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The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

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Dave Alvin's 25th Anniversary of Museum of Heart

Latest News: Dave is contributing a chapter to More Fun in the New World: The Unmaking and Legacy of L.A. Punk by John Doe and Tom DeSavia. The book will be published by Perseus Books on June 4. It's the follow-up to Under the Big Black Sun: A Personal History of L.A. Punk that came out in 2016. – Phil Alvin's 1986 solo album Un "Sung Stories" has been re-released on CD by UK record label Big Beat (distributed by Ace Records). It includes new liner notes by Tony Rounce. – The September, 2018 issue of Modern Drummer featured a 5 page feature story on Guilty Ones' drummer Lisa Pankratz. —
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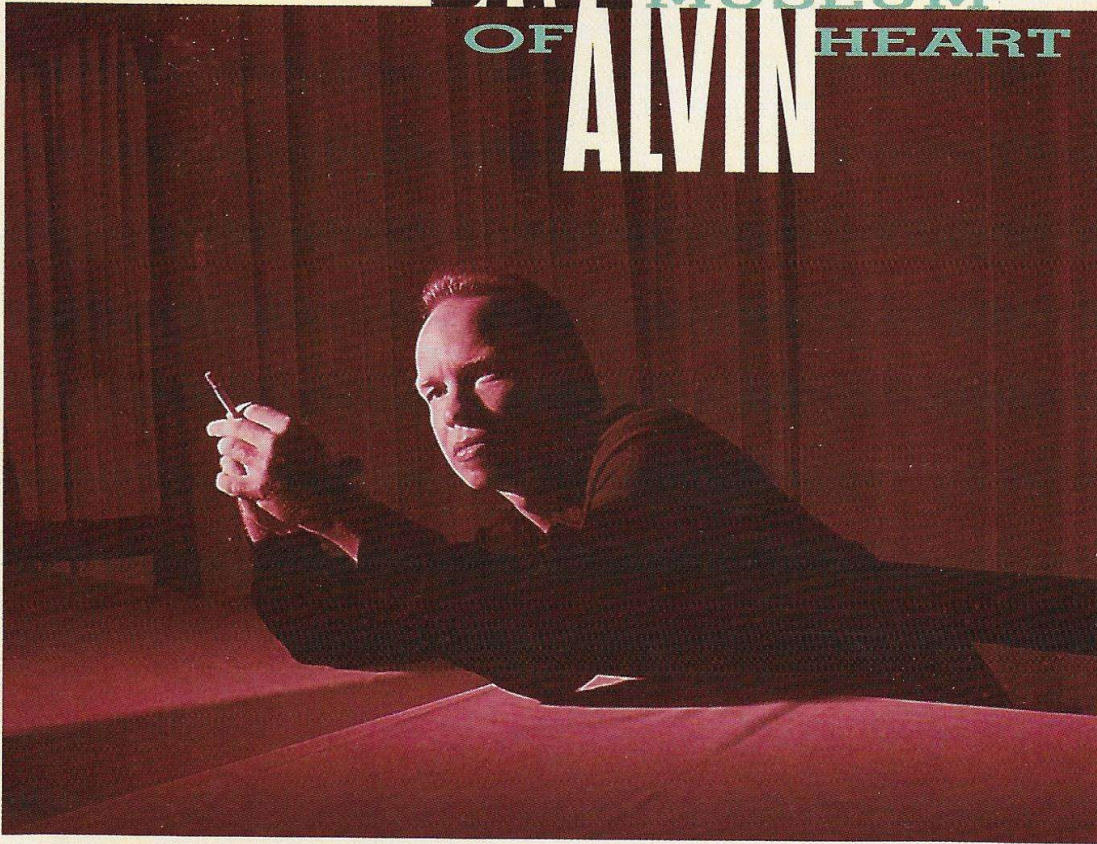
A reunion of Steve Berlin playing with the Blasters at The Observatory, in Santa Ana, CA on 12/27/18. John Bazz: "Phil invited Steve to play with us on 'So Long Baby Goodbye,' 'I'm Shakin' and 'One Bad Stud.' It was great!"

photo by John Bazz

This Issue: Dave's 1993 Museum of Heart album, Dave & Jimmie Dales' 2018 tour, Phil's guitar lost and found, Flesh Eaters CD review, and Phil Alvin's Solo Holiday Hayride.

25th Anniversary

DAVE MUSEUM OF ALVIN HEART



By Billy Davis

In the solo discography of Dave Alvin, the date September 20, 2018, marked the 25th Anniversary of the release of his third solo CD, Museum of Heart (1993, HighTone). As a solo artist, he had previously recorded Romeo's Escape (1987, CBS/Epic) followed by his first HighTone release, Blue BLVD (1991).

After the release of Blue BLVD, for the next two years Dave did some hard touring—playing solo, duo, and with a full band: the Skeletons. Dave Alvin remembers the Skeletons road manager brought them together: “He was working with my manager Shelley Heber, so they paired us up. I knew of the Skeletons and that they were a great band. I didn’t know if I really could afford to pay a band to stay on the road with me. We toured, and our deal was that we divided all the money up equally at the end of the tours. I remember getting home after three months, and I made \$345: and I was stoked! That was great compared to my first solo band - the All Nighters tours that lost so much money (laughs). I was in debt for a long time.”

At that point Dave had a band and a good record label, so it was time to do another album.

Dave: “I remember playing the Paradise in San Francisco (3/7/92) with the Skeletons and had lunch with Larry Sloven (president) of HighTone Records. I said, ‘May I please make another record?’ He said, ‘Of course you can.’ I had written the song MUSEUM OF HEART on the road and at the soundcheck that day, I taught the song to the Skeletons.”

