

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

APRIL 2020

The Third Mind

Latest News: The Blasters appeared in a photo in Entertainment Weekly magazine (December, 2019) in a story about Peter Ivers, the host of a 1980's cult music TV show called New Wave Theater. — BMG has launched a new record label called Renew Records that focuses on American Roots and Americana music. An upcoming release called The Suitcase Junket is an Americana-inspired railroad compilation featuring well-known and original train songs from various artists including Dave Alvin. — Dave Alvin and John Sebastian played NIGHT OWL BLUES on Feb. 29 at the Alex Theater in Glendale, CA to benefit the Autism Think Tank and served as a celebration of the music of The Lovin' Spoonful. — Dave Alvin produced an album for singer/songwriter/guitarist Carolyn Wonderland in Austin, TX in January. Guests on the as yet untitled album include Cindy Cashdollar and Marcia Ball. (((cont. on page 2)))

The current state of The Blasters

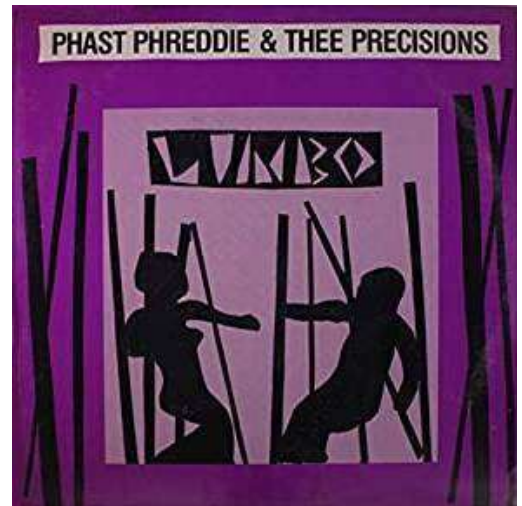
Keith Wyatt: "Since last Fall, Phil has been in and out of the hospital a couple of times for conditions that are non-life-threatening but do require care and recuperation. He got out again right before the CV situation hit so he's now practicing self-isolation like everybody else and is improving overall. With no pressure to get back on stage for a while due to the current situation, a small silver lining is that he can take all the time he needs to fully recover.

All shows that were booked for this year had already been canceled before CV shut everything down, but like every other live band, the Blasters now are on hold for the foreseeable future. So far, everybody's fine and we're all holed up in our different houses here in L.A. Once things start to lighten up, we'll make plans to get back together, start rehearsing and assess the next steps. It may take a while before we're back on stage, but we're all looking forward to the day it happens.

Meanwhile, thanks to all the people who have expressed their concern and support for Phil. We hope that everyone stays safe and that all of us are able to enjoy the simple pleasure of seeing friends and family again before long. Long live American Music!"

In This Issue: Dave Alvin's new band The Third Mind, a Chris Gaffney Tribute show, and Dave Alvin's Poetic Performances.

Latest News ((continued from page 1)) — The band Widespread Panic played Dave Alvin's *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* during their encore at a show at the Fox Theater in Atlanta on Dec. 30, 2019. It was the third time the band had played the song since 2012, according to jambase.com. Their version of the song can be heard on YouTube. — Phast Phreddie and Thee Precisions, a Los Angeles-based band of the early and mid 1980s, have reissued *Limbo*, their 1984 album, in a two-CD, 40-song deluxe set on Manifesto Records. The band featured Phast Phreddie, whose real name is Fred Patterson, on vocals and Don Snowden on bass. Guest musicians on the reissue include former Blasters Steve Berlin, Dave Alvin, and Gene Taylor. Dave and Gene are featured on the song *SLOPPY DRUNK* and Gene on *OOH WOW*. — *AM*



"I had a crazy idea and was looking for musicians who perhaps didn't think it was so insane." – Dave Alvin

DAVE ALVIN

THE THIRD MIND

By Billy Davis

The Third Mind is Dave Alvin's newest project. It's an all-star line up of players – Dave Alvin (guitar, vocals), Victor Krummenacher (bass, vocals), David Immerglück (guitar, keyboards, vocals), Michael Jerome (drums, percussion), and Jesse Sykes (guitar, vocals). The style is like psychedelic folk/rock of the late 1960s and early 1970s, but they put their own spin on songs. The album The Third Mind was released on Yep Roc Records on February 16, 2020.

Dave Alvin: I've known Victor for many years since his band Camper Van Beethoven started out. We've stayed friends over the years. He and I talked about the Miles Davis way of recording. Miles in his electric era, used to record for a week - just jamming with great musicians who knew how to improvise. Then his producer would go in and edit it all together. His album Bitches Brew most famously was cut this way. This was before Pro-Tools digital editing - they would actually take a razor blade to tape and create compositions out of the various jams. I always wanted to do that, but it is costly. We didn't actually use that technique because we didn't have a week to just sit and jam, but we knew we could record a bunch of great musicians jamming and come out with something good.

