

ISSUE #98

American Music

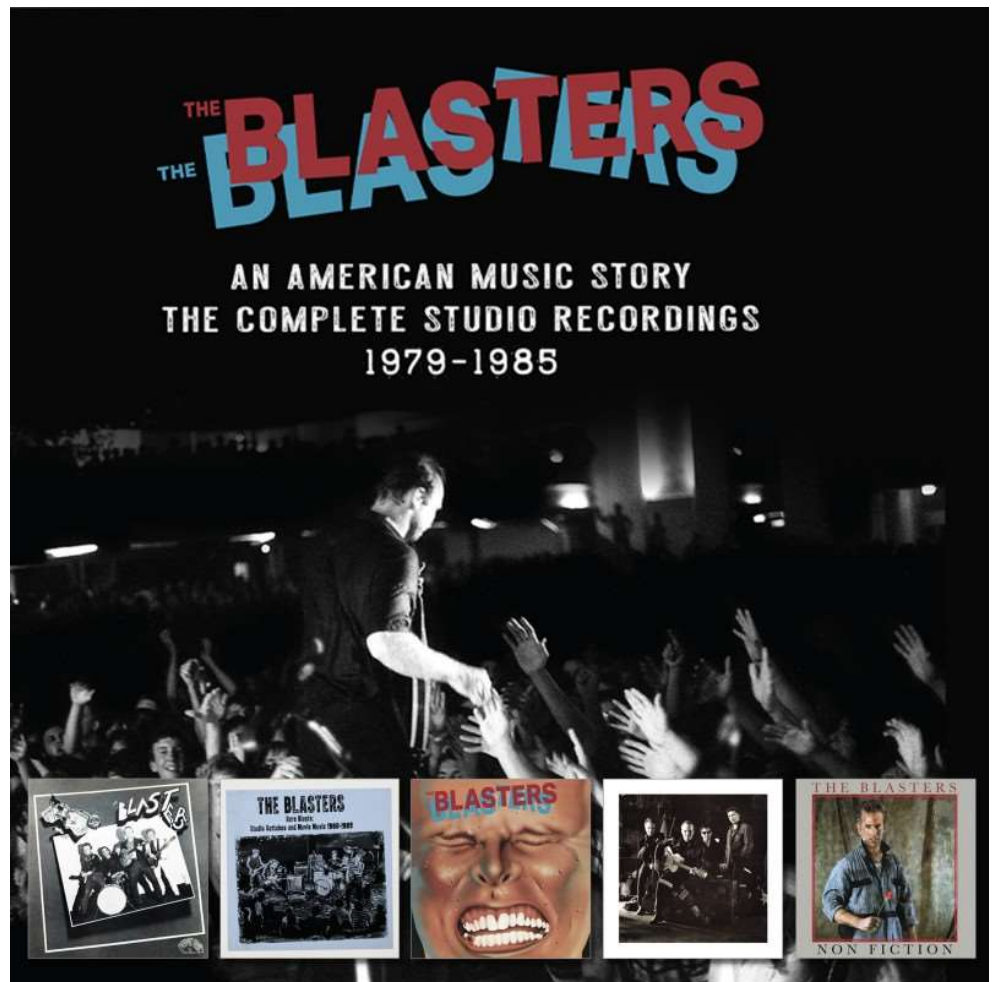
The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

Celebrating 31 Years 1994 — 2025

MARCH 2025

Liberation Hall Records To Release Blasters Studio Album Boxset 1979-85

Liberation Hall announces Los Angeles roots-rock legends THE BLASTERS' deluxe box set, An American Music Story: The Complete Studio Recordings 1979-1985 as an exclusive release for Record Store Day (April 12). This 5-LP collection marks the first time that the band's first four studio albums have been re-released on vinyl with their original cover art since their first pressings of the '80s. The newly compiled fifth LP, Rare Blasts, features studio outtakes and movie music. (continued))



In This Issue: The Blasters Live at the Venue 1982, The Third Mind Live CD, and a look back at DaveAlvin.com 1996-2007

((continued from page 1)) The box set will include the four remastered studio albums recorded during the original band's run: American Music, The Blasters, Non Fiction, and Hard Line, along with Rare Blasts, a new 14-track selection of studio outtakes and two songs recorded for the 1984 film Streets of Fire.

The deluxe hard slipcase set includes a 24-page booklet with a new essay by the box set's co-producer Chris Morris, featuring interviews with the band members, rare photos and memorabilia from the band members' personal archives, and historical images by photographers Gary Leonard, Michael Hyatt, Joel Aparicio, and Ed Colver. The set includes a replica of the poster by Slash used in '83 to promote Non Fiction. Limited to 1,000 copies, the hand-numbered set was produced by the Blasters, Antone DeSantis of Liberation Hall, and Chris Morris.

Latest News: Dave Alvin will be among the special guests when Jimmie Dale Gilmore celebrates his 80th birthday at a May 4th concert at the Paramount Theatre in Austin. Jimmie Dale, whose actual birthday is May 6th, will be backed by the West Texas Exiles. Other special guests include John Doe, Butch Hancock, Terry Allen, Jo Harvey Allen, and Rosie Flores. Proceeds from the concert will go to HAAM and the Sims Foundation, two organizations which provide assistance for musicians. Dave and Jimmie Dale will perform at the 53rd Annual Kerrville Folk Festival in Briarwood States, Texas, on May 31. For information, visit www.kerrvillefolkfestival.org -- Carolyn Wonderland's new album called Truth Is which Dave Alvin produced and played on is scheduled for a mid-May 2025 release. -- In 2025, Dave Alvin and Jimmie Dale Gilmore will do some tours together just as a duo. They will also do some shows with the Guilty Ones. -~~AM~~



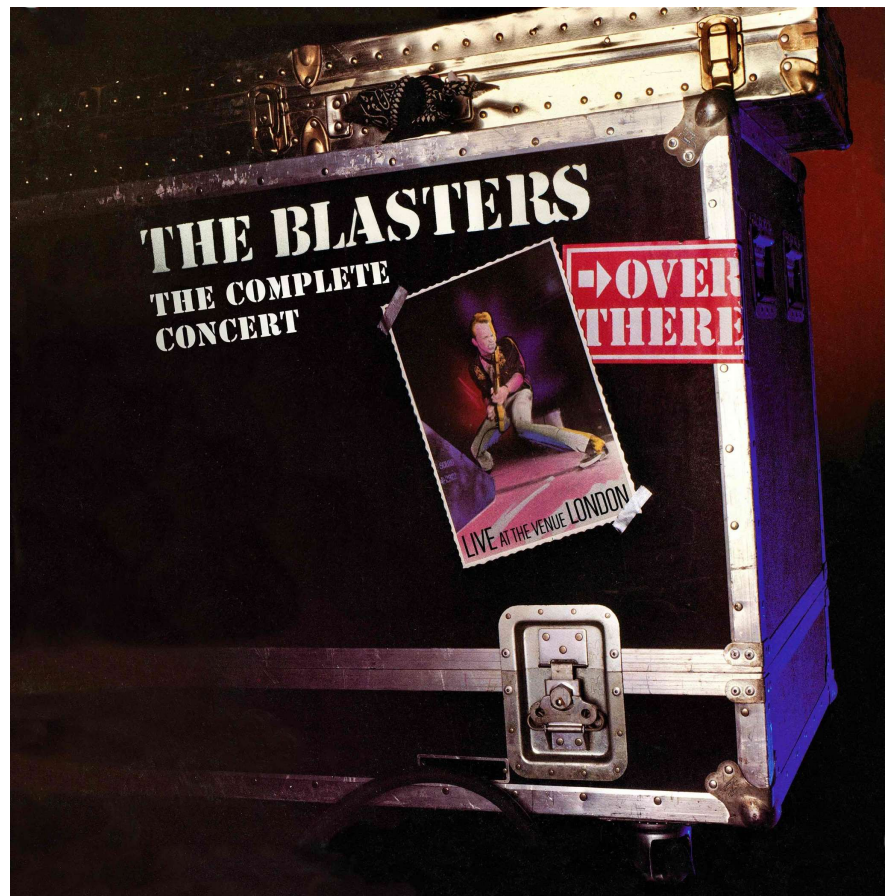
The Blasters U.K. Tour May 1982 (photo by Art Fein)

