

ISSUE #83

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

JULY 2018

Dave Alvin & Jimmie Dale Gilmore Downey To Lubbock

Latest News: Phil Alvin mentioned on the Roll FM radio show that the Blasters will record a new album in the spring of 2019 that will include cover songs that have rarely been heard. -- The Flesh Eaters (Dave Alvin, Chris D., John Doe, Steve Berlin, DJ Bonebrake, and Bill Bateman), will release a new CD in January 2019 called I Used To Be Pretty on Yep Roc Records. Dave Alvin: "It was recorded at Craig Parker's studio in L.A. and has a truck load of guitar on it. There's a 13 minute long song and mainly originals. We do a few covers by The Sonics and The Gun Club and also a Peter Green song called GREEN MANALISHI. This is just a great band. Bateman plays his ass off. I forgot what a great bass player John is. We will probably do a tour of big cities on the west coast and east." -- Dave Alvin is writing a chapter for the History of Punk Rock Volume 2 book due out in 2019. Dave: "I'm writing about dealing with record companies and why a Blasters song called KATHLEEN didn't make it on the Hard Line album." -- As they continue their nationwide tour, Dave Alvin and Jimmie Dale Gilmore are making radio and podcast appearances to promote their Downey to Lubbock CD. They have appeared on World Café in Philadelphia; Live from Studio A during the Global Village broadcast in Columbus, Ohio; and Mountain Stage in West Virginia, among others. Some of the performances are archived online. Dave did a 70-minute podcast with Foo Fighters drummer Chris Shiflett at Rollingstone.com. Dave and Jimmie Dale also appeared on American Routes radio show, hosted by Nick Spitzer. -- Chris Miller, guitarist for the Guilty Ones, has released Tell It to the Jukebox (Never Lucky Records available at CDBaby.com), a collaborative album with James Sasser. They are billed as Miller & Sasser. Chris had a hand in writing five of the album's 10 songs and also is a featured vocalist. Steve Mugalian, formerly of the Guilty Men, plays drums. -- Tom Russell has teamed up with guitarist Andrew Hardin to release Old Songs Yet to Sing (Frontera Records). The CD features 20 acoustic remakes of Tom's songs, including HALEY'S COMET and CALIFORNIA SNOW which he co-wrote with Dave. -- Former Blasters pianist Gene Taylor has scheduled an East Coast tour that begins in September. Visit gene-taylor.com. -- Christmas is still a few months away, but the Blasters will be touring in December again as part of Horton's Holiday Hayride. In addition to the Blasters, the bill will feature the Rev. Horton Heat, Junior Brown, and Big Sandy. -- Dave Alvin's West of the West 2018 rail trip runs from Oct. 7-17. The journey begins in Los Angeles with stops in Fort Worth, Chicago, Kansas City, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe before ending in Los Angeles. Artists schedule to perform include Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Rick Shea, Christy McWilson, John Doe and Exene Cervenka, Bill Kirchen, Carolyn Wonderland, Dead Rock West, Howie Gelb, Blind Boy Paxton, and Ruthie Foster. Roots on the Rails, which organizes the trips, warns that this journey could be the last one because of changes in Amtrak policy regarding the use of railroad tracks. -- **AM**

This Issue: Dave & Jimmie Dale 'Downey To Lubbock' interview, The Blasters in Finland, Dave's Poems: From Printed Page to DVD, and Dave & Jimmie Dale Live in Philly review.



DAVE ALVIN & JIMMIE DALE GILMORE TALK ABOUT 'DOWNEY TO LUBBOCK'

by Billy Davis

Dave Alvin's latest musical collaboration is with country singer Jimmie Dale Gilmore. Though always known as a country singer / songwriter, Jimmie's influences are deeply rooted in the blues. Jimmie was named after the legendary singing brakeman: Jimmie Rodgers who played country and blues. Alvin brought out the blues in Jimmie Dale Gilmore for their new Yep Roc album Downey to Lubbock.



Dave and Jimmie Dale's earliest meeting

Dave Alvin: Around the time in 1990 when I was putting my first HighTone Record, Blue BLVD together, Tom Russell organized an acoustic tour in New England. It was me, Tom, Katy Moffatt, Steve Young, Butch Hancock, and Jimmie Dale. (Ed. note: In the CD liner notes Jimmie Dale writes that this package was dubbed "The Monsters of Folk." That moniker is not to be confused with the 1998 HighTone Records package tour of the same name with Dave Alvin, Ramblin' Jack, Tom Russell and Chris Smither.) I had heard of Jimmie Dale because he wrote Joe Ely's song DALLAS. The Blasters used to tour with the Joe Ely band in the old days. Jimmie was on HighTone Records before his major label deal with Elektra Records. Jimmie is one of those guys that you just instantly like.

When I got the shocking phone call in 2012 that my brother Phil died (and then revived) in Spain, everything stopped for me and it was 'Phil time.' I said: "It's time for us to spend time together." We did two albums and lots of touring. Then I realized it was time to get back to what I was doing solo. I had to try to remember where was I when I got that phone call - what was I planning on doing? Roughly around that time I was offered to do an acoustic tour with Jimmie Dale (October, 2017). I thought that was a nice way to ease back into my solo career. I had no idea I would do another duo, but it's been great.

