


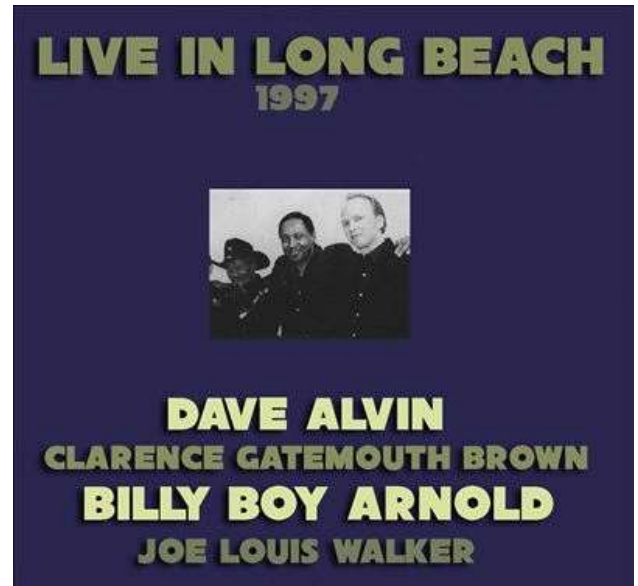
American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

APR. 2015

Dave Alvin Releases 1997 Live In Long Beach CD

Latest news: -- A 1997 concert featuring Dave Alvin with Billy Boy Arnold, Joe Louis Walker, and Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown has been released on CD and MP3 by RockBeat Records called Live in Long Beach 1997. For information, visit www.rockbeatrecords.com. -- A Feb. 1 concert at the Troubador in Los Angeles featuring Dave and Phil Alvin and the Guilty Ones was streamed live by Yahoo! Music. World Café, the nationally syndicated radio program, later aired excerpts from the concert during an interview with Dave as part of its Sense of Place series that focused on Los Angeles. -- Dave Alvin contributes a live version of CALIFORNIA BLOOD-LINES to the Sawyer Sessions, Season 1 on Yep Roc Records. It will be available on both CD and LP on April 18 as part of Record Store Day. Other artists on the album include Jonah Tolchin, Chuck Prophet and Aoife O'Donovan. -- Dave and Phil Alvin and the Guilty Ones performed for a future broadcast of the nationally syndicated radio show Mountain Stage in Charleston, WV, on March 8. -- A Blasters flashback: During Pills, a fourth-season episode of WKRP in Cincinnati that re-aired in February, 2015 on Antenna TV, a poster of The Blasters promoting their self-titled album released in 1981, could be seen in the background of the opening scene. Pills originally was broadcast on CBS TV on Jan. 20, 1982. -- The Blasters' American Music album is featured on the cover of the February issue of Record Collector magazine, a British music publication. The Rollin' Rock vinyl LP from 1980 is mentioned in a story about collectibles of Americana music. -- Dave and Phil Alvin's Common Ground were nominated for a Grammy for best blues album, but lost to the recently deceased Johnny Winter for his album Step Back. Dave told American Music: "I have a Grammy already, but I really wanted Phil to have one. We'll get him one!" -- The TV show Justified has a new soundtrack coming out for its final season, will have Dave Alvin's YOU'LL NEVER LEAVE HARLAN ALIVE on it. -- Dave Alvin reports on recording another album with Phil Alvin: "We'll start recording some things that we always wished we had when we were kids, or songs we didn't get to, when in the Blasters - or songs I wasn't good enough to play." -- Space is limited for Dave Alvin's West of the West April 18—24 train trip with Phil Alvin from L.A. to Chicago. rootsontherails.com. -- 



Phil Alvin looks back at Fun On Saturday Night

The Blasters released their CD Fun On Saturday Night in July of 2012 on Rip Cat Records just at the same time that Phil had fallen ill while on tour in Spain. An abscessed tooth caused swelling which blocked his breathing. Phil tells the story now that he flat-lined twice, but was revived. His recovery period was long; it derailed the chance to properly promote the Fun On Saturday Night album. Now, two years later, The Blasters Newsletter finally gets to hear Phil's present impressions of that album. In this interview it's obvious since the incident in Spain, Phil is a changed man - in his opinions, attitude, and approach towards life in general.

