

2025 re-print and expanded edition

AMERICAN MUSIC

The Blasters Newsletter

Issue #16 Aug. '97

Blasters To Re-Release 1st Album “American Music” on HighTone

DAVE ALVIN TOUR DATES

With the Guilty Men

Aug. Fridays in L.A. at Jacks Sugar Shack
opening unannounced trying new material

8/26 Silver Lake Ca. at Street (Fest)

9/6 San Diego Street Scene (Fest)

9/18 Ft Worth Tx at White Elephant

Tour with Kelly Joe Phelps

9/19 St Louis MO Town School Folk

9/21 Ann Arbor MI at The Ark

9/22 Jamestown NY at Scharmann Thea.

9/24 Knoxville TN at Laurel theater

9/25 Nashville TN at BlueBird

9/26 Clemson SC at Clemson University

9/27 Tampa FL at Skippers

9/28 Atlanta GA at Blind Willies

BLASTERS TOUR DATES

8/29 Long Beach CA at Blue Cafe

8/30 Milwaukee WI at Sprechtfest

8/31 Minneapolis at TBA

LATEST NEWS: Well, in the world of the Blasters you never know what can happen last minute. The date of release is September 14, 1997 for ‘American Music.’ A deal has been in the works for a long time after trying to work out a fair deal for all parties involved. Chris Morris is writing the liner notes. The album will include six previously unreleased songs.

The other 3 songs are I

FELL IN LOVE by Ken Cook, a Ray Harris song called LONE WOLF, and a Willie Dixon song, I'M ASHAMED OF MYSELF. The Vinyl LP version will have a bonus track, Elmore James's CRY FOR ME. -- Dave Alvin will be doing another mini-tour with Kelly Joe Phelps in the mid west. They toured the west coast in June '96 and the east coast in March of '97. The Dave and Kelly pairing has been

a popular one. They still have plans to do an album together in '98 -- The Bruce Springsteen tribute album is due out 9/23 and will include Dave Alvin doing a Springsteen song called SEEDS. -- It was previously reported that James Intveld would be filling in on guitar for a few gigs while Keith Wyatt was away on a trip to Japan. Keith's trip was canceled and he will still be playing those gigs. -- Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men will be playing every Friday in August at Jack's Sugar Shack in L.A. opening unannounced for such acts as Mojo Nixon, Chris Gaffney, The Derailers, and Russell Scott. They will be trying out new material, jamming, and just keeping in playing shape for the new album recording sessions due to start in November. Greg Leisz will be producing Dave's next album due for release in the Spring. -- Anyone having trouble finding Dave Alvin or other HighTone Records artists' CDs in stores can mail order them. Write for a catalog and order forms: HighTone Records mail order, 220 4th St. #101, Oakland, Ca. 94607 -- Kelly Joe Phelps album is coming out in August and the Derailers' record that Dave produced won't be out until January until they can iron out which record label owns them. — Am



A working design of American Music by Steve Bartel. Photo by James Austin. As Dave Alvin remembers, “It was the first photo taken of us that wasn't by a family member.”

INSIDE: John Bazz interview, The Blasters at radio station KUCI 88.9, Influenced by the Blasters story, a Dave Alvin concert review, and Dave in Italy.

HIGHTONE TO REISSUE BLASTERS AMERICAN MUSIC FIRST TIME CD INCLUDES SIX UNRELEASED TRACKS

OAKLAND, CA - HighTone Records has announced it will reissue for the first time on CD the classic debut from The Blasters, 'American Music,' on September 16, with the new version of the album containing six previously unreleased tracks. HighTone will also issue the album on a special double vinyl format as well, with one LP containing the original tracks and one 12 inch record containing the unreleased material. All of the songs are being remastered with the participation of ex-Blaster and current HighTone artist Dave Alvin. HighTone Records CD's are distributed nationally by Rhino/WEA.

Originally released in 1980 on "Rockin" Ronny Weiser's Los Angeles-based Rollin' Rock label with a limited pressing of two thousand copies, 'American Music' has become a valuable collector's item, fetching \$100 and up on the market. Produced by Weiser, the album was recorded in a Van Nuys garage on the kind of no-frills equipment that perfectly captured the excitement and raw power of The Blasters, the Downey, California band that bridged the gap between roots rock and punk music. The band included brothers Dave and Phil Alvin on guitar and vocals respectively, plus drummer Bill Bateman and bassist John Bazz. Several songs on the album, such as "Marie, Marie" and the title track, became staples of The Blasters live shows, and in-turn appeared later on both Blasters and Dave Alvin solo recordings.

In addition to several excellent originals written by the brothers Alvin, the 'American Music' reissue's 19 tracks feature songs by a number of the band's rock 'n' roll, blues, and country idols, such as Jimmie Rodgers, Bill Haley and Billy Boy Arnold. A few of the previously-unreleased songs include Hank Ballard's "Love 24 Hours a Day," Howlin' Wolf's "So Glad" and Magic Sam's "21 Days In Jail."

"This is a flat-out rockin' album, played by a bunch of young guys who loved the music and recorded before we got exposed to the perils of 'the music industry'," said Dave Alvin in recalling American Music.

