

2025 re-print and expanded edition

AMERICAN MUSIC

The Blaster Newsletter

Issue #9 Nov. '95

DAVE ALVIN TOUR DATES

w/ Tom Russell

11/29 London England at Weavers Arms

11/30 London at The Half Moon

12/1-2 Basel Switzerland at Atlantis

12/3 Langenau Ger. at Pfeghofsaal

w/Russell & Peter Case

12/5-10 Italy

w/Guilty Men

12/27 Lincoln Ne. at Zoo Bar

12/28 Kansas City at Grand Emporium

12/30 St. Louis at Lynks

12/31 Chicago at Fitzgerald's

BLASTERS TOUR DATES

11/11 L.A. Ca. at House of Blues

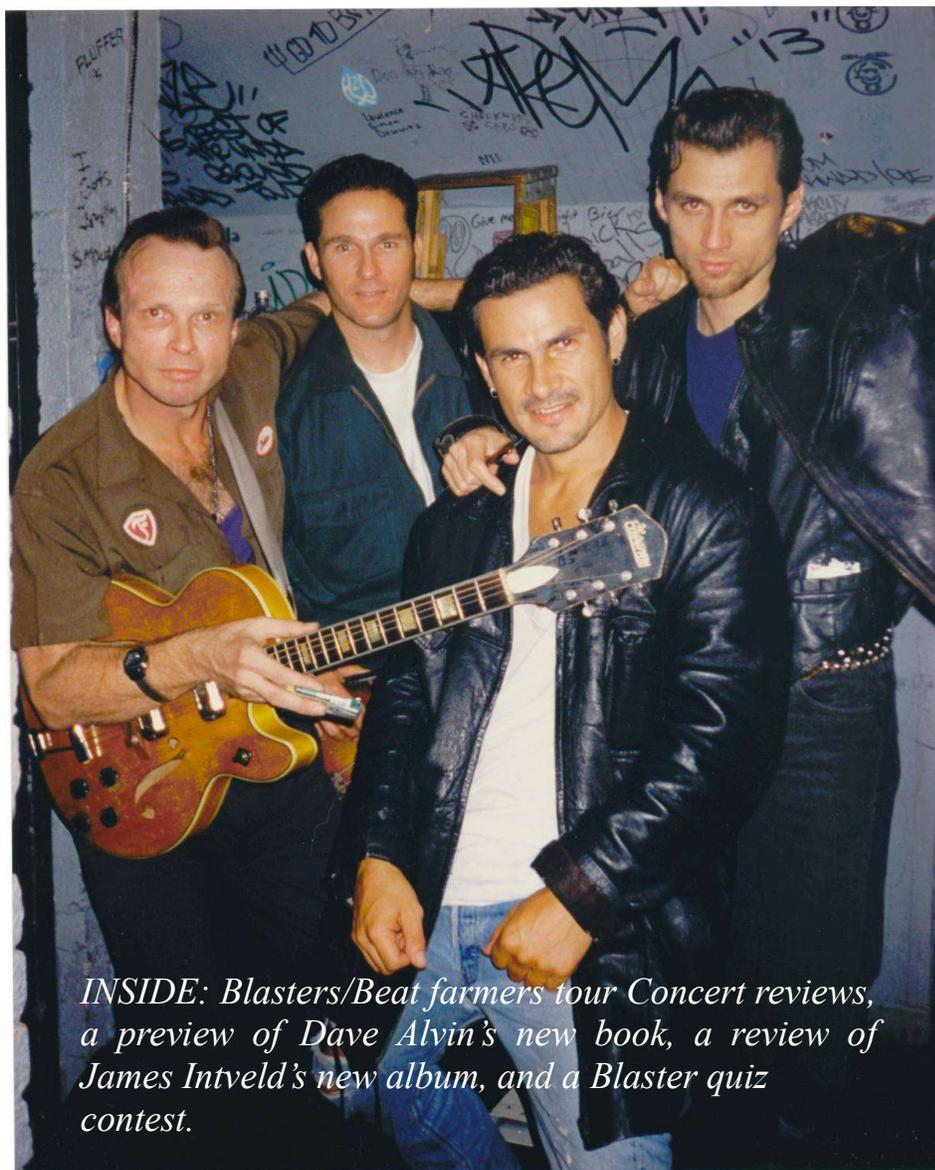
11/15 Las Vegas (private party)

Blasters

and The Beat Farmers

On Tour

LATEST NEWS: -- The Blast-ers live album called "AT HOME" is due for release on January 15th although that is a very optimistic date considering the delays that record companies sometimes cause. Three Los Angeles concerts were recorded and the best tracks from the trio will be compiled on the new CD. The "Live at the House of Blues" CD was scrapped when the band felt the sound that came across in the recording of that one concert didn't epitomize a Blasters show. They didn't want to fix it with overdubs, so compiling shows worked better. -- The November tour of Europe has been postponed until the live album comes out. -- Dave Alvin cut a song called *Old '55* for a Tom Waits tribute album due out November 7 on Manifesto records in the U.S. and Virgin internationally. -- James Intveld's solo CD is out on Germany's Bear Family records. The demand is still there for vinyl releases, so Bear Family is releasing James' album on 10" vinyl with extra tracks. -- James Intveld can be heard on a duet with Rosie Flores on her new CD (continued)

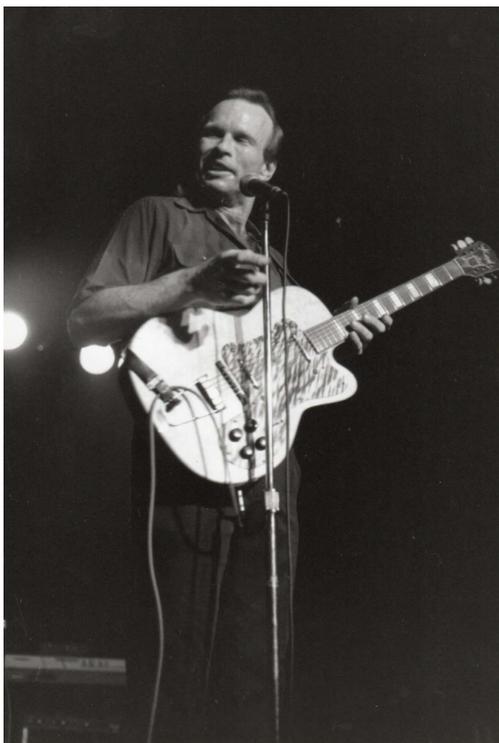


INSIDE: Blasters/Beat farmers tour Concert reviews, a preview of Dave Alvin's new book, a review of James Intveld's new album, and a Blaster quiz contest.