The production team was the same as the previous album: Chris Silagyi, Bruce Bromberg, and Dave Alvin. Dave: “Bruce Bromberg is really easy going and relaxed. I was honored to be working with him because of his work with Lightnin’ Hopkins and all the people like that. Silagyi I knew from a power pop band from California called 20/20 from the 1980’s. He was more of a pop guy in his style. Bruce and I, together, would make a very rootsy record; Chris was there to get us radio airplay. We thought the team worked well on Blue BLVD, but when we got to Museum of Heart, we had major differences of opinion. Near the end of the record, it came to a head with Bruce and Chris. Chris walked off and quit. Knowing what I know now, I’d love to go back and redo that record. On some of those songs, for lack of a better word, I chickened out. There were arrangement ideas I had, that I held back because of the war of words between Chris and Bruce. When I hear the record now, I can go back and remember the arguments. Two albums in my life that would like to do over are; the Blasters Non-Fiction and then Museum of Heart – except the song MUSEUM OF HEART and THIRTY DOLLAR ROOM, which I think is bitchin!”

— *The Songs* —

MUSEUM OF HEART

I imagined this as a Blasters song. It’s a shame I wrote it in a period of time when we weren’t speaking. Phil would have sung the hell out of it. I imagined Lee Allen right away on it. I had Juke Logan play harmonica on it, so it sounded like SO LONG BABY GOODBYE. I said, ‘Let’s just make this a Blasters song.’ The lyrical inspiration for the song came from getting my heart busted up – pure and simple. I call it the Blasters twist. I write sad words with happy music.

DON’T TALK ABOUT HER

This is where I chickened out. I was close to finding my voice, but I hadn’t found it yet. If I did, I could have sung it

Museum of Heart 1992 lyrics

I painted a beautiful picture of a love that never died
It’s a portrait of two lovers standing side by side
She looks so happy and he’s so full of pride
And in my beautiful painting, they never say goodbye
So I’m looking at you even though were far apart
As I hang another painting in my museum of heart

Well I painted another picture in several shades of grey
A portrait of two lovers with so much left to say
One lover reaches the other and begs him not to stay
But in my other painting, one lover walks away

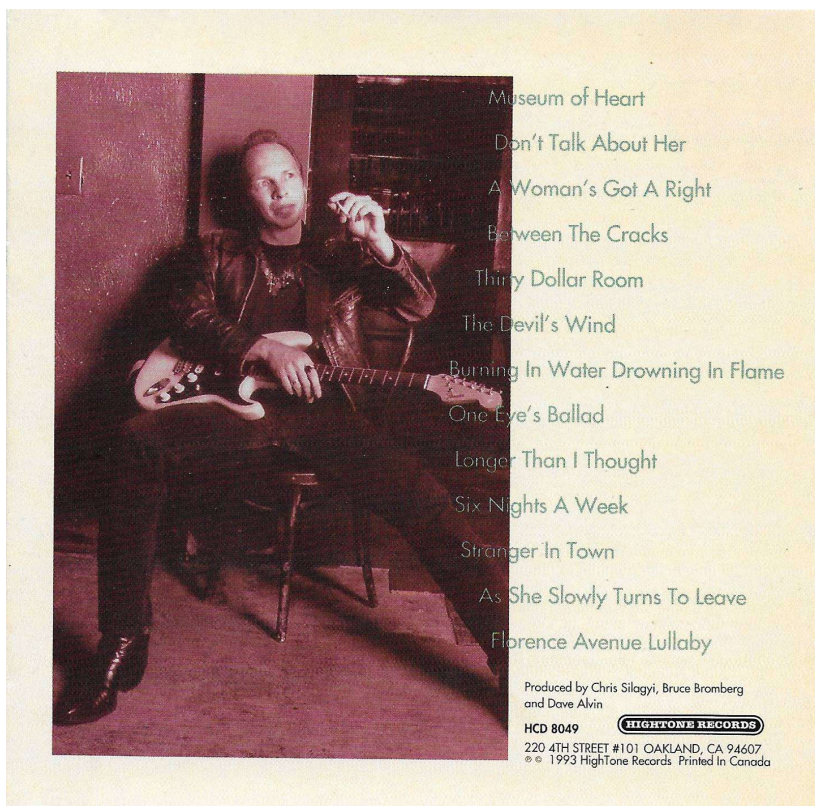
My paintings look like photographs real as they can be
And I never need a model because I paint from memory

Well I painted my greatest masterpiece
but it’s one that I hate to see
Its a portrait of two lovers and they both look so happy
They’re standing side by side and neither one will ever leave
But in my greatest masterpiece no lover looks like me

the way I wrote it. In the Blasters days, I wrote songs, and they always got changed in rehearsal. This happened here, but I allowed it to be changed by Chris Silagyi. We recorded at Leon Haywood's studio. Leon was an R&B star in the 70's and knew everyone in the neighborhood – I could have used an R&B vocal quartet – If only I knew the Calvanes back then to sing backup. I wrote it to be a rhythm and blues soul ballad, like a Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions song. But the way it came out was more like it could have been on the Blasters Hard Line album. I wrote that with a guy named Fontaine Brown, who was in a band called Southwind in the early 70s. He was another writer at my publishing company (Bug Music). He had made a record for Checker back when he was 16 years old and playing with Hubert Sumlin and Howlin' Wolf's band. He went under the name: Doug Brown. He's from Detroit with R&B roots, but a very mysterious guy who you don't hear from for long periods of time. I'm not sure where he is now.

A WOMAN'S GOT A RIGHT

This one came out exactly as I wanted it to. I remember Bruce Bromberg had just come off producing a big hit for Robert Cray, and I wanted to impress him, so I tried some things on guitar, and he popped up and said, 'Who is that!' This song became a staple in the Guilty Men sets in the 90s. I wrote it to be a bluesy R&B Soul song. Fontaine Brown is credited as a co-writer. I came off the road and wanted help in writing songs. The co-writers were more like sounding boards for the ideas I came up with. I didn't want to be too whiny. There are times when writers can go overboard, and you need an opinion.



