

NIGHTSHIFT

FANS OF THE Georgia Satellites who were expecting to see the hard-rocking Atlanta band open for David Bowie at the scheduled time of 7 p.m. last Saturday (August 15) were in for a rather nasty surprise. The Satellites' gig was pushed ahead to 6:30 p.m., so patrons of the scheduled 5½-hour concert would have time to catch public transportation before the midnight cutoff. Despite the efforts of the promoters to let ticket holders know about the last-minute change through radio, TV and the daily papers, Georgia Satellites fans who didn't hear about the time change got shafted. I was one of them. Oh well...

On the positive side, the Duran Duran set was actually quite good — a lot better than I thought it would be. From the press box the sound in the dome still resembled a cheap ghetto blaster, but at least there wasn't that irritating echo you usually get up there. Thanks to careful speaker placement, Duran Duran started off with the James Bond track "A View to a Kill," and headed through such hits as "Union of the Snake," "Hungry Like the Wolf" and "Wild Boys" (during which Simon Le Bon pulled off a rather nifty handsand). They also did a couple of tunes from the band's splinter groups, Power Station ("Some Like It Hot") and Arcadia ("Election Day").

At about 10 o'clock the 35,000 fans finally got what they'd been waiting so long for, and as the lights went down Bowie's spiky-haired rhythm guitarist Carlos Alomar came strolling out, knocking off Van Halen-type guitar licks, while a voice from the scaffolding high above kept yelling, "Shut up!" That voice belonged to Bowie himself, who descended from the belly of a huge, translucent, glowing spider while reciting the poetic opening lines of the song "Glass Spider." Dressed in an oversized red leisure suit and matching suede boots, the 40-year-old pop star was joined by the rest of his band and five dancers.

In no time at all, a huge throng of fans had assembled at the front of the stage, leaving those who had paid upwards of \$300 for front row seats to think about other ways they could have spent their money. From across the stadium, the performers looked like insects, but thanks to two massive video screens, most of the on-stage action was visible. With Peter Frampton's inspired guitar freak-outs leading the way, the Bowie band made its way through new material ("Time Will Crawl," Iggy Pop's "Bang Bang") and older stuff ("Heroes," "Rebel Rebel") before the marathon night of rock and roll came to an end, just before midnight. □ Steve Newton

and older stuff ("Heroes," "Rebel Rebel") before the marathon night of rock and roll came to an end, just before midnight. □ Steve Newton

YOU CAN hardly expect anyone to replace The Blasters, a machine that personalizes any tune they launch into. But the prospect of an evening with lead vocalist Phil Alvin was mighty inviting to a few hundred people at the Town Pump last week.

"I'll just say this once," announced a dark-suited Alvin as he took the stage with his semi-acoustic guitar about midnight, explaining the absence of the band. He said he awoke at 10 a.m. Monday to find that newest Blaster, Billy Zoom (formerly of X), had refused to cross the border into Canada. Alvin, who had a solo date at the Edmonton Folk Festival, decided to honour the booking himself. He promised that The Blasters, with another guitarist, would be back to play Vancouver, long one of the favourite gigs on their itinerary.

Alvin can be an excitable, over-amped, breathless motormouth about the history of American music, and sometimes he just gets too pedantic, didactic and downright pedagogical for his own good. He almost slipped into his lecturing mode at the start of the show, though he related an interesting anecdote about meeting Canned Heat's Bob Hite, a renowned record collector, and how Hite turned on a 14-year-old Phil Alvin to blues, slapping on one 78 after another. Alvin pre-acted song after song with reference to their original recordings, inevitably sometime in the '20s.

The solo format reveals what a good blues picker Alvin is on guitar — he doesn't have the precision of a bluesgrass player, but the feel of a Delta-raised bluesman. And even with the power of The Blasters, it's never been a problem to hear what Alvin could do with that big, reedy voice.

And it's a good thing it carries so well. What is it about blues that turns people into animals? A handful decided to scream like monkeys from one corner; they were soon persuaded to cease and there was more necking and groping on the dancefloor than at a co-ed summer camp dance.

Phil picked up the pacing by dedicating a song censored in East St. Louis in 1927 to Jello Biafra, currently fighting a censorship battle in the L.A. courts. Phil followed "Never No More Blues" from The Blasters' catalogue, with numbers from his solo album ("Minnie the Mocher," "Collin's Cave" and "Titanic Blues") and the gospel-folk finale "Samson and Delilah" from the last Blasters LP.

The audience screamed for more, and got a pair, including one of brother Dave Alvin's first songs, "American Music." Though the house lights started coming up, the audience whistled and screamed and stomped for a second encore, and got "Cat's Squirrel" — the original, pre-Cream version, of course. Phil left with a big, appreciative thanks, and a promise to return with The Blasters. □ Elle O'Day

LITERALLY, Cruzados means crusaders, but in East L.A. it also refers to those who have "crossed the border," to someone of mixed blood and even to a manner of playing guitar. Yet this L.A. band of crusaders managed to get lost on the way to the second date of its tour. In San Jose, and Tito Larriva apologized for being late with this phone call to *The Georgia Straight*.

David Bowie capped a marathon 5½-hour concert at B.C. Place Saturday (August 15) that began with Duran Duran and a surprisingly early opening set by the Georgia Satellites. See *Nightshift* review. Chris Cameron photo.



Chick Corea led his Electric Band through a generous three-encore show that featured the use of instruments and techniques on the leading edge of music technology, as exemplified by the work of John Patitucci on the six-string bass. Chris Cameron photo.

The crowd was small, but Keith Landers of The Killeney Cats whipped his guitar raw anyway. The group wrapped up a three-band showcase of talent from Athens, Georgia, at the Town Pump Sunday (August 16). John Scully photo.

