

**2025 re-print and expanded edition**

# AMERICAN MUSIC

The Blaster Newsletter

Issue #8 Aug. '95

## JAMES INTVELD INTERVIEW

### DAVE ALVIN TOUR DATES

#### w/ THE SKELETONS

8/12 Lawrence Kansas at Bottle neck  
8/13 Springfield Mo. at Murphys  
8/15 Lincoln Ne. at Zoo Bar  
8/16 Io. city Io. at Gabe's  
8/17 Madison Wi. at Crystal Corner  
8/18-19 Chicago at Shuba's

#### w/ THE GUILTY MEN

8/25 Hollywood Ca. at Jack's Sugar  
8/26 Norwalk Civic cntr. Lawn Ca.  
8/27 Silverlake street fest  
9/25 Gene Autry Museum L.A.(radio)  
9/29 Davis Ca. at Palms  
9/30 San Fran at Slims  
10/1 Santa Cruz at Fat Friday Fest.  
10/6 Santa Monica at Alligator  
10/7 Ventura Ca. at Nicholby's

### BLASTERS TOUR DATES

8/4 Long Beach at Blue Cafe  
8/11 Santa Anna at The Galaxy.  
9/9 San Diego CA at Street Scene  
9/20 Salt Lake City UT at Zephers  
9/21 Ft. Collins CO at Mishawaka  
9/22 Denver CO at Ogden theater  
9/25 De Moines IO at Roadhouse Ruby's  
9/26 St. Louis MO at Other World  
9/27 Kansas City Mo at Lonestar  
9/29 Minneapolis MN at Caboose  
9/30 Chicago IL at Double Door  
10/1 Milwaukee WI at Shank Hall  
10/3 Detroit MI at St. Andrews  
10/5 Cleveland OH at  
10/6 S. Amboy NJ at Club Bene  
10/7 NYC at Tramps  
10/10 Hoboken NJ at Maxwell's  
10/11 Boston MA at Mama Kin  
10/12 New Haven CT at Toads Place  
10/13 Providence RI at Club Babyhead  
10/14 Wash DC at 9:30 Club (2 shows)  
10/17 Oklahoma City OK at VZD's  
10/19 New Orleans LA at Jimmy's  
10/20 Baton Rouge LA at Varsity Club  
10/21 Houston TX at The Loft  
10/22 Austin TX at Antone's  
10/23 Dallas TX at Trees  
10/24 Albuquerque NM at Bingo's  
10/25 Tucson AZ at The Rock  
10/26 Phoenix AZ at Rocking Horse  
10/27 Ventura CA at Ventura Theater  
10/28 Riverside CA at House of Rock  
11/3-4 San Francisco at Slims  
11/5 San Jose CA at Cactus  
11/11 Las Vegas NV at private party

**LATEST NEWS:** : The Blasters are going out on a month long tour with the Beat Farmers which will span the U.S.A. starting on Sept. 20. - The Blaster live album has been recorded for Private Music Records and some of the songs in the set were *Rebound*, *Daddy Rollin Stone*, *Blue Line*, *Window Up Above*, and *4-11-44*. Some extra time is being taken to look at the mixing and how the CD is marketed, so release may be pushed further than September. The Blasters want to release the best possible record, since it has been 10 years since their last. - The Blasters would like to tour Europe after the album comes out. - Dave Alvin has two radio broadcasts coming up. The first will be at the Gene Autry Museum in L.A. on Sept. 25 and can be heard on FM 101.9. It will be acoustic Dave & Greg Leisz. The other will be on Oct. 12 in Austin TX at the Shady Grove on KGSR Texas. - Dave has also just finished up doing the theme song for the Mystery Science Theater 3000 movie due out in February. - John Bazz and Bill Bateman have formed a Rockabilly Trio with Brian Setzer called Johnny Hot Rod. They have lined up some gigs around town and are doing the project just for fun with no plans to tour or record. They are fitting it around Brian's new Big Band album which will be due out in a few months. - Johnny Bazz & Smokey Hormel are playing with Bruce Willis in the Planet Hollywood band and will be playing Sept. 3 in Paris France at a Planet Hollywood grand opening followed by dates in Germany and Helsinki Finland. - Dave Alvin has been busy producing this year. Already out are the Forbidden Pigs 'Other White Meat,' Chris Gaffney's 'Losers Paradise,' and Big Sandy's 'Swingin' West' which is out this week. Coming in Sept. is Tom Russell's latest album, and in Oct. Dave will go in the studio to produce an album for The Derailers. - Dave Alvin did not do the music for the Jon Stewart show as erroneously reported last issue. Dave himself says, "There is another Dave Alvin out there and I wish he would change his name." —Am

# THE JAMES INTVELD INTERVIEW

**AM:** Tell me about your early influences.

**JAMES INTVELD:** Well, my father was a singer and he sang early crooner kind of stuff; Dean Martin, Bing Crosby. So my brother and I kind of grew up with music and my father got into Elvis a one point and Gene Vincent. That's where I heard those records and how I got into roots music. I first started playing drums when I was five, then I got a guitar when I was eight. I actually wanted a saxophone, but my parents thought it was too expensive, so I got this little guitar. I grew up in Compton, California and I took lessons at this little place that was a cake store and a music store, a Mom and Pop little place. Then I wound up going to Catholic school for a while and I played guitar in a guitar Mass ensemble and from that I started my first band at ten called 'Freedom.' We played what was current at the time, songs like Free's *All Right Now*, Grand Funk Railroad and Creedence. I didn't necessarily want to be a singer, but whenever we got to the gigs the other guys wouldn't want to sing, so I said, 'I'll Sing.'