That tour was a lot of fun. We played songs individually, but then we started to realize we knew a lot of the same songs. Jimmie was pulling out old folk blues songs that I knew. I remember playing Big Bill Broonzy's song YOU'VE CHANGED and Jimmie started playing the bass line on his guitar. I was like Wow!: He's a pretty interesting bass player. Every show was different. We started with familiar songs like my KING OF CALIFORNIA and his TONIGHT I THINK I'M GONNA GO DOWNTOWN. We would finish with his DALLAS and maybe my DRY RIVER - but everything in the middle was completely different. So we based this record on all those songs that just came to mind on the tour.

It was very early on that I realized we could make a record of this. By the third gig, I was saying: 'Let's definitely make a record.'

Jimmie Dale Gilmore: It happened fast - maybe the second night he said we should record this. I thought maybe he wanted to record the show, but then it became a complete album production. I jokingly used to say I had retired from recording (laughs). I hadn't recorded anything in a very long time. I didn't really decide I wouldn't record; it's just I never got around to it.

DA: It started out that it would be just me and him on acoustic guitars. Then I said 'I'll just add a standup bass player.' Then it went to: 'How bout a little drums and a keyboard?' It escalated



to be a full band.

JDG: Dave came to realize that I wasn't attached to the idea of a purely acoustic album. I love electric guitar as much as anything in the world - I just don't know how to play it (laughs). I preferred to have a full treatment and he could tell I loved his electric guitar on my songs.

----- The Songs -----

DOWNEY TO LUBBOCK

DA: We needed a song that was defining what we were doing with this project. I wrote a verse, sent it to him, and then he wrote one and sent it back. Then I followed with one and he again. Jimmie is a great and unique blues singer, so I wanted to really

bring that out on the record. I thought his other records which were more folk / country didn't show that as much. I said 'Let's make a blues folk rock record here.'

JDG: Dave showed it to me and I liked the title. He showed me like a verse and a half. I wrote my verse, and let him look at it. In the studio I recorded my vocal, just tossing words off. I thought it was just a scratch vocal and I would replace it later, but Dave liked it, so he kept that.

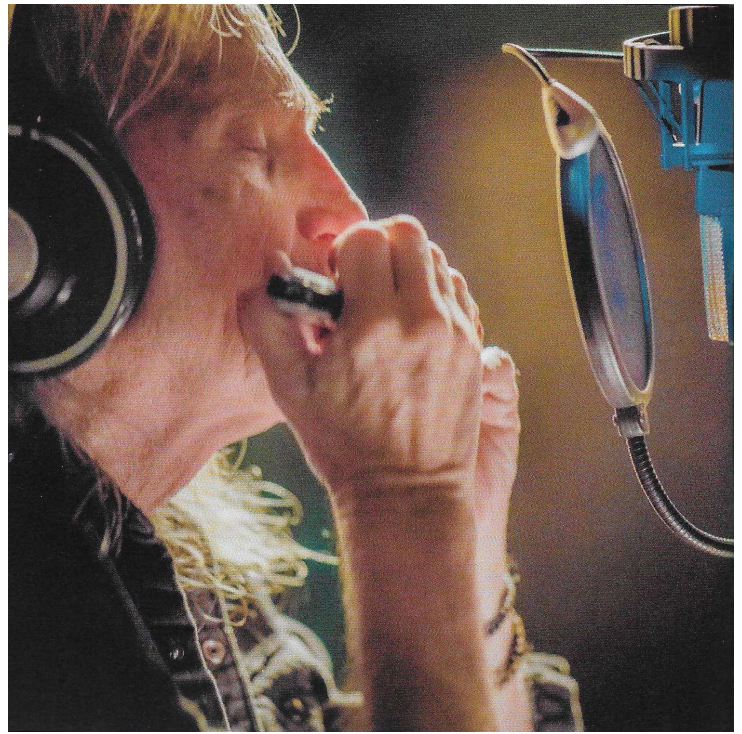
DA: I made Jimmie play harmonica which he hadn't done in 40 years (laughs),

JDG: I hadn't played harmonica live in front of an audience for like 25 years. I used to play it as a solo performer way back before I had bands. I always had better players than me in my bands, so I gave it up to let them do it. I thought, why play harmonica just 'okay' when I have a guy who can do it great? On our first tour together, once Dave found out I could do it, he had

me play on lots of songs. Dave loved it and kept asking me to play on more. I got my confidence on it and got back in practice. I surprised myself. It sounded like I knew what I was doing (laughs).

JDG: We pretty much recorded the album playing live, like the old-style way. All of it was recorded together, but the instruments were on separate tracks just in case we had to replace anything. But it only took us a few takes.

DA: We used Nick Forster from the bluegrass band Hot Rize to play mandolin, slide guitar, and lap steel on the album. He is also the host of a radio show out of Boulder, CO, called eTown.





JDG: I knew Nick back in the 1970s. He played bass in a band I had in Denver in the mid 70's way before he had the band Hot Rize. I played his show eTown a few times, and I always stayed in contact. I suggested to Dave we have him on the album.

DA: He's a guy like Greg Leisz or David Hidalgo: if it has strings, he can play it. He's also about the nicest guy in the world. Finally, we got Jimmie and Nick recorded together.