Victor Krummenacher: "It was an accident, really. But at some point long ago, somewhere in San Francisco, we were joking (at least I thought we were). Dave (Alvin) said he'd been offered a standing gig in a club there, like one Monday a month. That if I was game, he'd call me and we'd put together a set.. we had to play The Grateful Dead's TRUCKIN. Dave had covered Garcia's LOSER, and I spent a few years playing it with Cracker, so I wasn't sure if it was a joke. Musicians are poker players and storytellers anyway, and we're all at best, unreliable narrators. I left Dave that night thinking, "Yeah, I could play some Grateful Dead with Alvin..." But I was probably drunk, maybe high, maybe both. I think it was during a kind of weird part of my life when this conversation occurred, I was slightly confused if it really happened at all." — from *The Third Mind* bio

Dave Alvin: Last year Victor came into some money and wanted to do a recording session. The time was right to assemble a band so I reached out to drummer Michael Jerome who I've known for years playing in Richard Thompsons' band. David Immerglück was with John Hiatt and I knew him from Cracker - I knew he was a great player. The four of us went into the studio, picked a key and started jamming.

— THE SONGS —

Journey In Satchidananda - Miles used to come in and start from scratch creating songs. We didn't have that much time so we needed a template or guide, so we picked the cover songs to prepare on. We kept it to songs from the 60s.

Victor and David brought this song in. Written by Alice Coltran, the widow of John Coltran. The tenor sax player on the original was called Pharoh Sanders. I had to do his parts which was hard but I went for it and we got it in two or three takes. It's a droney East Indian song, so I just played the blues over it. I tried to keep it outside and not straight blues. The guitar melody is not on the original. But I naturally gravitated towards it.

These songs are very different from the originals but copyright-wise they are credited to the original writer because of a certain element that is most identifiable in the song. In this case it's that bass line.

David Immerglück has all the noise makers and the backwards stuff. He's more like Greg Leisz who works on the atmospheric side of things.



The Third Mind title

It's a good guess that Victor Krummenacher took the band's name from a book called The Third Mind by Beat Generation novelist William S. Burroughs and artist/poet/novelist Brion Gysin. Published in the late 70's, the book is a combination of literary essays and writings showcasing the cut-up technique popularized by Burroughs and Gysin in the 1960s. Cutups involve taking texts, cutting the pages, and then rearranging and combining the pieces to form new narratives. This "cutup" technique was the early concept The Third Mind band was going for in arranging their music.

The Dolphins – This is a Fred Neil song. I always wanted to record one of his songs. He was the patron saint of the New York City folk music scene in the early 60s. It's a song many artists have covered, but Victor prevailed upon me. Victor felt that THE DOLPHINS was applicable to right now. I knew I could sing like Fred with his deep voice and trail lower at the end of the lines. So, I liked that. Gaffney loved Fred Neil and did his I'VE GOT A SECRET.

DJ Bonebrake (from 'X') played on this song and the opening track adding some vibes in a session overdub while I was out of town on tour.

**"There were no rehearsals or written musical arrangements. Just decide on a key, start recording and see what happens."
– Dave Alvin**

Claudia Cardinale – This is an original that we came up with when we were trying something else that wasn't working. I thought let's take this idea and make it our own. I won't reveal what we were trying to do. Claudia Cardinale was a beautiful Italian movie star in the 60s. I told the band: "Just imagine you're on the beach in the 1960s with Claudia Cardinale." The engineer Craig Parker Adams added some inspiration by googling some images of her on the screens in the studio. It's very much a spaghetti western type of thing that became a little tribute to John Cipollina of the 60's San Francisco band Quicksilver Messenger Service and guitar player Peter Green.



Morning Dew – That's a song written by Bonnie Dobson that a lot of people know of. Victor worked off the Grateful Dead version so there is one guitar section that comes from their version – a part that leads right up to my solo. Everything else was pretty much organic.

When we first went into the studio, the project was gonna be all instrumental. When we scheduled the second session, we thought about vocals, Victor wanted to do MORNING DEW. I instantly suggested Jesse Sykes, who I knew for many years. She hadn't really retired from music, but she left Seattle and got married and moved to a college town in Iowa and was only playing occasionally. I knew she had the perfect voice for the song, so we convinced her to fly out for the recording session.