Our family moved to place called Garden Grove and we went to high school there. Nobody was into music, they were into motorcycles and stuff. So, I did that and when I was seventeen I got back into the music, sort of playing and singing and going to talent shows like at the Palomino and The Landmark. Just places where they would have Hoot nights or whatever, just to sit in with a band. So I decided to put my

**By Billy Davis**

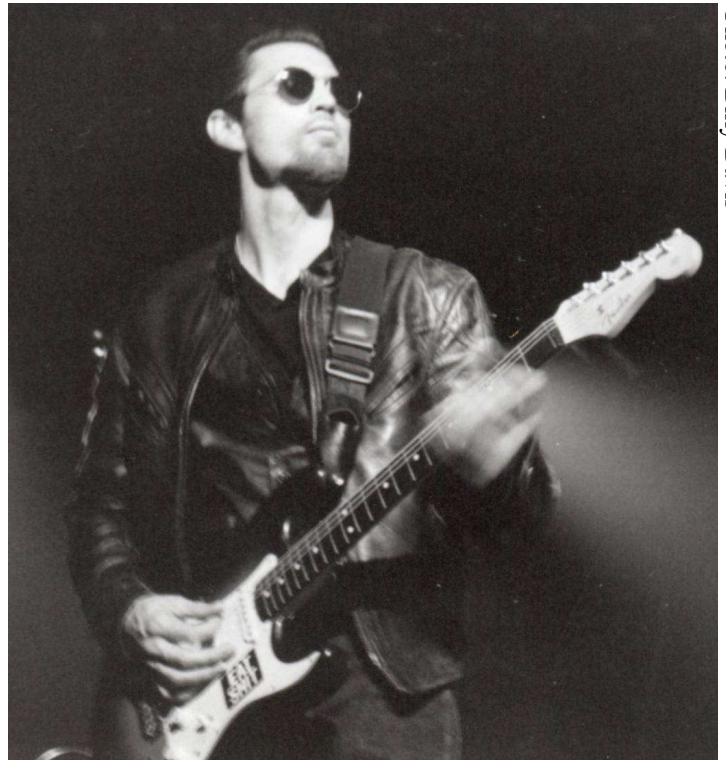
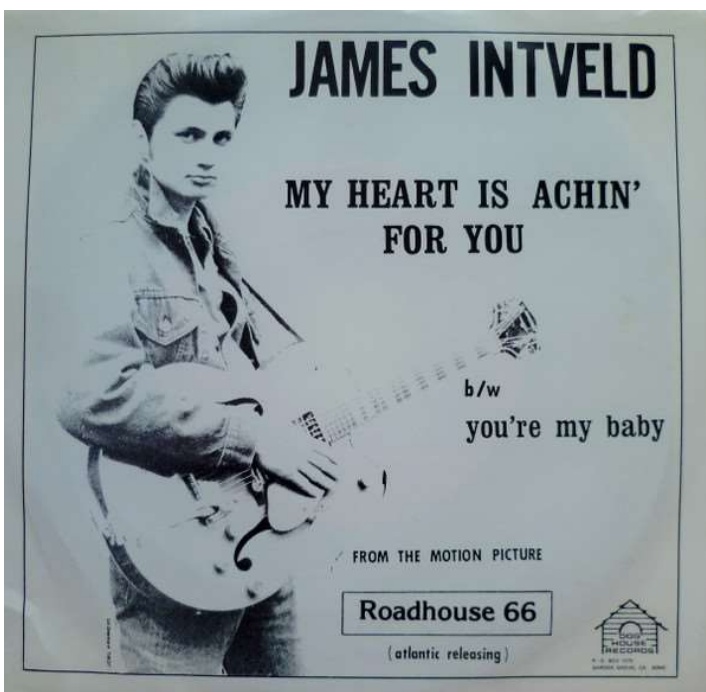


Photo: Billy Davis

own band together. So I formed a band called 'the Rockin' Shadows.' We played around town on the Los Angeles circuit, kind of Rockabilly style stuff and a lot of Sun records. We were really authentic back then. My brother was in the band with me after he got out of high school. He was eighteen and I was twenty-one when we started that band. We played together for a few years and we had some success. We had a song called *My Heart is Achin' For You* on the L.A. Rockabilly compilation album. I've had that song covered about ten times already. We just did that single at the time and recorded a few other things, but they never came out on anything. Then my brother left the band to play with Rick Nelson and I moved to Pasadena and just did solo for about three years by myself.

In between all this time I got really dedicated to acting. 'Roadhouse 66' was the first movie I was in because of the song *My Heart is Achin' For You*. A director heard me singing it at the Palomino and said I want this song in the movie. Then he said, 'Well you look right for this part in this movie, maybe you can have a few lines.' So I went to Arizona, did that and kind of copped a bug of wanting to do some acting.



**AM:** Is the song on the soundtrack for 'Road House 66' a different recording than the single?

**JJ:** No, it's the same version. Then I decided to go to acting school. I went for about eight years while I was playing music. I wasn't playing music all that seriously though, I was kind of in between the two things. My brother was gone now and I was on my own. (ed.-James' brother, drummer Rick Intveld, died in the tragic Rick Nelson plane crash) Putting bands together was always a little on the rough side to get guys to play for free or just to do it for fun. Over the years, I had a couple of spurts where I had bands and we played gigs. I always kept my name out there. I had some offers for some small record deals, but people kept telling me to hold out. I kind of passed up a lot of things that I should have taken at the time which was probably right for me. So, that's the reason why I never really recorded anymore.

I then meet Rosie Flores in late '86 or early '87. I saw her singing and I thought she was just wonderful. I told her "you need some original tunes" and she wasn't writing that much then. So I wrote a song, *Crying Over You*, and gave it to her. She liked it and started doing it in her set. I started playing bass in her band. I had been playing bass with guys like Johnny Meeks and a couple of other people at country bars, doing five sets a night. I did it just to play and make a little bit of money. Around the same time as the Rosie Flores thing got started, I was still studying acting and had the 'Roadhouse 66' movie getting off the ground.

**AM:** You acted in a TV series pilot called 'Private Eye.' When was this?

**JJ:** That was right after 'Roadhouse 66.'

**AM:** In the show you performed a song *Lookin' For a Back Beat*. Was this song released in any form?

**JJ:** No, That was a song that was written by Billy Burnette. But anyway, about this time, I got together with an agency called Triad, which is pretty big. They were handling John Doe and Exene from 'X' and they

were looking for other people that were interested in acting and of course I was. So, they booked me on that show (Private Eye). I didn't do much after that, because I started going to school for acting and I was in a class that you weren't allowed to work for a couple of years, just kind of intense training.

**AM:** How about the movie 'Motown's Mustang'?

**JJ:** I did that actually before 'Private Eye.' The guy that directed 'Roadhouse 66' was named Mark Robinson. He said "I'm doing another project. I want you to be in it?" He was trying to help me along and he liked me in his first movie. I played a kid that goes over to Vietnam and I get killed. My girlfriend buys this Mustang to give to me, but I never come back. The movie shows the life of twenty years of what the car goes through. In the late sixties it passed through all these different hands and then she found the car abandoned. So she said, "I'm going to fix it up and give it to Chuck when he gets out of the army." But of course, I never come back.