BETWEEN THE CRACKS

Tom Russell and I wrote that in NYC in an apartment near the United Nations building. It was Tom's girlfriend Sylvia Tyson's apartment, and she was adamant about no smoking. It was 25 floors up and we had a window that opened like 3 inches so I just hung my hand out dropping ashes on the FDR Drive (laughs). We got the basic chorus and verses down, and then over the next few months we refined it. Tom cut it: then I re-cut it on West of The West as a tribute to Tom. I had Greg Leisz do the solos because this was more country and he's got those country licks down.

THIRTY DOLLAR ROOM

Bruce Bromberg is credited as a co-writer under the name D. Amy. I never got a reason why he used an alias. Maybe some legal reasons from years ago. I don't know. Bruce gave me the title then I wrote the choruses and verses. I had a night off in Chicago and was in a hotel near O'Hare airport, so I finished the song. It was one of those nights of regrets about being in this business.

It's a minor key blues song but not a typical blues structure. We tried it a few different ways with Don Falzone, Rick Solem and Greg Leisz. One version was kind of funky. Don liked it, but I thought it was too funky for the lyrics. I said this has to be dark.

Lee Allen plays tenor sax and Michael Rose plays baritone sax. I'm really proud of the guitar solo I did, because it's so odd.

I don't play it live much. We worked it up with the Guilty Women in 2009, but never played it out. We've done it with the Guilty Ones a few times. I've reached the point of having so many songs that people want to hear. I can't get away with not playing certain songs like FOURTH OF JULY or MARIE MARIE - or else people will want their money back. It's hard to fit in new songs from a recent album, our classics and then rare cuts.



THE DEVIL'S WIND

It's an R&B blues song. I remember that we recorded all the guitars and then thought it needed some color. Greg suggested using the National steel to make it more bluesy and I brought Katy Moffatt in to have a mysterious woman wind voice.

BURNING IN WATER DROWNING IN FLAME

It's titled from a Charles Bukowski book and just perfectly explains what it's like when your heart is smashed (laughs) - but I was trying to be humorous about the pathetic-ness of being heartbroken. Doug MacLeod is a real witty blues songwriter who put in some

words.

Rick Solem is a great piano player that I met through James Intveld. I was producing the soundtrack for Cry Baby. I wanted to use Gene Taylor on a song called HIGH SCHOOL HELL-CATS, but he wasn't around. There are guys who can fake 50s piano, but not on this track.

James was doing the vocals and recommended Rick. He came down, played, and I thought he was great. Soon after, I put together The Guilty Men with Gregory Boaz and Bobby Lloyd Hicks.

ONE EYE'S BALLAD

There was a stray cat that was hanging around outside the backdoor of my place, and I got to be friendly with him. He died on a day that I was heading to the studio, so I wrote that in my head on the drive there. I played it for Lee Allen, and he added the melody to it.

LONGER THAN I THOUGHT

Another song that caused friction between the producers. What came out was a mixture of our concessions. It has a wah-wah guitar on there to make it sound 70s, but I really wanted it to be like an early 60s soul ballad. Donald Lindley played drums on most of the album, but became busy playing with Lucinda Williams. So I got Bobby Lloyd to fly out, record drums on the rest of the album and sleep on my floor (laughs).

SIX NIGHTS A WEEK

We wrote it in my living room with Chris Gaffney. Chris had been doing just that, playing 6 nights a week with his band in places like The Upbeat in Garden Grove – which wasn't upbeat at all (laughs), while I was just barely breaking-even out touring with the Skeletons. It's what we all do or did. The song is about singing songs to a person you wish would walk through the door at one of these gigs. Chris recorded it more 'country' on his Mi Vida Loca album (HighTone records, 1992). We differed on a bridge of the song, so we changed each of our versions. I had Leon Haywood playing

Katy Moffatt

Along with Greg Leisz, Katy Moffatt holds the distinction of being the only artists to appear on Dave Alvin's first three studio albums. Katy contributes background vocals on THE DEVIL'S WIND and BETWEEN THE CRACKS on Museum of Heart.

"As I remember, Dave had a specific memory of what he wanted me to do in terms of approach," she says of the recordings. She added her vocals to the completed tracks.

On THE DEVIL'S WIND, she provides an effective vocal counterpoint on the bluesy, noir-like track that sounds like a detective novel set to music. Her voice is higher in the mix as the song begins to wind down and she sings alone on the chorus.

"He must have said, 'Go wild,' at the end of the song," Katy remembers, referring to album co-producer Bruce Bromberg.

On the melancholic BETWEEN THE CRACKS, she and Bobby Lloyd Hicks add a touch of sadness to the tale of a boxer who took a dive in a fight and the woman who wonders what became of him.

Katy's musical relationship with Dave began when she started sitting in with the All Nighters, his first band, in concert and on radio shows. "I saw the strength of the songs and how compassionate Dave was and the depth of his compassion towards women."

"Steve introduced me to Dave," she says referring to former Blasters saxophonist Steve Berlin, who co-produced Romeo's Escape and her solo album Child Bride.

After the Museum of Heart album, Katy would sing backing vocals on "(LOOK OUT) IT MUST BE LOVE" on Interstate City, Dave's 1996 live album. Katy released her own version of the song on the British version of Child Bride.

Their last collaboration to date was Dave's production of Katy's album Loose Diamond, which was released in 1999 when both were on HighTone Records. She fondly recalls their duet on the title track. "The duet on THE CUCKOO was a really good experience. He had me cast my voice in a lower range than I would normally choose."

— Tom Wilk

Hammond organ. I regret not using Leon more on the album. It was a missed opportunity: that I would have loved to have written something that he and Lee Allen could have played on together.

Leon had a furniture store and made it into a studio; it was huge. He had a big hit in the 70s called IT'S GOT TO BE MELLOW and used the money to build that studio and become a record producer. Robert Cray's SMOKING GUN was recorded there.

