

ISSUE #99

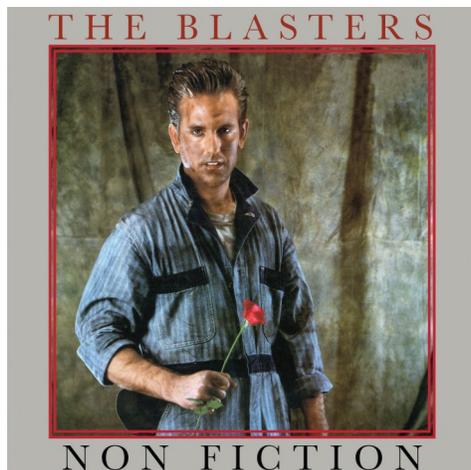
American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

Celebrating 31 Years 1994 — 2025

SEPT. 2025

The Blasters and Dave Alvin Album Releases 2025



LATEST NEWS: – Craft Records will issue *Tulare Dust: A Songwriters' Tribute to Merle Haggard* for the first time on vinyl on Nov. 7. First issued in 1994 by HighTone Records and put together by Tom Russell and Dave Alvin, the album features Dave Alvin's performance of *KERN RIVER*. He also plays lead guitar on Katy Moffatt's version of *I CAN'T BE MYSELF*. Other artists on the album doing Haggard's songs include John Doe, Dwight Yoakam, and Lucinda Williams. **|| |||** Carolyn Wonderland's *Truth Is* (Alligator Records) was released on May 16. Dave Alvin produced the album and plays guitar on four tracks. He also co-wrote three songs: *WHISTLIN' PAST THE GRAVEYARD AGAIN*, *TATTOOS AS HIS TALISMAN*, and *BLUES FOR GENE* a tribute to Blasters pianist Gene Taylor.

In This Issue: The Third Mind's new album, Art Fein remembered, The Blasters re-releases by Liberation Hall Records.

(continued) **II III** Blues guitarist/singer Joe Louis Walker died at 75 on April 30. He was featured along with Dave Alvin, Billy Boy Arnold and Clarence Gatemouth Brown on the Live in Long Beach 1997 album released in 2015 on RockBeat Records. **II III** Country singer Johnny Rodriguez died at 73 on May 9. He recorded Dave Alvin's EVERY NIGHT ABOUT THIS TIME for his You Can Say That Again album on HighTone Records in 1996.
-AM

Liberation Hall Records to release American Music and Non Fiction

For Record Store Day 2025, Liberation Hall released a lavish box set which celebrates the early years of Los Angeles roots-rock legends The Blasters. The five-LP An American Music Story: The Complete Studio Recordings 1979-1985 marked the first time that the band's first four studio albums had been released on vinyl with their original cover art since their original pressings from the 1980s.

Now, two of those albums, American Music (1980) and Non Fiction (1983), will be available individually on LP, CD and digital on November 7, 2025. All configurations will feature liner notes by music journalist and author Chris Morris alongside rare photos and memorabilia images. Both albums replicate their original packaging, with the band's debut album reprinting the front and back covers of its original release on Rollin' Rock Records.

Liberation Hall Releases American Music, November, 2025 -- The debut 13-track album from the American roots rock legends re-released with its original front and back cover, album labels and new liner notes from Chris Morris. The LP was originally released on independent label Rollin' Rock records in 1980. The set is a glimpse into the Blasters beginnings with many covers of songs the band made their own from Bill Haley, Howlin' Wolf and other American music legends. Features the original versions of the band's two most popular classic tracks, MARIE MARIE and the album title track. The groundbreaking album had been re-released by HighTone Records with a new cover and package in 1997 with both configurations unavailable for many years in the US. The album now makes its re-release on vinyl and CD Digi-pack in its original package appearance from 1980. The new liner notes are paired with rare photos and memorabilia only available for this 2025 re-release on an LP insert and 8-page CD booklet. Available on November 7.

Liberation Hall Records Releases Non Fiction, November, 2025 -- The legendary roots-rock band's 1983 album re-released with brand new liner notes and band interviews written by Chris Morris with rare photos and memorabilia images. The new 2025 release recreates the band's third studio album complete with a replica of the inner sleeve with songwriter Dave Alvin's lyrics. The 11-track set features the four core band members - Phil Alvin, Dave Alvin, John Bazz and Bill Bateman accompanied by Gene Taylor, Lee Allen and

Steve Berlin. Includes band classic cuts - LONG WHITE CADILLAC (a hit for Dwight Yoakam in 1989), JUBILEE TRAIN, RED ROSE along with deep track covers of BARE-FOOT ROCK and the Gene Taylor lead vocal on TAG ALONG. The album marked a shift in the band's sound as they incorporated more diverse influences, blending rock, rockabilly, blues, and country elements while still maintaining the energetic roots rock style they were known for. Available on November 7 on vinyl, CD Digi-pack and digital.

These two new releases have adapted excerpts of Chris Morris's box set liner notes that are pertinent to the individual albums as well as some of the rare photos from the box set. American Music will have an inner sleeve with liner notes while Non Fiction will have its original inner sleeve with Dave's lyrics reprinted as well as Chris's liner notes on an insert. The CD versions will have all of the notes and related photos compiled into an 8-page booklet packaged in digi-packs.

Digital singles have been released on those platforms, MARIE MARIE from American Music and IT MUST BE LOVE from Non Fiction. A second set of singles is planned for release at the end of September, ONE MORE DANCE and CRAZY BABY.

Chris Morris tells the Blasters Newsletter: "There is a great demand by the fans for the individual records. The box set sold out the minute it hit the record stores. None of us can get them anymore. So, these individual releases are happening as a response to the enthusiasm of the fans. This is meaningful right now because it renews the interest in important music that came out of Los Angeles in the 1980s. This is the best version of those individual records that can be presented. Unlike the boxset, these are not limited editions. It will stay in print for all who want to listen to good music. —Am

AMERICAN MUSIC
THE BLASTERS



AMERICAN MUSIC
REAL ROCK DRIVE
BAREFOOT ROCK
I DON'T WANT TO
MARIE MARIE
I WISH YOU WOULD
SHE AIN'T GOT THE BEAT
FLATTOP JOINT
CRAZY BABY
NEVER NO MORE BLUES
BUZZ BUZZ BUZZ
SHE'S GONE AWAY
BURN BURNING

PHIL ALVIN - Vocals, Harmonica Guitar
DAVID ALVIN - Lead Guitar
JOHN BAZZ - Bass
BILL MCFEEMAN - Drums

When Phil and Dave Alvin first phoned me saying they had a band doing "rockabilly" type material, I thought to myself "There, everybody starts to be doing it these days!" But a few days later they dropped over at my house and played me a cassette of some of the stuff they'd been doing. I was astounded!

Indeed they were that good. I had in a decade (aside from Ray Charles) that really excited me. A while later I went to see them play in my area then they showed they were the "REAL THING!" The same night that THE BLASTERS are 30 Overalls they have become the favorite band of each other rock 'n' roll obsessive as Ray Charles, James Lee White, Johnny Cash, etc.

The band's style is highly influenced by Skynyrd, Blue Swans, Green, Righteous, Blues, Rhythm and Blues, they show their inspiration from the roots of American music. Phil's sense of melody makes a breath of fresh air to start off the 1980s!

People have often described their style as "Rockabilly," "Blues 'n' Rock," or "Rock 'n' Roll," but when one asks Phil Alvin how he would describe it, he answers "It's a dangly string." AMERICAN MUSIC! Ain't nothing else I can add to that!

Keep on Rockin'!

Rocky Rowley-Dejean !!!