AM: You're currently out on tour with Dave Alvin supporting the Common Ground album. How is that going?

Phil: The album took off and it was number 1 on the blues charts for a few weeks, and we were nominated for a Grammy. Now I'm suddenly on the road all the time with David and also with the Blasters. Most of the shows have been sold out and the press seems to like the (Common Ground) album. It was a whirlwind that I was swept up in and I'm still being swept up in it. Between this and the Blasters, it's been a lot of work. But I like playing with David, and The Guilty Ones band are very good.

AM: With Dave Alvin you're playing a Martin acoustic guitar, which seems to require more delicate playing - unlike the way you bash on the electric guitar in a Blasters show.

Phil: Ever since Spain, I feel my guitar playing has fallen off considerably. On that Martin guitar, I'm still using the same heavy gauge strings and the action is too high. I'll get it lowered, but that's a lame excuse for the loss of coordination I feel. It's very strange. Some of it is from being out of practice, but it's an internal state that's changed so much since Spain. When I got back from Spain, I know everyone was worried about me, but I got tired of people asking how I was doing. I didn't realize how spiritually demoralizing it is to have people continually ask how I'm feeling.

AM: We all wanna show love and can't help it.



Phil: I agree and I thank everyone for that, but I'm just not used to that. It was the flat-lining that created the whole concern for me by people. It certainly presented my mortality and made the bad planning I made come to light. It was surrealistic then and surrealistic now - all of life has been surrealistic since then. And I'm certainly more introspective about what I'm doing now. I started eating much healthier since then. But on the road, that goes out the window . . . If I have to eat another fast food hamburger. . . God! It's hard to eat healthy out on the road.

One thing I noticed in Spain is that when I woke up in the hospital, I realized I'm not



gonna be able to smoke cigarettes. But I had absolutely no desire to smoke. It was the best flight home from Europe I ever had because I didn't need a cigarette. As soon as I was home filling out a health care form on the computer, it came back extremely strong. It's when I was back in familiar surroundings. I always smoke when I'm on the computer. I tried to fight it, but gave in.

I don't know if my singing has been affected by my spirit.

Whenever you start to question yourself as a singer, it becomes a difficult thing. When we made the first Slash record (1981), I had trouble yodeling one night. Everybody said: "Maybe you're losing your ability." That made me start questioning things, and it took me about 6 months to be convinced that I was still good. But now, I get scared when I go out there - especially a Blasters show. In a Dave Alvin show, there are plenty of solos for me to take a breather, but in a Blasters show my voice is going the whole time. It used to not bother me, but now I question it.

AM: I hear fans say: "Phil has gotten older, but his voice is still incredible."

Phil: Well, that's the kind of love I need. I'd hate to think people are paying their money for a show and I'm not delivering. That bothers me when I'm on stage, so I have a tendency to apologize.

The Songs

WELL OH WELL - I've been singing that for a long time and playing it on a piano. We might have been in New York at a music store and I started playing it on a piano. The other Blasters said: "Hey, we should do that." So we worked it out. It's a great jump blues number. I like Keith's solo in it. It's tough to sing. I always pressed my voice to its limits by moving the key up as high as I could - now I wish I hadn't always done that (laughs). I've committed to that style, but wish I didn't - it just becomes more difficult. The title is actually WELL WELL WELL on the record I have by Tiny Bradshaw. It's probably published under the title WELL OH WELL, but the lyric never says that.

JACKSON -- The Blasters and 'X' played one of those Johnny Cash festivals and me and Exene were hangin' out and we decide to do it. We had a rehearsal at my house.

