

**ELVIN BISHOP**  
**RANCHO NICASIO**  
**AUGUST 21, 2005**



Checked in to Rancho Nicasio this weekend to monitor a few old friends and hearken unto Elvin Bishop as he sounds now adays, after his recent CD release, "Getting My Groove Back".

Bishop has been a local fixture for some thirty years, but began his career in the mid fifties playing that gol darned rock 'n roll and "race music", dropping

out of the University of Chicago to play the blues, learning guitar licks from none other than Otis Rush, and teaming with folks like Junior Wells while working day jobs in steel mills. In 1965 he fell in with Mike Bloomfield to be a co-founder of the Butterfield Blues Band. He has evolved into quite the consummate stage presence, still enraptured with the music that snagged his soul many years ago and is known to suddenly appear for any old session in Marin for a sit-down improv.

Also to note is that his daughter was brutally murdered by a gang of cult fanatics a couple years back. The perpetrators were only recently convicted.

His salt 'n pepper band started out with quite a tasty swamp thing filled with New Orleans rough and tumble and he kept the feeling of the Crescent City going throughout his continuous set without descending into conventional "cajun" shuffles, preferring the barrelhouse rhythms of Congo Square. He performs with two f-hole Gibson archtops, using a glass slide until that flew off into the grass, but switching without a hitch into fretted chords. His right hand technique is exclusively fingerpick with an assist from wireless transmitter. His style is remarkable in that no matter how energetic the piece, he never loses the melody during comps and so his solos tend to be brief and to the point.

Also of note is the inclusion of a more than capable keyboardist/accordion player as well as a very talented trombonist and vocalist. Even the drummer demonstrated impressive vocal chops. All of which adds up to a package that surpasses the usual blues band repertoire.

It is quite a pleasure to watch a performer really enjoy his job and the entire entourage was clearly having the time of their lives after completing a multi-city tour in support of a new CD in this return to home turf. A neighbor indicated that Bishop lives not four miles from the venue.

Bishop is an engaging performer who has never lost sight of the old roadhouse, juke joint requirement for bands that can get the people up on their feet and his infectious enthusiasms undimmed by personal tragedy was much in evidence Sunday afternoon.