Bonnie Dobson on writing MORNING DEW:

"I saw a film called On The Beach and it made a tremendous impression on me. Particularly at that time, because everybody was worried about the bomb and whether we were going to get through the next 10 years. I remember I was singing in Los Angeles at the Ash Grove and I was staying with a girl, and she went to bed and suddenly I just started writing this song. It was a kind of reenactment of that film in a way, where at the end there is nobody left and it was a conversation between these two people trying to explain what was happening." -- *from a 1993 interview, she did with Randy Jackson and was reprinted in Washington Square Memoirs: The Great Urban Folk Boom, 1950-1970, a 3-CD box set that Rhino Records issued in 2001.*

Dave Alvin: Everything Goes back to the Ash Grove (laughs)!

East West – EAST WEST was first recorded by The Paul Butterfield Blues band in 1966. It's one of the first extended jam tracks of the 60s and it influenced many people. I was hesitant at first to record it because it's such an icon. But on the other hand, no one else has covered it in many years. It's not the kind of song you need to know note for note. We only had a few rules to follow, such as changing the groove in the middle, that was mandatory. Our preparation was that everyone listened to a previous version and then we just let anything happen. On the album, the master take has mixed versions by Craig Parker Adams and one by Tchad Blake. EAST WEST was cut on the first session. We did 5 takes and we knew we had it. The only overdub is the backwards piano and maybe some light percussion. It's really just two guitars, bass, and drums. We had to have harmonica so I called Jack Rudy and said: "You wanna be Paul Butterfield?" He said: "Of course!" Jack rode his motorcycle over and played. We all had big shoes to fill that day. Jack did a fine job.

Dave Alvin: "The future of rock guitar was in EAST WEST. At one point or another you're hearing what would become the Grateful Dead, Santana, the Allman Brothers, Crazy Horse, Television and the Tedeschi Trucks Band." – Quote from a press release issued on Oct. 22, 2013 by Legacy Recordings to promote the Michael Bloomfield box set From His Head To His Heart To His Hands.



Reverberation – It's a song written by Roky Erickson that I never heard of. We were set up in a circle to record. I just stared at the other guitar player's hands to copy what they were doing. My solo was me flying by the seat of my pants. That we did in only two takes.

— THE STUDIO —

Dave Alvin: We recorded the album at the late great Winslow Court Studios where I recorded all my music since the Ashgrove album. It was an owner / operated studio. And Craig Parker Adams is a great engineer, who made it affordable for me to spend as much

time as I needed to record music. Losing this is like losing a limb. Craig is looking for another place, but it won't be that cheap. He's my guy, so I want to continue to work with him. He lost his lease last year probably to apartment buildings.

When we first started discussing releasing this as an album I thought: "This is such a curveball for me." But then I thought that this is less of a curveball than the Flesh Eaters. I think of this as the same guitar playing I was doing on HARLAN COUNTY LINE. To me it's really not that different. I do a few things on guitar that sound West Indian but in general I'm just playing the blues. You know, through my career I've always tried to not make the same kind of record more than twice.

"So this is my fantasy recording session finally come to fruition. Is it commercial? Will it get played on the radio? Does the world want or need an album like this now? Hell, if I know, but here it is anyway." – Dave Alvin

-- PLAYING THE THIRD MIND LIVE --

Dave Alvin: Live, we definitely need another guitar, so my friend Kim Thayil from Soundgarden is gonna join us. Kim and I are guitar players who go for the jugular (laughs), so reproducing the songs live will be fun. I think the songs will be different every night. The irony is that Kim was trying to get Soundgarden to do MORNING DEW before Chris Cornell died. Now he finally gets to play it.

JESSE SYKES

ON THE THIRD MIND

By Tom Wilk

If The Third Mind were a television series, Jesse Sykes could be listed as a special guest star. As the lead singer and principal songwriter with her band the Sweet Hereafter, she has released a series of critically praised albums with her voice being singled out for its distinctiveness. "Sykes remains a truly unique vocalist whose dusky voice is capable of imparting a transcendent, almost spiritual quality to almost any tune it touches," James Allen wrote in his review of the band's Marble Son album for the AllMusic site.

On The Third Mind, Sykes provides vocals for two songs and found the sessions uplifting. "It's just such an honor to play music with these incredible musicians," she said. In a recent email interview, she discusses how she came to work with the band and the recording process for the self-titled album.

American Music: What led to you participating in the recording of The Third Mind album? Had you worked with other members of the band previously? I had read that you appeared on the same concert bill with Dave Alvin when he was playing with the Knitters.

Jesse: Yes, my band, Jesse Sykes and the Sweet Hereafter had done a West Coast stint with the Knitters back in the day (2002), and that's how I met Dave Alvin. What can I say -- he's not only one of my favorite singer-songwriters, but I am honored to be able to call him a friend, after many years of crossing each other's musical paths — and well, a mentor of sorts. I'd always hoped someday we'd collaborate, but I didn't think I'd get so lucky! So, when I got the call from Victor Krummenacher that Dave

suggested me to participate—my mind was blown! That's how it all started.

