

ISSUE #25

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

NOV 1999

The Knitters Reunite For A Tour

DAVE ALVIN TOUR DATES

with The Guilty Men

11/5 San Antonio TX at Cibalo Creek

11/6 Houston TX at Satellite

solo with Tom Russell

11/12 Tucson AZ at Cabaret theatre

The Knitters reunion Tour

11/13 Los Angeles at House of Blues

11/27 San Fran at Slims

11/29 Turlock CA at Cal State Stanislaus

11/30 Santa Cruz at Palookaville

12/1 Davis CA at The Palms

12/3 Portland OR at Aladdin Theatre

12/4 Seattle WA at Crocodile club

12/7 Pedaluma CA at Mystic Theatre

12/10 San Diego CA at Fourth and B

New Years Eve with the Guilty Men

12/31 Seattle WA at Mural Stage

Dave solo w/ Shea and Leisz

1/15 Pasadena Ca at Neighborhood church

BLASTERS TOUR DATES

12/31 Long Beach Ca at Blue Cafe



LATEST NEWS – The Knitters played two benefit shows in San Francisco (see the story this issue), and will now do an extensive West Coast tour in December. -- Acoustic Guitar magazine will release a sampler CD with their magazine, with Dave's TALL TREES on it. -- Tampa, FL radio station WMNF is putting a live CD, culled from shows in Florida. Dave and the

Guilty Men's live version of AMERICAN MUSIC is included. -- The 8/15 L.A. Times reported that singer Peter Case is overseeing a tribute album to bluesman Mississippi John Hurt, due early next year. Dave Alvin, Chris Smither, Van Dyke Parks, Richard Thompson, and John Sebastian are confirmed participants. -- The Blasters are rumored to be working on a tour of Italy and Scandinavia in March of 2000. -- The Mike Eldred Trio (with Blasters Bazz and Angel) have been selling an advance copy of their soon to be released CD at their shows. (See ad in this issue for mail-order info.) They will be holding a regular gig at the Blue Café in Long Beach, CA, every Tuesday night until Christmas. -- Phil Alvin has been negotiating with HighTone records to get some sessions scheduled for the recording of the Blasters upcoming album. Phil is focusing a lot of his energies on the study of digital storage and transmission of music (sound) and video data via the Internet. DVD's are his medium of choice right now. Phil adds, "I am now a highly skilled graphics programmer. I've got people who want to sell my images in art shows." - **Press** – In early September an L.A. Times reporter traveled on tour with Dave and the Guilty Men writing for an L.A. Times magazine cover story possibly titled; "On the Road with Dave Alvin." It may be out in December or January. -- Keith Wyatt recently wrote profiles on Albert King and John Lee Hooker for Guitar World magazine. Look for future profiles on Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters. Keith is also writing for an upcoming web site called truefire.com which (((cont. page 2)))

This Issue: The Knitters reunion and Phil Alvin talks about his first solo album 'Unsung Stories.' Also Phil Alvin's 'A Musician To Be Remembered' column

LATEST NEWS: (((cont. from page 1))) will provide music lessons via the Internet in print and on audio. -- Hyperion press will release a book called Listen To This: Leading Musicians Recommend Their Favorite Artists and Recordings. Dave has a six page chapter outlining his favorites. -- **EX-Blasters** -- **Bill Bateman's** new band features a blues vocalist me met while living in Anchorage, Alaska, named Jake Matson. Bill describes the singer as, "Sounding like Bukka White or Son House; real delta blues!" Matson has an album out on Storyville records in Sweden, and is working on its release in the states. Their band played in L.A. for a week in October. They are on their way to relocating to Matson's home in Savannah, GA. Phil Alvin had kind words to say about childhood buddy, Bill when he came to L.A. recently. "We had a great jam session; he's really playing good, and the guy he has with him is a good kid. I had a really good time. Johnny (Bazz), Bill, and I played with Matt Samia (a local friend and guitar player) at the Blue Café. It was cool. Bill was playing excellent. He really looked like Bateman again. I dragged their asses over my house and we played records all night long. It was a really good time." -- **James Intveld** is working on two new albums; one by his swing band, The Swing Sinners and another in the vein of his last solo record for Innerworks. He also has an acting part as a drummer in an upcoming movie about the Beach Boys. -- **Dave Alvin side projects:** --The Dave produced albums by Katy Moffatt and the Derailers have been released. Buck Owens, after many scheduling problems, was able to sing on an extra song recorded by the Buck-influenced Derailers for their album Full Western Dress. Dave was out on tour and couldn't be at the studio for that last session. -- The **Little Milton** album called Welcome To Little Milton (Malacco) is out now with two songs featuring Dave. Little Milton related a fun story about Dave, "When we were in the studio in Mussell Shoals, Dave and I started singin' and Dave sang so low. So I said 'Dave you have to bring it up a notch (laughs).' I never met Dave, so I didn't know (laughs). Dave said, 'This is the way I sing.' It came out great and we had a lot of fun. He's a real nice guy. Tell him I said, 'Hello' and, 'Thanks again for playing.'" -- **Dave Alvin Favorite Gigs of 1999** --Dave; The Roxy (Sept 11) in L.A. "It was great. An incredible show. The band was in top form and we had so much fun." Chris Gaffney was in Phoenix with his Mom and as Dave says in an amazing feat of determination, "Chris drove all the way from Phoenix. Leaving at 6 PM, he drove all night right to the Roxy, walked right on stage in time for the encore. That was perfect! He was taking care of his Mom, but he didn't want to miss that one"-- Dave's views of opening for Richard Thompson: "It was wonderful. We got to talking about various guitar things. He such a fabulous guitar player that every night was a lesson. He has always been an inspiration to me. He and his crew were so nice to me." In Madison, WI, a video crew was filming a home video documentary on Thompson. They filmed Dave but it isn't known if that footage will be released. -- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Johnny Bazz and Chris Gaffney and their families. Both lost their mothers recently. **Chris Gaffney's** new HighTone album recording sessions have been delayed indefinitely due to his Mothers passing. Dave Alvin was scheduled to produce. Meanwhile, Foothill records will release Chris's long out of print Road To Indio album on CD. The two CD package will include a live Gaffney concert from earlier this year. -- **Rick Shea** will be releasing his second full-length CD in mid November titled Shakey Ground. The CD will include all of Rick's 1991 (and out of print) album Outside of Nashville, along with five recently recorded tracks. The CD is a limited release and is available by mail-order by sending \$16 post paid to Rick Shea, PO Box 294, Covina, CA 91723 -- In August, Rick Shea played pedal steel at a recording session with REM for a movie about Andy Kaufman called Man On The Moon. He played on two instrumentals, one of which may be the radio single. ~~*AM*