Latest News (Continued) — ‘Rockabilly Filly.’ He also makes an acting appearance in the Showtime series *Fallen Angels*. -- In late February, a tour of HighTone artists will travel the country to promote the label’s new distribution deal through Rhino records. The tour will include Dave Alvin, Rosie Flores, Dale Watson, and Billy Wirtz. Other artists will join the tour regionally. With the new distribution deal, HighTone artists CDs will have better distribution in stores. -- Dave Alvin is starting to write his next album. He plans to record two albums, a studio and a live one planned for release next year. Dave describes the studio album as “singer, songwriter stuff.” The live one will include his four-piece band the Guilty Men doing their rockin’ songs. It will include some covers, older songs, and a new song that will probably be the title track. Dave: “The band I have right now I really like and it would be kind of nice to document it. Some of the songs will have Greg Leisz on them.” Dave’s new book *Any Rough Times Are Now Behind You* will be nationally available in December. —Am

The BLASTERS / BEAT FARMERS U.S. TOUR

Photo: Billy Davis



By Billy Davis

The Blasters/Beat Farmers tour lasted for six weeks and though the Blasters didn’t have a new album to promote, they took the opportunity to show off the newest incarnation of the band with Jerry Angel and James Intveld. The Beat Farmers were touring behind their new CD ‘Manifold.’ The bands switched off headlining each night, but in the bigger cities the Blasters played last. The Blasters set list varied throughout the tour. Usually running about 20 songs, they selected from about 26 songs. Most of the tour they opened with *All Your Fault* and closed before the encore with *Marie Marie*. Before finishing with *Marie*, they always played *Help You Dream*, which was a good contrast of a slow paced song into the very rockin’ *Daddy Rollin’ Stone*. *Blue Shadows* normally followed right behind. ‘Daddy’ features great guitar work from James and the whole band settles into a real heavy groove throughout the song. As an encore they almost always played *Hear Me Cryin’* and *One Bad Stud*, and sometimes added an extra like *High School Confidential*.

In the middle of the set Phil would put down the guitar and pull out the harmonica for two songs. *Little By Little* was the first song, a slow blues that nobody seems to know the title of because the title isn’t sung in the chorus of the song. Anyway, a cool tune and Phil is great on harp. *So Long Baby* is next and Phil points out, in tribute, that the solo he plays is Lee Allen’s entirely, he takes no credit for the notes. These two songs were kept together all tour with the exception of one night when Phil took a request and played one of my favorites *Oh Doctor* from Phil’s HighTone solo album. Also from that album they performed *County Fair* and *Blueline*. These two have become regulars in the Blaster set.

A comical point comes nightly when Country Dick Montana of the Beat Farmers joins the Blasters on stage for a vocal trade off with Phil on *I’m Shakin*. With much clowning, Country Dick spent the first half of the tour remembering the lyrics off paper and spent the rest of the tour forgetting them. At one show in Riverside CA, Dick started his antics while Phil was singing and was kind of sparring with him and Phil fell off the stage. Everybody was shocked until after a few seconds Phil re-emerged from the floor.

The tour opened in Salt Lake City on Sept. 20th heading all the way east then back west. They felt they were being followed by events when they encountered a hurricane in the Cleveland area, they were in Washington D.C. the weekend of the Million Man March, and then the Pope was in town at the same time as their gig in New York City. The Blasters joked that they put the pope on the guest list but he didn’t show up.

In Austin at Antone’s, Dave Alvin who was in town playing a gig the night before and producing a band called the Derailers, sat in with the Blasters on *Marie Marie* and *Hear Me Cryin’*. Off the concert stage, the Blasters had a good time traveling the country making stops to visit the Rock ‘n Roll Hall of Fame museum in

Cleveland and Graceland in Memphis. In Old Tucson Arizona the band took a break from driving and wandered off the road. James came upon a sleeping rattle snake and thinking it was dead almost got bit. John Bazz shot all the Blasters adventures on his home video camera.

The band had some official tour shirts on sale throughout the tour. The new logo looks like a Cadillac logo with the Blasters printed in the middle of it. A different version of this logo is seen inside the 'County Fair 2000' album. The shirts sold out fast and more had to be printed during the tour. The tour finished up with two nights in San Francisco

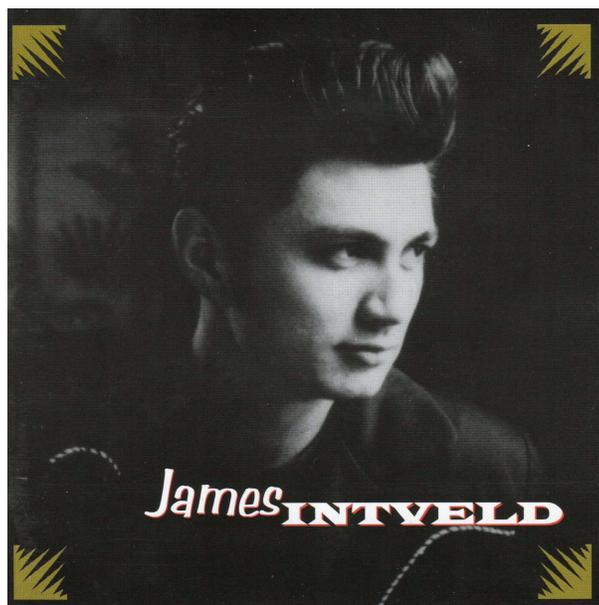


JAMES INTVELD's NEW CD

James Intveld's new CD for Bear Family Records is truly a solo CD. James plays all the instruments himself. The style is a departure from the Blasters. Mid-tempo songs and ballads are primarily the style but the roots influence is obvious. There are ten tracks on the CD. Here is a preview with comments from James. *Perfect World* was originally written for the Kevin Costner film of the same name, but wasn't used. Intveld wrote it with John Coinman who also co-wrote 3 others on this album. James met Coinman through his publishing company and they soon became a compatible writing team. *Blue Blue Day* was originally a Don Gibson song. "I heard it originally by Dean Martin, when I was a kid and it's one of my favorite songs." He plays an old Fender lap steel guitar on this one. *Cryin Over You* was written by James in 1986 for Rosie Flores and she had a hit single with it. "I didn't put any harmonies on it. It's just kind of stripped down." *I'm To Blame* was written by a guy named Jimmy Donnelly. "He used to sell his songs for \$50 to people, just for the money." That explains why the writing credit is given to Huey Meaux. "It's a song that he wrote just before he committed suicide and he kind of did exactly what was in the song. It's a heavy song to me. I put it on the record hoping people would ask me about it because it's a tribute basically to Jimmy Donnelly."

Barely Hangin On was a song that James wrote for inclusion on the Bear Family Records 20th Anniversary box set. The version heard here is a different recording. It's in a different key and has some minor changes in the instrumentation. *Samantha* is a very Roy Orbison flavored song written while James was working on the movie 'A Thing Called Love.' "I was in the studio with T-bone Burnett. His wife Sam Phillips was in the studio with us for a few days and kind of fell in love with her. So, I said I've got to write a song about this girl. T-Bone Burnett worked with Orbison in his last years," which prompted the writing in the Orbison vein. James also plays mandolin and piano on that track. *Your Lovin* is another Coinman co-authored track with James again on lap steel.

You say Goodnight, I'll say Good-bye was written while recording the album and is a very slow ballad. *Kermit Vale* is as far from roots as James gets on the CD. Played with just acoustic guitar and vocal, it comes across as the most powerful song on the album. "I was trying to come up with a fast song one night. I was thinking all of these hooks and I couldn't come up with anything I felt good about. It felt so meaningless to me. Then I started thinking about this story a friend of mine told me. Not that her story is anything like it, but the fact that my brother was killed at a young age and my friend River Phoenix died at a young age - seeing young graves in a grave yard is a different feeling than when you see old graves. Basically, the message is, you don't know how long you are going to be here and when you're young you think you're going to live forever. Live



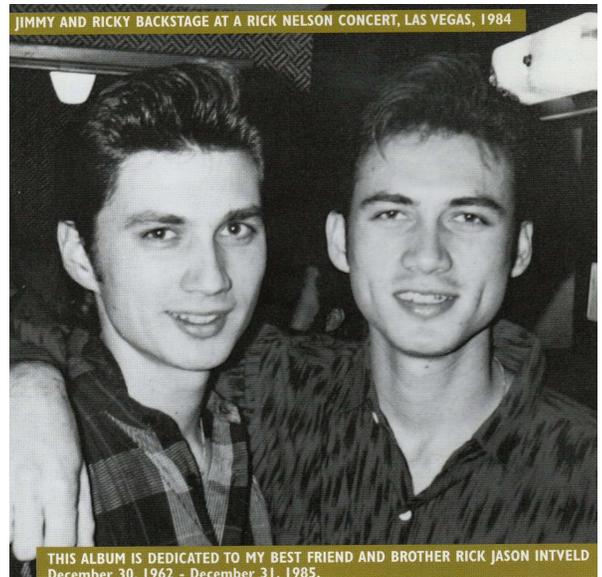


for the moment and if you love somebody don't back off. This is about being brave."

