

This is a reprint of the First 'Blasters newsletter' as it was when I was printing it on an old word processor. My info came from Phil Alvin, when he picked up his phone, and from the first on-line services 'Compuserve' and 'Prodigy.' Remember those? The writing is primitive but here it is, 'warts and all.' The only thing I have changed is that I have included full color photos. Check out the Expanded section where I display extra photos from the period and share some recollections.

AMERICAN MUSIC

The Blaster Newsletter

Issue #1 Feb. 94



Photo: Billy Davis

News: The Blasters are back. Back recording that is. A new CD is tentatively scheduled for release in the summer. The band reportedly is being courted by one of the majors again but is not yet saying which. The band originally planned a February CD-ep release, but now with major label interest things have been slowed a bit. The band's lineup consists of Phil Alvin on vocals and guitar, James Intveld on lead guitar, John Bazz on bass, and David Carroll on drums. James Intveld is a veteran of the L.A. scene, has done soundtrack and session work, and is the song writing lead guitarist that has eluded the Blasters since the departure of Dave Alvin. David Carroll is a long time Blaster acquaintance from Downey, CA. We're most familiar with his playing on Phil Alvin's Unsung Stories LP. Speaking of Phil Alvin solo, he will have his second solo effort to be released on HighTone records in the spring. More details as it becomes available.

The Blasters did a live radio show on 10/10/93 on KPFK's "Folkscene" show. The band was interviewed and performed 9 songs. This weekly radio show hosts many different groups and can be heard in the southern California area.

In the last year the Blasters and their related solo projects have remained fairly local to Los Angeles, so for the benefit of those who have not been kept informed-here is some of what has happened.

The Phil Alvin solo show consisted of Phil doing his repertoire of country blues accompanied by his own guitar. The Phil Alvin Quartet were shows done with the current Blaster lineup with the addition of Lee Allen. The Sand-Aid benefit brought together many of L.A.'s blues and rockabilly bands to raise money for the very popular band "Big Sandy & the Flyrite Boys", who had all their instruments stolen recently.

In October of '93 Dave Alvin released his latest HighTone CD, Museum of Heart. He toured the U.S. for a month with Adrian Belew. - In related news: former Blaster lead guitarist (1987-92) Greg 'Smokey' Hormel was seen on the E! TV network backing up Bruce Willis in his Planet Hollywood blues band celebrating the opening of a new club in Minneapolis MN.

Phil Alvin	3/19/93	Palomino (North Hollywood)
Phil & Dave Alvin	6/11/93	Bogart's (Long Beach)
Phil Alvin Quartet	6/18/93	Club Lingerie (Hollywood)
Phil Alvin Quartet	7/2/93	Alligator lounge (Santa Monica)
Phil Alvin Quartet	7/30/93	Palomino (North Hollywood)
Blasters (Sand-aid)	11/14/93	Palomino (N.rth Hollywood)
The Blasters	12/11/93	Palomino (North Hollywood)
The Blasters	1/28/94	Palomino (North Hollywood)
The Blasters	2/6/94	Strand (Redondo Beach)

JAMES INTVELD PROFILE

James originally came from Garden Grove and gained popularity in the early 80's with his band The Rockin Shadows. The band had James on guitar and vocals, his brother Rick on Drums, and Steve Grindle on Bass. Their first hit on Doghouse records in 1982, "My heart is achin' for you" has been covered by other artists and can be heard on Art Fein's L.A. Rockabilly compilation on Rhino records. The band appeared in the (now labeled-cult status) movie "Roadhouse 66" performing their first hit and others.

In a 1983 interview of Dave Alvin he was asked about the local L.A. music scene and replied, "There are alot of good rockabilly bands. James Intveld is the best singer. He will probably be around the longest. If I wasn't in the Blasters I would be trying to do something with him."

The band broke up in 1984 when drummer Rick Intveld joined Ricky Nelson's band and James took on bass playing and song writing in L.A. based, country singer Rosie Flores' band. They did one album for reprise records with James on bass.