Dave Alvin report: "Countdown to the Black Jack David Follow-up Album"

If everything goes according to plan, I'll get in the studio in April or May of next year, and have the record out in September. I have a bunch of music, so I have to start writing the lyrics. Greg Leisz will produce it, and I want to have more of the band (Guilty Men) feel to it. The ideas I have so far are pretty acoustic, but I do want to have some rock n roll songs on it. But at this point, it's all kind of conjecture.

In each issue we will hear from Dave on the progress of this eagerly anticipated album.

THE KNITTERS REUNITE

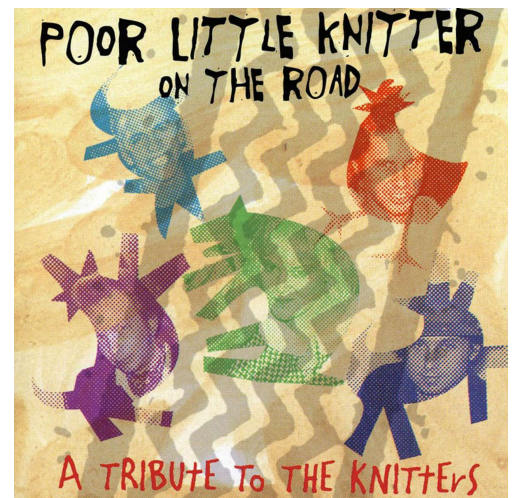
WELCOME BACK TO CRITTERVILLE

The Knitters are a country side project formed in 1983, by then Blaster Dave Alvin, and members of the L.A. punk band X. It was a means to play their favorite country songs and just have fun. The name of the band was a take off of a popular 1960's folk group called The Weavers. The Knitters released their only full length album in 1985, Poor Little Critter On The Road (Slash records). In 1986, Dave left the Blasters to join X. Since the Knitters were made up of Dave Alvin and members of X, it was no longer a side project, so they used the name X. Dave went on to a solo career and in 1991 the Knitters did a reunion tour for fun. Now here in 1999, it took a friend of the band in need, to bring the Knitters together once again.

From the early eighties start of the band, fun was always the main ingredient that brought the band together to perform. Dave Alvin remembers how it originally came together: "The Knitters were kind of an excuse for John (Doe) and Exene (Cervenka) to get out of their role in X, and it was a way for me, to put it bluntly, to get drunk, have some fun, and really play together. We became really good friends. The first couple of gigs we played were benefits. It was just me, John, and Exene. By the next gig we added D.J. (Bonebrake) on drums (from X), then Jonny Ray (Bartel) on upright bass (known from the Red Devils). We started taking it a little more seriously, just a little."

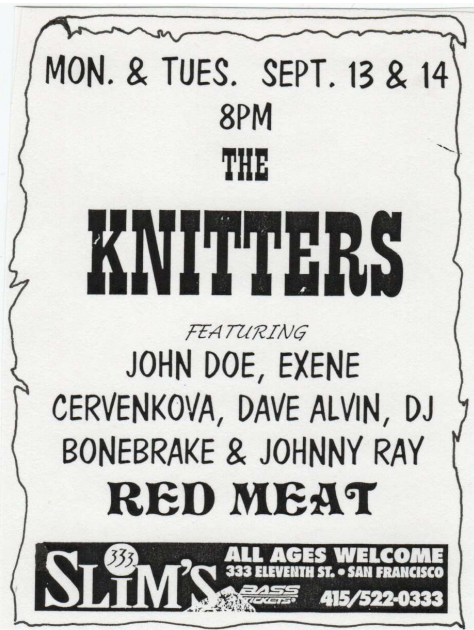
The classic album Poor Little Critter On the Road was released containing five original songs, which sit perfectly along side the classic cover songs that the band based their theme on. Dave remembers the events leading to the dissolving of the Knitters name and the early eighties Blasters: "The night that Gene (Taylor) left the Blasters was this gig in Montreal (Nov. 1985), and it was maybe the worst gig that I ever played. It was obvious that this wasn't working anymore. That night I decided, 'I'm quitting.' Everybody was so pissed off at each other in the Blasters. I flew to New York the next morning to do a Knitters gig at Irving Plaza. When I got to the gig, John said, 'Billy (Zoom) is leaving the band (X), do you want to join?' I said, 'Yeah!!' without hesitation. Once I became a member of X, the Knitters became X." Knitter bassist Jonny Ray Bartel was left out in the cold of this merger. John Doe was the bass player in X, leaving no room for Bartel. Dave would later leave X in 1986 for a solo career, as X continued on. Five years later the Knitters would reform for a series of sold-out reunion shows just for fun.

In 1999, a close friend of the band, Annie Whiteside lost her San Francisco apartment when it burned down. The Knitters jumped at the chance to help her with a pair of benefit shows. It was a timely gathering to also celebrate the release of a Knitters tribute album put out by Bloodshot records called Poor Little Knitter on the Road. Some artists on the disc include:



Whiskeytown, Old 97's (with John Doe), Robbie Fulks, as well as the previously unreleased Knitters track, WHY DON'T WE TRY ANYMORE? Exene joked about the first time she heard that Bloodshot was putting out the tribute, "I heard they were doing this tribute to the Knitters. So, I said to Bloodshot, 'Do you think that is a good idea?' Do any of these bands know we didn't write these songs?" So in effect the album is a tribute to a tribute.