Wild Places was the first song written with John Coinman and was the catalyst in bringing them back to write more songs together.

Bear Family recently asked James to record more tracks for a 10" vinyl release of his album. They will add four new tracks but to make space they will cut two heard on the CD. The record company is aiming the vinyl at rockabilly listeners and felt that two songs (*Kermit Vale* and *Wild Places*) are less likely to fit that category. "It was basically what I learned when I played Germany." James did a solo tour there in August of 1995. "I could tell what people wanted to hear. They are really into fifties music, and this is my chance to record songs of mine that might never have been recorded." The first of the four new songs is a Rodney Crowell song called *Standin' on a Rock* from the movie 'A Thing Called Love,' in which James had played and sang harmony with River Phoenix on the original version. "I really wanted to do a rockabilly version of the song." The second song, *My Heart is Achin For You* is a song that I have been known for since 1982. I figured I would make a new version of it that would be available. The original record came out so many years ago and is out of

print." The only difference in the song is the arrangement and the instrumentation, "I played it the way that I like to do it now." *Important Words* is a cover song of Gene Vincent's, "I originally cut that song at the first session for the CD just to try out the studio that I wanted to use. I wasn't happy with the vocals and other idiosyncrasies of the tune. Now that this vinyl version came up and it's kind of geared more to people who are into older roots music, I went in re-cut the vocals and remixed the song." *I love You* is a song written in 1981. A staple in live shows and always requested "It's a basic fifties style song." James is already working on material for his next record which he says will be a Hot Rod record. "It will be the type of record that you would drive around in your car and listen to - Driving fast on a Saturday night. It will be darker sounding, a little more edgy, it will still be a roots record though." —Am



Hecat Records mail-order will be carrying both the CD and the 10" vinyl. Call (714)532-2095 with credit card to order.

COLLECTING BLASTERS: some official Blaster tour T-shirts with the Cadillac logo are still available from the recent tour. Only white x-large shirts are left. Priced at \$15 each plus \$2.50 postage in the U.S.A. payable to "The Blasters." For overseas add \$2 postage and pay by International money order or checks drawn on a U.S. bank. Send to "Blaster T-shirts" P.O. Box 14354 Long Beach Ca. 90803

BLASTER CONTEST

WIN A PHIL ALVIN COUNTY FAIR 2000 CD. Here is what you do: Name all the members of the Blasters since 1980. Hint: 1 singer, 1 bassist, 3 drummers, 5 guitarists, and 2 sax players. 1 winner will be picked from a random drawing of correct answers. Deadline January 1st. Send to Blaster contest 80-16 64th lane Glendale N.Y. 11385

EXCERPT FROM DAVE ALVIN'S BOOK

LEE ALLEN

by Dave Alvin

The cigarettes that killed you,
you can smoke all of them you want,
now that you're in heaven.

Now that you're in heaven
each day will start in the late afternoon
with a casual round of golf

followed by a recording session
in the early evening and every heavenly session
pays triple scale and royalty points.

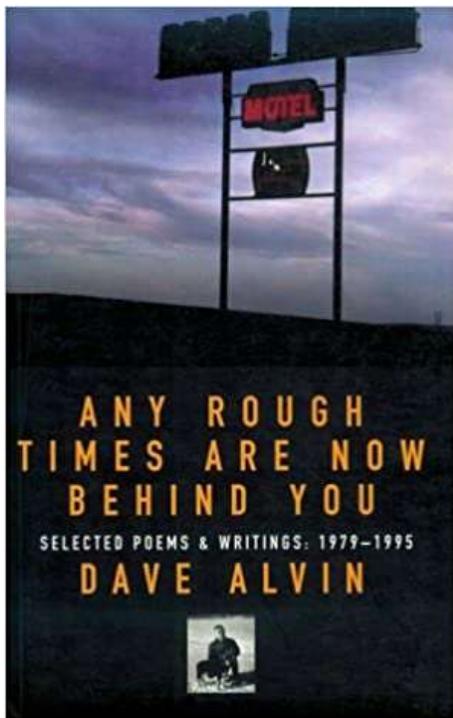
You'll have a gig every night,
now that you're in heaven, you and your sax
backed by a solid bluesy organ trio

in an intimate, smoky nite club
full of beautiful, smiling women
of every size, age, shape and color

and there'll be children sneaking inside
to learn the truths only you can teach them
about life and love of music

and when it's time for you to play in heaven,
you'll set down your scotch as a
sweet, black angel hands you your horn.

**To order 'ANY ROUGH TIMES' send \$12
plus \$3 postage payable to 'Rock Press'
Send to: Incommunicado press PO 99090
San Diego Ca. 92169**



**any rough times are
now behind you
dave alvin**

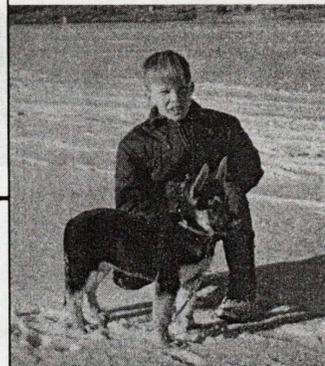
**Selected Poems and Writings:
1979 to 1995**

Known mostly for his masterful guitar work with The Blasters, X and on his own, Dave Alvin writes poems and stories of backwood blues, midnight diners, and the kings of California. *Any Rough Times...* includes selections from his first book, *Nana, Big Joe and the Fourth of July* (Illiterati), plus new material .

"Alvin is probably the best poet to emerge out of the Los Angeles punk scene. Of course, since he's only written one prior book, long out-of-print, it would be difficult to garner a writer's rep. With the publication of *Any Rough Times Are Now Behind You*, a great injustice has now been rectified. Indeed, a tree grows in Downey!"
—Rob Cohen, Publisher, *Caffeine*

Dave Alvin grew up in Downey, CA, and currently lives in Los Angeles. He has recorded and produced many records, his latest *King of California* is out now on Hightone Records.

any rough times are now behind you



selected poems and writings: 1979-1995
dave alvin

SHORT STORIES, POETRY
ISBN 1-884615-09-0
SIZE: 5 1/2 X 8 1/2
BINDING: PAPERBACK
PAGES: 130
PRICE: \$12
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST, 1995



PHOTO: STEPHEN W. SMITH

FROM THE EDITOR: Anyone attending a Blasters or Dave Alvin show that would like to write a review, please do. I have an idea for a new column. People always write to me asking questions about The Blasters and Dave Alvin. How about directing your questions directly to them? Send your questions to the newsletter address and I will print your question and their answer. - *Billy*

Blasters / Beat Farmers Tour Concert Reviews

THE BLASTERS AT VZD - Oklahoma City, Ok. -- 10/17/95 -- The show was held in a pretty small club. Not a big crowd, but this is really not their territory, so I didn't expect there to be. They did have a fairly large number of people dancing, especially to songs from the early days, so it appeared that a fair number of the people were familiar with them. Others came for the Beat Farmers, and some others obviously didn't know anything about either band. I spoke with Phil for a while after the show. He says the live CD is coming out in January. He was also ranting a lot about Newt Gingrich. He said that Newt has gone on record as saying the Blasters are one of his favorite bands, so that really got his goat! (I'm pretty certain that's what he said, unless he was talking about some other right winger). We talked a little about some Okie roots that he has. Apparently growing up he had a nanny or baby-sitter who came from Enid (about a half hour from where I live). He said he had a lot of fond memories of her singing songs to them in some giant '53 Roadster.