As far as the others musicians involved, no, I had never crossed paths with any of them—but I was familiar with each one's musical offerings, and I was like, "where do I sign up?!" I always like to tell the story about how Dave would give me advice over the years, and when we'd talk about the music business and how to navigate the fuckery of certain soul-crushing aspects of it, he'd say; "Jesse, go where the love is." Essentially that is what I've done here. I followed the love. Sometimes it really is that simple.



American Music: Did you have any input in choosing the songs that were recorded?

Jesse: No, they had already picked the songs, which is great, because left to me, I probably would've gotten lost down endless rabbit holes! I'm fortunate that they chose MORNING DEW, as it's one that's always been close to my musical heart. It's like they were reading the tea leaves of my soul.

American Music: You are credited with guitars and vocals on the album. Are you on all three vocal tracks and did you contribute to the three instrumentals?

Jesse: I only played guitar on MORNING DEW, which was cut live -- so I played acoustic while I sang and then I sang on THE DOLPHINS. That was all.

American Music: Your singing on MORNING DEW is haunting and grows in intensity as the song progresses. Did you have a particular approach in mind for the song, which has been done by a variety of artists?

Jesse: Well, thank you. "Haunting" is what I was hoping for. It's always humbling to cover someone else's song — especially one with so many beautiful interpretations. Truth be told, I was only familiar with a few versions — The Grateful Dead being the main one. I had no idea there were so many renditions and that it was written by a woman, Bonnie Dobson. When I did some delving and I heard her version and also watched a clip of she and Robert Plant performing it together — it changed the game for me. I suppose I wanted to pay homage to her in some sense, for having written such a beautiful song, but also for the new understanding of what the song is really saying — which for me, translated into trying to convey a deep maternal element — universal, but intimate in a sort of microscopic way. The way a mother would sing a lullaby to a child, while a sinister energy brews in the background. She's having to sing to her child, but she's comforting herself, faced with the knowledge that she has to let her child "go" to something bigger than the two of them.

It's not that others didn't probably sing it from that exact same vantage point, but it's just that I'd only heard men sing it — so I sort of envisioned that it was being sung to a lover vs. a child. Seemingly small stuff, until you are confronted with trying to do a song justice!

American Music: How did the recording process go for THE DOLPHINS on which Dave sings lead? Did you do the vocals together?

Jesse: We attempted to sing it at the same time and cut the whole thing live, but I ended up overdubbing my vocals. Dave and I had never sung it together, and I was having a hard time finding the subtle pocket and locking in with him. Aside from that momentary challenge, it was magical getting to witness the song come to fruition. I actually got tears in my eyes at some point while Dave was cutting his vocal.

American Music: Since the album only has six songs, will you be performing any of your songs on The Third Mind tour?

Jesse: This tour will be all covers, as far as I know. We are in the process now of deciding on the extra song, or songs that I'll be singing. It'll be a good challenge to do this on the fly, as there will be very few rehearsals—so we will have to be serving the music in a way that will be challenging, but exhilarating. I mean ultimately it's what music is meant to be about—listening to each other on a level where you aren't listening—but that can get overlooked in many musical situations, due to song structure dictating and holding you on a short leash. My guess is that each night will offer a lot of variation, and hopefully it'll be as exciting for the audience as it is onstage! —~~AM~~

DAVE ALVIN & FRIENDS: A TRIBUTE TO CHRIS GAFFNEY

McCabe's Guitar Shop, Santa Monica, CA, January 18, 2020

Photos by Rex Hamilton

Chris Gaffney died on April 17, 2008, but his music and memory have lived on with fans, friends and the musicians he worked with. Dave Alvin participated in a Chris Gaffney Reunion party last year in Long Beach, CA where many of Gaffney's former bandmates played. Dave Alvin: "After we did the Gaffney tribute last year in Long Beach, I thought it's a shame these guys don't play together more often. So, I thought let's just do a Gaffney show again."



Dave Alvin plays McCabe's Guitar Shop in Santa Monica, CA, every January. He always comes up with an unusual acoustic combination of musicians which brings about a unique, one of a kind show. This year in 2020, he put together Chris Gaffney's old band – The Cold Hard Facts. The band includes Rick Shea (guitar, vocals), Danny Ott (guitar, vocals), Wyman Reese (Keyboards), Mike Barry (bass), Doug Livingston (pedal steel), and the drummer from the Hacienda Brothers, Dale Daniel.