In the late 80's James did some acting in a TV series called "Private Eye", in the pilot episode he goes by the name of Eddie Burnette. From television on to movies, James sang on the soundtrack to the movie "Cry baby". He did all of Johnny Depp's vocals and the producer was, you guessed it- Dave Alvin, who finally got to work with James. Now James is lead guitarist in the Blasters. His vocal talents aside the Blasters are anticipating his guitar work and song writing talents to carry them back to the top. This has only been half the story, the Blasters are back.



James in '83 with the Rockin Shadows

COLLECTING BLASTERS

Photo: Ann Summa



Currently there is an ad for an LP in the record collectors papers listed as; artist: The Blasters. Title: Sounds of the Drags. It is on the Crown label #562 from the year 1963. Well, if it actually were the Blasters, it would have been funny to hear them shake their rattles and sing ga-ga but sorry, its a sound effects record of dragsters, so don't be fooled. There are some new licenced products available recently: 1. Rhino has put out a video "Best of New Wave Theatre vol. 1" The Blasters do a rockin' version of 'Go, Go, Go.' 2. Hal Leonard Publishing has a songbook of note-for-note guitar tablature entitled "Genuine Rockabilly Hits". It has transcriptions of Marie Marie and American Music.

BLASTORY

by BILLY DAVIS

This is the most complete history of the Blasters in print. Each issue will continue the story chronologically.

The Beginning

The Blaster's favorite brother act Phil and Dave weren't originally California home grown, well half of each was. Their Mom's family lived in L.A. as far back as she could remember. Their father was the out-of-towner, he hailed from South Bend, Indiana where steel working was the family business. When moving to L.A., he changed his name from Czyzewski to an uncle's middle name Alvin and settled in Downey, CA, a small bedroom community within the bigger Los Angeles.

The Alvin musical influences were able to expand due to a surrounding of different cultures. To the west is Bell Gardens where Eddie Cochran grew up and made his first record. To the north is Pico Rivera which is mostly Chicano. And southwest is Compton and Lynwood mostly black. A combination of these influences and a growing dissatisfaction with commercial music made record collecting easy. Phil explains, "I could hear a song on the radio that someone just put out, go down to the used record store and buy the same song, only the original, and a better version for a quarter." All the future members of the Blasters always shared the same distaste for the direction that contemporary music was taking, so they turned back the clock to find their musical influences.

Phil recalls the first gig he had singing, was for the school choir in the fifth grade but the real training for both brothers began with frequent trips to L.A.'s blues venues like the Shrine Auditorium to see the likes of Junior Wells, Buddy Guy, and Albert King, or the Ashgrove where they saw Lightnin' Hopkins, Johnny Shines, Rev. Gary Davis, Johnny 'Guitar' Watson, and T-Bone Walker. This came about in 1970 when Phil met a blues player named Ernie Franklin in a music store. His mother was a good friend of T-Bone Walker and also dated Lee Allen. Ernie invited Phil down to the York club to see Big Joe Turner. Phil recalls, "So, we went out there, scared you know. I was only 17 years old, and Joe Turner was up there on stage with

Lee Allen playin' sax-and they told us to get up and play! I went up and sang Joe Turner's 'Wee Baby Blues' right in front of him!! From then on, twice a week we'd go see these guys play." So it was from these excursions that they were able to learn first hand technique and advice from true legends in American music.

Saxophonist Lee Allen became a mentor to the young brothers. Lee was one of the most recorded sax players of the 40's and 50's and is well known for his solos on Little Richards' and Fats Dominos' records. "We used to go to Watts twice a week," explains Dave, "And see Lee and guys like Marcus Johnson, and they'd say 'Don't play that note,' or 'Don't play so much here.' Lee would sit us down and say, 'What you doin' these long songs for? This is dance music. People can only dance for about three minutes, then they get tired,' So we began to realize that there are things you just don't do."