LIB-2116 THE BLASTERS AMERICAN MUSIC LIBERATION HALL



THE BLASTERS



PHIL ALVIN - Vocals, guitar, harmonica
JOHN BAZZ - Bass
DAVE ALVIN - Lead guitar

1. RED ROSE
2. BAREFOOT ROCK
3. BUS STATION
4. ONE MORE DANCE
5. IT MUST BE LOVE
6. JUBILEE TRAIN
7. LONG WHITE CADILLAC
8. FOOL'S PARADISE
9. BOOMTOWN
10. LEAVING
11. TAG ALONG

LEE ALLEN - Tenor sax
GENE TAYLOR - Piano, vocal
BILL BATEMAN - Drums
STEVE BERLIN - Baritone sax



PRODUCED BY THE BLASTERS
Associate producer and engineer: Jim Hall • Second engineer: Steve Grimmel
Recorded in January 1983, at Ocean Way Recording, Los Angeles, CA
Mixed at The Light House Recorders, North Hollywood, CA • Second engineer: Laura Livingston
Art direction and illustration: Hudson Marquez • Photography: Frank Gargani • Manager: Art Fein
Reissue produced by Antoine DeSantis and Chris Morris
Mastering: Randy Perry • Graphic design: Mark Kalmus
LiberationHall.com TheBlasters.com DaveAlvin.net
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LIB-2118 THE BLASTERS NON FICTION LIBERATION HALL

DAVE ALVIN ON THE 3RD THIRD MIND STUDIO ALBUM CALLED . . .

By Billy Davis

Press Release: The Third Mind releases their 3rd Studio Album on September 19, 2025 on Yep Roc Records. The album was recorded live over four days at 64 Sound Recording Studio in Los Angeles,

Right Now! is a master-class in instinct and improvisation by skillful musicians meeting in real time to find the songs as they go. "Everything about this record is intuitive," says GRAMMY award-winning singer songwriter and guitarist and The Third Mind co-founder Dave Alvin.

"It's five musicians walking a tightrope, improvising in dialogue with each other and finding the songs in real time."

What began as a free-form studio experiment between Alvin and Victor Krummenacher (Camper Van Beethoven, Cracker, Monks of Doom, Eyelids), inspired by the spontaneity of Miles Davis' improvisational work, The Third Mind morphed into a supergroup enlisting guitarist David Immerglück (Counting Crows, John Hiatt, Monks of Doom, Camper Van Beethoven), drummer Michael Jerome (Richard Thompson, Better Than Ezra, John Cale), and singer/songwriter Jesse Sykes (Jesse Sykes & The Sweet Hereafter), whose mesmerizing vocal presence Alvin credits as the band's anchor. "To me, Jesse's vocals are the glue that holds this whole thing to-



gether,” says Alvin. “Her voice is so unique, and she sings with such intense introspection that it just sucks you in.”

Like its predecessors, Right Now! draws heavily from the 1960s songbook, reimagining classics with fearless creativity. The unpredictable and engrossing sonic journey is a boundary-blurring blend of psychedelic rock, folk, blues, and soul, featuring expansive, kaleidoscopic take on songs by Elizabeth Cotten, Otis Rush, Pharoah Sanders, and Mimi & Richard Fariña, alongside one standout original: the hauntingly sensual “Before We Said Goodbye,” which channels the atmospheric heights of Jefferson Airplane.

DAVE ALVIN ON THE SONGS OF RIGHT NOW!

SHAKE SUGAREE – Elizabeth Cotton wrote it. She was a fingerpicking guitar player who had been a maid all her life. Late in life in the early '50s and '60s she got discovered. She wrote a classic folk music song called FREIGHT TRAIN and she worked for Pete Seger. She and her kids wrote this song as a nursery rhyme. But it's a very evocative and moody nursery rhyme [laughs]. The songwriter Fred Neil recorded a version in 1965 which is the version that Jesse heard and suggested for this album. Chris Gaffney covered the song as well a few times with the Guilty Men and then after that with his solo band and then the Hacienda Brothers. On every Third Mind album we've done a Fred Neil song. So, this qualifies.

PRETTY POLLY – It's an old standard from the 18th century and there have been many versions. Victor brought that in because he thought Jesse could sing it really well. The reason we credited it as 'traditional arrangement by Judy Collins' is because her version in the late '60s was what we based ours on. Judy's verses was what we used. Victor loved Judy's version. Judy Collins' vocal chops are really good, so for Jesse that might have been intimidating, but on the other hand Jesse started singing and it fell right into place.

BEFORE WE SAID GOODBYE – This was a full 50/50 cowrite by me and Jesse. She had this bouncy little number, but I said that ain't us [laughs]. About the only thing that remained from her first version was the title. So, I wrote all the music and she re-worked the lyrics. We were trying to mix a late '60s San Francisco psychedelic ballad with an R&B ballad like the Stylistics would do or Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes did. Victor joked that we're an R&B band now. Immergluck called and joked we were Jesse Melvin and the Blue Notes [laughs]. I wish it would have been on my Museum of Heart album.

RENO NEVADA – Richard Farina was a songwriter, novelist, and a bit of a hustler in the early folk music scene. He died in a motorcycle crash in Monterey. He was married to Joan Baez's sister. Victor brought the song in. I



Michael Jerome, Dave Alvin, Jesse Sykes, Willie Aron, David Immerglück, and Victor Krummenacher

listened to their records a few years ago looking for a song for us but that one escaped me. I don't really like singing with the Third Mind, but this one really called for it. The original is mainly Richard singing with his wife Mimi doing this bluesy moan vocal effect that I don't care for. I knew that wouldn't work for us. Some people consider this the first folk rock song. The Farinas were dyed-in-the-wool acoustic folkies. It's before Dylan went electric, but they cut it with a full band. But other songs of the Farinas' they would sing in tandem, so I said let's pay tribute to that way they sang, but on this song.

The RENO NEVADA music video was shot in Reno. We were playing the High Sierra Festival and when we finished Jesse and I and Victor met up with a friend of his who is a commercial director, so he filmed us walking around

Reno.

REAP WHAT YOU SOW – Mike Bloomfield produced an album by Otis Rush in 1969 and this song was on there. Jesse wanted to do it, though she wondered if she could sing it. Besides being a great guitar player, Otis Rush is also a great singer. I was blown away that she chose this song. When she talked to me about the song, she wasn't sure how she would approach it. She said, but I'm not a blues shoutin' mama. So I said just imagine your laying in bed with your boyfriend or whatever and you're just whispering to him. You don't have to be Big Joe Turner or Big Mama Thornton or Janis Joplin. Sing it like you would sing a Jesse Sykes song. It came out great. It's funny because people think I'm the one who brings in the blues material. Not in the Third Mind. On the previous album she brought in a Paul Butterfield song called IN MY OWN DREAMS.

DARKNESS DARKNESS – It was a FM hit for the Youngbloods. Victor brought it in and it was much like EAST WEST to Me. I said you can't do a classic like that. No one has ever done EAST WEST and there is a reason. But when we started playing it, I thought why isn't everyone doing this song, It's fun. So I had that same respect for DARKNESS DARKNESS - cause the Youngbloods just nailed it.

On the original the production and performance is perfect. Jesse Colin Young was a great singer. I had recorded the song years ago with Christy

Photo: Emi Ito



McWilson for her second album that I produced. (Bed Of Roses, 2002 HighTone Records). She and I didn't like the way it came out. Christy sang the hell out of it but the way the musicians were taking it, in the long run we didn't like.

When Victor suggested it, I thought it's the perfect song for Right Now. It's about paranoia, fear, mental illness and all that kind of stuff [laughs]. But how could we do it differently? We started playing it and it worked. It suited Jesse's voice. Robert Plant did a good version, but I think hearing a woman's voice sing it, is much more effective. When we cut it, I thought we should make it heavier. The Youngbloods version starts with David Lindley playing fiddle - later known as the great peddle guitar player with Jackson Browne. I said let's make our's full of dread and turn the guitars loose.

THE CREATOR HAS A MASTER PLAN – DARKNESS DARKNESS and this one are all one take straight through. I brought that in. It was written by a tenor sax player named Ferrell (Pharoah) Sanders. It came out around 1969 or 70. I heard it as a kid. It was an underground hit but not in the pop sense. I always loved the song but mainly the idea. This song is a palate cleanser and a spirit renewal song. The singer on the original was very abstract jazz singer named Leon Thomas. He would add yodels in which Jesse wasn't gonna do any of that.