After that I did 'Private Eye,' and then a movie called 'Sandman.' I played this guy who was a surfer who lived down by the beach. I had to go to Vietnam. When I'm over there, I'm writing letters to this lady who was my next store neighbor and I always had a crush on her, she's an older woman. She has a son, who idolized me as he was growing up. I came back from Vietnam and I don't look the same, I've changed, I've seen all this crap and really bad stuff. When I was over there she was writing me letters giving

me hope that when I came back things would be good between me and her. But she never thought I was going to come back, thinking I'd probably be killed. So when I come back she says, "I kind of didn't mean it." So the kid sees this and doesn't know what to do or how to handle me any more. So, I teach him how to surf and in the end of the movie I end up not getting together with his mom. The movie is called Sandman, because while I'm in Vietnam, she always sent me a little bit of sand in the letters saying, "Please come home. This is a little bit of where were from." So I keep all the sand in a vile and wear it on my dog tags. So all the guys call me Sandman.

**AM:** How did the 'Cry-Baby' sessions come about?

**JJ:** They hired Johnny Depp to do this movie and they





tried to get him in there to sing. They thought he couldn't sing well enough, so they figured they would try to find a voice for this character. My name had come up on some lists. So, I came down met these guys and they called Al Kooper who was in charge of the music. They asked me if I knew who he was, and I said, 'Of course I know who he is!' I had played gigs with a guy named Billy Bremner who was in the band Rockpile and Al Kooper was coming down to play some of the gigs with us, so that's how I first met Al Kooper. They had a few guys auditioning for the voice including Billy Burnette, me, and Colin Winski. All three of us went into the studio and cut two songs for 'Cry-Baby' with Al Kooper.

They took the tapes to John Waters (producer) and said, 'We're not going to say who anybody is. We'll play them for you and you tell us which voice you like.' I did a song that didn't make it to the movie called *Red Hot* (Billy Riley song) and *Tear Drops are Falling* which was in the movie. It's the one that I sing in the high falsetto voice. The other two guys sang it in a regular voice, so when John heard this, he loved it. Next thing, I found myself at a meeting with John Waters. Dave Alvin was only involved at this point as a guy pitching songs for the movie. They wanted to make the tracks sound a little more rootsy, and they thought that the stuff that Al had done was good, but they wanted to make it sound more authentic so they brought Dave Alvin in since he had written some of the songs that were going to be in the movie.

**AM:** Did Dave Alvin play on any of the songs?

**JI:** Dave Alvin actually played on *King Cry Baby*. It's kind of a mixture between me and Dave on that

track. I think he is on a couple of other tracks too. He overdubbed some stuff. On the Version of *Doin' Time For Being Young* that was in the movie, I played the first solo, Dave played the second solo. But for the single, I basically played everything except for the drum track that was there.

**AM:** What was your connection with the movie *Wild At Heart*?

**JI:** I got called in to coach Nicholas Cage to sing like Elvis. That was right after I had done *Cry-Baby* and I was getting kind of a reputation as a singer around town mixing in with movies. I ended up coaching Nick to sing for the movie and I also sang on the session with Elvis' band that was recording the tunes. They had me do some of the incidental music, I played on some of the sessions.

**AM:** Did any of your singing make it to the movie?

**JI:** No. I just played on some of the other tracks for David Lynch. I did some string bass and guitar, things like that. I did the back ground singing, like the Jordonaires' parts for the Elvis stuff. It was me, John Jorgenson, and Herb Peterson. I hired those guys.

**AM:** Tell me about the movie 'Shake Rattle & Rock' and the songs you played on in it?

**JI:** I audition for films all the time. This was just another audition. It's hard to get a part. There are so many guys that are up for the same kind of parts I'm up for. And especially at this age they can always take somebody who has a name. I was originally cast in a movie called *Johnny Suede* which Brad Pitt got. The producers didn't want to use me because they said, "This guy has no name." I played drums on all the tracks. The original way I got involved was that Joey Altruder from *Jumpin' Joey* called me because I'm a drummer too. Joey told the director, 'You should get James Intveld in for one of these parts.' I got a call and that's how I got the part.

**AM:** Is that your bike in the movie?

**JI:** That's my '46 Indian Chief. I told them I wanted to ride my own bike and they let me, so I was pretty happy about that.

**AM:** Any other movies you've done recently?

**JI:** I was in a movie called 'A Thing Called Love' with River Phoenix. I played his buddy. There are a couple of scenes where I play upright bass and scenes where I'm playing guitar with him and were singing together. Peter Bogdanovich directed that. I had Peter come out to see my band



Jimmy & the Gigolo's, my eight piece 40's style swing band and two weeks later he asked me to be in another Showtime series called 'Fallen Angels.' We shot it about six months ago. I have a little scene with Jennifer Grey where I play piano in this taxi dance hall in the forties.

I was in another movie called 'Indian Runner,' with Sean Penn. I was playing with Harry Dean Stanton for a while in the late eighties and early nineties. I played bass and later I played lead guitar for Harry Dean. We went to Australia and did a tour and in fact I produced a Harry Dean song for the 'Town South of Bakersfield 3' compilation CD. I produced that track and played guitar on it too. So I met Sean Penn through Harry Dean Stanton and Sean asked me if I would like to have a small part in his first film called 'Indian Runner.'

In the opening scene you see me drive this El Camino in a car chase. I've got a beard and my hair is long. I'm this kid from a local town in Nebraska and I just shot somebody in town. I jump out of the car and I'm running through the snow trying to shoot the police officer and he pulls out a shot gun and shoots me and I die right there in the snow. I was also in the 'F. B.I. Untold Stories' TV series and I got cast as the lead role. It was cool because they put my name in the TV guide for that. I play this guy Danny Michael Weeks who was basically a murderer and rapist who is traveling around the country with this older woman. He escaped from jail and they're traveling around picking up younger women, taking them for their money, killing people and all kinds of crazy stuff.

**AM:** Tell me about the solo records you've made.

**JJ:** I haven't made any records really. I was on the 'Town South of Bakersfield 2' CD. I got a song called *Somewhere Down the Road*. Pete Anderson produced it. I knew him from playing on Rosie Flores records. He asked me to do it.

**AM:** You did a Christmas single with Dale Watson.

**JJ:** Yeah, called *Christmas Just Ain't Christmas Without You*. We did that for fun. It's on a label we made up ourselves called Penny-Ellen. Because my Mom's name is Ellen and his Mom's name is Penny. So we figured let's make our own label. We printed up a thousand of them. We just sent them out as Christmas presents.

