

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

Nov. 2006

Blasters shows	
(Phil, John, Jerry, Keith)	
12/6	Aspen CO at Belly Up
12/7	Boulder CO at Trilogy Bar
12/8	Denver CO at BlueBird Theater
12/9	Ft. Collins CO at Aggie Theater
12/10	Col. Springs CO at Black Sheep
12/14	Phoenix AZ at Rhythm Room
12/16	Tucson AZ at Club Congress
Dave Alvin w/Guilty Men	
12/1	Kihei, Hawaii at Hapa's Brew
12/2	Honolulu, HI at Anna Bannana's
1/19	Philadelphia at World Cafe Live
1/20	Alexandria VA at Birchmere
1/22	Annapolis MD at Rams Head
2/2	NYC at Bowery Ballroom
The Knitters shows	
12/27	Solana Beach CA at Belly Up
12/29	Hollywood CA at Safari Sam's
12/30	Hollywood CA at Safari Sam's

Dave Alvin Austin City Limits DVD to be Released

Latest News: – New West Records will be releasing a DVD and CD companion of Dave and the Guilty Men's 1999 performance on Austin City Limits TV. Release is expected in January or February of 2007. – Another DVD, the long-in-the-works Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men Live in San Francisco DVD, which this newsletter has been reporting on in the past few issues, still does not have a release date set by Yep Roc Records. It is possible that the Austin City Limits DVD release may conflict with and delay any Yep Roc release. -- Two musicians have recently recorded Dave's songs. Texas singer/songwriter Brian

Burns recorded DOWN THE RIO GRANDE for his Border Radio CD. Lisa Christian has recorded WHY DID SHE STAY WITH HIM with guitarist Skip Heller. -- Dave was among the musicians interviewed for the documentary First Tuesdays at Ronnie Mack's Barn Dance, a film about the Los Angeles music club. The film is directed by Jim Hollander. -- Dave Alvin contributed liner notes for Rockin' Bones: 1950s Punk and Rockabilly, a 4-CD box set from Rhino Entertainment. The anthology includes the original versions of CRAZY BABY by the Rockin' R's and ROCK BOPPIN' BABY by Edwin Bruce. Both songs were later recorded by the Blasters. -- The Morells version of MARIE MARIE is on Anthology Live: 101 Songs About Cars, Girls and Food on Almercon Records. The 4-CD set consists of songs recorded in concert between 1980 and 1984. Joe Terry, keyboardist with the Guilty Men, played with the Morells. -- Bill Bateman has been replaced in the Cramps by the original drummer. -- Gene Taylor is moving from Austin, Texas to Belgium to pursue a solo career. He has left the Fabulous Thunderbirds. -- Dave Alvin has recently taped some interviews to be included in a documentary about the legendary Ashgrove club. -- Freddie Willis of the Calvanes passed away on October 16, 2006, of a heart attack while undergoing cancer treatments. He was still active up until his death and was booked perform with Dave Alvin on Nov. 3 at the Getty Center in L.A. His vocals on Dave's West Of The West song SURFER GIRL may have been his last recorded work. He also sang with the Calvanes on the Blasters Going Home live CD and DVD. -- Dave Alvin is considering releasing a compilation CD of songs he has contributed to Tribute Records, various artist collections, etc. It possibly may be only available at shows. -- Dave Alvin plans on spending 2007 touring and recording tracks for a new studio album. ~ *AM*

In This Issue: Dave Alvin's 9-Volt Radio show, The Blasters re-unite with James Intveld, and Dave Alvin is interviewed as a son of a Union Man.

The '1992-95 Blasters' Reunion in 2006

–Billy Davis

The Blasters were nearing the end of an U.S. east coast tour when guitar player Keith Wyatt learned of an illness in the family which would make him miss the last 3 shows of the tour. The Blasters didn't really want to cancel, so they called James Intveld in as a temporary replacement. In 1996, Keith Wyatt was James' permanent replacement, and now in 2006, James temporarily replaced Keith. James first tenure with the Blasters was from 1992 through the end of 1995, when he had replaced Smoky Hormel on guitar. James ended that three year-run with the band in late 1995 to pursue a solo music career.

James recently has been directing movies and playing solo gigs. Coming back to the Blasters to play lead guitar was going to be a challenge because James hadn't played electric guitar since his last Blasters gig in December 1995 – that's over 10 years. In James's solo shows, he sings and plays acoustic guitar leaving all lead guitar duties to other very capable guitarists. Currently, former "Guilty Man" Rick Shea is his guitar player.