I asked about the origins of one of tonight's songs, the term *4-11-44*. I figured it had something to do with luck which he confirmed. It especially goes back to the thirties when it was a famous, huge lottery winning number. He also expounded on his theory of their mix of music, and to be honest, he was all over the map on this one that I'm not sure what the heck he was talking about. He tends to make some big leaps that are hard to keep up with. I don't know if that was because he's a pretty smart guy, just tends to ramble, was road weary, had a substance helping him do the talking, or I suspect all of the above. He had a good time with some of the Beat Farmers especially Jerry Raney and Country Dick Montana.

After their set, they parked themselves next to my table, so we visited some about music and all sort of things. Mostly they wanted to drink, hoot and holler. Man, they're a rowdy bunch! Country Dick wanted me to sneak up to Phil and have him autograph a napkin on which he wrote: "We suck, Dick rules. God, where are we? See you in rehab. Wish I was a Beat Farmer. I know - I suck - up yours, duckbutt." His plan was for me to hide his writing, have him sign the napkin, and show it to him after he'd signed it! From what I can tell they appear to be pretty good pals.

Country Dick joined them on a boozy, male bonding version of *I'm Shakin*. He couldn't remember the words, so they had to start over. It was all in good fun, so it's not like it was a major faux pas or anything. The Blasters drummer Jerry Angel also sat in with the Beat Farmers on a few numbers when Country wanted a break to sing, do some table walking, spill beer, and cause general crowd mayhem. That's about all I remember. To summarize it, they played a good set of mostly up-tempo stuff, so it was mighty fine in my book.

- John Sikes

THE BLASTERS AT THE BIRCHMERE- Alexandria Va. 5/14/95 -- The Blasters played the Birchmere in Northern Virginia just outside of the power Stadt (Wash. D.C.) Sunday night. Trouble followed Phil Alvin & Company all the way from their show Saturday night in NYC. The band encountered a delay at the Delaware bridge caused by a car accident, were stopped for driving under the speed limit (really living on the edge, huh, guys), and to add insult to injury, Phil lost his tooth in the band's van. Phil sans tooth and the rest of the Blasters arrived on stage late, but ready for action. Phil told everyone that the band owed the sold out audience. The band proceeded to play with great intensity and emotion delivering on all its promises.

Minor problems continued as Phil's guitar strap broke soon after taking the stage, but the band was determined to ignore everything but the music. They Blasted the receptive fans with all the classics. When Phil was asked where Dave was, he answered with a toothless smirk, that 'right now my brother Dave is in a bar lying to a girl,' reportedly his standard retort to the oft asked question. Phil added that he better get some dentition work done if he were to do any lying of his own.

When the band came out for their promised encore, someone asked to hear some yodeling. Having said he owed the audience, Phil and the Blasters launched into *Never No More Blues* featuring plenty of yodeling. When someone called out *High School Confidential*. Phil said the crowd was really making him pay for his sins. Having said that, the Blasters ripped out a fierce rendition of the Sheri Lewis - OOPS, I mean the Killer's - rocker that brought the house down. Everyone was sweaty and satisfied, presumably including the Blasters who spilled out into the night air. -Kevin McCauley

Cerebral 'Blaster' lets music speak for itself

By Michael Mehle

News Popular Music Writer

For facts about the Blasters, don't ask Phil Alvin.

It might be his band, but the Southern California singer has a way of twisting and turning a conversation into several dissertations comprehensible only to Mensa members. He'll verbally force-feed you the *Encyclopedia Britannica* rather than tell you about the new Blasters album due

out this winter.

IF YOU GO

The Blasters and the Beat Farmers perform at 9 tonight at the Ogden Theatre, 935 E. Colfax Ave. Information: 830-2525.

To wit, in a recent 50-minute phone conversation, the throaty singer and math wizard managed to speak at length about:

■ The Pythagorean

theorem governing the length of sides on right triangles.

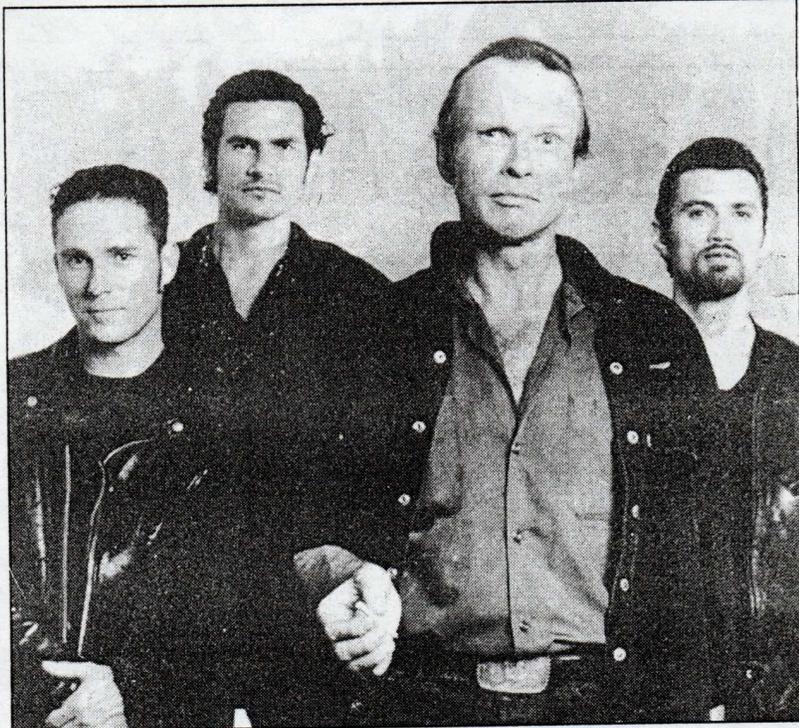
■ Mozart, music royalties and how they both changed music forever.

■ Edison's invention of the phonograph, the Victor Furniture Company's improvement on the idea, and the problems with patents on both ideas.

Stephen Hawking couldn't have kept up with Alvin's train of thought.

He refused to be pinned to a single topic, just as his band refuses to be pigeonholed into one type of music. Once described as "Hank Williams meets the Cramps," the Blasters (which plays the Ogden Theatre tonight) broke out of east Los Angeles in the early '80s as an unlikely addition to the punk scene.

Mixing souped-up blues, country and rockabilly, the band made a quick stab at commercial success before fading into an on-again, off-



The Blasters, with singer, guitarist and math genius Phil Alvin, center.

again exile while Alvin fed his "mathematical habit" at UCLA.

"In 1993, they put my picture up on the wall at UCLA, and I left. I finished my thesis, and all I wanted to do was play music," said Alvin, who tried, but failed, to explain the premise behind his thesis in simple terms.

To get back into the Blasters frame-of-mind, Alvin took his act back to the bars.

The group will return soon to the CD bins with *At Home*, a collection of live performances recorded at three small Southern California clubs.

"Actually, this album is about 'My good gal done thrown me down.' Most of the songs hint that someone's been cheating on someone. And I don't know why that it is, brother, but it might have something to do with what's been going on in my life," Alvin said.

He hopes the album will be out in late October, but admits it might have to wait until February.