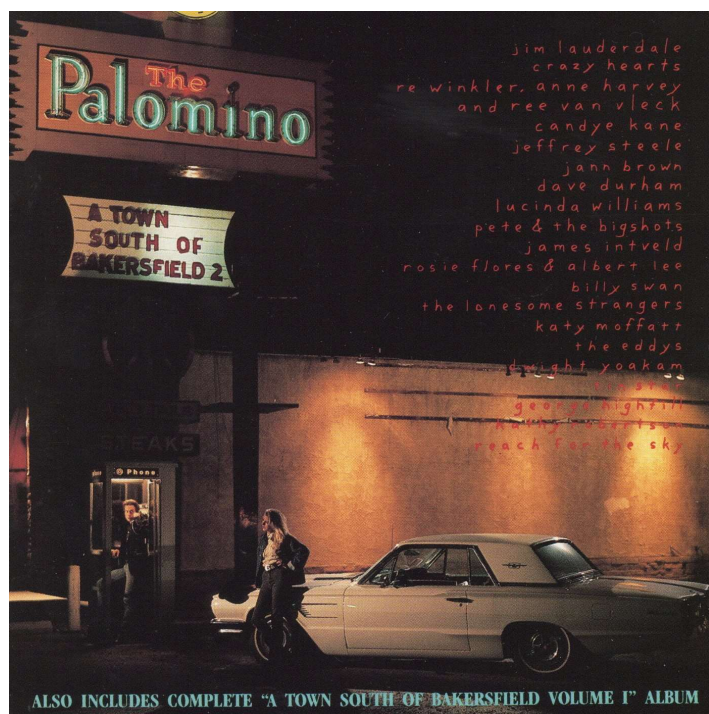
**AM:** Tell me about the Bobby Mizzell sessions. We reviewed them in issue #6 of American Music.

**JJ:** I met Bobby at a swap meet, PCC swap meet selling records. I was looking at his stuff and he asked me what I did and I told him I was a singer in a band.

He said, 'Well I'm a piano player, maybe you can come down and see me sometime.' So I went down to the Tam O'Shanter, a Los Felez club, and I said, "This guy is great." So he started coming out and playing at this place called The Landmark with me and Johnny Meeks and at the time my brother was alive, he was playing with Patrick Woodward, a bass player. Over the years, I played different gigs with Bobby, mostly at the Tam O'Shanter. I would go down there and set up my drums and we would play as a duo. I would sing and play drums and he would play piano. He wanted to record, but we didn't really have any money to hire anybody, so me and Bobby would go in and cut the track. I would play drums and he would play piano and then I would overdub bass and guitar. That's how we made those little records. It was very cheap to make them that way. So when Bo (Berglund) came over here and saw Bobby and said, "I want to make a CD with you," We basically just took all the masters out and put together this compilation.

**AM:** How did you come to join the Blasters?

**JJ:** I've known the Blasters since maybe 1981, because we all played around town and everybody knows everybody and I had done some shows with them where I opened for them. And we were always friendly over the years. So I guess Phil Alvin wanted to go out and play again and he had a thing called the Phil Alvin Quartet. I was at a gig and I was talking to Johnny Bazz. Basically Johnny said, 'Hey were looking for a guitar player, maybe you're interested in doing it?' I thought maybe, whatever, it might be fun. I





really liked Phil as a vocalist. I think he is a great singer.

**AM:** Coming off the notoriety of the 'Cry-Baby' sessions, didn't you feel your next step would be something vocal?

**JI:** It wasn't a big commitment. It was basically: Phil has some gigs, maybe you want to do 'em. Then it was one of those things where I came into the King King one night, I guess this was in your newsletter, and I sat in. I played guitar and I thought I played lousy that night. I felt really bad but I still got a call, 'You want to come down to our rehearsal hall?' We did some jams at the rehearsal hall and then we booked some gigs. I thought, 'Well this isn't a lot of time,' because Phil goes, 'I've got a lot going on and I know you do to. I don't want to take you away from your own stuff, but maybe we can do these gigs together.' So I said "O.K." We started doing gigs as the Phil Alvin Quartet and it started really coming together so they said maybe we should make this the Blasters. I didn't care if it was the Blasters or the Phil Alvin Quartet. For me it was just an excuse to be able to focus on playing guitar. Most of the time I was focusing on other things. This is a good place for me to be able to play guitar and not have to think about anything else. I can get pretty lazy, I'm not the type that will sit around and practice, but if I had gigs to do. . . That's where I've learned how to do everything, on stage, on the bandstand.

I know Phil is very knowledgeable with music in general especially old music and blues. I thought this was a good place for me maybe to learn new stuff. So they decided to call it the Blasters, we started doing

gigs and then Phil made his solo record and I played on a bunch of that stuff. That is how it evolved.

**AM:** How did Jerry Angel wind up joining the band?

**JI:** Me and Jerry had played in bands on and off for the last fifteen years. I'm not sure how it all went down but at the time they were going to fire Dave Carroll and they needed to bring somebody in. We needed somebody who was professional who could just walk in and do the gig. Jerry already knows that style of music and he is very good at just coming in without any rehearsal and actually be able to pull off the gig. Jerry showed up at the House of Blues (June 17, 1994) and at sound check we talked about the songs. Phil wasn't even at the sound check. We gave him a brief description of where there were breaks in tunes and basically just read everybody for signals. Then a week or two after that we went to Europe and Scandinavia.

**AM:** We were surprised to hear at tonight's show (The Birchmere in Alexandria, Virginia 5/14/95) a version of *Rock Boppin' Baby*. That is one the band hasn't played in years.

**JI:** I never played *Rock Boppin' Baby* with Phil. We just pulled it off tonight cause I started it and kind of forced them into it. Which is fun to do. I love doing songs that are different then what we usually do. Even if you don't play it completely right, the fact that somebody requested it, it makes you feel good and it makes them feel good. Its all about sharing the music and being spontaneous.

**AM:** Tell us about your band Jimmy & the Gigolos.

**JI:** A couple of years ago I kind of wanted to put a band together where I could play drums. So I put that band together and did one gig at a place called The Whitehorse. Actually, I used Johnny Bazz on bass and Smokey Hormel on guitar, we had a little swing combo thing. I was singing and playing drums. Then the Derby asked me to put a thing together for one night a week. I was going to put my original band together which at the time I was doing gigs playing my own music. I had D.J. Bonebreak playing drums, Gregory Boaz playing bass and Smokey on guitar. Sometimes I would use this guy Bruce Witkin on bass. So, a lot of those guys were out of town, so I couldn't do an original band thing. I figured let me put together a jam swing band. I hired myself as the

Photo: Cameron Davis



**The Blasters at the Blue Café Long Beach, Calif. 6/30/95**



drummer and after that first gig, they were like, 'You can't sit back on the drums, your the front guy.' Also I'm not going to be able to cue the band from back there.' So I hired Kenny Sara to play drums and I was up front singing and just walking everybody through the set. So I just sing and I play the bongos. After a few weeks I said (to the Derby), 'I need more money I want to have a horn section.' So I put a horn section together, now its eight pieces. We've been there for a year now on Thursday nights. Now I use it as a vocal gig, it's a nice gig where I can concentrate only on singing and I like singing that stuff. It's like 40's swing, like Fats Domino meets Frank Sinatra. Mostly covers but we have a few originals that we do.