"American Music is a seminal piece of American rock 'n' roll history, sought by collectors all over the world," said HighTone Records managing partner Larry Sloven. "We are especially proud and excited to be associated with its return to the public."

Brenda Burns "A Song Away From You"

Brenda's new CD features Jerry Angel (Blasters), Juke Logan (Allnighters), Gregory Boaz (The Guilty Men), Jimi Bott (Fab. Thunderbirds, Rod Piazza band), and Junior Watson (Canned Heat). Brenda, a former member of "Asleep At The Wheel" wrote all the songs that roll in style from blues to swing to jazz. Two songs on here have been recorded by C.J. Chenier and Francine Reed. She is currently writing songs for "Pops" Staples and Marie Muldaur. The CD can be purchased by mail by sending \$15 Postpaid to:

Big Boss Records P.O. Box 481153 Los Angeles CA 90048



JOHN BAZZ INTERVIEW

by Billy Davis

John Bazz has played bass in the Blasters since the beginning and grew up with the Alvin brothers in Downey Ca. He has seen it all. In this interview conducted on 8/6/97 Bazz remembered the old days and tells what he's up to now. It's been a long time coming to interview John in this newsletter. He has been the steadfast supplier of information from the Blaster camp in the 3 and a half years of the existence of this newsletter. I can't thank him enough for that.

American Music: How did you get into music?

John Bazz: I always wanted to be a drummer and my dad was a drummer. I wasn't allowed to take drum lessons when I was a kid. I really got into music when I was a teenager. All my friends picked up playing guitar. I remember going to a friend's house and we would all sit on the bed and there weren't enough guitars so we would take turns playing the songs of the day. Simple tunes like, GLORIA or LOUIE LOUIE. I remember hearing Elvis, Little Richard, and Carl Perkins, but it didn't make a big impact on me. The first thing that did, was when we had a baby sitter who was a teenager. She, at a prescribed time, switched the TV to the Jack Parr show or something for film footage of the Beatles. I never heard of them but what freaked me out was when I turned away from the TV and looked at the baby sitter, she was just beside herself! Watching her watch TV and the way she was reacting peaked my interest.

AM: Were the Alvins some of those guys sitting around in your bed rooms playing guitars?

JB: No, I'm older than both Alvins, and I wasn't playing yet. I went to Catholic school and then left all those buddies after grade 6 to go into junior high school. I started playing music with those new friends. After 9th grade

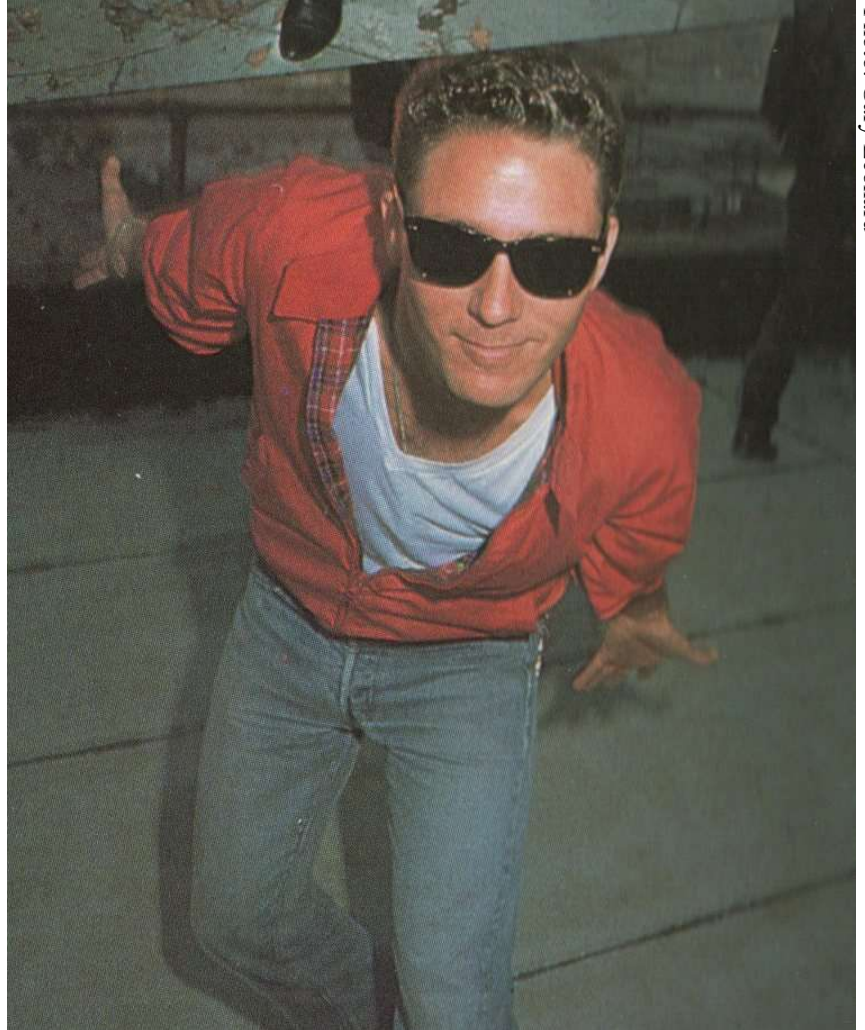


Photo: Gary Leonard

I went back to catholic school and that's when I started playing music with my other friends, the Alvins included. We were still just down the street from the Alvins and it was in those same years that I re-met Phil. Our moms were friends. We became friends when he was in 9th and I was in 10th grade. What really nailed the friendship was we were both into blues. Blues is very popular today, but back then not many people listened

to blues. We started playing music and I was a drummer. He was playing harmonica. David was so much younger than me and when I was 16 and he's 12, we were worlds apart. We became better friends over the years. David was more a musicologist. He had the killer record collection and the subscription to Rolling Stone. His bed room was the music reference room.