A New Life for **THE BLASTERS OVER THERE: LIVE AT THE VENUE**

By Billy Davis

On Nov. 29, 2024 Liberation Hall Records released the complete legendary Blasters 1982 concert from the London Venue – all 23 songs included on a 2-LP vinyl edition. A CD pressing followed a week later. Previously only six songs were released on a Warner Bros. EP in 1982 called Over There: Live at the Venue. In 2002, the Blasters' Testament CD compilation included an additional four live songs from the concert. For many years the Blasters

fans have coveted hearing the full Blasters concert from the peak of their career. Finally, Liberation Hall Records has done that for us.



But first let's go back to 1982 and see how it all happened. The Blasters were at the height of their popularity in spring of 1982 with their first major label album on Slash/Warner Bros. out. They were loved by the press and were getting positive reviews and great offers for concert tours and TV appearances, including taping a PBS concert TV special with Carl Perkins and Willie Dixon. In May of 1982, The Blasters were booked for a month-long tour of the U.K. supporting Nick Lowe's tour and few other dates in Europe.

Some have said it was a bad move to leave the U.S. while their popularity was on the rise stateside. How much would it really do for them, es-



pecially in support of Nick Lowe playing pubs and universities? But the Blasters did have some connections in England and maybe a debt to pay. F-Beat Records in England had released the Blasters' "The Face" album in the U.K. with different artwork and a number of singles to promote to radio. The record company owners Andrew Lauder and Jake Rivera were championing the Blasters' cause over there.

The tour with Nick Lowe and his Noise To Go band started in Leeds and proceeded through the UK. The Nick Lowe promoters didn't include the Blasters in their pre-tour publicity. John Bazz remembers: "Attendance wasn't always good for us opening for Nick Lowe because most venues were attached to a pub. So, we'd start playing and some would saunter on in, but most would stay where the drinking was, until Nick Lowe came on. We weren't listed as support on the Nick Lowe posters or promotion, so no one knew who we were. We complained and they tried to correct that before the tour ended. But at the first gig of the tour there were just a few guys in the audience for us. Phil got on the mic and said,

Tour Itinerary

- 4/29 Leeds at Polytechnic (w/ Lowe)
- 4/30 Sheffield at Polytechnic (w/ Lowe)
- 5/1 Durham at University (w/ Lowe)
- 5/2 Glasgow at Night Moves (w/ Lowe)
- 5/3 Edinburgh at Coasters (canceled)
- 5/5 Nottingham at Rock City (w/ Lowe)
- 5/6 Warwick at University (w/ Lowe)
- 5/7 Manchester at University (w/ Lowe)
- 5/8 Loughborough at University (w/ Lowe)
- 5/10 Chippenham at Gold Diggers (w/ Lowe)
- 5/11 Cardiff at Top Rank (canceled)
- 5/12 Birmingham at Locarno (canceled)
- 5/13 Guildford at Civic Hall (canceled)
- 5/14 Uxbridge at Brunel University (w/ Lowe)
- 5/15 St. Albans at City Hall (w/ Lowe)
- 5/16 Norwich at University (w/ Lowe)
- 5/17 London at Hammersmith Palais (w/ Lowe)
- 5/18 Manchester UK (headlining show)
- 5/20 London at Dingwalls (headlining show)
- 5/21 London at The Venue (headlining show)
- 5/22 Paris FR (w/Nick Lowe)
- 5/23 Berchem Belgium at Parkpop fest (w/Lowe)
- 5/24 Amsterdam NL at Paradiso (w/ Bo Diddley)
- 5/25-27 Hamburg, Munich Germany
- 5/28-29 Isle of Capri, Italy



Photo: Art Fein

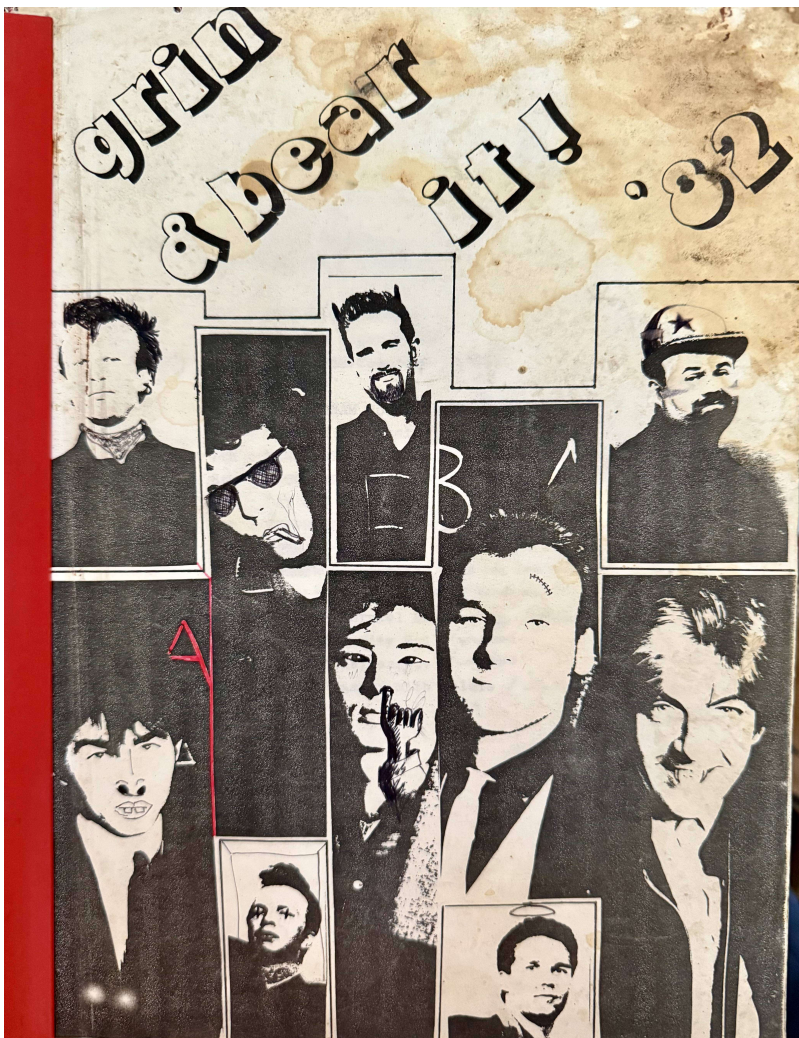
"I'd like to thank the gang of four for coming out to see us to-night." [laughs] The band 'The Gang of Four' was a pretty popular band at the time."

The Blasters were on a budget on the tour. They couldn't afford to ship their equipment [amps and drums] so they rented equipment.

Dave: "We weren't playing on any of our instruments. It was all rented amps and drums. In those days backlines were terrible quality, especially overseas. So, to me, the guitar sound was nothing like I got back in the States."



