

2025 re-print and expanded edition

AMERICAN MUSIC

The Blasters Newsletter

Issue #15 May '97

BLASTERS RECORD LABEL GOES UNDER

DAVE ALVIN TOUR DATES

With the Guilty Men

5/10 Tampa FL at Tropical Heat Wave
5/25 Toledo OH at Rock, R&B Fest
5/26 Rochester NY at Lilac Fest
With the Skeletons opening 5/28-30
5/28 Charlotte NC at Double Door
5/29 Atlanta GA at Star Bar
5/30 Ashville NC at Be Here Now
5/31 Richmond VA at Rte. 1 music conf.
6/13 Seattle WA at Backstage
6/14 Portland Or at Aladdin Theater (with
Kelly Joe Phelps opening)
6/21 Santa Monica Ca at Ashgrove (with
Tom Russell opening) acoustic show
7/19 Denver CO at Lodo Fest
7/24 Kansas City Mo. at Grand Emporium
7/25 Lincoln NE at July Jam fest
7/ 26-27 Calgary Alberta Folk Fest
7/30 Long Beach Ca at Museum of Art
BLASTERS TOUR DATES
6/8 San Francisco Ca. at Slims
7/3 Long Beach Ca at Blue Cafe
7/5 Irvine CA at Hootenanny Fest

LATEST NEWS: : The Private Music label has officially announced it has merged with Windham Hill records and label head, Ron Goldstein will not continue in any capacity with the merged companies. Private has closed up shop and only its artists under long time contracts will now record for Windham Hill. The departure of Goldstein is a blow to the Blasters since he was personally responsible for initiating the proposed live Blasters album. The Blasters must now search for another deal. -- Dave Alvin is wrting new songs to recorded in August and September. Some song titles are *Abeline*, *Mary Brown*, *California Snow*, and *Three Chords*. -- Greg Leisz turned down an offer to tour for 8 months in John Fogerty's band. He wasn't interested in playing just rhythm guitar. As a great producer and musician, he will be able to work with Dave on the next few projects -- Dave enjoyed his recent tour with Kelly Joe Phelps so much, that later in the year he wants to record an album of traditional acoustic folk songs. His plan is to record as a trio including himself, Phelps, and Greg Leisz. -- In March, Dave Alvin finished production on the Derailers' album

Kelly Joe Phelps and Dave Alvin in Piermont NY

and while in Austin he recorded a song called *Seeds* for the Bruce Springsteen tribute album due for release on Bruce's birthday, Sept. 23. -- The Skeletons have stepped up their touring after being signed to High-Tone records. Bobby Lloyd Hicks, an original member of the Skeletons, also doubles in the Guilty Men as Dave's drummer. Since he won't be available for all of the Guilty Men's summer concerts, Dave will be using Darren Hess, who played in Poi Dog Pondering for about 6 years and currently he is in a band called The Cyllos. -- The Blasters performed 2 songs acoustically on Ricky Rachtman's FM radio show on



Photo: Josh Lewis

INSIDE: Inside: The Dave Alvin/Kelly Joe Phelps east coast acoustic tour, Dave Alvin's poetry teacher and mentor Gerald Locklin, and reviews of Blasters concerts

Latest News Continued from Page 1))) May 2, 1997. It was Southern Cal. radio station KLSX, 97.1. The band played *Long White Cadillac* and *Marie Marie* and were interviewed. -- As mentioned last issue, Dave Alvin wrote an article for the March issue of Live magazine on the greatest show he has ever seen. In the April issue an article appeared on Dave's hotel soap collection. Apparently Dave collects hotel bars of soap from around the world when out on tour. -- The May issue of Guitar Player features teachings from G.I.T teachers. Keith Wyatt has a couple of pages of lessons on blues guitar playing. -- Anyone having trouble finding Dave Alvin or other HighTone Records artists' CDs in stores can order by mail order. Write for a catalog and order forms: HighTone Records mail order, 220 4th St. #101, Oakland, Ca. 94607 -- Former Blasters' drummer Bill Bateman has left the James Harman band. No reason is known. -- Former Blaster guitarist James Intveld has just finished a tour of Europe and is searching for a U.S. record deal -- In April, Dave played a show at the Carpenter Center of Performing Arts in Long Beach, CA, with Joe Louis Walker, Billy Boy Arnold, and Gate-mouth Brown. Dave felt it was 'the highlight of the year' because he was asked specifically by Gate-mouth to join him on stage after everyone else did their own sets. Dave played acoustic guitar and Brown on fiddle for a bunch of blues songs. Billy Boy Arnold played *I Wish You Would* with Dave, which is a song that was one of Billy's biggest hits and has been a frequently heard song in Dave Alvin set lists over the years. -- The new Candye Kane album should be out now and the Derailers' album in July. Both were produced by Dave Alvin. -- The L.A. band "X" will be putting out a box set of rarities at the end of the summer. When Dave Alvin was a member they recorded a lot of songs that never saw release, so now we can expect some. -- Robert Earl Keen just recorded Dave's *4th of July* for his major label debut album called 'Picnic.' — **Am**

The Dave Alvin/Kelly Joe Phelps Acoustic Tour

— **Feb. 28 thru March 7, 1997**

by Billy Davis

February 28 in Philadelphia PA at The Tin Angel: Dave's idea for the tour was to play intimate folk clubs and listening rooms.

Most of the venues seat only about 100. The first night in Philadelphia was at the Tin Angel doing 2 shows, an early and late. The opening set featured Kelly Joe Phelps, a great acoustic and slide guitar player who plays country blues old style. His playing really has a classic flavor to it. His vocal is very unique, though he slurs his words and you can't understand a single lyric, but his voice acts as an accompanying instrument. Dave Alvin took time out to announce, "In my

day I have known a lot of people that have gone on to buy mansions on hills and not return phone calls, Kelly Joe is next on that list." In between songs KJP has a tendency to talk to the audience and make jokes. The first set for him was about 45 minutes and he only played 5 songs leaving the rest to his jokes. The Tin Angel crowd was roaring all through out his set; he was really funny. Has he ever considered being a stand up comic? He must be really shy though because he never looks at the audience...not once. He kept claiming he was Dave Alvin. He also kept going on about meeting Ted Nugent in the Detroit airport and how his impression was shattered when he saw Ted wearing the unmasculine Hush Puppies shoes.

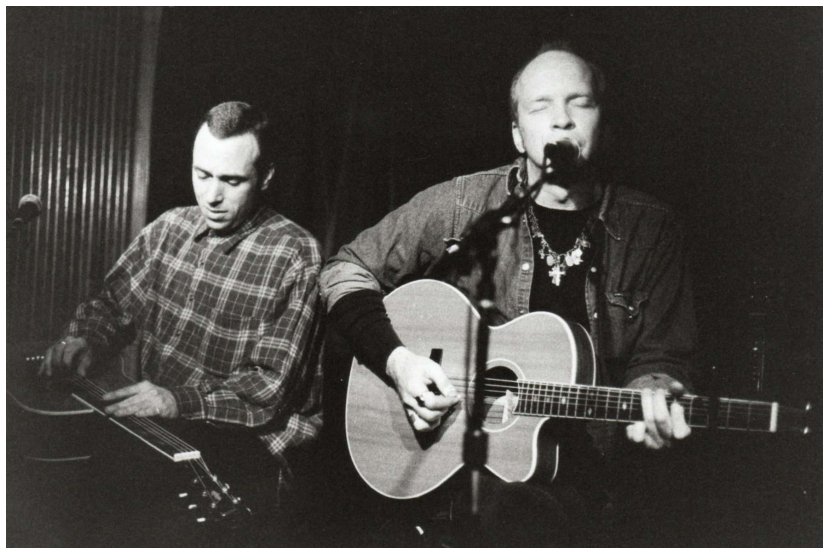


Photo: Josh Lewis

Dave Alvin came on and his first song was *Waiting for the Hard Times*. Dave Alvin's voice was in fine form tonight and through out the tour. He played 3 songs that will appear on the new studio album to be released later this year. Great songs - two of which Dave played with his full band on the 'Interstate City' tour called *Abilene* and *Mary Brown*. The third song is as yet untitled. Dave says the working title is *Sitting in my Kitchen Writing a Song*. Dave drew some laughs when he had trouble remembering the lyrics to his song *Every Night About this Time*. He had to restart it a few times and got help from the audience on the lyrics. Dave said he hadn't played out in about a month and a half, so he was nervous. But he said, jokingly, "I was there when the guy wrote the song...so trust me. I will get it right."