The show started with Dave Alvin addressing the audience: “Thanks for coming to the Gaffney love fest. Chris had two great bands – The Cold Hard Facts and the Hacienda Brothers. We have members here tonight from both bands.” He continued to introduce each member then added: “They’re gonna play some Gaffney and Gaffney adjacent songs for a little while.” Dave Alvin left the stage and would return later to front the band for the second set.

Rick Shea took over the mic and

lightened the mood by saying: “They say the first rule in show business is to make it look easy. That’s something Chris was pretty good at. So, when we play these songs tonight that we seldom play, keep a kind thought and remember we do this out of love.”

Rick was a member of Chris’ Cold Hard Facts back in 1990 when Chris recorded his first CD on ROM Records. One of the songs from that album called KING OF THE BLUES opened this show with Rick on vocals. Then Danny Ott, who has been the guitarist in the Cold Hard Facts since the beginning, sang TURN TO GREY and GLASS HOUSE. He and Rick Shea traded off vocals for the rest of the set. A highlight was Chris’ signature song called COWBOYS TO GIRLS. It’s a song that Chris didn’t write that was a R&B hit in 1968 for The Intruders. It was one of Chris’ favorite songs and he often finished his live shows with it. They finished the set with Rick Shea singing LONG BLACK VEIL. The Lefty Frizzell song is one that Rick said: “Chris always loved when I sang it.”

After a short intermission Dave came out and said: “We were backstage telling old stories about Chris. Sadly, we can’t tell any of them on stage,” as the audience laughed he continued, “the stories can’t even be in my book.” He teased saying: “There is one involving Uma Thurman—and it’s true (laughs).”

Dave’s 80 minute set included as much time telling Chris stories as playing the

songs. For those who never knew Chris, they would come away understanding the passion Chris had for his songs and why he was loved by so many. For those of us who knew Chris, his music and stories are always a pleasant memory to revisit. So here are Dave's introduction stories for each song:



LIFT YOUR LEG -- "I was out drinking in a club in 1985 called Raji's and there was a band onstage that was great. I started shouting out requests after each song and Chris Gaffney, fronting the band, knew them all. After the set he walked up to me and we were best friends from then on. A few weeks later he asked me to play on a record he was making (Chris Gaffney and the Cold Hard Facts, 1990, ROM Records). One of those songs was this."

This up tempo song was a great opener in which Dave doubled the length by having every member take a solo..

THE GARDENS - "One of the big things in Chris's life was that this song was recorded by one of his vocal heroes, Freddy Fender. He always used to tell the story about getting a phone call one morning from Freddy. Chris called me and said: 'Alvin. Guess who called me this morning.' I said, 'I don't know.' He said: 'Freddy Fender!! You haven't lived until you heard Freddy Fenders voice come across the line.' I always loved this song, so I recorded it on the album I did with Jimmie Dale Gilmore (Downey To Lubbock, 2018, Yep Roc Records)."



SIX NIGHTS A WEEK - "This is one Chris and I wrote together. We were both heartsick about something."

MAN OF SOMEBODY'S DREAMS - "Chris and the guys used to play some really interesting places. There was a place in Garden Grove called the Upbeat - which was not. It was a nice dive (laughs), with plenty of parking. A few doors down was a dancing school and one night they were learning line dancing. So, after the class, the students decided to drop in the Upbeat where Chris's country combo was playing. They figured they could line dance all night long. Christopher being Christopher took one look at them and said "No" and proceeded to play just ballads the rest of the night until they left. He said he even got out a fiddle and did LONG BLACK VEIL as a dirge. I'd like to do one of those slow songs. This is a song that I got to produce on one of Chris' albums (Loser's Paradise, 1995, HighTone Records)."

ALBUQUERQUE - "Chris did not write this but, like COWBOYS TO GIRLS, Chris really made it his own. None of us had ever heard it before. He had some very odd and rare 45s. The original was by a rockabilly and western swing performer named Link Davis. When Chris joined my band the Guilty Men, we were driving to Albuquerque as the first gig of the tour. I told him: 'We're gonna hit all those bars and nite clubs that you sing about in the song.' There was a long moment of silence and then Chris said: 'Alvin. I've got a confession. I've never been to Albuquerque.' But when he sang it, he meant it."

ARTESIA - "When Gaffney and I were little kids, the part of California that we grew up in was changing incredibly fast. They were tearing down the orange groves and the avocado groves, covering up the bean farms and running out the dairy farms. They were putting in tract houses and shopping malls, gas stations and free-ways, but some of it remained. Chris and I would talk about how in the mornings you could



smell the orange blossoms which was sweet and beautiful. It was a nice way to wake up. But then in the summertime, when the Santa Ana winds would blow in, they would come from Artesia and Cerritos, and then south of Bellflower and Norwalk in the afternoon, the sweet aroma of orange blossoms was replaced by the pungent aroma of cow shit. That lasted into the early 70s. One day, years later, Chris and I were talking about that particular smell. A few days later he calls me on the phone and says: 'Alvin remember that cow smell? Well, I just wrote a song about it.'"