Photo: Art Fein



John Bazz's 1982 Itinerary cover in which he may have altered the faces of the Blasters and Nick Lowe's band.

The Blasters rode on Nick Lowe's tour bus and didn't plan on bringing their road manager, Wally Hanley. "Wally really wanted to come to England with us" John Bazz recalls. "He said, 'I know there's no money in the budget, so just pay my expenses. I don't need a salary. I want to go to England with the Blasters!' So, we paid for his hotel, meals, and transportation. Art Fein was billed as a co-manager of ours - even though Shelly Heber was really the boss. When Art heard that Wally was going with us, he said, 'I wanna go too so you can pay me whatever you're paying Wally' [laughs]. He didn't know Wally wasn't being paid. Art had friends worldwide, and really wanted to go to England, so we got to meet

some of his collector friends there like Ted Carroll of Ace Records."

Art Fein was also managing the Cramps at the time and introduced the Blasters to "The Legion of the Cramped" fan president Lindsay Hutton. Lindsay was also the founder of the famous fanzine "Next Big Thing" out of Scotland. He became a fast friend of the Blasters and a big fan of their American music.

"I think I first heard of the Blasters by reading the American press," Lindsay remembers. "I was more interested in American music than what was going on in England, so I bought the Blasters first album [The Face] on F-Beat Records. We had heard the Shakin' Stevens hit of MARIE MARIE over here but I was very aware that Dave Alvin wrote it.

When the tour with Nick Lowe came around, I liked Nick Lowe, but I was really there for the Blasters. I attended the Glasgow show at Night Moves on May 2. The next day the tour was going to Edinburgh, but it got canceled because Meatloaf was playing in town and the promoter thought everyone would go to that one."

Lindsay: "I hit it off with the Blasters right away. They were very welcoming to us. I've remained friends to this day, especially with Dave. Gene Taylor was a funny guy. A few years later I was in Madrid in Plaza de Santa Ana when I walked past a jazz bar and saw Gene playing. He recognized me



Lindsay Hutton: "The photo in the gatefold of the LP of Dave walking with a bunch of people was taken in Edinburgh on the day the show was canceled by Art Fein. We spent the whole day in the hotel bar called the Mount Royal on Princes Street and it was very entertaining. In the photo is [L-R] road-manager Wally Hanley, my ex-wife, the bus driver, her friend named Jennifer, then John Bazz, and Dave. I'm not sure who the last person is. We were heading to a burger place called King Hero."

Lindsay Hutton: Dave did this sketch for me of us heading to King Hero on their day off in Edinburgh."



and we talked a while, but I couldn't stay for the show. He was such a character. They broke the mold when he came along and left. Wally Hanley was their go-to guy and made everything possible for them. He was a hell of a nice guy. Belinda Carlisle was there hanging out with Bill Bateman too."

John Bazz says it was the first time the guys in the Blasters had been out of the country, "Touring was very new to us. Going just to New York was a big deal to us, so going to the U.K. was the

same. Thank God they spoke English, so that makes it easier than the rest of Europe. I remember Phil calling home to his girlfriend Christina from a pay phone and I had to stand next to him dropping in change because he couldn't talk and put coins in quick enough. That's nuts [laughs]."

"Nick Lowe's crew made it easy for us, booking the hotels and we rode on their tour bus. England is small enough that often we would drive back to London after a gig and had like a home base in a hotel called the Hillgate. We got to know the neighborhood, the shopping and food places. The food was different. I remember both Alvin brothers lost weight because they couldn't get the burgers and fries that they were used to in the States. It was mostly bangers and mash and the English breakfast was like nothing we had ever seen."

Manager Shelly Heber had this memory of the tour: "The 1982 Blasters tour of England was very well received. MARIE MARIE had been such a huge hit by Shakin' Stevens over there and we thought we could capitalize on that. We opened for Nick Lowe and Nick loved the Blasters. I remember Nick gave Dave his gold record for CRUEL TO BE KIND. Dave took it [laughs] and had it for like 15 years until he finally gave it back. It was a poker game and Nick had run out of money and said, "I'll bet my gold record" [laughs].

The Blasters finished the Nick Lowe tour at the Hammersmith Palais and had headline gigs in Manchester and London's Dingwalls, which were a good warm-up for recording the Venue show. The sax section of Lee Allen

and Steve Berlin joined the tour for the Venue and the following gigs in Paris, Amsterdam and Belgium.

Lindsay remembers the day of the London Venue show May, 21: "I met up early with Art to eat lunch and then headed to the Venue. Another friend, Mark Hagen, was there too. The thing I remember most was meeting Lee Allen. It was exciting to meet one of the originals. He was a thousand feet tall to me and totally charismatic. I've never been that star-struck with someone. He was really special and he would have never played with these guys if they weren't special too."

The show was recorded by Nigel Miles and Rob Taylor for "The King Biscuit Flower Hour" radio show [DIR ABC Radio Network], which was broadcast in the U.S.A. on Sunday nights from 1973 until 1993. During its prime, the program was carried by more than 300 radio stations throughout the United States. The show's name was derived from the influential blues radio show "King Biscuit Time," which was sponsored by the King Biscuit Flour Co., combined with the hippie phrase "flower power." The Blasters' show was to air later in the summer.



John Bazz was asked if he recalls anything was special in the set list for the recording: "When Dave was in the band, the set was never the same each night. After Dave left, the set never changed [laughs], but Dave really labored over the set list. We could have been on the road for months, but every night it was a different set with generally the same songs rearranged."

Dave Alvin continues: "We rarely did THESE ARMS OF MINE, so it came out that night, but WHAT WILL LUCY DO was a regular in the early days. There was a spot in the set where we let Phil pick a harmonica song. Phil would decide on GOT LOVE IF YOU WANT IT or HOODOO MAN BLUES or something else like that. When Non Fiction came out we dropped a lot of these covers because of course there



Lindsay Hutton: "That's my original backstage pass that made it into the Liberation Hall album. I've had it stuck to an old address book for all these years and you can see that it's been embellished upon by pen probably while I was on the phone with someone. I have one of the Gun Club at the Lyceum in 1983 on the other side of the book."

are just so many of our own songs to play. WALKIN WITH MR LEE we played pretty fast [laughs]. Lee would have preferred if we slowed it down. But he appreciated that we were doing his song. It would come and go from the set around that time. Lee had a lot of fans in Europe, so we definitely wanted to feature him a little more. KEEP A KNOCKIN' would normally be the last song of the set or MARIE MARIE. We had two encores that night so we pulled out extra songs like BARN BURNING."

Lindsay Hutton: "I loved that Phil dedicated WALKIN WITH MR. LEE to me on the album. He knew I was enamored with Lee."

John Bazz recalls that "we had a great crowd at the Venue because it was properly promoted." And Lindsay adds: "It wasn't

completely sold out, but well attended. After the show we went backstage for a while and then back to the hotel called the Hillgate. We all stayed up very late celebrating. I remember the guys from the Polecats were there. We pulled an all-nighter, and the Blasters had to leave early in the morning for Paris. I remember quite a few of us were in various states of disrepair [laughs] and we saw them off in the bus to the airport without any sleep."

The Blasters finished the tour and went home. On Aug. 29, 1982 the King Biscuit radio show aired with a Flock of Seagulls concert taped at a different venue followed by the Blasters' six-song performance. The set was different from what was on the EP. It was GO GO GO, BORDER RADIO, I'M SHAKIN', MARIE MARIE, AMERICAN MUSIC, and SO LONG BABY GOOD-BYE. The King Biscuit producers added in some additional crowd noise. The song selection looks like the Blasters management might have chosen it. The opener is an obscure song while the rest are the Blasters' hits song.