**AM:** Any plans of recording it?

**JI:** Yeah we want to record. I think when we write more material for that band, we will probably record a record. A couple of people have been interested, small independent labels, but the band isn't ready to record. Do you know about the Bear Family record that I'm making?

**AM:** No.

**JI:** I'm making a CD for Bear Family. Bear Family (German reissue record label) is doing a record for the label being around for twenty years. They are making a compilation record with all these different artists and the thing that ties it all together is that every song on the album has the word 'bear' in it. It's used in any context that you want to use it. Ray Campi asked me to do a track. I wrote a song called *Barely Hangin' On*. I went into this small little eight track studio that Ray took me to recorded all the instruments by myself. I mixed it, gave it to Ray and he

sent it to Germany to Bear Family. Richard Weize who owns the label called me and said, 'I really love your track. Is there any possibility you may be interested in making a CD with us? I'll send you some money, you can record it and we'll put it out.' And I went, 'This is too easy. He's not asking for anything. I can do anything I want for it in the states? He wants it for Bear Family in Europe. So I said "O.K."

**AM:** Is the compilation out yet?

**JI:** It's a box set coming out in August. Now they want me to make this record before the twentieth anniversary party that they are going to have in Germany on August 24. So, now I'm making this CD on my free time to deliver to them in Germany so they can put it out August 24. I'm going to Germany in August to perform at the anniversary party and they are gonna have me do some other dates too (from Aug 26 - Sept. 8).

**AM:** What style will the CD be in?

**JI:** Well, he wants stuff kind of like the stuff I wrote for him for the compilation record which is kind of like early honky-tonk. I've got like four country shuffle song so far. I'm going to record that song *Crying Over You* that I wrote for Rosie Flores - I'm doing my version. Just a bunch of other tunes. I might have a couple of covers on there. It's fifties-style country, that's how I would categorize it.

**AM:** Who is playing on the sessions?

**JI:** Me. If I had a lot more money, I would put a cool band together to go in the studio, but it is easier to just go in this way and cut the stuff. I have certain ideas of what I like stuff to sound like. I use old equipment. I like old sounding instruments, I like old style playing. What does that mean: old style? That could mean anything. It could mean the twenties. I have my own taste of what I think sounds right and I know what I want it to sound like in my head. Hopefully in the future, I won't make records that way, but for this first record I think this is the way to do it. Because I need to do it fast and I need to do it cheap. Fifteen years have gone by and I haven't made an album and people keep asking me why. For some reason or another I just haven't taken the opportunities that have been given to me to do that. I'm like in between country and rock 'n roll, somewhere in between there is what James Intveld music is. What ever the stuff is that I like, I like the stuff to sound the way I like it to sound and there is no market for that. You have to either be a rock-pop singer guy or a country artist. Well I'm not really either. I'm somewhere in the middle and people like Bear Family say they like that. It's a perfect opportunity for me to



make this particular record.

**AM:** How does the Blasters fit into that style?

**JI:** The Blasters are like rhythm & blues, country, whatever you want to call rockabilly. The stuff that Phil listens to is like early Jazz and Gospel. The gospel influence is such a big thing. People hear the vocals I do on some of my stuff and they go, "You're trying to sound like Elvis." It's not necessarily that I sound like Elvis, if you listen to the Golden Gate Quartet records, all four of the guys on there sound like Elvis. But they were there before Elvis was making records. The truth is, I didn't hear it from the source, I heard it first from Elvis and Gene Vincent and Roy Orbison. I had to go back track to hear where it came from and when you do that, it gives you a different perspective in the way that you sing.

**AM:** What songs have you written for the Blasters?

**JI:** I wrote *Slip of the Tongue* with Rick Solem (Dave Alvin's keyboard player in the Guilty Men) and Phil liked the song. I co-wrote the *Blue Line* but it wasn't listed there on the CD. I also wrote *Blues Into Gold*. I have lots of songs, but it hasn't yet evolved like that in the Blasters. We don't spend very much time rehearsing, so it doesn't happen. Sometimes you write, because there is a necessity to have it happen. Like I would have never wrote that song *Barely Hanging On* for Bear Family, but they said they needed a song so I wrote it. I wrote a song the other day called *You Say Goodnight I Say Good-bye*, it's a ballad. I wouldn't have probably written that if I hadn't needed it for this (Bear Family) record. I'm using some existing material and I'm probably going to write a couple more songs before it's done.

**AM:** Why was the Blasters April east coast gigs canceled?

**JI:** It was because of a series of gigs that were booked. Sometimes we cross over in our communications of where we're working. We try to accommodate our schedules, so everybody can do what they have to do. You can't really cancel just two of the gigs and still go the whole tour. The important one we had to miss was in New York and because New York was one of our main gigs we decided to cancel

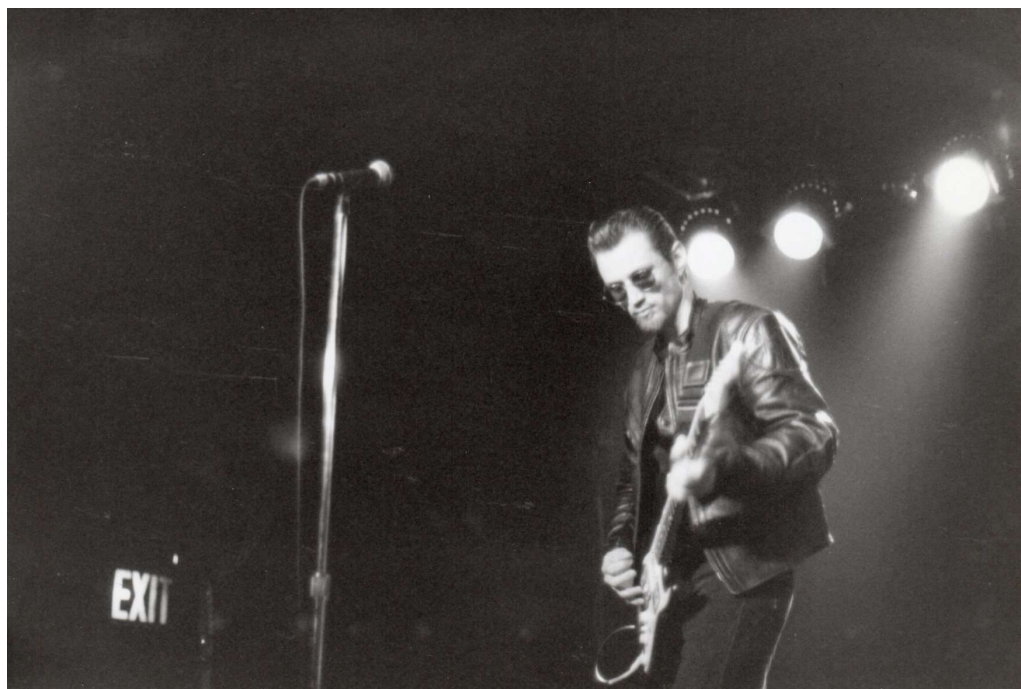


Photo: Billy Davis

the rest of it.

