

ISSUE #63

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

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The Blasters with Dave Alvin at the Fourth of July American Music Festival in Chicago



In This Issue: The Blasters with Dave Alvin 'Fourth of July' weekend, The Mississippi Sheiks Tribute DVD, and all the latest news

Blasters shows (Phil, John, Bill, Keith)

4/23 Las Vegas at Viva Las Vegas

Dave Alvin & Guilty Women

1/7 Portland OR at River City fest

6/18 Honesdale PA at Roots & Rhythm fest

Dave Alvin solo acoustic

1/9 Vancouver BC at Capilano PAC

3/5 Chicago IL at Old Town School Folk

4/3 Santa Monica CA at McCabes

4/3-7 Los Angeles CA on Kings of California Train Tour

4/5 Portland OR at Aladdin Theater

Dave Alvin, Cashdollar, Gerber

1/14 Sebastopol CA at Studio E

1/15 Sebastopol CA at Studio E

Gene Taylor Blues Band w/Dave Alvin

12/9 Fresno CA at Audie's Olympic

12/10 Santa Cruz CA at Moe's Alley

12/11 Winters CA at Palms

12/12 San Francisco CA at Slims

12/13 Santa Rosa CA at Last Day Saloon

12/15 San Diego CA at The Casbah

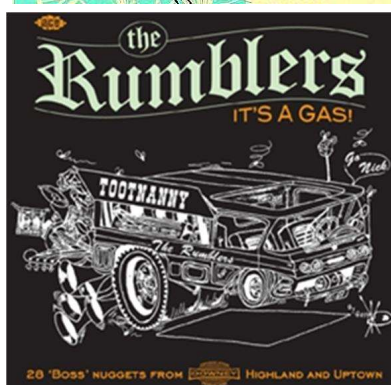
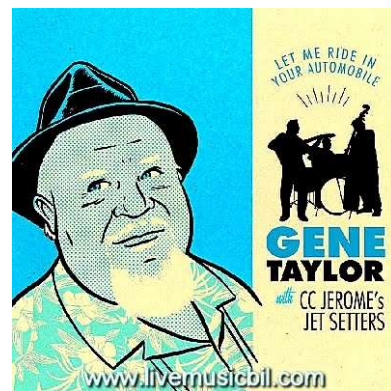
12/17 Santa Monica CA at Harvelle's

12/31 Los Angeles CA at Redwood (with special guest Phil Alvin)

Latest news: Dave Alvin is self-producing the recording of a new CD due for release in June 2011. It will not be a Guilty Women CD, but billed as Dave Alvin. Dave says: "It's all new songs, brand new, sort of a loud rockin' guitar record." WHAT'S UP WITH YOUR BROTHER is a song Dave sings with Phil Alvin and also TWO LUCKY BUMS with Chris Gaffney will be on there. Dave also plans to do another studio album with the Guilty Women in the future. -- Dave Alvin will appear on an FX network police drama TV show called Justify. He will be seen performing one of the new CD songs in a bar. It's due to air in February or March 2011. -- Gene Taylor has a new CD out on El Toro Records called Let Me Ride In Your Automobile. The Gene Taylor Blues band featuring Dave Alvin did a tour of California December 9-17, 2010 --

Blizzard Entertainment has released a follow up to the very popular Starcraft video game called Starcraft II. The Blasters can be heard doing a country version of FREEBIRD. You can hear it on youtube. There was a premiere party for the game on 2/26/10 at Fry's in Fountain Valley, CA where John Bazz played in the band that played all the music from the game's soundtrack. Phil Alvin sat in for a version of FREEBIRD. -- Yep

Roc records has released a vinyl LP version of the Guilty Women album available at the yep roc records web-shop. It's a high-quality 180 gram double vinyl LP featuring the original artwork. -- The Blasters have been preparing material for a new album to be recorded in 2011 -- Dave Alvin has contributed an intro to the liner notes of the new Rumblers collection on the Ace label called It's A Gas. -- The 1986 B & W ind-film Bad Day is now available for download at BadDayMovie.com to raise funds for charity. Dave Alvin did the music sound track and appears in the film with John Doe. Dave: "It was so low budget, I had to play all that guitar in 15 minutes nonstop, one take, because they were doing it direct to the film. That was the cheapest way of doing the soundtrack." -- Bill Bateman was featured in the May/June 2010 issue of Drumhead magazine discussing the craft of drum building for his own Bateman Drum Company. -- Dave Alvin is featured in a new book of photographs of musicians called Their Love of Music by Steve Azzato. (252 p \$65.00 Quiet Light Publishing). -- Dave Alvin has put plans on the backburner of releasing the CD Dave Alvin -- Downey Boy: A Decade of Rare and Unreleased 2000-2010 CD of his online singles. It will come out next year as a CD to sell at the shows. The newly recorded tracks for this project may instead appear on the new Yep Roc records Dave Alvin album. --AM



An "American Music" New Years Eve 12/31/10

Los Angeles -- New Years Eve at the Redwood Bar and Grill will feature the Gene Taylor Blues band show. Phil Alvin will open the show acoustic with Dave Alvin backing him up with some of his vintage acoustic guitar collection. Then at the end of the night Phil will join the Gene Taylor Blues band transforming it into the Original Blasters to ring in the New Year.