STRANGER IN TOWN

I wrote this as an acoustic song like BLACKJACK DAVID, but it didn't turn out that way. I wrote the lyrics after I went out to visit my dad in Downey, and some guy was killed in a liquor store. It examines the idea that when neighborhoods change, it's hard for people to still find the commonality of humanity. Duke McVinnie is credited as a co-writer. He's a bass player and songwriter: kind of a Captain Beefheart-type. He's an all around great musician.

AS SHE SLOWLY TURNS TO LEAVE

I like this song. We're definitely playing blues, and we caught a nice mood on that with the musicians. We did three takes. This was the last. I just wouldn't stop playing. It was the first time in the making of the album that I said, 'Let's just play a lot of guitar.' This was where I felt I was breaking the Blasters rules.

The way I played guitar in the Blasters was forced on me. There were Blasters rehearsals where I was told there are certain ways to play. I always wanted to break out of that. I didn't bend notes until the last Blasters album Hard Line.

In the Blasters, those restrictions were meant to differentiate us from every other blues band. So many guitarists back then wanted to sound like B.B., Albert, or Freddie or the off-shoot of those guys – Eric Clapton. When Stevie Ray Vaughan came out, he was doing Albert King note-for-note, and we said, 'But we already saw Albert do that and Jimi Hendrix do that. We don't need it.' I look back and think we were stupid. I think those records could have been better if they took me off the leash a little bit.

FLORENCE AVENUE LULLABY

That was a piece of music I could never put words to. I wrote it about a Denny's restaurant in our neighborhood at the corner of Florence and Lakewood in Downey. There were these little lounges around in neighboring towns that Lee Allen and various guys would do gigs at. After they were done, they would all go eat at Denny's. I was 15 years old and would sneak out of my bed room window at 2 in the morning and sit at the counter eating French toast and listen to those guys talk. I'd always say good-bye to them, then sneak back home to bed.

Dave Alvin: "All the disagreements in the studio brought me to do a more acoustic album next. That became King of California. Greg Leisz, in his frustration told me: 'I know how to make you sound.' I had enough of producer squabbling, so I said, 'Greg let's do it on our own.' So that's how Greg Leisz became my producer."

“We went right into planning what we were gonna do. I knew from solo gigs that my voice was better in an acoustic setting. I didn’t have Phil’s voice; I didn’t have Big Joe Turner’s voice, so how do I find my voice? I was trying to figure it out on *Museum of Heart* and I thought I almost had it. When we got to recording *King of California*, Greg changed keys to suit me, used mics that captured my voice better, and he got rid of extraneous sounds meant for radio air-play. The two albums are totally different. —*AM*”

The Flesh Eaters new CD ‘I Used To Be Pretty’

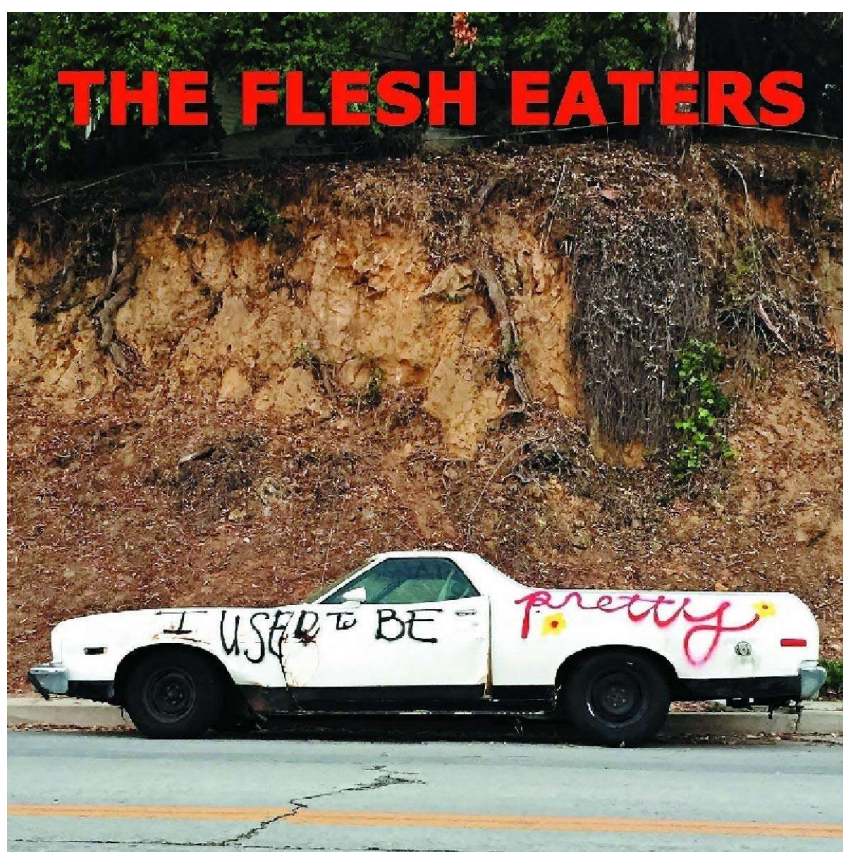
By Tom Wilk

Dave Alvin offers a simple explanation for The Flesh Eaters reuniting for their first studio album in 38 years with a stellar cast of musicians that includes members of three of the top Los Angeles bands of the 1980s. “It’s six old friends who rarely get to see each other or play music together and decided to make an album while we’re all still alive,” he says.

With Chris D. serving as principal songwriter and lead vocalist, the Flesh Eaters, one of the earliest new wave bands in Los Angeles, have had a rotating cast of backing musicians since the group’s formation in the late 1970s. *I Used To Be Pretty* (Yep Roc Records) finds him reuniting with Dave on guitar and drummer Bill Bateman of the Blasters; bassist John Doe and percussionist D.J. Bonebrake of X; and saxophonist Steve Berlin of Los Lobos, and formerly of the Blasters, for their first studio album since the lineup recorded 1981’s *A Minute To Pray, A Second To Die*.