SILVERLAKE

DA: That was a song Jimmie pulled out at one of our first gigs and I was like 'Wow!' I said: 'We have to cut that.' I recorded the song years ago for a

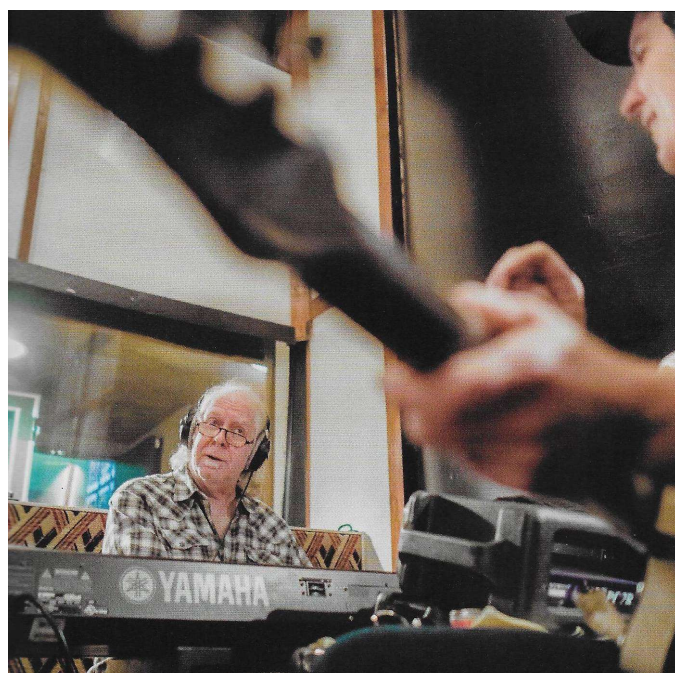
Steve Young Tribute CD being organized by his son. It never came out. I thought the version I sang on is good, but I really think this was meant for Jimmie to sing. Jimmie comes very close to capturing Steve. It's a perfect blues ballad and Jimmie sings the hell out of it. There is a version on one of Steve Young's albums, but it's a little more rock.

DA: At our gigs, before playing the song, we each tell a similar story. Steve used to come over my house, and he told me he wrote that song for me.

JDG: And Steve told me that the song was for me. That was probably in the late 80's. I've played the song acoustic live or in a duet with Robbie Gjersoe, but I've never recorded it. I learned it directly from Steve, but I have been doing it from memory, so I might have altered it over the years.

JDG: Steve changed it when he recorded it. And I've never heard Dave's recorded version. The way I played it on the recording is exactly the way I play it by myself. Dave added electric guitar to it. He's such a great producer. Dave enhanced the power of the song with lots of instrumentation, but kept the feeling of the solo performance. I like that.

DA: When we cut it, I thought it needed an accordion. I thought of Van Dyke Parks who co-wrote songs with Brian Wilson for the Beach Boys' Smile album that was never released. He was a record producer and arranger and a legendary figure, but he was also close friends with Steve Young. I called him and asked him to play on this Steve Young song. He was at a dinner party and said: 'I'll be there in 10 minutes.' And he was. Having him there on the sessions was wonderful.



STEALIN', STEALIN'

DA: That's a song that Jimmie played in his teens at coffee houses with a rack harmonica, acoustic guitar, and voice.

JDG: When I played solo, years and years ago, I played that and knew the whole harmonica part. I copied it as best I could from the Memphis Sheiks.

DA: For some of these old songs that we both knew - the funny thing is that he pulled out songs he learned in the 50s or 60s from folk singers, but I knew the songs from the 20s and 30s by collecting original 78s - so we approached the songs from different eras, which makes it interesting. It sounds to me like Jimmie learned it from the Jim Kweskin Jug Band, which were a big folk act in the 60s.

DA: I cut a version for an album with JAMES COTTON (Baby Don't You Tear My Clothes - Telarc Records) in 2004 that had me and Gaffney on it. This is a very different version. You can hear me and Jimmie on the eTown radio show (Mar. 25, 2017) doing an acoustic version, and even that is very different from what ended up on the album. I was experimenting with different tunings. It's a famous blues song that many have recorded. I wanted to find a tuning that would make it special and different. So on the album I'm in open-G tuning, which gives it a jug band feel.

JDG: We started with my acoustic version and then built off of it. To my tastes, he did it perfectly - not taking away the feeling of the song.



JULY, YOU'RE A WOMAN

DA: John Stewart who wrote this also wrote CALIFORNIA BLOODLINES which I've played over the years. He also wrote DAYDREAM BELIEVER which I played on one of my Roots On The Rails train trips. John's first big gig was being the songwriter and singer in the Kingston Trio. I saw him on TV when I was kid doing those 3 songs. A lot of people have recorded his songs over the years. I met him once in Colorado. He was a big guy, but he was very nice and knew of my career. Another connection to me: Greg Leisz's first live touring gig was playing in John Stewart's band.

JDG: I didn't know the song. I came into the studio one day and they had just laid down the tracks. I just said: 'That is wonderful.' Nick Forster added the Mandolin part on it; that made it distinctive - in Dave's mind. Dave didn't want to play the song live without the mandolin. He said it just wouldn't be the same. I personally think if Dave did it all by himself, it would be great. It's an amazing phenomenon to me that Dave doesn't recognize how great he is.

DA: Jimmie and I have very different voices, so we needed a voice in between us to sing harmony. I called Cindy Wasserman from Dead Rock West. She's a great singer.

BUDDY BROWN'S BLUES

JDG: I've been doing that a long time. I taught that to Joe Ely when we had the Flatlanders band. Joe took it and made it one of his signature songs.