The Blasters with special guest Dave Alvin

The American Music Fest at Fitzgerald's—Berwyn, IL July 3-4, 2010

By Billy Davis

Every Fourth of July weekend, Fitzgerald's club, in the Berwyn, IL, suburb of Chicago, hosts the American Music Festival. The event runs 3 days on two stages featuring the best Americana, roots rock, country, and blues acts. Owner Bill Fitzgerald is a longtime Blasters and Dave Alvin fan and has always looked for something special for his festival when asking the Blasters or Dave Alvin to participate. In 2006, he brought in The Blasters to play two nights with special guest Gene Taylor. And in 2003, when the Original Blasters reunited, Bill Fitzgerald was the first to make an offer to get them to come east for a show which spurned a full east coast reunion tour. So for the 2010 festival, Bill asked the Blasters to play with Dave Alvin as a special guest.

Dave Alvin and Phil Alvin will be forever talked about as nearing the top of the list of famous 'battling brothers' who play in bands together. That legacy of conflict continues, but it is no longer true. The two brothers clearly have fun with the 'battling brothers' idea and play it up as part of 'the act.' Dave and Phil Alvin have always had distinctly different personalities. Dave has the hot temperament, and Phil can be relentless in his sarcasm. Dave is organized and always has all his ducks in a row while Phil prefers life on the edge, not knowing what will happen in the next minute.

Many fans are amused when the brothers argue, but I point out that when they used to have arguments, the atmosphere was very emotionally charged. I remember 2002 when Dave and Phil and the rest of the Blasters got together at a rehearsal studio in Hollywood to prepare for the Original Blasters reunion tour. It was the band, me (Billy Davis), and soundman Rick Brown. I was videotaping the rehearsals for a documentary that I eventually plan to make . . . when Dave and Phil started arguing and yelling about the key for playing SADIE BROWN. I should have kept filming, but seeing two of my favorite people go at it like that made me upset. I remember thinking: 'This reunion is over.'

Fortunately, the other band members reassured me that this was the norm with the Alvin brothers. Everyone else had experienced their arguments before, but not me. Looking back now, 2002 was a long time ago.

Now that the Alvins are in their "older age," they have seen family and friends die. These brothers and their bands are the only family they have left. It appears Phil and Dave now are catching up on that lost time. Recently, Phil has been spotted at Dave's shows to sing a song or two. The original Blasters have reunited locally in L. A. to play some unannounced shows, and Dave has even written a song for his brother and himself to sing called WHAT'S UP WITH YOUR BROTHER? They have recorded it already, and it should appear on Dave's next studio album.

— July 3, 2010 —

The Blasters played the outside tent stage in late afternoon. The plan was for the Blasters (Phil, John, Bill and Keith) to play for 30 to 40 minutes and then Dave Alvin would join them on the rest of the set. Another special guest, bluesman Billy Boy Arnold, would replace Phil Alvin for a few songs.

There was a packed crowd and the temperature was hot. The Blasters walked on stage below the stage-wide American flag. Phil picked up a piece of paper and said, "Personally, I don't use these." He was referring to never using a set list. Whenever Dave is not in the band, Phil just calls out songs to The Blasters off a barely memorized set list in his head. In the old Blasters days, Dave Alvin always made up the set list and he does again for this show.

This time, they opened with a new one to their repertoire called WELL WELL WELL a song originally done by Tiny Bradshaw. It was great to hear a song from the Blasters that I've never heard before.

It was very hot in the audience and on stage. It didn't take long for Phil to assume his iconic image from the first Blasters album:



Photo by Tina Hanagan



Photo by Sean Birm

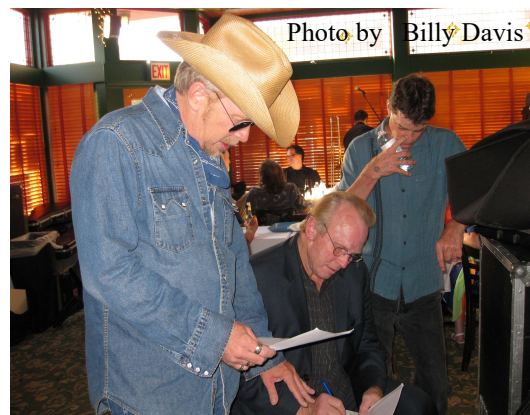


Photo by Billy Davis

Dave & Phil make the set list



Photo by Tina Hanagan



Photo by Tina Hanagan

drummer Bill Bateman. Those two seemed to be feeding off each other hitting their instruments even harder. They played THE BIG F CHORD, (also known as HEAR ME CRYIN') which was always a favorite of Dave's. The second mini set ended with AMERICAN MUSIC extended with Keith and Dave trading off guitar solos.

Phil exited the stage for a rest while bluesman Billy Boy Arnold came on. He has always been a favorite blues artist of the Blasters. In 1980 they recorded his song I WISH YOU WOULD on their first album, American Music (Rollin Rock Records). Phil sang a duet with Billy Boy on Phil's 1994 solo album County Fair 2000 (HighTone records) on the song I'M GONNA WRECK YOUR V-8 FORD. Billy Boy has made many special appearances at Blasters live shows over the years, most notably on the 2003 Blasters Reunion DVD Going Home (Shout Factory).