All of the songs on this album the songs were veering dark. SHAKE SUGAREE starts out bittersweet, followed by PRETTY POLLY where the guy kills the girl. Then BEFORE WE SAY GOODBYE is a sad love song leading into the desperation of RENO NEVADA. The next two songs REAP WHAT YOU SOW and DARKNESS DARKNESS are dark just in their titles. I thought the last song needed to pull us out of that mood. When I listen to records, for the first few times I don't listen to songs but I take on a full LP beginning to end. So if you're driving cross country listening to Right Now!, I don't want to make you drive off a cliff [laughs]. Here at the end is some peace, love, and understanding.

Dave Alvin on Jesse Sykes: In Jesse's band, The Sweet Hereafter, she's one of the electric guitar players. She's a really good musician. But in the Third Mind we have two electric guitar players, so she plays acoustic. Just like when I played acoustic in the Guilty Women band, it was because we had Nina Gerber, Cindy Cashdollar and Amy Farris on electric stringed instruments. In the Dave and Phil Alvin band, Phil played acoustic while Chris and I handled electrics. The thing about acoustic guitar in an electric band is that you might not hear it, but you can feel it. When I produced Big Sandy and The Fly-Rite Boys albums, Big Sandy's acoustic guitar was a big part of the band's sound. In the Third Mind, not so much on the first album with Jesse only on a few songs, but the rest of the albums, we're all playing to Jesse. She sets the tempo. Most songs are started by her and we follow.

She doesn't do up tempo [laughs] on her records, they're very slow. These are peppy compared to hers [laughs]. I think her voice and guitar make us sound unique compared to other jam bands. Other bands don't worry about the voice and lyrics because they're all about "Look. We're jammin!" We look at it as "We're jammin,' but with these great songs with a unique singer." If we had a more traditional singer, songs could easily be over-sung especially a song like DARKNESS DARKNESS. Here we have an intimate vocal that feels like it's being whispered in your ear.

Her finger picking is great. She can calm the band down like on EAST WEST. For the long instrumental sections, she could leave the stage and come back after a rest, but she doesn't. She stays there and falls in with the band and even leads us in certain directions. She will shoot me a look occasionally to direct me.

Third Mind Songs Live: Earlier this year we were doing songs from the album DARKNESS, CREATOR, POLLY, and SHAKE SUGAREE. We haven't done RENO live yet. Well do a mix of all three records. GROOVIN, IN MY OWN DREAMS, and SALLY GO ROUND THE ROSES are staples in the set. The shows are very trance-like throughout the regular set. It's not until the encore that we do a more traditional song like HIGHWAY 61. That's the only time it looks like a Dave Alvin show.

The New Recording Studio: 64 Sound Recording is in Island Park only ten minutes from my house. It's a huge room that has been around since the '70s. The owner bought it and restored it to be state of the art modern, but it reminds me of the studios of old. It feels like 1980. The only thing missing is the ash trays [laughs]. The room is big enough that all of the band could fit in there to record live and play off each other. There's a lot of sound bleed in mics from other instruments, but we wanted it like that. They offered to put my amp in an isolation booth, but I said no, I want to feel that amp right next to me and the sound hitting me. That's the way it was recording records in the old days. I'm looking forward to working there a lot in the future. My producer Craig Parker Adams loved it and called it his dream studio. — *Am*



Right Now! Is available from Yep Roc Records on CD, Vinyl, and digital.

Art Fein

June 17, 1946 – July 30, 2025

by Randy Lewis

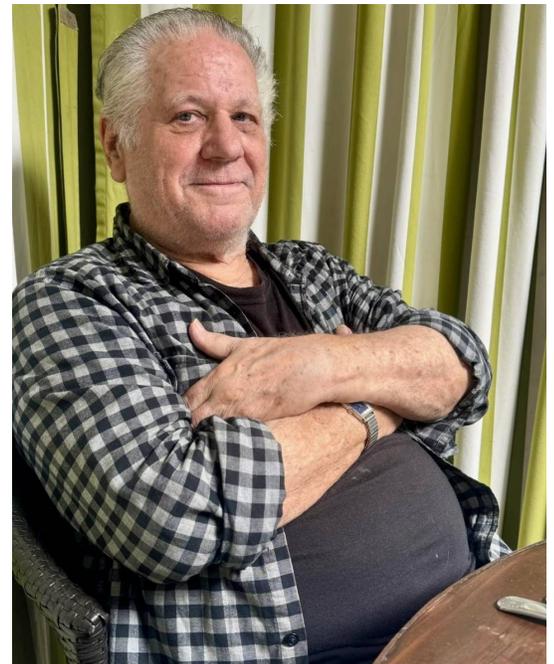
All photos courtesy of the Art Fein Estate

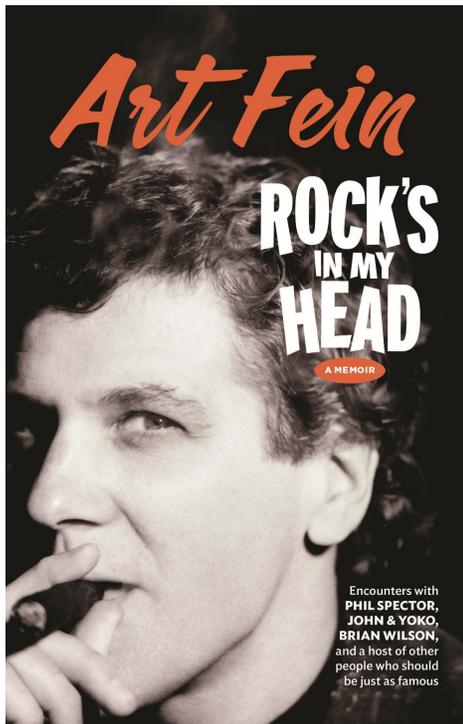
Most people have a friend or acquaintance they like to introduce as a musical know-it-all. When John Lennon says you are someone who “knows everything about music,” it means something. Those were the words Lennon used to introduce his new friend Art Fein to fabled record producer Phil Spector when the three met in Los Angeles in the early-1970s. Lennon and Fein quickly bonded over a shared love for early rock ‘n’ roll, R&B and blues music when they had met at Capitol Records in Hollywood, where Fein was employed doing college promotion for the label’s artists.

It was one of hundreds of examples in which his unflagging passion for music won him the affection of those he encountered through decades as a music journalist, record company publicist, talent manager, public-access television show host and other hats he wore until his death on July 30 at age 79. Fein died of heart failure while recuperating from surgery for a broken hip, according to longtime friend Cliff Burnstein, co-founder of Q Prime Management.

“Back in the early days of The Blasters, when few outside of Rollin' Rock Records knew or cared who we were, Art cared deeply,” Blasters co-founder, chief songwriter and lead guitarist Dave Alvin wrote shortly after news of Fein’s death circulated through the music community last week. “In late 1979/early 1980, I was a wannabe poet working as a fry cook in Long Beach,” Alvin recalled. “I was also a clumsy guitar basher in a R&B combo from Downey who was beginning to write songs for my brother [Phil] to sing. One of those songs was called ‘Marie Marie.’ Long story short: Art Fein played ‘Marie’ to a Welsh rock ‘n’ roll singer named Shak-in' Stevens, who quickly recorded my song and made it into a huge international hit (everywhere except the US of A). Thanks to Art Fein (and the ensuing BMI royalty checks), I was soon able to quit my job as a cook and pursue music, songwriting and rockin' n' rollin' full time. I can never, ever thank you enough for all you did for me, Art,” Alvin wrote. “Especially for ending my career as a fry cook.”