The Blasters were confident James could pull this off because he is such a good overall musician. James also plays bass and drums very well.

The three gigs in mid-July of '06 were in Oneonta, NY; Camden, Maine; and North Hampton, MA. All were shows off the beaten path – not near big cities and not expected to be high visibility gigs, so a temporary change in members wouldn't be that noticeable.

James flew from his home in Nashville to Albany, NY. He arrived right around the time the band was scheduled to load in equipment 70 miles away in Oneonta at the gig. I drove to Albany to pick up James and we made it just before show time as the band prepared the venue. James had been so busy, he hadn't had time to practice any songs, and he would be going on stage to play songs by memory from 10 years ago.

As we drove from Albany to Oneonta, we listened to a bunch of Blasters songs, so he had some idea of how the band sounds now. Arrangements of the songs had changed over the years. We listened through the 4-11-44

album and then Testament (The complete Slash recordings). Quite a few times James stopped on a track and said, "Oh, I love that song." He's definitely a fan of the Blasters music as well as being a temporary member of the 2006 Blasters. One song he liked was ROCK BOPPIN' BABY, and when I told him it is currently in the Blasters set, he was excited about playing it. Another he wished the band would play was HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL. I told him the band hasn't played it in years, and I doubt Phil even remembers the lyrics.

This was going to be an interesting first show of the tour.





Just before the show, James opened up his guitar case and there was the Fender Stratocaster that he had played in the Blasters years. Back then I dubbed it the “Eat Shit” guitar because of a sticker on the pick guard. James said it still had the same strings on it from the last Blasters show he played in 1995. He said he kept the guitar in storage, but hadn’t opened the case in 10 years. It was as if time had stopped for the guitar. Now it just started up again.

James’s appearance was just like he looked during his first tenure with the Blasters – the leather vest, T-shirt, and blue jeans. He still has the same leather jacket that he wore in the early

90’s. So, of course he wore it on this tour.

The first gig was at The Armory in Oneonta, NY. The promoter - a big Blasters fan - set up a big stage with a pro-lighting rig in a basketball gymnasium. At one point during the show, Phil said to the audience: “We’re gonna have basketball tryouts after the show.” The crowd was enthusiastic, but the room was terrible for sound. It was extremely echoey – not a good room for concerts. But it was a small town and they probably don’t have any place else to hold music performances.

They ran through exactly the same set as any other show. James gave every song a shot, never being asked in advance whether he knew it or not. Some came off great -- a few, not so great. DARK NIGHT was a big problem because James had never played the song before. LONG WHITE CADILLAC started off a bit tentatively because the Blasters of the early 90’s played it just like the studio version. The 21st Century Blasters start it off with the pounding drums, and come in differently. James was better on the rockabilly songs like LOVE IS MY BUSINESS and RED ROSE and 4-11-44. James pointed out to me, while listening to the 4-11-44 album, that he was the one who came up with the guitar riffs for a lot of the songs on the CD. Keith Wyatt embellished a lot of them, but the basic guitar riffs came from James. Songs like 4-11-44, REBOUND, PRECIOUS MEMORIES, REBOUND, LOVE IS MY BUSINESS, and WINDOW UP ABOVE all were introduced in the band’s repertoire during James’s time in the band. Also,



SLIP OF THE TONGUE was written by James back then and has remained in the Blasters set all these years.

James knew there would be songs he might not remember but admitted: “I’m not one to walk away from a challenge. I’ll try and play any tune.” Throughout the show, James would often look at John Bazz for cues and chord changes, but John plays so intensely, he couldn’t seem to offer much help to James while concentrating on his own playing.

Phil dedicated ONE BAD STUD to James Int-



veld. After the show, I asked James how he felt: “It was fun. I had a great time. For me it was like the old days – being able to strap on a guitar and just go. It was a gas. That’s the type of music I really like to play.”

By the last show in Northampton MA at the Iron Horse, the band was a lot tighter. There were a lot of Blasters and Dave Alvin fans present. Dave Alvin plays this venue on a regular basis so the music scene here is in touch with the recent happenings in American Music.

