

CROSSING**DAVID ELIAS @ MCGRATH'S PUB**

Dropped in to the local to find Peter in a jovial mode and the place jammed. David Elias was in town to make whoopee, assisted by Peter Tucker and Chris Kee from Houston Jones. John Harvard filled out on lead guitar while singer-songwriter Elias did vocals and acoustic rhythm on a dreadnought Gibson.

John Havard was rigorously trained by classical jazz musicians and the work really shows when it comes to picking his solid-body strat. He sticks to single-string runs, remains sharply disciplined, playing only what is necessary without flourishes or embellishments until it comes time to solo, where unlike a lot of hot shots out there who can play rapid triplets and fancy riffs that have little to do with the song structure itself, he hews to the melodic line in a manner reminiscent of Wynton Marsalis on trumpet; that is, he takes the basic melody and packs it with chord inversions, hammer-ons, artificial harmonics and sweetly

constructed phrases that compliment the song before returning deftly to the melody.

It's safe to say that Elias and Co. brought the house down. Elias is one of those dripping-with-talent musicians who writes very capable Indie-rock lyrics, pens catchy tunes to go with them, sings his own material, plays any number of other instruments, produces, directs and presses his own CD material and generally answers to nobody and no boss because he simply does not have to.

His material is pure Californian Americana, with personal lyrics reminiscent of John Hiatt in his more meditative moments and the "confessional poets" of the eighties, and infused with contemporary Western/Californian images and themes while his music borrows freely from folk, rock, and world beat rhythms. Several times the distinct beat of reggae came lilting through while one of his songs busted out into a John Lee Hooker boogie.

In other words, Elias is difficult to categorize, other than the fact that in person and in his music he is thoroughly Californian in texture and feel, and its no surprise that the reviews on Amazon.com and even his own website fail to convey the slightest impression as to what the man does.

After the evening had wound up with an extended jam that included a rocking "Knocking on Heaven's Door" with Neil Young's "Helpless" woven into the middle," Elias consented to talk about what he does. There is no press kit on the anti-marketing performer's website, so one would never know that people like Thomas Dolby have performed with him (Dolby on keyboards), he has done the

prestigious Monterey Jazz Festival, and has fronted for Jane Siberry at the Great American Music Hall.

The fiercely independent Elias refuses to sign with any label, does no marketing at all, and oversees all technical aspects of studio and final production. He employs no manager and has no booking agent, preferring to play when he feels like it. A glance at his calendar shows that the majority of his dates will be in the hamlet of San Gregorio at the General Store. San Gregorio is a tiny place of some fifty persons just north of Half Moon Bay about a mile inland from Route 1.

The production values of his "Crossing" CD, done in "super audio" are simply stunning for a self-produced work -- or even a CD made by the technicians in Sony's multimillion dollar studios. Not surprising that one finds Todd Rundgren's techs have been advising the blessed Elias on howtos, and a former Sony employee carted over much of the technical equipment used in production.

When asked what his next plans, the quixotic Elias responded, "Travel. Purely for pleasure." As for the music, he said, "We'll just see what happens." He clearly has no intention of trying to climb That Big Hill, preferring to perform for the fun of it. And his enjoyment is quite enjoyable to watch and hear. You can get his CD's from Amazon.com or from BabyCD.net. His website is www.davidelias.com, but be forewarned that the website is a work in progress and has no promotional material at all, in keeping with the laid-back approach of its contrarian master. If you can at all make it down to San Gregorio on April 30,

then do so, for the trip along some of Northern California's most beautiful roads will be well worth the trip. Special guests are promised to appear for this gig.