Billy Boy explained to the American Music fest audience that I WISH YOU WOULD was the song that "put my name on the map." After playing that one, he played his other big hit I AIN'T GOT YOU. It was cool to see Billy Boy play with the Blasters and for a little bit, it became a blues show and audience mood mellowed. But the crowd seemed to get recharged when the Blasters started the third mini-set with favorites like BORDER RADIO, DARK NIGHT and MARIE MARIE.

A funny moment happened when Phil almost messed up the lyrics during MARIE MARIE after the first solo. Dave looked over at Keith and both of them had a brief laugh over that. It was a different, but cool, dynamic to hear two guitars in the Blasters. Only rarely in the arrangements did Keith and Dave play different rhythm parts together. Mostly they played the same exact guitar riffs which fattened up the sound with extra power. For me there can never be enough loud guitars. At the end of the song Dave named all the members and their instruments, but he finished with this line: "and my big brother Phil . . . on whatever it is he does." The band left the stage.

In the encore, they played the standard Blasters encore songs of late: ROCK BOPPIN BABY and ONE BAD STUD. Phil had a dedication for the song ONE BAD STUD. Phil said, "One of the best fights I ever saw. . ." Dave with a smile distracted the audience's attention by motioning with his hands between Phil and him. That brought a laugh from the audience. Phil continued: "The best fight I ever saw was in Sunset Beach. We were all sitting at a big picture window and there was a guy lookin' for a fight. My good friend Frank Furillo, who fights like Bugs Bunny, took care of him. Frank entertained us for about 10 minutes on that guys head. So this goes out to my good buddy Frank Furillo from the Rousers who is here tonight." Frank was a founding member of the Blasters before the band had its name. (ed.note – American Music # 49, May, 2006 Frank Furillo is interviewed).

Phil usually claps along during the solo and will start shadow boxing with himself. This time he moved closer to Dave and gave him a grin while moving his fists. Dave smiled and finished his solo.

As the song finished Phil said to the audience: "I now leave you in my brother's hands." Phil leaned over to Keith and said "Fourth of July" while pointing at Dave. Phil then left the stage. Dave seemed to be changing the game plan and prompted the band to leave the stage, but he said to the audience. "Happy Fourth of July because in about 3 hours it will be."

The show appeared to be over. The audience didn't applaud or cheer for another song. Road manager and Dave Alvin guitar tech, Danny Bland started breaking down the stage. Keith Wyatt came to the stage to discon-

the dripping sweaty, grimacing face. A fan even asked Phil why he doesn't towel it off. He replied, "I can't do the Satchmo thing, (as he imitated the patting of the brow that Louis Armstrong did), It comes right back."

The Blasters finished off their mini-set with a tribute to Lee Allen with SO LONG BABY GOODBYE. On this song Phil plays Lee Allen's saxophone parts note for note on the harmonica.

Then the time came for Dave Alvin to come on stage as Phil announced playfully: "That money taker, sheet shaker, and baby maker – my brother David." Dave walked on stage with a cowboy hat and his trademark blonde Stratocaster guitar. He plugged in the guitar and launched into the rockabilly classic CRAZY BABY. Keith Wyatt took a guitar solo, and then Dave played one. It was nice to see Phil move closer next to Dave as he played the solo. Dave acknowledged and flashed a grin back.

Dave was having a great time playing with his old band. He spent a lot of time turning around to play to



Photo by Tina Hanagan



Photo by Tina Hanagan



Photo by Tina Hanagan

nect some of his gear. Five minutes passed when Phil appeared on the stage to sing a solo version of SAMSON and DELILAH. Keith Wyatt worked the crowd up prompting them to clap along.

Danny Bland meanwhile started hooking up Dave Alvin's equipment obviously knowing that there would be another full band song. The full band came to the stage and Dave looked at Phil and said in the microphone: "As Lee Allen would say. . . That was beautiful." Dave prompted some loud applause when he raised his voice and said "It's The Blasters god damn it!" and he started playing FOURTH OF JULY. Keith (still taken by surprise) had to re-hook up his equipment.

The plan was to finish with FOURTH OF JULY, but due to a misunderstanding, Phil expected Dave to sing it with Phil leaving the stage like he did for Billy Boy Arnold. So as ONE BAD STUD ended and Phil said "I leave you in my brothers hands" and walked off, the only way Dave could get Phil

to sing FOURTH OF JULY as intended, was to leave the stage and come back with him for a second encore. Dave laughs recalling: "It was just a typical Alvin miscommunication."

The band returned and Dave took the opportunity to tease Phil back and told the audience: "Phil even wore a nice shirt." This version of FOURTH OF JULY was definitely a highlight of the show. Keith Wyatt did a nice solo playing the song for the first time. Dave really wanted Phil to sing along on the chorus with him and kept motioning to Phil to come to share his microphone. Phil didn't budge, maybe being in his own zone as he strummed along. Finally Dave grabbed Phil's sleeve and pulled him over. On the last chorus they both alternated chanting "Hey baby, it's the Fourth of July." Phil started getting into it and kept singing it while Dave stepped away to just play the guitar. This was a touching moment for fans of the Alvin brothers such as myself - to see them making American Music together and bonding while celebrating the Fourth of July.

— July 4, 2010 —

The 2nd Blasters show on the following day was in the main indoor venue, and was the last act of the festival. The dimly lit stage was back-dropped with a gigantic 50-plus-year-old flag – a 48-star American flag.