AM: How did you start as a bass player?

JB: I hadn't played bass, but I had played guitar. This is gonna sound like bullshit and it kinda is; I taught Phil and Dave how to play guitar in that I showed them where you put your fingers and how you hold the guitar. I would show those guys things, but they really taught themselves how to play guitar. So back then, in their minds, "Johnny Bazz knows how to play guitar." Bass is just the bottom four strings on guitar. The guy they had, Mike Kennedy was too good. He would just jump out of context. He would play a simple pattern which is perfect for a Carl Perkins tune, then he would jump to Jaco (Pastorious, a virtuoso jazz bassist). He was more of a jazz musician. I didn't have a bass and I just played the bottom four strings of the guitar. My first gig was a wedding reception. It might have been the St. Patrick's day thing (3/17/79) I remember going to the gig and on the way stopping at a music store and renting a bass. A few days later someone said they saw a killer bass in a pawn shop, so I bought it. That was my regular bass for a number of years.

AM: Is that the bass pictured on the Rollin Rock American Music album?

JB: Yeah, it's an old hollow body Kay electric bass. Historically it's a pretty important bass.



Photo: Billy Davis

I think it was one of the first electric basses. Kay is known for their acoustic basses, so when they designed the electric bass they tried to get an acoustic sound with something that was modern.

AM: Where is that bass now?

JB: It's lost somewhere in Phil Alvin's house. He borrowed it a few years ago and I hope it is still there somewhere.

The band was called Cool Filter and the Kings back then. We had been playing off and on, different groupings of guys for ten years and there was a resurgence of blues in the late 60's, but then disco kind of stole live gigs from that and I had more or less given up on playing music. When this whole thing happened, it had been a while since I played and there was now a new interest in live music and there was a certain energy there. The whole music scene was starting to explode in '79. With Phil and Dave in the band, we were able to mix and match so many different and varied styles of music that we really weren't a blues band or a rockabilly band, but we were a lot of things.

AM: You recorded a demo with James Harman in your rehearsal space before getting the Rollin' Rock deal. How did that happen?

JB: The more we played, the more interest we got in it. We were all friends with James. I'm not sure if that was the tape that we gave to Ronny Weiser to get the Rollin' Rock deal. James had really nice recording equipment and we recorded like 30 songs in an afternoon. James still has the tapes. That same session I recorded on a cassette player with my microphone. I can't find the tapes but it's around. We did a couple of reggae tunes. We were experimenting and were very open minded at the time.

AM: We just learned that the Rollin' Rock album is going to be released on HighTone. What can you tell us about the new remastering?

JB: Yeah it sounds great. The fidelity of the

original Rollin' Rock record always left a lot to be desired. I thought it was kind of thin sounding and had an amateur feel to it. It had a lot of echo on Phil's voice and I think it robbed a lot of the frequencies from his voice. Back in that time frame we were young, but not kids, 25 or 26. We were at the peak of our physical prowess and you can hear that in Phil's voice. I was so green as a bass player that I don't think I can play that way anymore. It's a clearer rendition of those original performances. My second impression is at how well we played especially David who was new at his instrument. David was always under pressure because he had months of experience, not years. When we played double bills with James Harman, there

were Hollywood Fats and Kid Ramos who grew up with guitars in their hands and then we would headline. Poor David had only 18 months of guitar playing and he has to go up against these guys. So David played really well.

AM: We heard Gene Taylor did some over dubs on some tracks like I'M SO GLAD.