Shelly Heber had an idea to get the Blasters some credit for the song MARIE MARIE in England that was taken away by Shakin' Stevens recording the song. She wanted to release a live version of the song and a

live EP release just for England, but she ran into some resistance as the New Wave movement was taking over. Shelly: "We recorded the London Venue show to have a special EP release for England. I had a big fight with the head of Warner Bros. in England named Rob Dickens, who said: "No one wants real instruments anymore, all they want is synthesizers. This is absolutely never gonna fly again and I'm not gonna spend one more red cent on bands like this." That was pretty off-putting. I was able to get another department to commit enough money to finance the EP hoping that that they could get the MARIE MARIE live version on the radio hoping that the public would make that connection. Somehow the live MARIE MARIE didn't get released because someone said they didn't want to exploit Shakin' Stevens. Who the hell is he? [laughs] He had one hit and that was MARIE MARIE. He was the least authentic rockabilly artist ever – but whatever. But the recording turned out so well it was released here in the U.S.

as an interim between LPs."

Dave remembers: "When we later heard it we thought it was good enough for release. Our management said you never put a live record out right after your first big album, 'The Face' record, so it was decided to do just an EP. There wasn't much planning in this." And John Bazz adds: "It was good to have some product out to fill in between studio albums to satisfy Warner Bros."

The Blasters had a small amount of time to mix the tracks and brought Pat Burnette in, who had worked on the Blasters' The Face album as well as the Germs, The Flesheaters

445 Park Avenue
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PROMO SHEET

KING BISCUIT FLOWER HOUR

8/29/82

starring

A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS / THE BLASTERS

On _____, _____
Day Date

at _____, _____
Time Station

presents The King Biscuit Flower Hour. This week King Biscuit gives you a glimpse of some of the best new music of the 80's, featuring A Flock Of Seagulls and The Blasters. English stars A Flock Of Seagulls were recorded live at The Metro in Boston. You'll hear songs from their debut album, which is currently topping the charts, all performed in concert. The Blasters, hailing from Los Angeles, play a unique brand of traditional American rock'n roll. Recorded on their second British tour, The Blasters were captured on stage at The Venue in London. So tune in for great music in concert from two of the hottest groups on the scene, A Flock A Seagulls and The Blasters on The King Biscuit Flower Hour this _____ at _____
Day Time
right here on _____
Station

THE TUNES - A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS

INTRODUCTION THEME
MODERN LOVE
MESSAGES
STANDING IN THE DOORWAY
THE FALL
SPACE AGE LOVE SONG
MAN MADE
THE TRAVELER
TELECOMMUNICATION
I RAN

THE TUNES - THE BLASTERS

GO GO GO MARIE MARIE
BORDER RADIO AMERICAN MUSIC
I'M SHAKING SO LONG BABY, GOODBYE

THE ARTISTS - A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS

MIKE SCORE - Keyboards, Vocals,
Guitar
FRANK MAUDSLEY - Bass, Vocals
PAUL REYNOLDS - Lead Guitar
ALI SCORE - Drums

THE ARTISTS - THE BLASTERS

DAVE ALVIN - Lead Guitar
JOHN BAZZ - Bass
BILL BATEMAN - Drums
GENE TAYLOR - Piano
PHIL ALVIN - Vocals, Guitar, Har-

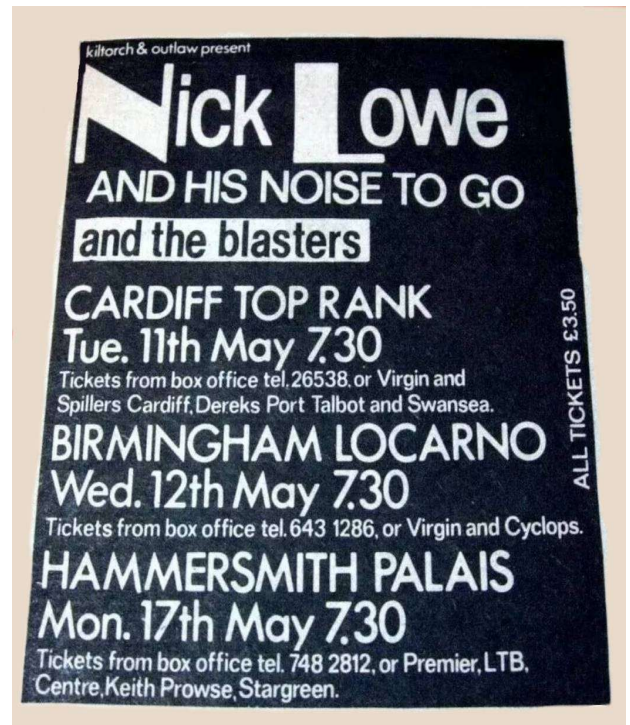
monica

and would later would mix the Blasters' Streets of Fire songs. John Bazz was there. "I was there with Phil at Quad Teck studios. I remember Phil thinking the tapes didn't sound right that they had possibly used noise reduction like Dolby. We spent two days with Pat. Dave at that time didn't like the sound quality. They weren't perfect, but not bad. It's the Blasters at our peak time. You have to take a few steps back and listen to the recording and as a musician not focus on your own performance. You have to listen as a whole and I think this is a good representation of us."

The EP's artwork was done by an artist and friend of the band named Steve Bartel who had designed the Rollin Rock and The Face album. He came up with the iconic red and blue Blasters shakin' logo. For Over there: Live at the Venue, he created the ultimate 'band on the road' art with a depiction of a Blasters amp road case, a guitar case and Dave's Mustang guitar. On the front cover was a now iconic photo of Dave by Gary Leonard which was shot at the University of Irvine in California. Dave: "We had a running gag that each of us would be on the cover of our albums – Phil on The Face, Me on this, Bill on Non Fiction - but [laughs] it ended before Bazz got a shot."

Steve Bartel came up with the album design concept as John Bazz helped: "Steve asked to borrow my bass cabinet case that is seen on the front cover to photograph it. The bass amp was like a Fender Showman with two 15-inch ported speakers. It was a custom flight case built for me by James Harman. Steve asked my permission to stencil paint the Blasters on the side of it. I still have the bass cabinet road case in my garage. The guitar case on top is Dave's with his bandana tied around the handle. It was a really funky looking all-steel guitar case [laughs]. Steve became our friend through James Harman. James was a great friend of the band because, first he was a record collector, so Phil and James sometimes were connected at the hip. There were many trips to James' house in Costa Mesa. He was a collector of records and guitars and amps. He was good friends with Hollywood Fats. We met the whole Bartel family through James. Steve was a friend and true artist.

The Blasters Over There: Live at the Venue was released on Sept. 29, 1982. Dave Alvin remembers: "We didn't expect to get radio airplay. There were two types of Blasters fans. One who liked the horns and the other



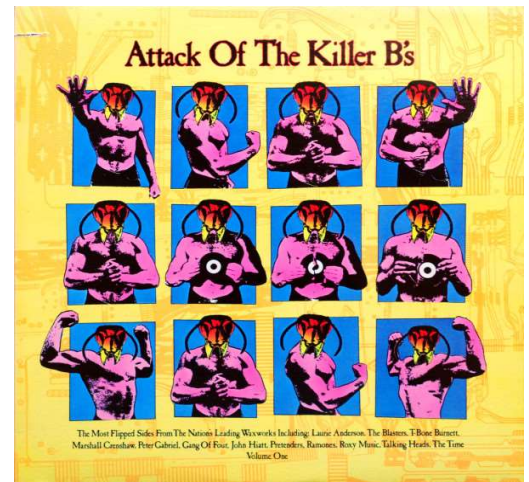
liked the Rollin' Rock Record and more the rockabilly side. I was working on the Non Fiction songs at the time and thought our early fans might not like it, but this EP would satisfy them. The great thing about the Blasters is we were a great live band. We could tour without a new album. Usually in the music industry in those days you had to do an album, a tour, an album and a tour. I respected the bands like Black Flag and Grateful Dead who didn't have to do that. I thought, we got there. The live EP cemented the idea that we were a live band first and foremost. The live EP did its job."

