

# American Music

## The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

MAY 2002

### BLASTERS Shows

(Phil, John, Jerry, Keith)

5/24 Las Vegas NV at House Of Blues  
7/5 San Francisco CA at Hootenany  
7/6 Irvine CA at Hootenany  
7/7 San Diego CA at Hootenany  
7/8 Costa Mesa CA at Orange Cnty Fair

### DAVE ALVIN Shows

Avalon Blues Tour with

Peter Case and Chris Smither

6/13 Minneapolis MN at Cedar Cultural  
6/14 Chicago IL at Old Town School  
6/21 Norfolk VA at private party at  
North Shore Point House Concerts  
6/22 Vienna VA at Wolf Trap  
7/19 Ellsworth ME at Grand Auditorium  
7/20 Greenfield MA at Green River  
8/30 Yosemite CA at Strawberry fest

With The Guilty Men

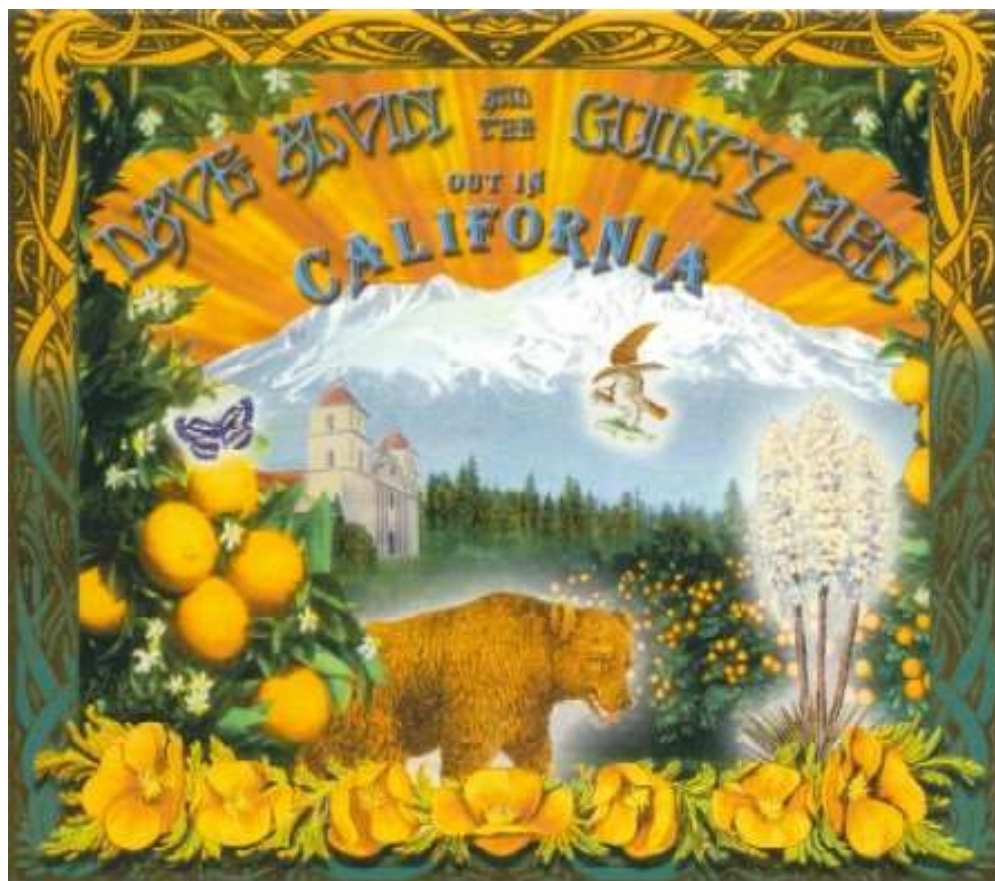
7/2 Milwaukee WI at Marcus Center  
7/3 Madison WI at Harmony bar  
7/4 Chicago IL at Fitzgerald's  
7/6 Lincoln NE at Zoo Bar Blues fest  
7/11 Richmond VA at VA Museum Arts  
7/12-13 Arlington VA at Iota  
7/18 Somerville MA at 608  
7/20 Greenfield MA at Green River fest  
7/21 Long Island NY at  
Stephen Talkhouse

8/3 Reno NV at Bartley Ranch  
8/7 Teton Village WY at Mangy Moose  
8/9 Calgray AB at Night Gallery  
8/10,11 Edmonton AL at Folk Fest  
8/16 Salmon B.C. at Roots festival

With Rick Shea & Brantley Kearns

6/16 Santa Barbara at Live Oak Fest

## Dave And The Guilty Men Live Album Due Out May 21



**Latest news** -- On May 21, 2002, HighTone records re-releases Out In California, a live album featuring Dave & the

Guilty Men. -- The original five Blasters are rumored to be playing another show in California in the summer. The purpose: To record more songs for a live album. The band wants to record some rarer songs to add to the recordings made on the recent reunion tour. -- The Blue Shadows new album report from Jake Matson: "The record is very close to being completed. There are thirteen tracks and a few of the tracks feature Dave Alvin, Gene Taylor, John Bazz and Bill Bateman combined. I don't need to tell you what an honor that is for me to have those guys. Also contributing were Erin from Rumble King and Kid Ramos. ((cont. on page 2))

**Special Double Issue:** Dave Alvin's new live Out In California album and an extensive day-by-day tour diary of the "Original Five Blasters" March 2002 reunion tour.

(cont. from page 1)) We have had a lot of fun recording it.” -- In April Dave did an interview for Mojo magazine. -- Bill Bateman reports on the opening of the King King club in Hollywood CA. Bill: “There were 500 people there by invitation only on April 11, 2002 The Blue Shadows played, Jumpin’ Joey (Altruder), and T-Rail. Phil (Alvin) showed up and me, Bazz and Phil did a six-song set as a trio. We got Phil on stage cause Jake (Matson leader of the Blue Shadows) sang a Charlie Patton song. Phil was standing front and center and when we whipped into that Charlie Patton song at high tempo, Phil threw his cigarette on the ground and started jivin’ around a little bit like ‘I gotta show this kid up.’ And he did! The song was called HANG IT ON TH WALL.” On Monday April 15 Dave Alvin played lead guitar for the Blue Shadows and has been making a habit of showing up on Monday nights when the Blue Shadows play the King King. The legendary club has been closed since summer 1993 and finally returned in March of 2002. -- Look for the March-April issue of No Depression magazine ([www.nodepression.net](http://www.nodepression.net)) for a feature article on Christy McWilson’s new Bed Of Roses CD on HighTone records. You’ll hear from producer Dave Alvin and see a photo of Dave in the studio with Christy. -- On 5/6/02 Dave Alvin taped 5 songs and an interview for "Sessions at AOL," an internet only radio station on AOL. It is expected to start airing in mid-May. Dave played with Rick Shea, Chris Gaffney, and Brantley Kearns. Go to keyword "Sessions at AOL." -- Rhino records will release on CD the X album See How We Are on May 21. Dave Alvin was a member of X for the recording of this album. His 4TH OF JULY is on there. Six bonus tracks will be included such as: demo remixes of HOLIDAY STORY, I’M LOST, IN THE TIME IT TAKES AND SEE HOW WE ARE; an outtake/rough mix cover of HIGHWAY 61 REVISITED, and the cassette version of SEE HOW WE ARE. Dave remembers: “We did about three sessions with different producers so there are a lot of unreleased stuff. A song called JUST ANOTHER PERFECT DAY and a Dylan song called POSITIVELY FOURTH STREET. When I finished the record putting my last guitar part down, I handed in my notice. Then they went in and on a couple of songs they took my guitar off and had Tony Gilkyson to play.” -- On April 25, 2002 Dave Alvin along with a backing band of Rick Shea, Chris Gaffney, and Brantley Kearns appeared on the Craig Kilborn Late night TV show on CBS. Dave: “The show was fun, but it was a little weird because they don’t film it in one fell swoop. The Rock (wrestler) was taped a few hours before us in the morning. We were on in the afternoon and the girl who was interviewed before us on the aired program, was taped after us. I thought it was great that they did a tight close up of the album cover (Out In California live album). They checked the songs on the record and asked that I do FOURTH OF JULY.” -- Jill Olson’s MY BEST YESTERDAY album (produced by Dave Alvin) is due out 5/28 on “125 records.” There is a special pre-release price of \$10 for the disc available now at [www.125records.com](http://www.125records.com). The special ends on 5/27. —Am

## **HIGHTONE RECORDS RELEASES A DAVE ALVIN AND THE GUILTY MEN LIVE ALBUM CALLED OUT IN CALIFORNIA**

The Live CD was recorded at a pair of Southern California gigs in August 2001 with the Guilty Men. Also included are three songs from a Dave Alvin acoustic show in Pasadena in January 2002. I asked Dave why a live album now? Dave: “This is a real good band and I can’t capture what happens live in the studio. Also, at shows people go over to the merchandise table, and they ask, ‘Which CD sounds like what I just heard?’ Gaffney (selling the merchandise) says, “Well uhhhhh????” So now we just hand them that one.”

“On Interstate City (Dave’s first live album, High-Tone 1996) there were a lot of songs people didn’t know. I thought on this record we should make it sound more like our show. On this record, there are songs that people always wanted, things that are big live numbers



photo: Issa Sharp

like FOURTH OF JULY and WANDA AND DUANE. This is a much more cohesive record than the first live one.” Dave feels he has learned the right way to make a live record. Dave: “On Interstate City we brought in Greg (Leisz - guitarist and producer) and that was great, but I had to change how the Guilty Men played. On this one, we had so many miles under our belt I just knew exactly what I wanted.

Mark Linett (producer / engineer) has so much experience making live records. He just did Brian Wilson live at The Roxy. He co-produced my first solo album years ago. I’ve been working with Mark pretty regularly on a lot of projects. He has great music sensibilities and has been a sound engineer for a long time. He started out with Frank Zappa. He is a record collector. So, I can say, ‘ I’m looking to make this sound like an old Chess record or an old Sun record.’ He knows exactly what I’m talking about.”

“I had been thinking about doing this record as a bootleg for fans only. But this was just too good, so I wanted HighTone to put it out. We’re planning on putting out a companion CD to sell at gigs. We might call it Out In California Part 2: The Authorized Bootleg. We have a lot of material left over like; great versions of WHY DID SHE STAY WITH HIM, and NEW HIGHWAY. There is a Sonny Boy Williamson song sung by Chris called HELP ME. Also there is HONKY TONK and BORDER RADIO and a lot of stuff from the acoustic show. There is a long-ass-guitar-jam version of LONG WHITE CADILLAC. It’s about 14 minutes long and gets real good. It’s over in the Allman Brothers side of town (laughs). Mark Linett the engineer really wanted to have it on this record but I figured we already did that on Interstate City. There was even a part of me that thought to start it at a fade in the instrumental section at the end. We did 2 sets at the Blue Café that night. The stuff in the first set is what’s on the record, but the second set is just us goofin’ around. The second song we did was that version of LONG WHITE CADILLAC and its pretty neat sounding. So, the CD sold-only-at-shows is still gonna happen.

The Songs: I asked Dave what the difference was between the version of the song OUT IN CALIFORNIA on Interstate City and on the new album. Dave: “The original was more of a show piece for Greg Leisz on guitar. It was a folkier take -- let’s put it that way. Because Greg is not in the touring unit, we changed it to more of a Merle Haggard meets Paul Butterfield blues band version. It turned out more rockin.” That version heard leading off this album has been a staple in Dave’s set since 1997.

HIGHWAY 99 is the only newly written Dave song for the album. Dave: “It sort of is (autobiographical) a little bit because I spent time years ago in Nashville trying to become a country song writer. I failed miserably and was home sick most of the time. Highway 99 runs up the middle of the San Joaquin valley. It’s a four-lane highway through all the little towns like Bakersfield, Selma, McFarland and all the little towns up to Sacramento and on to Redding. My Mom’s family is from the south of Fresno in a little town called Reedley. Whenever we would go up there when we were little kids, we would take Highway 99. Because that’s where all the little towns were, it was lined with Honky Tonks. That’s where Merle Haggard and Buck Owens and all those guys played. The song is a little bit of a tribute to the west coast country guys.”

ALL ROUND MAN - “When I was doing Public Domain, I was looking for a hokum-style-blues number to put on the record. I had a few things in mind and that was one of them. I wound up going with WALK RIGHT IN because it was more well known. I started doing ALL ROUND MAN live on the John Hurt tribute tour. The lyrics are very different than all my other songs. So it’s a nice change from sad songs. Bo Carter originally did that in the early thirties.”

On BLUE BLVD Dave does a nice recital during the lead in to the song about his cousin Donna. Dave: “That recital is not something that I planned; it just happened. I wasn’t gonna put the song on the record. But as we listened to the tapes, it kind of explains the song. I do like the song. I got a bad review years back, where he just gave me hell for that song. I took the review pretty hard -- the song means a lot to me --I dropped the song for a long time. Only recently, I brought it back. I’m pretty sensitive when it comes to that stuff.”

The last song on the CD is a Little Walter song that Dave does as an instrumental called EVERYTHING WILL BE ALRIGHT. Dave used to call this THE R & B EXIT song. Dave: “That’s because a lot of the R & B guys do an exit on that song and I kind of liked that (laughs). The first time we ever did it was in Colombia MO. It was strictly as a joke. But what was nice about it was I could get off stage put my guitar away, change my sweaty shirt, and the band is still playing. Then it gives me time to put my stuff away so I can go settle up, sit down, or meet people and sign autographs - you know before the post gig hub-bub starts. It’s also one of my favorite songs. I can’t sing it, but I love the lick and it gives me a chance to play a blues shuffle (laughs).



Lou Beach did the album artwork. Dave: "He did the artwork for the jazz band Weather Report and my first solo album. We drifted apart for some years and have now become really good friends again. He's done every cover for me after Interstate City. He is a great artist."

"The idea for the cover started out as a psychedelic Haight / Ashbury kind of cover. One thing they would do on the old psychedelic posters is they would use old graphics. So we used old California graphics from turn of the century post cards -- All the classic California visual natural archetypes. On the cover there's the grizzly bear, which is the state symbol and is extinct now. We couldn't find an old postcard of a California condor, so we used an eagle. Then there are the orange trees, the redwoods, the Santa Barbara mission, and Mount Shasta in the background. On the back cover is the desert, various cactuses, the scorpion, and on the inside you have the Guilty men conquering the rattlesnake (laughs), and we threw a mountain lion in there for good luck. The snake shot is from an old postcard. Lou put us in there and I thought that's brilliant!"

Inside is a nice shot of Dave kneeling in an orange grove with an unusual but interesting over exposure of orange coloring. Dave: "That was taken by Issa Sharp. She did the photos for Black Jack David and Interstate City. We took that about a year ago. It was gonna be the cover for Public Domain, then I decided to go with the nineteenth century photos instead. When she developed it a few weeks later, I was like, wow, the sunset was very orange. When they printed it for the cover they brought the orange out more.

It was taken at sunset in an orange grove in an area in Ventura county that I like a lot because the valley is like what Downey was like when I was a little kid. That area has small towns - places like Fillmore and Santa Paula with orange groves, and avocado groves. It's still like that to this day. I always loved that photo, and when Lou saw it he said it had to be on this record."