September 13 & 14, 1999, San Francisco at Slims



Country band Red Meat opened the show. The crowd enjoyed their set. They were fun, feeling the Knitters mood. The excitement in the crowd kept building through their set. People were hungry for The Knitters' music, asking each other, "How many years has it been since The Knitters have played together?" Even the SF Bay Guardian newspaper

noted in their Critic's Choice column: "Get your ass down to Slim's to see the Knitters...How often do 'side projects' reunite? This is a one-off reunion not to be missed."

The curtain rose to the Knitters tradition of starting with a pair of ballads, from a duo of Dave on electric guitar, and John Doe on acoustic and vocal. They played Merle Haggard's SILVER WINGS then the Knitters original CRYIN' BUT MY TEARS ARE FAR AWAY.

The crowd was excited but really came alive when suddenly, John leaned way back and yelled out: "Heeeeeeeey Knitters!!" The hungry crowd went crazy again, as the rest of the band walked onto the stage; Jonny Ray with his upright bass, D.J. on a single snare drum, and Exene on vocals. The audience was very interactive with the Knitters. One exuberant fan observed Exene and John Doe wearing glittery makeup and shouted, "John, you're all sparkly!" John turned a megawatt grin towards him and quietly said, "But of course I'm sparkly, my friend."

Exene playfully asked the audience for song requests, then said, "I know! Dave has an idea!" and he started the infectious guitar riff at the beginning of POOR LITTLE CRITTER ON THE ROAD. The band played all 12 songs from the Knitters album, as well as some songs only heard at live Knitters shows. -- A Joe and Eddie song called LONG TRAIN HOME, The Stanley Brothers RANK STRANGER, Tennessee Ernie Ford's TENNESSEE BORDER, and the X songs FT. LAUDERDALE, I MUST NOT THINK BAD THOUGHTS, and BURNING HOUSE OF LOVE. The second night they finished with an



extra song - Woody Guthrie's SO LONG.

It was a fun, relaxed show, and there was real camaraderie between the band and the audience, most of whom were X fans. John and Exene engaged in some witty ad-libbing between songs, and John professed that the band didn't know many songs. He said that we, the audience, would have to put up with a show that was only eighty percent good. Early on, Exene told the audience exactly what

the Knitters' ethic was: "The Knitters are all about doin' other people's old songs. Songs that people haven't heard before. Then you can go back and find the original one."

It was obvious, by looking at the audience, that everybody was grinning with the feeling they were experiencing a unique event. Dave's playing was incredible - from tender and delicate, to raunchy and sizzling. He whipped up the crowd, and inspired cheers and calls --

"PLAY IT DAVE!" like I've never seen before. The other Knitters kept turning towards him, trying to watch him play - as he was the catalyst with his '64 Strat in hand.

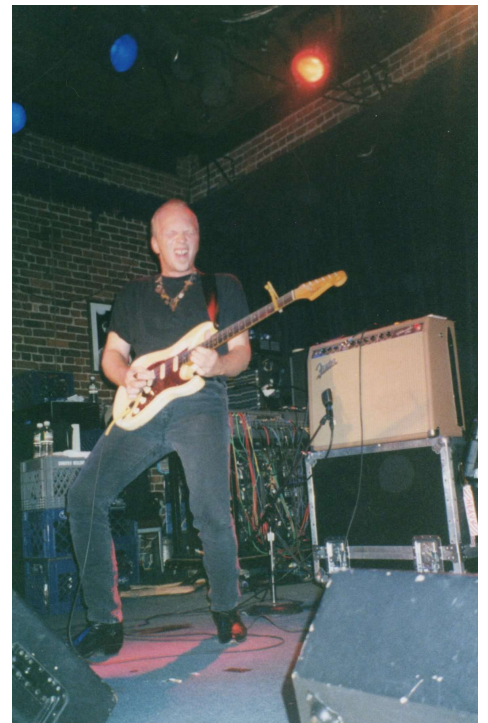
There were some choreographed parts - during ROCK ISLAND LINE, where John's intro recitation goes, "I got goats, I got pigs, I got pot-bellied pigs, I got kitty cats..." Meanwhile D.J. kept reaching into a big trunk on stage, pulling out a succession of little critters and squeak toys, to illustrate who they had room for on the train in the story of the ROCK ISLAND LINE.

At other points John or Exene would say, "We'll do another cover song by this other band..." The crowd would laugh and cheer, knowing it was another "X" song. John introduced BURNING HOUSE OF LOVE, saying how much he wished June and Johnny Cash would cover the song. He said, "If this one thing were to

happen - I could just die." then quipped, "Which I will eventually."

They played two encores, until finally John said, "This is PROOF that this is all (the songs) we know." Amid much laughter, they played POOR LITTLE CRITTER ON THE ROAD again. The perfect finish.

Yeah, the "SF Bay Guardian" newspaper was right - Knitters shows are NOT to be missed. Dave later recalled the fun and lack of pressure playing with the Knitters, "We had a lot of fun. We raised a lot of money for our friend. We did a few





John Doe with his Gibson guitar with an inlay that reads "Faith, Hope, and Charity."

songs that weren't on the original record. The nice thing about the Knitters for me is, I don't have to worry about anything. I just show up, and play guitar." Some people asked since Dave has such a successful solo career, 'Would he sing a song or two for the Knitters?' Dave had an easy answer, "I didn't feel like singing because the character I played in the Knitters didn't sing. So why screw with the illusion now."

The Knitters had so much fun, they are planning a tour together of the West Coast in December of 1999. Don't miss it!