Fun On Saturday Night was originally supposed to be just an EP that we sold on the road. When it became an album, we asked her to sing JACKSON with me on the album. It's always great to see how Exene interprets a song. She has a remarkable sense of harmony and great stage personality. So it's an advantage to have Exene do anything. When we cut it, we did it live, then overdubbed our voices. I remember Exene not being comfortable at first - but then she started playing around with the harmonies. When she heard the final mix, she was happy.

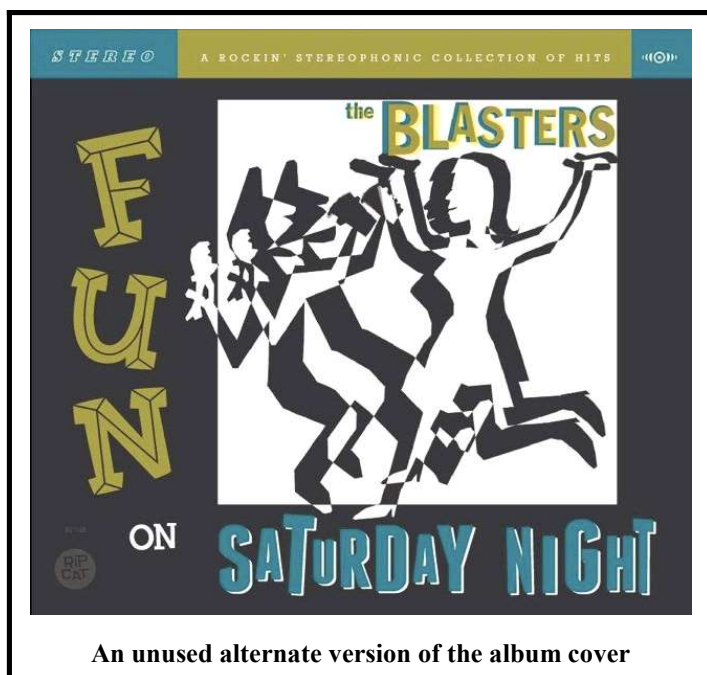
BREATH OF MY LOVE -- That is a very politically incorrect song and something that changed in me after Spain. The song is based on a few stories that have happened in my life. I've never hit a woman, but I was put in situation that it was feasible that I might have to. When I wrote the song (originally titled BIPOLAR LOVER), it was a compiled story of experiences I had, and experiences I've seen other people have. The controversial line is: "Though I might be a cheater, does the law let me beat her, when she's holding a knife to my throat." At the time it seemed reasonable to challenge that moral dilemma - but I really regret that now.

I've heard from people on that. I remember we played Maxwell's in Hoboken, NJ, and a woman that worked at Bellevue hospital came up to me and said: "I love that song," - it felt odd. It was never easy for me to sing it and I won't sing it anymore. It was clever and it juxtaposed the apparent innocence of the man - but now I wish I never would have done it.

If I would have never written that song and proposed that moral question, I would never have had to answer that question. At that time, I liked to challenge taboo in this society. But it wasn't worth it, and I have great regrets. I wish I would have written more songs, taken more English poetry classes - to have learned that before.

In the earlier version of the song, it was just me on piano like a Charlie Rich number. When the Blasters got it, it became a rock n roll song - but then it lost, for lack of a better word, its "intimacy" (laughs). When we were recording it for this album, I didn't like what was going on - so I sat at the piano so everyone could hear what it should sound like - though I don't think it should sound like anything now (laughs). So what was recorded there, was more like the piano version. Then Eddie Nichols and I worked out those backing vocal parts. He put the doo-wop sort of stuff on it. Eddie Nichols is a very talented guy. I always thought he was just a singer, but he's a really gifted guitar player - a chord guy. If the words weren't so abusive, it would be a pretty good song.

FUN ON SATURDAY NIGHT - That's a song by a really great L.A. singer named Willie Hedon. From 1954 to '59 he was on Dootone Records and a subsidiary of Dootone called Authentic Records. He sang with a gospel group called The Five Birds and he did secular songs. He made a lot of records, but no one seemed to know who he was. That song has



a great guitar solo on it. The first time I did it with the Blasters was when Hollywood Fats was in the band. When Fats died, we stopped doing it. When we turned this project into an album, I was trying to pull up lost or forgotten Blasters songs and I remembered that one.