**AM:** What kind of solo projects do you have planned for the future?

**JI:** I'm working on getting that CD done, so I can send it to them, so they can put it out before I get there. The Blasters only go out for a couple of weeks at a time so there is time in between. I've got my acting auditions, I'm up for some parts now. I've got the Jimmy & the Gigolos swing thing that I do. I play drums in a band called 'The Big Rhythm Combo' which is Kid Ramos (guitar), John Bazz plays bass in it, and Scotty Linwood Slim plays harmonica and sings. We play sometimes at the Derby and we play at a place called The Blue Cafe in Long Beach. Those are our regular gigs. So I'm busy with those bands and whatever sessions I might get and then the Blaster gigs.

**AM:** What is in the future for the Blasters after the live album?

**JI:** We've been kind of recording a record for the last year. We recorded some tracks when we were in England on the BBC. We liked those tracks, we were thinking of putting those out at one point. We cut a bunch of the tunes we do now that weren't Blasters songs before. They put them on the radio, we would have to lease those masters if we wanted to use them. The EP was some thing that we were supposed to do for Columbia (Sony/CBS/Columbia) like studio recording stuff. We never really finished that. We may just go out and re-record everything. —Am



# BILL BATEMAN Quick interview by Janne Kurunsaari

## Why did the Red Devils break up?

**BB:** Well, the management tried to break us inside and they succeeded. The management and our singer Lester Butler just got too greedy. I'm still friends with the Bartel's, Johnny Ray and Dave Lee.

## Do you have any unreleased stuff in the can from the Red Devils?

**BB:** Man, do we have! I have a tape of Mick Jagger with the Red Devils in the studio. There are 13 songs and our bass player Johnny Ray Bartel has a D.A.T. of it. That's what I listen to when I want to hear something good. I don't think it will ever see release.

## What was the original lineup of the Blue Shadows (later known as the Red Devils)?

**BB:** We had me on drums, Johnny Ray Bartel bass, Lester Butler vocals and harp, and Greg 'Smokey' Hornel on guitar. Then we got Johnny's brother Dave Lee on rhythm guitar and Greg didn't like that so he left. So we got Kid Ramos (James Harman band) on lead guitar and after he left us we had different guitar players like Junior Watson and Dave Alvin.

## After the Red Devils do you have any new bands in mind?

**BB:** Yes, we have this punk band with the guitar player of Blondie. I've known him for about fifteen years and we are great friends. I've always wanted to play stuff like that. Now I have this real new band with Brian Setzer and Johnny Ray Bartel (*ed.-recently replaced by John Bazz*). In fact when I leave here (Helsinki Finland) on Tuesday were gonna have our first practice on Wednesday. Brian just called me up while I was here and said, 'Do you want to be in a band with me?' So that's gonna be my main project from now on.



## THE MAKING OF TENNESSEE BORDER by DOUG HINMAN

*The Tennessee Border album was another production masterpiece by Dave Alvin released in 1992. Sonny Burgess is one of the all-time underrated Rockabillys. For Sun records in the fifties he recorded in the shadow of Jerry Lee and Johnny Cash and never got the recognition or promotion he deserved. Here he is brought to the forefront by Dave Alvin, a hot backing band, and authentic song writing. They more than pass the test and I state with confidence that this stands up to any of the old Sun records. Doug Hinman was the back beat in the project and gives us an insiders view into the making.*

I first met Jack Smith in the summer of 1982 when our bands first played a show together at the Lone Star Cafe in New York City back when for a while the club had this thing called "Rockabilly Blast Sundays." I was with the band Rock House and he was the singer in the Rockabilly Planet from Providence Rhode Island.

When Rock House split and reformed in Providence in 1984 we ran into each other more often, and late that year I filled in for his drummer at a local gig. Over the next few years, Jack and I kept in touch and a few times he brought up the subject of my working with him. But when Jack's drummer left in 1987, I had just joined Duke Robillard's band, an offer too good to refuse, so I had to turn down Jack. Three years later when I finished my time with Robillard, due to his joining the Fabulous Thunderbirds, I think Jack once again brought up the





subject of my joining, but I was turning down full time offers as I had finally decided to stop playing for a living and return to school to better support my family.

I continued to play locally and often worked with my ex-Rock House bassist and long time friend Rory MacLeod. He had been playing in Roomful of Blues after Rock House, then subsequently in a Boston based band Little Frankie and the Premiers which I played with a bit at that time. I recall during the fall of 1990 Rory and I went to see Jack at a local club, The Last Call Saloon, because there was this irresistible billing: Sonny Burgess, Dave Alvin, and Jack Smith. I had been a fan of the Blasters myself from the days of their first Slash LP and had even seen their rather drunken New York City Debut in April of 1981. And I had seen Sonny in NYC too in his first appearance with the Sun Rhythm Section around 1983 (at the Lone Star with Jack opening). I was blown away by the fact that he still had it and could still rock out like a man many years younger. Jack goes back a ways with both Dave and Sonny. Jack did a bunch of dates with the Sun Rhythm Section

and was responsible for much of their bookings in the Northeast. Jack and Dave became friends in the early 1980's after the Rockabilly Planet opened for the Blasters. They hit it off right away and over the years a mutual admiration for each others talents developed and they became good buddies.