Others whose lives and careers were touched by Fein’s abiding passion for spirited music of all stripes promptly conjured examples of the special place he holds in their hearts. “Back in ‘94 when I was touring with Butch Hancock in Europe, I took a bad fall, at the end of our month-long tour,” singer-songwriter-guitarist Rosie Flores said a day after his death. “I slipped in the rain on a cobblestone street in London and severely broke my wrist. Three months later I was invited to sing at the Elvis [annual birthday] bash at The House of Blues. With metal bars and screws on my arm holding a [mike], I was able to sing my three Elvis





songs. No guitar for several months. It was normal protocol to donate all the money from the proceeds of the show and give it to an organization or a charity,' Flores said. "This year, Art surprised me and handed me a stack of money to the tune of \$1,500 for my medical bills. I didn't expect that at all [and] it brought tears to my eyes. I felt the love."

She referenced a tribute to Elvis Presley held in Los Angeles each year on or around his Jan. 8 birthday. The event had been started by roots-rocker James Intveld in the mid-'80s and was hosted for at least a couple of decades by Fein, who also frequently helped corral talent for the show, whose proceeds, as Flores noted, typically went to charity. Presley was the Big Bang for Fein's lifelong love of rock 'n' roll, as he noted in his 2022 memoir, 'Rock's in My Head.'

"On Jan. 6, 1957, when I was 10, I accidentally caught what I'd later learn was Elvis Presley's third and final appearance on 'The Ed Sullivan Show,'" he wrote. "My life changed in a lightning bolt. Who was this side-burned Pied Piper from outer space with slick black hair like Superman, and just as handsome? ...What was this music? This was rock 'n' roll!...Suddenly I craved records, and as usual, my parents indulged my enthusiasm to the degree that they were able. This was in Logan Square, a working-class Jewish neighborhood northwest of Chicago,

where Arthur David Fein was born June 17, 1946 and adopted at birth by Sam and Lillian Fein. Art said he never knew, or sought, information about his birth mother or father "because it seemed ungrateful—and one set of parents was enough."

Much of his young life revolved about trying to acquire the latest hits he discovered on the radio, or by reading about them in any of a number of publications that catered to the new generation of young music fans. "I compiled 20 Elvis scrapbooks," he wrote in 'Rock's in My Head.' "When I left for college, I tossed them out in a fit of maturity. Who knew the maturity wouldn't last?" Describing himself as a good student, Fein persuaded his mother to accompany him to a rock 'n' roll concert in Chicago headlined by Chuck Berry. He was 10. The bill also included Little Brenda Lee, Eddie Cochran, the Collins Kids and the Everly Brothers. Fein mentioned that show a decade later to Phil Everly, who asked him "First or second set?" Fein replied "First. I was only 10 years old." Everly told him, "Far out. That was our first show by ourselves, as the Everly Brothers. Two nights before we were still with our family on the Grand Ole Opry."

He missed a live appearance in Chicago by Presley a few months later but was back in the house the following December for another rock 'n' roll revue, this one featuring Sam Cooke, Lloyd Price and the incendiary Jerry Lee Lewis. "I'd already caught him on TV," Fein noted, "but seeing him in person was something else again. If Elvis was God, Jerry Lee Lewis was the Prince of Darkness. This blond guy came out, eased into 'Whole Lotta Shakin',' and pretty soon he was pounding the piano maniacally. He tore off his white shirt to reveal a purple satin one underneath, a senseless action that I considered one of the greatest things I'd ever seen."

After graduating high school in 1963, he entered the University of Illinois, Chicago. "I studied not, flunked out, and went to work in an office, sorting and filing I didn't know what. My attitude toward college," he said, "was



'What for?' I had an alternative plan—listening to music for the rest of my life." Yet, he returned to higher education—first a brief stint at a junior college, but then the University of Colorado, Boulder, where he graduated at the end of the '60s with a degree in journalism. It was in Colorado he met and befriended Chuck Weiss, immortalized more than a decade later by singer-songwriter Rickie Lee Jones in her breakthrough 1979 hit "Chuck E's in Love."

He had come to appreciate '60s rock icons such as Bob Dylan and The Beatles, but not in the way he had idolized Presley, Berry, Lewis and the original class of rock

'n' rollers. At one point during his years in Boulder, he and his girlfriend lived in the Victorian apartment that would become famous as the Mork and Mindy house during that sitcom's hit run from 1978-82.

Writing freelance music reviews and other articles when he could, he moved to California in 1971, lived for a couple of years south of Santa Cruz before heading further south to Los Angeles. There he settled in and landed his first job in the record industry thanks to Ken Sasano, a classmate from the University of Colorado who had gone to work for Capitol Records. "The city had captured me when I was 15, on a cross-country road trip with my parents," he remembered. "Great weather, spacious homes with swimming pools, hot rods on the streets, things for teens to do. 'Why do we live in Chicago!?' I'd cried."

It was during the brief stint at Capitol in the label's newly created college promotion department when he forged an unlikely friendship with Lennon and Yoko Ono. He was tasked with coordinating interviews with college radio stations for Ono's latest album, 'Approximately Infinite Universe.' Inconceivable as it was for one of the titans of rock music to meet with a recently-hired low-on-the-totem-pole college promotion guy, Fein brought Lennon and Ono to his cubby-hole office decorated with photos of Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Eddie Cochran and several of Capitol's early rockabilly stars including Wanda Jackson and Gene Vincent. "This is my kind of music," Lennon said with a smile. Fein spent a week coordinating interviews promoting Ono's record – and talking obsessively with Lennon about early rock records. At one point, Lennon quipped that if he'd known and had access to all the music Fein had introduced him to earlier in life, he might have been content to become a grocer and just listen to rock 'n' roll day in and day out.

But less than a year after Fein was hired, Capitol eliminated the college promotion department and Fein with it. He then freelanced music articles to the Los Angeles Times, Herald-Examiner, Billboard, Record World and Los Angeles Free Press for a time before being hired as music editor at Variety. "By the time I got this job, I was sick of the new, aggravating profession of rock criticism," he recalled. "It was about writers, not the music. I wasn't inter-





ested in being terribly critical. I was an advocate. I wanted to help the music along; rock critics wanted to help their sense of superiority.”

Fein’s allegiance was to music, not personalities, even as much as he worshipped Presley. That could lead to some surprises. “I liked the Carpenters a little,” he confessed in his memoir, “but the 1972 song ‘Goodbye to Love’ was something else altogether. I considered it Richard Carpenter’s Phil Spector song—not similar in style, but powerful, with a nice melody, a stirring mid-tempo pace, and a sign-off with an unexpected guitar exercise that finished the song in a long, exhilarating solo that held little connection

to the ballad. This was a thrilling oddity.” His catholic tastes extended to the roots music of Louisiana, and he became a cheerleader for “The King of Zydeco” Clifton Chenier, urging anyone and everyone who came into his orbit to join him for treks to Verbum Dei High School in South Central L.A., Chenier’s preferred venue when he performed in Southern California.

He lasted a little more than a year at Variety, was fired and returned to freelance writing and hanging out in clubs soaking up more music. All along he’d been a frequent habitue of the Palomino, the North Hollywood club that was the most important country music venue on the West Coast. As it turned out, Fein also was an earnest fan of country music outlaws such as Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson, Gary Stewart and rock’s original bad-boy-turned country-music hitmaker, Jerry Lee Lewis.

For a time after being dismissed at Variety, he found work at an unemployment office, which lasted less than a year. In 1977 he was hired as a publicist for Elektra/Asylum Records, then one of the most respected labels for its roster of esteemed artists that included Joni Mitchell, Jackson Browne, Linda Ronstadt, Tom Waits, the Eagles and others. Or, as Fein thought of them, “not my rockin’ cup of tea, but good.” He was charged chiefly with writing artist biographies, but also worked as liaison with writers at the trade publications Billboard, Cash Box and Record World. As in most jobs he held for whatever duration, he continued to be a regular presence at those, and other musicians’ shows most nights of the week. That was pivotal year for Fein, not only on the career front, but because it also was the year Presley died. He lasted barely a year at Elektra/Asylum, let go after a label executive informed him, “You’re just not fitting in with the team.” Fein noted in retrospect, “That would be my last full-time job. Ever.” Nevertheless, he shortly landed another gig doing publicity at Casablanca Records, then red-hot for its disco hits, but further yet from Fein’s musical cup of tea.