In the meantime, he's touring with longtime Blasters bassist Joe Bazz, drummer Jerry Angel and guitarist James Intveld.

Note that Alvin's younger brother (and gifted songwriter), Dave, still hasn't returned to the fold after leaving the Blasters a

decade ago.

Phil insists they get along. And to prove his point (as well as his intricate theory that the brothers share the same speaking voice, but have different singing voices because speaking and singing emanate from different sections of the brain) Phil handed the phone to Dave, who happened to be visiting and doing his laundry.

Dave announced that everything's fine, he'll have a new solo album out next fall and that, indeed, he sounds much like his brother on the phone.

"I'll give you back to the genius now," Dave said understandingly before handing the phone to his brother. "And good luck."

Good luck indeed. By the time this one-sided conversation was over, Phil also managed to sneak in references to Homer, St. Paul's Paradox, his theory of semantics, finding computer programs in the public domain and how he'll soon be able to send complete albums over the Internet for 25¢.

"I'm not the normal Blaster interview?" he asked at one point, guessing at the pregnant pause at the other end of the line. "Yeah. But I play like a poor boy, and the band will speak for itself."

Beat Farmers, Blasters heat up Toad's with roadhouse rock

By MICHAEL KODAS
Courant Staff Writer

Thursday night's bill at Toad's Place teamed the Beat Farmers' rock 'n' roll rodeo with the Blasters' racetrack rhythms for a four-hour show that left the small, spirited crowd with sweaty palms and saddle sores.

The scene was something of a '50s roadhouse: Christine Ohlman's barn-burning beat and blond beehive opened well for the Beat Farmers' cowboy hats and

the Blasters' greased-back hair.

New Haven's Ohlman, who also handles the vocal duties in the "Saturday Night Live" band, brought her own band, Rebel Montez, to the stage to throw an Eastern twist on Western country.

With 20-odd years of rock experience between them, the Blasters and the Beat Farmers know how to heat up a club and fire up a crowd.

The Beat Farmers took to the stage first, spicing Jerry Raney's well-crafted country punk numbers with Country Dick Montana's

ROCK REVIEW

ability to ride bad taste like a bull. Early in the first number, Montana's favorite prop — beer — was splashing onto the stage like blood in a slasher movie, while his foghorn voice butchered Kenny Rogers' hit "You Picked a Fine Time To Leave Me, Lucille." Before the tune was over, Montana was lying on his back and holding a can between his boots to pour the suds into his mouth.

For the second number Montana returned to his drums while Raney took the band back more than 10 years to its first record. Although he sang that "It seems like we rolled bigger stones back then," the rocks they rolled Thursday night seemed more substantial than ever.

Selections from their latest disc, "Manifold," made the crowd's boots stomp. While Raney and company's punk-country made the crowds dance, Montana's white trash anthems and stage antics gave them belly laughs. Toward the end of the set, Montana had the crowd sit with him in the middle of the dance floor while he gave campfire-style renditions of two of his favorites, "Lakeside Trailer Park" and "Are You Drinking With Me, Jesus?"

If the Beat Farmers' set was a rodeo of eclectic rock, then Phil Alvin and the Blasters' set was a road race straight down the main drag. By the time Alvin broke into "Long White Cadillac," his deep, smooth voice was humming like freshly tuned and lubed V-8.

If Alvin's stories didn't draw the laughter that Country Dick's did, Montana and Raney did their best to help out with their clowning, both on stage and in the crowd. As for the tunes, the Blasters never took the foot off the pedal. Retro favorites like "I'm Shakin'," "Help You Dream," "Border Radio" and "American Music" kept the crowd redlining until well after last call.

The Blasters

The Blasters haven't released a new studio album since Dave Alvin left the group nine years ago, but they remain one of the most exciting roots-rock bands around, as they proved once again at the 9:30 club Saturday night. Only singer Phil Alvin, Dave's older brother, and bassist John Bazz remain from the original lineup, but guitarist James Intveld and drummer Jerry Angel sounded like integral Blasters as the group previewed material from its new live album, due from Private Music in January.

The new songs included Phil Alvin's twitchy working-class lament "411-44" and Intveld's slow swing-blues number, "Slip of the Tongue," but Alvin revamped old songs such as Charlie Rich's "Rebound" and George Jones's "Window Up Above" so radically that they sounded new. No one sings Dave Alvin songs better than his big brother, and the show's highlights were breathtaking charges through Dave's "Marie, Marie," "So Long Baby Goodbye" and "Border Radio." Phil barreled through the songs as if he were still one of rock's best singers. And he is.

Just as the Blasters were getting started upstairs, the Health and Happiness Show was winding up its set in the Atlantis, the 9:30 club's basement room. Named after Hank Williams's 1949 radio program, the New Jersey band was founded by ex-Bongo James Mastro to reflect his increasing interest in American roots music. The recent addition of ex-Television guitarist Richard Lloyd to the lineup, however, has transformed Mastro's songs from Dylanesque folk rock into dazzling roots-guitar constructions worthy of Richard Thompson at his most manic. It wasn't that Lloyd played so fast (though he did on occasion), but that he invented a melodic phrase to answer every line Mastro sang.

—Geoffrey Himes

Washington Post 10/17/95
submitted by Casey & Jo Anne Brill and Kevin McCauley

Hartford Courant 10/14/95 submitted by Ken Kidd Jr

Billy Davis' Blasters / Beat Farmers 1995 East Coast Tour Diary

Thirty years after publishing this newsletter issue on paper to be mailed out, I'm finally uploading these digitally for the BlastersNewsletter.com website. In my archives, I've found so much extra content from the period that fans sent me that I did not have space for in the 7 page newsletter. I am now including it.

This tour diary I wrote in 1995 when I was young, a new Blasters fan, and establishing a friendship with the Blasters. This writing was personal and never meant to be published. I've decided to share it now to show how kind and welcoming the Blasters and their community was to me, a new fan. —Billy

Friday October 6, 1995 South Amboy NJ at Club Bene

I was told doors opened at 9pm. I pulled up to the club at 9:15 and could hear the blasters playing inside. I ran to the front entrance and was told they just started their set. The place was only half full. I guess like me didn't expect a show in a club to start that early. I watched the set and the sound was exceptional. A really good mix in this room. I audio taped the show on my Walkman. It came in at about 75 minutes, so I missed the first 15. The Beat Farmers played next and the audience filled in to about three quarters full. Not so good for a Friday night, but maybe good for a small town in rural New Jersey.

After the Blasters set, I went backstage and found James Intveld and John Bazz. They were glad to see me and we talked for awhile about the tour. James told me that Bear Family Records was going to release his solo album on 10 inch vinyl with bonus tracks added. We also talked a lot about Dale Watson's new album on HighTone Records. James takes credit for convincing Dale to put *Nashville Rash* on his album. It's a song that is very against what kind of country Nashville is producing lately.

He said that Dale is sitting at home right now because HighTone won't finance a tour for him. James isn't on speaking terms with the HighTone guys because they gave him the run-around a few years ago on a potential album deal.

Phil disappeared for awhile, but came in for a few minutes to say hello. I gave the band some custom buttons that said "Blasters Blastour '95." An old friend of the Blasters named Rosie Gutierrez was acting as road manager on this tour. She has been doing a great job and is helping make extra money for the band by selling new T shirts. The design is really cool. It's a Cadillac logo with the Blasters lettering inside. They're printed on black and white shirts and cost \$15 each.