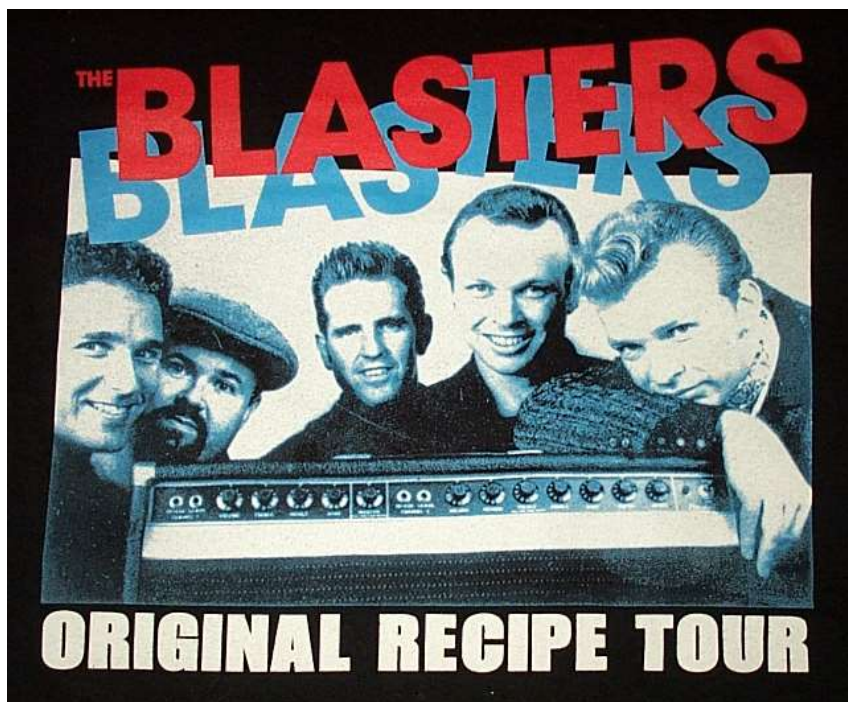
The album will be released on May 21, 2002. Dave says: "We are going to be on tour all summer supporting this. I have to keep my guys all working." ~~**AM**

## **The Blasters Original Recipe Tour**

### **Day-by-Day diary by--Billy Davis**

### **Phil Alvin, Dave Alvin, John Bazz, Bill Bateman, and Gene Taylor reunite as The Blasters for a March 2002 tour of California**

The Blasters Reunion tour of March 2002 happened as a result of the Rhino records release of The Blasters: Testament 2 CD set. The Blasters anthology CD was in the making for about 18 months before its 3/5/02 release date. The idea naturally came up that if there were ever a time for the original band to get back together, this would be the best time in promotion of the CD. All the members were up for it: Phil Alvin, Dave Alvin, John Bazz, Bill Bateman, and Gene Taylor. The least likely expected participant would be Dave Alvin because of his success-



ful and very busy solo career. Dave makes his own records, tours constantly and produces other artists' albums leaving little time for anything else. But Dave Alvin was the first to say that he would do it. Dave: "The only thing I was worried about is logistics. Musically, my major fear was that we would let people down and not be as good as we were; that we wouldn't live up to people's expectations, people who saw us in the old days and people who had never seen us." The plan

was to do one or maybe two shows. Even for only two shows the guys were unsure if the magic and chemistry would re-surface. When the time came to book the one show, the promoters booked 5 shows in 5 nights.

Six weeks before the tour started, day-to-day the tour was off and on again. At one point there were money disputes and then Phil Alvin bowed out for another reason: "I don't want to confuse the issue of who the Blasters are." Phil Alvin fronts a version of the Blasters with John Bazz and non-original members Keith Wyatt and Jerry Angel. A general statement issued by the band, "There will be no Blasters reunion. Phil Alvin is afraid that the original Blasters getting together, playing a bunch of gigs will affect people's perception of the current lineup of the Blasters and it will hurt Jerry and Keith's feelings and people would bother him for years to come about 'Is Dave playing tonight?'" (Read more on this in Buddy Seagle's article below).

Blasters Manager Greg Lewerke persisted in trying to convince Phil that the reunion could benefit the new Blasters as well as the old Blasters. It took about two weeks for Phil to give the go-ahead, but it was only after Keith and Jerry contacted Phil to give their blessing to go ahead with the reunion. The shows stood to benefit even Keith and Jerry because with the media attention and CD release, now any version of the Blasters will have higher visibility in the media and can command a higher payday at gigs.

With the wheels set in motion for five shows in five nights, The Blasters scheduled three days of rehearsals immediately preceding the tour.

Doing five gigs in five nights would be breaking Phil's long-time rule of no more than three nights in a row. That rule: to protect his voice from over exertion. So it was a wise decision to leave Phil out of some of the rehearsals. The first rehearsal day would be for the instrumental band to choose songs and work out their parts. Day 2: Phil would come in and sing over what was prepared and change arrangements to his liking. Day 3: The instrumental band would refine the tunes while Phil rested his voice for the next day's start of the tour. Dave says about Phil's absence: "In the last few years of the band Phil would come only occasionally if he had to learn a song."



photo: Billy Davis

**The original 5 Blasters.**

Another issue on the minds of many was: Will the Alvin Brothers be able to get along? Their sibling rivalry and fighting was no secret to the press in the past. The media surely will be looking down that road again. In that tradition, both Alvin's still aren't holding back their opinions. Here is an article that ran one week before the tour in an Orange County Music Newspaper. Phil and Dave both comment:

*March 1, 2002 OC Weekly printed this article titled*  
***"Blood Brothers: The Blasters' Dave and Phil Alvin agree to disagree"***

***By Buddy Siegel***

*Fans have speculated for the past 16 years as to whether the original Blasters might reunite, and that day has finally come. With the Rhino Records release of the double-disc set Testament: The Complete Slash Recordings on March 5, everyone has decided that now is a good time to show the young'uns what all the hype was about in the '80s. Well, almost everyone.*

*"Phil had to be talked into doing this," sighs Dave. "He didn't want to confuse the issue of the new Blasters vs. the old Blasters. He didn't want to have people bugging him at every gig, asking, 'Where's Dave?' He even wanted to have the new Blasters onstage with the old Blasters, but no way—we're going out in support of this reissue, and it's, like, here's the original band, the guys that played on the original records."*

*"I really can't even tell you how this happened," says Phil in a separate interview. "I never told David to leave the Blasters in the first place, and I still don't know how that even came about. There's only been two times in the history of the Blasters where I ever threw somebody out of the band. People leave the band, and I always tell them, 'There's going to be some point in the future where you'll be upset that you did this.' They should pay attention to my advice."*

*The Alvins also disagree about the release of Testament. Phil is upset about the anthology, claiming that it's the result of "an illegal contract." Dave views it as belated recognition—if not redemption—for all the trailblazing work done by the Blasters in the early years of the roots revival.*

*"It feels good," he says. "I always felt that there was the Blasters, the original Fabulous Thunderbirds, Rockpile and the first few Mink DeVille records, and they did something. Those are the acts that broke the door open for everybody that came after them. We created an atmosphere where that kind of music was accepted. I think that's our ultimate legacy. People forget that there was no roots-rock infrastructure in those days. Today, there're 8 million websites and No Depression magazine and venues all across the country where you can go out and tour and play this music. That wasn't the case back then. For whatever reason, we were one of the bands that made older, traditional-style music palatable to people."*

*"I miss the guys," Dave continues. "We all grew up together; we've known one another since childhood. But at least we can play a couple of gigs together. It'll kind of be like going home, that's my feeling about it. It's partially nostalgia and partially because there's really not anyone out there doing this particular kind of thing anymore, the kind of rock & roll and R&B the Blasters played."*

*For his part, Phil harbors no nostalgia for the old days and views the Blasters as a living, breathing, on going entity.*

*"I don't differentiate between the Blasters as I play with them now and the old Blasters," he harrumphs. "If it wasn't for the fact that [current Blasters] Keith Wyatt and Jerry Angel told me, 'Go ahead and do this: it's the right thing to do,' I would never have agreed to play. And I'm still not sure it's the right thing to do. I don't want to fool audiences into thinking they're coming to see Dave and Phil after these reunion shows are over, and I don't want people to think that's the way I'd even want it. Jerry Angel and Keith Wyatt are as good as any players I've ever worked with."*

*The brothers disagree on other issues as well. Lee Allen passed away several years ago, but Steve Berlin also played sax with the Blasters for a while in the '80s. Phil says he'd like to invite Berlin along for the reunion shows, while Dave says Berlin wasn't an original member and therefore shouldn't be part of the reunion. Dave wants to limit the reunion to the five shows currently booked up and down the California coast, while Phil believes if they're going to reunite, they might as well take the show to fans all over the country.*

*You get the feeling that on any given night, disaster could result, and we'll be reading fratricidal Alvin obituaries before this mini-tour is complete. Count your blessings, OC: the Blasters' show at the Galaxy Concert Theatre on Thursday, March 7, is only their second scheduled concert, and hopefully, we'll get to see them rage once more. Does Dave think they'll make it through the whole run? "Well, we're brothers, and you know how that goes," he says with a laugh. "And it's usually okay once we actually play. There were only a couple of times when any fights between us actually spilled over onto the stage."*



## 3/3/02 - Day 1 of Blasters rehearsal, Hollywood CA

It was a beautiful sunny Southern California afternoon outside the rehearsal studio. If you looked up the block, you could see the famous Hollywood sign on the hills. At the out-of-the-way hole-in-the-wall-type rehearsal space, there were no roadies or record company people around. A young rehearsal space attendant never even heard of the Blasters. It was as if the Blasters were any other garage band coming in to rehearse. That's probably the best conditions to have, to focus on just the music. The first to arrive was Gene Taylor and Bill Bateman. They carried their own equipment in through the dark hallway into room C. The room was small, about the size of a small club stage on a platform and room for PA and monitor speakers, a mixing board and a few couches. The walls were lined with a material for soundproofing that looked like burlap canvas sacks. There was very little lighting, many cigarette burns and marks on the carpet floor proving that quite a few bands spent hours here perfecting their songs. There was a big garbage can near the door for beer bottles and various consumable left overs. There would be none of that stuff for the Blasters as I would later see. They were there to get down to business. The hardest drink to be found in the room was Gene Taylor's Diet Cokes and Dave Alvin's large cup of a fast food restaurant soft drink.

The band brought all their best equipment. Bill Bateman tells about the drum set he set up for the rehearsals and the tour: "It was a 1938 Leedy set in perfect shape. It's an American made brand that has been out of business since the 1950's. It's a nice marine pearl that is yellowed with age; I thought they looked prettier. When people heard we were reuniting, they couldn't wait to see those white marine pearls up there on stage like the old days. I said 'okay,' because if I brought my old mahoganies up here the people might be disappointed (laughs)." For the drummers out there, Bill uses his mahogany set with The Blue Shadows and other gigs: "A Ludwig bass drum from the teens, a floor tom that is actually a street drum from 1922; it's a Ludwig and I play it like a floor tom, and the little tom-tom is a Ludwig from the late thirties. The snare is a custom job I made myself from old Ludwig parts and a shell I had custom made for me. It's a 15" by 6 1/2" It's a bigger deeper sound. They have a unique sound."

Dave Alvin was the next to arrive along with his classic-setup of his 1964 Fender Stratocaster and his early 1980's Fender Concert amp. John Bazz arrived with his bass and a newly bought rig and Gene Taylor's (just shipped into town) piano. Gene tells great story that the piano was bought in an emergency for a last minute gig. He and Kim Wilson of the Fabulous Thunder Birds bought that at a pawn shop and he has had it ever since. He

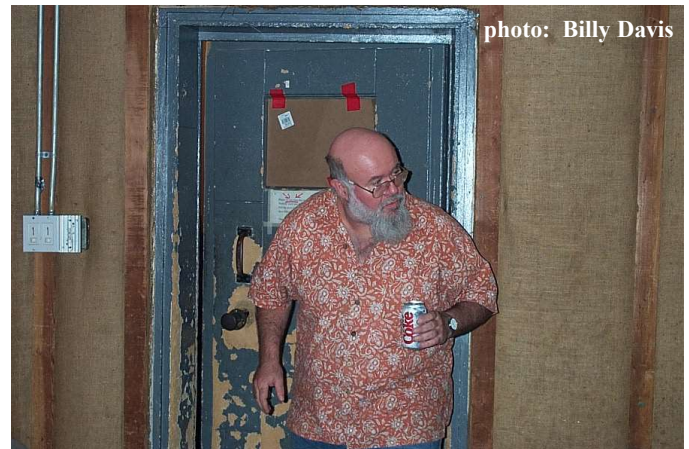


photo: Billy Davis

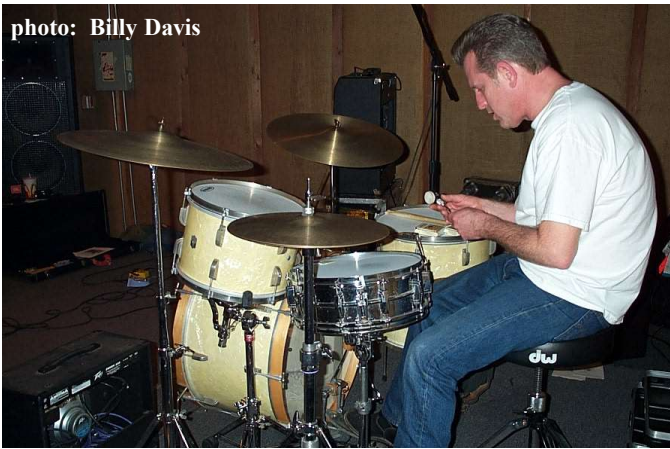
Gene Taylor is the first to arrive.



photo: Billy Davis

Practicing LONG WHITE CADILLAC.

photo: Billy Davis



**Bill Bateman tuning the drums.**

magic we had was still there. Or how do we bring it back or pretend it was there (laughs). But it was there!” Gene remembers: “The idea was to get up as many songs as we can, then when Phil came into the second rehearsal, we would say what do you absolutely want to do and what do you want to drop off.”

When you think of reunion, you expect guys coming together who haven’t seen each other in a long time. The first steps into the room together are usually special with greetings and memories of old times spoken. I was looking for that and there was none of that feeling here, mainly because these guys have remained friends over the years. They see each other around town, sit in with each other’s bands, and stay in touch. Gene Taylor said: “I wouldn’t do this if it wasn’t fun for all of us. The band was started out of friendship and it should maintain that. Even in the worst argument the band had, the friendship factor was never in question. Dave and Phil still love each other, and even though they can’t work together full time, they will always be brothers.”

They started off with TROUBLE BOUND and seemed so comfortable with each other, it made it hard to imagine that these four haven’t played together in 15 years. They all were having fun and maybe even surprised each other that they sounded so good. When the song ended, Dave said, “Hey we’re sounding like a band again.”

Gene Taylor took a pad and pen on his keyboard and took down a list of songs they discussed they should do. Gene Taylor suggested Dave sing a song but that brought no answer from Dave. Later Dave said: “I treat it the same as the Knitters. If people want to see the Blasters, they’re here to see the Blasters. This is entirely something else.” Dave did sing in rehearsal on the Blasters songs just for the purpose of cuing the other guys to changes.

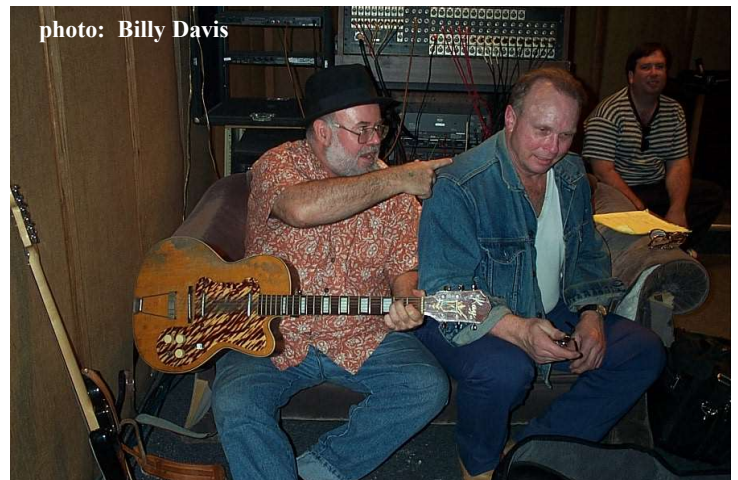
They did the best versions of the songs they could remember, songs such as: NO OTHER GIRL, BORDER RADIO, HOLLYWOOD BED, ONE BAD STUD, BLUE SHADOWS, TROUBLE BOUND, CRAZY BABY, TOO TIRED, I FELL IN LOVE, REAL ROCK DRIVE,

says it’s the best sounding piano for a compact unit that he has ever heard.

It took them an hour to get set and the reunion was now underway. Four of the five were here with Phil Alvin resting the day off. Dave: “It was good because when Phil is there, there is this pressure. I don’t know how to describe it, but it’s different. Having just Bateman, Bazz, Taylor, and me was a nice way of blowing off steam and figuring out what we sound like now.”