Knitters Discography: The Radio Tokyo Tapes Compilation LP-1 track medley of HONKY TONK ANGELS and WILD SIDE OF LIFE (Enigma records). Poor Little Critter On The Road 1985 LP (available on CD) (Slash Records), Poor Little Knitter On The Road 1999 (Bloodshot) 1 track. ~-AM

Thanks go to the California girls, Anita and Holly, who lent their accounts of the Knitter experience to the writing of this story. Anita Bunter took the photos. --Billy



John Doe said "Oh well. We just put our lead singer to sleep." Then DJ fell asleep (partially hidden behind the drum set)



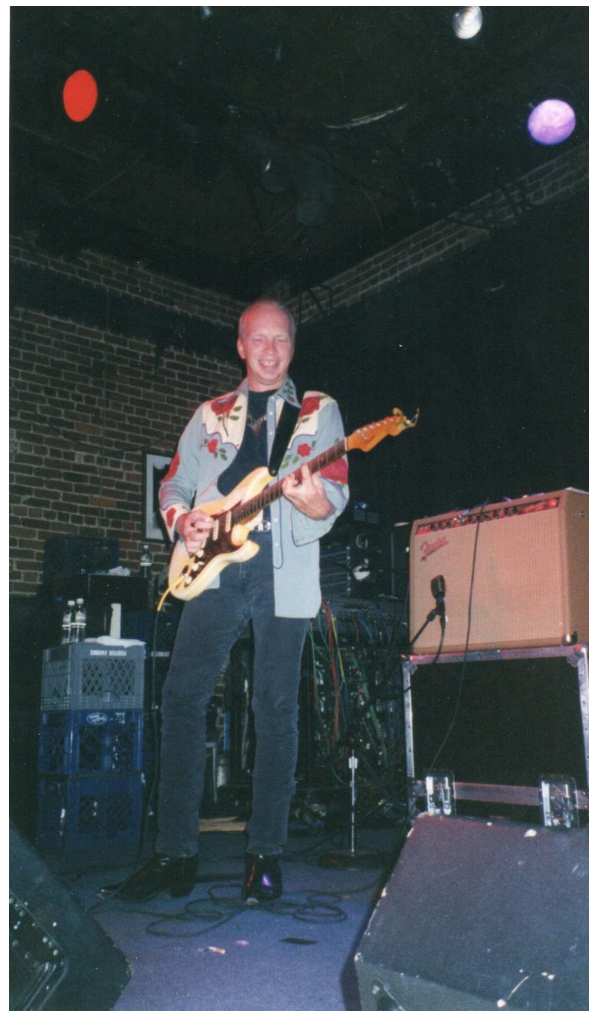
D. J. Bonebrake on snare drum & Jonny Ray Bartel on bass.. D.J. is playing the squeek-toy cat during "Rock Island Line." He has a whole trunk full of props for this segment of the show.



Dave playing "wrecking Ball" in the encore

CRITTER
LONG CHAIN ON
BABY OUTTA JAIL
TRAIL O' TIME
NEW WORLD
HEARTSICK ME
RANK STRANGER
LOVE SHACK
TENN BORDER
SKIN DEEP TOWN
WALKIN CANE
ROCK ISLAND

SOMEONE LIKE YOU
BAD THOUGHTS
WRECKIN BALL



Dave wearing a friend's "Red Rose" shirt.



Phil Alvin talks about his first solo album – 1986



Blasters lead singer Phil Alvin released his first solo album in August of 1986 titled Unsung Stories. It contained 11 cover songs culled from Phil's vast record collection ranging from country blues to hot jazz: three songs with jazz great Sun Ra and the Arkestra, one with The Dirty Dozen Brass band, four solo with guitar country blues songs and two Phil Alvin band songs. When the idea of a lead singer solo album came up, the Blasters were in full swing touring for their Hardline album (Slash/Warner Bros. 1985).

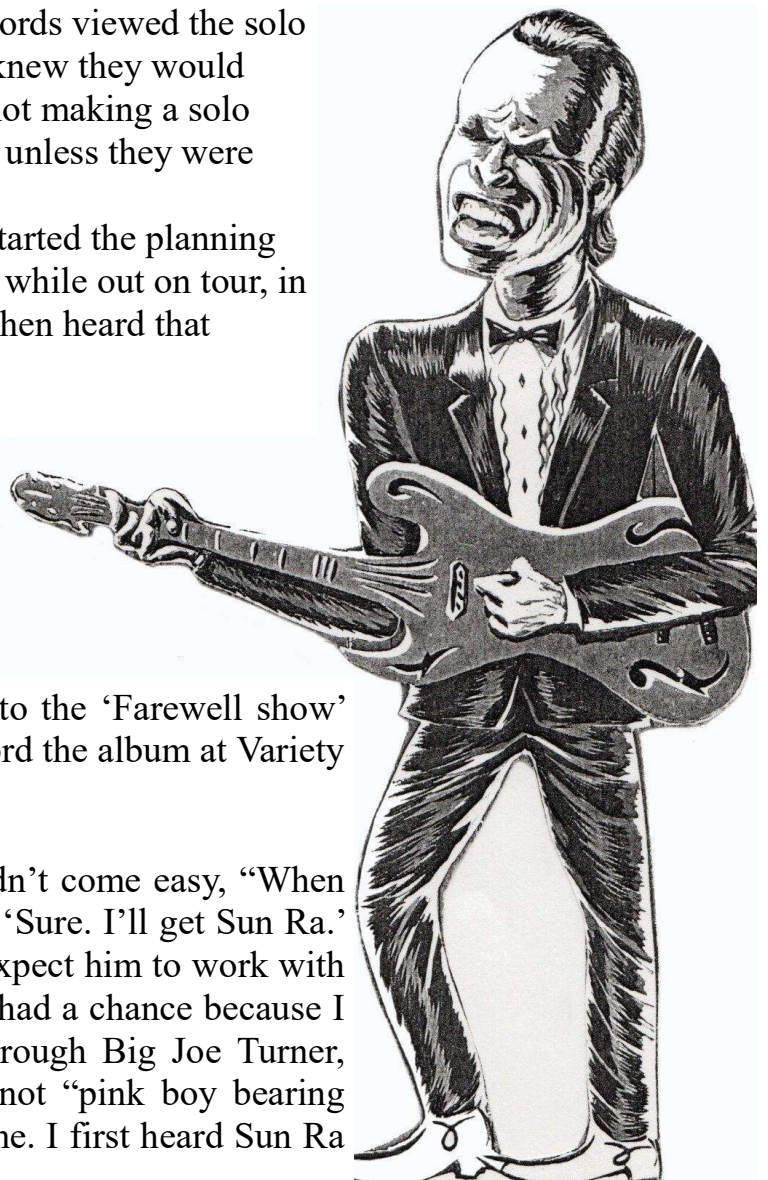
Dave Alvin was still a member and Slash Records viewed the solo album as promotion for the Blasters. Phil, "I knew they would approach me at some point, but I said, 'I am not making a solo record.' I was taught that bands were no good unless they were hard to keep together."