DA: It's a Lightnin' Hopkins song that goes back to Jimmie's old days.

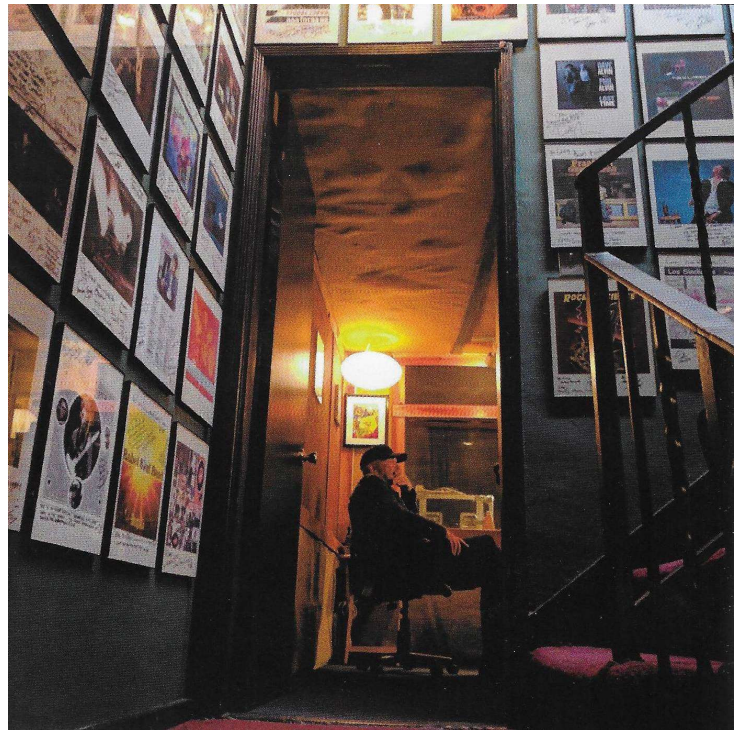
JDG: I took an old Lightnin' song and did it in the style of Elmore James. The lyrics are Lightnin's, but it's my arrangement. In the beginning of our recording, Dave does a verse of the slow version that Lightnin' did. Then we go into the rockin' part.

DA: Once the band kicks in, it's a rocker that bears no resemblance to the original. Jimmie never recorded anything like that, but it's a big part and good representation of what he is. We don't do it live cause it rips out Jimmie's voice.

JDG: Yeah, that would really tear up my voice, but I might be in shape now after touring with the band. I think I can do it. I love it. I love when the sax comes in. That might be my favorite moment on the album.

DA: I haven't used tenor sax on a recording since Lee Allen died. I kind of had a rule that my silent tribute to Lee was to never have tenor sax on any of my recordings. But in the studio, when we were working on this song, I said: 'You know, this needs saxophone.' I knew Jeff Turmes from years ago playing with the James Harman band. Currently, he plays bass in the Mavis Staples group. I thought that there is only one sax player that I think can sort-of do Lee Allen and that's Jeff. So allowing sax on the song was a big deal for me.

DA: Lightnin' Hopkins would record a song for anyone for \$200. He made a lot of records and a lot of them didn't get published; so they won't appear in the BMI or ASCAP files, so it becomes a public domain song. That's the case here, but we gave him credit as a songwriter in the CD liner notes.



THE GARDENS

DA: We did an acoustic gig in Tucson, so I had to do a Gaffney song in his town. I could have done FRANK'S TAVERN which I've done in the past, but it would be hard for Jimmie to follow. THE GARDENS might be Gaffney's best ever song - though it's hard to touch Freddy Fender's version of it. On the recording, I added the National steel to make it sound like a different version. That guitar has a unique sound. It doesn't really fit in our live set list because I don't want to be ballad heavy. I'm giving Jimmie the ballads; we already have SILVERLAKE and DEPORTEE. I was doing it with the Guilty Ones last tour.

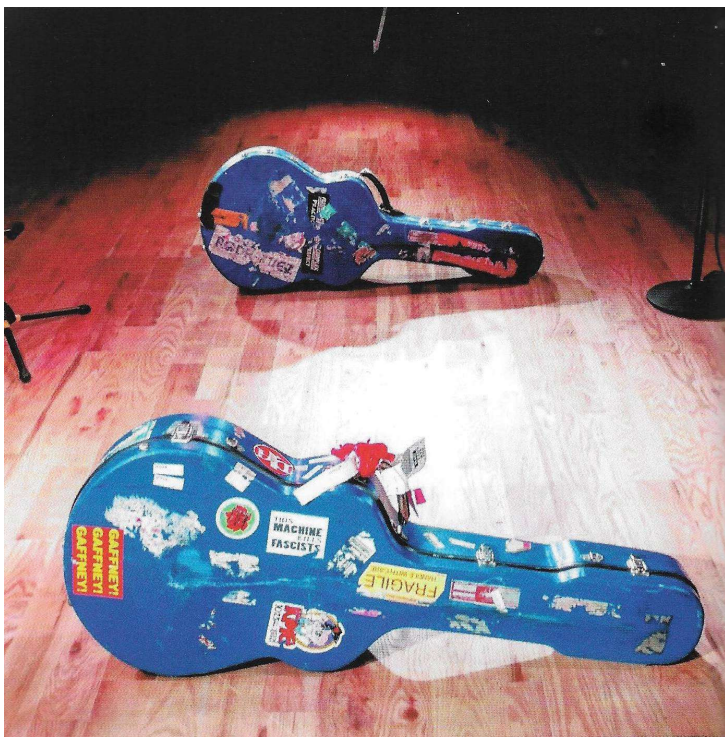
GET TOGETHER

JDG: I revived that because I was a fan of Jesse Colin Young and the Youngbloods. I often did it in my live shows over the years. It's an anthem for my age group. That was one of the first songs that Dave said: 'We have to record that song.' It's a song that the audience participates in singing. We usually don't have to ask - they just sing along. We wanted to honor Jesse Colin Young - but not copy him.