Dave continues: “The rehearsals were basically to get used to playing together. To see if the

photo: Billy Davis



**Phil and Gene talking guitars.**



LONG WHITE CADILLAC and a few others. The band sounded great and much of the credit goes to Dave Alvin who still remembers all his classic guitar riffs. He was right on the money as if he never stopped playing the songs. Dave did a little preparation at home to learn the songs: "Some songs I listened to and I played the Rhino CD all the way through once. I put it on and played guitar to whatever song came up. There were little things I'd forgotten. But some songs are ingrained in you. A lot of the (American Music LP) Rollin' Rock songs are ingrained in me because they were the first songs I ever learned. In some ways, I know those better than the others."

The boys were loose and fooling around. At one point Bateman and Bazz were talking about some non-music stuff and Dave said loudly, "C'mon let's do NO OTHER GIRL!" and Bazz says, "We just did it right now (pointing to Bateman) you didn't hear it?" Dave laughs and says, "Yeah the Zen version of NO OTHER GIRL."

The band discussed certain criteria in deciding what songs to do. They wanted songs they thought Phil would remember the lyrics to; they didn't want songs that would blow out Phil's voice: One of those they mentioned to stay away from was I LOVE YOU SO (The Bo Diddley song).

Then there were songs that they just didn't like, and just about all the songs they ever released were discussed. Dave vetoed ROCK BOPPIN BABY and Gene Taylor's request of BARE-FOOT ROCK. Dave suggested either BREATHLESS or HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL but none of the other guys showed interest. Gene mentioned WHAT WILL LUCY DO but they never got around to trying it. There just were too many songs to choose from. There were a bunch of classic Blasters songs that they had to leave room for in the set. John Bazz, the only member at the rehearsals who is in the current Blasters, was able to be a reference of which songs Phil still sings in recent years. Those songs would be easy for Phil to be ready for.

They prepared a lot more songs than could be played in one set, but with the intention of being ready for Phil-surprises. They talked about ROLL 'EM PETE and different ways to play it if Phil changes the tempo. Gene Taylor says that it was played a lot slower in the old days as opposed to Phil's faster tempo in the new Blasters.

Dave Alvin's guitar tone sounds better than ever here with the Blasters. He says, "Yeah cause now I'm allowed to play loud," but in all seriousness, Dave has spent many years honing his unique guitar sound. Dave: "Another of my musical concerns was: would they let me be who I am now - playing guitar wise. I take longer solos and play a little louder. By the middle of the first song in the first day of rehearsal, I knew all this would be fine. I was pretty relaxed."

At the session the Blasters members were seeing the Rhino records Testament 2 CD compilation for the first time. They looked it over and had many stories to tell about the sessions contained within. Gene had a funny story to tell about the band working through the night to finish up the Non Fiction album in 1983. Gene was summoned from a passed-out position at the bar in the middle of the night to come and sing his TAG ALONG vocal.

They recalled the process that the song CAN'T STOP TIME went through. They blame producer Jeff Eyrich for changing the song not to their liking. Supposedly, Dave wrote it with a totally different groove and the producer turned it into a pop song. The band left it off the original album release. Talking about songs that didn't make it onto Testament, Gene and Bill agreed they liked JUNGLE SOLDIER. Dave who wrote the song says, "I hate it, but it has a great Lee Allen solo." The song still remains unreleased.

The band seemed to have fun at the rehearsal and the conversation amongst all of them, complete with inside jokes, showed these guys are right back in the groove. John Bazz, "It was going so well at rehearsal that I knew music would not be an issue or problem. In some ways it was more enjoyable to do rehearsals than the live show because it's almost hard to have fun during the show --Your responsibility is to perform the music as well as you can. At rehearsal you can be a little more playful."

At 6:30 PM the band wrapped up the first day and loaded out. Dave was tired from a gig the night before and a long drive home. Dave couldn't have been too tired: He was seen at the Merle Haggard concert at the El Rey theatre later that night. John, Bill, and Gene played a gig the night before with the Blue Shadows band at Linda's Doll Hut in Anaheim and tonight (3/3/02) they had another Blue Shadows gig at All Star Lanes In Eagle Rock.

## **3/4/02 - Day 2 of Blasters rehearsal, Hollywood CA**

The band arrived at 1 PM today for another day of rehearsal. Phil Alvin was expected to be there later in the day, limiting his voice to a short rehearsal time. Starting out the day, Dave, John, Bill, and Gene listened to a few of their original recordings on a boom box to hear certain arrangements and how they have changed over the years.

The guys had to convince Gene to sing TAG ALONG and when they first played it, it was at double speed -- so fast it knocked my socks off! Gene suggested they slow it down. Man, what a great tune it is. Gene likes to say that it's a throw away song just to give Phil a breather from his vocals, but I love the song, the fans go crazy during it, and Gene and Dave's solos are some of the rockinest rockabilly you can find.

Other songs rehearsed were RED ROSE, TOO TIRED, and BLUE SHADOWS.

At about 4 PM Phil Alvin arrived, the original lineup was now complete. Phil walked carrying two guitars wearing a t-shirt and denim jacket, and a pocket full of harmonicas in different keys. Phil also carries three pairs of reading glasses. I can't explain that - maybe one for each different key of harmonica's.

As Phil walked in, I was curious what kind of communication he would have with Dave. The band was on a break, and Dave was lying out on one of the couches. Phil walked in telling one of his crazy stories to Bill Bateman, and Dave didn't even look at him. Phil didn't look at Dave either. I think both brothers were nervous about working with each other again. After all, the biggest fighting they ever did was not as brothers but as fellow musicians. Now here they were in that possibly volatile position again of being not just brothers but band mates. In retrospect, Dave didn't think it was any big deal. Dave: "We have played together off and on goofing off and little things over the years."

Phil sat on one of the couches talking about tuning up his pickup truck in order to make it to



the session. The whole band was there as well as manager Greg Lewerke.

Legendary L.A photographer Gary Leonard arrived to capture the first few minutes of the reunion on film. Gary, known for his black and white photography, has been the Blasters' official photographer since the band started in 1980. An exception to his black and white shooting is his color shot of the Blasters that graces the front of the Testament CD. The band gathered on the stage arm-in-arm to pose for a standing group shot. The guys all were telling jokes to each other, clowning around, and picking on their old friend Gary as well. So when you see them smiling in the picture, they ain't fakin' it.

In conversation with Phil, I brought up the Lonesome Sundown song LEAVE MY MONEY ALONE. Phil didn't know it was included as a Blasters bonus track on the forthcoming (to be released the next day) Blasters: Testament Rhino records 2 CD set. He asked, "How do you know about that song?" He hadn't played it for many years but claimed he still remembered it.

After tuning up and starting his amp, the first song he played was LEAVE MY MONEY ALONE. The band picked right up on it as they did in the initial recording and Phil, to my amazement, remembered all the lyrics. So the first Blasters song of the reunion was LEAVE MY MONEY ALONE, so put that in the history books! The next song and first actual original Blasters tune of the reunion was TROUBLE BOUND. Within minutes, Phil Alvin was drenched in sweat pouring out his heart and voice into each note, chugging away at the guitar with his typical intensity. And the rest of the Blasters seemed to step it up a notch as well when

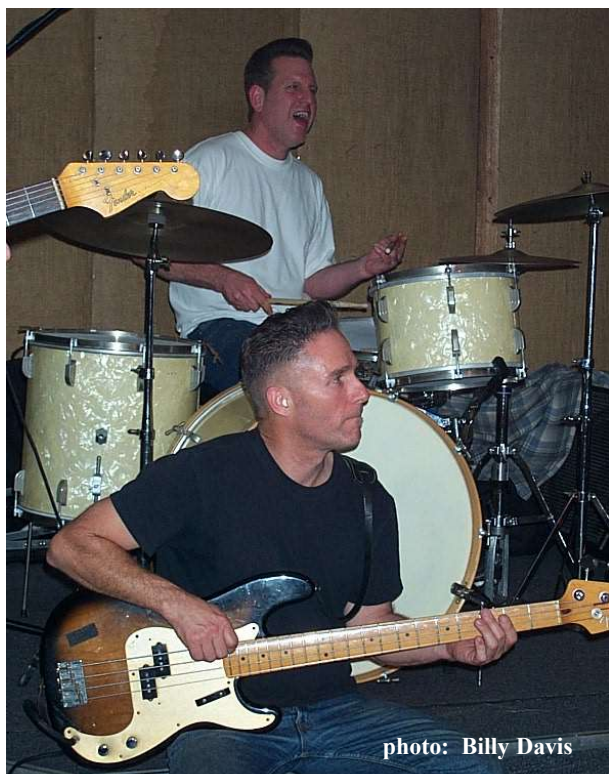


The original 5 Blasters pose for photographer Gary Leonard.

they are all together. What a band! And this was with no audience present. Phil doesn't let up as he attests, "I don't rehearse. I play. I really don't know how to half-sing a song."

Next was the fantastic NO OTHER GIRL which they ran through not knowing how it would go. Phil was apprehensive but sung it perfectly at high tempo. When the song ended, he looked back at the band with a proud grin like, 'That was easy. We don't need to practice that.' Oh man, I'm in Blaster Heaven.

Next Phil called for LOVE 24 HOURS A DAY then the Johnny Guitar Watson song TOO TIRED. Phil was out of breath so the band took a break. After the break, the band started playing an old blues song and Phil couldn't wait to run up to the mike and started singing the lyrics to a song called ALL YOUR LOVE by Magic Sam. What a great blues band they can be even with a thrown-together-quick song. It's a pleas-







**Practicing I'M GLAD YOU'RE DEAD YOU RASCAL.**

ure to see them playing a song for enjoyment, with no intention of playing the song on the tour. It was just for the sake of their own fun jamming together. They went on to play songs that the band had prepared like NO OTHER GIRL, an intense version of CRAZY BABY, and ROLL 'EM PETE with Phil's version of the lyrics that in recent years has been titled the JOE TURNER MEDLEY.

Phil's suggestion of I'M GLAD YOU'RE DEAD YOU RASCAL YOU was next. Phil took extra time to teach the rest of the Blasters how

he wanted the song to go and they were soon off and running. He also took special care to get in SO LONG BABY GOODBYE where he duplicates Lee Allen's sax solo note-for-note on his harmonica.

Other songs that Phil suggested they play but were never tried were JUST ANOTHER SUNDAY and COLORED LIGHTS. About COLORED LIGHTS, Phil said, "Do you know how many people come up to me and say that it's their favorite Blasters song?" It just came down to numbers; only the best could be played.

At one point Dave got a phone call which, gave Phil a chance to noodle with something off the Blasters path. He started singing a spiritual song called IF I COULD HEAR MY MOTHER PRAY AGAIN. The band fell in with accompaniment, and Dave as well. Phil sang it in Mahalia Jackson's style-Beautiful. They didn't finish the song when hitting the mid-song break. But it was quite a treat. Phil shook his head in a loving-it motion and asked Dave, "You still have the album, don't you?" Dave said "yeah." Back in the 80's when Dave moved out of the Alvin house, they split the record collection. Dave says it's a Staple Singers album.

Another great call on a song was Phil's suggestion of COMMON MAN. This was a surprise and a fantastic choice. It has been out of the band's rotation for about ten years. Phil even had some trouble remembering the lyrics, so they cued up the CD player and listened to the track from the Testament CD. Phil stood at his mike with a lean towards the CD player with his eyes closed and listened intently to the lyrics taking them all in. Dave played quiet licks to the song. Then band was off and running with a hot version of the song.

In between songs the guys kept having fun. It only took Gene's request for Phil to do some old gag song they used to play, and Phil started singing it. The guys just laughed. Phil took the opportunity to even make fun of me singing a Lonnie Johnson song called SHE'S MAKING WHOOPIE IN HELL TONIGHT. He added my name to it singing: "Billy, you know the undertaker came by this morning. I gave him your height and size. Billy, you'll be making whoopie with the devil, about this time tomorrow night."

Near the end of the session, Phil went into a T-Bone Walker song called COLD COLD FEELING. Gene jumped in with some real tasteful piano playing as Bill eased in there with a light rhythm. Before long all of them were playing. Dave held back to rhythm playing while Phil played lead guitar. On one of the breaks Phil sat down to play some old jazz and blues riffs on his guitar. Gene stepped up to Phil, got his face close to Phil and started harmonizing on an old hokum song. Gene threw piano licks in between verses and they just keep going; another

brilliant impromptu performance never to be heard again.

The brothers seemed to be working together well, but one tense moment came. Between songs, Phil started telling an explicit sex joke, holding up the start of the next song. Dave put down his guitar and started walking to the door to take a break. Phil stopped him and said, "I'm sorry, David. Let's play." Dave turned around and strapped on the guitar and they went right into the next song. Phil might have been doing that as a way to catch his breath after blowing the harmonica in the last tune, or he just got carried away talking, which he himself will admit he can lose control of sometimes. I don't think Dave was upset; in fact he did have to take a break, but I think he just wanted to send a signal that the music would be the focus here. Dave is a consummate professional who is very proud of his role and contribution in the Blasters. His goal is to make the Blasters reunion look as good as the Blasters ever were. He really took charge of the sessions and in every sense was showed complete respect by Phil.

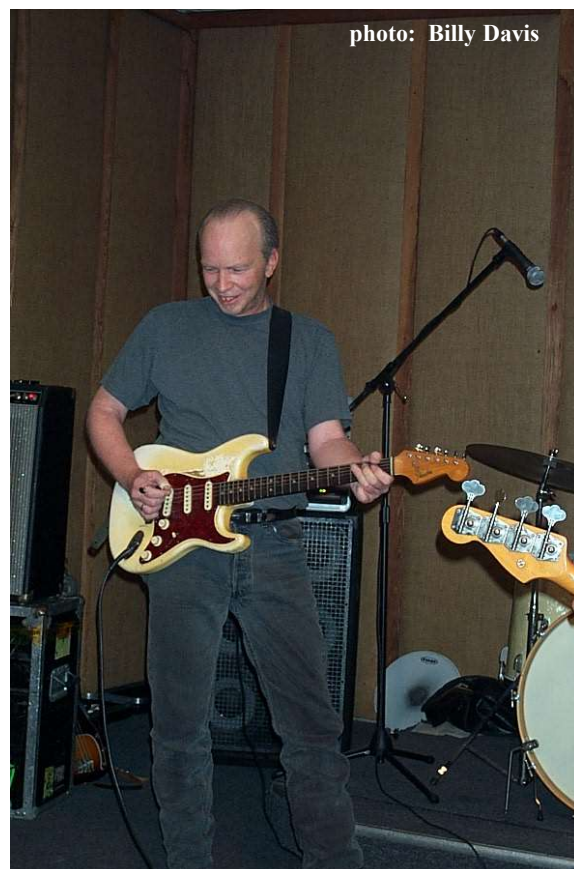
Dave's leading of the band helped expedite things. In the old days, The Alvin brothers' fights were legendary and on full display in the press. There was always the notion that Phil, the big brother, might have taken advantage of the pecking order of older brother to younger. If that were the case, there is no sign of that now. In retrospect of the rehearsal and tour, Phil has shown Dave complete respect all throughout. John: "It was much different than I had anticipated. Phil bent over backwards to make things go smoothly, and I was really proud of him. David is one of those guys that believes it when he sees it -- I got the feeling from him that he never thought it was gonna work until we got on stage and played the first time."

Near the end of the rehearsal day, Dave cut off conversation to say, "Let's do ONE BAD STUD" and Phil came back very sincerely, "Oh, good call, David." These little things tell a lot of the story of how the brothers can relate to each other in a band situation now-a-days. This would continue on the tour as Phil let Dave lead the band and cue the band to start songs. Dave even made up the set lists. John Bazz, "I always loved Dave's set lists. We haven't used a set list since the last time Dave was in the band."

Phil and Dave really have grown to respect each other mutually, and especially Phil for his little brother: he realizes what Dave has accomplished as a solo artist.

They worked for a while on ONE BAD STUD, especially the ending, because as Phil said, "It's the big ending of the show." Phil stressed the importance of the big pause before the last chord of the song and taught it to the other band members. At that end, Phil usually yells a good bye to the audience. Here he mocked an address to the audience saying, "Goodnight Were the Blasters: The nostalgia re-tour band."