The last half of the show Kelly returned to accompany Dave. They played a few of Dave's classic songs and an old folk song called *Black Jack David*. The song dates back to around the turn of the century, but Dave first heard it by Warren Smith on Sun records. Dave and Kelly Joe blended well on this one and it remained a staple in their set every night, definitely a highlight of the set.

The show closed with a rockin' acoustic version of *American Music*. Kelly Joe wasn't ready for that one since it was an audience request, but he improvised perfectly. The Tin Angel 2nd show started with more of the same from Kelly Joe with jokes carrying over from the first show. At one point in between songs he jokingly referred to being on a day time talk show and that he was a transvestite from Brooklyn. The audience didn't laugh, but all you heard was Dave breaking up laughing back stage - that prompted the audience to laugh loudly.

Dave's set was very cool; If you stayed for both shows you were treated to a slew of different songs. Dave started with *I won't be leaving* and added *Guilty Man*, *Haley's Comet*, and *Bus Station*. After 45 minutes, again Kelly Joe came out to accompany Dave. They played a great version of the Memphis Slim song *Mother Earth* and a rousing version of *Long White Cadillac*. Between shows. Dave talked to a fan about the recent Merle Haggard shows and promised the playing of Haggard's *Kern River*: Another request fulfilled. Finishing the show Dave and Kelly Joe did an audience sing-along version of Webb Pierce's *Honky Tonk*. Both shows brought in very enthusiastic crowds.

March 1 in Bethlehem, PA, at Godfrey Daniels: A member supported non-profit club, no alcohol served B.Y.O.B. This might have kept the audience sedate. It was definitely a listening crowd. Also no smoking. Sorry Dave and Kelly. Kelly Joe started his set with a few jokes, but this was a different crowd, so he kept quite most of the set playing more songs than the night before. Dave played a similar set to the second Tin Angel show starting with *I Won't Be Leaving*. When Kelly Joe joined Dave, they started with a great working of Dave's *Barn Burning*. Then *Black Jack David* and *Long White Cadillac*. If you called the Tin Angel shows a tune-up

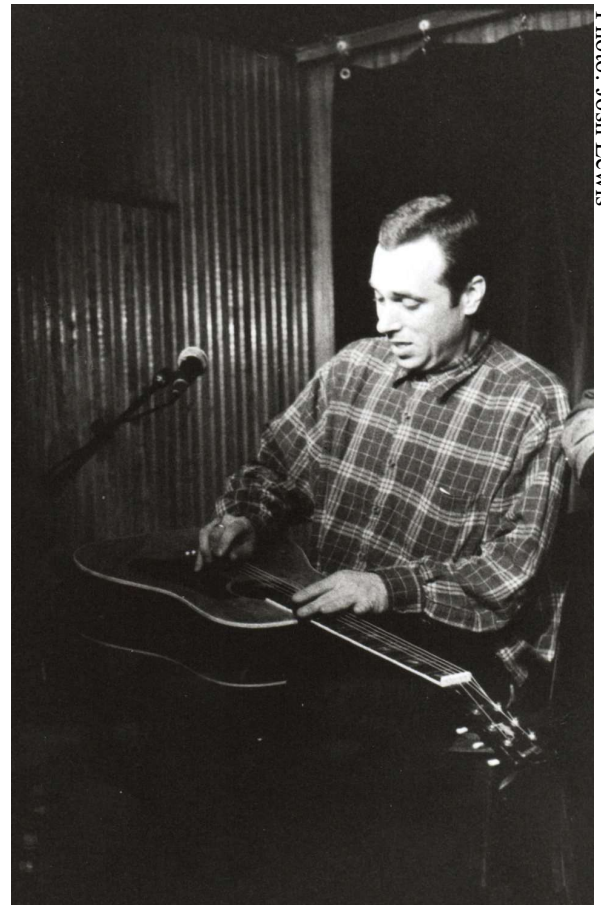
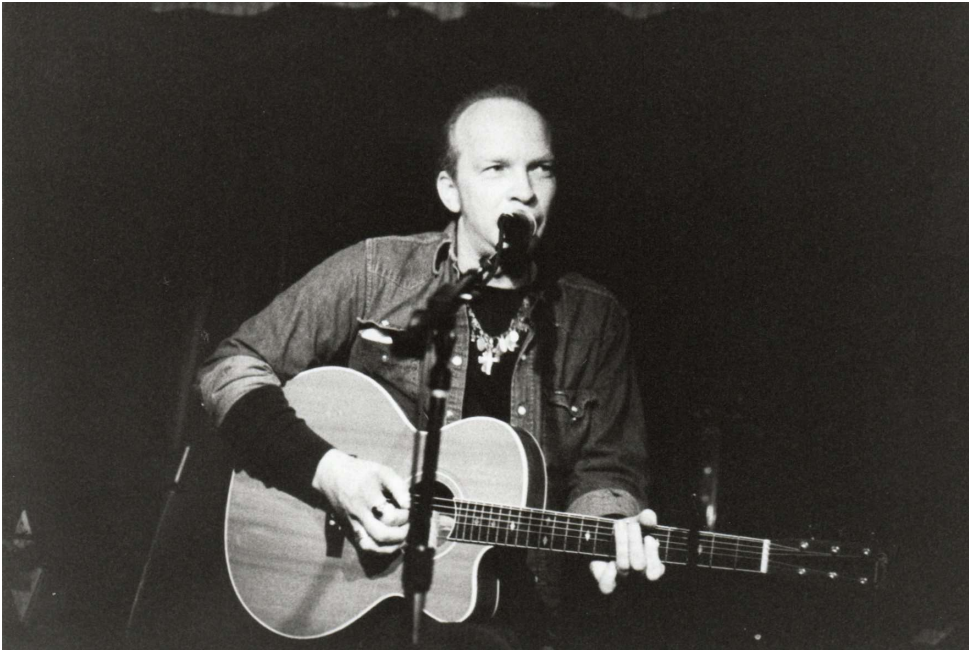


Photo: Josh Lewis



then this show was the finished product. The sound was perfect and both players were really on. Dave even said to the audience that he would concentrate more on the playing tonight. The club took the sound really well; there were times in Dave's quiet songs that his voice went really low and it really resonated through out the room. Some of the seats in the room were old church pews that creaked if you moved the slightest bit. It

was so quite at times the creaking could be heard over the music. Again Dave finished with a request: *Border Radio*. It's interesting how a different type of audience brings out a different show from performers.

In the next 4 days the Dave Alvin show traveled to Syracuse, Toronto, and Boston.