I spent most of the Beat Farmers set hanging around the lobby near the merch stand. James and John came out to hang out and meet the fans. I got a lot of compliments on my new black jacket with a custom embroidered Blasters logo on the back in diploma style lettering. My mother made it for me after I saw James and Johnny with the same type of logo on their jackets. Jerry wasn't hanging around with us. He had a girlfriend along on the tour that he was spending time with.

The show ended and the band stayed at a hotel nearby in New Jersey. James Intveld hitched a ride with me back to New York, where he had friends who he would be staying with. It took about an hour to ride back and we had some interesting conversation. I got a preview of the newly recorded four tracks that were going to be on his Bear Family 10 inch vinyl. Great songs.

James said the record company wanted some songs that were more rockabilly style to add to the record. I complimented him on the song, *Kermit Vale* from the CD and he said thanks and that it really means a lot to him to get a compliment on that song since he put a lot of feeling into it.

At three in the morning, we stopped in Greenwich Village to get pizza and then I dropped him off at his friends house who incidentally is the same guy who designed his solo CD .

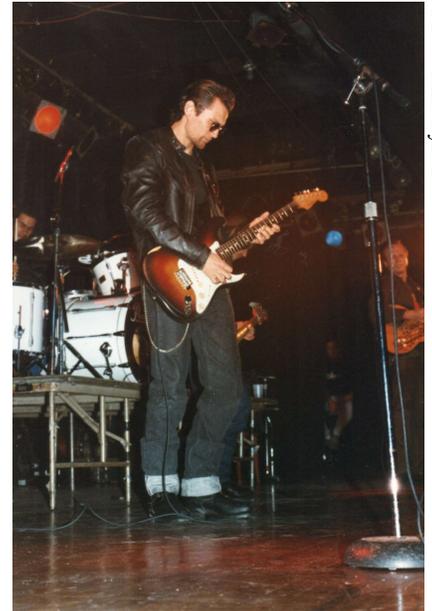


Photo: Mike Lynam



Saturday October 7, 1995 New York City at Tramps

I arrived early just as the Beat Farmers were going to go on. Backstage, only Johnny from the Blasters was there yet. A few people from L.A. were at the show, so we talked as the Beat Farmers started their set. I went out front to watch the last half of the set as Phil and James arrived. James had his friend that he was staying with and Phil with a friend from Los Angeles named Audrey. After the Beat Farmers played, I went backstage and met with James. James introduced me to his friend friend he was staying with named Mark Rubenstein. Mark was a friend of Art Fein and told me about his rare video collection. He gave me Art's phone number. Art used to be the Blasters manager.

The Beat Farmers came off stage and it was funny to see Country Dick Montana and Phil horsing around backstage.

A while back, Phil had promised to get me one of those cool blasters embroidered shirts that the band always wears on stage. While backstage, Phil called me over and presented me with a button shirt with a great looking logo of the Blasters like the Cadillac logo on the T-shirts. I was tremendously grateful and I told Phil how appreciative I was. He included a signed note that said "I may be late, but never, never."

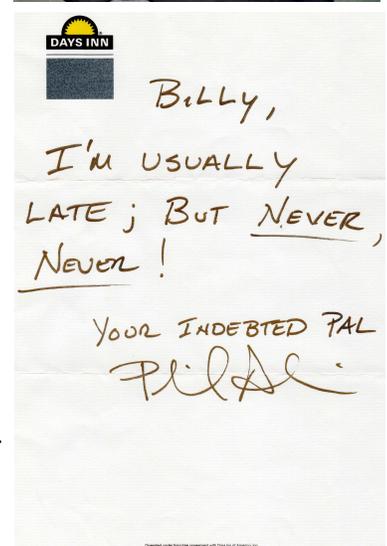
The Blasters were about to come on, so I came out across the stage and went down into a photographers pit between the stage and the audience to videotape the show. I did a great shoot, but came home, disappointed when I found out my camera was defective and put an interference line across the bottom of the picture, even wiping out the audio track.

Tuesday October 10, 1995 Hoboken NJ at Maxwell's

This gig was a last-minute addition and was without the Beat Farmers. The Blasters were playing for the door and didn't make much money, because nobody knew they were playing. I arrived early and saw the end of a set by a hill-billy band that was pretty good. I wore the shirt that Phil gave me, and soon after the Blasters arrived at the club. I was talking to Audrey and she said "I hope you washed that shirt, because Phil was wearing it." We all laughed, because you know how Phil sweats on stage. I thought it was a new shirt.

I videotape the show with a different camera, though the lighting was terrible on the stage. Just a red light on Phil. It was hard to see the other band members. The video came out decent and it was great to hear a rare song done: *Mean Ole Frisco* and in the encore Phil was joined by a Los Angeles friend by the name of Harlan on a few country blues classics.

After this set, Phil met a guy who has the computerized embroidery machine that could mass produce the shirt I was wearing. Hopefully he will call Phil after the tour and make these shirts available for sale. They were discussing the shirt. The retail may cost \$40-\$50.



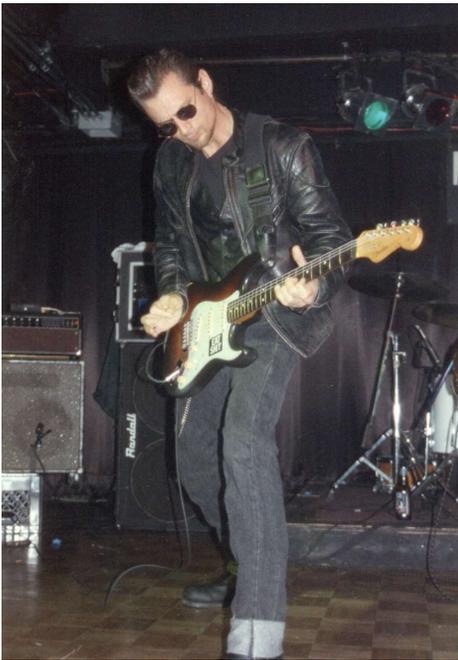
Photos: Billy Davis

Wednesday October 11, 1995 Boston MA at Mama Kin

I went to the club a little early and only Jerry Angel was there. He was getting ready to go on stage with the Beat Farmers. He's been playing drums for them on a few songs that Country Dick Montana uses to come upfront to the stage to sing.

The club is owned by Aerosmith and is really top-notch. It's has all new looking equipment, great sound and cool looking decor. Halfway through the Beat Farmers set, the Blasters arrived. Rosie set up for selling T-shirts and I talked to John. He officially asked me if I would like to write the liner notes for the upcoming new Blasters live CD and that I should call Greg Lewerke the manager the next day to arrange it. Of course I happily accepted!

I asked James if the Blasters still do *Oh Doctor* from the 'County Fair 2000' album. He said that they hadn't done it on this tour and that I would have to specially requested it from Phil, because he is the one who picks the set list. I asked Phil and he said he would get it in at another gig for me, but no tonight because he wasn't ready for it.