Phil walked out on stage in a black suit with a bright red jacket and like the previous night did a mini-set of songs before Dave Alvin joined in. Phil joked about the set list and not being able to see it in the lighting. A fan asked if it was because of bad handwriting. Phil replied reassuringly: "No. The handwriting is perfect. It's my brother's." Phil still didn't read the set list correctly. He intro-ed the next song by saying, "Here is a tough guy song." He thought DADDY ROLLIN' STONE was next, so he was surprised when Keith Wyatt started PRECIOUS MEMORIES, but Phil fell right in perfectly. I guess that one is a tough guy song as well.

Phil always has something entertaining to say between songs. Although sometimes it doesn't appear to make sense, it probably is attached to some conversation he had with someone that night. These were some of my favorite 'Philisms' of the night: "Put the cat out. He's on fire." "They should make this shit illegal." "The Indians are attacking. Here come the wild Chop-a-tulas and the wild Magnolias."

The instrumental BONEYARD features Keith Wyatt on surf-style guitar. Phil told the audience: "Keith Wyatt is from Cleveland, Ohio. He is a pink person from the northern climate. Nonetheless, he has acquired – through the remaining part of the Blasters from Downey, the home of Surf music -- the ambition to be a surf guitar player."

Phil almost got thru the mini-set with frequently performed Blasters songs. But when it was time for SO LONG BABY GOODBYE, Phil interrupted the show to announce: "Ladies and Gentlemen, I am an idiot because I left my harmonicas backstage." Phil reassured the crowd: "There will only be a short delay. I will sing a song." Danny Bland ran backstage to find the C harmonica needed for SO LONG BABY GOODBYE. When I'm working for Phil, I always take his harmonicas from the backstage and place them onstage on his guitar amp. The previous night I asked him if he wanted the same routine. This time he said he would keep the harmonicas in his pocket. In fact, the previous night, Phil purposefully resisted removing his jacket during the set so could have the harmonicas close in his pocket. It was only when he had started SO LONG BABY with harmonica in hand, that he finally got relief from the heat and took his jacket off.

But tonight he forgot to put them in his red jacket. But these little surprises are my favorite moments in a Blasters show when they have to pull out a trick. Phil had an A harmonica ready so he called to the band: "Jimmy Reed in the key of E." We got to hear TAKE OUT SOME INSURANCE ON ME, my favorite Jimmy Reed song – one that Phil has played on rare occasions in the past. This time, though, Phil played a harmonica on the song instead of guitar – which I had never seen on that song. SO LONG BABY was played next as promised, while Dave Alvin prepared to walk on stage.



Photo by Tina Hanagan



Photo by Tina Hanagan

Phil continued his talkative mood and introduced Dave to the stage: "At this time, ladies and gentleman, let me bring to the stage the pride of Los Angeles, the pride of Downey, California, the pride of Via Amorita St., the pride of the country, the pride of the hemisphere, the pride of all parallel universes. . .my brother David." Again they launched into CRAZY BABY – a great starter song. TROUBLE BOUND was next. Keith and Dave had to decide in advance who would do the solo. They decided to both do solos, not at the same time, but concurrently. Dave took his first but as he was finishing and expecting Keith to start his solo, Phil made a motion to cut off the solo with the next lyric verse. Dave quickly patted him on the arm to stop, and pointed at Keith. Keith was able to get his solo in a new arrangement of the song - Perfect execution.



The set was the same as the previous day just in a different order. The only exception was I'M SHAKIN replaced DARK NIGHT. In Billy Boy Arnold's spot, he played the two previous night's songs and added one more: Willie Dixon's THE SAME THING.

ONE BAD STUD was longer tonight with more extensive solos. Dave Alvin led the band into a quiet down part in the solo like he has always done in Guilty Men shows during AMERICAN MUSIC. It's a technique used to bring a dramatic rise to the song when it returns to full volume and intensity. The Blasters never use that effect in their songs. They finished the show with Phil singing the Spanish lyrics to MARIE MARIE. They returned for their first encore and Phil dedicated ONE BAD STUD to Bill Fitzgerald.

Coming back for the second encore, Phil reached the microphone first and in a wise guy tone announced: "Yesterday was the Fourth of July (ed. note -- because by this point in the set it was after midnight). I heard this song on the 3rd of July and will now on the 5th of July." Dave chimed in: "And if you're lucky, Phil, you will hear it every God damn day of your life!" The crowd cheered on Dave's side so Phil added: "I'll sing it every God Damn day is right (as Phil affectionately patted Dave's shoulder)." Dave then faked an onstage argument and said: "Don't give me shit. I'm workin' here for you tonight. Tonight and last night and that's it and I'm done!" Phil continued the fun: "Come on, David. You can't get upset because some people call you Phil sometimes?" Dave: "That's why I wear the hat." Phil looked at the audience and said: "I guarantee I get called Dave more times than he gets called Phil." Dave retorted: "Well. . . are you hanging out at schools for the blind?"

Phil looked at the audience and prepared to go into a story: "A guy the other day told me that. . ." Dave immediately cut him off in the mic and said: "No no no no no! You just stand right there." Dave knew this could go on forever. The audience was laughing and having a ball listening to this routine. Dave: "You just stand right there. You're the guy wearing the red suit!" Everybody started laughing at that comment, including Phil, and they went into FOURTH OF JULY.