During the song AMERICAN MUSIC, James finally broke one those old strings. Phil sang SAMSON AND DELILAH while James changed his string. GLAD YOU’RE DEAD YOU RASCAL was one James never played with the Blasters, but he had played it with his swing band Jimmy and the Gigolos. DADDY ROLLIN’ STONE was interesting because it was another that James ‘rocked-up’ earlier for the Blasters back in 1992. Keith later changed it to more of a surf-vamp for the 4-11-44 recording sessions. So the band played it the surf way, while James did it his old way. It was an interesting mix.

The last song of the night--and of this reunion tour--was a surprise: HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL. That was the Jerry Lee Lewis song that the Blasters covered on their 1982 Over There Live EP. It’s also the song that James and I listened to in the car the first day, and I assured him the Blasters wouldn’t play it because Phil probably didn’t remember the lyrics.

But here it was, being played and I was thrilled to hear something unusual like this. Seeing that song performed, made my weekend complete.

The Blasters played a solid set, the best of the three shows: James fit right in and did a great job. For me (Billy Davis), this was a special reunion. I love all versions of the Blasters for different reasons, but this reunion stands out--personally--because I first became a fan of the Blasters in 1992 when the guitar player was James Intveld. My first ever Blasters show was December 13, 1993 at The Palomino in North Hollywood, CA with James on guitar.

James has stayed in touch with the Blasters over the years since he left the band: James: “I run into Phil and the guys once in awhile at shows, so we do see each other and we’re still friends. But riding in the van with the guys and doing gigs is extra special and just so much fun.”

“I’m so serious now-a-days directing movies and organizing my own music career. With the Blasters I just have to show up and play guitar – with them, it’s all about ‘just the music’ – no business to deal with. It was great to play all those songs again and Phil is just a great singer.” ~ *AM*



Dave Alvin's 9-Volt XM Satellite Radio show

Dave Alvin finally has his own 'Border Radio' on XM's Satellite Radio Network. XM extends farther than 50,000 watts out of Mexico. The only question is: Will Dave Alvin do dedications?

The show starts with instrumental music from Dave's cover of Bob Dylan's HIGHWAY 61 REVISITED (originally released on a Dylan tribute CD by Uncut Magazine in the UK in 2005).

Dave's introduction: "From the mountains to the sea, from the swamps to the deserts, from the prairies to the streets of your hometown, this is '9-Volt with Dave Alvin' on the mighty XM satellite radio network."

"My name is Dave Alvin and I'm gonna be your host for an hour long trip down the back roads, back alleys, two-lane highways, and endless Interstates, deep into the heart of traditional and contemporary American roots music." Those familiar words start each '9-Volt' program in the series.

Dave announced on his first show: "I have to admit that after 26 years of being a professional singer-songwriter and bar-room guitarist -- all I ever really wanted to be was a DJ."

The great thing about a show like this is that Dave gets to play the records he likes with no interference from the network on content. Dave: "The only restriction I have is that the songs have to be commercially released on CD. I have to provide a tracking number. On the first show I used a song by the Spaniels that I had only on vinyl in my collection. I had someone track down the CD codes for it."

Dave recalls how he got the DJ gig: "I had performed a few times on XM radio and I teased the program director saying: 'Why don't you let me come down and be a DJ?' Later, I ran into her on the road and I kept saying: 'When am I gonna get to be a DJ? I wanna be a DJ!' Finally she said, 'Sure.' We signed a contract for a year; that's 12 shows."

As expected, all the music is American Music. In the first few shows Dave has named sub-genres, such as: West Coast Country, Folk, Blues, Gospel, Doo-wop, Rockabilly, and Juke Joint Blues - we all know it's just American Music.. The first songs Dave played on his first show were songs by artists who had an impact on him at a very early age: Lightnin' Hopkins and Big Joe Turner followed by Lee Allen's WALKIN WITH MR LEE.

Dave is perfect as a DJ. He has always written and talked about other artists more than himself--whether it's in shows, in interviews or in his own writing. Dave Alvin has an extensive knowledge of the history of American Music, and he loves to share stories from it on XM radio. In the first two shows, Dave the DJ has paid tribute to his heroes, mentors, and contemporaries, including such artists as Tom Waits, Tom Russell, Chris Smither. Big Sandy, The Skeletons, Robbie Fulks, Jonathon Richman, and Katy Moffatt -- just to name a few.