March 6 In North Hampton, MA, at The Iron Horse. Reviewed by Rob Bores:

Terrific show, though cut short due to another band scheduled to play there at 10 PM. Kelly Joe started at about 7:10 and performed a 55-minute set. Excellent guitarist and soulful vocalist, though it's nearly impossible to understand the lyrics. Very funny, too. After a 5-minute break, Dave came on solo and started with *Every Night About This Time*. He joked that he usually talks a lot during acoustic sets, but since he only had about 15 minutes to play, he'd only talk for 10. He then went on to play a great 85 minute set. Dave was in excellent voice, and his guitar playing with Kelly Joe was outstanding. I have to admit that I preferred this set to the show with the Guilty Men in October as the sound and lyrics were perfectly clear. The only disappointment was that the show was considerably shorter than other shows on the tour. Dave explained to my wife and me after the show that the shows have typically gone 3 hours. His autograph to my wife on the King of California CD will require some explaining if we lend it to friends: 'To Robin, Next time.....longer! Dave Alvin.'

March 7 in Piermont NY at The Turning Point:

Last stop on the tour was The Turning Point in Piermont, a rural town in New York near the state border of New Jersey. Kelly Joe opened the set as he has all tour doing a few songs acoustically then pulling out his slide and playing lap style to finish the set. More jokes from Kelly such as this, "I spend too much time alone and I don't talk to people much and when I do I don't make much sense. . .It's hard to find prozac when you're out on the road."

Dave opened with *Every Night About This Time*. The sound system in the club sounded exceptional, so much that the vocals and guitar didn't sound amplified. Dave expected good friend Tom Russell to attend the show and join him in a duet on *Blue Wing*, but Tom was in the process of moving his home from Brooklyn, NY, to Laredo, TX.

Another treat was the rarely played and very somber song, *Andersonville*. Dave intro-ed the

song telling a story why it is rarely played; Years ago in Nashville, Dave played the song and half the audience left. It was just too depressing. Dave announced to the audience that he and Kelly Joe were going to record an album of “really old folk songs,” then proceeded into one of the songs: *Black Jack David*. Even the finishing versions of *Long White Cadillac* and *Little Honey* had that old folk flavor to them. The last song of the last night of the tour was the last song from the first night of the tour; *Honky Tonk*.

After the show Dave met back stage with some friends and fans while trying to get the energy for the long drive that night back to Philadelphia to catch his plane home. On the west coast tour with Kelly Joe last year, the duo did an outstanding version of *You Are my Sunshine*. Reportedly they performed the song in the middle of this tour. I didn’t have a chance to hear this song performed and I told Dave so. To everyone’s surprise, Dave pulled out his guitar, strummed and sung “You Are My Sunshine” as he walked out the door. What an exit to make that we all won’t soon forget. —Am

Kelly Joe Phelps — Lead Me On

Kelly’s 1994 debut CD on Burnside Records is real country blues. I mean real country blues! He plays lap slide guitar masterfully in the bottle neck style. He has a baritone voice that flows like an accompanying instrument. Also impressive is Kelly’s ability to pick the strings with his bare fingers...no finger picks.

What makes his style so unique in this age of modern music is how authentic his sound is to traditional country blues of the twenties and thirties. In those days the bluesman called their recordings “sides,” because a song was recorded in less than 3 minutes to fit on one side of a 78 rpm record. Kelly breaks tradition here with 13 songs that all log in at no less than four and a half minutes each for a total running time of 70 minutes on CD. It’s fair to say, many of the bluesman of yesterday wish they were afforded the extra time that Kelly takes to let loose.

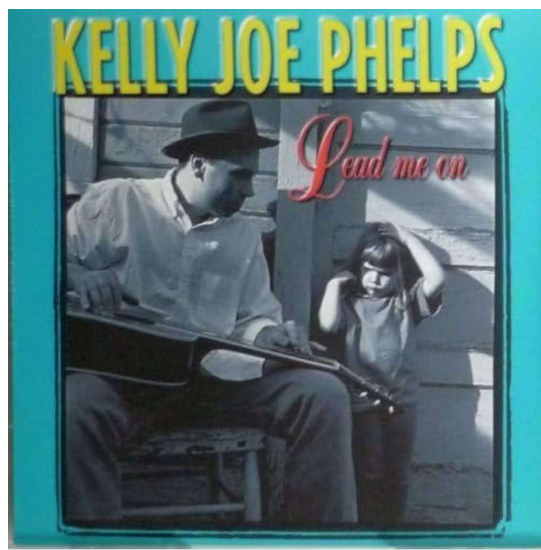
The session for this album lasted only 3 hours, culminating in 13 songs played with out retakes and overdubs, an unheard of feat in the 1990’s age of recording. The album contains 6 original songs which create the feel for the listener of standing in a Mississippi cotton field in the pre war era with sounds heard drifting in the wind from a silhouette of a minstrel bluesman on a grassy hill. The other songs on the album pay tribute to some of his favorite bluesman, Joe Callicott and Skip James.

Kelly has played guitar since he was 12 but emerged as a back up musician in the Jazz field in Washington state. In 1989, he started listening to country blues players Mississippi Fred McDowell and Robert Pete Williams and was enthralled into making the style his own. He began writing original songs and for the first time singing them himself. In ‘94 he perfected his art and released “Lead Me On.” He has received wide spread acclaim and has played shows with B.B. King, Little Feat, Robben Ford, Leo Kottke, Keb’ Mo’, and now Dave Alvin.

Kelly Joe will release his 2nd album on Rycodisc Records in August of ‘97.

In an Oregon music paper, Phelps stated how dedicated he is to his blues, “You want to know what my goal is? I want to be 60 years old and still playing country blues. Just to see what it’s like to be that age and still doin’ it.” Now seen as a dying art, country blues was an important part of the growth of American Music. It is a relief to see that the art will carry on through great musicians like Kelly Joe Phelps.

Lead Me On - Burnside records 3158 E. Burnside, Portland OR, 97214



Gerald Locklin Interview

By Craig Frischkorn

Dave Alvin is well known for his great songs as well as his song writing, but behind his music he is also a poet. He has now published 2 books of poetry: Nana Big Joe and the Fourth of July (1985) and Any Rough Times Are Now Behind You (1993). Dave has read his poetry on National Public Radio, and he has gained great respect in the field of contemporary poetry. He credits many influences, including poet and novelist Charles Bukowski and the man interviewed here: Gerald Locklin, poet and teacher at Long Beach State University. Here Craig Frischkorn, teacher of English at Jamestown (NY) Community College, interviews Dave's friend and poetry mentor Gerald Locklin. Locklin has published his own highly regarded books of poetry and prose, including A Sure Bet, which is a recent tribute to his friend Charles Bukowski. Bukowski wrote the screenplay for the film Barfly, which is based on his life as a Los Angeles poet. "Buk" was an important influence on Dave Alvin's song "Burning in Water, Drowning in Flame." Locklin lists Dave Alvin first in the acknowledgements in A Sure Bet. Gerald and Dave's friendship goes back to the late 1970s when Dave took English courses from Gerald at Long Beach State. Since those early days, Gerald has closely followed and encouraged Dave as a fine poet. Craig talked with Gerald about Dave's writing in this interview, which took place in Jamestown, NY, on April 23, 1997.

CF: Tell about your first memories of meeting Phil and Dave Alvin.

GL: The first time I met Phil Alvin was at the Bodega Bar in Long Beach. It isn't there any more, but they used to have poetry readings and good roast beef sandwiches. We were sitting in there, and we had a friendly argument over mathematical theory. "Was it unrelated to real life? Was it rooted in concrete reality?" Phil is a mathematician and teacher who takes his math very seriously and knows everything about music. He's a wonderful musician and singer, but he does take his math and philosophy and intellectual life very seriously also. Phil knew infinitely more about it than I did, but I never let ignorance stand between myself and the utterance of an opinion. Hey, I'd argue with Einstein. (laughter).