At the urging of the record company, Phil started the planning stage of the album and cemented the decision while out on tour, in late 1985. Phil, "I made the record because I then heard that David was leaving the Blasters."

While the Blasters were out on tour The Blasters manager put an ad in the L.A. Times that said "The Blasters Farewell Show At The Palace." I had to make that solo record because I didn't have a dime, and I didn't know if I had a band.

I like having a band. So I said 'farewell' to the 'Farewell show' and stayed in New York with Sun Ra to record the album at Variety studios."

IN SEARCH OF SUNRA - For Phil it didn't come easy, "When the record company asked me to do it, I said 'Sure. I'll get Sun Ra.' I didn't mean it as a joke but I really didn't expect him to work with me. I was aware of his political stance, but I had a chance because I knew they could check me out by going through Big Joe Turner, who would tell them that this Pink boy is not "pink boy bearing gifts." Still he was much bigger than life to me. I first heard Sun Ra



the year before I graduated from High School in 1970. I bought all of Sun Ra's albums and did all my homework to records by him and Bill Broonzy. He was trained by Fletcher Henderson. So anyway, I didn't think he would make a record with a pink guy.. (laughs) I knew his politics to a certain extent where no news is good news on planet earth.

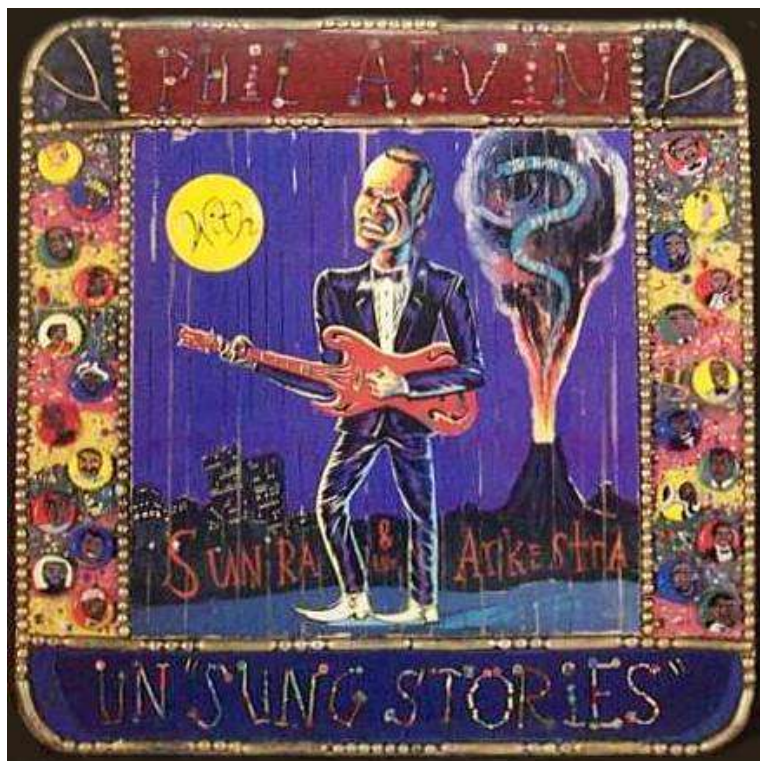
MEETING SUNRA - Before Phil learned of the coming Blaster breakup he accidentally met up with Sun Ra when the Blasters were playing Philadelphia. It was at the Chestnut Cabaret where Phil recalls meeting the legend, "Sun Ra heard that the Blasters played Rock 'n Roll so he started talking about how he'd played with Gate-mouth Brown and Wynonie Harris. But then I told him what I had in mind for the solo record was to go back to guys like Lucky Millinder's Blue Rhythm Band and Cliff Jackson & The Crazy Cats – Hot Harlem jazz from the 30's. And he perked right up."

RECORDING WITH SUNRA - Variety Studios, New York City – "Sun Ra was incredible. At the session, he sat there for 18 hours and only got up once and that was to use the bathroom. Charts were flying over his head. Sixteen horns would hit some incredible outside chord and Sun would turn around and say, 'Marshall! Didn't I give you a B flat? Then why do I hear a D.' Jeez! how did he hear that! He kept a 21-piece band together with the highest class of musicians. I was so afraid to talk to Sun Ra himself, but I know what he can do with music. I'm still a mathematician so Sun Ra couldn't pull any space jive on me without me being right there with him.

Session Songs: THE BALLAD OF SMOKEY JOE. – This medley combines three songs of related characters most familiarly is MINNIE THE MOUCHER Phil, "Smokey was Minnie's boyfriend but in the early thirties, he was as much a character in the song as Minnie. Now



Phil and Sunra by Gary Leonard



people don't remember Smokey Joe." OLD MAN IN THE MOUNTAIN – Another Cab Calloway story song.

BROTHER CAN YOU SPARE A DIME – “I am still much chagrined that the vocal on BROTHER CAN YOU SPARE A DIME is the work vocal. That was used when we had 21 pieces going and you're all in one room. Bob Biggs (Slash Records) wanted to get the record out quick so, he said he lost the tape of the vocal I recorded later.”