Dave is up for building on the show and trying some new things. In December, he will air a Christmas show. Dave: "On the third (9-Volt) show (November) I just played my first scratchy old record. I don't know how people will like that. I hope they do." Dave played a historically important record from 1930: Jimmie Rogers and Louis Armstrong playing BLUE YODEL #9.

In the third show Dave added a personal touch playing records of friends and artists that he has played with over the years such as Chris Gaffney and the Hacienda Brothers, Amy Farris, Hollywood Fats, James McMurtry, Greg Brown and Sonny Burgess.

The show is a labor of love for Dave. Living in L.A., he doesn't have the convenience of going to the Washington, DC, XM studios to record his shows. He has to do it in L.A. at his own cost. Fortunately, his engineer, Craig Parker Adams in Winslow Court Studios in L.A. makes the project possible.



Dave Alvin's '9-Volt' airs the third week of every month on X Country XM 12; Monday at 11 am, with replays the following Thursday at 7 pm and Saturday at 11 am. All times are Eastern.

Son of A Union Man By Dave Saldana

from Znet: The United Electrical Workers News www.zmag.org February 23, 2006

Brother, I'm fighting for you as well as me. I gave them my sweat, they want my dignity. When the boss man shakes your hand and says, 'Son, you'll do just fine, 'And you walk into the factory to a job that once was mine, Please don't forget your brother who's still standing on the line. -- Dave Alvin, 'Brother on the Line'

You won't find many songs like BROTHER ON THE LINE on the pop music charts. You won't find many Grammy winners who say things like, 'Most people don't know what the pioneers of the labor movement did for this country.' But Dave Alvin is not your typical pop star, or your average Grammy winner.

Steeped in the deepest traditions of American music, from folk, blues and country, to rockabilly and R&B, Alvin has the musical chops to keep up with anyone on stage. But what sets him above and beyond most of his peers is his storytelling, which comes from learning about class and labor issues from about the time he could walk.

"My old man was an organizer for the Steel Workers," he says in his rich, warm baritone, "which in the west was steel mills in Maywood, and Fontana and South Gate (California), and then copper mines and coal mines in Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming. He was involved in all the great copper strikes in southern Arizona. Sometimes our family vacation was going with him on his organizing trips. He'd throw my brother Phil and me in the car and we'd spend the summer going from mining town to Indian reservation to mining town."

"I saw things as a five-year old that most five-year olds don't see, or don't even have a concept of." Alvin tells the story of driving with his dad into Red Cloud, Colorado, on a one-lane dirt road into a canyon to hold a secret union meeting, because they had to hide in a company town. "Seeing things like that, you learn that there's more than one side to every story, and that's what I'm going for. What's the side that you're not hearing?" he says.

Dave and his brother Phil also learned to love the rock and roll music they'd listen to on those car trips. The early R&B, soul, honky-tonk and rockabilly you find on AM radio were their first brushes with the music that would shape their lives. They would go on to form The Blasters, a rockabilly band that tore up the Los Angeles club scene and spearheaded the roots rock revival that included bands like the Stray Cats in the 1980s.

Eventually, Dave wanted to explore other musical influences and left the band in 1986 to develop his own thoughtful, storytelling style. Since then, he has put out ten solo albums, including 2000's Grammy-winning Public Domain. The albums slide easily between the musical styles that he grew up with, and plays soulfully and skillfully. But they are all linked by a Jack London or John Steinbeck-like, gritty truth.

The stories Alvin tells are powerful and moving, full of working class heroes and anti-heroes, people for whom the American Dream is just a dream. They're about the folks who live in faded houses off the highway, a liquor store with bars on the windows selling lotto tickets on the corner, whose jobs provide just enough to get by. Alvin tells their stories with blunt honesty, sometimes heart-breakingly so, but never makes them appear pathetic. Rather, he defends the dignity of their day-to-day struggle. For Alvin, it comes from the class consciousness his father instilled in him.

"I have a song on my most recent album, Ashgrove, called OUT OF CONTROL," he says. "It's a song about methamphetamine addicts, a tweaker and his girlfriend. She's turning tricks in a motel while he waits in the car, and he's telling his life story. And it all revolves around when the Fontana plant closed."