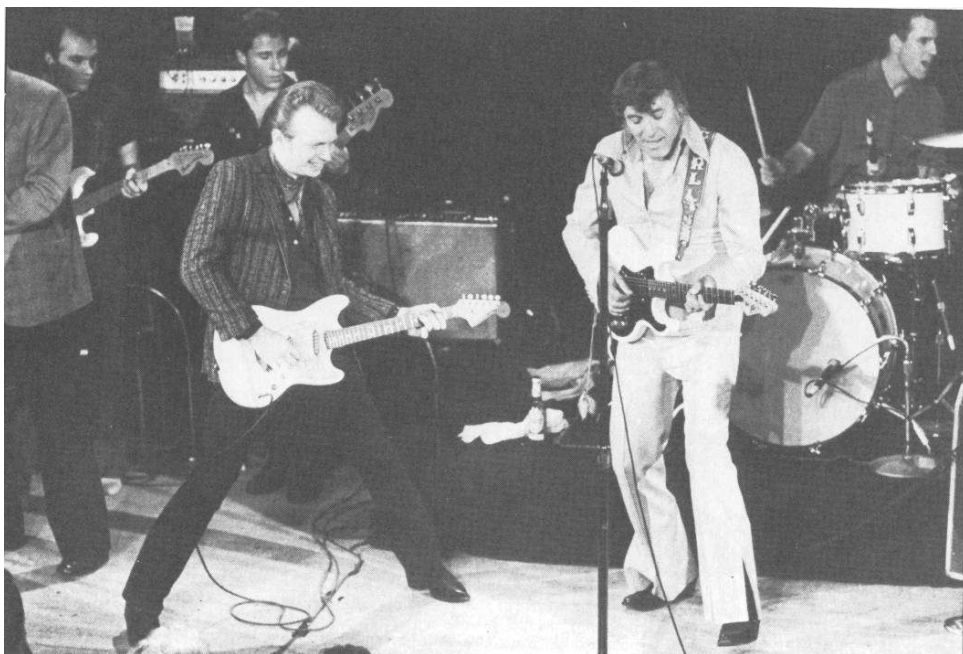
JB: Yeah it was anywhere between 82 and 86 he went into the studio with Dave Zalkes. He worked with Ronny like his assistant. It was all David Zalkes' idea. He and Gene were collaborating on other things and it may have been an after thought. I'm speculating now.

AM: Any favorite TV Appearances with the Blasters?

JB: We did this thing in Italy at the Isle of Capri with Frank Zappa, John Cougar, and some new wave band. It was called "Rock Stars 83." We would hear this introduction in Italian like blah blah blah Blasters and we would run on stage and lip sync a song like

Photo: Neil Hever





MARIE MARIE then you'd have to run off because here comes Frank Zappa running on stage. It was a half hour show with like 12 bands. It was fun being there and being on the Isle of Capri. I never saw the show, but we were pissed off because we wanted to play live but they wouldn't let us.

AM: How about "American Bandstand?"

JB: Those were always cool. We did three of those. They wouldn't let us play live either, so one of the shows I put my guitar on left handed. Why not! We also played 'Farm Aid.' There were great people backstage. Standing next to Johnny Cash, watching John Fogerty was great! 'New Wave Theater' was like that Isle of Capri show where they had a production line. It was a warehouse where one band would play then Peter Ivers would interview somebody, then the cameras would go down the row and another band would play. It was pretty cool.

AM: What do you remember about the Soundstage special with Carl Perkins and Willie Dixon?

JB: Carl was really an engaging, sincere, nice guy. I remember being a little disappointed that Willie Dixon wanted to do songs that weren't cool. He did some new thing and had

his son play bass. It was really square and maybe they didn't air that.

AM: They aired the songs BUILT FOR COMFORT and I'M READY.

JB: You know I don't think I ever saw that. You do these things and by the time they air you're out on tour and how many people had VCR's back then. We also did a morning show with Christine Ferraro and Steve Edwards. Steve played drums with us. 'Rock n Roll Evening News'

was really cool. That was Hollywood Fats on guitar. I remember he was wasted and we were all disappointed. It seemed every time the Blasters had anything really big and prestigious and it was being filmed, Fats would get wasted. He was out of his mind at 'Farm Aid' and on 'Rock 'n Roll Evening News.' I remember he played poorly but I look back at the tape and he really shreds.! In ROCK N ROLL WILL STAND he slides up to the wrong fret in his solo and it didn't matter because he was Hollywood Fats and he fixed it. One of the things I like about watching a really good musician perform is when they make a mistake watching the recovery. He recovers and then looks over to Phil with this sheepish look on his face because he's so guilty. Ha Ha!

AM: Do you remember a show called 'Take it to the Bridge' that include a performance with James Intveld?

JB: We filmed a sound check at the "Town and Country 2" (London England club) for MTV. We also went to the BBC and recorded for a radio show. We did COUNTY FAIR and something else, I think AMERICAN MUSIC.

AM: Tell us about Bruce Willis' band The Accelerators and how you made that association?

JB: Bruce was a harmonica player and loved the blues. He loved playing with the Red Devils and they always invited him up to play. When Planet Hollywood happened, he had the Red Devils come out to the very first Planet Hollywood in New York City. The music made a big impact at the opening and at the same time the Red Devils were self destructing, so then me on bass, Steve Hodges on drums and Smokey on guitar, took over. Smokey left a year ago so we have Miles Joseph in the position. Whenever a Planet Hollywood opens we all get the call to show up and we have a really long sound check to run through the tunes we've forgotten. We're recording all the shows and there is talk about Planet Hollywood putting out a CD. It's a lot of fun because I get to go to Australia. I leave on a Friday and come back on Monday and I've played Sydney. I've seen really great places like Berlin, Tokyo, Sydney, and San Antonio.

AM: In this issue is a full review of the recent KUCI radio show where you played upright bass with the Blasters. How much experience do you have on the dog house bass?