Phil's first guitar hero was a cousin who played in a rock band: "At

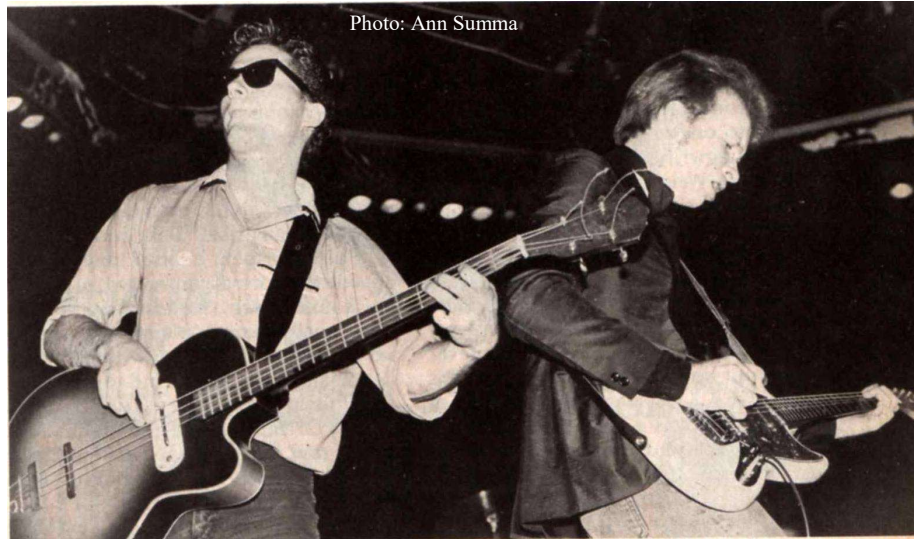


Photo: Ann Summa



Photo: CC

first I just wanted to be a cool guy like her." His priorities would change when he bought his first serious guitar at age 14. The brothers already had an old Orlando nylon string, but wanted a real guitar like what their idol's played. He paid \$100 in a pawnshop for a Epiphone 1949 Harry Volpe model. Phil explains how he forced upon himself into a very defined guitar style of country blues: "Later on when I got into the harmonica, I realized that there is a certain style of guitar playing that accompanies harmonica players; players like Robert Junior Lockwood and Houston Stackhouse made me realize that the guitar is a very complex instrument. None of the players around me would learn to play like Lightnin' Hopkins. They all wanted to play like Jimmy Page, which is easier - I mean, you only had to look for one string for your notes, you didn't have to worry about your bass line or anything like that."

Dave was studying flute at 12 years old when something happened that really made him want to become a guitar player. Dave, "This guy in a record store in Downey played me an album called 'Anthology of the Blues: The Legend of Elmore James.' It was the most incredible guitar album I ever heard. Some of the songs sounded like the gates of hell were opening up, because of the slide work he was doing. So that's when I decided what I wanted to be - I wanted to be like Elmore James."

In the mid 70's, Phil had a job teaching mathematics and Dave was a literature major in college and doing the poetry circuit, free readings, etc. At one point he held a job as a fry cook. All the members claimed to have been in numerous garage bands at one point or another. Some such as, The Flying Cats, Delta Pacific, The Night Shift, Fresh Water Bass and the Delta Rabbits, and The Strangers. These bands ranged in style from R&B, to Norteno, to country and of course blues backing up legends T-Bone Walker and Big Joe Turner. Dave played for about 6 months in a primitive punk band called 'The Murderers' while Phil continued playing in blues bands. One band in particular just before the formation of the Blasters was the James Harman band with Phil on lead guitar and future Blaster Bill Bateman on drums. This didn't work because Phil wanted to sing and Harman was already a lead singer.