The cassette version of the EP included a bonus song from the show – WHAT WILL LUCY DO. Later Warner Bros. released a compilation LP of B-sides and outtakes of various bands titled Attack of the Killer B's that included the track.

In 2002, Rhino Records released a 2-CD collection of Blasters studio and live tracks called Testament overseen by Dave Alvin. The collection featured the Slash/Warners studio albums and the six songs from the live EP. Among a bunch of bonus tracks were another four live songs from the Venue – all of which were songs not recorded on the Slash/Warners studio albums.

Dave: "I'm not sure of the source of this recording that Liberation Hall used, but wherever the master tapes are now, they would be useless. Mark Linett and I mixed the songs from the Venue that were used on the Testament collection in 2002. The tapes had to be baked to keep the oxide from coming off on the heads. You can only get one play out of them after baking as the tape breaks down – so on that one pass you gotta correctly capture them digitally. The manufacturing of recording tape in the 1980s was of very poor quality. Anything before those years is good. Our budget for Testament was only to work on those 10 songs so the rest of the tape was baked and is now useless."

In about 2022, The Blasters re-acquired the rights to their recording masters and went to Liberation Hall Records to start releasing the old material on CD and with a renewed interest in the format of vinyl. Antone DeSantis became the Blasters' product manager. Antone: "Part of Liberation Hall's agreement with the Blasters in March 2023 was for all of the



Slash recordings plus the Rollin' Rock album to see release. We planned to re-release all the titles on vinyl. We originally thought we'd release all 10 previously released songs from the Live at the Venue EP and Testament. But then when we were sorting through material, we realized we had the full concert. Now we were excited about releasing for the first time ever, the whole concert! We pitched the concept of a special Record Store Day release on vinyl nationwide. We didn't want to rush the project for the April 2024 Record Store Day, so we scheduled it for Black Friday Record Store Day."

Liberation Hall brought in music writer Chris Morris to assist with the project and write the liner notes for all the Blasters and Phil Alvin re-releases. Chris has a long history with the Blasters. He wrote some of their first national press, has known the band personally all these years, and has always been in touch with what the Blasters are up to.

"I had only ever heard the original EP and the bonus songs on Testament." Chris recalls, "I was amazed the whole show existed. I think it's the ultimate Blasters recording. It's all live. No overdubbing, which is common on live albums."

Chris got to work on re-searching, and writing the story of the U.K. tour and the recording for the liner notes: "The real hero of this package is John Bazz. He's the pack rat who kept stuff and brought it out for this package. Most specifically it is the first time the actual date of the show is correct. The EP listed it as May 22, but it was actually May 21. John has a date book that had the correct date and the original tour itinerary [and further proof on a recently discovered dated backstage pass pictured in the LP gatefold]."

The original art from the EP was adapted to a gatefold for the 2-LP vinyl edition with original photos from Joel Aparicio and Gary Leonard's

Photo: Gary Leonard



cover photo. They were able to uncover some really interesting photos and paperwork from the tour. Antone: "John Bazz has many more tour itinerary pages that we didn't include. But in here are some really funny details. I like where it says, "If you run out of money, contact Warner Bros. Records," and it lists a number [laughs]. The photos are great too."

When the recording was mastered and ready for release, the team at Liberation Hall knew this would be something special that Blasters fans have been waiting for a long time. Chris: "The band steamrolled over you in this performance. It's like a punk rock record. Astounding velocity for 65 minutes." Antone DeSantis: "I listened to the recording in my car while driving upstate out of the city. I couldn't help driving like 90 miles an hour [laughs] because it was so fast and energetic. I was really pleased to make this release happen."

Dave Alvin told Chris Morris in the liner notes that "this is a pretty good representation of where we were and what we were like live. This is exactly who we were."

Lindsay: "The Blasters were never about nostalgia. There was a power to their music that was very contemporary. I thought they never made a studio record that sounds like they are live. But 'This Is It.' Some things take a while to be appreciated and I think now is the time for this live record." — ~~AM~~

On November 29, 2024 Live at The Venue the complete concert was released as a two-vinyl set limited to a first pressing only. The CD and digital editions followed on December 6, 2024. Liberationhall.com

John Bazz: "It was the end of the European tour. Here we were all the way across the world in the The Isle of Capri and as we were coming out of the hotel, Frank Zappa stops us and says "You look like you're from Downey." (laughs). He knew who we were, being from California. That was also where we met John Mellancamp which put the Blasters on his radar to later work with us."



Photo: Art Fein

THE THIRD MIND: LIVE MIND

— album review by Tom Wilk —

“I like live albums, and some people don’t,” Dave Alvin said in a 2008 interview about The Best of the HighTone Years, which is primarily a compilation of his studio work on the roots-music label. “In fact, they run screaming when they see live tracks.” That shouldn’t be a problem with the release of Live Mind by The Third Mind, which coincidentally is the band’s third album on the Yep Roc label.

Live Mind features in-concert versions of five songs featured on the band’s first two studio albums, plus a cover of The Grateful Dead’s DARK STAR and DORALEE, a song written by the group’s lead singer, Jesse Sykes, and originally released in 2002. The album was recorded at shows in Los Angeles, Ventura, Calif., and Dallas in 2024.

It’s a dynamic collection that plays to the strengths of The Third Mind, augmented in concert by guitarist Mark Karan and keyboardist Willie Aron.

SALLY GO ROUND THE ROSES kicks off the album as Sykes conjures up an ominous vibe with her eerie-tinged vocals that add to the tension before it’s relieved by Michael Jerome’s drum solo. She switches gears for a tender rendition of DORALEE.

The guitar work of Alvin and Karan takes center stage for a soulful interplay on the Paul Butterfield Blues Band’s EAST WEST, which unfolds like a classical piece with its various movements. The following track, Fred Neil’s bittersweet LITTLE BIT OF RAIN, serves as a soothing balm with Sykes on lead vocals. DARK STAR concludes the album with a nod to the ‘60s music and improvisational freedom that inspired the formation of The Third Mind.

Emmylou Harris once observed that songs need new voices to sing them in places they’ve never been sung in order to stay alive. The Third Mind accomplishes that on Live Mind with its spirited performances of songs from the 1960s. —AM



AMERICAN MUSIC FOR THE 19TH CENTURY

DAVE ALVIN FEATURED ON SOUNDTRACK FOR CIVIL WAR FILM

By Tom Wilk

Since the early 1980s, Dave Alvin's songs have been used in more than two dozen movies and television shows, ranging from SO LONG BABY GOODBYE in Bull Durham to FOURTH OF JULY in The Sopranos.

Saving Lincoln, a 2013 film directed by Salvador Litvak, showcases another side of Dave's music, this time as a performer, rather than a songwriter. He sings THE WAYFARING STRANGER and BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC for the film's soundtrack.