JB: I've played upright off and on for a number of years now. Back when the Red Devils

were playing "King King" and went on the road and a version of the Blasters filled in on Monday nights. It was Phil, me, Steve Hodges on drums, and Smokey. The very first set of the three sets we would play that night, I would play on upright bass. That's really where I cut my teeth. We did that Ricky Rachtman radio show. I played upright bass then and we did MARIE MARIE, LONG WHITE CADILLAC, and I think MYSTERY TRAIN. I don't have the endurance to play a whole set, it's really a demanding instrument.

AM: What memorable moment or impressionable experience with the Blasters has meant the most to you?

JB: It's all been great. No matter what I say there will be something else I forgot. Maybe most people who read this won't know what the "Whiskey A Go Go" is. It's a club in Hollywood where the Doors played, and I think the Beatles played there on a lark. Everybody played there! And its still open, but it just doesn't have the vibe any more. Stay away from there. Back when the Blaster were starting we had played there a couple times but then we had the opportunity to headline the Whiskey. We did a weekend, 2 shows a night, and all 4 sold out. To me that's it! Had it ended there, that's fine. It got bigger and better since then, and it's been a roller coaster since then. But that's my fondest memory. And or.... going with Dave Alvin at 'Farm Aid' to Bob Dylan's trailer to shoot the shit. Dylan knew everything about the Blasters. That blew my mind...that blew David's mind. That was a crazy highlight and there are 1000 of them. --**AM**



Blasters opening for Queen in 1980. Bazz with his Kay bass.

Review -

Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men

The Double Door in Charlotte NC 5/28/97

by Billy Davis



A packed crowd on a Wednesday night saw The Skeletons open up for Dave Alvin. A good bunch of straight rock 'n roll songs taken mostly from the Skeletons new HighTone album were played. Bobby Lloyd Hicks who is the regular drummer in both the Skeletons and The Guilty Men did double duty tonight.

Dave Alvin made a conscious effort to alter his set since he and the Guilty Men had played here last October on the 'Interstate City' tour, so he started with EVERY NIGHT ABOUT THIS TIME. Dave used the song to start a lot of his acoustic shows with Kelly Joe Phelps, but the difference here is the full band helping out. I especially enjoyed a song I haven't seen often played; LOOKOUT IT MUST BE LOVE. Which was on the 'Interstate City' live album with Katy Moffatt on back up vocals. In the live situation, the band pulls it off great with keyboardist Rick Solem handling the background vocals. He has a unique voice that complements Dave's. We've all heard Dave's live version of WANDA & DUANE where Dave does the poetry rap in the middle of the song about what Wanda and Duane have been up to lately. Well, it changed as Dave said, "Wanda is sitting in the living room and all afternoon she has been watching American Movie Classics because they just got cable." I wonder if this is autobiographical because the last time I talked to Dave, he was probably the last one I knew who didn't have cable. I would bet Dave just caught up. He continues, "She remembers being a young girl and sitting on her mother's knee and her mother singing this song to her..." then Dave kicks into QUE SERA SERA. Last time I heard Dave do this was on the '93 Pleasure Barons tour. The set continued into the now traditional loud, I mean loud finish with JUBILEE TRAIN, CADILLAC, and ROMEO. The crowd got a little excited when Dave threw in a few lines from the Blasters classic NO OTHER GIRL at the end of

ROMEO. Dave says he has been thinking of doing the whole song with the Guilty Men.

The encore opened with KING OF CALIFORNIA but not before Dave announced to the crowd that there was a police roadblock at 7th and McDowell. Next came one of the highlights of the night. It was another song from Dave's Pleasure Baron days, GANGSTER OF LOVE. Dave then said, "Last year one of my biggest influences passed away at a very young age. I would like to do one of his songs for him...this one is for the great Johnny Guitar Watson." It was a great extended blues song where Dave really stretched out on guitar. A pretty heavy mood song, but Dave lightened it up. He changed lyrics on the spot singing about the roadblock at 7th and McDowell again. To finish the set rockingly - MARIE MARIE - enough said. —~~am~~



THE BLASTERS INVADE RADIO STATION KUCI 88.9

IRVINE CA- On June 9th 1997, the Blasters came to the KUCI radio station at the University of California at Irvine. Three fourth's of the Blasters performed live on the air in the studio on DJ Lindsay Lou's weekly show called "I Like Country. Be My Friend Anyway." It was her last time hosting the show and what better way to go out than with a bang with the Blasters?

John Bazz was a listener of the weekly show while working in Irvine. When he heard that she was doing her last show so he called up to wish her a good-bye. John picks it up. "I'm calling her. She's on the air and has to put on another record on, so I hung up and went back to work. Then she makes an announcement over the radio, "Hey John Bazz!! Call me back, I need to talk to you." So I was cracking up, because some other guys were listening and they would walk into my office and say "What the fuck!!" So I called her back and she wanted to get the Blasters down to





Photos by Lindsay Lou Westbrook

play. So I arranged it.”

The band played a 50 minute set chock full of tunes not normally heard in a Blasters set. Drummer Jerry Angel wasn't available because of a scheduling conflict so this left the opportunity open for John Bazz to play a more percussive instrument - the upright bass. It was the second time on a recent radio show that Bazz played upright with the Blasters and it really filled out the sound. The studio temperature was exceptionally hot, bringing Phil to exclaim sarcastically, “The Air conditioning here is wonderful. Ha! Ha! I would rather the radio station be hot than the mathematics department lose another professor.”