Dave got Phil to sing the chorus yesterday. Today he did it again but also was able to get the whole audience singing along to it. Cocktail napkins flew everywhere like it was New Year's Eve led by Bill Fitzgerald. What a great weekend. It was truly a Blast with the Blasters. — **AM** Thanks to Tina Hanagan for her great photos that accompany this story. You can see more of her photos and another review of these shows at <http://tinahanagan.com/2010/07/08/fourth-of-july-weekend/> Also check out a great website she contributes to called NoFightin.com which covers The Red Devils, Lester Butler and California Blues Rock and Roots Music.

Phil Alvin records with Nick Curran

Nick Curran and the Lowlifes have released a new album called Reform School Girl (Electro Groove Records). It includes a duet with Phil Alvin on FLYIN' BLIND.

Phil Alvin: I met Nick six years ago at a jam session. But more recently a friend brought him over to my house for one of our parties, and I remembered him. We immediately started playing some country blues and Gary Massey came over to play. Gary was gonna be the guitar player in the Blasters when we started the band, but I couldn't find him, so luckily we had David. Anyway, Nick had heard of Gary Massey because Gene Taylor, who is also friends with Nick, told him that Massey played like Jimmy Reed. So after Nick had a Viva Las Vegas gig, he wanted to come back to Downey and jam with us and particularly Gary Massey -- and listen to old records.

In October 2009, Nick flew me out to Austin to record a song on his new album. We were driving over the Congress ave. bridge – It's well known that bats live under the bridge. I was thinking about bats (laughs) and just said out loud "Flyin' Blind." So I started writing a song around that title. The whole theme of the album was about the 'youthful I-don't-care-attitude' thing, so the song fit. I think it's a pretty good song.

The Mississippi Sheiks Tribute Concert DVD by Tom Wilk

The Mississippi Sheiks Tribute Concert - Live in Vancouver (Black Hen Music) gives Dave Alvin fans a chance to hear him perform two songs commercially unavailable elsewhere.

Filmed over two nights in March 2010, the 84-minute DVD honors the legacy of the Mississippi Sheiks, an influential blues band of the 1930s made up of members of the Chatmon family. The band's songs have been recorded by a variety of artists over the years, including Ray Charles, Cream, and Howlin' Wolf.

Bob Dylan featured two of the group's songs (the title track and BLOOD ON MY EYES) on World Gone Wrong, his 1993 Grammy-winning album of blues and folk covers. "Muddy Waters said he would have walked 10 miles to see them," said Steve Dawson, who organized the DVD and put together a 2009 tribute CD (Things About Comin' My Way - A Tribute to the Music of the Mississippi Sheiks).

In addition to Dave and Guilty Women singer Christy McWilson, other artists on the DVD include John Hammond, Alvin Youngblood Hart, Geoff Muldaur, Van Dyke Parks and Robin Holcomb. Their entertaining performances, backed by a five-piece house band, bring the Sheiks' songs to a new generation of listeners and demonstrate their timelessness and appeal.

Dave and Christy perform a lively duet of WHO'S BEEN HERE, a song written by Bo Carter, whose real name was Armenter Chatmon. Dave had recorded Carter's ALL 'ROUND MAN on Out in California, his 2002 live album with the Guilty Men. Both songs have a play-

fulness and sexual suggestiveness.

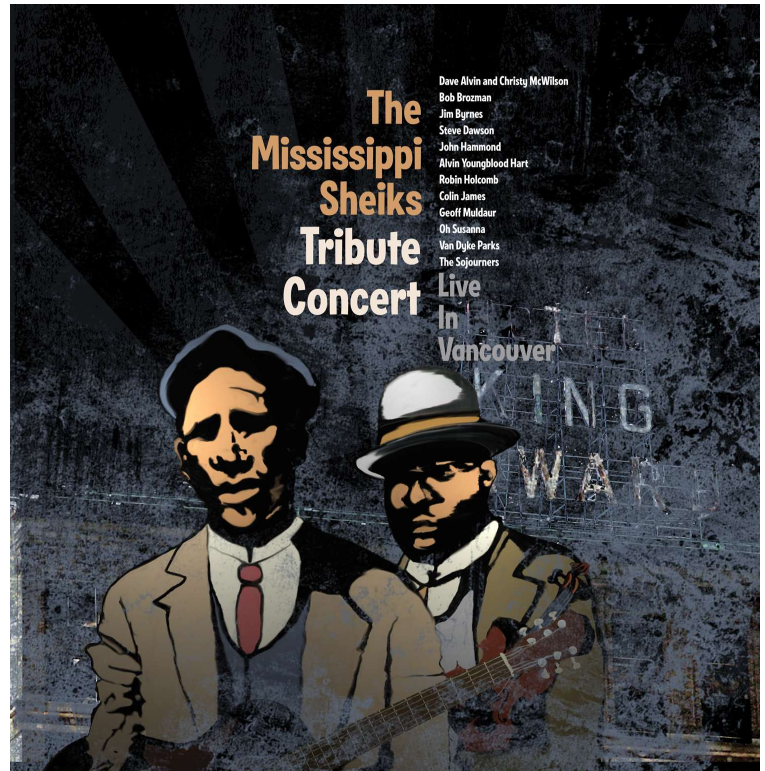
In recent concerts with the Guilty Women, Dave has added WHO'S BEEN HERE to his sets in an amplified arrangement that adds to the song's excitement.