FINDING THE DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND: – Phil remembers the first time he heard of them, “Just before we made the Rollin Rock album (American Music 1980), me and Clint Bazz thought we should have seen New Orleans by now so we got in his van and

we drove there. We went on all the side roads. The first record I found on that trip was in Oklahoma City. It was the CRAZY BABY record (The Rockin R's). Then I found two very rare records in Texas; I was very happy. In New Orleans we were sitting at Café DuMonde and I saw a marching band with horns in the street. It was the Dirty Dozen Brass band. I didn't know it was them at the time. I went back home and I was as enthralled as hell. That band stayed in my mind all through out the beginning of the Blasters. When I was in New Orleans with the Blasters, I heard the Dirty Dozen Brass band on the juke box and I made the connection. Stuff like SWEET LIZA JANE, FEETS GET A MOVIN, and a bunch of stuff that were righteous local hits. I found out Roger (Lewis of the D. D. B. B) is a friend of Lee (Allen). I told Lee, ‘I thought they were great.’ So he said, ‘Let's go down and see them.’ He called Roger and told them he had this pink boy who wanted to sing. (laughs) So, when I got to the studio, we cut the track.”

Sea Saint Studios, New Orleans - SOMEONE STOLE GABRIEL'S HORN – “It's a song Bing Crosby did with Edmund Hall. Bing was a very cool guy in the late twenties and early thirties. People forget about his hot jazz. Yet he was probably the first example of rebellious youth in recording history, and he was a killer singer. In the song they look through the band to see who stole Gabriel's horn but Crosby's band had piano players and other instruments -- which used to bother me. But that's okay, The Dirty Dozen Brass band has the horns.”

PHIL SOLO - Quadtech Studios, Los Angeles – Phil recorded some country blues-styled songs like NEXT WEEK SOMETIME, GANGSTERS BLUES, TITANIC BLUES, and COLLINS' CAVE. On the latter Phil received some accompaniment from Richard Greene on violin.

On DEATH IN THE MORNING Phil used the gospel styled ‘Jubilee Train singers’ who sang backing vocals on SAMSON & DELILAH (Blasters, Hardline album 1985). Future Blaster drummer Dave Carroll also played on the track. A fully assembled ‘Phil Alvin band’ was put



together for the Otis Blackwell song DADDY ROLLIN' STONE. The band included Mike Roach and Gary Masi on guitar, Gary Taylor on bass, and Blaster piano man Gene Taylor.

THE UNSUNG STORIES THEME COMES TOGETHER – Phil remembers the underlying theme, “The point of the record was to represent a lot of American Music that couldn’t be presented by the Blasters. I wanted songs that didn’t necessarily have hooks and relied on the singer to keep your attention and that told stories. In the past 30 years the hook has degenerated the art of songwriting. Relying on a hook is an unsubtle way to beat something into your brain. That’s why story songs don’t crop up anymore. DADDY ROLLIN’ STONE has a hook but I had to put that song on for the furniture company (record label.). So I selected story songs. I picked songs that represent catastrophe from over confidence -- Which related to events at that time of the 1980’s.”

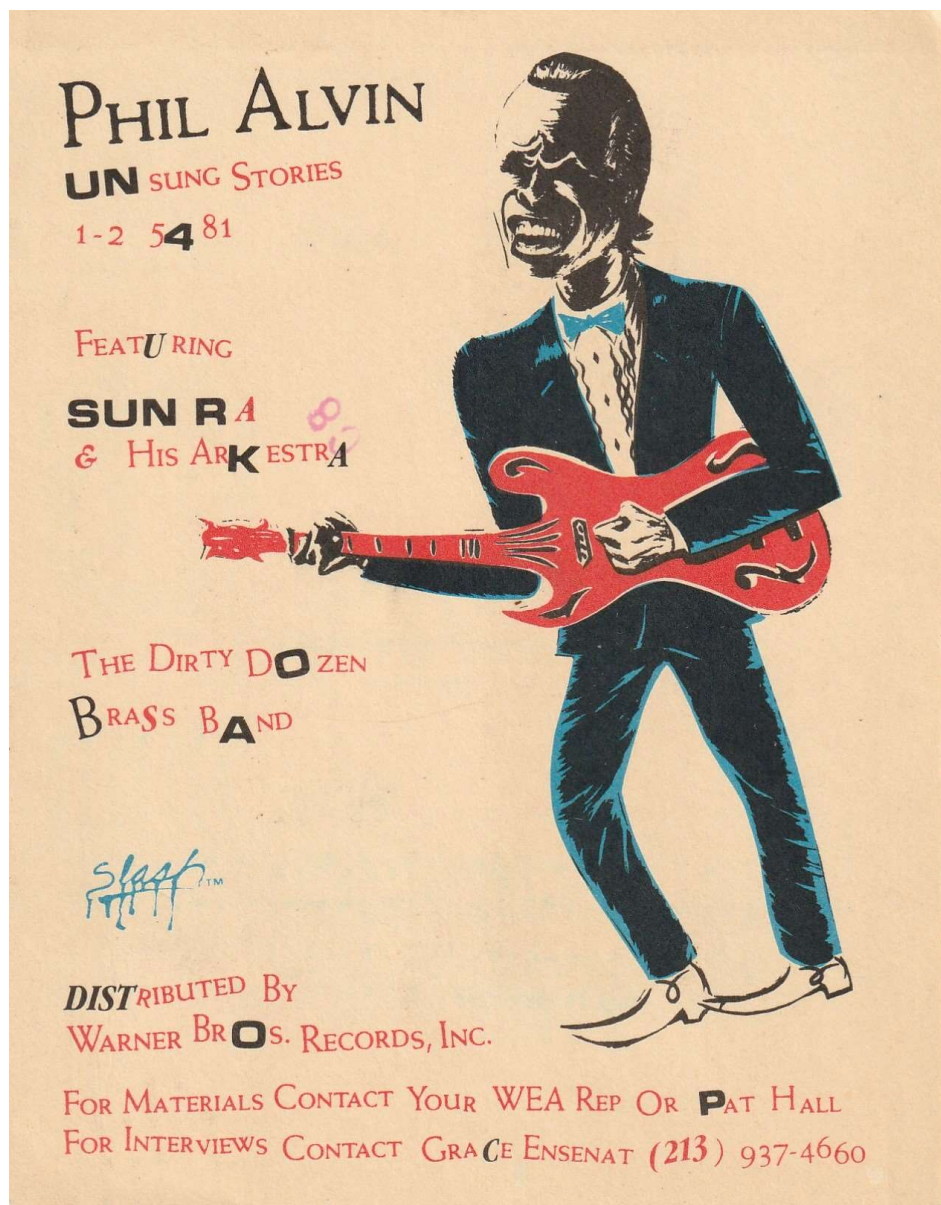
THE ARTWORK OF UNSUNG STORIES - Phil, “The only good idea that Bob Biggs (Slash records) ever had was the album cover artwork. It was Bob’s ‘ability’ (Phil says sarcastically) to control the record albums that gave us the cover of NonFiction.(laughs). Which goes right up there with David’s first record cover (Romeo’s Escape Epic 1987). I was ten minutes late for the meeting for Non-Fiction. So anyway, Biggs recommended Georganne Dean to do the art work. I went to her house, she opened the door and I said, ‘I’m Phil Alvin.’ She was very gracious, so I walked inside and I didn’t go more than two steps and a big white parrot flew and almost took my head off (laughs). He came by with his mouth open and tried to grab my ear (laughs). It was a big parrot--I mean a BIG parrot-- and he pinned me the whole time I was there. He did not like me, and she wouldn’t put him in a cage. So I’m sitting there trying to talk to her, and all I could do was look at that parrot. It’s sitting’ there goin’ “KAW, KAW, KAW!” It was pretty funny (laughs). She had the album finished but she had not set the back up completely. She also later added the bottle caps and put the faces of Sun Ra and the people on it. So I was stunned! I thought it was exquisite art. I couldn’t have thought of something that good. What surprised me was that Bob Biggs had anything to do it (laughs). The only thing I told her was, ‘Look, them big white shoes...Those are things my brother wears (laughs)’ I wear black shoes that you cant see. I try to walk softly but carry a big skill (laughs). She said she would turn them Black, but I then I thought since she did such an exquisite job, it was wrong to change them. The white shoes gave me some weight and be-