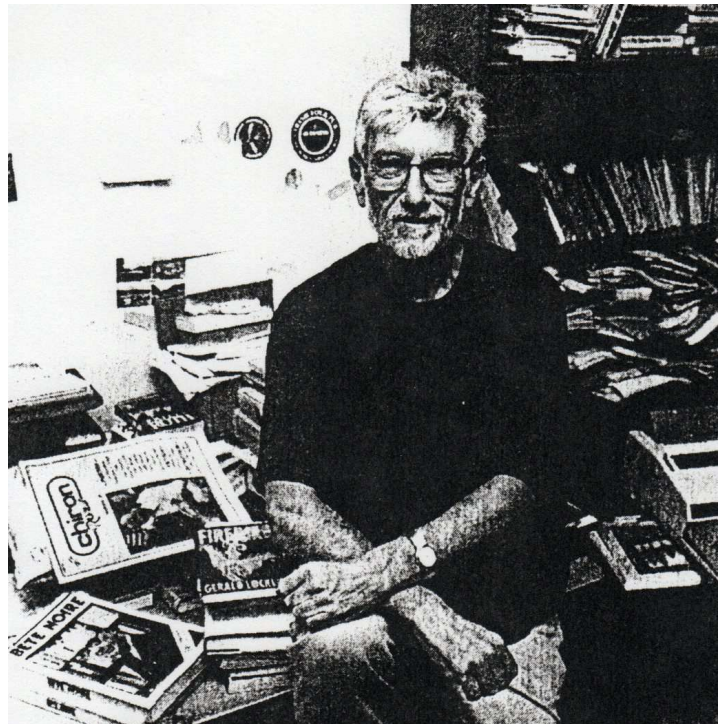
CF: You saw the Blasters perform live in the earliest days?

GL: Yes, I remember the Blasters used to give concerts in the cafeteria at Long Beach State when they were just starting out.

CF: How did your friendship with Dave begin?

GL: Dave was a student of mine at Long Beach State in fall 1979. He was an excellent student in the creative writing program, but he was also enrolled in literature courses of mine. He was a top student. I would let him go in and lecture to my British literature survey course on the night's assignment because I trusted his abilities. He handled it quite well, and he could have been a literary scholar, a professor of English, if he had wanted to be one, very easily.

CF: Your friendship must have expanded beyond



the classroom.

GL: Yes, class was only a part of it. We also met at my second home, the 49er Tavern. He and others in the class might come over to the 49er a couple of times a week. We might be drinking beer in there on a Thursday night. It's just a beer bar; a lot of the bars in California don't serve liquor, just beer. We'd argue literary, musical, and movie trivia. Dave knew everything, just as his brother Phil knows everything. We could go at it until the early hours of the morning, playing trivia games, and not just rock music but also classical and jazz. Dave knew it all, more than I

did, but I never would have admitted it. I bullshitted as much as possible, so the relationship and the educational relationship extended far beyond the classroom into our whole social lives.

CF: Give us a sample of what you'd talk about.

GL: With Dave and me it was often musical and literary trivia. It would go back to renaissance poets, the first line of a sonnet, or an Elizabethan sonneteer. We'd quiz each other. I actually asked him to teach the British survey so I could do some review. Dave was catching me in some areas I hadn't taught for a while. I would be drinking with Dave at the 49er Tavern and the Reno Room which are still there in Long Beach. Thin American beer was all they served in those days. I always liked the German beers but you couldn't find them in those bars. We'd talk, drink, and play foosball, pool, and pinball. Dave was as much of a friend--or more of a friend--than a student.

CF: Tell us about Dave's early writing.

GL: I was aware of the poetry he was writing. I gave poetry readings with him and other students. They organized a big reading downtown in around 1979. They rented a space downtown in L.A., and there was a buffet and free champagne. They put out press releases, and they were doing me a favor by including me in on it. It was a great evening, and there was an anthology of his and their poems in it.

CF: What was Dave writing about then?

GL: From an early stage onward, he wrote poems on relationships, his family, and Long Beach. Soon after that, he was writing road poems on the rigors, adventures, and travails of being in the band on the road. He learned from Bukowski and others to write about Long Beach and Downey, those locales. It's what Bukowski said he learned from Fante: that it was OK to write about L. A. as a subject and setting for poems and novels. So Dave was writing about growing up in Downey, a working class suburb of L. A., and about bars of downtown Long Beach--navy bars and honky tonks. I think he's continued writing about those.

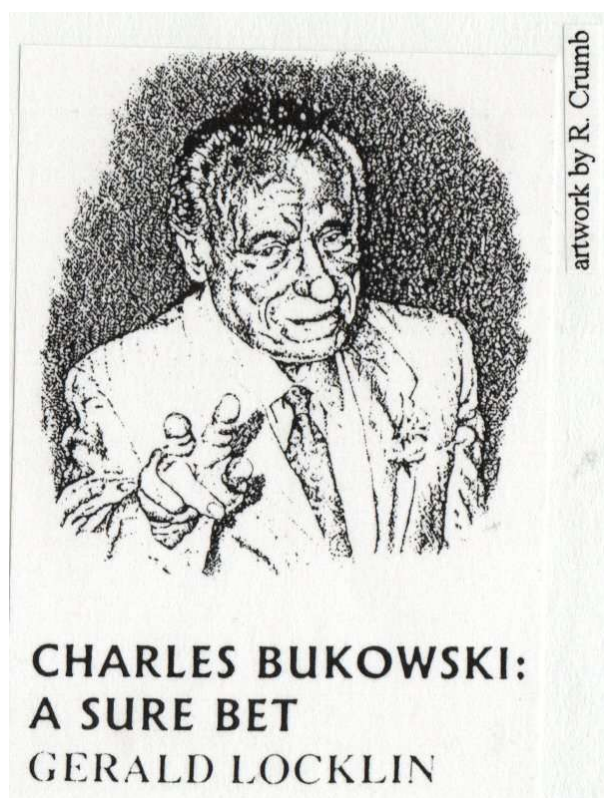
CF: As a professor of literature, how would you describe Dave's approach to writing about common people?

GL: Dave is interested in naturalistic settings, realistic settings, common people, down and out people. Bukowski's people. Dave didn't necessarily learn it from me but maybe just from the whole world of Buk and others he was becoming aware of from his classes, from me, and from others. He was absorbing

the whole southern California style of poetry and what it's all about.

CF: What are some California musical influences on Dave that you're aware of?

GL: He and Phil had been going to L.A. to hear the great blues singers from an early age. Maybe he learned something from the Bakersfield country scene, too. I don't know. I do know that my friend Gerald Haslam, the great short story writer of the Central Valley, consulted with Dave when writing his book on California country music.



CF: How was Bukowski an influence on Dave?

GL: Dave might have gotten his plain speaking from Bukowski and the Populism of writing about ordinary, working class people. He would have found those blues and country elements confirmed in Buk. Here was someone writing about the same terrain, and doing it seriously, as a literary artist.

CF: I remember a poem Dave read on NPR about a girlfriend who expected him to throw out his Bukowski books. How do you respond to that?

GL: Bukowski being rejected by a female in that poem registers a certain moment in the history of feminism because Buk actually has a lot of feminist admirers today.

CF: Another thing I remember about his Fresh Air interviews is the way Dave has been so careful to footnote his sources--who's influenced him and

helped him along the way--in music and poetry.

GL: No one I know is more loyal than Dave to anyone he feels is his friend. Anyone he feels any debt to, real or imagined. He has been extremely loyal. He is so wonderful about citing Buk and those of us at Long Beach when he talks on NPR or gives interviews. He has had me give readings with him. Most people forget the people in their lives at a certain stage. But Dave has not. He is uniquely loyal. It would be so easy to forget to mention everybody from the old days.