The band opened their set with I GOT MY EYES ON YOU, as Phil dedicated it to “All you psychopharmacologists.” The song, a medium tempo blues, has been heard in Phil Alvin's solo acoustic sets. The band sounded the tightest on this song like it was well rehearsed. Blasters' classics AMERICAN MUSIC and BORDER RADIO followed second and third and the upright bass gave them a distinct sound. Next Phil directed traffic as he taught Keith Wyatt a song as they were playing it, another gem, and a song I haven't heard before in Phil's repertoire - MEAN OLE LONESOME BLUES. This



song features some yodeling by Phil in the same vein as the Blaster classic reworking of NEVER NO MORE BLUES from their first Slash album. MEAN OLE... was my favorite song of the show, real uptempo and something I hope they will add to their live shows. Keith Wyatt might have really learned this on the spot, although I doubt it since it sounded perfect.

Next they did one of Phil's favorites: Jimmy Reed's TAKE OUT SOME INSURANCE ON ME. Then LONG WHITE CADILLAC. At this point

John Bazz had to leave the studio for a obligatory appointment. They planned on starting the set a lot earlier, but as John explained, "We were all there waiting for one of the members to show up. We'll keep his name out of it. So by then I had to leave." With just Phil and Keith left, Phil tried to stop Bazz from leaving by launching into an improvised version of JOHNNY PLEASE DON'T GO, based on the song PLEASE DON'T GO. Johnny comments, "I was still in the studio as he was improvising that song, but I think I was so embarrassed, that I wasn't listening."

It didn't work, so the duo went into a song made famous by Elvis, but originally a hit by Rufus Thomas on Sun Records called TIGER MAN. This is another song that sounds like a Blaster natural. Next they played a ballad called DEEP SEA BLUES. It's a song I've never heard before but was very interesting in that Phil handled the lead vocals and supplied an accompanying baritone back up vocal that sounded just like a bass singer in a gospel quartet.

In trying to decide what song to do next, Phil lost control of himself and started doing field hollers. Upon being reminded where he was, he went into as Phil put it, "Something spiritual and uplifting": SAMSON AND DELILAH. The Blaster trio sound with the upright bass was a different side of the Blasters and something I hope they explore more in the future. The sound quality in the studio was a little erratic, but everyone appeared to be having a fun time.



Next the band, or what was left of the band, sat down for an interview. Phil was in an exceptionally happy and raving mood, blurting such nonsensical and very entertaining statements as "I'm too ugly. I've got to be good!," "It looks a little zippy," "It must be a call from another world", and "We're calling ourselves the fat free Blasters." The cool thing about this radio show was there were no commercials and the Blasters and especially Phil were free to do what ever they wanted and they did. —Am

LINDSAY LOU'S BLASTERS INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

Lindsay Lou: So Keith, How long have you been with the band?

Keith Wyatt: A lifetime! It's been a year.

Phil Alvin: It's gonna be real good when we get a rehearsal in.

Keith: Yeah. One of these days.

Phil: To give you a little inside picture, if that's of any value. The rules in the Blasters are, that you have to be able to play really well. When James Intveld left, it took a while to find some one who plays well, in fact who plays the best. I played with a few guys who all did fine jobs, but they did not have that. . .they weren't good enough. I didn't know Keith Wyatt by name, but I'd seen the Dime Bags (early group with Keith, Tony Gilkyson, Jerry Angel, and Gil T). Keith Wyatt came down and played a rehearsal and did it good. So we went up to San Jose to play a gig with him. I hadn't slept all night, can you imagine that. They had no hotel and I thought this was going to be real difficult. Because when you play a Blaster gig with a guy the first time he doesn't really quite have the "ummf" to do it. I thought I was going to have to give all the extra. But Man! We hit the first song and Keith just gave me it all! I was so happy that day!!

LL: Do you have a musical project that you play with on the side?

Keith: Yeah, I play with some guys called the "Crying Knobs."

Phil: How much did you pay for that name? Ha! Ha!

Keith: Nobody was using it so we grabbed it.

LL: Do you ever play live?

Keith: No we're far too exclusive. We try to build a mystique by not playing or recording. We never even play together. Ha!

LL: What about you, Phil? Do you have any other bands on the side that you do?

Phil: Number one, I can't have bands on the side because then they would be my band. I never could. I never understood bands that way. Bands are gangs to me. I have gone out with girls who have cheated on me and I feel much more angered. . .and I'm telling you the truth. . .and I'm not talking about The Knobs. . . If a guy has to make a living, he has to play in many bands. But if I went out with the Phil Alvin band and played Phil Alvin gigs, there would be a billion people there saying "play 'Marie Marie'" So I would have to do Blasters songs and If I didn't do Blaster songs there would be people hating me after the show and I hated having to go see Muddy Waters and hearing him sing "The Blues had a baby and they called it Rock 'n Roll." I said, "What?!?! What the hell is that? Play "I'm a Man" for Christ's sake. I didn't come here to hear this goofy stuff.