The movie focuses on Abraham Lincoln's close friendship with Ward Hill Lannon, who served as the 16th president's bodyguard following his election in November 1860. Lannon was away from Washington, D.C., when Lincoln was assassinated in April 1865. Litvak and his crew used Civil War-era photos digitized by the Library of Congress and utilized them as the backdrop for his actors. Litvak calls the process "CineCollage" and it lends a feeling of realism to the movie, which stars Tom Lamandes as Lincoln and Lea Coco as Lannon.

From conception to completion, the film took more than a decade to reach the screen. "We really immersed ourselves in Lincoln," he says in conducting research for the script that he co-wrote with Nina Davidovich, his wife.

Steven Spielberg's film about Lincoln, which was announced in the early 2000s and released in 2012, forced Litvak to adjust. "When Spielberg's movie about Lincoln was announced, we tossed the old script and started a new one."

Music plays a key role in Saving Lincoln, according to Litvak. "There's singing throughout the movie," says Litvak. "Certain songs are integrated into the characters." In one scene the characters of Lincoln and Lannon perform JIMMY CRACK CORN and BLUE TAIL FLY with Coco providing banjo accompaniment. Litvak recalled how Lincoln had a band play an instrumental version of DIXIE after the Confederates surrendered in Virginia to signify the country was no longer divided.

What led to Dave Alvin's role in the film? "Dave's performances came about because my friend Willie Aron, who coached the actors in the singing scenes, made the intro after I told him I was thinking of asking Leonard Cohen to do it," Litvak recalled. "Willie said great idea, but Dave would be even better."

In an email interview, Aron elaborated on his thoughts regarding Dave as a vocalist. "When Sal Litvak asked me to be the music supervisor for Saving Lincoln and he asked if I knew a good artist to perform those songs, Dave Alvin immediately came to mind," Aron wrote. "He is a font of knowledge of the history of American music, and he's a master interpreter of folk forms. Dave seemed the obvious choice."

Aron and Dave had a history of working together. "I had seen the Blasters many



times in Los Angeles during the 1980s," he recalled. "But we first crossed paths in earnest in 1988, when we were both enlisted to play with Syd Straw at the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis and with Tom Waits alumni Marc Ribot and Michael Blair, as well as JD Foster. Following that show, Dave and I continued to perform with Syd, touring and recording together in 1989 and 1990."

More recently, Aron plays keyboards on the second album by The Third Mind and the Live Mind album.

For "Battle Hymn of the Republic," Litvak believed the song was a good fit for Dave. In a 2013 interview with Meg Groeling of the Emerging Civil War site, Litvak explained: "We thought his uniquely deep and American voice would be perfect for BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC which we play over the end credits." Dave's reading of the song is a solemn and stirring one and lives up to Litvak's intentions. "I wanted it to be haunting," he added in a 2024 interview.

THE WAYFARING STRANGER is a traditional folk/gospel number that's been recorded by a diverse range of artists, including Burl Ives, Paul Robeson, and Emmylou Harris. Dave's version captures the sorrow of the narrator's plight. It's a song that would have been a good fit for his Public Domain album.

No film soundtrack album exists. "We did consider doing a soundtrack, but that's a rare fit for a little indie film made for under a million dollars," Litvak said.

In 2024, Dave remembered his work on Saving Lincoln as a positive experience. "They got a hold of me through Willie Aron, who was a sort of musical director, and asked me to do 'Battle Hymn' and another song," he said. "I told them that I'm really not that kind of a singer [laughs] and they said, 'Well we don't want that kind of a version.' I think it came out pretty good. I was happy to be loosely involved in that."

"Saving Lincoln" can be seen on Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV+ and on DVD and Blu-Ray. Excerpts of Dave's performances can be heard on YouTube by searching for Saving Lincoln.

DaveAlvin.com 1996-2007

by Gary Stern

Before social media, Dave Alvin responded to hundreds of fans' questions for a website and revealed much about himself in the process

Dave has always been the more reticent of the Alvin brothers. They joke about it toward the end of their recording of WHAT'S UP WITH YOUR BROTHER? Phil insists that Dave should be fine answering questions from well-wishers about his big bro. Then Phil adds: "Well, they got to know about you, too!" But Dave doesn't want to hear it: "They don't need to know nothing about me, brother...We keep everything secret around me. Loose lips sink ships, mi hermano."

The truly funny exchange cuts to a key part of Dave's persona. He's engaging but reserved, a dynamic performer who doesn't reveal much about his personal life, a revered songwriter and guitarist who is eager to praise his musical heroes but somewhat uncomfortable receiving accolades himself. During several podcast interviews he gave during the pandemic, in addition to talking about the cancers that threatened his life, he opened up about his lifelong shyness and having to overcome it as a performer. He's become increasingly at ease reflecting on Facebook about certain things -- his favorite hikes, life on the road, friends he has lost, the passage of time.

Still, until Dave releases the memoir he's been hinting at for several years, the place where he may have revealed the most about himself could have been the old www.davealvin.com website. It was there that Dave answered hundreds of

questions from fans over a decade, from 1996 to 2007, as part of a regular Q&A feature. Scot Kleinman, an astronomer by training, ran the site, and collected fans' questions for Dave and for a separate Blasters Q&A, for John Bazz. "They were into it, until it died out. :)," Scot said by email. It was a pre-social media world, and Dave took his time in crafting often eloquent responses to queries of all types, often apologizing for his tardiness.

Davealvin.com was suspended years ago, but remains frozen in time on the web, with Dave's responses to fans still available for hours and hours of reading – and for insight into all things Dave. The remarkable thing about Dave's responses was how eager he was to engage, writing often lengthy and candid reactions to questions, anecdotes, and expressions of fans' devotion. "Words like yours help me get through nights when I sometimes question whether what I've done all my life has been worth it. Maybe I should've sold out and gone top forty when I had the chance [Laughs], he wrote to one fan in 2000. "Without sounding too cliché, there isn't anything else I could do besides this. It's all I know."

Remembering shows, influences, and ringing bells as an altar boy

What did fans write to Dave about? Memories of specific shows, their interpretations of his songs, their demo tapes that Dave might enjoy, their eagerness for him and, at the time, the Guilty Men to play Milwaukee, Maine or the like. Dave often recalled the very shows fans wrote about. "Wow, I remember that gig with The Go Go's! in downtown Sacto in some great old theatre. All The Blasters got a bit drunk that night but that's another story," he wrote to one fan. To another: "Candlelight, warm beer, high humidity, tornadoes, fallen trees in the dark streets, no air conditioning but a great audience and Joe Terry playing a toy piano! What a night. I'll never forget it."

Not surprisingly, Dave would revel in memories about his boyhood in Downey. "No matter where I go or what I do, I take Downey, Bellflower and Long Beach with me! See ya on the 605!" he wrote. He was happy to hear from a teacher he once had at Pius X High School in Downey: "I'm eternally grateful for the survival techniques of humor and skepticism you instilled in me." Dave even wrote about being an altar boy: "I knew I was supposed to ring the altar bells 3 times during the Mass, after the priest's sermon, but I'll be damned if I could remember exactly when to ring them. So I just rang the damn bells non-stop for about 10 minutes figuring that I'd be correct at least some of the time. After the Mass, Father Kerry said, in his thick Irish brogue, 'Next time, not so much of the bells.'"