NO MORE NIGHTS BY MYSELF -

That's a classic Sonny Boy Williamson song. I didn't want to do that song but Johnny really likes it and Bill is always up for any blues song. It's a song we did in the Blasters over the years, but the idea of recording it was never a thought by me. I love the song, but there isn't any way to tamper with it. What are you gonna do with a song that is so classically performed by Sonny Boy Williamson? But we had to fill up a record, so we did it.



LOVE ME WITH A FEELING - We had never done that before, but we learned it for the album. Keith has great guitar skills, so we learned it for a gig we were playing with Nick Curran. Nick flipped over the song. Magic Sam originally did it, playing the guitar and singing it. It was on Cobra Records. He was quite a guy. It's in a surprisingly low register and a very difficult song to play - even the rhythm part. It'll cramp you up pretty fast. The original was short, like 1:30, so we had to extend it with a chorus.

I DON'T WANT CHA -- That's the flip side to HIGH HEEL SNEAKERS by Tommy Tucker on Checker Records. That was a monster hit. I had no idea who he was, so asked Billy Boy Arnold and he said Tommy was a lounge singer. HIGH HEEL SNEAKERS and this song were arranged with a rhythm section by some New York band he had. I imagined DONT WANT CHA was like a great Jimmy Reed song that he never did - which is always interesting to me. But the thing that struck me about that song is, after he sings "I don't want cha, I don't want cha," in the end he says: "I don't want cha two-timing me." I always thought: "Well, I just don't want you - Like period - not at all." I talked to Nick Curran about the song, he liked it so I thought we would go with that.

PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE -- I met James Brown twice. The first time was in Los Angeles when he had played at the Universal Amphitheater. I went to Slash records offices



one day and Bob Biggs (president of Slash) was talking to James Brown's lawyers about putting out a James Brown record - which never happened. Bob told me that the people at Universal amphitheater are giving a tour to James Brown. I took to the car immediately to meet him there. I arrived and there he was. It was incredible! Someone introduced me saying: "This is Phil Alvin of the Blasters." He said "Yeah Yeah, Yeah, Hi, Hi, Hi." It didn't mean anything to him, and it shouldn't have. We were given the tour. At the end, we were waiting as the staff were bringing us T-shirts. So I was standing in a circle of people with James and he started telling this story about when he and Elvis went down to see the Rolling Stones. He said: "We were sitting in the back at Ciro's (a Sunset Strip Rock 'n Roll club) in L.A. I like the Rolling Stones. So, I said to Elvis: Elvis, you know they're okay, but there's something missing Elvis, what is it?" He said that Elvis and he turned and looked at each other at the exact same time and said: "gospel." So he and Elvis started singing old gospel songs in the back of the club. "We sang songs like PRECIOUS MEMORIES and OLD BLIND BARTIMAEUS. " He turned to a friend of his



in the entourage and said: "You remember OLD BLIND BARTIMAEUS?" The guy said "No, I don't remember it." I immediately said: "I know that song." James said: "Let me see your ID." So I showed him my ID and then we both sang part of OLD BLIND BARTIMAEUS together - and I was just shakin' to be singing with James Brown. He said: "You got a lot of energy. Come back to my Hotel, we'll sing some more." But I just couldn't do it. My knees were shakin' so I copped out on him. Later on,

we were in Chicago and James came to see a Blasters show and at the end of the show he said to me: "Man, you are the second hardest workin' man in show business." I don't know how many other people he said that to, but it meant a lot to me.

Every year Art Fein holds an Elvis Tribute show in Los Angeles on Elvis's Birthday. At one of them in the 90's, James Intveld and I worked out OLD BLIND BARTIMAEUS, because it was a song Elvis never recorded, but we knew he sang it because James Brown told me that they sang it. I believed him because it's a Golden Gate Quartet song and we know Elvis's favorite singer was a guy from the Golden Gate Quartet. So we did that. At another Elvis tribute in 2007, we were planning on doing some Elvis songs but James Brown had just died so last minute as I was going to the stage, I told the band we have to do PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE for James Brown. I had never sung it before - I did in the car, but never in a show or rehearsal. I was so choked up about James Brown, we did it and it went over well. We added it to the set and everybody liked it so much. That's why we recorded it. I hope I did it some justice.