There was a funny moment between the brothers Alvin when Phil said, "How come Steve Berlin isn't doing these gigs? He's from Downey." Dave came back and said, "Well, do you want



to pay him enough to get him off the Los Lobos tour?" Phil responded in a low put-in-his-place tone, "No." and Everyone laughed. Enough said. Some of my favorite moments were seeing the Alvin brothers interact. There's still a certain electricity there.

Phil and Gene had a thing going. They got on quite well and even had a lot of fun with each other. Gene reminisced with Phil saying, "Phil. Look. I never had this note (he hits a low piano note) back with the Blasters." (Modern keyboards can switch to lower octaves). Phil jokingly replied, "Now that you have a real piano, we'll have to get a real piano player (laughs)." Phil said that playfully because Phil is the one who has repeatedly said, "Gene Taylor is the only one who can play piano since Roosevelt Sykes (legendary piano player from the 40's)." That's quite a compliment.

ONE BAD STUD finished and the session was over.

It was a great day in Blasters history. The session today was the longest stretch of time in 15 years that the Alvin brothers, let alone the rest of the original Blaster, have played music together in the same room. They gelled perfectly and showed that there is some magic there, and it came right back when all five of these guys started playing. Bill Bateman remembered how long it's been having all five of them at a rehearsal: "These are the first full band rehearsals since 1984 when we were preparing to make the Hardline record." Day two of the rehearsals was over. Johnny, Bill, and Gene have some more playing to do today. The Blue Shadows are playing a pre-re-opening of the legendary King King club in Hollywood.

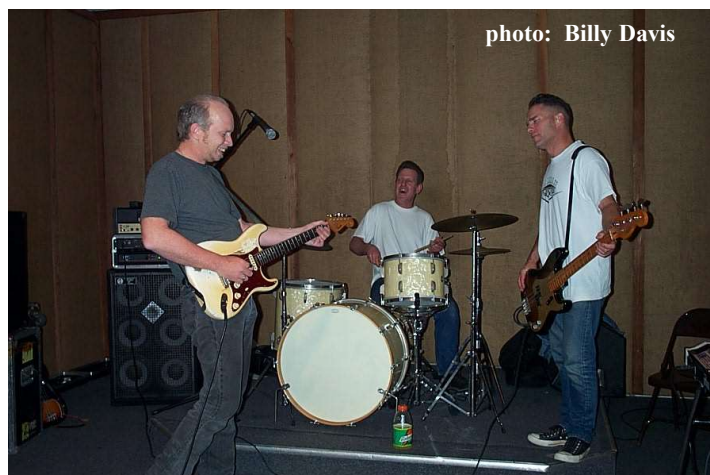
## **3/5/02 - Day 3 of Blasters rehearsal, Hollywood CA**

The Blasters, minus Phil Alvin, got together for the final day of rehearsals before the big tour. They spent a few hours fine tuning and making last minute changes to arrangements and song endings. They rehearsed a few rare songs like ROCK & ROLL WILL STAND, which was one of my favorites of the rehearsals. It all depended on if Phil remembered the lyrics and if there would be enough time to get the songs in the set.

The band really appears to be having fun playing together. Dave Alvin sang I'M SHAKIN' with a whole new set of lyrics playfully teasing each of his band mates. He sang a verse to each of them as they just laughed it off. That was a one time un-censored version that you'll never hear in public.

They fooled around with some jamming on riffs from BOOMTOWN and HIGHWAY 61 just for the fun of it. The band is really loose and ready.

It's a thrill to see Dave Alvin giving his all to playing the Blasters songs note for note as we heard them on the original recordings. At the shows, watch for Dave's trademark leaps during his solos on CRAZY BABY and AMERICAN MUSIC. With an energy level present even in rehearsals, the shows should be unprecedented in intensity. Dave even said, "By the third day, I knew that if we were anywhere near as good as the rehearsals, it would



**Dave shows the band ROCK N ROLL WILL STAND.**

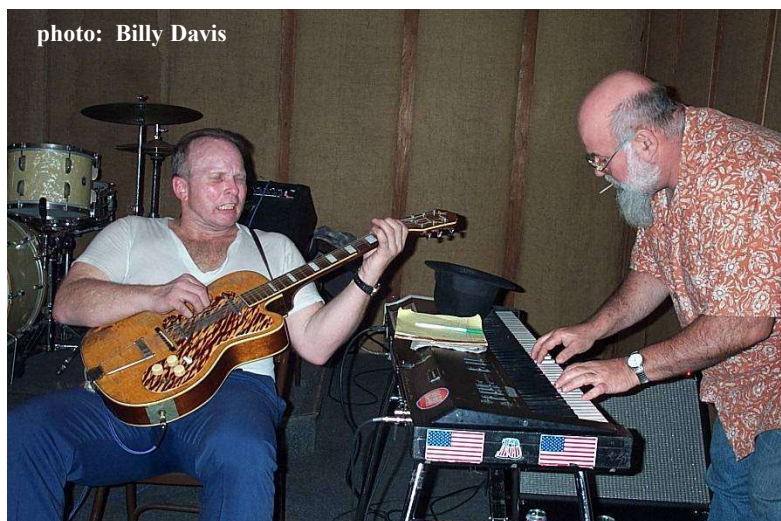


be fine.”

There was some talk about what to expect from Phil’s dedications. He has been using the same song dedications for the last 10 years. A funny instinctive response to the crowd that Phil uses is when he is asked to do MARIE MARIE in the middle of the set. Intending to finish the show with that, Phil always says, “If I don’t do that song, you can cut my toe off with a brick.” Well, John Bazz relates a funny story about last year’s Hootenanny concert in Irvine, CA. The stage manager cut the Blasters off at their contracted set length of 30 minutes. Phil lost track of time and didn’t get to do MARIE MARIE. John Bazz laughed in recalling that day and said, “I was gonna find Phil a brick and hand it to him.”

Another dedication that is going to be a fun one to handle is HELP YOU DREAM. Normally Phil says, “This one goes out to my brother Dave who is somewhere in a bar lying to a girl.” Let’s see what happens.

Since it’s the last day of rehearsal, (this is the day before the tour starts) in the last hour the Blasters got serious and ran through a potential set list, song by song as if they were playing it live. Here was the set: RED ROSE, TROUBLE BOUND, FLATTOP JOINT, LONG WHITE CADILLAC, CRAZY BABY, COMMON MAN, NO OTHER GIRL, HOLLYWOOD BED, TOO TIRED, TAG ALONG, DARK NIGHT, BLUE SHADOWS, I’M SHAKIN, AMERICAN MUSIC, and ONE BAD STUD.



The encore songs will be a last minute call by the band based on other songs they practiced. Of course MARIE MARIE will get in there. Dave wrote up a set list with good song continuity. Dave: “I used to write the set list in the old days. And I didn’t know how Phil or the band would take it if I said, ‘I’m writing the set list.’ But Johnny suggested I make up the set lists. So I did.” The band put down their instruments and it was now on to serious business.

Gene: “I thought the rehearsals were some of the best rehearsals we had in the history of the band. We worked the same way in the old days. We used to rehearse at Johnny’s father’s factory. We would use the employees’ lounge at the Bazz/ Houston Corporation. Basically we would run through a song ourselves, then Dave would give the song to Phil, and he would learn it. Sometimes Phil would change things. The tried and true way for the band was to learn a song and get right out there and play it. We always wanted them played live before recording them. If it worked live that was the way we would record it.” John Bazz: “They didn’t feel like rehearsals - the one thing that impressed me was how well we all knew the music and how much fun it was to play those songs after so many years. At the old rehearsals, we labored over those things to get the final form. Here, we did nothing to change the songs.”

I asked Dave in what way he had to change his style of guitar playing for the Blasters tour. Dave: “There are songs like CRAZY and FLATTOP where to make the songs work you have to play similar to the way you played 20 years ago. Then there are songs like DARK NIGHT, COMMON MAN or ONE BAD STUD that I can play more like I play now. Phil and the band

could have said, 'No don't play that way,' but they didn't."

The band is ready; the fans are ready so here we go. Countdown T minus 24 hours to Blast Off in San Diego!!

One of the great experiences of my life that I will remember forever was the privilege of being able to attend the rehearsals for the sake of documenting this historic event. A realization of dream-to-reality came for me near the end of the second day. It was just me in the room watching the five original Blasters pounding away at their instruments, sweating and rocking as hard as if they were playing in front of a few thousand fans. Just incredible!

Today is the day, Tuesday March 5, 2002 that The Blasters Testament: The complete Slash recordings was released. Hallelujah!

## **3/6/02 - The Blasters 4TH and B Sound Check San Diego CA**

Today was the big day, the first show of the tour. 4th and B was a great venue for the Blasters to open the tour. The high stage and top of the line lighting rig made for good viewing anywhere. There was standing on the floor, tables in the back, and inclined theatre seating with a few thousand capacity.

The band members each drove themselves the two-hour trip to San Diego for the gig. Phil who normally doesn't attend sound checks was there. They started out testing sounds and then warmed up on a few blues songs - BIG ROAD BLUES is a Tommy Johnson song that Phil plays often in his solo acoustic country blues shows. It also was a regular in the Blasters set around the time they put out their Rollin Rock album. Another one they used to do - SMOKE-STACK LIGHTNING - originally by Howlin' Wolf was played in a long 6 minute version.

Phil was wearing his denim jacket and his reading glasses as he sang. John Bazz noticed the photographers taking pictures and in mid song surprised Phil by pulling his glasses off his face. Phil bent over in a quick laugh and resumed singing.

Rick Brown was handling the Blasters sound. He started as their soundman back on the 1985 Hardline tour and was asked to return for the southern California shows. Dave: "He was the sound man at the Whiskey in the old days and took over for our original soundman Babo. Rick worked with the Blasters after I left the band and he also went out with me on the All-Nighters tour in 1987." While Dave was doing some tuning, Phil started singing a Mance Lipscomb song TELL ME WHERE YOU STAYED LAST NIGHT. Phil took the lead guitar role with John and Bill accompanying. While the rest of the band were preparing equipment and not playing, Phil jumped on the piano and played some two-beat jazz stuff. Gene yelled to Phil to, "play a jig." Phil said, "I can't play that" and went into Joe Liggin's HONEY-



photo: Janne Kurunsaari

DRIPPER PART 2, with bits of a Fats Waller song merging into ROLL 'EM PETE. Phil was just having fun. Phil gets some practice on piano at home; he has an old upright piano in his living room that he found at a thrift shop. Near the end of the sound check, Dave called out to the band members, "OK, let's do a song. Hey Johnny! Geno!" Phil still sitting at Gene's piano with a quick wit yells, "I'll cover for him."

Everybody makes it to the stage, Phil returns to his vocal mike and John asks for ROCK N ROLL WILL STAND saying "Hey, it's on the set list." Phil said he didn't have the words ready, so instead they did BLUE SHADOWS. Next, Dave suggested they do HELP YOU DREAM and Phil joked into the mike, "This is my brother Dave. He's drunk, lying to a girl in a bar right now." Phil laughed and looked at Dave but Dave was tuning his amp and didn't hear him.

They changed gears to try Gene's vocal mike and played TAG ALONG. The band looked ready and didn't seem nervous. Here was a promise from Phil after the sound check to me about the first show that night, "We're not gonna have no damn nambi-pambi baloney. None of this takin' it easy crap. We're gonna knock 'em out tonight. Ho!"

The Blasters had a small crew with them to load equipment in and out. Chris Gaffney was along on the tour acting as Dave Alvin's guitar tech.

## **3/6/02 - The Blasters 4TH and B Show San Diego CA**

The Beat Farmers opened up the show with their original singer from many years ago, Buddy Blue. It was a special reunion for them planned only because their biggest musical inspiration, the Blasters, were reuniting here in San Diego. This would be the Beat Farmers one and only reunion show.

If you arrived early enough, you could meet Blasters bass player John Bazz at the merchandise table. The Blasters have two T-shirts available. One has an old picture of the band leaning against a Randall guitar amplifier circa 1982. With the words "Original Recipe Tour." On the back are the five tour dates and cities listed. The other shirt says Blasters&Beer. John Bazz came up with the design for the shirt based on a bar's logo in El Centro Mexico called Poppers&Beer. Bumper stickers for the place with that same font design are plastered all over cars in southern California, making it a take off on that logo. Also available was an 18 X 36 poster of the Rhino records album cover that will be autographed by all five members of the band (the autographed copies weren't yet available at the first show)

Backstage the band prepared and were they nervous? Gene Taylor remembers: "As usual the most nervous guys were Dave and Phil. That was the secret to the band in the past. That's why subsequent editions of the Blasters, while musically every bit as good, didn't have that tension. When you have Phil and Dave's nervousness mixed together you have so much energy from



**Dave tunes up backstage.**





the get-go.” John Bazz: “I’m never nervous. I have that advantage over Dave, Bill, and Gene that I haven’t ever stopped playing 90 % of these tunes over the years.” Bill remembers: “I could tell Dave was nervous but I was pre-occupied with family at the show.”

The lights went down and the crowd roared. Just one spotlight was lighted on a chair at stage right and over the PA you heard Lee Allen’s signature song WALKIN’ WITH MR LEE. On that chair was a saxophone, a Lee Allen “Down On Bourbon Street” LP, and bottle of his favorite liquor Johnny Walker Black label, and also a cap once owned by Lee. (The legendary Lee Allen was the second most recorded sax player in New Orleans behind King Curtis. He played with Little Richard and Fats Domino among many others. He was a Blaster until 1994 when he passed away) In a classy tribute, Lee Allen is not for-

gotten. The spot light will stay lit as long as the other Blasters are on the stage.

As Lee’s song faded down, the Blasters walked on stage to a thunder of applause. This was the big moment. Buddy Blue of the Beat Farmers announced them saying, “Ladies and gentlemen. I remember what it was like to be a musician in San Diego in 1980 wondering what was going on with this new wave shit. Meanwhile there were the Blasters, making real music for real people. They influenced and inspired the Beat Farmers, Rank & File, Dwight Yoakam, Los Lobos and every mother fucking southern California band of the time. They were the greatest thing to happen in the eighties. Ladies and gentlemen, the Blasters!!”

This is it! The original 5 Blasters performing for the first time in 15-plus years. Wow! Phil looked cool in all black wearing a bowling shirt with a red racing stripe down the side and said, “Thank you Buddy Blue. We’re the Blasters. Thanks for comin’ down here.” Bill Bateman was dressed all in black, John Bazz wore his Social Distortion jacket, and Gene wore a red shirt with his John Lee Hooker style hat. I noticed something very special about Dave Alvin. I got chills down my spine realizing Dave was wearing his red neckerchief. That neckerchief is very special to him. He wore it in the old Blasters days, put it away for many years and finally took it out for one very special occasion last year: When he attended and won his Grammy award. Now he has taken it out again to wear on this tour. Dave: “Well that was my signature Blasters look. It’s on all the album covers, I wore it every Blasters gig. I had to wear it.” Dave has a lot of sentiment for this reunion. He was the one who came up with the Lee Allen shrine idea for the side of the stage. I thought that was brilliant.



They opened with RED ROSE and you knew it was for real when Dave made one of his

trademark leaps during his guitar solo. The old Blasters are back. Gene Taylor, who I always thought of as the quiet guy, was pretty wild on this tour by always starting hijinx. During CRAZY BABY he threw beer bottle caps at Phil, a tradition he would continue through the rest of the tour. During DARK NIGHT he started talking to someone in the audience, posed for a photo for them, and then took an album up on his keyboard to autograph it. What a kick. You gotta love Geno.

CRAZY BABY still remains a fast rockin' song for the Blasters. It's one that really gets the band going. Another leap by Dave in this one.

That dedication we were wondering about finally came for HELP YOU DREAM. Phil said, "This goes out to the Jordonaires and The Golden Gate Quartet and my brother Dave who is out in some bar lying to a girl at this very moment." Dave must have been so nervous that he didn't even hear what Phil said in the mic as he quickly approached Phil and whispered something. What was it? He asked Phil to ask for some beer to be brought to the stage.