CF: His stage banter also connects to his sources, influences, and friends.

GL: Yes, Dave always deflects attention from himself and uses the forum to call attention to others and give them their due. I think it's part of his good family upbringing in Downey. I think he was instilled with very fine breeding of how you should behave to people. You should be modest, loyal, grateful, and respectful. These are old fashioned values which are germane to the values of the type of music he plays.

CF: Do you know other members of his family besides Phil?

GL: No, I don't know his family at all but I almost feel I do by just the way he turned out so well. They must be very proud of him as a musician and an exemplary human being.

CF: How does Dave's poetry fit into your teaching now?

GL: I'm using Dave's book of poetry Any Rough Times in one of my classes. It's an intro. to poetry writing class. So they'll see some work that is not only accessible but is by someone who once sat in the same classes that they're sitting in. Now he's got this beautiful book out and is writing about the same subjects they could write about--their family, the music they enjoy, love affairs, their hometown, good and bad and rough times--whether or not they're behind them yet. Dave read from it at the Long Beach amphitheater a couple of years ago. He did a very good job of reading the poems from it, and I think it's a fine book of poems. I recommend it and have given it as presents to people. I always see it with the Bukowski books in Tower Records, Barnes & Noble, Borders, so Incommunicado must have good distribution.

CF: What do you tell your students about Dave's songwriting ability?

GL: Dave knows how to keep it simple. I've tried to write song lyrics, but I don't know enough about it to do it well. I get too complicated. I try to get too much in the lines and make them too compressed,

too poetic. But Dave knows how to keep the lines simple in his songs. He gets just enough poetry in his lines without overloading and overcharging the lines. He's not putting T. S. Eliot in there. It's really a gift. Mark Twain knew how to get just enough of the spoken dialect into the flavor of his dialogue, so that it's not like reading a linguistic transcription. And Dave knows how to get poetry into the lyric line without overloading it.

CF: What are some of your favorite songs by Dave Alvin?

GL: Just a few would be "Border Radio," "Fourth of July," "Andersonville," "Haley's Comet," and "Burning in Water."

CF: You were a friend of Bukowski's and have written a book on him A Sure Bet (Water Row Books). What can you say about Dave's song "Burning in Water, Drowning in Flame" which took its title from a Bukowski poem?

GL: I heard Dave sing this at a coffee house in San Pedro at a Buk tribute after Buk died. John Doe was also there that evening and performed. It's great line and Dave adapted it to a great hard driving song. It captures what Buk had in mind with the line, poem, and book "Burning in water." "Burning in Water" is a collection of poems by Buk. You can see the paradoxical quality of the oxymoronic title, which would have attracted someone with literary knowledge, such as Dave. There's a certain melodramatic quality to Buk's poetry, a quality about living on the edge and maybe not making it much longer, or maybe making it by getting by with the booze and then the booze creating its own problems and then drinking your way out of those problems and into more of them. There's that element of living on the edge. In music, it's "Help me make it through the night." In Buk, it's "How am I going to get through one more day?" That quality of vulnerability and the perilous quality of life in Buk are found in Dave's song.

CF: As Dave's former teacher, could you respond to the lyrics in a few of Dave's songs? How about "Between the Cracks"?

GL: It's the 1980s idea of the net that was supposed to reform welfare but catch those that fell between the cracks. But a lot of people didn't get caught in the safety net. It's a neo-depression of Reagan, Thatcher, and Charles Keating. A lot of people were flying high but many were falling through the cracks. But that's just an aspect of it.

CF: This reminds me of the critique of Reagan in "Common Man." Reagan "knew how to quote Abe Lincoln and get his foot in the

door."

GL: Yeah, everyone thought Reagan was like John Wayne or Audie Murphey. There tends to be so much bad political poetry and music, so much preaching to the converted. It's so easy because the audience is on your side anyway. But when someone like Dave can do it in a subtle and original lyric (such as "Common Man" and "Between the Cracks"), it's quite an accomplishment. There's such depth and complexity in the simple structure that the lyrics work as poetry.

CF: Your perspective on Dave blends his musical and literary background.

GL: Dave wears a couple of different hats: that of the original musician and that of the scholar of the tradition. He knows the history and roots of American music and American and English literature. He's aware of where he's coming from, and he appreciates

what others who have come before him have done. He celebrates that.

CF: Any comments on Dave's most recent performances?

GL: His voice is beginning to be that of someone who has lived the life. You're beginning to hear the whiskey and cigarettes in his voice. I noticed that authenticity the last time I heard him. This has its dangers. He's not a self-destructive person at all. He's not trying to kill himself with booze and cigarettes. But he's lived the bar life and the life of the road enough that you're beginning to hear those things in his voice and that's giving a deepening and character and a new mature, weathered sound to it. You can't fake it and he's not faking it. You hear the weathering and experience and hard times as in the blues singers' voices. -----end---

Locklin's A Sure Bet is available in trade edition for \$25 or a signed limited edition of 50 copies for \$35. Add \$3.50 postage in the U.S. and \$5 overseas. Or for a free catalog of Locklin and Bukowski books write: Water Row Books, P.O. Box 438, Sudbury, MA 01776 Visa and Mastercard accepted Tel (508) 485-8515 Fax (508) 229-0885 email: WaterRow@aol.com

-- To contact the interviewer Craig Frischkorn via e-mail : Frischjc@jccw22.cc.sunyjcc.edu

Review - THE BLASTERS 3/28 Chicago House Of Blues

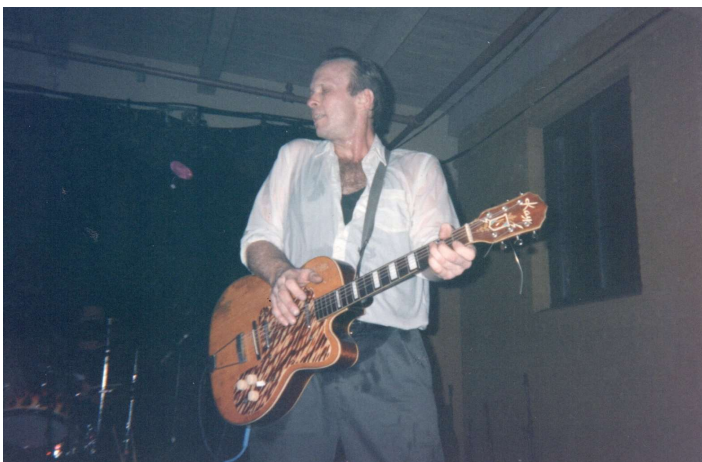
Photos: Billy Davis

This concert was anxiously awaited since the last Chicago visit was canceled due to a problem with Phil Alvin catching his flight (see Issue #14 for details). John Bazz arrived in town with a beard after not having shaved since that notorious February 1 no-show date. By show time, he was clean shaven Johnny.

About 3pm, WXRT radio played the Blasters' version of *American Music* and mentioned that, 'The Blasters are probably loading in right now for their big show tonight at the House Of Blues.' The impressive newly opened club's interior is designed like an old theater, very much resembling the House of Blues in L.A.. The stage is enormous with large columns flanking each side, something like the old vaudeville theaters. The stage curtain is made up of thousands of stitched together rags. The walls of the club are lined with southern influenced paintings and art work put together with beer cans and bottle caps. Before the show, Phil Alvin was excited about being in Chicago again and reminisced about Chicagoan friends Marcus Johnson (a horn player and an old mentor of the Blasters) and Dave Meyers (a legendary Chess records session man who played on Phil's 'County Fair 2000' solo album.) The show was a near sell out. New England based bluesman Ronnie Earl opened the show.