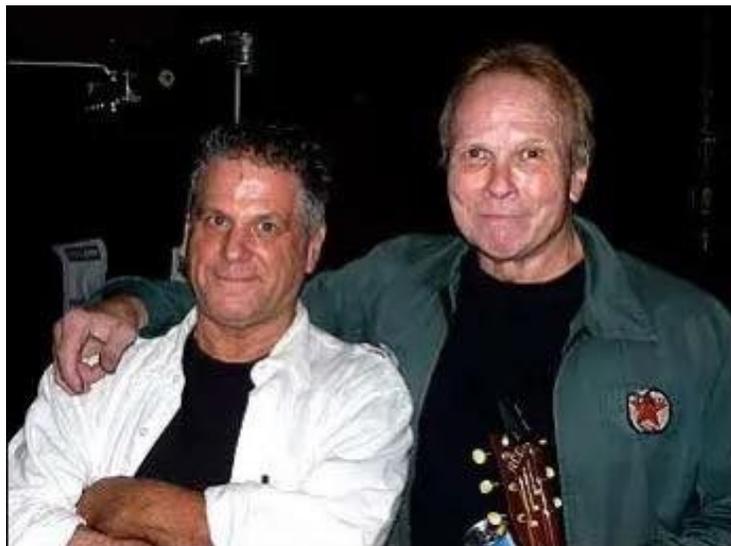
“A cold atmosphere, with no fun and plenty of flash, and nobody needed me for nuthin’,” he wrote. “I sat wondering what I should do. My small office had no windows, and I didn’t need to be there to write, so I took four-hour lunches, my field of expertise.” In an-



other unlikely turn of events, Fein became friends with one of Casablanca's acts, Randy Jones, aka the Cowboy from Village People. But fairly soon he was let go from Casablanca too. The day after being sacked, he tagged along on a UK tour with a minor rockabilly figure from the '50s, Ray Campi, who was in the early stages of a career renaissance in the late-1970s with his fiery band of young acolytes, the Rockabilly Rebels, who definitely were Fein's speed. "I hopped on the bus with them and had the time of my life," Fein remembered.

Campi was among several acts with whom Fein next tried his hand as talent manager. That group would go on to include the earliest iteration of the Blasters, the roots rock group started by Downey-based siblings Dave and Phil Alvin, psychobilly group the Cramps, and a punk pop band that had begun causing a stir in and around Hollywood with its vibrant live shows, the Heaters. Fein embraced his passion for niche roots music forms as the '80s arrived and unfolded and a roots-rock renaissance blossomed in Los Angeles side-by-side with the punk rock explosion erupting in various metropolitan regions around the world.

In L.A. this community soon included transplants such as Kentucky native Dwight Yoakam, Louisiana-born singer-songwriter Lucinda Williams as well as homegrown acts such as punk rock band X and its rootsy spinoff, the Knitters, along with the Blasters, Los Lobos, Rosie Flores, the Plimsouls, James Intveld, the Rockin' Rebels, the Red Devils,



Extremely sad hearing of the passing of Art Fein.

Dave Alvin—July 31, 2025

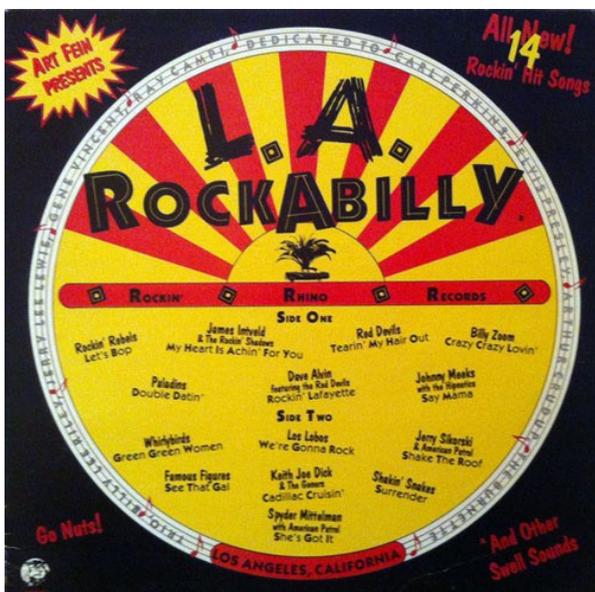
There is so much to say about Art. A music journalist, a passionate (though always nicely cynical) true believer in rock and roll, rockabilly and other raw creations, a sometime band manager/advocate for The Cramps, The Blasters and other notable groups, a public access television host (check out his old Little Art's Poker Party shows on YouTube), a sneaky photographer and a complicated friend. I'll save the details for the eventual memoir but for now, I'll just say a belated, sincere thank you to Art, for everything he did for The Blasters and me.

Back in the early days of The Blasters, when few outside of Rollin' Rock Records knew or cared who we were, Art cared deeply.

In late 1979/early 1980, I was a wannabe poet working as a fry cook in Long Beach. I was also a clumsy guitar basher in a r+b combo from Downey who was beginning to write songs for my brother to sing. One of those songs was called Marie Marie.

Long story short: Art Fein played Marie to a Welsh rock and roll singer named Shakin' Stevens, who quickly recorded my song and made it into a huge international hit (everywhere except the US of A). Thanks to Art Fein (and the ensuing BMI royalty checks), I was soon able to quit my job as a cook and pursue music, songwriting and rock-in' n' rollin' full time.

I can never, ever thank you enough for all you did for me, Art. Especially for ending my career as a fry cook. Rock In Peace!



the Wild Cards and dozens more. Many of those acts were featured on an album's worth of the best area neo-rockabilly music that Fein assembled and released in 1983 under the title (Art Fein Presents) The Best of L.A. Rockabilly. The LP became something of a musical bible for younger roots-music converts who now were often sharing bills with hardcore punk groups such as Fear, Circle Jerks and Orange County's Social Distortion. Although Fein had nominally shifted into talent management, "Nobody paid me," he pointed out. "I was happy to sit in my hot, stuffy living room getting into people's problems and dispensing advice."

That scenario was a rough blueprint of what would become one of the defining – and longest-lasting – facets of his life: a public access cable TV show called 'Lil Art's Poker Party,' which featured conversation and performances with most of his favorite musicians, aspiring and seasoned, as well as his circle of quirky friends in and adjacent to the music business. The show continued for 24 years.

Rhino Records co-founder Richard Foos recalled that "For years we had a weekly poker game either at his house or mine. I was there the night [music critic] Lester Bangs was playing. We started the first hand, started talking music, and never played another hand, which led to the creation of Lil Art's Poker Party." According to his longtime friend and fellow music writer Todd Everett, "The way I heard it, the name came from a Chicago TV show called Little Wally's Polka Party [aka Polka Party with Li'l Wally]. Then the places he was taping it – various cable facilities, depending on what was available -- started getting touchy about the cigars people were smoking, and that whole concept became Art Fein's Poker Party, sans props and decor."



"One of my fondest memories of Art was playing on that show," said Chip Kinman, veteran roots rocker and founding member with his brother Tony of influential bands including the Dils, Rank And File, Cowboy Nation and Blackbird among others. "When we played on the Poker Party, it was just great," he said. "We sat on this couch, and Tony had it all figured out and it was just so much fun. Art really got what we were trying to do with Cowboy Nation, and I had profound respect for him for that."

Flores also was among the roots music stalwarts Fein brought onto his show. "He made sure that the people that were going to be on his show, were smart people that knew about the music, and he just did such a great job," Flores said. "We could get on television, you know, and we weren't famous people – a lot of us weren't famous – but we were cool, and he would give us airtime and who else was doing that?" she said. "Nobody." He extended performance platforms to musicians he admired at the annual Elvis Birthday Bash, held at numerous clubs and theaters around Los Angeles for more than four decades.