Dave plays acoustic guitar and sings a verse of SITTING ON TOP OF THE WORLD, the Sheiks' best known song, in the concert finale that features all the performers on the bill.

The DVD opens with a six-minute prologue that features the artists discussing the project and rehearsal footage, including a clip of Dave going over WHO'S BEEN HERE with the house band.

For Dave, the concerts were an enjoyable experience. "It was a good couple of nights, a chance to see John Hammond and Geoff Muldaur and catch up with old friends," he said in an August interview.

For more information, visit www.blackhenmusic.com



Dave Alvin and Tom Russell – Tall True Tales

Singer songwriters Dave Alvin and Tom Russell got together recently to perform together. These two old pals reminisced about each other's adventures. Let's listen in:

Tom: I used to say that when I moved to El Paso, Dave was one of my first visitors. I was so fascinated that you could irrigate your property right off this river that came down from Colorado, so I was out there turning all the cranks and flooding my land and digging everything up. Dave was standing on the porch like this (with arms crossed and glaring), holding a beer. He imitates Dave with a deep and exaggerated gruff voice: "Do you want me to stop you before you ruin your lawn?"

Dave: That's true. But the one thing wrong with that story or to make it more colorful and accurate: it was one of the worst hangovers of my life. I just went over to hang out at Tom's house. I was wearing

expensive boots and Tom said: 'Do you want to help me dig these irrigation trenches?' (Dave hesitates sarcastically). . .Sure! So I lost a good pair of boots but he dug that trench right towards an adobe house. Water and adobe. . .not a good combo.
Tom: It used to be a three story house.
Dave (Laughs) That's a subterranean split level thing.

Dave: I was living in Nashville in a delusional state. Tom and I have a mutual friend, Katy Moffatt, who said to me, 'You have to hear this guy Tom Russell.'

The publishers had a cassette of Tom that I took home to listen to. The first song I heard was BLUE WING. It was such a great song I said, 'I'm gonna get out of this town.' I recorded it on my King of California album and over the years many people come up to me and think that I wrote it. I have to be honest with you, Tom, a lot of times I do not correct them.

Tom: That's fine.

Dave: It makes me a little upset that a guy from Inglewood wrote it, but what the hell.

Tom: Now I have to be honest: when I wrote it and recorded it years ago, I did it as a country thing. When I came into Dave's King of California recording session, I was blown away by the way he was doing it. Dave made this song his own, and now I do it the way Dave recorded it.

Dave Alvin stories from the road

Krazy and Ignatz

Dave: This is a wonderful country we live in and it's given the world many beautiful, wonderful things. One of the things it's given us besides the music and Mark Twain is comics - comic books and comic strips. One of the greatest comic writer/ artists was George Herriman, a Creole cartoonist from New Orleans who lived in L.A. on top of a mountain. He doesn't just border on genius, he is genius. He did Krazy Kat and Ignatz in the teens, thirties, and forties. I am a huge fan of Krazy Kat.

Ignatz for those of you who don't know, was a mouse and Krazy was a cat. It was a wonderfully surreal, borderline Shakesperean back alley world of Krazy Kat that took place out in Coconino County, Arizona, in this amazing landscape that he drew. Krazy loved Ignatz the mouse, but Ignatz had anger issues and mixed feelings towards the cat. Ignatz's standard gag would be to pick up a brick and bean him or her, because Krazy was either gender - seriously. When she would get hit by the brick, Krazy took that as a token of love - which says something about the times that the comic was written in. But it also goes onto many other levels. So Cindy and I cut this instrumental that I wrote, as a bonus track for the Guilty Women CD called KRAZY AND IGNATZ.

KRAZY AND IGNATZ is available in the yeproc.com artist store listed under Guilty Women bonus tracks.

From The Editor: — The Blasters newsletter has discontinued the print edition /snail mail version in favor of a free web version only. There is a limited number of print editions that go out to close out pre-paid subscriptions. No new subscriptions are being accepted.

— The Blasters newsletter no longer has an official mailing address as the PO Box in Woodhaven NY is no longer valid. If you need to send something please contact me at davistb@aol.com and I will provide an address.

— On a personal note, I apologize for the newsletter updates not being on time lately. I am in the process of moving the Blasters Newsletter headquarters out of New York City to Long Island. Hopefully soon I'll be back on a regular newsletter and update schedule. — Billy Davis

AMERICAN MUSIC: The Blasters / Dave Alvin newsletter

editor/writer: Billy Davis editorial assistant: Craig Frischkorn contributing writer Tom Wilk

Publishing 4 issues quarterly. www.Blastersnewsletter.com

Dave Alvin exclusive digital download tracks discography Part 3

In summer of 2007, Dave Alvin launched DaveAlvin.net. It opened up opportunities for Dave to further reach out to his fans. He began releasing exclusive bonus songs available only on the internet. It was Announced: "Throughout his career, Dave Alvin has periodically paid tribute to songwriters/performers that have inspired him by recording his favorite songs by these artists. Dave has many of these and other self penned gems hidden away in his personal archives. He is happy to now have the opportunity to make some of these tracks available to you exclusively through yeproc.com and davealvin.net. To accompany each song's release, Dave has a few words for us about why he felt compelled to record it.."