The song featured a bring-it-down-low part in the middle where tonight Gene started playing this riff that has frequently moved around the band members in practices. It's the riff from Joe Liggin's HONEY DRIPPER PART 2 song.

COMMON MAN was a great surprise in the set. The song has some exceptional blues guitar playing by Dave. Over the course of the tour, Dave will extend the song and really stretch out on the guitar on this tune. In tonight's version, Gene is always up to something. He left the stage to go to the bathroom and of course Phil had to announce that to the crowd. When Gene came back he stood behind Phil who was singing and pretended to wind something up. Phil said before the song, "We weren't able to do this song for about 8 years because the guy we had (president) was actually so common we couldn't believe it. Now we have a rich man again." The song was written about President Reagan in 1984.

HOLLYWOOD BED was another pleasure to hear. Not done in a long time because it was a featured Lee Allen song, but they played a rockin' version. The Johnny Guitar Watson song TOO TIRED showed great work by Dave Alvin. At a turn around point of the song Phil was going to end it but Dave continued soloing.

They bailed out of the mistake and it still sounded fine. There were some tentative moments for a band playing together for the first time in fifteen years but still one of the best shows I have ever seen - period! Phil was feeling nostalgic in BORDER RADIO when he sang, "This song comes from 1982" instead of 1962.

AMERICAN MUSIC finished off the set and what a finish it was. That song to me is what the Blasters are all about. They finished the song with an extended solo like Dave does it in his Guilty Men shows. Dave moved as close towards the center of the stage as he could while still facing his band mates as he banged on his guitar. Phil from his stage-left spot started coming closer to Dave and just stared at Dave, but strummed away with his trademark grimaced face. I could feel something happening there with Phil stepping towards Dave. Maybe it was a symbolic gesture between the brothers. Whatever the case, Phil started strumming a little harder and Dave's knees buckled more and Bazz pulled the bass strings harder. They made some kind of connection there. These once battling brothers sure look like they can agree on one thing: that they love Blasters music. They finished and Phil said, "We're the Blasters. Thanks a Million." Dave followed in the mic and said "Gene Taylor, Johnny Bazz, Bill Bateman, Phil Alvin. Thanks for coming out tonight." As the Blasters walked off the stage all that was left was the

spotlight on Lee Allen's chair.

Dave Alvin really set a fast pace for the Blasters tonight. He counted off just about all the songs to start the band off. John: "Yes, Phil not counting off was completely different for me. In the Blasters current lineup, Phil will finish a song, catch his breath, think about what song is appropriate and make that decision. David labors over the choice of songs and really goes for making the best show possible. That was one of the things I've missed in recent years, because we didn't have that different song selection. It's not just the order of songs that Dave likes; he likes them to come rather quickly." Along with that Dave made up the set lists each night.

Set List: RED ROSE, TROUBLE BOUND, FLATTOP JOINT, LONG WHITE CADILLAC, CRAZY BABY, HELP YOU DREAM, I'M SHAKIN, BLUE SHADOWS, COMMON MAN, NO OTHER GIRL, HOLLYWOOD BED, TOO TIRED, TAG ALONG, DARK NIGHT, BORDER RADIO, and AMERICAN MUSIC. Encore: ONE BAD STUD and MARIE MARIE.

The performance was just spectacular. I can't imagine this band ever being better. And the audience walked away very satisfied. Phil Alvin sweated, showed the grimacing face and sang beautifully. Dave Alvin cranked out all his great riffs, jumping in the air and chugging notes on the guitar faster than the eye could see. Bill Bateman made the drums be heard, as he did in the old days. Johnny Bazz wore his Blasters&Beer shirt and played hard holding down the rhythm as he always does. You won't see a bass player pull strings so far off the bass as Bazz does. Gene Taylor sang on TAG ALONG and showed why as a piano player he is among the great ones.

Also say "Happy Birthday" to Phil Alvin. It's funny though, that we the fans got the present.

Backstage the band celebrated in a crowded small room: Three bands, their guests, and no room. Dave: "Everyone on earth was backstage at that gig except (Chris) Gaffney couldn't get back there or any of the people who were actually working for us." "The night ended on one sour note. Someone stole the Lee Allen cap from the shrine dedicated to him on the side of the stage. Lee gave the cap to a friend of the Blasters many years ago. That friend was in attendance and was asked to lend his cap to the shrine. The cap was probably taken by a fan that innocently thought it was a prop and didn't know how special it was to its owner. It is hoped that the cap snatcher reads this and will return the cap to the Blasters and there will be no hard feelings. It's a prized possession that is only of sentimental value to a long time friend of Lee Allen's.

Dave: "Other than the Lee Allen's hat being stolen, Chris Gaffney's early 1970's Black Fender Stratocaster disappeared." Because of the thefts, everyone left with a bad taste despite a great Blasters show. Luckily the next day, it was discovered that the Beat Farmers roadies accidentally loaded the guitar in their truck so the guitar was returned, but the hat remains missing.

What a show it was. This is a band that has to be seen live. This may have been the best concert I have ever seen and tour has only just started.



## **3/7/02 - The Blasters Galaxy Theatre Sound Check Santa Ana CA**

Phil didn't come to sound check. The interesting thing about these sound checks is you can sometimes hear songs from the band that aren't played in the regular show. A good example happened today. Gene Taylor hadn't set up yet so only Dave, Bill, and John were on stage playing. I don't know if this was a conscious decision but they played a rapid fire few songs that they had recorded on the American Music Rollin Rock record in 1980 which was before

Gene Taylor joined the band. The songs were I FELL IN LOVE and LONE WOLF. Dave had played those two with the Blast-

ers back at the first impromptu reunion jam at the Blue Café in Long Beach in June. They faced each other in a circle and played the songs, as Dave yelled the lyric lines, barely audible because they were playing so loud. They were having a lot of fun playing together. Then they played a favorite warm up tune for Dave, Freddie King's SIDETRACKED. Gene soon joined them and they continued the Rollin Rock theme playing REAL ROCK DRIVE. They sounded tight playing those songs, and it's a shame they didn't get played at the show. Next they did a few songs from last night's show that needed some polishing on changes and endings.

A funny moment happened when the volume level on Bill Bateman's kick drum was set so loud that it would vibrate the glass light fixtures. When he would step on his pedal a 'big boom' would sustain through the room. Bill ran up to the front of the stage and called out dramatically to soundman Rick Brown in the back at the sound board, "You're tearing the house down! It's way way too big! (laughing) It's just a little jazz bass drum."

There was obviously a lot of extra equipment and double mics set up around the drums and amps because the Blasters themselves are recording for a possible live album. Their plan is to record tonight's show and the L.A. House of Blues show. Mark Linett, who has engineered many of Dave's albums, is in charge of the recording.



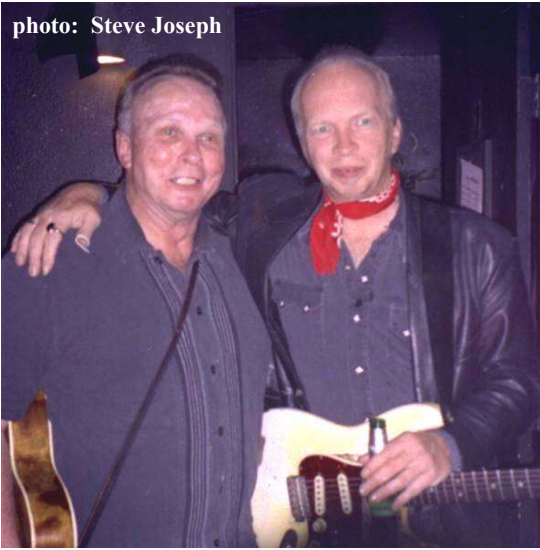
**The trio plays in a circle as Gene looks on.**

## **3/7/02 - The Blasters Galaxy Theater Show Santa Ana CA**

Santa Ana is part of Orange County, an area about one hour south of Los Angeles. The Galaxy is a beautiful old style theatre with step-up levels with tables and seating. On the floor, right against the stage is a half circle dance floor for general admission standing. Up in the balcony are private viewing boxes. It's a beautiful theatre.

Backstage the band prepared for the show. Dave and Phil separately gave interviews to L.A. Times reporter Richard Cromelin for a L.A. Times Calendar section cover story to appear in the coming Saturday edition. John Bazz and Bill Bateman stood behind the merchandise

photo: Steve Joseph



Phil and Dave just before show time.

counter posing for pictures, signing autographs, and selling T-shirts. It was cool to see some of the Blasters out there with the fans. Lots of people gathered around as John remembers: "It was fun for me because about every other person that bought a shirt had a Blasters story and it was really great to hear that stuff. The typical story was when they saw us for the first time, they'd say, 'I was with my girl and now we have three kids and here is my oldest.' That was fun."

The Blasters had some guests back stage. One of them was Tiny Allen, Lee Allen's widow. The Blasters lined up to say hello to her. No one saw her after the show but everyone is sure she was touched by the Lee Allen tribute. Later during the set Phil dedicated TOO TIRED to her. He said playfully, "This goes out to one of my lover girls, Tiny Allen."

The Lee Allen shrine at the side of the stage had an addition: the night's set list. As soon as Phil made it to the mic he pointed over to the chair with Lee's sax, LP cover and whiskey bottle, and said, "That saxophone sitting there, in case you didn't know is a dedication to Lee Allen. His wife Tiny is here. (He was) the saxophone player gracious enough to put a horn in Rock N Roll."

The Blasters played the same set as the night before with some songs in different order. The only addition was SO LONG BABY GOODBYE put just before the final song of the regular set AMERICAN MUSIC and Dave remembers: "Phil suggested we move I'm SHAKIN up near the beginning because it was harder to sing later."

Following Phil's dedications, he sent out RED ROSE saying: "This goes out to your river bed." He had some fun with HELP YOU DREAM. Once again he said, "This goes out to my brother David who is right now in a bar lying to a girl." Phil with a big grin turned to Dave and Dave was busy tuning his guitar facing his amp. Phil returned to the mic and said, "David whispered under his breath that, that girl is me." In the low down part of the song Phil typically duels with someone else whether it's Keith Wyatt in the new Blasters or now Gene Taylor in the old Blasters - kind of a riff trade off part. Phil said in the mic as he looked over at Gene: "I'm not gonna tell him 'You can't catch me' cause I know he can."

COMMON MAN was noticeably different. Dave started off with a different and more note

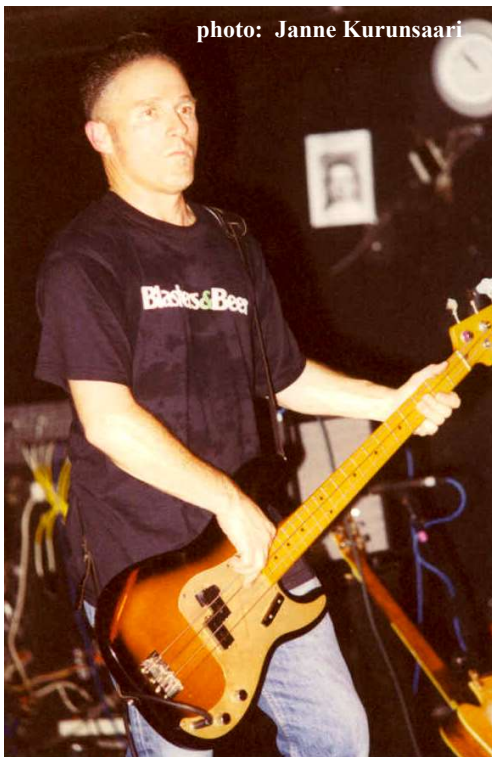
filled guitar lick. Maybe this was because of the recording and they were looking to get a few different versions. Dave also added a cool slow bluesy solo on the ending that extended the song to six and a half minutes long - an excellent version. Dave: "I was kind of thinking of that as like a Guilty Men song. The Blasters actually let me go to town. The same on DARK NIGHT. In the old

photo: Billy Davis



John Bazz and Bill Bateman at the merchandise counter.





John Bazz with his Blasters&Beer shirt.

days they would never let me do that. I would have gotten a lecture backstage from Bateman and Phil.”

During HOLLYWOOD BED, Gene was taking a piano solo. Phil took Gene’s hat off and poured what we thought was water on his head. It spilled on the keys too. Phil usually has water and douses his own head and neck to cool himself down but the liquid was actually Gatorade. Gene didn’t look happy, and motioned to Phil to wipe the piano keys off. Gene recalls: “Phil meant to pour water and he actually had the Gatorade. I was getting hot and he wanted to cool me off. You might want to say it was a sticky situation because I didn’t mind it getting on me but it was getting on the keys.” Phil started wiping the keys and banging down on it in time with the song. Phil resumed singing and a roadie came out and wiped down the keyboard more and by request wiped Gene’s head off. Some say it might have been retaliation on Phil’s part because last night Gene playfully autographed Phil’s old Kay guitar. Phil and Gene pick up the story: Phil: “Gene Taylor signed this guitar last night, because Gene Tay-

lor originally bought this guitar.” Gene: “I bought it at a pawn shop. I was the first of our group to own this instrument.” Phil: “And he gave it to Gary Masi because it was just like the ‘I-Am-Jimmy-Reed guitar.” Gene: “Gary Masi is the world’s biggest Jimmy Reed fan, so I thought he deserved it.” Phil later claimed that when he poured the liquid on Gene’s head, he thought he had water and forgot that it was Gatorade.

They kept picking on each other through out the show. When it was time for Gene to sing TAG ALONG Phil announced him saying, “Gene I-got-too-much-love-on-my-hands Taylor.”

Dave was trying to move things along into BORDER RADIO and yelled off mic “Are you ready.” Phil yelled, “No.” and Dave shot back, “He’s not ready,” Phil responded, “Excuse me. I was breathing. Then moved to the mike and said: “I signed a contract that I wouldn’t (he took a big breath) hold it in for very long.” Then over the BORDER they went. SO LONG BABY GOOD BYE was an important addition to the set for Phil. He has learned Lee Allen’s sax solo note-for-note on the harmonica and especially wanted it in the set with Tiny Allen in attendance. Also Phil’s ambition has been to get that version on a Blasters album whether live or in the studio. Hopefully if this live album comes out, Phil will get his wish.

Dave had a subtle ways of showing his admiration for the Lee Allen legacy. If you watch carefully at some point in the show, Dave lights a cigarette and continues to play guitar. Once per show, while his hands are free from the guitar, he steps next to the photo of Lee on the chair shrine and puts the cigarette to Lee’s mouth for a shared drag.

The set list: RED ROSE, TROUBLE





BOUND, FLATTOP JOINT, I'M SHAKIN, LONG WHITE CADILLAC, CRAZY BABY, HELP YOU DREAM, BLUE SHADOWS, COMMON MAN, NO OTHER GIRL, HOLLYWOOD BED, TOO TIRED, TAG ALONG, DARK NIGHT, BORDER RADIO, SO LONG BABY GOODBYE, and AMERICAN MUSIC. Encores: ONE BAD STUD and MARIE MARIE.

Dave: "I had the set list written and SO LONG BABY got yanked or skipped last night. I had MARIE and ONE BAD STUD in the regular set and figured we would do the oddball stuff in the encore, but it didn't work out so that sort of allowed the master set list take shape for the other shows where MARIE and ONE BAD STUD were the encore songs." Dave understands why Phil didn't do longer shows, "It's physically pretty hard on him."

Glen Glen the rockabilly singer was in attendance and Phil dedicated AMERICAN MUSIC to him saying: "And this goes out Glen Glen one of your local American Music stars." Dave remembers the first time he met Glen Glen, "I first met him about 10 years ago and that was right after the movie Cry Baby came out. On the movie soundtrack I stole a Glen Glen lick in writing KING CRY BABY. It's that little guitar thing right at the top of the song. When I met him, he busted me. He had a song called EVERYBODY'S MOVIN' and that was what it was from. I said to him I used one of your licks and he said You're damn right you did (laughs). We had fun. He came backstage before the show at the galaxy and we were singin' songs away like EVERYBODY'S MOVIN and ONE CUP OF COFFEE AND A CIGARETTE. He made some great records."