He got his opportunity when a band was put together to play a wedding down in Huntington Beach on St. Patrick's day in March of '79. It was the first time the brothers played together in a serious situation. Though they had never rehearsed together before the performance, it could have been a disaster. Dave explains there was a certain chemistry, "There was this sound between us that I've never heard in my life, outside of a few rare exceptions. My influences are Johnny 'Guitar' Watson and Carl Perkins - more of the raunch-out, thrash the guitar school of playing. Phil's is more the very refined finger-picking style, like Blind Blake and Blind Willie McTell. Our drummer plays very rhythmically, most guys just settle into the cymbals, but Bill is pounding away. So what we had there on this first gig was Blind Blake on this end, Carl Perkins on the other end, and this bashing drummer. It was a kind of groove that no other band has." The gig went well and the band figured they would stay together. Dave recalls, "When we first started rehearsing it was me, Phil, and Bill. And we wouldn't play any single string solo's, we'd play chord solo's and because none of us are McLaughlin or Wes Montgomery...we sat there playing accents against that rhythm again and again for hours and you get (laughs) kind of a feel."



Photo: CC

Drummer Bill Bateman played in numerous bands including 'Crowfoot' and 'Horatio Kleat' before joining Phil and Dave. He had worked for Randall instruments and was able to set the band up with a good deal on their amplification equipment. The original bass player, Mike Kennedy was in the band three months since that first gig, when his persistent love for a hooker got the best of him and he was found dead in his car. John Bazz had concentrated on guitar and drums and never regularly played bass before joining Phil, Dave, and Bill. His past experiences ranged from rock to gospel configurations. He had a day job working in a spring factory and became the new Blaster bassist.

The band then did a series of gigs in south L.A., "Hollywood was too hard to crack," recalls Dave, "We couldn't get into The Whiskey or Starwood or even Club 88. We were doing biker bars and hoot nights at country bars." They were playing under a slew of names including- 'Kool Filter and the Kings,' and 'Bozo Hefner and the Playboy Clowns' until they took a serious name from Jimmy McCracklin's 'Blues Blasters'. They short-



ened it to just The Blasters. For eight months they played out and rehearsed in a vacant space above John Bazzs' father's work office. It was here that James Harman brought in his portable recording equipment to make a demo. This was the demo that would get them their first record deal with Rollin' Rock records.

THE ROLLIN ROCK YEAR-1980

Upon seeing an ad for a local record company recording what Rollin' Rock boss Ronnie Weiser called 'original rockabilly,' the band felt ready to take a bigger step. "We saw an ad in the L.A. Weekly,"(a local music paper), Dave explains,"We were rehearsing in a factory in Garden Grove, far removed from Hollywood. We thought,' There's people out there playing this stuff, and they're getting famous on the cover of this magazine!'"

They drove up to the Denny's restaurant on Sunset Blvd. and gave Ron Weiser a call. Phil remembers the conversation, "We've got a tape here!" Ron said, 'Oh yeah, I've heard tapes before'. I said that I had a guitar with me and I would play real live rockabilly for him in his living room." Ronnie Weiser continues the story, "This Alvin fella was very persistent so I agreed to phone him back. Anyway, Phil Alvin came to my house and played me a cassette of their rehearsals; I couldn't believe how great this stuff was! Finally there was a band who knew what American Music was all about." While sitting down listening to the Blasters demo of all their cover songs, a truck driver had come into pick up some records being shipped somewhere and heard the tape being played and said, "Who is that, I'd buy that record", when asked what he thought it sounded like he replied,"That's rhythm and Blues, man!" Weiser told them if they could get some original songs together, they could make a record. "So we set up a meeting for everybody to write 2 songs," explains Dave, "I came in with 4 and nobody else had any." The other 9 songs they recorded that would appear on the album were cover songs, but more obscure than most other groups would usually cover. The other 9 out take songs could more accurately be labeled blues songs but being on a rockabilly label, Weiser chose the more suitable songs to his taste. The album was recorded only a week after their first meeting with Weiser.

The band recorded 22 songs in 2 days on Ronnie's 16 track machine in his living room at a budget of about



two thousand dollars. In February, the classic record "American Music" was released with a pressing of 4000. It sold out quickly without the benefit of distribution to stores and today is a very rare collectable and goes for about \$100 in collectors shops.