Finally the Blasters hit the stage opening with *All Your Fault*. At the first break, Phil explained that he just turned 44



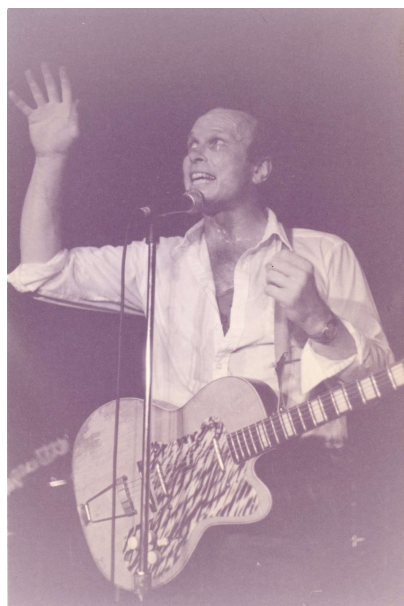


and has been playing gigs since he was 12. His February no-show was his first in 32 years. The Blasters played most of their regular set of songs. They played an intense version of *Dark Night* in which Bazz broke a string. In allowing time to change the string, Phil launched in to a solo version of *Samson and Delilah*. For the last few verses, the full band joined for a rousing finish to the song. Phil's two harp songs included, *So Long Baby* and a song I have long mistitled here in the newsletter called *Come On In This House*. I had called it *Little By Little* which Phil said was actually the song on the flip side of the single that Phil had learned the song from.

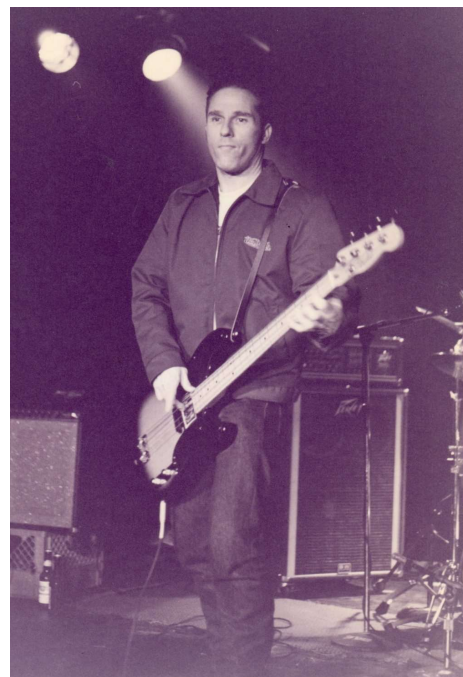
Lead guitarist Keith Wyatt has come into his own and seems comfortable now as a Blaster. He showed a lot of mobility while playing, especially here on the House of Blues massive stage. His style of playing and his sound has a certain clarity to it, even in a loud club situation. Another interesting observation on Keith's style, which is rare in guitarists; is his preference to play both a Fender stratocaster and a Les Paul type guitar. These are the 2 most popular traditional American guitars and sound completely different. Most guitarists usually prefer one style of guitar over the other and stick to it. Keith uses each guitar according to the textures of sound needed for a particular song. The last time the Blasters played Chicago was in September of '95, so the return left the Chicago fans satisfied. The next day the Blasters would drive 300 miles to Detroit for another show.

Review - THE BLASTERS 3/29 Detroit MI at Majestic Photos: Billy Davis

The Majestic is located on Woodward Avenue in an industrial part of town. Arriving in the dark, the streets were deserted. The only motion seen on the street was the thick white of leaking steam exiting the vents from the massive steam pipes that run under the street. While last night's Chocago House of Blues show brought a mixed crowd of music fans, The Majestic was a straight rockabilly club with an army of leather jacketed greasers lining the bar. The Club is located on the second floor over a bowling alley that boasts of being the first commercial bowling alley in the United States.

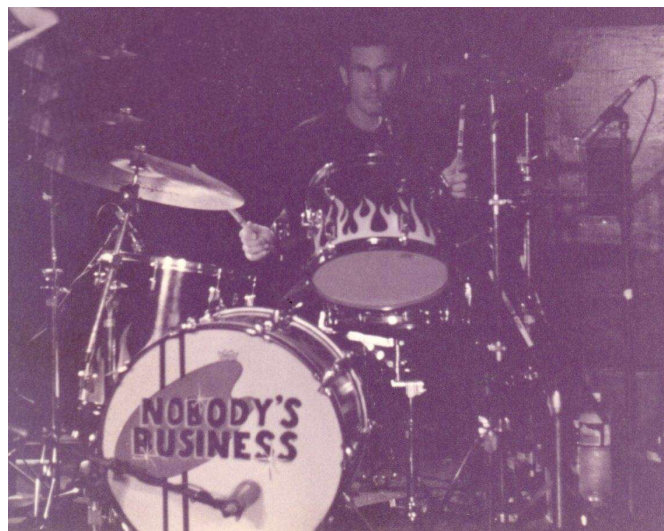


A rockabilly band called 'Nobody's Business' opened the show. The back stage room was a small one so the Blasters chose to arrive at the club and walk right onstage instead of visiting the backstage room. This made it look like they were late in arriving. They played the same set since it worked so well last night. Phil famous for his dedications, sent out *Love is my Business*, to "the stock brokers who want to raise interest rates. I say shoot the mother fuckers." Before playing *Samson and Delilah*, Phil stated, "Whenever I see a screw driver on stage, it makes me think of this song." Well, there wasn't a screw driver in sight, but Phil just likes to play the song. Phil usually reserves this solo song for the other 3 Blasters technical difficulties like string breaks, ect.. For *Hear Me Cryin*, Phil revealed "I've been singing this song since I was a child." Near the end of the set somebody in the audience started yelling "Bass solo! Bass solo!" and Phil announced back, "If I give the bass player a solo, he will cut my throat in my sleep this evening. The hotel is on his credit card. He'll come in get the key and do it while I'm sleeping....before I grow a



beard.”

The closing song, *Matchbox*, was dedicated to, “Ida Cox, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Johnny Lee Wills (who was Bob Wills brother who could sing) and Carl Perkins.” These were all the artists who had a hit with *Matchbox*. Backstage after the show one of Detroit’s best rockabilly bands, The Twistin Tarantulas dropped by and Phil told everybody a story about their bassist Pistol Pete, who joined Phil in L.A. at one of his solo shows. He kept up with Phil note for note on every song he played. In other words, Phil was impressed. Autograph seekers dropped by to meet the Blasters with CDs and pictures, but the last autograph of the night was signed on a bowling pin. The first bowling pin, Phil pointed out, that he ever signed.



Review - The Blasters 3/22/97 Seattle, WA

Photos: Jon Noe



Just days after it was officially announced that their record label went under, The Blasters played their first Seattle show in over 2 years. Despite it all, they put on an excellent show. The band came on 'round midnight and tore through a 90 minute set. Sound problems plagued the first few numbers - *Dark Night*, *American Music*, and *Border Radio*. They hit their stride with *Love Is My Business*, featuring some tasty work by new guitarist Keith Wyatt. That was followed by a great song about playing the lottery, *4-11-44*.

The next number was dedicated to "everyone who's gone through rehab that wasn't court ordered, *All Your Fault*. After that song, while Keith and Bazz were tuning up, Phil played an old folk/blues tune called *Ain't Gonna Rain No More*. The biggest surprise of the evening was a jump blues version of the old standard *You Rascal You* featuring Phil on harmonica.