The seed for the Tennessee Border recording project came when Jack booked a gig in Providence and was able to get Sonny and Dave to appear with him. Both Jack and Dave wanted to put Sonny in the spotlight with a hot band behind him and this was a way of demonstrating their support of Sonny's talent. Jack was working with another rhythm section at the time (Johnny Scia Scia & Frank McCarthy). These were younger guys from Boston and they had settled in fine as Jack's band. About a year later as it turned out, they started doing some playing on the side with the guy Rory and I were playing with: Little Frankie. At one gig Rory and I were doing, it came up that they (Jack's Rhythm Section) were growing tired of commuting to Rhode Island to play with Jack. As Frankie was looking for new blood as were Rory and I, someone suggested the obvious, why not swap each band's rhythm section. On top of this, they also casually mentioned that Jack had a possible record deal set up and his band would be backing up Sonny with Dave producing.

Both Rory & I thought what a great opportunity as it was and certainly a project we'd be interested in. This was around October 1991. We also looked forward to working with guitarist Jerry Miller, a good friend from way back and with Jack and Mary Smith - two of the very nicest people around and whom we both admired as a talent. The seeds of the record deal had actually come the day after the Sonny/Dave/Jack gig in Providence. Jack thought what a great idea it would be to do a record with Sonny based on the success of that one gig. Mary apparently further pointed out, why not have Dave produce it. I think both Dave & Jack felt that Sonny had a great record in him if given the right circumstances.

Over the course of about a year of negotiating, HighTone records was sold on the idea via Dave but gave Dave a somewhat limited budget in which to get the whole thing done. Logistically it was a little crazy. Dave had a busy schedule and lived in California while Sonny still lived in Arkansas. Jack was able to get a good deal on a local studio and figuring it was easier to fly both Sonny and Dave in to Rhode Island rather than for Jack and Mary and the whole band to travel elsewhere. Jack arranged a four day block of studio time at Normandy Sound in tiny War-



ren, Rhode Island. Jack had worked with owner/producer Phil Greene before, Phil being a bit of a local legend and a character to boot. His studio is notable for the fact that all of the New Kids On The Block records were recorded there.

So the whole deal was set. The recording would take place late February, 1992. I think Dave was concerned that Jack had a brand new untested band but Jack assured him that we knew what we were doing. Rory and I both had proven 'roots' credentials in our favor. Rory had long been one of the foremost slap bassists around and we both had played tons of rockabilly, R & B and blues. Dave I think is opinionated about drummers (of course the most important member of ANY band!) and was concerned if I would be right for the gig. Jack reassured him I could. With me back in school, taking on this gig was feasible as Jack too by this time was only booking occasional dates, the band was really only a part time venture. But all being seasoned players, the band gelled quickly over the course of about three gigs before the session was to start the weekend of Feb. 22-25.

Both Sonny and Dave flew in late Thursday afternoon on Feb. 21. We had one rehearsal that evening to go through all the possible songs for the album. Dave, Sonny, and Jack had agreed on a dozen or so songs, a combination of old material and originals by all three principals. Our only preparation prior to this was getting a cassette of the 12 songs so that we'd be familiar with them at rehearsal. I literally had classes all that day at the University of Rhode Island and drove over to the basement of a fire station Jack had rented out for the rehearsal in rural Exeter, R.I.. Over the course of maybe four or five hours we ran down the material quickly.

Dave is a real take charge guy and knew what was necessary to get this project done. Admittedly he had gone out on a limb taking on this project, so I think he was definitely under some pressure to get results. We dropped two songs that didn't feel right titled *Tell Her I'm Gone* and *I Thought It Was Over*. We wrapped up about midnight. I was due to show up the next day at 10 am as we were allowed about half a day primarily to get the drum sounds - but of course everybody's sounds as well. As it always does, it took longer than expected and we didn't get to serious recording until 6 PM. A piano player (Steve Burke from the John Cafferty Band) had been



Photo: Sonny Burgess

### **Doug Hinman on drums at the Tennessee Border Sessions**

hired, as well as our steel guitar player Dick Bachmann. Sonny is from the era of recording live and quickly, so we tried to keep that spirit. He sang live with us on everything, though the vocals weren't used in the end. By today's standards the approach to recording was pretty basic with minimal overdubs. I think for Sonny, who is still used to everything live in one or two takes, any overdubbing was a departure, but a balance was struck. For the first track it was real traditional rockabilly with just myself, Rory and Jerry backing Sonny. For most everything else piano joined us for the backing tracks. From my notes the night went like this:

- *I Can't Get Enough* (trio only backing)
- *My Heart Is Aching For You* (quartet backing)
- *I Don't Dig It* (quartet backing)
- *Flat Top Joint* (quartet & Dave backing)

This night went smoothly. We were shooting for 11 or 12 songs total, so we were on schedule for the first night. This was a style of material we were very comfortable with, though we were still working out arrangements as we went. The piano wasn't present at the rehearsals, so that had to be worked in. Dave, I recall helped me fine tune some of the drum parts. I remember particularly the drum fill on *Flat Top Joint*, he had to sort of drag out of me as it was late at that point and I had been there for 12 hours. Dave pushed me to work as hard as possible. He expects a lot from the drummer (and rightly so), and likes a very energetic player. I think I rose to the occasion, as it is some of my favorite playing captured in the studio and I credit Dave partially with getting it out of me. The night ended with Dave joining us on second guitar for his own tune *Flat Top Joint*. Through

out the session, we always approached the first take as hopefully the perfect one as we knew Sonny wouldn't want to run a song into the ground. We usually got by with 2 or 3.

The next day we got going earlier because everything was up and running and we hoped to get a good 12 hours in. The second day went as follows.

- *Stuck Up*

- *Tennessee Border*

- *As Far As I Could Go*

- *Talk In Your Sleep*

- *Automatic Woman* (with Dave on Guitar)

Things proceeded smoothly, though I recall 'Talk In Your Sleep' becoming a bit of a problem as we couldn't agree on the right feel for the tune. This was the only point while I was there that things got a little tense as everyone was frustrated. We tried all kinds of slow and medium country feels and finally took a break to let the air clear. We came back and tried a Ray Price shuffle feel and everyone felt good about it. We all got the tensions out of our systems with the last song of the night. We were determined to do this in one take and I recall Dave giving me a quick death-ray glare after flubbing early on in the tune after he got the song off perfectly with a great guitar bit. We got it in the second take.

For the third day we only needed two more backing tracks and then the serious overdubs and vocals could be started. We'd done some of the dubbed guitar solos as we went. There had been a couple of very minor drum dubs also done as we went along. The last two done over the course of Sunday afternoon were:

- *Old Old Man*

- *Hell Yes, I Cheated*

With 11 backing tracks down and time running out

Dave decided not to go for a twelfth song. I was finished at 6 PM packed up and left. I had to get back to my family and get ready for exams (bad timing for me but music comes first). Dubbing continued that night and during the next day. Mixing I don't think began until Tuesday and went until sunrise Wednesday morning with Dave catching his plane with tapes in hand. Unfortunately, they didn't get to mix the last song (*Hell Yes, I Cheated*) which was a nice Fats Domino kind of feel tune. This remains unmixed and unfortunately unreleased. But such was the nature of the project. Every second of available time and money was gone. Given the circumstances, and the fact that it got done at all, I think we were all pleased with the results. Personally, I'm pretty proud of it.