EAST OF HOUSTON WEST OF BATON ROUGE - "Here's another one that Chris didn't write, but he recorded it on Loser's Paradise, the HighTone Records album I produced. I wrote this with Billy Swan. Chris, among his many achievements in his life time, was on the LSU football team. He never made it on the field, but he sat on the bench and he loved the LSU Tigers."

This was a great version with Wyman Reese playing Hammond organ in place of an accordion which was played by Ponty Bone on the Loser's Paradise album. In Chris' live shows he would play the accordion himself.

FRANK'S TAVERN - "This is one Chris wrote. After he passed away, I put together this tribute album with people doing Chris' songs (Man of Somebody's Dreams, 2009, Yep Roc Records). We had Los Lobos, Boz Scaggs, Robbie Fulks, Tom Russell, Joe Ely, Peter Case, Bill Kirchen, John Doe, and many others. Chris was a much beloved figure among musicians. Chris and I had done this radio show up in Colorado called E-Town. The other act with us was a band from Tucson called Calexico. We hung out with them all day and at the end of the show we all jammed together on a Bob Dylan song. They were great guys. Especially the little trumpet player. He saw Chris' Arizona flag tattoo and that was it, he loved Chris.

And for Chris it was like he had a new son. So, on the tribute album they did one of Chris songs, but they did it so different. The way they did it, perfectly captured Chris. So here is Chris's song in the Calexico style."

TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT - "This next story relating to this song is a little personal, but I'll tell it because it was a long time ago. Chris liked to talk to me on the phone to get song ideas. I just got giggles out of him. He called me up one night and said he was playing at some place and would I like to come down and see him. I was living with a particularly intriguing person at the time. I said: 'I can't. Tonight's the night we stay home and fight.' Two days later, I get a call from Gaffney and he said: 'Hey, remember what you said to me on the phone the other night.' I said, 'No?' He said: 'Well, you said this... and I wrote a song about it.'"

That was the last song of the regular part of the set. Gaffney often closed his

shows with that song. The band came back on for an encore and Dave said: "Thanks again for coming. I wanna thank McCabe's for letting us do this. This is such a great band and it's great for me to see you guys back together again. These gigs are séances for us. It's a way of bringing brother Chris back on stage with us."

Someone in the audience requested TWO LUCKY BUMS which was a song Dave recorded on his Eleven Eleven album

as a duet with Chris. Dave played the first two verses but didn't continue because the band hadn't prepared it. Dave reasoned: "It's just no good without Chris."



The next song Dave played was a song called RUN CONEJO RUN also from the Eleven Eleven album. It was a song Dave wrote about Chris Gaffney's boxing days. Dave didn't have to tell a story about the song. The lyrics tell it all.

Run Conejo Run

**When his old man would hit the bottle he would kick Conejo's ass
So with a wounded heart Conejo swore he would outrun his past.**

**He boxed lightweight at the Olympics out in dirty old L.A.
And he earned his golden gloves by putting sixteen fighters away**

**But the seventeenth one nailed him and blinded his right eye
So with battered fingers and a busted brain he kissed the ring goodbye**

**He was singing in a barroom on the night we first crossed paths
And we'd known each other all our lives but we finally met at last**

**And then we rode these highways twenty years fueled by beer and nicotine
From New York down to Nogales and every joint in between**

**And he told me his life story his loves and his regrets
From the hot streets of Tucson to the cold prison cell up in Quebec**

**His ex-wives and lovers and all the promises they believed
And his daughter down in Louisiana that he never wanted to leave.**

**Now it's three hours past midnight and I'm riding down interstate ten
A hundred miles east of El Paso and I'm thinkin' of my dear friend**

**Now I know I can't see you but I can feel you by my side
So light up a cig Conejo and let's go for another ride**

FOURTH OF JULY - For the last song Dave said "This is the Chris adjacent section of the show. It's a song that he used to do with Dale (Daniel) and the Hacienda Brothers in their show. A few times he got me up there to sing with him. He always said to me that this was his favorite song. Chris had a cracked / chipped front tooth. So, whenever I'm on stage singing this, I still look to my left where he would be standing, and look for that cracked tooth to be smiling at me."

As the band finished, they all had smiles on their faces. As they walked off, all that was left at center stage was Chris Gaffney's accordion.

Dave reflected later on about the show with just a few short phrases: "It was wonderful. The Cold Hard Facts knew all the songs and we just had a ball. They're such a great band. This show will always be a fond memory."