DA: Jimmie played it at the first acoustic gig we did in Texas. It was a huge hit for the Youngbloods. It's reached a status where the lyrics are meaningless, but Jimmie sings it sincerely.

K.C. MOAN

DA: I said to Jimmie: 'Let's go back to when you were 17 years old' and this song from the Memphis Jug Band came out.



JDG: I couldn't remember where I learned that song. Dave looked it up to check for me. I might not have ever known who wrote it. I just probably learned it off an old record of a friend of mine.

DA: K.C. stands for Kansas City, but the song is about a train. Jimmie channels a bit of Jimmie Rodgers, but at the same time, I'm playing a big-ass loud guitar. I didn't want the song to be full old-timey, I wanted it to be moody and threatening and aggressive. I think it balances nicely.

JDG: When my wife Janet heard this song in the recording sessions, she told me she didn't like it. And she never heard me do it. But the next day, it started growing on her. Then she said it was her favorite on the record.

Things strike people in different ways.

DA: I normally use Bob Glaub on electric bass in my recording sessions, but I wanted a standup bass, so I got David J. Carpenter. He's a great player.

LAWDY MISS CLAWDY

DA: Jimmie told me he always wanted to cut songs like this. I said, 'Great, here's your opportunity.' The Lloyd Price version had a big effect on him growing up.

JDG: This song is from way back for me when in the early days I did a whole lot of loud screamin' stuff. Nowadays, my voice can't handle the strain night after night. New Orleans R&B is great! If I had to be restricted to one type of music, that would be it - Lloyd Price and Fats Domino. Dave is very deeply knowledgeable about the New Orleans music.

DA: We also have elements of the Elvis version in there - but for me, it's always been about the Lloyd Price version.

DA: While Van Dyke Parks was in with us to play on SILVERLAKE, we somehow convinced him to play on this one, too.

There were songs that didn't make the record that we had played live, like Elmore James' GOODBYE BABY, which is one of my favorites. There was a coin toss of that song or LAWDY MISS CLAWDY to be included on the album. I chose LAWDY because it was up-tempo; GOODBYE BABY is more of a slow grinder blues number. It'll get released eventually.

DA: Brad Fordham plays upright bass on here. David J. Carpenter is not a slapper, so I added Brad on this.

JDG: Brad played in my band when I was on Elektra Records and when I was pushing hard with touring. I tried to get Lisa in my band around Austin. But she made a joke: instead she got a job from a band that could pay her (laughs). This whole band is just so much fun to be around. I feel like I stumbled across a goldmine. Everyone did all the heavy work, and I got to just enjoy it.

DA: We had to have piano on this, so I got Skip Edwards. I've know him for years. He played on King of California; he played with Dwight Yoakam; and for years played with Johnny Rivers. An all around great musician that knows many styles.



BILLY THE KID AND GERONIMO

DA: I had parts of this around for a few years. Jimmie has native American blood, so it was perfect for us. When Jimmie first sang the line: "Geronimo said there's no place left to hide," I thought that this is meant to be!

I'm a history fan and was always interested in both guys. Billy The Kid was born in New York City. I mentioned it at the City Winery show in NY and I think the audience thought I was kidding. He was the son of Irish immigrants living on the Lower East Side. I always wondered what would happen if they met.

JDG: Dave designed this song to be a duet. He was also lookin' for something that took place in the middle geographically between Downey and Lubbock. That's New Mexico.

DEPORTEE (PLANE WRECK AT LOS GATOS)

DA: This song was one that Jimmie really wanted to do. Jimmie is from the same area as Woody Guthrie - so he has an affinity for him. It was a big deal for him to record a Woody song. I had mixed feelings about recording it because a lot of people have done it. The night before the session, I stayed up very late and watched like 120 versions of the song - I'm not kidding on how many there are. I made notes of not what to do. The most obvious choice would be to add accordion like on THE GARDENS, but instead I said: 'Let's make Jimmie's voice the focus because it's heart-breaking.' I wanted it to be moody and mysterious like it's coming out of the darkness. When we did the first take, I knew it didn't sound like any versions I have heard before.

DA: Jimmie originally wanted me to sing with him, but I thought my voice would be a distraction. Then he suggested his son, who had sung it with him before. We sent the tracks to him, he sang and on it, and when we heard it, it was perfect.

JDG: My son and I had done this song so many times at gigs. We sing together very well. He opened some shows for us when we were out on tour. It's The Colin Gilmore Band. In recent years I've used Colin's band for full band gigs.



WALK ON

JDG: That was in honor of the fact that I had been friends with Brownie McGhee in the 1960s. Dave was very familiar with Sonny Terry and it struck us as the perfect ending song for the album.

DA: We say we wrote two and half songs on the album because on this one, it's a half. We rewrote the lyrics because the Brownie McGhee lyrics weren't representative of us.