Eddie Nichols and Johnny Bazz did the background vocals. David saw me sing it and was all jazzed about that, so he added it to the Dave and Phil set. It's another ruthlessly hard song to sing. I'm glad everyone likes it. I would never sing it live while James was alive. It was one of his first records on Federal Records.

ROCK MY BLUES AWAY -- The Blasters did that song back in the late '70s, but only for a short time. It might be on that James Harman demo. (ed. note - James Harman

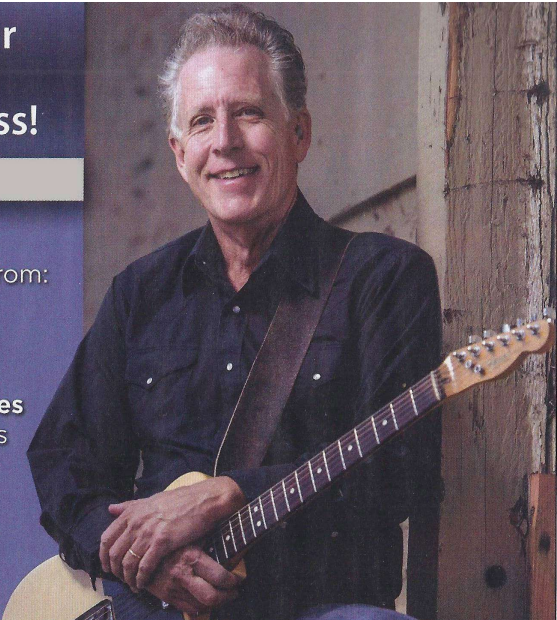
recorded the Blasters 1979 demo which got them their first record deal.) That was from a Peacock Records '78 by Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown that I had. Its a great R&B song, that has great Gatemouth guitar, that Keith does a great job on.

PENNY -- That was just a goofball song. A student of Keith's in Chicago offered free time in a studio. I didn't care if it was free, but he was a friend of Keith's, so we went down there and recorded. When we were in there, we started on that vamp. We just played a gig at Fitzgerald's. There was a girl there named Penny that was talking-up a storm saying the most pornographic stuff and we were all crackin' up about it. I don't even wanna repeat what she was saying (laughs). So when we started that vamp, I started that rap about Penny and it was a free-style. When we recorded the album, we had that guy in Chicago send us the recording to add to the album. I was really expecting to sell this EP on the road - that was before Rip Cat records wanted it to be an album. It's another song that I wish we hadn't done.

THE YODELING MOUNTAINEER -- That's a great song. I got that record from Jeffrey Lee Pierce (Gun Club). We were hangin' around listening to old 78 records. I had a Callahan Brothers record that I didn't like but Jeffrey liked it. So I traded him for J.E. Maior's YODELING MOUNTAINEER record. It was sort of a joke yodel song. So when ever people would yell at me to yodel at solo gigs, I would pull that one out. It's got such a wild yodel in it. It's another song that was played at this Nick Curran / Phil Alvin jam session in Downey that I thought of on the spot. The band picked it up and it went well enough that it stuck in my mind to include it on the album.