Many of Dave's anecdotes about growing up, of course, became tales of his love of music and the heroes who inspired him. "Yeah, I forced my mother to buy me a copy of El Paso when I was about 4 or 5 years old," he wrote in 2006. "Then I had her teach me how to work the record player so I could play the 45 over and over and over. That song is certainly one of the biggest (if not the biggest) songwriting influences on me. Marty Robbins is an extremely under-rated songwriter but I also agree that part of the magic of the record is Grady Martin's guitar work." On Sun Records: "I LOVE early Sun records and have most of the great 45's from Elvis and Roscoe Gordon to Warren and Ray Smith. Sun Records have always been one of my biggest influences. As the old saying goes, 'They don't make 'em like that anymore.' "

On Chuck Berry: "Well, I think most people have been hugely influenced by Chuck Berry (whether they admit it or not) and I'm certainly no exception. Some of my earliest memories are of hearing Chuck songs on the radio and the immediate impact they had both on my young mind (he could paint pictures with words like few others) and on my body (I couldn't help but jump around like a goof ball whenever one came on the radio back then)." On Woody Guthrie: "There certainly was a direct influence on me from Woody Guthrie. I don't know of too many songwriters in this field of music that haven't been influenced by him. My dad was a union organizer and often sang Woody's Union Maid (as well as Joe Hill songs) at the dinner table, especially if he'd had a couple of glasses of vodka. So when I first heard Woody sing on records, when I was about 12 or so, I finally realized whose songs my old man had been singing."

Again and again, Dave reserved special recognition and esteem for Lee Allen. "Well, I'm positive I wouldn't be a professional musician if it wasn't for Lee Allen. He was always the most important musical mentor to my brother, Phil, and me. You know, wherever I go I hear Lee. He played on so many hit records from New Orleans in the 1950's by Fats Domino, Little Richard and countless others, that I hear his solos around the world in all night diners, car radios, tv shows and movie soundtracks. Sometimes hearing him play makes me very sad but usually it makes me feel pretty damn good. It's almost like he's still watching over me somehow."

Asked if he had watched a video of a Blaster show on MTV, Dave responded: "I watched it a couple of times but it's hard to look at stuff because it reminds me of Lee."

Words of praise for some of Dave's favorites

Dave knocked out a lot of words praising his fellow musicians and songwriters, both those who came before him and his contemporaries. Here are just a few highlights:

- "I think Ry Cooder is so great that the American Gov. should give him \$ just for getting out of bed. I would be too imitated to ever work with him. He's a genius!"
- "Little Milton was a great, an under appreciated treasure and his premature death was, in my biased opinion, a national tragedy of sorts."
- "Richard [Thompson] is not only one of the best guitarists anywhere, he's also an evocative, soulful singer and one hell of a songwriter. Even though he's a very nice guy, I have to confess to being a bit intimidated by his talent."
- "I used to go see Clifton Chenier, the greatest of the Cajun/Zydeco accordionists, when I was a kid and his sound has had a direct influence on my music."
- "Now, Magic Sam? One of my all time favorites. Slinky, snakey, nasty, soulful, biting, heartbreaking guitar playing. I never saw him live. He died a little bit before I started sneaking into clubs but I did have a small flyer tacked up on my bedroom wall when I was a kid from a club gig he did in L.A. at a joint called The Bank. I wished back then that I could have seen him and I still have the same wish."
- "Yeah, I dig the older reggae stuff. One of the best concerts I ever saw was Bob Marley singing with Peter Tosh many, many years ago. You certainly can't say one bad thing about the Wailers as a band. As tight and powerful as James Brown's early 70's JB's or Springsteen's E-street ensemble. I also dig reggae crooners like Dennis Brown. I think that Marley, Brown and a lot of the reggae guys learned a lot from Curtis Mayfield (one of my heroes) as well as from some of the old New Orleans records that my mentor, Lee Allen, played tenor sax on."
- On Christy McWilson: "She's got one of those voices that make me cry."
- "I saw The Clash's first L.A. gig back in '78 or '79 and was absolutely blown away. A very, very tight band especially compared to some of the local punk bands (some might complain that they were too tight but I never saw that as a bad thing) with a great, eclectic range of influences from reggae to R&B. They helped rip down the genre barriers for a while. I didn't keep up with what he was doing for a long time but then I saw one of Joe Strummer's last shows in LA and thought the same thing. An intense, honest performer and a great, devastating songwriter."
- On Bill Morrissey: "I think Bill is one of the greatest songwriters, finger-picking guitarist and low-key vocalists is the world. He can certainly charm you as he's breaking your heart with his lyrics."

One of things Dave mused most about was his songs, songwriting, and his identity as a writer. Fans often asked him about his songs or tried to explain what Dave's songs had meant to them. Many of Dave's most heartfelt responses were about his songs. One example: "Writing songs can get pretty lonely and then playing them in front of people can be very scary, so I find that most songwriters are very appreciative of knowing that their songs have moved someone else so profoundly."

Dave wrote this about the songwriting process: "I do view songwriting as work. Really hard work. Sometimes the only way to get a song is through sweat, discipline and blood. Other times (rare but wonderful times), the songs just appear like an old friend knocking on the front door." And he wrote this about the reward: "This may sound stupid, but I never get tired of playing my songs. Most of them I can't believe I wrote." And this, about judging his own songs: "Well, sometimes I know a song is special as I'm writing it. Sometimes I don't know until I play it for someone I trust. Sometimes I don't know until I play it on stage in front of strangers. I guess what I'm trying to say is that I don't really know." And this, about what songs mean to him: "Sometimes all I have to hear is a song by Big Joe Turner or Lightning Hopkins or Curtis Mayfield or Billy Lee Riley or Fred Neil or Chris Smither, and I feel able to deal with all the crap that we all have to deal with. I'm extremely proud and touched that my songs can have the same effect for you."

It was during the period when Dave's 2004 album Ashgrove was released that Dave was most active on the Q&A. Many fans wrote about his song THE MAN IN THE BED, about Dave's dad's final days, and described their own parents' deaths and how deeply the song connected with them. Dave was plainly touched, writing back to one: "THE MAN IN THE BED is the most personal song I ever wrote but somehow it has struck a deep chord with more people than I ever imagined. The story of your father reminds me of my father (and of close friends that have passed away). I wrote it as an attempt to deal with the pain, anger, sadness, etc, of his final days and his death and knowing that it brings some help to you and your family, well, it is the greatest compliment I can receive."

'You play each gig like it was your first and your last'

Dave was in his 40s when he was answering questions on davealvin.com, having established himself as a solo performer but with a long career still to come. He wrote often about the challenges of a life on the road – and how he couldn't imagine doing anything else. "I hope to keep on the 'touring circuit forever.' Heroes of mine like Lightning Hopkins and Howling Wolf were fortunate enough to do it, so I hope to be as lucky as them," he wrote. He was honest about the financial difficulties many musicians faced – at a time when he could not possibly foresee how streaming would largely replace CDs. "What I don't think most people realize is that most musicians make no money by touring. On a business level, touring is strictly to help promote your music and help to get to people to buy your CDs. The money generated by live performances goes to salaries, motel owners, gasoline companies, insurance companies, rental car companies, etc."

Asked how and why he could keep going, Dave answered with an anecdote about his mentor, the "Boss of the Blues": "Back when I was 13 or 14 years old, my brother, Phil, and I would follow Big Joe Turner, the great blues shouter, from gig to gig. We saw Big Joe perform in a variety of venues and situations, sometimes in front of sold out crowds in a Hollywood music club or in front of several thousand people at some "oldies but goodies" revue show in a theatre or, unfortunately, in a neighborhood joint playing to a handful of listeners. He was always great. If he was singing to a packed house, Big Joe might be a bit more of an entertainer and feed off the crowd's energy, but even in an empty bar on a Sunday night, Big Joe Turner would dig deep into himself and sing like the bar was full of adoring fans."