Like his work in such side projects as the Gene Taylor Blues Band where he serves as the sole guitarist, Dave gets the chance to stretch out on a type of music he wouldn’t play as a solo act.

BLACK TEMPTATION, the album’s opener co-written by Chris D. and Dave, starts off with a swampy vibe before transitioning to full-throttle rock with Steve contributing some jazzy horn fills. The band employs an eclectic approach throughout the CD’s 11 songs. Dave’s guitar provides a



bluesy beginning to HOUSE AMID THE THICKETS before turning into a slice of no-holds barred punk.

The bracing MY LIFE TO LIVE has overtones of The Clash with Chris D.'s vocals recalling Joe Strummer's emotional power and riveting focus. The sonic attack of PONY DRESS recalls the early singles of 'X' with John's bass setting the pace, while Bill's percussive power is spotlighted on THE WEDDING DICE. On MISS MUERTE, the guitar and marimbas set up a contrasting sound as Chris D. and backing vocalist Julie Christensen team up on a reflective song.

The band revives the late Jeffrey Lee Pierce's SHE'S LIKE HEROIN TO ME with Chris D. chanting the title like a mantra and provides an ominous feel to THE GREEN MANALISHI, a cover of a Fleetwood Mac song written by Peter Green. GHOST CAVE LAMENT is a 3-minute long track, co-written by Chris D. and Dave. It ends the album on an ominous note with a soundscape that suggests flamenco music and a spaghetti-western soundtrack.

Thirty-eight years after the release of A Minute To Pray A Second To Die, The Flesh Eaters show that you can go home again with I Used To Be Pretty.

I Used To Be Pretty is available from Yep Roc Records on January 18, 2019.



I Used To Be Pretty CD

Dave Alvin: "I'm really proud of it. I think it's a great record. There are two co-writes with me and Chris D. In the old days of the 1981 Flesh Eaters, Chris sang songs into a tape recorder and then me and John Doe would make up the music behind it. For these two songs, Chris gave me lyrics, and then I created the music and took suggestions from him to complete them. We did the Peter Green song GREEN MANALISHI, which was also covered by Judas Priest. It's funny, when the Flesh Eaters did some shows in early 2018, people said 'You're covering Judas Priest?' We said "No! It's Peter Green" (laughs). It's a perfect Flesh Eaters song. The rest of the songs were ones Chris recorded over the years. We just rearranged them to fit a full band."

The Flesh Eaters Tour of 2019

Dave Alvin: "We played only one gig away from California in the band's history. It was in East Sussex England in April 2006. But that was it. This Spring, were doing shows for the first time all over the U.S. We do have some hardcore fans, so hopefully they come out. This isn't the Blasters, 'X', or Los Lobos, so you won't see those songs. This is the longest interview I'm doing regarding the Flesh Eaters. I'm not the guy in this band. This is Chris's band, so he will be doing the talking. I just wanna play some loud guitar."

Phil Alvin's Guitar Lost and Found

Phil Alvin's guitar, a Kay K 161 from the early 50s, was recently stolen on 9/8/18 at The Buskerfest in Long Beach California, but was recovered a few days later. Phil had been playing his "Jimmy Reed" guitar in all his Blasters shows since 1995.

Dave Alvin reported this on facebook on 9/10/18: "Great news! My brother Phil's beloved 1950s Kay guitar has been recovered in Long Beach! Our dear friend Audrey Mabie did some deep detective work on the backstreets of Long Beach and tracked down a guy who 'claimed' to have bought it from a street person. He also said that he paid an outrageous amount of cash for the guitar and wanted that same amount back, to return the guitar."

John Bazz picks up the story: "I'm not really sure exactly how we got the freakin' thing back, though! My wife was the only one in direct telephone contact with the perp. On 4 or 5 different occasions, between calls to the Long Beach Police, the dude told my wife so many conflicting stories, along with changing plans regarding the actual exchange location, and finally the whole 'ransom' thing. The final instructions from the dude, were to meet him in front of a church, and then he hung up."



Jimmy Reed and his Kay guitar

"The police told us not to meet with the perp, but rather to let the police handle the matter on the following day. We decided to seize the moment and go to the church, if only to try and catch a glimpse of the dude (s) and Phil's guitar as we anonymously drove by."

"While en route, I called two friends Bernard and Vince for advice and moral support. They both dropped what they were doing and asked to come along, insisting that the opportunity to get Phil's guitar was upon us and might not exist come tomorrow."

"Vince got to the church first and parked across the street so that he had a view of everything. The rest of us showed up but we saw nothing out of the ordinary. Bernard and I walked towards the church, Bernard with a baseball bat in hand, but we saw no one. No one suspicious looking, that is! As we crossed



Phil's beloved guitar is rescued !

the street, Bernard got excited and asked me; "Is Phil's guitar in a black case?" At first, I thought it a dumb question, then realized Bernard had spotted a black guitar case leaning against the side door of the church. Eureka! Without question, this was Phil's guitar. We cautiously rushed to retrieve the guitar not knowing what to expect, Bernard grabbed the case, I snapped a quick photo, Bernard exclaimed that we had the guitars and needed to get back to the car ASAP, which we did... running... and I think laughing. Wow!"

Phil's case had his Kay guitar and his spare guitar – a black Stratocaster. So it was two rare guitars.



Phil is happy to have his guitar back.

Gene Taylor recalls how the Kay guitar came into Phil's hands many years ago. Gene: "I bought it at a pawn shop. I was the first of our group to own the instrument." Phil interrupts: "And he gave it to Gary Masi (who was playing lead guitar in Phil's pre-Blasters bands) because it looked like the 'I am Jimmy Reed' guitar." Gene: "Gary Masi is the world's biggest Jimmy Reed fan, so I thought he deserved it." Years later Phil acquired it from Gary to use on the 1995 Blasters / Beat Farmers tour. Phil has used it all over the world at every Blasters show since then.