Of course at every Blasters show some drunk guy always yells out *Marie*, *Marie* after every song, to which Phil responds "If we don't play that I'll cut my toes off with a brick!" Other highlights were an extended version of *Slip of the Tongue*, *I'm Shakin* (for James Brown, Jackie Wilson and Rudy



Seattle show set list

Dark Night	Slip of the Tongue
American Music	Long White Cadillac
Border Radio	Help You Dream
Love Is My Business	I'm Shakin'
4/11/44	Blue Shadows
All Your Fault	Daddy Rollin Stone
Ain't Gonna Rain	Red Rose
No More(Phil solo)	One Bad Stud
Rebound	encore Marie Marie
You Rascal You	Hear Me Cryin
So Long Baby	Samson &Delilah
Goodbye	Matchbox

Toombs) and the set closer *One Bad Stud*, "to Evander Holyfield and Mike Tyson but Evander's probably a better date." The first encore was *Hear Me Cryin'* followed by *Marie, Marie* which incited the usual dancing frenzy in the crowd.

For the second encore, Phil did *Samson and Delilah* which I'd only heard him do once before. The last number was the old Carl Perkins tune *Matchbox*. Let's hope it's not 2 years until the next show. What a night! --Jon Noe

Review- SKELETONS WITH SPECIAL APPEARANCE BY DAVE ALVIN Austin TX at SXSW Thursday, March 13th:

I stayed up 24 hours straight to make Dave's closing set at the Speakeasy. I caught about half of Joel Watson's fine show but, man, was I tired. I found renewed motivation as I saw Dave, sporting motorcycle jacket and usual black stage duds, cross the room between sets.

The Skeletons did a very poppy set of material from their new HighTone record. Enjoyable, but I was waitin' on my favorite guilty man. Dave came on at 1:55 (bars close at 2 a.m.). He galvanized the room. Roared through *Wanda & Duane* and *Jubilee Train/Do Re Mi/Promised Land*. Great stuff, "Dave" through and through, though I wished he'd had more stage time. He wrapped it up at 2:15 and we all shuffled for the door.

Picking up on a rumor (Thanks to Barbara from the Sons of Herman Hall in Dallas), that Brother Dave was joining Chris Gaffney for a little Sunday afternoon in-store at Under the Sun, a vintage clothing store, I cabbed it up to catch the show. No Dave (sigh), but Gaffney's set was magical. He did a version of *People Get Ready* that was like a prayer. Sarah Brown on bass, and lots of cool roots' n' blues musicians among the small crowd. Gary Primich got his harp from the car and sat in for a tune. Don't know where the "Dave playing" rumor started. But, Gaffney's in-store set was worth the \$20 bucks in cab rides. Joel Watson was also supposed to play at Under the Sun, but had to cancel. A fine way to end my SXSW experience, though I was secretly hoping for at least one more Dave "sighting" besides the Speakeasy, since he was in Austin working on the Derailers' new CD. -- B.J. Huchtemann, music journalist and Dave Alvin fan, Omaha, NE

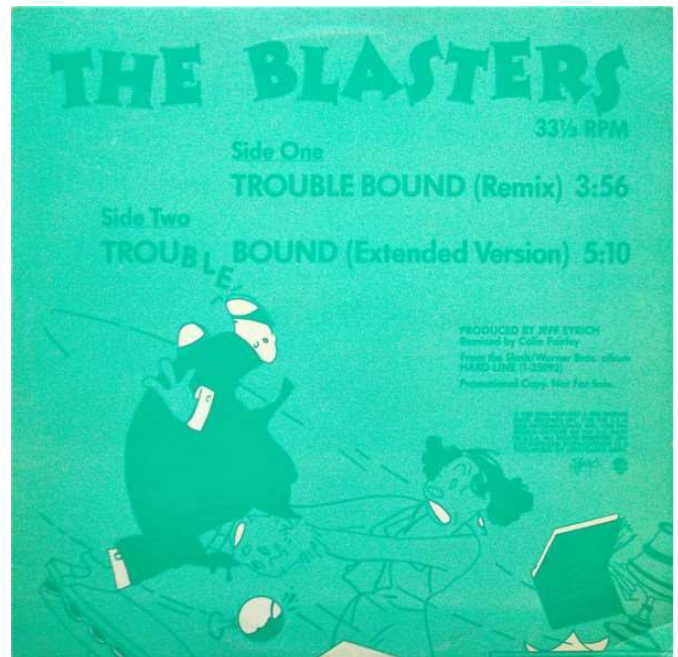
Q. from you & A. from the band

For Dave Alvin: Do you remember your first gig with the Blasters? What kind of songs did you play? Were you ever forced to play the songs of the day? - Per Ake Persson, Lund, Sweden

Dave: No, we were never forced to play the songs of the day. We couldn't...No! We wouldn't!! There were several first gigs. What became the Blasters was one gig and then the first Blasters gig where we said that was the name of the band. We did *Honey Don't*, *Mystery Train*, a Sonny Boy Williamson song called *No Nights By Myself*, *Love, 24 Hours a Day* by Hank Ballard, and I'm sure we did some Big Joe songs like *Roll 'em Pete*. But the first gig was at a biker bar called the Sundance Saloon in West Long Beach as the Blasters. The St. Patrick's day wedding gig was the first time that Phil and I played guitars together, Bazz wasn't in the band and there was a guy named Frank Furillo on harmonica. Frank was the guy who convinced Phil to let me play guitar.

For Dave Alvin: I'd like to ask about the promo twelve inch record for *Trouble Bound* with the cartoon on the cover jacket. (pictured on right) We call it Finbeck and Fra here in Norway. How did you come up with that? - Harald Elvsveen, Norway

Dave: Well the idea of doing the mix wasn't our idea, it was London's (record Co.) who was distributing Slash product in England. I don't write songs that apply themselves to dance remixes. The cover came from an old cartoon from the twenties or thirties called something like 'Bringing up father.' The woman's name was Maggs and the guys name was Jiggs. Somebody in England came up with that.



For Dave Alvin: As you know we are dear friends of Buddy Blue. Unfortunately he is very sad, because he can't get satisfaction playing music. Why is it so difficult for a great musician to make a living? I heard you had a hard time after leaving the Blasters. Can you give the readers any advice on this? - Lele and the beautiful Oli, Milan, Italy

Dave: Well, it wasn't right after leaving the Blasters. It was after my first solo record, because I had sunk all the money I made with the Blasters and X into putting the Allnighters (Dave's backing band on the first tour) on tour and I wound up in about \$25 - \$30,000 in debt. So that flipped me out to where I didn't want to play music anymore. Instead of having fun, I play music and I go broke. So I rarely did anything. I didn't come out of that until Country Dick talked me into the Pleasure Barons. I played on Buddy Blue's first solo album. He was the original guitarist and singer in the Beat Farmers. But I don't know...If we could figure out why good musicians starve sometimes, we would rule the universe. —Am

Collecting Blasters - Keith Wyatt has 2 guitar instructional CD Roms out called 'Play Rock Guitar' and 'Play Blues guitar.' Priced at \$59.95 each write to Play Music Inc. 11320 Chandler Blvd., Suite G, N. Hollywood, Ca 91601 Phone 818-766-2958 fax: 818-766-7616 Web site: www.playmusic.com

--Check out the fanzine called Rock Beat International, put out by Geoff Cabin. It covers roots rock and rock 'n roll with artists such as Dave Alvin, Bruce Springsteen, Graham Parker, and the like. Write: Po Box 27636, Towson Md. 21285 \$6 for 4 issues, \$10 in Canada and Mexico, \$14 overseas. Payable to Geoff Cabin.