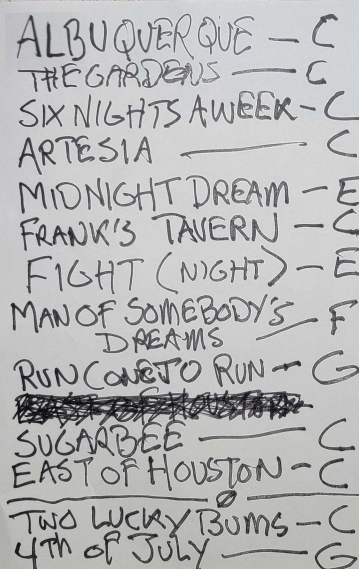
I finally got up the nerve to ask him what it was like singing to thousands one night, to hundreds on the next night and then almost no one on the following night. He gave me a hard-earned and wise answer. "Well, sometimes there's people and sometimes there ain't." He didn't need to say anything else. It may sound corny but what I learned from him was that after all is said and done, you play music and sing songs for the sheer love of it. If you really love it, you play each gig like it was your first and your last, whether there's people or whether there ain't." —*AM*

Dave Alvin Tribute to Chris Gaffney

McCabe's Santa Monica 1/11-12, 2025

Dave Alvin teased a few months earlier on a Facebook post: "I'm excited to tell you that I will be performing a very rare, special tribute concert to my best friend, the late Chris Gaffney at the legendary McCabe's Guitar Shop in Santa Monica, California. Joining me onstage will be musicians who knew and deeply loved Chris and his songs; the brilliant guitarist Danny Ott and world wise keyboardist Wyman Reese (members of Gaffney's veteran back up band, The Cold Hard Facts), plus bassist Gregory Boaz and drummer Steve Mugalian (the current rock solid rhythm section for Mavis Staples and former members of my long running Guilty Men), as well as the soulful singer/songwriter/guitarist Rick Shea (who over the years was a member of both my band and Gaffney's). We'll be playing songs Chris wrote, songs Chris and I co-wrote, songs written about Chris, and songs Chris loved."

"All of us spent thousands of hours traveling the world's highways with Mr. Gaffney, from Tucson to Milan, from seedy joints to swanky dumps, playing music, singing, swearing, messing up, screwing around and seriously creating while laughing constantly. To say that we still love and miss our wild,



ALBUQUERQUE - C
THE GARDENS - C
SIX NIGHTS A WEEK - C
ARTESIA - C
MIDNIGHT DREAM - E
FRANK'S TAVERN - C
FIGHT (NIGHT) - E
MAN OF SOMEBODY'S
DREAMS - F
RUN CORRETO RUN - G
~~THE GARDENS~~
SUGARBEE - C
EAST OF HOUSTON - C
TWO LUCKY BUMS - C
4th of July - G

Photo: Scott Mackdanz

departed comrade would be a gross understatement. So, we're putting on a musical seance to summon Chris's spirit back to the McCabe's stage (where Chris and I performed together for the last time shortly before his death in 2008). Please come and join us on this unique evening for some great songs, fine musicianship, goofball giggles and, yeah, probably a tear or two or three."

The two shows sold out their 125-seat capacity even though the Southern California fires were happening. Dave: "The Gaffney Tribute on the first night was weird because some people wanted us to cancel because of the fires. McCabe's is close to the Pacific Palisades. Ash was falling from the sky like snow. My car was covered in white. There were people at our shows who got evacuation notices. They had to leave. But I felt we were here to heal each other and get through this. By the second night, they had contained the fires and it felt like a better vibe. Playing music is what we do. Musically both nights were great. I added a Hacienda Brothers' song called MIDNIGHT DREAM. It was really nice."

"I've never seen winds like this in Southern California in the city. It never happens. My sister and her husband live in Altadena one block away from the national forest. Their house survived, but all the houses around her were gone including her neighbor who refused to evacuate and died in the house. She doesn't want to go back because all her neighbors are gone. A guy named Doug Anderson who works on my amplifiers lives a mile from there. He refused to evacuate because his garage is filled floor to ceiling with vintage amps that belonged to Frank Zappa and Eddie Van Halen. He stayed on the roof watering it down with a hose. Fortunately, his house survived but his neighbors didn't. Near my house there were floating embers. I posted on Facebook a photo of this large black cloud created by the fires. It was surreal. I just didn't want to cancel the gig. It's how musicians cope, we make noise. The guy at McCabe's said we could cancel, but he said 'we know Dave's audience will show up.' And he was right."

"It was great playing with Steve, Gregory, and Rick. As a tribute to Gaffney we were expecting lots of tears from us. We even put boxes of Kleenex around the stage as a joke. But it didn't have that vibe. It was less mourning and more celebrating. Some emotional moments, but overall, fun." -~~am~~



Photo: Alistair Hunter



Photo: Dave Alvin

2024: Dave Contributes To Three Tribute Albums **— Lowell George — Don Heffington — David Olney —**

Since the release of Tulare Dust: A Songwriters' Tribute to Merle Haggard in 1994, Dave Alvin has been a steady contributor to similar projects. In 2024, he set a personal record with appearances on three tribute albums in the same year. Here's a rundown on his tracks.

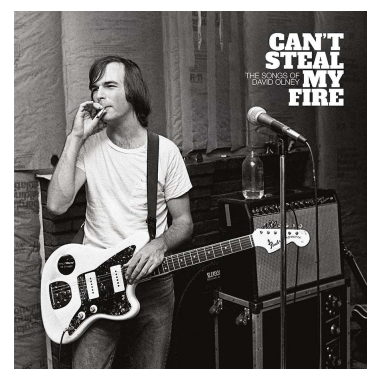
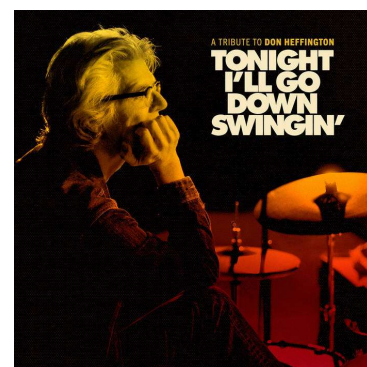
On Long Distance Love – A Sweet Relief Tribute to Lowell George, Dave brings a bemused swagger to “A APOLITICAL BLUES, an early Little Feat song. Eamon Hyland provides the slide guitar work that George, who died in 1979, did on the original. Lyrically, it's a song that recalls mid-60s Bob Dylan and name-checks Chairman Mao and John Wayne.

Tonight I'll Go Down Swingin': A Tribute to Don Heffington is an album close to Dave's heart and a benefit for Sweet Relief, a charity that helps musicians with their medical bills. “I've known Don for 40 years and he was always (and I stress always) an inspiration to me,” Dave posted on Facebook after Heffington's death in 2021.

Dave's performance of AVENUE C alternates spoken word and instrumental passages, with the latter echoing his work with The Third Mind. Michael Jerome, the group's drummer, does similar duty here. Dave's vocals recall his spoken-word performances in the 1980s and early 1990s. At just over eight minutes, it's the longest studio track he's released under his own name.

Dave's rendition of STEAL MY THUNDER on Can't Steal My Fire: The Songs of David Olney would be a good fit on one of his solo albums. It's a bluesy promise of perseverance in the face of long odds. Backed by the Rick Holmstrom Trio, it's a reunion with the one-time Guilty Men rhythm section of bassist Gregory Boaz and drummer Steve Mugalian. Olney died in 2020 and Dave has mentioned they hoped to write a song together but never did. Dave recorded another Olney song for a duet with Anne McCue on DEVIL IN THE MIDDLE on Blue Sky Thinkin, her 2015 solo album. —~~AM~~

By Tom Wilk



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