Starting in American Music #54 (August 2007) Part 1 of this discography appeared for the first group of songs he released: PEACE, and HIGHWAY 61. Then Part 2 in #61 (January 2010). Here is part 3 of Dave's descriptions of the exclusive tracks available on his website:

These digital singles are available for download on Yeproc.com in the Yep Roc Web Shop for just \$0.99.

Dave Alvin and Chris Gaffney – "Two Lucky Bums (Memorial Edition)"

Release April 2008

My other big brother, Chris Gaffney passed away Thursday morning, April 17, 2008.

I had another song prepared for this month's download but with the recent sudden and tragic passing of my best friend Chris Gaffney, it just seemed proper to re-release TWO LUCKY BUMS. Nothing could better express what Chris's friendship meant to me than this duet I wrote for the two of us.

This version is a bit different than the previously released one. Just a few days before Chris died, I added two old pals of ours to the track, David Jackson on the stand up bass and Don Heffington on the drums. Both musicians have played on various recordings and in various barrooms with Chris and I over the years so it made sense to fill out the track a little bit with their subtle but invaluable assistance. Our trusted engineer, Craig Parker Adams, did a beautiful re-mix that brought much more dynamics and color to the track while keeping its essential intimacy intact.

I really don't know what else to say right now, but I feel that I have to say something. First of all, I want to again thank everyone that sent messages to Chris and donated funds to his cause. It means more than you'll know to Chris, his family and me. We are still raising money at www.helpgaff.com to help with the existing medical bills and other various expenses including a forthcoming memorial service.

After twenty-some years I have thousands of memories of Chris. Through those years of songs, laughs, countless barrooms, eternal highways, broken hearts, screw-ups, bail outs, close calls, busted strings, elusive dreams, flat tires, stalled engines, hard hangovers, bad gigs, great gigs, in between gigs, tragedies, triumphs, secret jokes, bad TV, worse food and now, tears, Gaffney always had my back. I never had to worry about nothing or nobody if Gaffney was with me. I don't know what I ever did to deserve it but, God, I was blessed to have Chris Gaffney as my best friend.

Chris's and my friend, B.J. in Omaha, said it best for me in a email yesterday. She said that I now have a "wild angel looking out for me." Yeah, I do believe that's true.

I'll still see you in Cuervo, brother.

Dave, April 20, 2008

Dave Alvin – "Man Walks Among Us"

Release: May 2008

The first record I ever owned was "El Paso" by Marty Robbins. I was four or five years old and forced my mother to buy it for me after hearing the song on the radio. The first mechanical thing I ever learned to operate was our family record player just so I could play "El Paso" over and over and over and over again. To this day if I'm in a barroom or a diner, and "El Paso" is on the jukebox, it's a damn safe bet what the first song I'm punching in will be. I often wonder whether the reason that I'm drawn to writing narrative style songs is based on the fact that "El Paso" (perhaps tied with Chuck Berry's "Memphis") is my favorite song of all time. A perfect piece of songwriting.

Many people tend to think that "El Paso" is a traditional old West folk ballad or was written by some extremely talented yet anonymous Nashville songwriter. Nope. It was written by the man who sang it, Marty Robbins. He was not only one of the greatest singers/performers in country music history but he was also one of country music's (or any kind of music's) greatest songwriters. Born and raised in Arizona, Marty had a deep

emotional feeling for the West and its history, myths and landscape and that connection was expressed in the lyrics he wrote in some of his best songs. Which brings me to my second favorite song that Marty Robbins wrote, "Man Walks Among Us." Originally released on his 1963 album, *The Gunfighter Returns*, "Man Walks Among Us" is a bittersweet meditation on the tragic changes mankind was bringing to his beloved desert and it's non-human inhabitants.

When I first heard the lyrics to "Man Walks Among Us" years ago, I was completely blown away. Not only was someone expressing thoughts and emotions that I'd always felt but, what really floored me, was that these very personal sentiments were coming from Marty Robbins. Marty Robbins, country music icon and... tree hugger?!?! Or cactus hugger to be perhaps more accurate. While I may be exaggerating the tree hugger thing a little bit, Marty's wise and tender lyrics predate the modern environmental movement, and our society's slow acknowledgment of the damages to our fragile ecosystems, by several years if not decades. I'd always admired Marty Robbins not only for his songwriting prowess and stunning voice, but also because (like Ray Charles, Elvis, Sam Cooke and Bob Dylan) he was always willing to explore various musical styles and not be hemmed in by musical genres or people's artistic expectations of him. Honky tonk, rock-a-billy, cowboy songs, pop ballads, blues, spirituals, even Hawaiian and calypso songs are all part of his recorded legacy. But after hearing "Man Walks Among Us," I also admire him for composing, in my opinion, one of the best environmental songs ever written.

Joining me on this track are some fellow tree huggers of one sort or another. Former forest ranger and current musical visionary, Greg Leisz on pedal steel and electric guitar, former Guilty Man Rick Shea is doing the pretty acoustic guitar work and harmony vocals, former Roger Miller/Hoyt Axton musical co-conspirator David Jackson plays the acoustic bass while former drummer for the likes of Emmy Lou Harris, Lucinda Williams, Big Mama Thornton and Bob Dylan, Don Heffington is keeping everything in time with his unique and sensitive drum styling. The track was recorded and mixed by the always patient and sonically astute, Craig Parker Adams at his Winslow Court Studio.