Alvin and Phelps' roots music no museum piece

Growing up in California, Dave Alvin often heard about Bethlehem's steel industry from his father, who was a steelworkers union organizer. Alvin, now 40, finally made it to Bethlehem last Saturday night to play a poignant, well-attended gig at Godfrey Daniels, the same week plans were being unveiled for a National Museum of Industrial History on the site of Bethlehem Steel only a few blocks away on the city's South Side.

Performing a mix of American roots music, Alvin easily drew the crowd of about 90 people into his stories of disaffected outsiders, working-class love, hard luck and longing.

The songs Alvin sang were low key but intense, often dealing with the vagaries and pain of personal relationships as on "Dry River" and the opener "(I Won't Be) Leavin'." Being an acoustic show, Alvin did not play much from his rock 'n' roll days with his 1980s band, The Blasters, although he did perform his classic "Fourth of July," which he first recorded while playing with California punkers X.

Opening for Alvin, and later joining him on stage, was folk-blues lap-slide guitarist Kelly Joe Phelps. With eyes downcast, Phelps exhibited a combination of shyness and wry humor as he introduced himself as "Dave Alvin."

Once over the hurdle of starting, Phelps played a strong, expressionistic set of spiritual/ blues-based songs. "Hosanna" and "Old Glory" spoke of salvation and release of the common man's miseries in death. Phelps' finger-picking technique was free-flowing and improvisational, and often impressive to watch. He finished with "Train That Carried My Girl From Town," written by blues artist Frank Hutchison in the 1920s.

The culmination of the evening was Alvin and Phelps playing together. As a duo they generated a level of energy usually reserved for full bands. The two showed versatility in playing traditional folk songs such as "Black Jack Davey,"



Kelly Joe Phelps, top left, and Dave Alvin, bottom left, played individually and together last Saturday night at Godfrey Daniels, Bethlehem.



LISA LAKE
Special to
The Morning Call

as well as blues-based originals such as the shadowy ballad "Barn Burning."

The most powerful song of the night was Alvin's Hank Williams tale, "Long White Cadillac." Unlike The Blasters robust reading and Dwight Yoakam's well-known honky-tonk version, Alvin started out slowly, singing with a haunting, weary baritone voice while his and Phelps' guitars built up to a feverish pitch of blues mayhem. Phelps used his lap-slide guitar as a percussion instrument, as well as bringing restless metal-

lic sounds out of it at the height of the performance.

Finishing with "Little Honey" and "Border Radio," the duo received loud applause from an entranced audience.

While other aspects of American culture are being relegated to museums, Godfrey's patrons got the chance to see a revitalized tradition in American folk and blues music kept alive.

Rosemary Pratka

Rosemary Pratka is a free-lance writer.

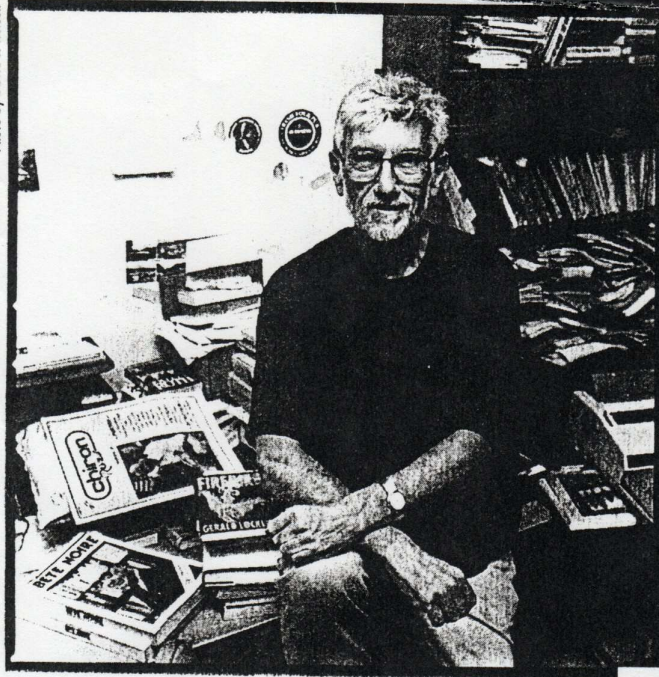


Photo: Barry Hynes

REVIEW

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH
VOLUME 23, NUMBER 1, FALL 1996

Photo by David J. Nelson



Gerald Locklin

One Man's Poetic Influence

"The prolificness of his [Gerald Locklin's] verse and prose, frequent live readings and above all his encouragement of younger talents, have made him a central figure in the vitality of Los Angeles writing...."—1996, *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Literature in English*.

Columnist Tim Grobaty writing in the Long Beach Press-Telegram took issue in November with "the dunderheads" who compiled "In Their Own Voices: A Century of Recorded Poetry" for their failure to include Gerald Locklin in the four-CD collection.

"Personally, we'd give Maya Angelou the heave-ho and insert our pal, Cal State Long Beach-based prof'n'poet Gerry Locklin," says Grobaty.

While Locklin appreciates the attention *The Oxford Companion* gives him, he isn't as disappointed by his exclusion from "In Their Own Voices" as Grobaty.

"My inclusion in *The Oxford Companion* is in part the result of the exposure I've had in England," says Locklin, who has taught, lectured and read his works in that country. "That's one of the benefits I've enjoyed during my years here at Cal State Long Beach. Another has been the privilege of teaching alongside an outstanding English faculty and watching some very talented students go on to distinguished academic and literary careers."

Locklin joined the CSULB English faculty in 1965 a year after getting his Ph.D. at the University of Arizona. "I was 23 years old, younger in some instances than the students I was teaching," he says. "I took an instant liking to the university and the area, and I've never even tested the water for positions at other institutions."

Locklin has been one of the department's most prolific and visible writers over the years. He's had more than 2,000 poems published in periodicals and books and is author of 80 books and chapbooks of poetry and prose. He's listed in the *Directory of Poetry Publishers* as the seventh most widely published poet in America.

His unpretentious language, anecdotal ease and playfulness brought him critical praise early on for "The Toad Poems," "Poop and Other Poems" and "The Criminal Mentality."

According to *The Oxford Companion*, Locklin, "like his friend and mentor Charles Bukowski, offers candid reports on relations between the sexes, usually (though not always) deflating chauvinism by self-deprecating humour. He adopts a casual, discursive manner in ranging over West Coast mores and urban perils; sex, fatherhood and domestic skirmishes; teaching, drinking and the pursuit of all the essential human appetites."

Locklin's latest effort is a collection of memoirs, essays and poems titled "Charles Bukowski: A Sure Bet," released this year by Water Row Press and receiving the kind of wide praise he earned with "The Firebird Poems" and "Woman Trouble."

His longstanding friendship with the late Bukowski, a genuine rebel in the L.A. literary establishment who had a wide and loyal following, is one of the highlights of Locklin's professional career. They met in 1970 when Locklin summoned Bukowski to campus for a reading, one of several he would give at CSULB. Over the years they had corresponded frequently. Most of that correspondence is part of a huge collection of work Locklin donated to the University Library's Special Collections.

"It's been both a privilege and a pleasure teaching here and an honor to have my materials included in the library's special collections," says Locklin.

—Tom Wood

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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.
- #9. Blasters/Beat farmers tour reviews, Intveld Cd review.
- #10 James Intveld ex-Blaster, Dave Alvin on the Knitters, Remembering Country Dick, Q&A for the band.
- #11 Gene Taylor interview, Sonny Burgess interview
- #12 Dave Alvin song by song on Interstate City, reviews.
- #13 Drummer issue Interviews w/Angel, Bateman, Hicks.
- #14 Keith Wyatt Interview, Pleasure Barons history.