The guitar was called the Kay Thin Twin K 161 and was originally introduced in 1952 and was known as the "Jimmy Reed" or "Howlin' Wolf" model. T-Bone Burnett played a Thin Twin to back up Robert Plant and Allison Krauss at the 2009 Grammy Awards. The Thin Twin was the first guitar able to create that unique blues sound from the special Kay interior bracing that made the instrument a favorite among blues players as well as rockers of the '50s and '60s. The Thin Twin got its name from it's two blade pickups, known for their distinctive clean, sharp, sustaining sound. The Thin Twin's hollow body chamber parallel bracing produces that gutsy, bluesy, raw sound, creating a clean natural distortion without feedback. —Am

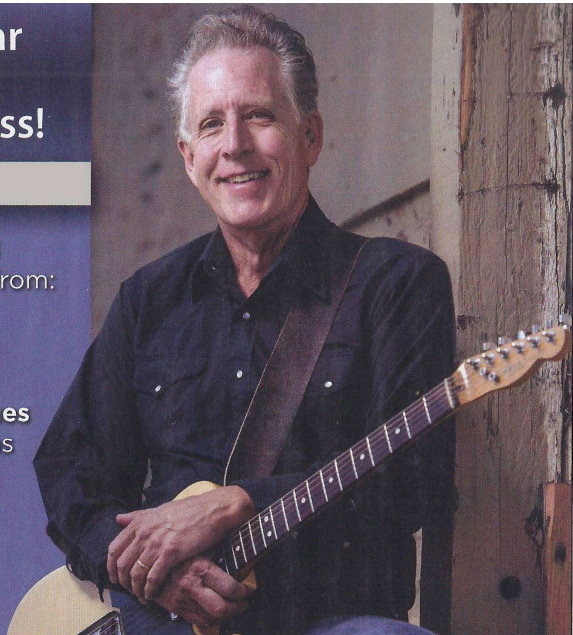
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A photograph of Keith Wyatt, a man with grey hair, smiling and playing a light-colored electric guitar. He is wearing a dark blue button-down shirt. The background is a rustic wooden wall.

DAVE ALVIN, JIMMIE DALE GILMORE AND THE GUILTY ONES 2018 TOUR

By Billy Davis

Dave Alvin and Jimmie Dale Gilmore, along with the Guilty Ones, spent the last half of 2018 touring the country relentlessly in support of the Downey To Lubbock album on Yep Roc Records which was released June 1st. The tour started that same day in Texas. The previous year, Dave Alvin and Jimmie Dale did two acoustic tours together leading into the recording of the album. "When I started the record, I thought it would be just me and Jimmie with acoustic guitars," Dave recalled, "but soon it became apparent that I wanted the Guilty Ones for a full-band sound. Jimmie always



Jimmie Dale, Brad Fordham, Lisa Pankratz, Danny Bland, Alyssa selling the merch, Jeff Turmes, Chris Miller, and Dave Alvin

Photo: Michael McCall



had great backing bands and of course the Flatlanders are great - but he had never been in a rock 'n roll band. He was the grand-daddy of folk/country/Americana. So when we got out on tour, I could see it was a thrill for him to do this because it was like a guy who was in his first rock 'n roll band. He's getting such a kick out of playing loud and rockin' - like on MARIE MARIE."

Throughout the tour, the band played a similar set; occasionally, they would add special

songs for special situations. The basic set included the full band songs from the album: SILVER-LAKE, STEALIN' STEALIN', BILLY THE KID AND GERONIMO, LAWDY MISS CLAWDY, and GET TOGETHER. The CD's title track DOWNEY TO LUBBOCK always opened the show. They did a selection of Jimmie Dale's most famous songs: DALLAS, MY MIND HAS A MIND OF ITS OWN, and I THINK I'M GONNA GO DOWNTOWN. Dave's songs were DRY RIVER, MARIE MARIE, FOURTH OF JULY, and JOHNNY ACE IS DEAD.

As the tour progressed, they added other songs from the album. BUDDY BROWN'S BLUES was a natural to perform because it was high on the charts of songs getting airplay on Sirius radio's blues channel. Dave explains: "We didn't want to play it because 'It's a throat ripper.' Phil (Alvin) had the same thing with songs like PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE and I'M SHAKIN' - it had to be the right conditions to risk blowing out the voice. On the recording of BUDDY BROWN'S BLUES, we tuned down to Eb to make it easier, but playing it that way live just didn't feel right."

Dave and Jimmie Dale gave the song some serious thought: "So here's a song that's getting the most airplay and we can't play it." Dave recalls, "So we decided to try it in the encore of the last few shows of the tour. If Jimmie lost his voice, we still had MARIE MARIE to finish the show off with. We did it, it worked great, and Jimmie said: 'I think I probably figured out how not to blow my voice on that song.' So, you'll probably see it in the set in 2019."

Another song added late in the tour was the Dave-lead-vocal song JULY YOU'RE A WOMAN. "We did it in Chicago at Fitzgerald's mainly because Jimmie Dale's wife was there, and it's her favorite song." Dave continues, "I do miss the mandolin, which is on the record, but I like it, and it'll be a regular in the set."

Fitzgerald's club in Chicago got another first when the band performed a Jimmie Rodgers medley in honor of the singing brakeman's birthday. Dave sang GOING TO CALIFORNIA and Jimmie Dale played WAITING FOR A TRAIN. Dave remembers: "That was spur of the moment.

Jimmie Dale was named after Jimmie Rodgers. Jimmie Dale's father was a guitar player in the Lubbock area, and his dad's hero was Jimmie Rodgers."