The band filed off after the regular set finisher of AMERICAN MUSIC. Dave passed the mike and said, "Gene Taylor, Phil Alvin, John Bazz, Bill Bateman, Lee Allen. See ya all in 17 years." When they returned for the encore, Gene Taylor started playing a piano version of a Bing Crosby song called TOO-RA-LOO-RA-LOO-RAL (THAT'S AN IRISH LULLABY). Phil picked it up and started singing a few verses, Dave joined in as John and Bill looked on in surprise. Just a little bit of fun there as Dave recalls: "I don't know where that came from (laughs). I remember doing it; it just came out of Phil's brain."

There was some more fun at the end of ONE BAD STUD when the band stoped and holds before the last chord of the song. Dave stands at stage center and, as he has done in his Guilty Men live shows, he throws his pick up and catches it in a show-off-of-skill move. Phil just looked at Dave and imitated the same thing with his recently opened soda can. Of course the soda spilled all over him and started foaming out all over the place. Phil just put that sly grin on his face and looked at Dave. Dave again threw his pick in the air and caught it. Phil yelled "Tails." And then they all hit the final chord. Dave just smiled and waved to the audience as they walked off the stage.

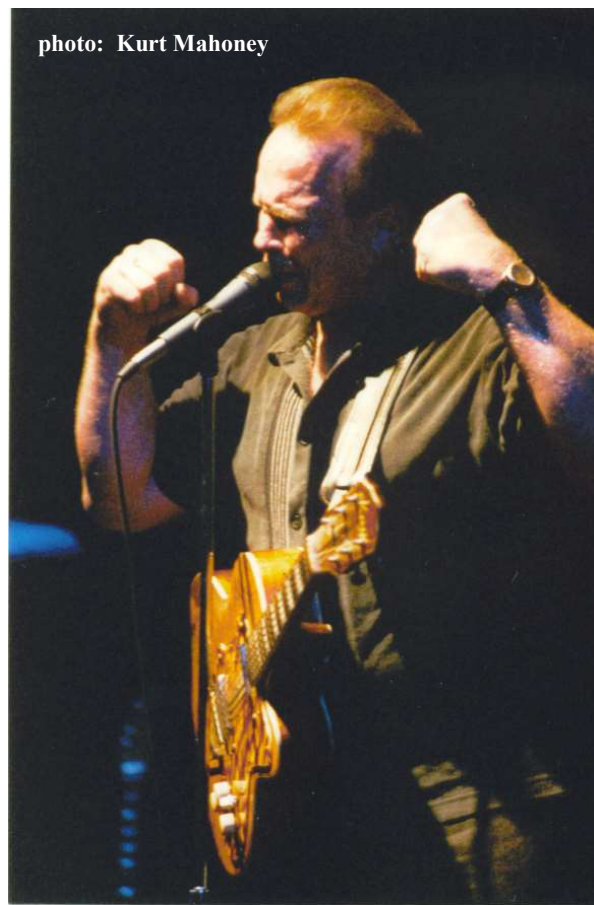


photo: Kurt Mahoney

**Phil sings I'M SHAKIN'.**

They came back from MARIE MARIE and Dave whispered to Phil, "Plug the record." So Phil announced in the mic, "We got a record coming out that has all the songs we recorded at Warner Bros and MCA, it's called 'The Blasters.' Buy it, record it for a friend." As they finished Phil said all the band members names and said "I'll see you on the freeway." It was another legendary Blasters show.

The Blasters always prove they are so fan friendly. Barry from Santa Ana reported this: "Afterwards I went down to the stage where the roadies were wrapping up the cords and stuff, with my CD and Sharpie in hand. John Bazz jumped down to greet some of his friends but I didn't feel like buggin' him. Then I saw Gene Taylor packing up his keyboard and I complimented him on a great show and asked him to sign the CD, which he did. John was still on the floor, so I asked him for his autograph. When he saw the new CD with Gene's signature on it, he asked if I wanted all the guys to sign it. 'Absolutely' I said. We talked about it for a minute, then he took it backstage. In about three minutes he came back and handed it to me. He got Phil, Dave, and Bill to sign it. E-Bay here I come -- NOT. What a great time. Thanks again." John remembers that and says, "Yeah that was the least I could do. It was like a one time thing. Who knew if you'd ever see us all together again." Next stop: Home turf, Los Angeles.

## **3/8/02 - The Blasters House Of Blues Sound Check Hollywood CA**



There's always some kind of controversy going on with the Blasters, and today some of it started. An article on the Blasters was printed in The L.A. Times Calendar section front page titled "Original Blast" by Richard Cromelin. It's considered great press to get a color photo on the cover and a long article. But Dave's comments about the state of the Blasters new and old was pushed into a direction by the writer to cause some offense to be taken by members of the new and old Blasters.

(See the end of this issue for the whole story and comments from all the participants.)

Another stressful situation was trying to get the band to arrive early at the House Of Blues sound check. Everybody knew Phil wouldn't be there so he could rest his voice. It was important for the instrumental band because they would again be recording the show for the possible live album., but John Bazz arrived an hour and a half late, resulting in very quiet (except from their instruments) band members. I was told, "it was typical Blasters stuff to always have something going wrong." In the waiting process, Dave spent a half hour on stage by him self-playing solo blues guitar licks from his Public Domain album and other electric blues guitar stuff.

When the Blasters minus-Phil were all there, they recorded a version of TOO TIRED for possible inclusion on this live album.

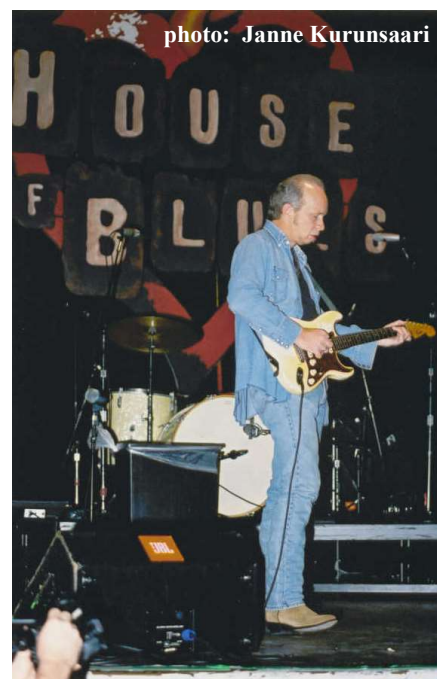


photo: Janne Kurunsaari

Dave plays Public Domain songs.

Dave says, "All we would have to do is add Phil's vocal. We recorded it because live, Phil has been singing it, finishing too early leaving off a verse." I asked Bill why he had a hammer lying next to his drum kit and he explained: "I bang an old nail through my foot pedal into the band stand, then pull it out at the end of the night (to hold the drums in place). It's also for my personal protection (laughs)." Gene seemed to be having trouble with his keyboard. Certain notes kept going flat. It might have had to do with Phil's Gatorade the night before. Gene called in a sound technician and they changed keyboards for tonight's show.

## **3/8/02 - The Blasters House Of Blues Show Hollywood CA**

Rumble King opened the show. John Bazz has played bass for them as a fill in for their regular bass player. For the Blasters tonight, it was a sold out crowd in their hometown. Many fans had to be turned away. The Blasters walked on stage to great anticipation that built through the Lee Allen tribute song. Phil said to the audience: "Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen. We are the Blasters . . .or some other incarnation thereof." Dave made a bit of a face at that comment. Phil continued: "That was a dedication to the great Lee Allen."



Before TROUBLE BOUND, Phil gave a little hint that the show was being recorded when he said "El Chinga El Record!"

Here was the set list: RED ROSE, TROUBLE BOUND, FLATTOP JOINT, I'M SHAKIN, LONG WHITE CADILLAC, CRAZY BABY, HELP YOU DREAM, COMMON MAN, BLUE SHADOWS, NO OTHER GIRL, HOLLYWOOD BED, TOO TIRED, TAG ALONG, DARK NIGHT, BORDER RADIO, I WISH YOU WOULD, SO LONG BABY GOODBYE, and AMERICAN MUSIC. Encores: ONE BAD STUD and MARIE MARIE.

A couple from Finland traveled 12,000 miles to see the Blasters show and got engaged during CRAZY BABY. Phil Alvin met with them after the show to personally congratulate them.

There was some trouble during TAG ALONG, which is a song that piano player Gene Taylor sings. Gene's vocal mic wasn't working. A fan in the crowd tried to pass Phil's mic in front of Gene. Gene knocked it out of the way. He said later that he was sorry he did that, but the stand was put in the way of his playing hand on that side. Phil then held a mic in front of Gene with one hand and strummed his guitar with the other. Gene remembers: "My vocal wasn't in the house speakers. It was (sounded) perfect where I was sitting. So, Phil came over with his microphone. But then I lost my focus. Phil is looking at the audience and starts drifting with the mic and I'm trying to play and sing and it's a fast song (laughs). I started yelling at Phil, 'Get that mic in my mouth - get it over here.' (laughs)"

Phil dedicated FLATTOP JOINT to James Intveld saying: "This goes out to James Intveld,





photo: Kurt Mahoney

former Blasters guitar player and singer.” For a lot of people the show brought back memories, even for James Intveld as he remembers: “Being an ex-Blaster, I came to the reunion gig to show my support. Seeing all the guys together took me back to a very innocent time in my life as far as how I felt about being a musician. All my dreams and fantasies during the early years of my career were revisited that night, mainly because the songs were being played by that particular cast. I thought they sounded exceptionally like themselves, with all their personalities intact. My favorite song of the night was HOLLYWOOD BED. I would have liked this show better if it had been at the Roxy or the Whiskey. I think when you grow up playing with a certain group of guys and you're all learning together, you can't help but make a sound that works as a unit. It made me miss my brother more than I already do.” (James’ brother Ricky, a drummer, died in Ricky Nelson’s plane crash in 1985.)

This was the only show where Phil did not dedicate HELP YOU DREAM in a joking manner to Dave. In-

stead he dedicated it to his girl friend Christina.

The Blasters played hard. So hard, that everybody broke guitar strings. Phil broke two on successive guitars and even bass player John Bazz broke a string. Gene Taylor got into the act, being very animated through the show. He stood up and got the whole audience clapping; he ran behind the stage to get beer, and at one point coaxed Phil Alvin into pouring water on his head to cool him down. I'm sure Gene was happy that this time, it was only water.

A pleasant surprise was the last-minute-call by Phil for the Billy Boy Arnold song I WISH YOU WOULD. By this third show of the tour, the band had their arrangements down pat and Dave is really shining on some of the extended guitar solo endings to songs like COMMON MAN, TOO TIRED and AMERICAN MUSIC.

They were about to start AMERICAN MUSIC when Dave yelled across the stage to Phil, “Plug the record.” Phil then said: “There is an album that came out with all the stuff that we recorded on Warner Bros and MCA records. Buy that if you wish. Get it from a friend and record it.”

After AMERICAN MUSIC ended, Phil said, “Thank You. Were the Blasters. Come see us again. Buy that record.” Dave passed by the mic and said “John Bazz, Bill Bateman, Gene Taylor, Phil Alvin and Lee Allen: The original one and only Blasters. See ya in 20 years.” Dave stressed the words’ Original-One-and-Only’ obviously because of Phil’s opening sarcastic introduction that said ‘We are The Blasters or some incarnation there of.’

Coming back on stage Dave started playing a little guitar from I DON’T WANT TO, but Phil moved right on to the final song ONE BAD STUD.

With some of the things that happened at the sound check, Dave was stressed and a little annoyed. It showed in his playing - He played with fire. He didn’t smile much in the show, and

admitted later that he was very nervous, but he really took out all that aggression on the guitar and it made it the best show so far of the three, it's a great thrill to watch Dave play guitar. The Blasters have always existed with strained relations within the band. The volatile mix is what gives them some of that energy. This is the Blasters way -- and we wouldn't have it any other way.

The House of Blues is a very upscale club with tight security. Dave, "Again we had trouble. I went through hell trying to get in to the building. They are pretty strict. I walked

to the dressing room needing ten or fifteen minutes to sit down and practice before going to the stage. I walk into the dressing room and it's wall-to-wall people that I don't know. They already drank all of our beer, so I was T-ed off. I got the manager to have everybody thrown out that didn't have a pass. I found out later that Taylor really dug that. He said that the manager came in and said, 'Okay everybody has to leave the dressing room. 'Somebody yells who says?' The guitar player wants you all out. (laughs)' Gene thought that was real bitchin' (laughs)."Dave, "I thought all of the gigs had special moments, but this one was special because it was L.A. I've since found out that there were a lot of people who were there that I hadn't seen in a long time. They couldn't, or just didn't bother to try to get backstage" John Bazz said the same: "The L.A. show was the closest for me to getting back to the old days. It's our core audience. When Dave left the band in 1986, a lot of people stopped coming around. The old fan base started dropping out. So, tonight I saw a lot of old faces - kind of a reunion for them too."

The show was recorded and Dave was asked if they got anything good on tape, "The only thing that we did (live) that isn't on any Blasters record is TOO TIRED. But Phil wasn't singing the whole song live - he was leaving out a verse. So we recorded it at (The House of Blues) sound check. If we use it, Phil would just have to come in to the studio and add his voice. But the differences in versions of COMMON MAN and DARK NIGHT from the album versions are probably pretty cool. ONE BAD STUD is different than the studio version too."

On to the San Francisco treat -- The Blasters at Slim's.

## **3/9/02 -- The Blasters Slim's Sound Check San Francisco CA**

The Blasters sound check started with the band trying to get used to new equipment. The band flew up to San Francisco and decided to rent all the equipment except guitars. Dave Alvin made the drive up in order to bring along his amp. He didn't want to risk shipping it. Phil Alvin didn't make the sound check again so he could rest. The band played a few rare songs in the sound check - HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL and Dave Alvin, guitar-less, singing ROCK BOPPIN BABY. Dave stood at the mic with his hands folded over the mic and belted out the song. That happened as a result of Dave testing Phil's mic for the soundman. The soundman



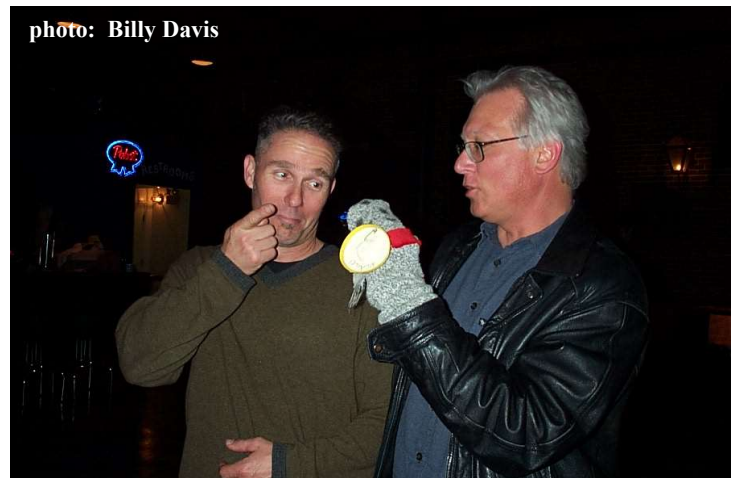
photo: Kurt Mahoney

Phil holds the mic for Gene during TAG ALONG.





**The Blasters sound checking.**



**John Bazz, Mr. Sock, Babo.**

was an old friend from the old days named Babo. He traveled with the Blasters from 1981-1984.

Babo brought along another friend from the old days of the Blasters organization, Mr. Sock. He was the band's mascot from the old days. It's been a long time coming for this reunion: Mr. Sock only attends Blasters shows when Babo works as soundman. Dave tells the story of Mr. Sock becoming a Blaster, "Babo found a sock in Boston. Someone left one sock in Babo's hotel room. He drew eyes on it and that became 'Socker.' We were out on the road for about four months non-stop for Non Fiction. It was like an endless tour; you can go a little brain dead when you're on the road. So we just thought 'Socker' was the greatest thing on earth (laughs). We would go through the tollbooths and Socker would do the talking for us. It even got to the point where we were so mentally deranged, we would let Sock do the sound checks. We would look out from the stage and Babo would be crouched underneath the soundboard and all you would see is the sock. At some point he got a little sombrero and he became 'Señor Socko.' He used to get girls (laughs)."