ing the big footed boy that I am, it's about the right proportion (laughs). I was very happy."

RELEASING THE UNSUNG STORIES ALBUM -

The album was finished in November of 1985 but was held up from release because of some label politics. "When the dust finally settled after Slash's negotiations with Warners, the album was put back on line in April of '86. I tried to put a few more things in the mix." And it finally saw release in August 1986. Phil had to stress, "It was not my intention to mislead people into thinking I was now a solo artist. Bringing Hollywood Fats into the band made it even more important to get the Blasters back out on the road and prove that there still was a band called the Blasters." In a 1987 Interview, Phil may have forecast the release of his 1994 solo album:

County Fair 2000 (Hightone). Phil, "I have plenty of solo records still to make. Sonny Terry told me, 'Do not lay all your cards on the table.' —Am



News and Tidbits from the West Coast

****Dave's added THE CUCKOO to the set list of his shows. Dave recorded a duet of the song with Katy Moffatt on her new album, Loose Diamond. When he introduces it, he mentions that he sings this beautiful, old folk song and that we in the audience should just imagine Katy singing along. At the midnight Strawberry Festival show in September, he grinned and told the band, "I'm going to have you play a song you haven't done before." (Which got LOTS of laughs from an audience packed with folk and bluegrass musicians.) They sounded GREAT, and of course, the Strawberry audience, who are folk music-oriented, just loved it. The next night in San Francisco, even the young, hard-rocking Saturday night crowd that packed Slim's loved it too. — Report by Anita Bunter

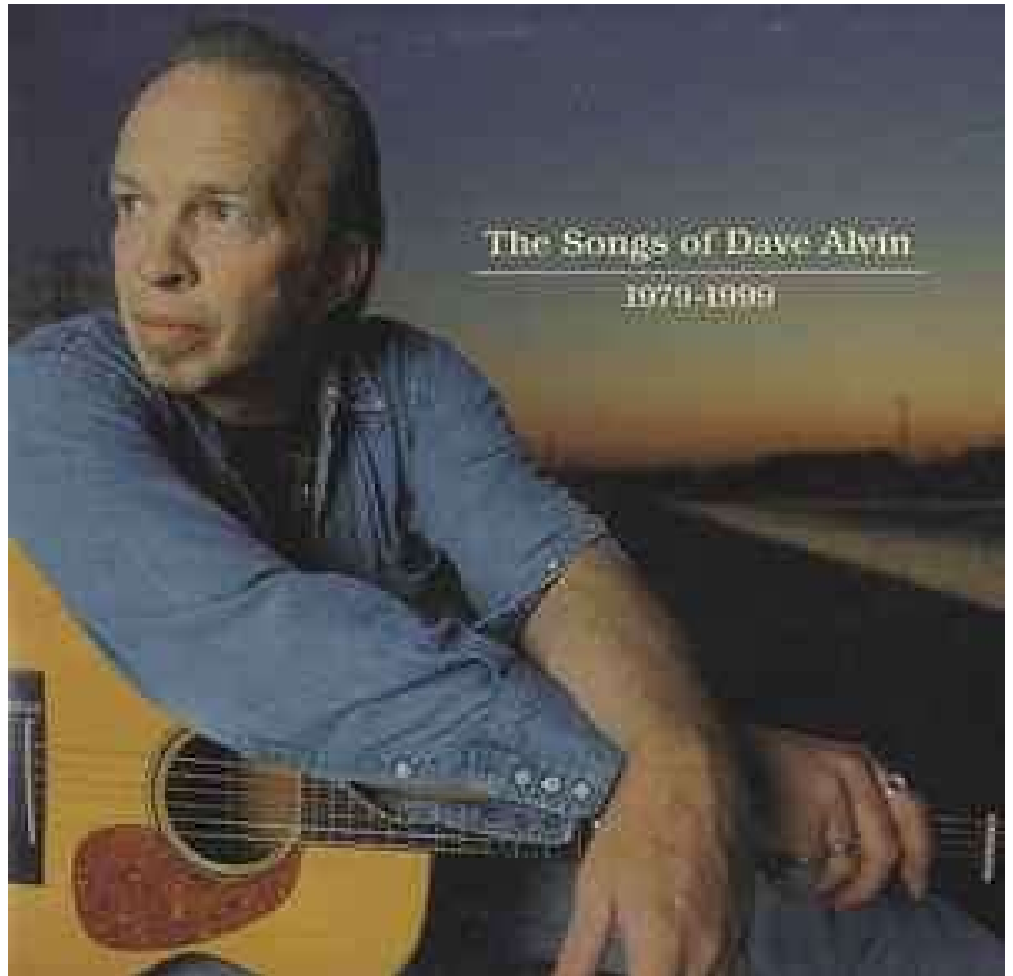
****Dave told this story at his Reno show, when four songs into the show, one of the concert workers brought more beer up to the stage. Dave declined it in mock horror, saying, "Oh my God, BEER.... Trouble, Trouble,