There weren't too many one-off songs played in the shows, but Dave remembers fun songs in sound checks: "I was sitting down to change my guitar strings at a sound-check and saw Jimmie and the band do a great version of Haggard's MAMA TRIED. A few times I pulled out WALKIN' WITH MR LEE. Once in a while, Jimmie would do a favorite of his called BETTY AND DUPREE."

Dave's original song BILLY THE KID AND GERONIMO from the album made a distinct impression on some people during the tour: "I had a few Apaches tell me how much they love the song." Dave said, "I got several comments and a nice letter from the Apache reservation in San Carlos and other native Americans who liked the arc of the song. In Phoenix, I met an Apache named Doug Miles, who designs skateboards, and he gave me one with Geronimo art on it. It's beautiful."

Dave explains why he thinks the song resonates with people: "I made Billy into a less sympathetic character than he actually was (laughs) - cause I'm kind of a Billy the Kid fan. Jesse James, nah! (laughs) So to create some sort of difference between the two characters, I made him sympathetic by losing his Mom early. I felt that song definitely touched some people."

Dave, Jimmie Dale, and the Guilty Ones had a few guests join them throughout the tour. On DEPORTEE, Jimmie's Dale's son, Colin Gilmore, joined the band in Houston to sing background vocals as he had on the album. Dave: "We did have Jon Langford and Dead Rock West sing on GET TOGETHER at shows where they were opening for us on tour. "

"At the first gig at the Troubadour in Hollywood, CA, and at the Coach House in San Juan, Skip Edwards, who was on the record, sat in on keyboards and accordion." Butch Hancock joined us in Denver and sang on DALLAS and MY MIND'S GOT A MIND OF ITS OWN. At the Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Fest in San Francisco, Jeff Turmes who played sax on the Downey to Lubbock album, played with us. He currently plays bass with Mavis Staples but for



Photo: Brad Elligood



Photo: Susan Darrow

Jimmie Dale and Colin Gilmore



Photo: Brad Elligood

Chris Miller and Jeff Turmes

years was a sax player with James Harman. Jeff also played with us in Petaluma, CA, and then at the Coach House in San Juan. That was great."

The ending of the live show always brought the audience to their feet with MARIE MARIE and a reprise of DOWNEY TO LUBBOCK. Dave said: "Near the end of the tour, we had MARIE MARIE morphing into DOWNEY TO LUBBOCK and then

into DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE."

So what does 2019 hold for Dave Alvin, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, and the Guilty Ones? "This is so much fun playing with Jimmie Dale and the band." As Dave smiles, "We will have some touring going on, but not as heavy as 2018. We'll play again in April after I'm done with the Flesh Eaters tour." And the big question is 'Will we see another album?' "I'd like to get down to Texas in between the Flesh Eaters tours to sit down with Jimmie Dale with a couple of acoustic guitars and write songs. We only wrote the song DOWNEY TO LUBBOCK together and that was just throwing verses at each other in the studio. We've never sat down with acous-
tics. I'd love to do it. We'll see." — ~~an~~



Photo: Brad Elligood

Skip Edwards, Dave, and Lisa

Phil Alvin: The Solo Holiday Hayride

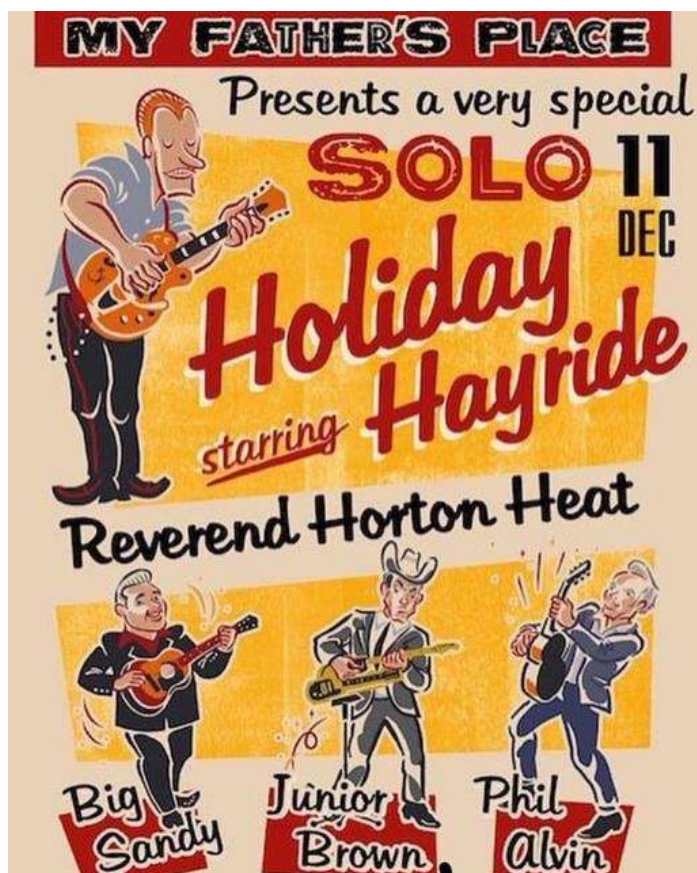


By Billy Davis

In the winter of 2018 the Blasters were out on the Horton's Holiday Hayride tour with Reverend Horton Heat, Junior Brown and Big Sandy. All the shows were high energy rock 'n roll. One show was different. It was at the legendary Long Island club called 'My Fathers Place' on December 11.

The format for this show featured each band's front man playing a solo acoustic set. The reason for this unusual format is unknown. Could it have been because of the small stage at this venue, where they couldn't fit all of the bands' equipment? Or, because this dinner club makes their money on sit-down meals, they wouldn't want to lose dinner revenue to a stand-up general admission crowd (which was the way every other show on the tour was set up). Whatever the case, the owner Michael "Eppy" Epstein had set the way the show would go months in advance. For us Blaster fans, it was a treat to see Phil Alvin play self-accompanied blues songs. It's something Phil often did many years ago.