DA: We didn't do it in our live shows but we kept talking about Brownie McGhee. I knew Jimmie had blues

roots but then one night it came out on stage that we had this Ashgrove (blues club) connection. Phil and I used to hang out at The Ashgrove in the 1970s; Jimmie Dale used to in the 1960's so "Did we cross paths?" (laughs). Phil had taken harmonica lessons from Sonny Terry and later did gigs with Brownie McGhee.

JDG: Right away we realized this connection. Old things came out of my memory when talking about The Ashgrove. STEALIN' might be the first time that Dave recognized that I knew some

of the really old stuff that he knew. The initial impetus was discovering that we both knew those blues things and it was an important part of our backgrounds. We both loved Lightnin' Hopkins, Brownie and Sonny.

DA: Well I had a version of that song recorded live at the Ashgrove from 1961. We needed lyrics that were more central to us. And we needed lyrics where no one dies, so we wrote verses on the spot.

JDG: I did the song out of memory. In places where I didn't remember the lyrics, I made up new ones.

DA: We cut another Brownie McGhee number which is full on rockabilly.

JDG: I have some songs that might be good for Dave and I to do together, so maybe there will be another album. Time will tell. Much gratitude to Dave Alvin for being an all-around talented and great guy. —~~Am~~

Downey To Lubbock Photography by Joseph Murray, Todd Wolfson, Jeff Fasano, Dave Alvin, Craig Parker Adams, Jack Rudy, and Danny Bland.

Dave Alvin and Jimmie Dale Gilmore @ World Cafe Philadelphia by Tom Wilk

In a 2009 interview to promote his album with the Guilty Women, Dave Alvin mentioned that one way to improve as a musician is to perform with other musicians. It's a philosophy he's followed since his days with the Blasters when he also recorded and performed with the Flesh Eaters and the Knitters. As a solo artist, he did the same with 'X' and the Pleasure Barons; and has toured and recorded with a series of backing bands from the All Nighters to the Guilty Ones.



Most recently, Dave's collaboration with Jimmie Dale Gilmore in the studio and on-stage continues in that tradition and has proved to be a successful one. That was evident when the two, backed by the Guilty Ones, performed at World Café Live in Philadelphia on June 7, 2018.

Opening with the title track of Downey to Lubbock, the band roared into action as Dave and Jimmie Dale effortlessly traded verses with the confidence of two singers who have performed together for years. Dave and guitarist Chris Miller demonstrated an instrumental interplay that set the tone for the evening.

The concert featured seven songs from the new album. The shimmering SILVERLAKE,

sung by Jimmie Dale, spotlighted his strong tenor voice with Dave contributing an expressive solo on guitar. They both engaged in some spirited banter on the background of the song, written by the late Steve Young. STEALIN', STEALIN', a song associated with the jug band tradition, featured Dave and Jimmie Dale vocalizing in an acknowledgment of their blues roots. BILLY THE KID AND GERONIMO showed Dave's creativity in imagining a meeting between the two legends of the American West.

While MARIE MARIE and AMERICAN MUSIC became signature songs during Dave's time with the Blasters, FOURTH OF JULY has assumed the same role in his solo career. It was an early highlight of the set - with Jimmie Dale and bassist Brad Fordham contributing background vocals on the refrain. An extended version of DRY RIVER served as a showcase for Lisa Pankratz, who generated some indoor fireworks on her drum kit and earned an ovation from the sell-out crowd.



Jimmie Dale displayed his vocal versatility with a powerful version of GET TOGETHER, a hit in the 1960s for the Youngbloods, and a somber reading of Woody Guthrie's DEPORTEE (Plane Wreck at Los Gatos). It's a song that remains relevant in the ongoing debate over immigration.

TONIGHT I'M GONNA GO DOWNTOWN and DALLAS were inspired selections from Jimmie Dale's songbook. Lisa switched to brushes

on the former to emphasize the song's yearning mood, while Dave sang the second verse of the latter in a spirit of collaboration.

The upbeat encore featured Gilmore's version of Butch Hancock's MY MIND'S GOT A MIND OF ITS OWN and Alvin's full-throttle version of MARIE MARIE that segued into a reprise of DOWNEY TO LUBBOCK. The set suggested a completion of a musical journey, bringing band and audience back to the beginning and leaving fans with the hope of a follow-up album. —~~AM~~

The concert can be heard at Archive.org by searching 'Dave Alvin Philadelphia.'

Set List: *Downey to Lubbock / Tonight I Think I'm Gonna Go Downtown / Johnny Ace is Dead / Silverlake / Stealin', Stealin' / Fourth of July / Deportee (Plane Wreck at Los Gatos) / Lawdy Miss Clawdy / Dry River / Get Together / Dallas / My Mind's Got a Mind of Its Own / Marie Marie / Downey to Lubbock (reprise).*

Hey, "Roots On The Rails" train trip travelers: Is there anyone who would like to write a review or story about your experience on the October, 2018, final Dave Alvin train trip? The American Music Newsletter has never had any written coverage of the many trips Dave has traveled on. We would love to hear every detail of this exclusive and special experience. Email davistb@aol.com if you'd like to submit something.