--HIGHTONE LAUNCHES NEW LABEL - HighTone Records is starting a new label venture called HMG. HMG Records will be an archive of roots related recordings. The releases will include reissues, unreleased archive recordings and some new recordings. In the first few months, there will be blues from the Testament Records vaults as well as the High Water label and rockabilly reissues from the Rollin' Rock label. Later there will be country reissues and an African collection added. "Travis County Pickin'" and Johnny Tucker & James Thomas are the first of the new recordings to be released. HMG will be independently distributed by The REP Company and will be available in better stores everywhere.

FROM THE EDITOR: With the anticipated release of the Blasters CD in September, the next issue of the newsletter may come a month early in October, because I know you can't wait to hear the latest news. After that issue it will be back to the regular schedule of Feb., May, and August.

-- Ireland's top Rockabilly band the Sabrejets have just released their debut full length album on Raucous Records called "Hell Bent." Lead singer Brian Young is a good friend and subscriber of American Music. Their new release can be found at Hepcat Records mail-order here in the USA or contact Raucous records direct at Shakespeare House, 37-39 Shakespeare St. Southport, England, PR8 5AB.

-- Already a big Blasters/Dave Alvin fan, Michael DePrisco is looking for collectors of Chris Gaffney to contact him. Write: 320 84th Ave N.E. St. Petersburg FL 33702

"INFLUENCED BY THE BLASTERS"

by Mike Lynam

Over the years I've read thousands of album and concert reviews, as well as loads of band biographies and promotional packages. It has always amazed me at just how many bands cite the BLASTERS and DAVE ALVIN as a major influence in their sound. Or, the number of reviewers who attempt to explain to an audience what a particular band sounds like (i.e., "this band sounds kind of like the Blasters".) A mere two months ago I asked BILLY DAVIS if I could start tracking some of these references and perhaps write a little piece for AMERICAN MUSIC. I didn't really go out of my way looking for comparisons or Blasters references during these few short months. From several different sources, including the Internet, some of the following just appeared.

A list of some of today's popular roots rock and roll and rockabilly bands would probably include North Carolina's BACKSLIDERS, Rhode Island's BIG BAD JOHNS, the BLACKTOP ROCKETS from Atlanta, Georgia, and Oregon's the FLAPJACKS. What do you think these rockin' bands have in common? Answer: the Blasters! DAVE WEIL of the Blacktop Rockets specifically mentions Dave Alvin as a big influence on his songwriting, singing, and guitar playing, and the similarities are evident in the Rockets' live shows. When I recently asked drummer RICH CUELLAR about his band, the Flapjacks, and their new CD "SOLID GONE", he noted that the group, "sounded a bit like the Blasters". As a result of his response, "Solid Gone" is deservedly among my CD collection.

According to one music magazine, the Backsliders' new recording, "THROWING ROCKS AT THE MOON", is said to "celebrate trashy roots rock and boogie-woogie in the vein of the Blasters".

Let's see...who else is connected in this thread? Maryland's BOB KANNENBERG and his band, the BARN BURNERS, have a style which has been compared, as well as Upstart recording artist DENNIS BRENNEN. In a recent e-mail exchange, FRANK NOWICKI, guitarist for San Francisco's SLOE GIN JOES, noted his fondness for the Blasters and their influence on him. Their new self-titled CD is well worth having. Additionally, there are reports of a band tearing it up, "Blasters-style", out in Las Vegas, called DRAGSTRIP 77.

Out of New England, there exists Connecticut's BANDIDOS, who according to band member TOM SMITH have a sound "akin to the Blasters". Also, a recent review of New Hampshire's RAGING TEENS included that this band "sounded like the Blasters." TWANG magazine notes that WYLIE and THE WEST SHOW...well, the vocalist "sounds like Phil". At the WWW Rockabilly Hall of Fame website, female rocker JOSIE KREUZER from Southern California also cites the Blasters as a musical influence along with many of the rock and roll pioneers from the 50's.

The "Allentown Morning Call" noted in a recent article that Dave and Phil and the Blasters actually "revitalized American roots music." The article also stated that although Dave's approach to songwriting may be different, he did have a bit of a hand influencing current and well-known national acts such as WILCO and SON VOLT (calling them "loud kids with loud guitars".)

Finally, I know that I have mentioned a number of new and relatively unknown bands herein. What about any major stars who have stood up and paid close attention to what the Blasters have done? I was reminded that BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN himself, who although he started his recording career in 1973, (while the Blasters might just have been known only as "Four Guys from Downey"), revealed that he was always a big fan of the Blasters. Phil notes that Springsteen, who jammed with the Blasters in July '95 at Los Angeles' House of Blues, knew all the Blasters tunes. Subsequent to that session, Springsteen told the New York Times that it was a thrill to play with the "roots-rock band, Blasters." As a result of playing with the Blasters, Springsteen also stated that he was "toying with the idea of making a record that is centered around loud guitars". (Hmmm...more "loud guitars"; see American Music Issue #7).