Phil was a little nervous about playing by himself. The last



time he did a show like this was in 2012 when he did some shows with Petunia and the Vipers on the west coast.

The show opened with Big Sandy singing his hits and playing acoustic guitar. Phil was second and would be followed by Junior Brown and then Jim Heath of Reverend Horton Heat.

Phil started his set and surprised everyone by adding John Bazz on bass. I heard later on that John was going to play the up-right bass from Reverend Horton Heat's band, but they couldn't get that together in time, so he played electric bass.

Phil played his Kay electric and started with a song called FRANCE BLUES. It's an old blues song sometimes referred to by the title MOBILE LINE. This was one Phil had been doing most of his life and finally recorded it on the California Feetwarmers 2013 CD (Shepherd's Records). Next, Phil did his favorite Jimmy Reed song - TAKE OUT SOME INSURANCE ON ME and then the crowd sing-along song MINNIE THE MOOCHER. The audience sang along

just a little bit without Phil's encouragement. With Phil playing the Kay 'Jimmy Reed style' guitar, he kept that theme going by doing another Jimmy Reed song, the slow blues CARESS ME BABY.



Earlier in the day I caught Phil coming off stage from his sound check and reminded him that 25 years ago on this day, I saw my first ever Blasters show at the Palomino Club in W. Hollywood, CA. When the time came to finish his set with a few Blasters favorite songs, I was touched that Phil remembered and dedicated the song AMERICAN MUSIC to me. He said: "This goes out to Billy Davis who's a big fan and it's his 25th Anniversary of seeing us." AMERICAN MUSIC has always been my favorite song.

Blasters songs aren't meant to be played acoustic, but it was interesting to hear the song broken down to just rhythm guitar and bass. But those songs are really meant to be heard with a full band rocking it out. Phil improvised a solo as Keith Wyatt and Bill Bateman watched from the audience. Phil and John closed out the show with MARIE MARIE. That song might not have worked as well with just rhythm guitar and bass. It's another always thought of as a loud rocking, all out crowd dancing song – but it might have been the only time I've ever heard MARIE MARIE acoustic.

John Bazz said the set was challenging to adapt the Blasters songs to this stripped down format. By not having the other instruments, he had to approach the bass lines differently. They prepared one more song but it wasn't played – Sonny Boy Williamson's NO NIGHTS BY MYSELF.

Phil and John did a great job considering there was no time to prepare something this different. Anyone fortunate enough to have been there saw a very unique show. I hope they do it again. —~~AM~~



My Father's Place in Roslyn, New York, first opened in 1971, and in the words of The New York Times, "created a scene that would influence music for decades to come." In the nearly sixteen years the club was open before it closed in 1987, My Father's Place presented more than 6,000 shows from over 3,000 diverse artists. Its owner Michael "Eppy" Epstein refused to book cover bands, and so the club became known as a place that aspiring artists could perform. Young unknown musicians such as Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen, Madonna, Aerosmith, The Police, Tom Petty, as well as hopeful comics Billy Crystal, Eddie Murphy, and Andy Kaufman, and a host of others graced the stage. In the late spring of 2018 Epstein opened a new version of the club in the newly renovated Roslyn Hotel, not far from the location of the original venue.

From the Editor -- Hey American Music fans, some of you have written in recently with interest in contributing writings to the BlastersNewsletter. The answer is Yes! Send any reviews of shows, or stories of your experiences to me at davistb@aol.com. I'd also like to bring back the "Questions for the Band" column. If you have any questions for any of the musicians covered in these pages, send them. I'll try to get answers to print in the newsletter. Thanks --Billy Davis

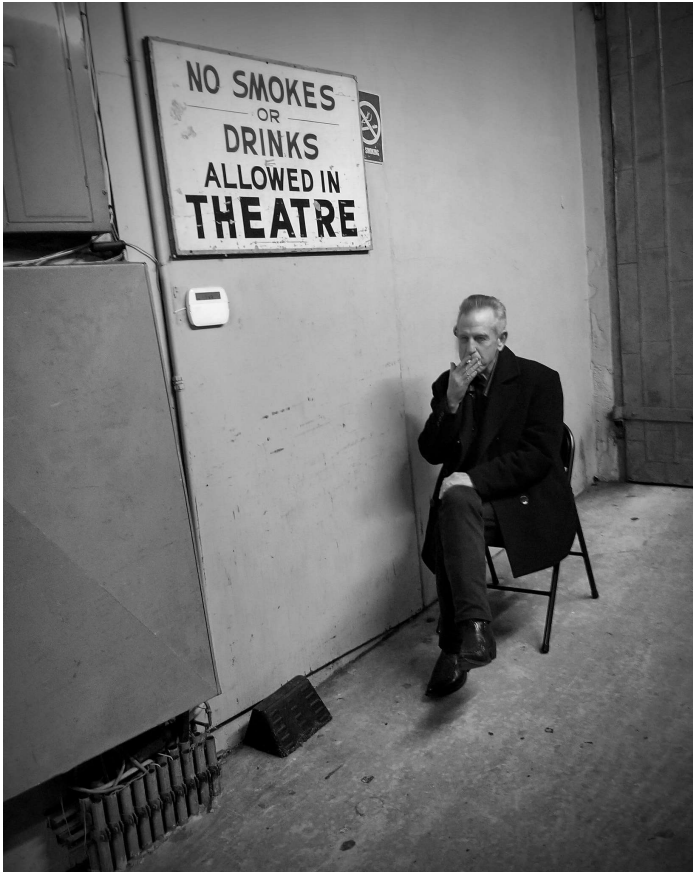
Blaster University

Lessons from the Blasters



**Phil Alvin
says:
“Never
listen to
the
police.”**





**Bill Bateman
says: "Rules
were made to
be broken."**

**John Bazz
says:
"Never run
over your
singer even
if he's rid-
ing a pink
bicycle."**



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