Normally I don't do this kind of thing but if you want to check out some environmental groups I support, I sincerely recommend looking into The Nature Conservancy, The Center For Biological Diversity and The Wildlands Conservancy to name a few. If you ever do run into me out on a hiking trail in the desert or in the hills, it's a damn safe bet what song I'll be humming to myself. - Dave Alvin, April 15, 2008

Dave Alvin – "Who Will Buy The Wine?"

Release: June 2008

"Who Will Buy the Wine?" is an outtake of sorts from *West of the West*, my tribute CD to California songwriters. Its composer was Billy Mize, who is one of the true pioneers of West Coast country music and the Bakersfield sound in particular. A true unsung honky-tonk hero.

Gerald Haslam, the noted California novelist/essayist/ historian and Bakersfield native, told me that local folks, back in the early 1950s, thought Billy Mize was supposed to be the Bakersfield kid that would make it big in country music. Not Merle Haggard or Buck Owens. Handsome and multi-talented, Billy Mize was a singer, songwriter, sideman and television personality (I still remember seeing him on Cal Worthington's old Saturday evening country music shows and on the Town Hall Party back when I was a boy) who seemed to have all the right ingredients for big time stardom. Despite his success on the west coast country music scene, Billy Mize never became as big a star as Merle or Buck would become in the 1960s.

Who can say why some people become big stars while others don't? I certainly have no idea why, believe me. All I know is that Billy Mize wrote one of my favorite (if not my favorite) drinkin' and cheatin' songs, "Who Will Buy the Wine?" It was a big country hit for Charlie Walker in the late 50s and has been subsequently recorded by a Honky Tonk Who's Who including Jerry Lee Lewis, Ernest Tubb and Merle Haggard.

Besides paying tribute to Billy Mize by recording his song, I also wanted to tip my hat to a world that has vanished to a great extent. From the 1940s up into the early 90s, there was a thriving country barroom scene on the southeast side of Los Angeles County where I grew up. Joints like The Tumbleweeds in Bell Gardens, Nashville West in El Monte, The Dodge Saloon in Norwalk and The Blue Bayou in Bellflower. Long Beach had more than it's share of clubs with places like George's Round-up, Hollywood By The Beach, Nashville Beach and, up on Signal Hill maybe the greatest of them all, Bonnie Price's Foothill Club. For many years Billy Mize and The Tennesseans was the house band at the Foothill and more than once, after I turned 21, I

stopped by to catch one of his sets and have a beer or two. These were neighborhood clubs that catered to the local blue collar factory and oil field workers and what was left of the old dairy and agricultural workers in the area. As tastes changed in country music and the customers and jobs moved on or, sadly, as the old timers passed away so did these honky-tonks and the music scene they supported.

Many of the musicians I've worked with over the years (Chris Gaffney, Greg Leisz, Rick Shea and Gene Taylor to name a few) cut their teeth in these joints as young sidemen to countless, nameless bandleaders. I was fortunate to have Greg (pedal steel) and Rick (electric guitar and harmony vocals) join me in recreating a lost world that they were a small part of. The superb rhythm section of David Jackson on bass and Don Hefington on drums (no strangers to the honky-tonks) added the necessary country shuffle groove while Craig Parker Adams did his usual stellar job recording this at his Winslow Court Studio. While I consider myself a rock and roll/folk/blues guy, country music, and especially the kind played by Billy Mize in the local bars of my youth, has always had an immense influence on me and my songwriting. So, anyway, who is going to buy the wine? See you at the Foothill. - Dave Alvin

Dave Alvin – "Albuquerque"

Release: July 2008

This version of "Albuquerque" is a tribute of sorts to my best friend and spiritual advisor, the late Chris Gaffney. For many years this old Link Davis Sr. song was a staple of Chris's barroom gigs with his great band, The Cold Hard Facts. I dug this funky, little blues song so much that Chris and I talked through the years about recording it together but, sadly for whatever reason, we never got around to it. Oh well.

During a recent rehearsal with my band, The Guilty Men, we started reminiscing about Chris and before long we were jamming on "Albuquerque" just for fun. Fortunately, we were practicing at Craig Parker Adams's Winslow Court Studio and Craig recorded the whole thing. Drummer Steve Mugalian and bassist Gregory Boaz are the rock solid rhythm section and Jack Rudy is blowing the tough harmonica. Guitarist Chris Miller is playing some soulful R+B licks while I'm doing my Freddie King imitation on the wah-wah guitar.

Unfortunately, Joe Terry, the keyboardist for The Guilty Men, wasn't able to be at the rehearsal. Also, sadly, Gaffney wasn't there either.

"Albuquerque" was written by Link Davis Sr. He was a veteran musician/singer who started out playing western swing but, throughout his long career from the late 40's until the 60s, he cut records in just about every roots music style from Cajun (his biggest hit was the Cajun classic, "Big Mamou"), blues, rockabilly, folk and country. My kind of guy. Most of the bars mentioned in the song are long gone except for the Caravan East on Central Avenue (the old Route 66) on the east side of Albuquerque. Maybe some night, I'll run into you at the Caravan East and we can have a beer or two and raise a toast to Link Davis Sr. and Chris Gaffney.

- Dave Alvin, July 16, 2008