Dave, "The problem with Ronnie is that he was screwed over by distributors, and didn't want to deal with them anymore. All he wanted to do was have people mail in for records through his fanzine." The Blasters wanted more than that, they had sold records at their gigs, gave records to stores to sell on consignment and were ready for something better. Bill Bateman was asked in an interview why they made the Rollin Rock lp and he said, "Mainly for promotional reasons", and when asked why the band left Rollin Rock he quickly re-

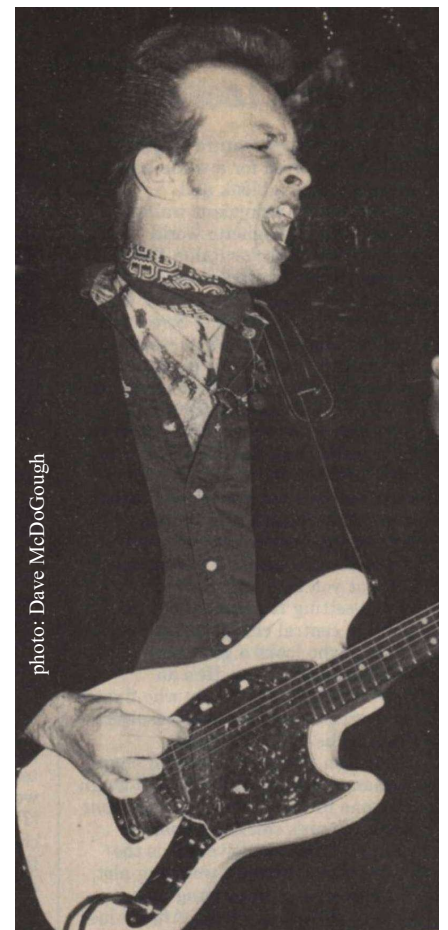


stated with a laugh, "Mainly for promotional reasons."

The album gave the band some notoriety and the gigs got better. At one point within one month they had opened for the Go-Go's, Asleep at the wheel, X, and the Cramps. But they were about to get an even bigger break: In the summer of '80 the Blasters played at a local roller disco called Flippers. Roger Taylor, Brian May, and Roger Deacon of the group Queen were in attendance. They were in town getting prepared to do a

series of west coast arena shows promoting their new "The Game" album. They were so impressed with the Blasters, that they asked the band to open up for Queen on their west coast swing. Roger Taylor of Queen comments, "The Blasters had a genuine feel for basic rock n' roll, so we decided the next day we wanted them to open for us."

The Blasters played 8 shows including San Diego, Phoenix, L.A., and Oakland. "That first night in a 14,000 seat hall in San Diego was really something," remembers Phil. "The stage was bigger than most of the clubs we've played." The crowd response, as expected was not good. The audience consisted of mostly teenagers into hard rock, who had never even heard of the Blasters. The band didn't get any billing so when the lights went down each night the crowd roared thinking Queen was coming on, only causing confusion, then disappointment. The Blasters got a lot of press coverage from the tour, helpful for an unsigned band. Opening for an internationally famous band resulted in getting gigs headlining in the Hollywood clubs. The record labels would now be looking at the Blasters.



American Music liner notes

When Phil and Dave Alvin first phoned me saying they had a band doing "Rockabilly type material, I thought to myself: "Sure everybody claims to be doing it these days." But a few days later they stopped over at my house and played me a cassette of some of the stuff they'd been doing. I was astounded! Indeed this was the first L.A. band in a decade (aside from Ray Campi's) that really excited me. A while later I went to see them play in some bar. Yes, indeed they were the "Real Thing." The news spread fast: The Blasters are it! Over night they have become the favorite band of such other Rock 'n' Roll celebrities as Ray Campi, Jimmie Lee Maslon, Johnny Legend, etc.