Even more ambitiously, perhaps, he and a group of entertainment-biz pals including singer-songwriter Jerry "Swamp Dogg" Williams, Bob Merlis, Gene Sculatti, Bill Liebowitz and Dick Blackburn banded together in 1978 to stage the first of what turned into a handful of stellar New Year's Eve gatherings over the next half dozen years. They booked many of their favorite vintage rock 'n' roll, R&B and soul performers including Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Darlene Love, Roy Brown, Swamp Dogg, Ray Campi & His Rockabilly Rebels, and Cannibal & the Headhunters, along with latter-day favorites such as the Blasters, Joe "King" Carasco & the Crowns, the Beat Farmers and Ronnie Mack & the Black Slacks, all of whom helped usher in a new year for a select group of invited guests. Notably, Tom Waits met his second wife Kathleen Brennan at the second of these events, dubbed Mambo Beat '80. When Love headlined the Panic at PJ's '82 edition, it was her first performance after a years-long hiatus from playing live and the first live performance ever of "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)," which subsequently became an annual highlight of Late Night with David Letterman.



Along the way, Fein fashioned his Hollywood apartment into something of a time capsule from the '50s, so meticulously and authentically appointed that it needed little tweaking for its use as a set in Paul Bartel's 1982 cult classic film *Eating Raoul*, as well as for cover photos of two Rhino Records' "Rockin' Christmas" compilations of holiday music from the '50s and '60s, respectively.

The license plate to his long-running VW Beetle read "SOFEIN," and he made up business cards to inform recipients with whom they were dealing: "Art Fein—Still Photographer....Still a Writer." True to his word, in 1990, Fein published his book *The L.A. Musical History Tour: A Guide to the Rock and Roll Landmarks of Los Angeles*. A 136-page compendium of nearly 250 locations, the book guides readers not only to gravesites of seminal rock, blues and R&B stars such as Roy Orbison, the Burnette Brothers, Eddie Cochran, Ritchie Valens, Gene Vincent and T-Bone Walker, but sites where Sam Cooke, Janis Joplin, Marvin Gaye, Tim Hardin, Dennis Wilson and Darby Crash died. In addition, there are cheerier entries on places the Beatles stayed while performing

in Los Angeles, the favorite music community hangout of Canter's Deli, the "Rock and Roll Denny's" and the Hollywood Mercedes Benz dealership where Elvis reportedly bought six Mercedes for friends during a single visit in 1970.

In 2022, he published his memoir 'Rock's in My Head,' choosing a title that toyed with a grammar police bugaboo against the misplaced use of possessive apostrophes—in Fein's case, of course, it was employed correctly. On social media in recent years, he would rail about and routinely correct any misuse of the word "cover" to refer to a performance or recording of a song other than the original version. A "cover," he insisted, invoking the original usage, was a competing recording meant to "cover" or overshadow the original and thus steal sales. Subsequent recordings were more accurately, and simply, called "versions."

Beginning in the mid-1970s, with the Lennon-Ono friendship as a springboard, Fein also developed and maintained what he called a complicated relationship with producer Phil Spector, another of his biggest heroes from the early days of rock 'n' roll. It was, after all, Spector to whom Lennon had introduced Fein all those years ago as the man who "knows all about music." Later, Fein became part of Spector's inner circle, even into his dark, deeply troubled years when he was charged with, and later convicted of, murdering House of Blues hostess Lana Clarkson. Fein maintained contact with the fallen recording legend after he was sen-



tenced to life in prison. "I wrote to him 15 times when he was in prison and never got an answer," Fein pointed out in his memoir. "By the time he died, on January 16, 2021, at the age of 81, I had completed my mourning." A good chunk of *Rock's in My Head* explores their relationship in greater depth.

Almost to a person, musicians who engaged with Fein through the years praised the purity of his passion for music, his kindness and generosity, and his dedication to helping musicians further their careers in whatever ways he could. "It felt like he was a connection between all the bands," Rosie Flores said shortly after his death. "If there was somebody that you could think of that would be like a wire that would run through all the roots bands that were somewhere between country, R&B and rockabilly, he was the guy."

In the final word of his memoir, Fein saved others from needing to invent an epitaph. He noted that "I can't say anything terribly pithy or canny about the state of record sales, or streaming, or new delivery systems. Or how YouTube or TikTok are shaping contemporary music. Frankly, I stopped following the details of commerce quite a while back.

"It turns out I didn't want to be in the music business; I wanted to be in the music," he wrote. "There I remain."

Fein is survived by his beloved daughter Jessie, his wife Jennifer, and a host of family and friends who loved and will miss him dearly.

-- **Randy Lewis covered pop music for the Los Angeles Times from 1981-2020 and for Cash Box Magazine from 1976-1979. --- For more on Art Fein and his writings visit sofein.com**

Sax appeal: The Blasters add brass to their sound

By Tom Wilk and Billy Davis

As part of the Los Angeles music scene in the early 1980s, the Blasters had a component that set them apart from such contemporaries as X and the Go-Gos. The two-man horn section of Lee Allen (tenor saxophone) and Steve Berlin (baritone saxophone) allowed the group to expand its musical range on recordings and in concert.

Lee had been the featured soloist on many Fats Domino and Little Richard hits of the 1950s and had briefly toured with the Rolling Stones in 1981. A native of the Philadelphia area, Steve played in bands along the Jersey Shore as a teenager and with a later version of the Soul Survivors before heading west to California.

Lee provided the impetus for the Blasters to supplement their sound with horns, Dave Alvin told the *American Music* newsletter: "Lee Allen called and said, 'I hear you are making a record. What am I playing on?' Dave recalled, with a laugh. 'I said, 'Oh, yeah. You're playing on a bunch of songs. Then I wrote HOLLYWOOD BED for Lee. SO LONG BABY GOODBYE had already been rehearsed without Lee, but I was thinking horns would be great on it,' Dave said.



“Our first idea was sax and harmonica. Sort of like, and for lack of a better example, in the band War they did that. So, I thought that lick would be great with sax and harmonica. I did that pairing again on Museum of Heart.”

Steve’s addition to the band came about as a result of a fortuitous phone call. Dave sets the scene. “We knew Steve around town and we really needed a baritone sax, especially on I’M SHAKIN’,” Dave remembered.

Steve filled in the details in a 2019 interview with the American Music newsletter. “I got a call when I was working at a music store called Bettman’s Music,” he recalled. “Dave Alvin said: ‘We’re having a recording session tonight for a song called I’M SHAKIN’. Do you wanna play baritone sax on it?’ “I didn’t own a baritone, but as I was on the phone, I looked at one in the store, and told him ‘Yes, I have one right here.’ It was in a case and I hadn’t even looked to see if it was even in there – much less ever played one before. But that’s the one I played at the session, then at live shows with the Blasters. I still own that baritone. It was a very special horn that was built in the 1930s, then retrofitted in the 1950s, with extra bracing for traveling. There’s no other horn like that one.”

The horn section made its studio debut with three songs on the Blasters’ self-titled album in 1981. The saxophones add punch and serve as an instrumental chorus of I’M SHAKIN, a version of the 1960 single by Little Willie John. The horns provide a New Orleans flavor to the rollicking HOLLYWOOD BED and give a sense of urgency to SO LONG BABY GOODBYE.

Over There: Live at the Venue, London, the 1982 EP, provided an outlet to show what the Blasters sounded like in concert. KEEP A KNOCKIN’ is a spirited performance of Little Richard’s Top 10 hit. On ROLL ‘EM PETE, a tune popularized by Big Joe Turner, the saxophones take center stage alongside Gene Taylor’s energetic piano playing. It stands as a highlight of the group’s concert recordings.