MARIA MARIA -- I wanted to translate a bunch of the Blasters songs to Spanish because we have such a large Spanish speaking following. A good friend of mine, Fernando Cruz, helped translate it, so I started singing it that way at Blasters shows. We were rehearsing the night before we went into the studio, prepared to do this version. I somehow started singing it in a Norteño style and it came out good. So, the next day we had Kid Ramos put a bajo sexto (a Mexican 12-string guitar) on it. It's a good translation musically. It doesn't rhyme, but it didn't rhyme in English anyway. That's part of the power of iambic pentameter in David's songwriting. Fernando and I had an argument as to whether I should

say "Marie Marie" or "Maria Maria." Fernando said it should be "Marie Marie" and that's originally how I was singing it, but once I sang it "Maria Maria" and fit that extra vowel in, I really liked it - regardless of my translator's objections. Keith does a great acoustic part even though we rarely play acoustic in the Blasters. —*am*


A photograph of Keith Wyatt, a man with grey hair, smiling and playing a light-colored acoustic guitar. He is wearing a dark blue button-down shirt. The background is a rustic wooden wall.

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California's newest American Music band playing
Hot Jazz, Blues, Dixieland and Ragtime

Like the Blasters, the California Feetwarmers play their own brand of American Music. The eight-piece band's self-titled debut CD on Shephard's Records is a lively mix of jazz, blues, Dixieland and ragtime. The album's 13 songs span the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, ranging from Scott Joplin's MAPLE LEAF RAG, written in 1899, to OOZLIN' STOMP, a song written in 2013 by California Feetwarmers' guitarist and vocalist Jeffrey Moran and banjo player Patrick Morrison. The band raised more than \$6,100 from 172 backers in a Kickstarter campaign to record the album.

The CD recalls the music Phil Alvin featured on his two solo albums – UnSung Stories and County Fair 2000. Phil has served as a mentor to the Feetwarmers and sings three songs on the CD – FRANCE BLUES, GOLDEN GATE and MICHIGAN WATER BLUES. A celebration of California, GOLDEN GATE was co-written by Al Jolson.

The other members of the group are Brandon Armstrong (sousaphone, bass), Charles De Castro (trumpet, accordion, vocals), Joshua Kaufman (clarinet, accordion, piano, vocals), Juan Carlos Reynoso (washboard, guitar, vocals), Dominique "Chief" Rodriguez (bass drum, snare drum), and Justin Rubenstein (trombone, vocals).

Phil Alvin "It's rare to find such a mixture of joy and skill that the California Feetwarmers provide. The Happiness of the music and the skill with which it's layed down is encouraging for the future of the genre. It gives me great Solice." (*comment from californiafeetwarmers.com*)

Along with singer Keb Mo', the band was nominated for a Grammy in the Best American Roots Performance category for THE OLD ME BETTER, a song from Keb Mo's BLUES Americana CD. Rosanne Cash won the award for A FEATHER'S NOT A BIRD off The River & The Thread album.

The California Feetwarmers have performed frequently around Southern California and toured Scotland earlier this year. The band performed for the BBC Radio Scotland's The Jazz House. The performance can be seen on youtube at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02hfmjv>

Brandon Armstrong discussed the formation of the band and the group's association with Phil Alvin in a recent email interview with Tom Wilk:



Question: What led to the formation of the California Feetwarmers? Did the eight members have a common love of this type of music?

Answer: The California Feetwarmers formed when a mutual friend (record collector and music aficionado Michael Kieffer) introduced two separate bands. The Feetwarmers' rhythm section approximately consists of Captain Jeffrey & his Musical Chumbuckets, which fit well with the horn section of The Blasting Company (a mostly Eastern-European brass band, which still exists). We all had a deep love for ragtime and early, grooving jazz, so we set about learning to play our favorite tunes together.

Q: How long have you been performing together? Have you been doing many concerts beyond California?



A: We began playing together as a street band in fall of 2012. In 2013 we drove to New Orleans for Mardi Gras, and that summer up the California Coast. We keep busy in Southern California, but we do find time to make trips to Las Vegas every once and a while. This January (2015) we were invited to Scotland to perform at the Celtic Connections festival in Glasgow.

Q: How did you arrive at the name California Feetwarmers?

Any other names considered?

A: The name was agreed upon quickly while playing on the sidewalk in Hollywood, and to be honest, no other names were considered. It is related to a historical line of place-named dance bands from the last century (New Orleans Feetwarmers, Harlem Footwarmers, etc.), indicating that we aim to make people happy through dancing, or at least tapping their toes.