The Blasters style is highly influenced by Rhythm & Blues, New Orleans, Cajun, Blues, Hillbilly and Rockabilly. They draw their inspiration from the roots of American music, yet their music is totally modern, a breath of fresh air to start the 1980's. People have often described their style as "Rockabilly," "Rhythm & Blues," or "Rock 'n' Roll," but when one asks Phil Alvin how he would describe it, the answer is disarmingly simple: "AMERICAN MUSIC." Ain't nothing else I can add to that!! Keep on Rockin' Rockin Ronnie

Meanwhile in England, pop singer Shakin' Stevens had recorded Dave's song "Marie Marie" and by the end of the year the song would reach #19 on the British charts. Dave remarks, "It's real good that Shakin' Stevens recorded Marie Marie and had a hit with it. It's like saying about the Blasters, 'These guys can have a hit record because Phil is a better singer and our version is not so cornball.'" The story goes that Shakin' Stevens visited California and rock scribe Art Fein was asked by Shakin's label, Epic, "To interview him and make him feel important." Shakey mentioned that he was looking for some new tunes to record and Fein then pulled the American Music LP off the shelf. According to Dave Alvin "Marie Marie" was cut and pressed less than a month later for release in the U.K.

Last on the agenda for 1980 would be their first dates outside of California: A two-night stand at New York City's Danceteria. With this, the Blasters first big year was complete. Next issue: Part 2

SUBSCRIPTION INFO: Free for now. The quality of the printing and the low number of subscribers is manageable at this budget. My main goal is to get the latest info out fast. If through negotiations with the Blasters management this newsletter can be mentioned in the liner notes of the new Blaster CD, The readership could increase bringing a nicer printing, more informative stories, and a minimal subscription fee. We'll see what happens. Publishing 4-6 issues a year. Send one S.A.S.E or a stamp per issue for U.S. residents. Overseas subscribers send 2 IRC's per issue.

UP TO THE MINUTE INFO (option): If you would like to be informed immediately of Blaster happenings in your area such as concerts, radio shows, TV, or solo appearances. Send \$1 which will get you 5 postcards which will be sent to you with notes on the latest events, so you don't miss them. For non US subscribers, send 1 IRC per postcard which will actually come as a letter.

AMERICAN MUSIC PO Box 210071 Woodhaven NY 11421

Next Issue: Phil Alvin is interviewed and tells us about the new releases . A complete Blaster Discography, and part 2 of Blastory.