Dave: "The only guy missing from the old gang was our road manager Wally Hanley. We first met him when we were opening for a band called 20/20 at the Whiskey in 1980. He was roadie-ing for them then came to us. When I left the Blasters, he came with me and then to X. Wally went on to manage John Hiatt and Los Lobos for ten years. He works for Habitat for Humanity now. He was the main guy missing."

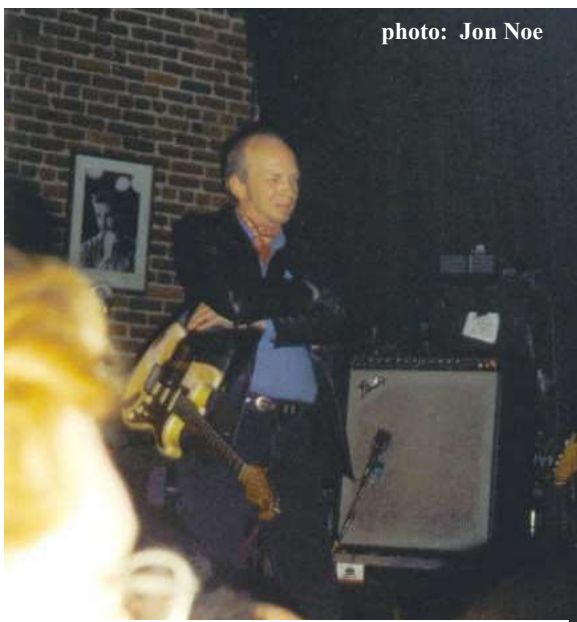


**"Señor Socko quiere mucho a Los Blasters!"**

## **3/9/02 -- The Blasters Slim's Show San Francisco CA**

Slim's is a big name in the San Francisco club scene but small in capacity at 460 people. This gig is the only one on the tour that is not considered a concert hall type venue, but a small club atmosphere. Dave Alvin expected this to be the best show of the tour. Dave: "I'm looking





Dave waits for Phil to turn his amp on.

forward to that show. We have always had a big following in San Francisco.”

The place was sold out weeks in advance. This tour has been a reunion for not only the original Blasters band members, but also the fans. Many people who followed the band in the old days came out to see these shows. People from all over the country traveled here. One fan letter I received that really struck a chord and tells of the feeling towards the Blasters: “My wife told me that I couldn't go to the San Francisco show, but I just smiled, then hit a few keys on the computer and made my airline reservations. I think my priorities are straight, don't you?” Yeah, I can't agree more.

Rockin' Lloyd Trip opened the show as the rain poured down outside. The crowd kept getting louder as the place was filling up. By showtime, people were

pushed tight against the stage. The anticipation mounted.

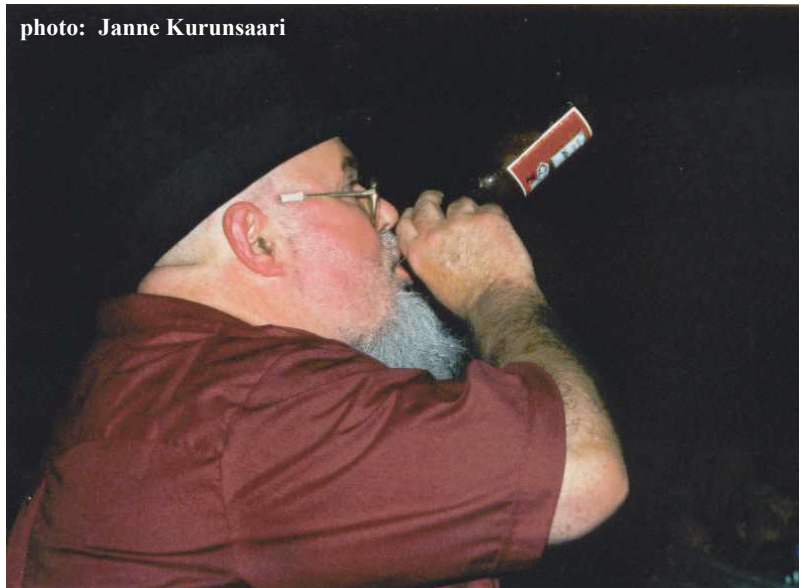
Showtime came as WALKIN WITH MR LEE played. The band walked out on stage to big applause. Phil plugged in his amp and realized it wasn't working. He hadn't arranged to have his amp plugged in or set at the proper volume. He couldn't get the amp working and looked a little embarrassed. Phil approached the mike to stall the audience: “One second, I have to learn how to turn this amplifier on.” Someone else in the crowd got a laugh by yelling, “What? Did you get that on ebay?” Dave muttered under his breath, shaking his head, “Professional, professional,” as you could see the rest of the band just lost all their pent up adrenaline. It took something away from the continuity of the Lee Allen tribute opening song into the opening Blasters song. Dave, “That pissed me off. I just thought, if Phil wasn't gonna be professional, then why should I care.” Dave shook his head and crossed his arms. He even took off the guitar and waited the few minutes as Phil kept working. It took four minutes to get the amp going because the power switch was in a different spot than most amplifiers.

Finally the amp made a big loud buzzing noise and the crowd roared in approval. Phil was ready and said: “Good evening, ladies and gentleman. Sorry I couldn't figure the amplifier out. I'm not sure I figured it out yet. Without any further adieu: We are the Blasters or some incarnation thereof.” Immediately they went into RED ROSE. A girl in the audience handed Phil ‘one red rose’ and yes she was wearing a new black dress. She came all the way from Chicago to see the Blasters.

Four songs into the set, Dave was still upset: “By I'M SHAKIN, I was just leaning on my amp playing with my thumb. Bateman was yelling at me ‘People pay good money to get into



here. Don't fuck this gig up." Through those first four songs you could see there was a definite lack of energy on stage, Dave couldn't shake his aggravation. But during LONG WHITE CADILLAC Bill Bateman took control of the situation. Bill: "Yeah, I got a little upset because it was so packed, the crowd was uncomfortably crowded and they paid good money to be there and they weren't getting a good show. I yelled at Dave and he snapped out of it." Bill did this by hitting the drums and cymbals so hard his drums got louder than any of the other instruments. Bass player John



**Gene chugging.**

Bazz turned to face the drums wondering what the commotion was all about: "I was turning around yelling 'Yes!' Because I had been missing that element of his drumming the whole tour. In that song he was really going over the top like he used to in the old days." Bill got Dave's attention and inspired him. Dave: "Bateman snapped me out of that. That was typical old Blasters stuff. It was Bill's way of communicating. I was more than willing to walk through the whole show after Phil's opening. Bill was pissed at Phil and I. But you know, that was the only sort of 'Phil and Dave legendary-brother-thing' brought on stage. After that it was a great show." Yes, Dave was rockin' again.

The next song was CRAZY BABY and again Dave was smiling and enjoying playing. When HELP YOU DREAM came around, Phil skipped mentioning a dedication.

Gene Taylor was very animated tonight getting the crowd going and in typical rock n roll fashion, was pounding down beers all through the set. He had a tub of beer in ice at his feet and at one point pulled a bottle out and gave one to an audience member in front of him.

After BORDER RADIO, Phil introduced the band for the first time on the tour. He said: "Dave Alvin, John Bazz, Bill Bateman, Gene Taylor, and me George W. Bush." The crowd started to boo, and Phil just laughed.

They finished the regular set with AMERICAN MUSIC and came back for an encore of ONE BAD STUD. As the band walked off, a fan asked Gene for his set list. He gave it to him, then he grabbed Phil's harmonica and faked throwing it in the crowd. Then he grabbed Phil's guitar and faked throwing that in the crowd.

After MARIE MARIE, Dave passed the mic and announced the band members finishing it off by saying: "See ya in twenty years."

Here was the set list: RED ROSE, TROUBLE BOUND, FLATTOP JOINT, I'M SHAKIN, LONG WHITE CADILLAC, CRAZY BABY, HELP YOU DREAM, COMMON MAN, BLUE SHADOWS, NO OTHER GIRL, HOLLYWOOD BED, TOO TIRED, TAG ALONG, DARK NIGHT, BORDER RADIO, SO LONG BABY GOODBYE, and AMERICAN MUSIC. Encores: ONE BAD STUD and MARIE MARIE. The set was just the same as Santa Ana. The original recipe seems to be working, so the Blasters don't want to fool with the set list.



## 3/10/02 -- The Blasters Mystic Theatre Sound Check Petaluma CA

photo: Janne Kurunsaari



The piano stylings of Phil Alvin.

Petaluma is a small town about 50 miles north of San Francisco. The Mystic Theatre is a small theatre looking something like an old vaudeville theatre. It was a good sound check today: Phil was there and everybody was pretty relaxed. Phil arrived and immediately checked his amplifier (after having problems the night before). Chris Gaffney showed Phil the settings and made sure there would not be any problems tonight.



photo: Janne Kurunsaari

Chris had already turned it on and tried it out before Phil arrived.

Gene Taylor put on a piano clinic, as everyone was getting ready. He played some brilliant stuff -- A bunch of old tunes including BROTHER CAN YOU SPARE A DIME and ST. LOUIS BLUES. I made a special request of the piano riff that Gene played as a hidden track at the end of the new Blasters Testament 2 CD set. On the master tape reels, it was titled LITTLE PHIL, but Gene tells us that it is actually a part from I GOT YOUR ICE COLD NU-GRAPE by the Nu-Grape Twins from the 1930's. Gene played the whole song and sung the lyrics as well.

The band started playing and jammed on some riffs that merged into other riffs and songs. One of those riffs that has circulated through the band during soundchecks and rehearsals was Joe Liggin's HONEY DRIPPER PART 2. Other rareties surfaced like WHERE YOU GET YOUR SUGAR FROM. Phil sounded great singing this and Dave took a cool blues solo on the song. They also ran through their set-opening song RED ROSE. Phil's voice was showing some strain during this song. Four straight gigs in a row are taking their toll.

Phil next got up on piano again and played old jazz songs singing along. He directed his attention to the few people at the sound check who were very entertained by watching him flip through his repertoire of piano songs. He played one called YOU TOOT YOUR WHISTLE and another by Don Redman called HEAVEN'S IN YOUR HEART.

As the Blasters relaxed backstage awaiting the start



photo: Billy Davis



of the show, Babo, introduced Mr. Sock to everybody. Tonight, Mr. Sock decided he wanted to watch the show from the top of Dave's amp. The band was ready for the last show of the tour.

## **3/10/02 -- The Blasters Mystic Theatre Show Petaluma CA**



A lot of crazy things happened tonight - maybe because it was the last night of the tour and everybody wanted to have their last bit of fun. Gene Taylor continued to lead the scoring in band mischief. Back stage I saw a very funny scene. In the corner of the dressing room stood Lee Allen's shrine props - a chair with the sax (inside its case), a picture of Lee, and a bottle of Lee's favorite whiskey; Johnny Walker Black label. (The Blasters contract stated the venue had to provide that whiskey bottle every night for the Lee Allen tribute). There were a few people in the room talking as Gene walked in nonchalantly towards the bottle. He took a quick look around to make sure no one was watching - luckily I escaped his eye - and he took a swig from the bottle. What Gene didn't know before hand, is that the bottle was actually refilled at the bar with a quarter Coca Cola and the rest water. It wasn't actually whiskey in there. Gene turned around, didn't react - or make any kind of

face - and walked directly out of the room. I laughed so hard. Gene was really cool about it and didn't let on that he was fooled.

The Blasters hit the stage after the Lee Allen song. The Lee Allen shrine had a new picture of Lee instead of the LP cover. It was a cool picture of him in a long white coat. Babo provided that photo. He and Lee were very close friends.

The Blasters set list: RED ROSE, TROUBLE BOUND, FLATTOP JOINT, I'M SHAKIN', LONG WHITE CADILLAC, CRAZY BABY, HELP YOU DREAM, COMMON MAN, BLUE SHADOWS, NO OTHER GIRL, HOLLYWOOD BED, TOO TIRED, TAG ALONG, DARK NIGHT, BORDER RADIO, SO LONG BABY GOODBYE, and AMERICAN MUSIC. Encore songs ONE BAD STUD and MARIE MARIE.

Phil's voice showed some strain especially on the first few songs. It got a little better as the show went on. John Bazz recalls: "Starting off it was really bad, the worst I ever heard it. But five gigs in a row is just unheard of." Bill backs up Phil's courage: "I thought Phil did a hell of a job, was a real trooper, and gave it his all."

Dave: "I thought Phil's voice sounded great the whole tour. He was right at that cusp where he was gonna start to lose it in the end of the San Francisco show, but he still sounded great. He gave it his all in Petaluma and I think he really stepped up to the plate." Phil's voice got better when he warmed up but for the vocally tough I'M SHAKIN' Phil said: "Oh Doctor. Oh Doctor. Cross your fingers on this one."

An early high point in the show came on LONG WHITE CADILLAC. The band really steps it up a notch led by John Bazz on bass who plays some intense bass on that song. His style of pulling the strings far from straight lines really drives the song.



**Gene starting some high jinx.**

The songs tonight often had longer solos than in the previous shows. In HOLLYWOOD BED Gene Taylor waved Phil away from the microphone - he was getting ready to go back into the lyrics - Gene waved his hand in a round-and-round motion. Phil joked back motioning he was zipping his lip. Gene did a double solo drawing cheers from the crowd. Dave came back at the end of the song and did the same: another extended solo. It's cool to see the Blasters be able to stretch out and jam a little. The band consciously took long solos to give Phil some vocal rest during the show.

A musician friend of the Blasters from Los Angeles was in attendance at the show in the

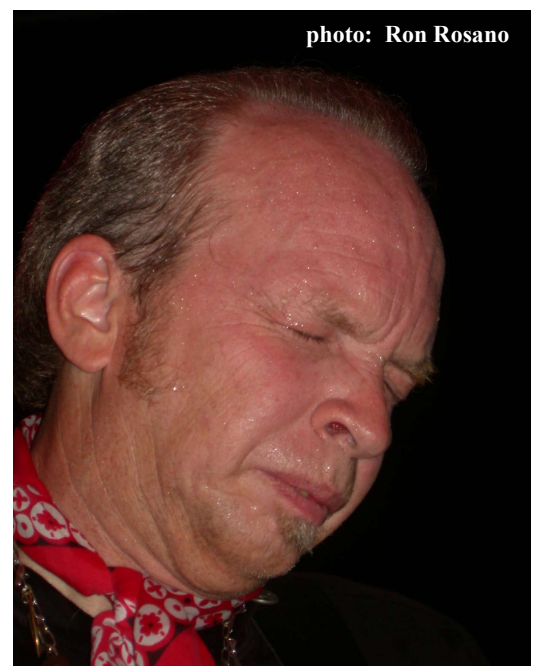
front row. His name is Carlos Guitarlos. He was the guitar player from the Top Jimmy and the Rhythm Pigs band. Phil spent the rest of the evening teasing Carlos. When Phil first spotted him, he said, "I dedicate this song to you." Dave started playing the Blasters love song HELP YOU DREAM. Quickly Phil said, "No. Not this song, but the next one" with a big sheepish grin on his face.

Phil and Gene did some dueling in the section of HELP YOU DREAM where everyone plays at a low volume awaiting the big ending. Gene played a few piano licks then Phil returned with the melody line from Beethoven's 9TH SYMPHONY FINALE (ODE TO JOY). Phil joked: "That's a little tune I wrote, but I don't have any words for it yet (laughs)."

BLUE SHADOWS was next. During the song, Gene continued his interaction with the audience. He started talking to Carlos and handed him his hat to try on. When the song ended, Phil sang a short blues song that drew a lot of laughter from the audience aimed at Carlos Guitarlos. He sang this:

"Carlos, you know the undertaker came by this morning.  
I gave him your height and size.  
Carlos, you know the undertaker came by this morning.  
I gave him your height and size.  
You'll be making whoopee with the devil,  
in hell about this time tomorrow night  
Carlos, you know the devil told me he has 90 million little  
punk boys, oh but he just needs just one more.  
Carlos, you know the devil told me he has 90 million little  
punk boys, but he just needs just one more.  
He said if I'd deliver you he'd treat those 90 million just  
like they were princes, and just one like he was a little jail-  
house whore."

