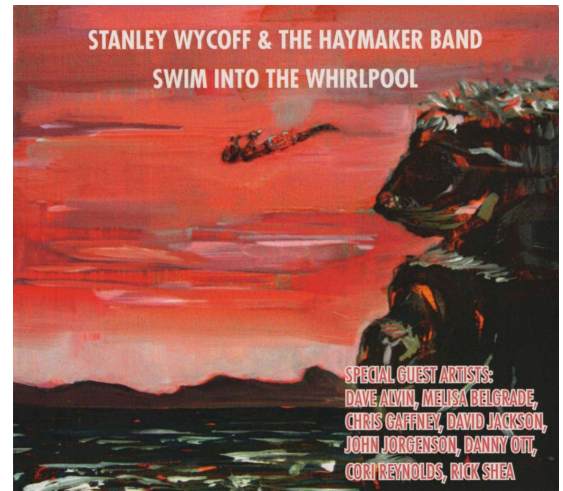
AM: How did you meet Dave Alvin?

SW: Through Chris Gaffney. The first song Dave played with me was on my Vale of Tears (1993) album. A song called DO SOME DON'T'S also with Nicky Hopkins on piano. Nicky played with the Stones on SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL and John Lennon's IMAGINE and so many great rock records in the 60's and 70's. On that song Dave and Nicky traded off licks. It was a great moment.

On my album Haymaker (2000) I had Dave and Dick Dale on the same track on a song called MINUTEMAN. That was nice having those guys in the studio together. I don't get excited about too much because I'm too old (laughs), but that was something to see two great guitar players in the studio.

AM: Tell us about how Gaffney came to sing GUITARS OF MY DEAD FRIENDS.

SW: It happened all in one night. Originally I was singing the song on the mic at the



Alvin, Gaffney and Wycoff

demo session so we had a rough mix to listen to. I was struggling with it and Chris said: "I'll do it." He acted right away like he owned the song. We were stunned because it was just supposed to be a demo session.

It reminded me of a song on the Haymaker CD that he sang called HELLO MAMA. His mother had just died, and he almost couldn't get through the song. When we demoed HELLO MAMA in 2000 in my living room, he started crying. I got that song back in 1991. I was auditioning a mandolin player for the L.A. River (1991) album who didn't make the cut. But he had a friend with him who handed me a demo tape – just like in the movies when someone tries to pitch a song – of HELLO MAMA. I never forgot the song, but I lost the tape. I ran into the mandolin player 10 years later and asked him about the song and his friend, who was Jeff Denk. So I used that song for the Haymaker album and Chris sang it beautifully.

AM: So Chris Gaffney is on all of your four albums?

SW: That's right.

AM: The first two albums are credited to the band name "Bierce In L.A." What brought about that name for your band?

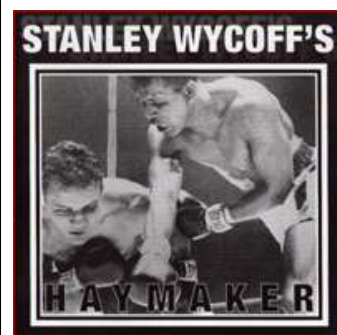
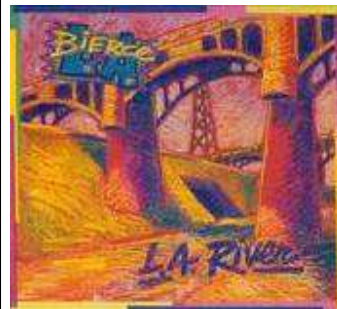
SW: Ambrose Bierce was a writer at the turn of the century who was very jaded with a bleak outlook on things. He wrote a book called The Devil's Dictionary which is a cynic's explanation of various terms. I had a dream that I met up with him and went to L.A. I wrote a song about it and then named the band Bierce in L.A.

***Swim Into The Whirlpool is available on iTunes and at
<http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/STANLEYWYCOFF>***

Ash Grove: Roots, Rock & Revolution film update

-- Production continues on Ash Grove: Roots, Rock & Revolution, a documentary film about the legendary Los Angeles music club that inspired the title track of Dave Alvin's 2004 album. A trailer for the movie, directed by Aiyana Elliott, has been posted at ashgrovefilm.com. She is working on the film with Jerry Hay, her stepfather, who worked at the Ash Grove in the late 1960s. The trailer features Dave performing an acoustic version of the song and includes interviews with Dave, Ry Cooder, and Taj Mahal. The film will incorporate the 50th anniversary Ash Grove reunion weekend of concerts and celebrations in April 2008. "We're in the process now of trying to raise finishing funds. Until we have those, there is no completion date for the film," she said in a recent e-mail. Elliott is the daughter of Ramblin' Jack Elliott, who toured with Dave as a member of the Monsters of Folk in 1998. Aiyana made her first movie on her dad in 2000, The Ballad of Ramblin' Jack, which has some brief footage from a Monsters show with Dave at the Birchmere in Alexandria, VA.

Stanley Wycoff **Discography**



On Rococo Records
L.A. River 1991
Vale of Tears 1993
On Irrevocable Records
Haymaker 2000

From The Editor: The Blasters newsletter is in its 17th year, and is still going strong. As I mentioned in the last issue, I have discontinued the print edition /snail mail version of the BlastersNewsletter. The web version on Blastersnewsletter.com will continue and now you can print it out off the web site for free. I am not accepting any new subscriptions but will finish out currently paid subscriptions. Anyone who currently has a paid subscription, will still receive those issues until it is filled. If there is anyone who has a special situation, like not owning a computer, or special circumstances, etc. . . then write to me and I will try to accommodate you. Contact me at davistb@aol.com
The American Music PO Box has been discontinued. — Have A Blast — Billy Davis

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editor/writer: Billy Davis **editorial assistant: Craig Frischkorn** **contributing writer Tom Wilk**

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