Expanded Newsletter Content

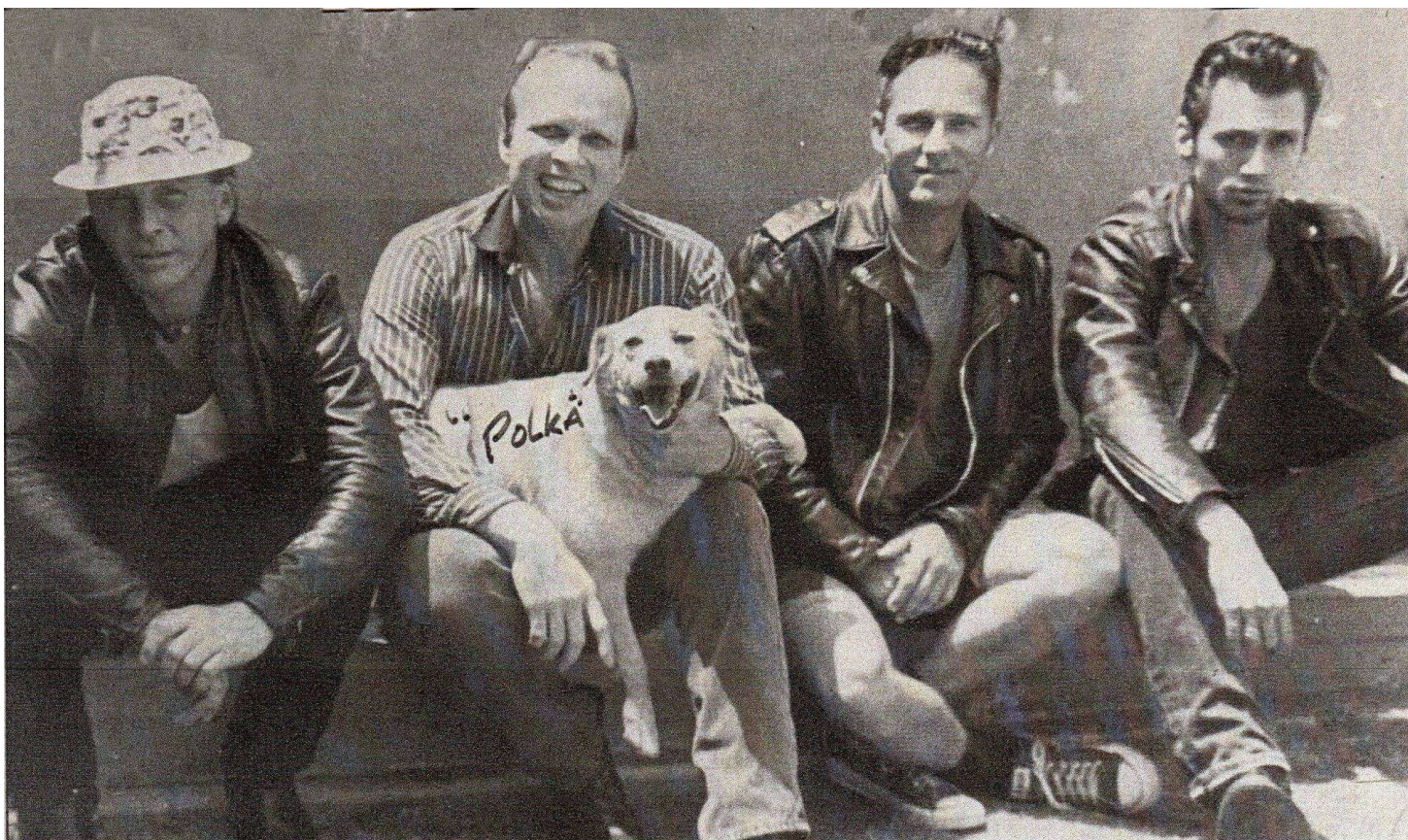
Previously unseen photos from Blasters Newsletter archives compiled and added here in 2006

In 1992 I became a Blasters fan after finding the Blasters Collection CD. Living in NYC, far from the west coast, (and before the internet) I did not know that the Blasters still existed. In the L.A. free Weekly newspaper, I learned of a Blasters show happening in North Hollywood, CA at the Palomino club on December 11, 1993. Crazy me made a trip to Los Angeles just to see that show. The Blasters had James Intveld on guitar.

After a great performance, I waited with my wife Triss to get Phil's autograph. I think I waited an hour in the parking lot and told my wife: "I'll wait only 5 minutes more and we'll leave." Suddenly Phil Alvin came busting through the side doors in desperate need of air. Phil was very nice and signed a photo for me. I told him, "Nobody on the east coast knows the Blasters still exist. You need some kind of newsletter." He said, "Why don't you do it and I'll help you. Here is my home phone number. Call me when you get back to NY."

I left with a dropped jaw. I had an opportunity to start a Blasters Newsletter with the help of the lead singer of my favorite band. What an endorsement. Wow!

The newsletter was five minutes away from never happening. If I'd left a minute earlier, I would have never met Phil and never started this newsletter. Below are some photos from the December 11, 1993 Concert.