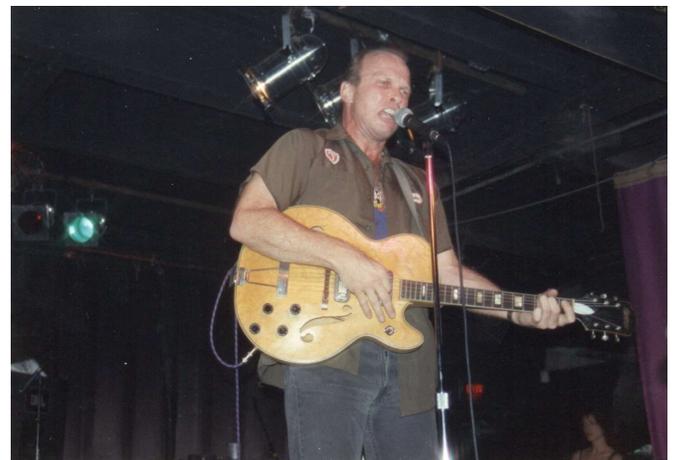
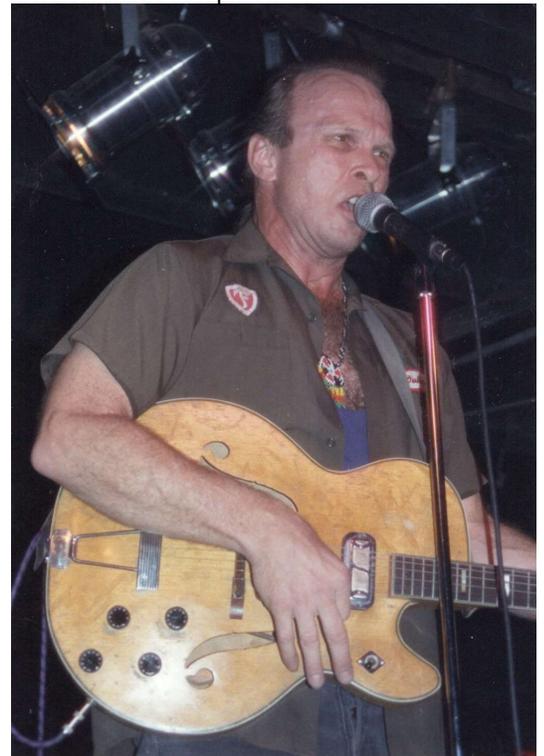


right now. But they want the liner notes next week, so as soon as my time on the tour is over I have to prepare it and submit it

Thursday October 12, 1995 New Haven CT at Toads Place

I arrived again during the Beat Farmers set and soon after the Blasters arrived. I did a short interview with James about his solo album. That interview will appear in American Music issue #9. After the interview, Phil came over and discussed the new CD with James. Phil talked over the phone with the art director who is designing the new CD cover. The

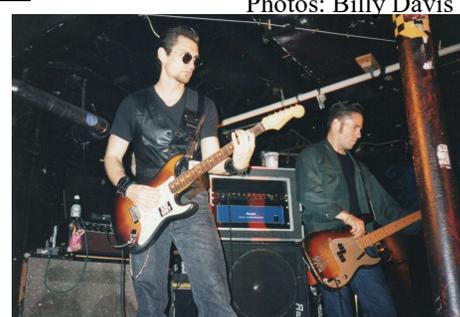
The Blasters came on stage and I didn't bring my camera. The Venue doesn't allow any kind of taping. I just enjoyed the set. I did audiotape it. the show ended, and I left for the two hour ride home to Queens.



Friday October 13, 1995 Providence RI at Club Babyhead

Photos: Billy Davis

Photo: Danny O'Meara



I left New York at 7 PM expecting to make it by car to Providence in three hours but because of traffic and road construction, it took four hours. I figured since the Blasters were opening for the Beat Farmers, that I probably would be late for the set. Luckily when I arrived, the Blasters had yet to get there. They arrive soon after and they immediately prepared to go on stage. I was gearing up to shoot a bunch of photos with the club's colorful walls as a backdrop. The club was small, but a pretty good crowd filled up to the front of the stage. I shot about three rolls of film, black and white and color 1600 speed and 400.

It was another good set by the Blasters, of course. At one point, Phil turned to the band, not in the range of the microphone and said "Let's do Billy's song. They did *Oh Doctor*. So Phil remembered my request from a few days ago. After the song, Phil announced in the microphone, "That was for Billy Davis. I told you I would do it." Wow! That was really cool.

The band played a short set, but finished with a high energy *High School Confidential*. After the set, I went backstage in the dressing room just to talk to Phil a little and thank him for the dedication. We talked for a while with some other people while members of the Beat Farmers started throwing stuff all over the dressing room walls and suddenly Phil and the Beat Farmers were involved in a playful water and beer throwing fight.

When that settled down, Audrey was nice enough to take pictures of me with the individual band members. I didn't get Jerry because he was already on stage jamming with the Beat Farmers.

They were still playing late when at about 1 AM James invited me to go with him a few

Photos: Audrey M.



blocks away to another venue called the Met Café to see Big Sandy and the Flyrite Boys play their set. James paid for the admission and I bought the beer. We watched the set and talked a lot about James doing more solo stuff and his role on the blasters. I was happy that he confided in me and respected my opinion of him and the band as viewing from the outside, he told me a little bit about his future in the blasters - more on that later. The people from the Boston Rockabilly Fanzine were there and we're happy to finally meet James.

After the show, James introduced me to the Flyrite Boys. They were all very friendly. We were right here at



Photos: Billy Davis



Danny O'Meara and Phil

the hotel that the Blasters were staying at but James figured he'd walk with me back to Club Babyhead to see what was happening with the Beat Farmers finishing up there. It was 3 AM and the Beat Farmers were just loading out their equipment. Only Country Dick was still there finishing

off his last beer. We left, I drove James to the hotel, and then headed home to Queens. I made it home by 6:30 AM.



Saturday October 14, 1995 Wash. DC at 9:30 Club (2 shows)

The Blasters headline the first show and then opened the second one. A lot of traffic and heavy rain made me late. I arrived about 20 minutes into the Blaster set of the first show. The club was very small and not the fancy place I envisioned it would be.

Back stage I met up with Kaktus Kimmy who hosts a roots rock radio show on WDCE Richmond. She posed for some photos with Phil with her Blasters Newsletter copy in hand.

The band was about to go on and Jerry Angel asked me to take a picture with his camera of just the four Blasters. I took the opportunity to get a shot on my camera and off they went on stage. Later when I looked at what I shot, it was one of the best band shots I've seen of the Blasters. I'm thankful Jerry suggested that.



The band went on to open the second show and played another great one. After the set, we went backstage to say goodbye. This would be the last show of the tour for me. I went around and shook everybody's hand and when approaching Phil, he gave me a big hug and thanked me for everything. I was the one who should be thanking him. I did, for everything and that great shirt.

I went outside and bumped into Phil and Audrey leaving and Phil mentioned that they would be back in the spring. The Blasters now have two days to travel 1500 miles to Oklahoma City for the next gig. What a great tour this was. Thank you Blasters. —Billy Davis



Kaktus Kimmy and Phil

Liner Notes:

The Blasters

“AT HOME” 1996

The Blasters planned a live album release for Sony's Private Music in 1996. Recorded in 1995 with James Intveld on guitar. I was asked by the Blasters to write the liner notes. Unfortunately, Private Music went out of business and along with it, the Blasters record deal. Here is what I wrote in 1995. —Billy Davis

Here you have it. The Blasters live! It has been 10 years since the Blasters have released an album of new recordings, but the wait has been worth it. This CD encapsulates everything the Blasters have stood for in American Music through their last 15 years - but that is not all we have here. With new songs, they introduce us to the new rules that the Blasters play by - Their own rules! We wouldn't have it any other way.

This precious piece of plastic you hold in your hands was recorded at various Los Angeles venues that the Blasters call home. Thus the title "At Home." This seminal live band excels in their own environment: the concert stage. Here the Blasters bring back some of their classic songs, plus debut some new songs written and arranged by the 1996 Blasters.