Trouble!" Then he added, "Speaking of beers, one night last year I'd had maybe one too many beers. I was sitting in a hotel room in Houston, Texas, and in the room next door to me was Ramblin' Jack Elliot, who had one too many of something else. I was sitting in the hotel room singing this song, which is an old folk song from God knows when. Ramblin' Jack came over and knocked on my door (Dave imitates Jack's knocking, on his guitar), and said, 'How do you know that song? You know, every time Woody Guthrie got drunk, he'd sing this song.'" Dave paused for a moment, and said, "So I figured, what the hell, let's pretend we're drinking with Woody." Then the band launched into the best version of DEEP SEA I've ever heard. — Report by Anita Bunter

***** Blue Café, Long Beach, CA. – 9/4/99 - Record release party for Kid Ramos' new CD -- What a special night. Most of the players on the new CD were there. The band consisted of Janiva Magness, three horn players, Gene Taylor on piano, and Willie J. Campbell on bass. And of course the Kid was just "blistering" on the guitar. They played 90 minutes, took a break and came back for an hour more. But, I have to say the last 15 minutes were completely awesome!! Phil Alvin of The Blasters came up and sang the last three songs. Wow, did he blow the socks off the crowd!! He was so tight, and with the "Kid" blistering the guitar behind him, it truly was a very, very special musical moment! —Jeff from Los Angeles

Collecting Blasters/Dave Alvin

The Songs of Dave Alvin 1979-1999 is a beautifully packaged two CD set, released by Dave Alvin's publishing administrator, Bug Music. The package is not available for sale. It is intended to be a promotional tool used by Bug Music to find recording artists to record songwriter Dave Alvin's songs. You'll be lucky if you come across one in a used CD shop somewhere. Grab it! This is destined to be a rare collectible. The set has thirty Dave Alvin written songs in performance by The Blasters, Dwight Yoakam, Last Train Home, and Dave himself. As a bonus, and what makes the CD set most desirable, is a pair of old Dave songs recorded new just for this disc: DON'T TALK ABOUT HER and LONG WHITE CADILLAC. ~~*AM*



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Phil Alvin Quote of  
the month:

"I have a large ego -  
but so large that I  
don't allow myself  
to have one."

## The Mike Eldred Trio debut CD

Mike Eldred, guitarist from Lee Rocker's Big Blue has formed his own trio with Blasters rhythm section John Bazz and Jerry Angel. Eldred handles the vocals and blazing guitar. The CD is described as being a combination of blues, boogie, and rockabilly. What ever it is, it's hot! The band is heading toward great things. Now through a limited mail-order offer, an advance promo limited pressing is being made available. (CD pictured)

Send \$15 to Mike Eldred Trio PO BOX 5120 Bellflower CA 90707



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## A MUSICIAN TO BE REMEMBERED BY PHIL ALVIN

Fletcher Henderson 1897-1952 – Jazz – He was the most advanced musician that America has produced. Most of Benny Goodman's songs were Fletcher Henderson's arrangements. He pretty much single handedly made modern Jazz. Sun Ra was one of his lead boys. In the twenties and thirties, a bandleader that had arrangements would have five bands out on the road at the same time playing his arrangements. Sun Ra was one of the last lead boys who would take Fletcher's bands out. Fletcher Henderson was a mathematician with a masters degree in Chemistry. In the late teens and early twenties he was going to Columbia University. He got a job to pay his way through college by working as an arranger and piano player on one of the first black labels called Black Swan out of New York. Pretty soon, he had gone through all the forms of jazz that existed by 1925, composing and arranging. He was the most advanced. There has been nothing new in jazz since then. Fletcher Henderson put together his first serious band, and he had forgotten the academic world...Oh Fletcher, I have some empathy (laughs). The



players he picked for his band would later become some of the greatest band leaders and arrangers in Harlem. He became known as a talent scout. Everyone of Fletcher's players could read music. He had a reputation as a tight-ass about reading music. He wanted to be able to tell them exactly what to play. Fletcher's great band members went to other bands who benefited from him. Irving Mills owned a club and was able to support a large band that was playing extremely experimental music called Mills Blue Rhythm Band. They were a Harlem band with the greatest players -- a lot from Fletcher's band.

It was Fletcher who laid down the general rules on what Jazz was. Duke Ellington was able to capitalize on that when he came from Washington, D.C., in 1925 to New York. There were a lot of great backing musicians from Fletcher's bands like Barney Bigard. Listen to Red Ride by Mills Blue Rhythm band....it's unique. Fletcher Henderson was the most innovative arranger, but he wouldn't stay very long. He was ready to move to the next challenge.