Phil Alvin learning songs with the California Feetwarmers.

Q: How did you go about choosing songs for your CD? Was it important to include original material, such as OOZLIN' STOMP and ALWAYS GOT A HOME on the album?

A: We recorded all of the songs that we knew and had arrangements for, and chose the best ones to be on the album. We gave slight preference to songs that had never been recorded before or at least had not been recorded enough in a style to our liking, such as the three original numbers. A few of the tunes were composed by Emil Grimshaw in the 1890s, but to our knowledge there are no recordings of bands playing them.

Q: How did Phil Alvin get involved with the band? Did he give the band any advice?

A: We met Phil at Joe's Great American Bar & Grill (in Burbank, Calif.), where we frequently play and dance. He played us some great music from his record collection that we otherwise never would have heard. He taught us how crucial it is to enjoy every performance, and to always put forth our best effort.

Q: Has the band ever played live with Phil or have any plans to do so?

A: We visit with Phil more often than we perform with him, but every now and then when he comes to one of our shows, he will come and sing a few songs with us. It is usually spontaneous, though now that you mention it, it would be a good idea to plan something! The only video that I know of us performing together is from two years ago at Joe's Bar & Grill in Burbank, California, right before we decided to record together, is on Youtube. Titled: "Michigan Water - Phil Alvin & The California Feetwarmers."

Q: Did Phil help to pick the songs he sings on the CD?

A: Phil is a great fan, collector, and authority on early American music, and his exquisite taste is evident in his song choices. When he selected the songs he wanted to sing with us, we first listened to him playing





the songs by himself -- just singing and playing guitar -- and then we began to play along with him and develop a full arrangement.

Q: You used a Kickstarter campaign to raise money to make the CD. Did you think Phil's presence in the video helped your efforts?

A: We are forever grateful to all the friends, family, and fans that helped make the Kickstarter campaign

a success -- without their help, we would not have been able to record that album. A number of contributors told us they found out about us because they are fans of Phil and/or The Blasters, and we are very thankful to them, as well.

Q: Has the Grammy nomination for your work with Keb Mo' raised the band's visibility? How did you meet up with him?

A: Being nominated for a Grammy has directed much new attention towards us, and we are excited about exploring new opportunities alongside continuing to play our music in the ways and places that we already do. We met Keb' Mo' while playing at a 70th birthday party -- we noticed that he was the first person to start dancing. We all had great fun at the party, and he called a few days later because he said he had a song that he wanted to work on together in that same spirit. So we collaborated on OLD ME BETTER and soon found ourselves sitting next to him at the Grammys. Now that we've gotten to know him, we are proud to say he is as great a person as he is a musician.



Q: What's next for the California Feetwarmers in 2015? Are there plans for a new CD?

A: We are excited about touring in the beautiful Yukon Territory in summer 2015, as well as continuing our presence in Los Angeles at dance events, weddings, and concerts. We will be releasing our record on 12" vinyl in April in cooperation with Trapline Productions. We've been performing a lot, and attending the Grammys inspired us even more, so the momentum for our next recording is building quickly.

The California Feetwarmers album can be purchased at CDBaby.com. For more information on the band, visit www.californiafeetwarmers.com. --AM

The Band Answers Your Questions

American Music Reader: Has Dave Alvin ever considered performing one of his studio albums live in its entirety?

Dave Alvin: No. It doesn't interest me that much. The only one that would be fun to do in its entirety would be maybe the first Blasters record (Slash Records) or maybe King of California. I would do that.

American Music Reader: Did I hear Phil Alvin was in a band called "The Strangers" before The Blasters?