The litany of bands who fall into this category seems endless, and other than the Springsteen reference, these are only a few bands to come to my attention within the last couple of months. Additionally, consider the large number of bands who have recorded some of Dave's tunes, among them, BUCKWHEAT ZYDECO, SHAKIN' STEVENS, BILLY HANCOCK AND THE TENNESSEE ROCKETS, SONNY BURGESS, etc. etc. As subscribers to AMERICAN MUSIC there is not a single person among us who fails to recognize the impact that the Blasters had, and still have today. Their recordings, albeit few in numbers, are timeless and will continue to influence young, new rock 'n' rollers for decades to come. Because?...*"the whole world digs that (Blasters) sound from the U.S.A."* by Mike Lynam. *"Mike is the owner of Run Wild Records, a label dedicated to roots rock and roll and rockabilly music. Run Wild is at PO Box 58, Sea Girt, NJ 08750, USA."*

DAVE ALVIN and THE GUILTY MEN Tour of ITALY

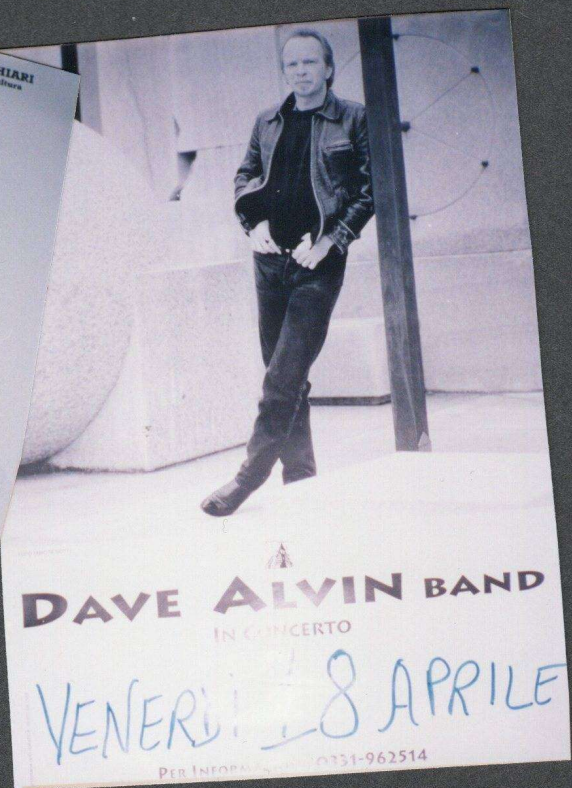
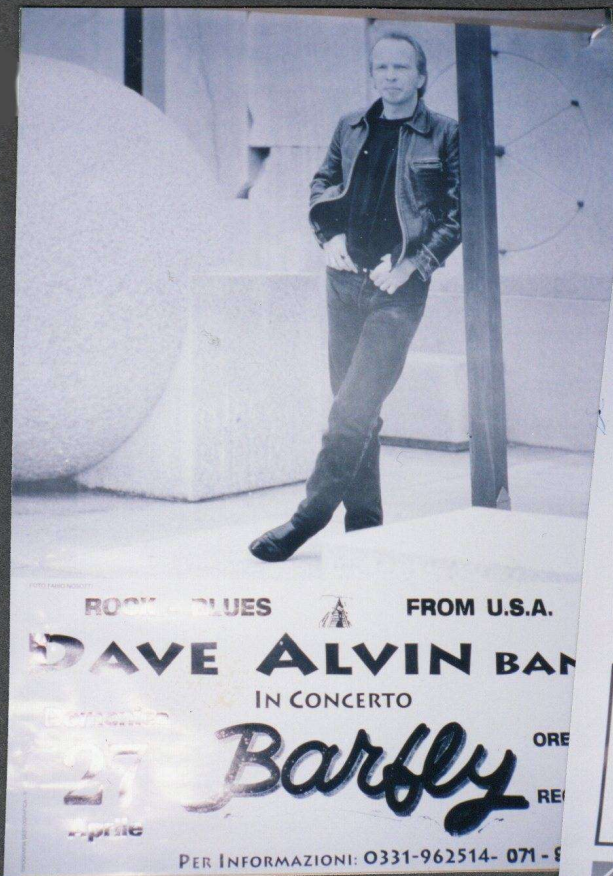
In April 1997, Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men toured Italy for 2 weeks.

Our friends Lele Varano and Oli were there and took these photos



Photos by Lele Varano at Sesto Calende in Salamama where a big jam session ensued playing PANCHO AND LEFTY with John Reed, Butch Hancock, Gregory Boaz, Dave Alvin, Dirk Graham, and Neal Casale. Not pictured are Rick Solem and Bobby Lloyd Hicks.





Bobby Lloyd Hicks collected these posters from the tour and sent them to American Music: The Blasters / Dave Alvin newsletter for the fans to see. Thanks, Bobby!

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- #1. Blastory part 1, James Intveld profile.
- #2. Phil Alvin interview Part 1, Dave Alvin's "Museum" tour
- #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.
- #6 Rockin Ronnie Weiser interview, Bobby Mizzel & James Intveld Cd review, State of the 1995 Blasters 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 '95 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.
- #15 Dave's poetry mentor Gerald Locklin interview, Dave Alvin/Kelly Joe Phelps 1997 east coast acoustic tour