-- You can view a video from this show of Dave Alvin and the Cold Hard Facts performing *THE GARDENS* on YouTube. Search "Chris Gaffney Tribute - Dave Alvin & Friends - The Gardens - Live at McCabes" Thanks to Wayne Griffith for his excellent sound and video on this clip. See more of his Dave videos at youtube.com/user/mandowayne. Special Thanks to Rex Hamilton for his photos and detailed descriptions of the show.

From the Editor -- Hey American Music fans, Thanks as always for writing in with your kind comments. They are appreciated. I'm always looking for more content about our favorite American Music makers so if you would like to write a story about your experiences, or a show review, or even just some photos you have — please send them to davistb@aol.com. I'm open to ideas.

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

DAVE ALVIN: POETIC PERFORMANCES

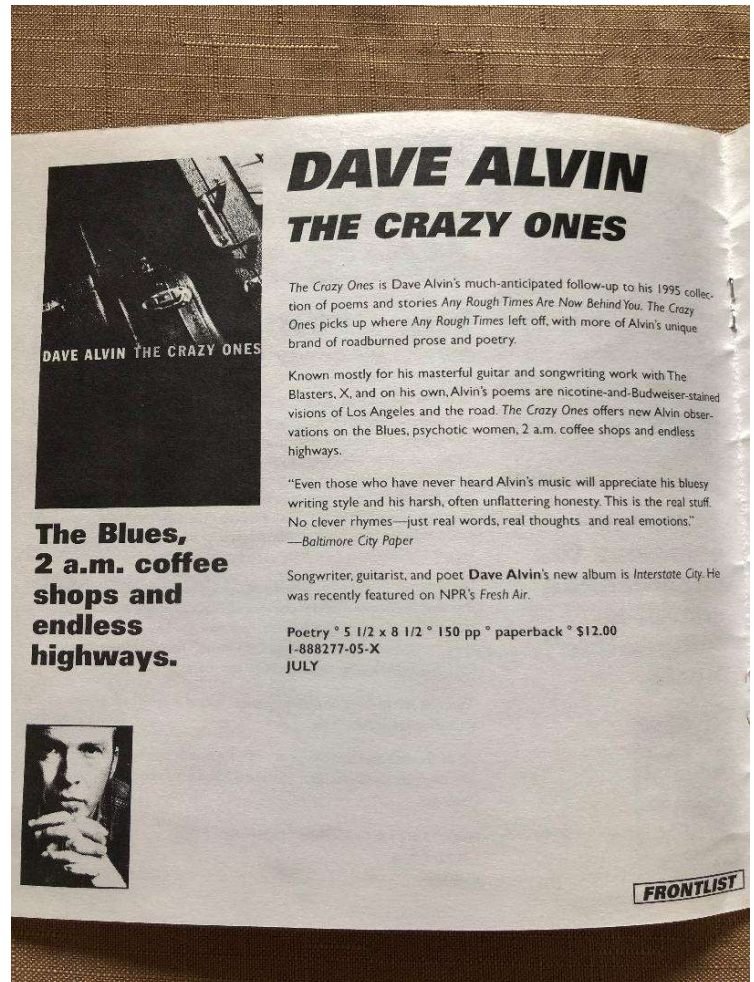
By Tom Wilk

2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the release of Dave Alvin's Any Rough Times Are Now Behind You: Selected Poems and Writings 1979-1995. Published by Incommunicado Press, the now out-of-print book was a commercial and critical success that helped establish Dave as a poet.

Any Rough Times features 51 selections, including 18 that were first published in 1986 by Illiterati Press in Nana, Big Joe and the Fourth of July.

Dave has come close to publishing a sequel to Any Rough Times. The now-defunct Incommunicado Press went as far as listing a follow-up book in its 1998 catalog. The Crazy Ones was scheduled for publication in July of that year. The catalog featured a book cover depicting what appears to be a guitar case and/or a suitcase. It said the book would be 150 pages and sell for \$12. The Crazy Ones, according to the catalog copy, "Offers new Alvin observations on the Blues, psychotic women, 2 a.m. coffee shops and endless highways."

Amazon still lists the book on its site with a publication date of January 2003 and a note cautioning "out of print, limited



availability.” In its brief description, Amazon says the book “offers versified portraits of Los Angeles and life on the road after too much nicotine and beer.”

While the wait for a follow-up continues, Dave has continued to write and feature his poetry in occasional spoken-word performances since the late 1990s.