THE BLASTERS

LIVE and ROCKIN' at SHAMROCK Vantaa, Finland

May 11, 2018

**BY
JANNE "DRAC" KURUNSAARI**

The Blasters have not toured Europe since Phil Alvin's tragic gig in 2012 in Valencia, Spain, when he died and was revived. So a recent tour in 2018 was a welcome back for European American Music fans. The tour was billed "The Original Kings of American Music." The Blasters have a dedicated fan base in Finland, so when they were announced as playing in Vantaa, Finland, the show sold out well in advance.

The day of the concert was a hot Friday evening as the band landed on Finnish soil. They hadn't been to Finland since 2004. From the airport, the band headed straight to sound check - all except Phil, who was picked up in a cool looking 1965 Pontiac Catalina convertible and driven to a radio station for an interview. It was a special treat for the Roll FM radio listeners to cap off Blasters coverage in the preceding weeks. They aired 5 episodes of 'The History of the Blasters' on their channel. The shows included 5 hours of stories about the Blasters - nearly 40 years of history. All that, of course, including the Blasters 'pure Rock n Roll' music. Phil's live appearance on the show was the cherry on top.



ROLL FM
WE'RE NOT LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE

The Blasters-story

Viisi-osainen Blasters-story Roll FM:llä
Keskiyökoisin klo 9-10, alkaen 11.4.
Uusinnat sunnuntaisin klo 16-17

osa 1 "American Music", ke 11.4 / su 15.4
osa 2 "Trouble Bound", ke 18.4 / su 22.4
osa 3 "Hard line", ke 25.4 / su 29.4
osa 4 "What's up with your brother", ke 2.5 / su 6.5
osa 5 "Over there, Live at Venue London 1982", ke 9.5 / su 13.5

ROLL FM - Janne Kurunsaari & Nisse Lindström
102.0MHz pääkaupunkiseudulla tai netissä www.rollfm.fi

The gig was held at the Shamrock Club in Vantaa, a town close enough to Helsinki and the

airport. The anxious fans packed the club before the opening act - called Pete Boy Trio - came on. When the Blasters hit the stage it was very hot and the people were well liquored up. When the first drumbeats and guitar chords of LONG WHITE CADILLAC sounded, it was like a California earthquake hit the club. But we all knew we were surely in the right place at the right time.

All the Blasters favorites were played in a set that ran a little over an hour's worth of time. REBOUND, RED ROSE, AMERICAN MUSIC, SO LONG BABY GOODBYE, DARK NIGHT, BIG F-CHORD, COMMON MAN, etc. Something special happened during MARIE MARIE: The entire audience sang on the chorus with Phil. It was amazing to hear the crowd sing almost louder than the band. All the Blasters noticed and appreciated the compliment. As the Blasters played ONE BAD STUD in the encore, I thought, as I'm sure the rest of the audience did, that Phil's vocals are amazing and seem to get better and better like an old bottle of whiskey.

Keith Wyatt is playing real mean and always plays cool licks on his guitar. No wonder he's been behind the guitar helmet in the Blasters for 22 years now. The Downey guys, John Bazz and Bill Bateman, are still the best rhythm section around. This band is tight: A perfect example of how a rock 'n' roll band should sound--no bullshit, just straight-up rock 'n' roll.

Everyone was smiling and feeling good that perfect night. The Blasters played with such enthusiasm that the crowd surely got their money's worth of American Music. Hopefully, we won't have to wait another 14 years for the Blasters to come back to Finland. I have to say that "American Music" is the perfect medicine for the boogie disease! — *Watch Phil Alvin's interview on Roll FM from May 11, 2018 at <https://youtu.be/1OsZTOu6mIA>*



Dave Alvin's Poems: From Printed Page to DVD

by Tom Wilk

Before he became the principal songwriter for the Blasters, Dave Alvin was a poet. "I first started writing poems," he recalls in Innerscapes: Ten Portraits of Los Angeles Poets, a documentary film by Sophie Rachmuhl. "It wasn't until a record guy told us that we needed original songs, that I started writing songs."

Innerscapes on DVD is included with the book A Higher Form of Politics: The Rise of a Poetry Scene, Los Angeles, 1950-1990, which was translated from French and published in English in 2015. Rachmuhl, a French Fulbright Scholar, was inspired to write the book and make the film after coming to UCLA to teach in 1984.

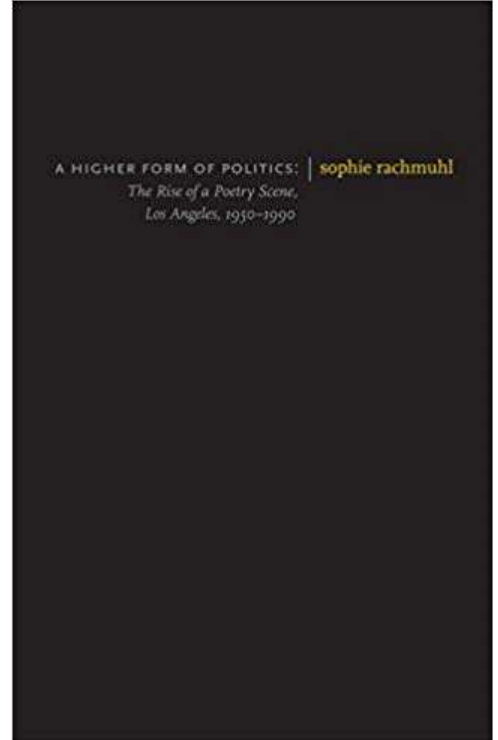
A bonus 94-minute DVD features a seven-minute profile of Dave filmed near the time of the release of his first album, Romeo's Escape (1987). The DVD features Dave reading two poems at the Lhasa Club in Hollywood: MY MOTHER FELL and MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE, NOVEMBER 1981. Both poems were featured in Nana, Big Joe and the Fourth of July, Dave's first collection of poetry published by Illiterati Press in 1986. He also discusses his approach to writing songs and poems.