Two performances from the Venue surfaced in the 21st century. WALKING WITH MR. LEE was released in 2002 on Testament: The Complete Slash Recordings. The band revisits Lee’s Top 60 Billboard hit from 1958 and it remains the sole instrumental released by the Blasters. THESE ARMS OF MINE saw the light of day in 2024 on Over There: Live at the Venue, London – The Complete Concert and shows Phil Alvin emulating soul man Otis Redding with a Stax-styled horn section.

Non Fiction, the 1983 studio album, features horns on four of its 11 songs. BAREFOOT ROCK finds the band redoing a song from their American Music album. The addition of saxophones follows the instrumentation on the original version by Little Junior Parker and his band in 1958.

ONE MORE DANCE and FOOL’S PARADISE are mid-tempo songs of ruefulness and regret. LEAVING, which Dave has described as a “Late Night Ballad for Jerry Butler,” shows the soulful side of the band, with horn parts that provide a musical balm.

JUSTINE, an outtake from the Non Fiction sessions, was released on The Blasters Collection in 1990. Originally done by Don and Dewey in 1958, the song features Phil Alvin and John Doe trading vocals on a full-throttle rocker with horn support.

Streets of Fire, the 1984 film directed by Walter Hill, featured the seven-man lineup



performing two songs onscreen and on the soundtrack album. BLUE SHADOWS is a world-weary rocker that captures the essence of Tom Cody, the character played by Michael Pare. ONE BAD STUD recalls the band's rhythm & blues roots in a number written by Leiber and Stoller that was first recorded in 1954 by the Honey Bears, a doo-wop group.

Hard Line, the last studio album with the original lineup, featured the five-man band. However, two songs recorded with horns during the sessions eventually saw release. KATHLEEN surfaced on The Blasters Collection. At nearly five minutes in length, it's the longest studio track released by the band and spotlights the saxophones in the second half of the song. CAN'T STOP TIME, released on Testament in 2002 features a spirited interplay between the horns and Dave's guitar.

One studio track with horns remains unreleased. JUNGLE SOLDIER, recorded during the sessions for Hard Line, has echoes of DON'T YOU JUST KNOW IT, released by Huey "Piano" Smith and the Clowns in 1958. JUNGLE SOLDIER was considered for and rejected for inclusion on Testament. Dave spoke candidly about the reasons in Issue #34 of the American Music newsletter. "That is the worst song I ever wrote and the only tape of it we could find was an awful '80s rough mix with 'big drums.' Perhaps, if the original master tapes are found someday, it will come out. A great Lee Allen solo, though!"



Photo: Gary Leonard

Forty years after the release of Hard Line, Dave reflected on the decision not to include any songs with horns on the album. "I still say it was Warner Brothers who got rid of the horns on the Hard Line album. It was not our decision," Dave said.

Were there any songs that didn't work that you tried horns on? "No, each song was written with horns in mind, so we know from the beginning what songs would work," Dave noted. "I will say there are songs I regret not recording with horns. THE BIG F CHORD is one of them. That would have been great with Lee and Steve on it." The Blasters did release that song under the title of CRYIN' FOR MY BABY on the live Trouble Bound album in 2002.

Other horn players occasionally backed up the Blasters on tour. On April 13, 1985, Marcus Johnson substituted for Steve at a show at Park West in Chicago. The concert aired live on WXRT-FM.

Jerry Jumonville also played saxophone with the Blasters. Dave provided the details. "I hired Jerry as Steve's possible replacement and he did one East Coast tour and a few West Coast gigs. Great player from New Orleans. Lee was his hero. A nice guy. Sadly, he wasn't really a rock and roller and didn't fit in overall." Jerry, who died at 78 in 2019, had a long career and backed up such artists as Delaney & Bonnie, Bette Midler, and Rod Stewart.

In concert, the Blasters occasionally featured songs with horns that never received an official release. With Hollywood Fats on guitar in his first show as a Blaster, the band performed a celebratory version of

Sam Cooke's HAVING A PARTY at the Palace in Los Angeles on June 7, 1986. At the Palace on Dec. 26, 1986, Dave Alvin rejoined the Blasters for the band's first show after the death of Hollywood Fats. A rousing CALIFORNIA SUN with horns was the final song of the evening.

More than a decade after Lee's death in 1994, Steve paid tribute to his fellow saxophonist. "Lee will always be my hero," Steve recalled in a 2007 interview, acknowledging him as a mentor and influence. "I will always owe the Blasters for life."

—AM



THE BLASTERS: An American Music Story: The Complete Studio Recordings 1979-1985

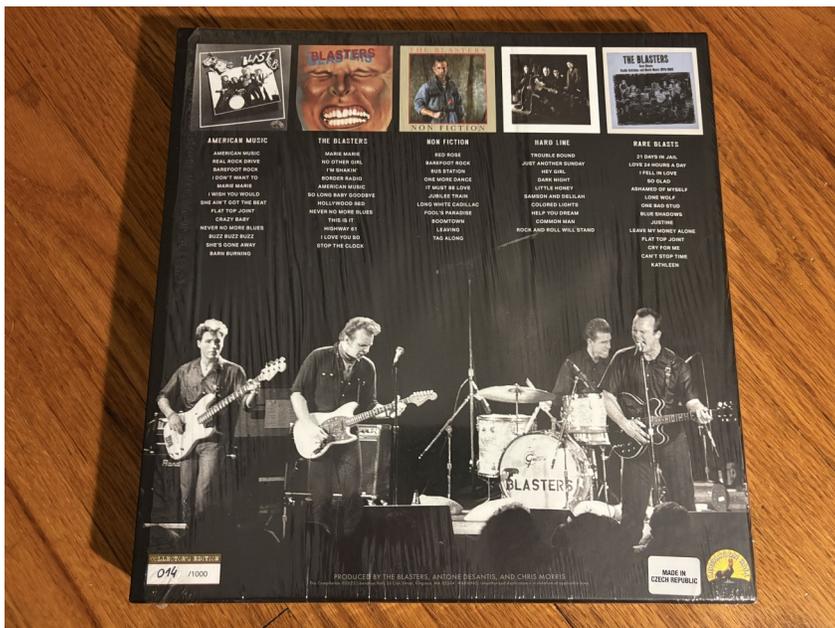
By Billy Davis

On RECORD STORE DAY April 12, 2025, Liberation Hall Records released a vinyl only 5-LP collection of the Blasters first four studio albums and a bonus disc entitled Rare Blasts: Studio Outtakes and Movie Music 1980-1985. The deluxe hard slipcase is individually numbered and limited to a pressing of 1000. Each LP is an exact replica of the original 1980s pressing including lyric sheet inserts.

Also included is a 24 page 12 X 12 sized 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. All told it includes 73 photos. For Blasters collectors, this booklet is the real prize. The writing by Chris Morris of the 1980-85 period in the Blasters history takes the reader right back to that time. The photo collection accompanying the essay features many rare and never before seen images. The box also includes a replica 12X18 promo poster for the Non Fiction album from 1983 that resembles a movie theater poster.

The set was produced by the Blasters, Antone DeSantis of Liberation Hall Records, and Chris Morris. Liberation Hall Records project manager DeSantis recalls, "Part of Liberation Hall's agreement with the Blasters in March 2023 was for all of the Slash recordings, plus the Rollin' Rock record, to be re-





leased as a box set. We originally thought we'd release all 10 previous released songs from the London venue show that appeared on the Testament set. We started working first on the Mandatory best of collection and realized in the archives we had the full Venue concert. We pitched the concept of an April Record Store Day release, but missed the deadline, so we scheduled The Complete Live at the Venue for Record Store Day's Black Friday and that moved the release of the box set to the April 2025 Record Store Day."

Chris Morris oversaw the artwork, inclusion of photos and wrote the new essay

for the 24-page book. "I couldn't wait for the world to hear this and read the book. It was really tough, because I had to write all the copy and organize the photos. Joel Aparicio shot the cover photo taken at the Hollywood Palladium of the fans all reaching their hands towards Phil. When I saw that photo, I knew it was gonna be great. Originally, it was to be on the back of the box, but when Dave Alvin and his manager Nancy (Sefton) saw it, they said, That has to be the front cover."