This inception of the Blasters is as solid a band as there has been in the band's history. On vocals, rhythm guitar and harmonica is Phil Alvin. With vocals as strong as ever he leads the Blaster caravan through American Music frontiers and has arrived in your town right now. In the last 10 years he has put out 2 solo albums, supervised the assemblage of the Blasters collection CD, and kept the Blasters sporadically on the road in Europe and state-side. Outside of music he has successfully published a mathematical thesis which has been recognized by the world's top theorists in the field. He is one of the two remaining

founding members.

John Bazz on bass guitar has also been there from the beginning. He has been the rhythmic back bone of the band. Known as always consistent and intense in mid-song, there isn't a bass player out there who's right hand works harder on the bass strings. I recently saw this guy break two bass strings in one song!

James Intveld became a Blaster in the summer of 1993. The lead guitar player brings even more versatility than what was lost when Dave Alvin left the band in 1986. He is a song writing lead guitarist, vocalist, producer, and all around musician playing bass, drums, and piano. James only occasionally steps up to the microphone at a Blaster show, like he does here on the third verse in "Blueline." He prefers to concentrate on guitar and it shows in his intensity on stage. James style is one that has really added a new dimension to the band. His soloing style has an exceptional bite to it and really stands out in the Blasters sound mix.

James started out in the early 1980's rockabilly scene fronting the Rockin' Shadows and had a minor hit "My Heart is Achin' For You." Through the eighties, James played in backing bands for Rosie Flores, Harry Dean Stanton, Johnny Meeks, and Bobby Mizzell while finding time for solo work and some acting in movies and television. He has done extensive movie soundtrack work. Most nota-

bly he was the singing voice of Johnny Depp in the movie "Cry Baby." Here in 1996 he still keeps up on these other activities in his spare time, but now he is THE Blaster guitar player.

Drummer Jerry Angel joined the Blasters in the summer of 1994 and was the rock solid drummer the Blasters had been searching for to complete the definitive line up of the band heard on this disc. He came to the Blasters with high credentials touring and recording with artists as diverse as Brian Setzer, Carole King, Dwight Yoakam, The Divinyls, The Dickies, and Dave Alvin's Allnighters. When he joined the Blasters, his professionalism was really put to the test. He was asked to come in on last minute notice and play his first Blasters gig without a single rehearsal. At this point the band knew the Blaster four was complete.

They immediately embarked on a European tour with Dwight Yoakam and needed someone who could do the job right away. Jerry was it! By reputation they knew Jerry could do it. By experiencing such a wide range of styles, Jerry brings an arsenal of ideas to the Blasters from the drummer's seat. He has renewed the percussion role in the Blasters to be a heavier more dominating edge to the backbeat. The Blasters string section has remarked how Jerry's spontaneous style of throwing in new ideas and fills has brought their playing to a higher level.

As stated before the Blaster live performance is an experience that leaves you awe inspired. A lot should be said about musicians who can still uncover the barest roots of music called Rock 'n Roll and convey it to our ears as freshly as the day this music was born.

The influence of the Blasters ranges from beginning listeners to even music legends. Bruce Springsteen was so thrilled to join the Blasters on-stage at one of their recent shows, he remarked in a N.Y. Times interview that the Blasters have led him to start "toying around with the idea of making a record that's centered

around loud guitars."

The Blasters song selection comes from their personal taste, not from some critic who claims to know what the public wants to hear. The Blasters constantly dig up obscure songs, some originally recorded 35 or 40 years ago, and they put their unique sound stamp on it. In some cases you would not know it from the original but the Blasters know only one way and that is perfection. Just listen to a song like "Daddy Rollin' Stone." The Blasters had played a version of this song before James Intveld joined the band, but when James got a hold of this tune he completely changed it and now it stands out as a Blaster show stopper. James approach to learning a new song is not to listen to the guitar player's arrangement, but to hear the melody.

New songs here from the pens of Alvin & Intveld are the bluesy "Slip of the Tongue," and the up tempo song about lotteries "4-11-44." These two originals give us a glimpse of the Blasters of the future.

"So Long Baby Good-bye" has been a staple in the Blasters set since the bands early days and featured the fifth member of the Blasters, Lee Allen on Saxophone. Legendary is an understatement in describing the man's contribution to music. He is the one responsible for bringing horns to Rock 'n Roll. Witness him on all the Little Richard & Fats Domino hits. Lee Allen passed away in October of 1994, but his music lives on. On "So Long Baby." Phil Alvin plays Lee's solo note for note on harmonica and takes no credit, for it's all Lee Allen. This record is undoubtedly dedicated to Lee Allen as should every Rock 'n Roll record be from this day on.

If you have never seen a Blasters live performance, you will know what your missing because here it is the proof on plastic. The Blasters further exploration of American Music has only begun. So step up, listen and learn!
-Billy Davis

Live Reviews

THE BLASTERS
MAMA KIN OCT. 11th '95

There's only one way to describe The Blasters show at Mama Kin.....shitkicking Rock n' Roll.

I've always loved The Blasters. They were the kings of roots rock n' roll during the 80's. They were the center of L.A.'s roots/punk/rockabilly scene that included other greats like X, Blood On The Saddle, The Flesheaters, Los Lobos, Ronnie Weiser's Rollin' Rock projects and the list goes on.

Man, this line up played some in your face rock n' roll. I have all their albums, but this show really surprised me. Gone are all the subtleties and slower moments that appear on their studio stuff. The Blasters played some of the toughest straight ahead rock n' roll I've seen in some time. As far as power and energy go (not to mention musicianship) The Blasters can blow away any of these current bands that think they're so hard and heavy.

The Blasters have only two or-



James Intveld and John Bazz
kickin' out some rockin' tunes

Phil Alvin of The Blasters



iginal members - singer/rhythm guitarist Phil Alvin and bassist John Bazz. They brought along L.A. scenester Jerry Angel on drums and Dave Alvin's spot was filled by the semi-legendary rockabilly cat James Intveld. He's most known for the original "My Heart Is Achin' For You" with The Rockin' Shadows. He also is the guy who actually sang and played all Johnny Depp's songs in the movie "Cry Baby". (Bear Family Records just recently released an album compiling all his work).

The Blasters pounded out all their classics: "Marie, Marie", "Border Radio", "American Music", "Long White Cadillac". They even included a boppin' version of "I'm Shakin'".

It's worth the price at the door just to listen to Phil Alvin's powerhouse voice and see him grit his teeth with that trademark mouth of his.

John Bazz is the most aggres-



sive electric bass player I've seen. He even broke a bass string by sheer force of plucking with his bare fingers.

Even on slow numbers like "Help You Dream" they never let up for air.

They also did some material off of a forthcoming album, so I hope that means they'll be coming back to tour when the new albums released.

If you missed them you should catch them next time they roll into town.

For anyone interested in The Blasters or Blasters related news and history, you should send for American Music The Blasters Newsletter. It's a cool 'zine put out by number one fan Billy Davis. Contact: American Music, 80-16 64th Lane, Glendale, NY, 11385....1\$ an issue or 5\$ for a year subscription.

-Jon



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#1. Blastory part 1, James Intveld profile.

#2. Phil Alvin interview Part 1, Dave Alvin's "Museum" tour review, Faultline Syncopaters profile.

#3. Phil Alvin interview Part 2, complete Blasters Discography.

#4. James Harman interview, Blasters 91 Finland tour.

#5. Lee Allen tribute issue. Dave Alvin interview. Lee Allen profile. Phil Alvin Foothill club review.

#6 Rockin Ronnie Weiser interview, Bobby Mizzel & James Intveld Cd review, State of the Blasters today story.

#7. Phil Alvin on the Making of County Fair 2000. An in depth look at Blaster cover songs.

#8. James Intveld interview, The making of Sonny Burgess' and Dave Alvin's Tennessee Border Cd.