"I just write and write and write," he tells Rachmuhl. "Then a line will stick, like 'Fourth of July.' Sometimes I'll write a poem and that will turn into a song."

That was the case with FOURTH OF JULY IN THE DARK, which became FOURTH OF JULY, a song featured on the 'X' album See How We Are and on Romeo's Escape. The film features Dave performing a solo acoustic version of FOURTH OF JULY in concert.

Other poems are more personal, he says. "MY MOTHER FELL is too close to the heart," Dave admits. "That wouldn't work as a song. There's a reason a poem is a poem and a song is a song; you can't wed the two."

As a musician, Dave says the sound often takes precedence over the lyrics for the



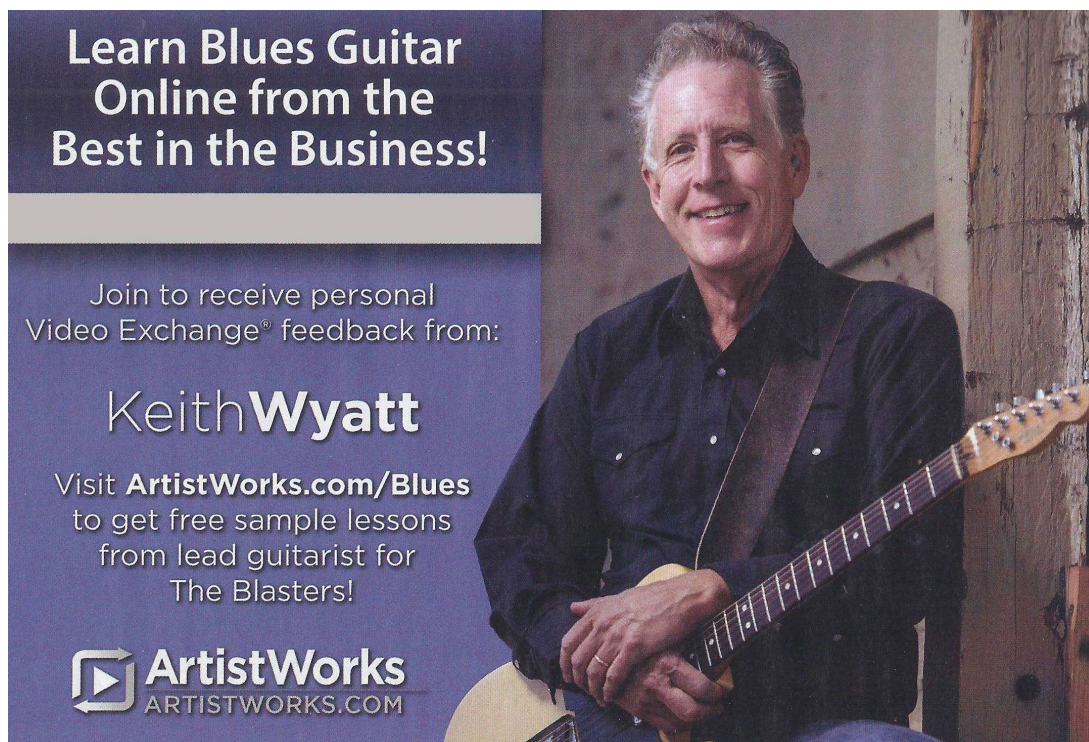
audience in live performance: "When I was in the Blasters or 'X', people were more interested in the drumbeat or the melody lines." But Dave points out that the lyrics matter, too: He notes of reaction to his songs. "After a while, you want people to know what the song is about."

Dave's poetry readings show him capturing the raw emotions of a parent's physical decline in MY MOTHER FELL and the frustrations of a life on the road in MEMPHIS TENNESSEE, NOVEMBER 1981. They recall the spoken word recordings he did in the 1980s.

There's a feeling of achievement in writing a poem or song, but something special about the latter, according to Dave. "It's twice the kick to write a song and make the music and melody fit the words."

Innerscapes also features profiles of such poets as Wanda Coleman and Jack Grapes and a teen-age Beck Hansen, now known as the singer/songwriter Beck. He is included in a feature on a literary/arts magazine geared to young people.

The film was initially screened in the late 1980s, but only became widely available in 2015. In a 1988 story, Kevin Thomas, a writer for The Los Angeles Times, called the movie "a succinct and vibrant introduction to a highly varied group of talented, impassioned people seen and heard both in interviews and in performance." —*AM*




**Learn Blues Guitar
Online from the
Best in the Business!**

Join to receive personal
Video Exchange® feedback from:

Keith Wyatt

Visit **ArtistWorks.com/Blues**
to get free sample lessons
from lead guitarist for
The Blasters!

 **ArtistWorks**
ARTISTWORKS.COM

AMERICAN MUSIC: The Blasters / Dave Alvin newsletter
editor/writer: Billy Davis copy editor: Craig Frischkorn writer: Tom Wilk
www.BlastersNewsletter.com