Chris continues, "The Dave shot on the booklet is of course the photo from the original Live At the Venue EP, but it is the original unedited photo. Gary Leonard who shot that, after many years was able to find the negative, that was thought lost. He captured that from a show at the University of Irvine in March of 1982. I was very involved in putting this together and right now the Blasters fanboy in me is very happy."

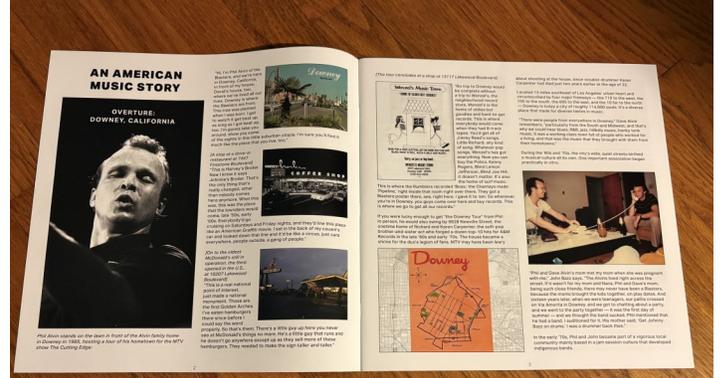
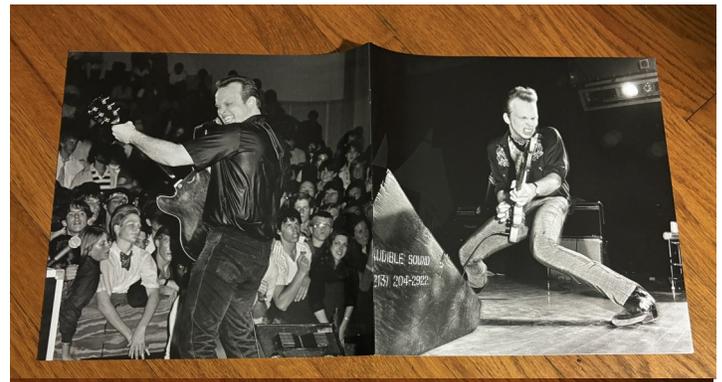
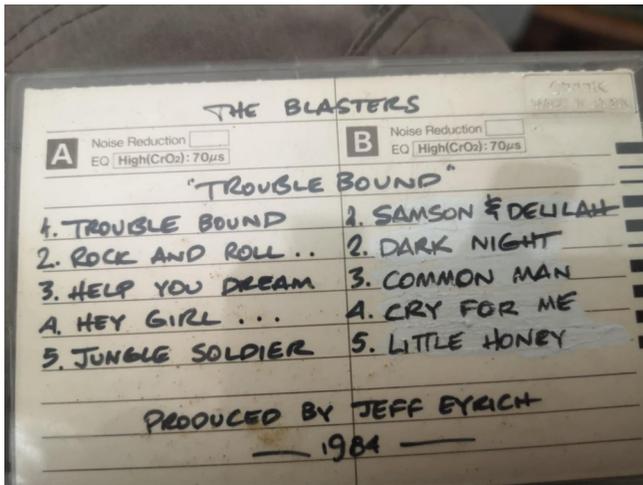
Antonio DeSantis adds, "It was great to work with Chris on the boxset because he was so intense and so entrenched in what happened in the 1980s L.A. Music scene. I remember seeing the Blasters back in the 80s. I was already into punk with the Gun Club and Kid Congo and when I saw the Blasters I was blown away."

The bonus disc of songs had much considered for inclusion. Because of the limitations on time for vinyl, the Rollin Rock album bonus tracks wouldn't fit like they did on the CD. In fact when the American Music HighTone Records reissue came out on vinyl in 1997, it was made into a 2-record set. But the point of this boxset is to have replica records that look and sound exactly like what we remember was originally released in the 80s.

Dave Alvin told American Music the Blasters Dave Alvin Newsletter: "If the individual albums were going to be totally re-worked, I would have liked to have put out Hard Line the way we originally intended - taking off one song and putting on KATHLEEN."

An extended version of DARK NIGHT exists that has an extra





verse in it, but Dave didn't want it included. Dave remembers, "That was a big argument. I'm the songwriter and I wanted to yank the last verse out. I thought it didn't add much. After I wrote it, I didn't like it. But Phil was dead set against removing any verses. You wouldn't expect a song writer to argue in favor of editing his song [laughs]. Those were weird times. We also removed a verse in TROUBLE BOUND, but Phil insisted on still singing it live."

Another outtake from the Hard Line sessions that Dave doesn't like was a song called JUNGLE SOLDIER. Dave, "It has a great Lee Allen solo on it, but I don't like the way it came out. I especially don't like all the eighties effects and instruments. If you listen to HOLLYWOOD BED, it's all traditional instruments. JUNGLE SOLDIER is a New Orleans R&B song, but the mix has all these eighties smush sounds and eighties drum sounds. I think it's the worst song I ever wrote, so I don't want to see a release of it."

Rounding out the bonus disc are the rest of the outtake songs that appeared on Testament The Complete Slash Recordings CD set.

Uncut Magazine awarded a "9 out of 10" to the An American Music Story box set and designated it their "Reissue of the Month." In an accompanying interview, Dave Alvin told music critic Allan Jones, "We helped make some traditional American music styles cool again for a while... We helped artists like Dwight Yoakam, Los Lobos, The Gun Club and many others to get breaks in the music racket while also influencing a lot of people—famous and obscure—to pick up guitars and make some noise. The Blasters on the right night, in the right place, in the right year, in front of the right audience, could be and sometimes were the greatest rock 'n' roll band in the world."

The box set is beautifully presented and with its limited printing, It is sure to be a sought after Blasters collectible for years to come. —Am

Golden Sounds: Dave Alvin, Blasters featured on California Soundtrack

By Tom Wilk

California has been a source of inspiration for songwriters and performers for almost as long as music has been recorded. Since July 2019, the California Today newsletter, which is published by The New York Times, has been soliciting reader contributions for its California Soundtrack. The goal, according to the newsletter, is “to build a playlist of songs that are about, evoke or otherwise have some connection to California.”

As of January 2024, 369 songs have been added to the playlist. As might be expected, Dave Alvin is well represented with his songs about The Golden State. BORDER RADIO, written for the Blasters, is Dave’s earliest song on the soundtrack. His versions of DRY RIVER, KING OF CALIFORNIA, CALIFORNIA SNOW and CALIFORNIA’S BURNING also have been selected for the soundtrack. CALIFORNIA SNOW was co-written with Tom Russell. Tom’s version of OUT IN CALIFORNIA, which he co-wrote with Dave, also is on the list.

Chris Gaffney is represented by ARTESIA, a song Dave recorded for Man of Somebody’s Dreams: A Tribute to Chris Gaffney in 2009. Dave has recorded his own versions of songs by other songwriters also featured on the playlist. They are CALIFORNIA BLOODLINES and JULY, YOU’RE A WOMAN, both by John Stewart; PROMISED LAND by Chuck Berry; KERN RIVER by Merle Haggard; and HERE IN CALIFORNIA by Kate Wolf.

The oldest song on the list is I LOVE YOU, CALIFORNIA from 1913. It was adopted as the state song of California in 1951 and reconfirmed in 1987. The most recent song is PINK PONY CLUB by Chappell Roan. The song was released in 2023.

Anyone can recommend a song for the California Soundtrack, according to the Times. Send the recommendation and a few lines about why it deserves inclusion to CAToday@nytimes.com. Submitters should also include their name and address. A full list of songs on the California Soundtrack can be viewed at the following site.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u4NLofw_ZSSbUWnnQ3dJa_XiL-00EUsj8-2urXnYIjk/edit

Any song on the list can be heard on Spotify. Go to <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7xlNfphFqXIxQORC7hhehP>

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