ROBERT JOHNSON’S CIGARETTE and CORNFLAKES is a pair of new poems he delivered in a reading in Jamestown, N.Y., on Sept. 22, 1997. ROBERT JOHNSON’S CIGARETTE is a reflection on a postage stamp issued to honor the legendary bluesman and the questionable decision to airbrush a cigarette out of his photograph. CORNFLAKES is a humorous account of Dave’s unsuccessful audition as a voiceover artist to promote a breakfast cereal and how it would have been a good fit for one of his spoken-word recordings of the 1980s. Ultimately, Dave would find success in the field as a commercial spokesman for Jim Beam bourbon. Both poems were likely candidates for The Crazy Ones before the publication was canceled.

TOAD MEETS LITTLE JULIAN HERRARA is a poem that once was posted on Dave’s site. Conceived as a tribute to Gerald Locklin, one of his English professors and poetry mentor at California State University - Long Beach. The poem was read by Dave at a retirement ceremony for Locklin in 2008. The reading was aired on the Off-Ramp radio show on May 17, 2008, and can be heard at www.scpr.org. The poem also was published in Some for The Road, a collection of poetry written by Locklin’s former students.

In December 2015, Dave premiered three poems that show his range as a writer during a poetry reading in Santa Monica, CA.

CHRIS GAFFNEY HATES POETRY was inspired by a conversation Dave and Chris had while on the road in a van between Denver and Kansas City. The reading focuses on a humorous, if barbed, discussion on the merits of poetry and public readings.

An untitled poem details Dave’s relationship with Laura Cloud, who helped him publish Nana, Big Joe and the Fourth of July and

shows his eye for detail as he traces her ups and downs. The video of the nearly eight-minute poem doesn't start at the beginning. Dave also recited the lyrics of OUT OF CONTROL, the song that appears on Ashgrove, his 2004 album.

The highlight of the Santa Monica, CA reading was a powerful poem about the final days of his father that is called CAROLE

LOMBARD, named for the Hollywood actress who died at 33 in a 1942 plane crash. Dave was emotionally moved as he recounted a visit to the hospital to see his father. It details his battle with dementia. It's a more detailed follow-up of sorts to his song THE MAN IN THE BED. All of those readings can be found on YouTube by searching for "Dave Alvin Library Girl."



In October 2016, Dave read the poem EVERYBODY LIKES THE VENTURES at the La Luz De Jesus Gallery in Los Angeles, CA. Dave describes his encounter in April, 1981, with the notorious

Eddie Nash, the owner of the Starwood Club, in West Hollywood. The seven-minute poem recounts his efforts in trying to get paid for a Blasters gig and having to open a show for The Ventures. Dave's reading of the poem can be seen at <https://thelosangelesbeat.com/2016/10/keith-morris-my-damage-all-star-punk-rock-signing-party-at-la-luz-de-jesus/>.

Dave's most recent reading came in August, 2019, at a 99th birthday party celebration for Charles Bukowski in Southern California. He read A POEM FOR CHARLES BUKOWSKI, which ap-

peared in Any Rough Times. However, Dave revised it for this rendition as he paid tribute to the poet who has influenced his songwriting and poetry. BUKOWSKI POEM, a new work, is a light-hearted look at Bukowski's influence on him. Both readings are available at YouTube by searching "Dave Alvin Bukowski 8.11.19." —~~AM~~

Iris Berry and "56 Reasons to Go Downtown"

By Tom Wilk

Over a 40-year career, Dave Alvin has collaborated with more than three dozen musicians in writing songs. One of his more off-beat collaborations has been both a song and a spoken-word piece.

Iris Berry and Dave teamed up to co-write 56 REASONS TO GO DOWNTOWN, the opening track on Life on the Edge in Stilettos, a collection of her poetry and spoken-word selections released on New Alliance Records in 1995.

In an interview with the Punk Globe site, Berry said 56 REASONS TO GO DOWNTOWN was "written about some friends of ours who were doing way too many drugs." The piece name-checks some prominent drug users, including Johnny Thunders, Art Pepper, Charlie Parker, Lenny Bruce, and Keith Richards.

56 REASONS had an earlier incarnation as a song and was released in 1990 on the album 60 Watt Reality (A&M Records) by the Ringling Sisters. The song can be heard on YouTube. The band's members included Berry, Pleasant Gehman, and Johnette Napolitano.

Berry went on to have a successful career as a poet, spoken-word artist, and actress. Her film appearances include a brief role as 'the Scenester' in Border Radio, the 1987 film for which Dave contributed to the soundtrack. She has credited Dave with encouraging her as a writer and listed him as one of her biggest writing influences in an interview done for The Nervous Breakdown site in 2010.



AMERICAN MUSIC: The Blasters / Dave Alvin newsletter
editor/writer: Billy Davis copy editors: Tom Wilk / Lesah Smith

writer: Tom Wilk
www.BlastersNewsletter.com