Phil Alvin: Dave Carroll (later a drummer in the Blasters from 1993-94) was in a band with me, Johnny Bazz, Bill Bateman, and a guy named Steve Barnes, a very influential guy on bass. We called the band "The Strangers." We were being managed by Buddy Banks and the great jazz bass player Al Morgan. Al taught me to sing MINNIE THE MOOCHER. At the time of The Strangers, David (Alvin) was playing flute. He was about 15 when we took him on one of his first outings to a jazz festival. David always hung out with me and my friends, but up until then had never been out all night long. The Jazz fest was in Monterey Park at a place called Jimmy's Yearly. Louis Jordon was there. His piano player had David play flute. I was crying, David played so good. That's when Lee Allen saw David and offered to give him saxophone lessons.

American Music Reader: What happened on the Border Radio soundtrack where a song was left off the first pressing?

Dave Alvin: They screwed up the mastering and repeated a song called LA FRONTERA I, where LA FRONTERA II should have been. That was on the first 10,000 copies. That first pressing had the piece of film included as a bonus. I was told the second pressing would be corrected.

American Music Reader: How did Steve Bartel come up with the design of the first Blasters album on Rollin' Rock Records:

Steve Bartel (answered in 2003): The letters were cut out and stuck on pins to give that drop-shadow. We set it up so it could be shot as one photo. Rockin' Ronnie Weiser said "I'll pay for just one shot on a cover." Cass Alvin (Phil and Dave's Dad) shot the photo of the band in the basement. The Logo on "The Face" album is mine too. I designed that.

American Music Reader: What did you think of The Blasters Live: Going Home DVD and CD?

Dave Alvin: I think it's great. Some of that stuff like Gene Taylor's DON'T LIE TO ME is amazing. I think that might be my best guitar playing, at that point, captured on record. We had just come back from a tour of Europe, so we were perfectly in sync.

American Music Reader: I have heard that the great Hacienda Brothers band, led by Chris Gaffney, had a third front man named Teddy Morgan. What happened to him?

Teddy Morgan: I met Chris at the Doll Hut in Anaheim, CA, at a gig. The drummer of the Forbidden Pigs was my drummer and he knew Gaffney. Gaffney came to the show; then we stayed at his house that night and played with his dogs. I frequently saw him in Texas at shows. We all had worked with Jeb Schoonover (Hacienda Brothers manager), who had this vision to put us all together. We recorded a 4-song demo and did some shows in California. I had stuff going on in Nashville and when the time came to record the first album with Dan Penn, I was just too busy, so it was decided they would go on without me. I would have loved to have done both The Hacienda Bros and my Nashville project. I moved to Nashville to record a record, which didn't come out, but it led to a lot of other work and contacts, producing, and writing. But Chris Gaffney! -- What I loved about him was that he was someone who could relate to everybody, but be himself. He could be friends with the punk rocker or an old man. The ladies loved Gaffney, too. There's not many people who can be like that and still act like themselves. He had that spark.

American Music Reader: Hey Keith Wyatt, can you tell me what equipment you used to record the 4-11-44 CD? It sounds like you used that Les Paul Gold Top that you've been playing at live Blasters shows for so many years.

Keith Wyatt: I didn't even own the Les Paul Gold Top/P-90 (1954 reissue) when we started the record, but it does make an appearance. I cut most of it with my '73 Strat, my original 1953 ES-295 Gibson hollow body, a 1983 Telecaster, and then the Gold Top. On one track - I think it was SLIP OF THE TONGUE, I used (producer) Bruce Witkin's Telecaster - I don't know the vintage. The rockier stuff was cut with the Les Paul, although I used the ES-295 on 4-11-44 and LOVE IS MY BUSINESS. I think we wound up keeping the Strat only on DRY RIVER. Amp-wise, it was virtually all done running from my guitar into a Fender reverb unit, then to a 1967 Fender Dual Showman head through either a 1X12 or 2X12 cabinet. I used my Matchless Amp on a couple of things, but I don't remember what. When we cut basics, we were all in the room, and I had the speaker inside a baffle box for isolation. For overdubs, I played in the control room and ran a speaker cable out into the room. Witkin used the basic SM-57 setup for close miking; he had another mic set up a few feet away for room sound, but don't remember what it was. --~~AM~~

AMERICAN MUSIC: The Blasters / Dave Alvin newsletter

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