Fontana is a town in the Inland Empire, a dusty, windy patch of arid land between Los Angeles and Las Vegas about the size of Massachusetts. Formerly the home of steel plants and industry, the economic slide that began when a lot of well-paid factory and mill jobs started disappearing in the mid 1970s never quite stopped in some foothill and high desert towns surrounding San Bernardino. With the loss of work came a loss of purpose for a lot of people, and a decline in the community. A 2004 report by the San Bernardino County Health Department shows parallel trends in unemployment and drug addiction, with similar trends in domestic violence and teen runaways.

"What I was trying to get at in the song is, this is what happens when you remove jobs," Alvin says. "Most

people find meaning in their lives from their work. And when you close the factory, when you close the mill, you take the meaning out of their lives. Some people might find good jobs as teachers, or some might find good jobs in the sanitation department, but a lot of them are going to find lives of meth and petty crime.”

For Alvin, and for a lot of his fans, telling intimate stories about working people's lives is more effective than putting slogans to music. “Some of the best songs, the songs everyone relates to, are your most personal,” he says. “There's a tendency to go for the big grandiose statement, especially in political songs. But sometimes when you go for the universal, you fall on your face.”

Fortunately, part of Alvin's personal story is being raised to respect the history of labor and the struggle of working people. He knows the songs of Woody Guthrie, Joe Hill and Ralph Chapin, but has too much respect to mimic their work. “Joe Hill was a Wobbly, and he wrote great Wobbly songs, because he had a right to do that,” he says. “It would be presumptuous of me to go in that direction. I'll write a song about a garment worker, and he or she can talk about their issues. But for me to stand up there and sing 'Garment workers of the world, unite' would be a little bit disingenuous because I'm not a garment worker, and I think the workers would see right through that.”

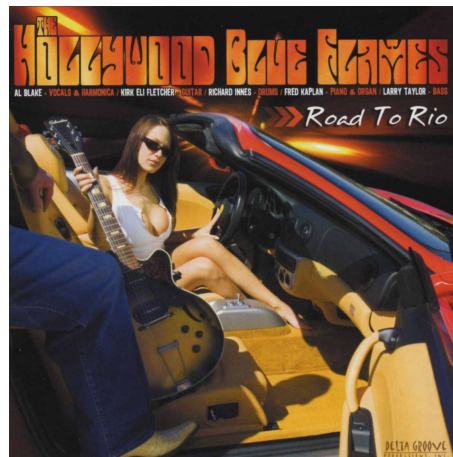
But that doesn't mean Alvin believes he can't speak to workers. He learned growing up in the heart of post-war, working-class suburban L.A., tagging along with his father to union meetings, that Black, Latino, Asian, and white workers all had the same issues. “There are differences between everybody, but what I've tried to say is, what are the connections. On a working class level, you're connected by that,” he says. “You're all working men and -women.”

Though times have been tough for unions, Alvin believes there is cause for optimism. But it requires the union movement to bring the uninformed and unorganized on board. “People think that all their benefits were given to them by the great humanitarian impulses of the owners. These CEOs - who I'm sure are good people in their own way, and they love their families and give to charity - if you think they're looking out for the interests of their workers, you're out of your mind. A single worker on his own can't stand up to those guys,” he says.

And where union-busters and management lackeys paint unions as gangsters and grifters, Alvin says that should only provide more incentive for workers to take control. “To most people, unions are a vague notion with a bad rap. Have some unions, some locals been corrupted? Sure,” he says. “But so have people in the Army, and in the churches, and in the government. Does that make the whole thing useless? No. In fact, it makes the workers' involvement more necessary.”

Dave Alvin's next album, *West of the West*, is a collection of cover songs from California singer-songwriters like Jackson Browne, Merle Haggard and Brian Wilson, due out in May. Dave will tour throughout the U.S. starting in June.

Highly Recommended
New Release
The Hollywood Blue Flames
‘Road to Rio’ /
The Hollywood Fats Band
‘Larger Than Life’



Disc 1 -- ROAD TO RIO features brand new recordings by the Hollywood Blue Flames (The original Hollywood Fats band) featuring Kirk "Eli" Fletcher on guitar, a guest appearance by Kim Wilson on harp, and three bonus tracks with Junior Watson.

Disc 2 -- LARGER THAN LIFE features never-before released vintage live recordings of the original Hollywood Fats Band from '79-'80. Special guests include Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson and Roy Brown. Plus a rare vocal performance by Michael "Hollywood Fats" Mann on the song NASTY BOOGIE WOOGIE.

www.deltagrooveproductions.com
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