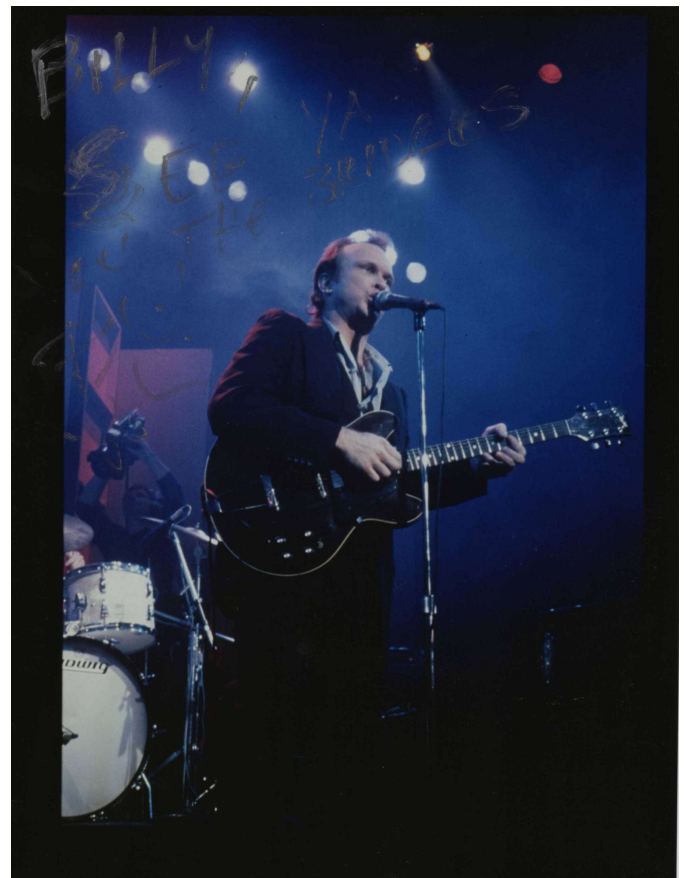


The Blasters of 1993-94—David Carroll, Phil Alvin, John Bazz and James Intveld





When I met Phil the first time and said I was from New York. He mentioned NYC having seven bridges. I never thought about how many we have. Here is the photo Phil autographed at the show. It says "See ya on the Bridges. Phil Alvin."



Smash debuts of '82

HOT ROCKS

Blasters play American music

As the Blasters are about to arrive at their record company's office, a publicist is scouring the place for some beers. The conference room is stocked with Heinekens, he explains, but the Blasters have requested domestic Budweiser. It figures.

The five-man group from the L.A. suburb of Downey is intensely American, its music encompassing a range of traditional styles from blues to rockabilly to country. It's a music that's usually better accepted in Britain, which is why such purveyors of rockabilly as the Stray Cats went over there in search of a break. The Blasters chose instead to work at home, even though "Marie Marie," a song penned by lead guitarist Dave Alvin, hit #1 in the U.K., covered by Shakin' Stevens.

"Not to sound nationalistic or anything," says Alvin, whose hair is swept up into a neat pompadour, "but we figured the job was to be done here."

Alvin and his older brother Phil, the band's lead singer, were exposed early on to such artists as Carl Perkins and Big Joe Turner. Alvin, 27, recalls that their affection for blues and r&b was considered a bit eccentric by their high school peers. "It'd be like, 'Hey, Dave, we're havin' a party; why don't you bring some rec — never mind.'"

His taste was more highly regarded by the members of Queen, who caught the Blasters at an L.A. club in 1980 and invited them to open for them on *The Game* tour. Drummer Roger Taylor tried to procure them a deal with Queen's label, but the company wasn't interested, so they went with the indie label Slash.

The band now has Warner Bros. distribution behind them and a sizzling live release, *Over There*, and stardom could actually happen; look at the Stray Cats. But if the Blasters do start getting those big royalty checks, don't look for them to be driving Porsches. You can bet they'll go strictly American.

—Philip Bashe



David McGough/DML (Inset) Ebet Roberts

The Blasters, with Phil and Dave Alvin. (Inset) Dave and bassist John Bazz on stage.

THE WORLD, NEW YORK CITY - MARCH 28, 1986

I advertised the existence of the Blasters Newsletter in music collectible newspapers often in 1994.

Blaster collectors started contacting me with interesting things.

These rare photos were sent to me by an un-named fan. I can't remember who it was (if you read this, contact me and I'll give you photo credit). This is the last show Dave Alvin performed with the Blasters as a full time member. He left the band the next day to join 'X.'