We subsequently did a handful of shows backing Sonny, because we weren't available for regular touring. We haven't been able to get together with Dave again, but Sonny did some shows with Dave. We did two shows with Sonny just prior to the release of the CD: May 29, 1992 at Maxwell's in N.J. and the following day at The Last Call Saloon in Providence. We did one show after that on October 3 at Maxwell's that was plagued by equipment problems for Sonny, but Rockin never-the-less. Shortly after that show the band split as Rory joined ex-J. Geils band members J. Geils and Magic Dick in their blues revival band Bluestime, along with guitarist Jerry Miller who had played over 10 years with Jack Smith. Miller needed a solid paying regular gig which Jack couldn't provide with our occasional bookings. Rory lasted a year with Bluestime while Jerry is still there. Rory has since gone on to front his own band Linoleum 235.

A great Rockabilly band split, but was captured well on the 'Tennessee Border' album. I've continued on with Jack and in reforming his band he's brought in another highly respected local rockabilly figure Wild Bill Coover on guitar. Coover had formed the trend setting Memphis Rockabilly Band out of Boston in the late 70's. Jack recruited his original bassist from the early days of the Planet, Kevin Hanna. Together we carry on the spirit and try to have fun too.



Courtesy: Doug Hinman



Recently Sonny got the urge to do some shows again and we booked two nights last September in Boston at Johnny D's and Providence opening for my ex-boss Duke Robillard at Lupo's Heartbreak Hotel. We also did our own night next door at the Met Cafe. The latter show was a burning performance in my humble opinion but as it stands, no future dates with Sonny are planned, though one never knows. Jack talks of getting Dave to produce some tracks for him with our current band, but things move slowly these days. But we all felt that we got it pretty right at least for the 'Tennessee Border' album. Hope to see you all out there some day!

*Aside from being one of the best rockabilly drummers in the northeast, Doug is also an avid collector and musicologist of The Kinks. He has published a book "An Illustrated World Discography on the Kinks." For info write PO Box 4759 Rumford RI. 02916-0759.*

### Rockabilly terror Sonny Burgess tears it up live

Eric Clapton and Elton John may have ruled L.A. from Dodger Stadium that night, but the late-night-place-to-be was the King King, where rockabilly wildman **Sonny Burgess** made his first appearance in the southland since 1959, backed by a few stellar L.A. players. On guitar was the ever-incendiary **Dave Alvin**, who produced Burgess' comeback album on HighTone, *Tennessee Border*. **Tony Gilkyson** from X also played guitar, **James Inveltdt** played bass, **Rick Solem** played piano and **Donald Lindley** played drums. Spotted in the smoky, sweaty and packed joint was **David Was**, **Big Sandy** of local **Fly-Rite Trio** fame, along with **Phil Alvin** and **Rosie Flores**, who both stepped up onstage around 1:15 a.m. to sing a couple of songs apiece. Rockin'.

**COLLECTING BLASTERS:** Dave Alvin has just published a new book (165 pgs.) of poetry called "Any Rough Times Are Now Behind You." It can be ordered for \$12 plus \$3 postage payable to 'Rock Press.' Send to:

**Incommunicado Press**

**PO Box 99090, San Diego Ca., 92169.**

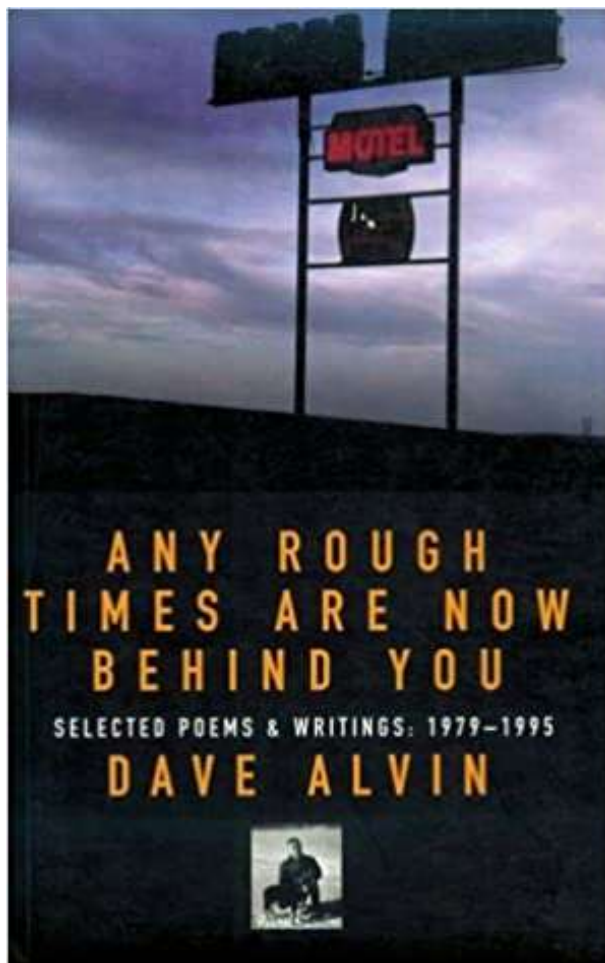
Dave will be doing a poetry reading in Long Beach Calif. at a poetry fest called 'When Words Collide.' call (310) 828-8037 for information.

— Razor and Tie Records has re-released Dave Alvin's first solo album 'Romeo's Escape.' It was previously only available on CD as an import titled 'Every Night About This Time.'

— James Intveld can be heard on Billy Poore's new 7 inch single for Denver based Rock-A-Billy Records playing guitar, slap bass, and drums. Songs: *Whole Lotta Racket* b/w *Fool, Fool, Fool*.

— Sun Records legend Billy Lee Riley has a tribute album out on BSC records in which he contributes as well as many young rockabilly bands. Brian Young's Sabrejets contribute a track which alone is reason enough to get this disc. Write

**BSC Po Box 123 Yellow Spring WV. 26865 USA (304) 874-3752.**



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#6 Rockin Ronnie Weiser interview, Bobby Mizzel & James Intveld Cd review, State of the Blasters today story.

#7. Phil Alvin on the Making of County Fair 2000. An in depth look at Blaster cover songs.