Phil left off the last word 'whore' and only said it off mic. He admitted to the audience: "Notice how I cleaned



**Dave just playing guitar.**



myself up.” The audience loved it and applauded. Phil laughed and said : “You shouldn’t clap for that.” That was a variation on the Lonnie Johnson song SHE’S MAKING WHOOPIE IN HELL TONIGHT (Okeh records 1930).

Back to serious Blasters music: DARK NIGHT was a special treat. Dave Alvin gave his all on the song playing a hard edged solo that showed he was giving a little extra; Dave gave the audience two of his trademark leaps in the air.

During BORDER RADIO Gene was getting into silly-mode. He played most of the song with a white towel over his head with a hat on top of it - meanwhile chugging beers. This guy doesn’t sip - he gulps. Only two meetings with the bottle and it’s empty! Gene was just having fun the whole tour. During SO LONG BABY GOOD BYE, Gene stood up and clapped, getting the audience clapping, then he took his hat off and started pretending to turn his hand like an organ grinder and holding his hat for tips.

After AMERICAN MUSIC finished, Phil said goodnight and Dave followed announcing all the members names and said simply: “Goodnight.” When everyone returned to the stage for the first encore Dave stopped at the mic and said, “This only happens every 22 years.” Phil, for some reason, didn’t return to the stage with the band. Phil was nowhere to be found and the band just looked totally confused. After about a minute, Carlos Guitarlos walked out on the stage on what looked like his own invite and picked up Phil’s guitar. John Bazz defends Phil here: “He’s the guy who is the most out of breath and because of that needs the most time to recover and recharge his batteries. Because he wasn’t there, Carlos walked out. I know Carlos was bugging Phil to get on stage.”

The band stood there waiting and Dave got a little upset and called for the band to start ONE BAD STUD without Phil. The song normally starts right away with Phil’s vocal. So the instrumental beginning made for an unusual version. Carlos started playing along as Phil made it back to the stage and found a spot to start singing the lyrics.

Carlos, Gene and Dave took solos and as the song ended with the long pause before the last big chord, Dave walked over toward Carlos saying something like “Don’t play that last note yet.” It looked like Dave was having a little fun with Carlos. After the last note, the band walked off stage and Dave stopped at the mic and said, “See you all in this shape in about 20 years.”

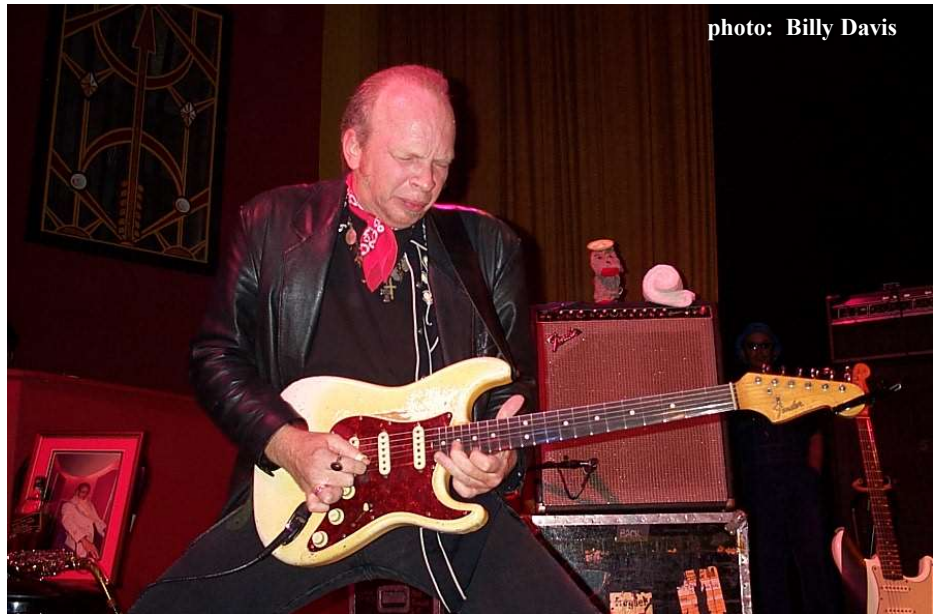
Now things got crazy. Gene Taylor stayed out on the stage playing some quiet boogie woogie piano music - sort of at the volume the house PA music would be played at. Bill Bateman joined in on drums following Gene. The crowd was unsure of what was going on. They stepped up the tempo into another barrel-house blues song. This went on a few minutes. Bill, “I thought they were waiting too long to get back out on stage, and since Gene was out there I came out. I thought the crowd liked it.” Everyone who knows the Blasters must assume that



**Carlos Guitarlos and Phil on ONE BAD STUD.**



they have to finish with MARIE MARIE. Gene and Bill knew that too. Gene: "I wouldn't have done that at any other show, but because it was the last show we were giving the crowd something extra. It was good because Phil had some time to recharge his batteries. Phil's voice was the worst I ever heard it, but to Phil's credit he's not gonna give up. He won't quit on you. I thought Phil sounded good at the gigs. The rule for Phil's voice was to do gigs three days in a row and



**Dave taking one of his famous Blaster solos.**

a day off. In an emergency, 4 days in a row and a day off. It worked real good then. So, here he came right out of the box and had to do five and they were all big gigs. They weren't little college campus or bar gigs. These were real serious showcases: Best-foot-forward shows."

Meanwhile backstage Dave recalls, "While Gene was doing his solo piano pieces, Phil said, 'We have to do more gigs!' At that moment with all the confusion, I was like 'There's no way!!'"

The Blasters manager approached Gene on the stage and told him that he and Bill had to get off the stage for the rest of the band to come back. Gene and Bill walked off and the house lights came on. It was 11:05 PM on a Sunday night; maybe it was beyond the venue's curfew. They couldn't leave without doing MARIE MARIE? Even with the lights on the crowd started clapping and stomping on the floor.

The Blasters finally came back out to a relieved audience. Dave couldn't wait to start the song and tried the opening chords to MARIE MARIE but the rest of the band wasn't ready. Dave tried again and the Blasters were off and running with the last song of the reunion tour.

When they finished, the band walked off and Dave stopped at the microphone: "Thanks for coming out, be careful getting home, we'll see you in thirty years." A few days later Dave recalled: "I know I said it would be 30 years, but I actually kind of miss the guys already." Though it was one too many shows in a row for Phil, Dave said: "I'm glad we did it, but it ended on a weird and bizarre note. But it was the perfect way to end a Blasters tour. It's not just me and Phil that are loopy, but the whole band."

Dave now thinks the original Blasters will do more shows: "I'd like to do New York and Chicago and maybe L.A. and San Francisco. Austin and Houston would be great because we had a good following there. I'm sure other things will come up. Now that I know the band sounds great, I think we will do more shows."

I enjoyed seeing Phil have so much fun on stage. He was more serious in the old Blasters days and maybe that was what this band is still expecting. If these guys are to do any more gigs, they will have to adjust to the 2002 personalities and not expect the 1985 personalities to suddenly re-emerge. I am not saying that the Blasters didn't get along, there was obviously a

special camaraderie. there. Yes, there were some minor confrontations, but these guys are ALL brothers. (They wanted to name the “Testament” compilation “Band Of Brothers” but HBO used the title for a TV miniseries)

Backstage after the show the Blasters celebrated. Tom Waits was seen after the show hanging around with Phil and Dave. Bill remembers: “The funny thing is; I was standing outside the dressing room door with a couple of beers in my hand, and somebody put their arm around me and said, ‘Hey Bill. How’s it goin?’ I looked and it’s Tom Waits. I knew Tom from doing a session with him in 1989.”

Dave added this: ‘ We have a mutual friend and Tom had called him later and told him that show was one of the greatest things he’s ever seen.”

That’s quite a compliment from someone like Tom who has seen a lot in his lengthy career.

Dave was happy to hear Phil sounding so good on the tour: “He sang like I hadn’t heard him sing in years. From the recordings I heard from the shows, he did a lot of interesting stuff vocally phrasing and all that. On stage I can’t pay attention. I’m just listening for vocal cues and concentrating on playing. Listening back I said, ‘Wow. He’s really singing that interesting.”

The show is over, the tour is over, and the Blasters reunion is now over. The fans leave exhilarated!! —Am

**Everyone’s asking: “How did the brothers get along?”** -- Dave says: “Phil and I have brother issues like all brothers have, but my biggest thing is that if he shows up at the gig, he has his amp on, and has his guitar in tune. I’m fine. I respect Phil. Phil is a great singer and I wish I had his voice (laughs).”

Gene comments: “I thought the brothers got along very well. There was never really the problems that people think there was - just differences in the career direction of the band. When you have requests for ten interviews a day, you say stuff that doesn’t have to do with music. That’s what started it. David was not the Blasters leader per se, but he was the creative focal point. If Dave or Phil was both the writer and singer, the pecking order would be more clearly defined.”

Bill, “I thought they got along fine. Dave had his own dressing room and Phil didn’t seem to care. Phil was real friendly before the show and sat in a pool of sweat after the show (laughs).”

**Favorite show?** -- Gene: “I think the first show in a lot of ways was the best show. I think we played more conservatively but it might have been the strongest performance from beginning to end. Everybody was concentrating on playing their parts right and the show had natural excitement.

But as the tour went on, the shows got wilder because everybody got more confident and guys started taking more liberties. That’s the way the band is. I thought all five shows were good as a whole. I think if you took any 5 Blasters shows in sequence in a tour from the history of the band, I think these 5 would stand up to any five from the hey day of the band.”

John: “My favorite was Slim’s.” Bill: “San Diego might have been my favorite. It was Phil’s birthday; He showed up all dressed up ready to go. It seemed like a concert.”

**Favorite songs or about song selection?** -- John: “DARK NIGHT, because I like what David does on that and TAG ALONG because I like to hear Gene sing.” Bill: “I like the old ones like FLATTOP and CRAZY BABY and the BORDER RADIO’s. I would have liked to have done a different one every night. I like songs like LONE WOLF, I FELL IN LOVE and SO GLAD. Bazz was ragging on me, ‘How come you didn’t bust your hands up or almost-half-die during the show?’ And I said, ‘Those songs weren’t there on the list.’ It takes those songs to get me going. I’m not gonna fake it. That’s why it’s dangerous, because if I feel it, there’s no stopping me whether I die or not on stage.”

Dave: “I would have liked to have played a couple more looser songs in the encore. At the House of Blues show, while we were back stage, I told the guys I would give them each a \$100 bucks if they would play HONEY DON’T. They all said, “I’ll Do It. I’ll Do It!!” But Phil said, “I can’t, I can’t do it.” I guess he couldn’t remember the words. “I even came out and played the opening riff but there wasn’t a nibble.”

**Final Thoughts** -- Dave says: "With the exception of Lee not being there, that's as good as the Blasters get in those shows. I enjoyed it all. My main memories will be One: How good the band sounded. My feeling was that if we sounded that good back then, we would have been riding around in limousines. Then two: I was blown away by the 'love-thing' coming from the audience. That kind of took me by surprise." So, Dave could feel the fans giving something back? He replied, "Oh, hell yes!"

John: "It was great. It brought back memories. It was very much like the old days. The guys I grew up with. That was my baptism as a bass player in the Blasters. It seems like a lifetime ago that we all played together and made those records. But it wasn't that many years ago. It was a joy and I never thought it would happen again." Bill: "Some people said we were as tight as we ever were."

## **THE BLASTERS GUITAR PLAYER CONTROVERSY – MARCH 2002**

**In recent issues of the L.A. Times newspaper, there has been some controversy between guitar players from the new Blasters and the Original Blasters. It's all been a misunderstanding based on comments by Dave Alvin taken out of context. Here is how it went:**

In the L.A. Times Calendar section cover story titled "Original Blast," Richard Cromelin interviews both the Alvin Brothers. Dave says this, " One of the reasons I'm glad this (Rhino CD) thing is coming out is: I kind of feel like the name of the band has been besmirched. I wish my brother called his band the Phil Alvin Band. Because to me the Blasters were these guys that are gonna be on stage and that's it. It's been 17 years since I quit and some people have no idea what the Blasters were. I wanted to redeem the name of the band. Now I'm gonna have a big fight with my brother for saying that."

**Actually Phil had nothing to say to Dave's comments, but current Blasters guitar player Keith Wyatt did. He wrote a letter that was printed in the L.A. Times on March 16, 2002 which said:**

A Blast From a Blaster: "During the past few months, Dave Alvin--along with pianist (Gene Taylor and drummer) Bill Bateman--sat in with the Blasters on several occasions and each time he was generous in his praise, even suggesting that the current lineup is "the best Blasters ever."

To now see him quoted in print ("Original Blast," by Richard Cromelin, March 9) as saying that "the name of the band has been besmirched" and that it's up to him to "redeem the name of the band" is extraordinarily disheartening for those of us who have worked so hard to keep that name alive, and I believe it's a serious misrepresentation. Whether Dave thinks his brother deserves to use the Blasters name is between them, but Blasters fans can rest assured that the Blasters legacy is well taken care of every time we hit the stage.

With all due, and well-deserved, respect for Dave, Bill and Gene Taylor, the Blasters today are as strong as they ever were, which is to say the equal of any band in the world. The Blasters don't need redemption. Long live the Blasters." --KEITH WYATT Guitarist, the Blasters Los Angeles

**On 3/22/02 Dave Alvin responded to American Music: The Blasters / Dave Alvin newsletter with these comments:**

Dave: "Anytime you're quoted -- Things can be taken out of context. I didn't mean to slag or put down Jerry (Angel) and Keith (Wyatt). I think Jerry is an amazing drummer and Keith is a great guitar player. In a way, I was really touched that Keith (in his letter to the L.A. Times)



took this so seriously. It's a true Blaster way of handling this, it wasn't like he took those comments as a side man.

When I was talking about "besmirching the band's name," it was in regard to the Blasters having not made a record in all these years. As far as I am concerned, by not making records, people forget how good the band is.

Are Keith and Jerry Blasters? Yeah, sure they are. But, until the Blasters make some records with these guys to stake their claim to the name, The Blasters will be the guys that actually made the records in the 80's. And I'm not slagging them, because I know Keith and Johnny have been trying to make a Blasters record forever.

When that guy was interviewing me, all he was asking was, 'what have the Blasters done since you left?' They were looking for that angle and I guess they want to play it up, because it sells papers."

"I'd just like to add that I'm really very sorry about the whole thing." --Dave Alvin

**On 3/26/02 Keith Wyatt responded to American Music: The Blasters Dave Alvin Newsletter with these comments:**

From Keith Wyatt, Blasters Guitar Player: "I can't tell you how glad I am to see more light cast on Dave's comments and how they were reported in the Times. I know that reporters have their own agendas, and even an innocent comment can be made to support whatever theme they've decided to develop beforehand. In this case, it was the theme of Dave and Phil's wrangling, and how the two brothers can't seem to see eye-to-eye on anything despite the great music they've made together. It's better press than two guys who get along just fine. I understand the pressure of that situation, with great expectations being laid on both of them, and I am not surprised to see some controversy come out of it.

Since Dave's comments were reported in the paper, I felt that the best way to respond was to write a letter to the same paper so that at least some people who read the first story might see that there was more to it than meets the eye. Being a Blaster has been a great honor for me, and so it does affect me deeply to see the name and my participation called into question.

I'm very - I guess "heartened" would be the best word - to hear that Dave understands how that article affected Jerry and I, and putting aside the specific words that I took issue with, I think Dave's right on the money about the Blasters being a band that hasn't carried forward the recorded legacy of the original lineup. Phil will argue, as only he can, that there are all sorts of reasons why that's OK, and some of those reasons are valid, but most are not.

But in any case, the fact that the old stuff is finally available is a great relief to everybody, and it's great to see Dave, Phil, Johnny, Bill and Gene (plus Lee) recognized again for the great band they were and the influence they've had.

If you talk to Dave, please let him know that I appreciate his thoughtfulness and concern a great deal, and I look forward to seeing him again at some Blasters gig, whether it's him or me on stage. Long live the Blasters. best regards, Keith"

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