

ISSUE #70

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

FEB. 2014

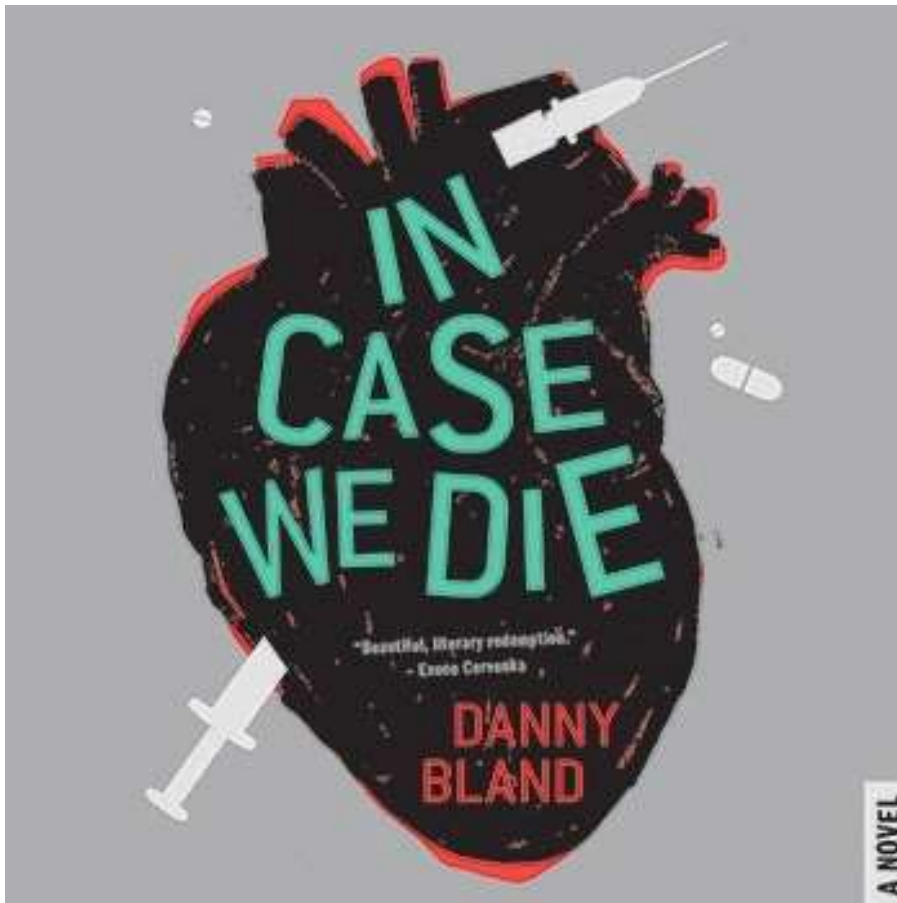
20th Anniversary Issue

Latest news: It's the 20th Anniversary of the first issue on The Blasters Newsletter. -- Dave and Phil Alvin are finishing up the recording of Common Ground: Dave and Phil Alvin sing the songs of Bill Broonzy for a Yep Roc Records release date of June 3, 2014. Dave Alvin said: "It happened by accident. To cheer up Phil, I thought 'you have to make some music.' So we went into the studio and cut a few Big Bill Broonzy songs. Phil and I, Bob Glaub and Don Heffington cut 6 songs. Phil is playing a lot of harmonica on this. In January, Lisa and Brad (The Guilty Ones) recorded parts for 6 other songs to finish out the album." -- Dave and Phil Alvin will debut some of the new songs at the South By Southwest Festival in Austin Texas in March. -- On April 19, 2014, on Record Store Day, Yep Roc Records will make available a 4 song vinyl edition set of two 10 inch records of some songs from the forthcoming Common Ground: Dave and Phil Alvin sing the Songs of Big Bill Broonzy. -- Link of Chain, a tribute CD featuring the songs of Chris Smither, will be released on Sept. 16, 2014 on the Signature Sounds label. Dave Alvin performs the title track. Other artists on the CD include Peter Case, Emmylou Harris and Bonnie Raitt. -- Dave Alvin has recorded a number of songs over the last 2 years that may see release as a whole album of covers. He recorded a Steve Young song in 2012 called SILVER LAKE. Others include a Bo Diddley song, and a Bill Morrissey song called INSIDE. -- The creators of Justified, the FX television series which has featured the music of Dave Alvin, have announced the sixth season will be the last. The show, which debuted in 2010, is in its fifth season. Dave has performed HARLIN COUNTY LINE, BEAUTIFUL CITY, ON THE RIVER, EVERY NIGHT ABOUT THIS TIME and YOU"LL NEVER LEAVE HARLIN ALIVE on the program. He also appeared as himself performing in a club in The I of The Storm, a 2011 episode. -- Greg Leisz, who has worked as a producer and sideman for Dave Alvin, is featured on Big E: A Salute to Steel Guitarist Buddy Emmons (Warner Brothers), a tribute album showcasing the contributions of the influential country musician. Greg performs WILD MOUNTAIN THYME. The magazine Fretboard Journal is planning to publish an in-depth story on Greg later this year written by singer/songwriter/producer Joe Henry. The magazine's Web site, fretboardjournal.com, also features a 36-minute podcast with Greg. He discusses a wide range of topics, including his development as a musician and steel guitarist, and his musical influences. -- Author Peter Guralnick has released an enhanced eBook edition of Lost Highway: Journeys and Arrivals of American Musicians, which includes an audio interview with Big Joe Turner conducted in May 1977. The book, which features profiles of Big Joe, Merle Haggard, Waylon Jennings and James Talley, originally was published in 1979. Lost Highway and Feel Like Going Home, Guralnick's first music books feature audio and video interviews not included with the original editions. Big Joe served as a mentor for the Blasters, who backed him up in concert in the 1980s. He also served as the inspiration for BOSS OF THE BLUES, a song featured on the 2009 album Dave Alvin and the Guilty Women. -- AM

*In This Issue: Danny Bland's 'In Case We Die' novel,
Dave Alvin's Facebook Diary 2013, and the Latest News.*

IN CASE WE DIE

A novel by Danny Bland – interview by Tom Wilk



After working as a musician and road manager for various musical acts, including the Knitters and Dave Alvin, Danny Bland has another title to add to his resume – novelist.

The longtime Seattle resident has published In Case We Die (Fantagraphics Books: \$26.99), a tale of drug addiction, crime, pornography, love and lust, and redemption told against the backdrop of the Washington state city and the emerging grunge scene of the early 1990s. The story unfolds through the characters of Charlie Hyatt, a porn shop clerk with a drug habit, and Carrie Finch, a musician. She is described in the novel's book jacket as a person who "drowns out the voices in her head and the consequences of a misled life with electric guitars, booze and petulant misbehavior."

"Amy Farris was the catalyst for the book," said Danny, referring to the violinist/backing vocalist who toured with Dave Alvin as a member of the Guilty Women in 2009. Dave produced Anyway, her lone solo

Danny Bland's debut novel In Case We Die hit shelves in September 2013. The book and jacket were designed by Jacob Covey. Dig those silver & day-glo inks. Some of Danny's music-scene compadres have already read the book and had this to say about it:

"Our anti-hero is floating in a tiny lifeboat made of heroin, graveyard shifts & rock music. His companions are two fabulous women; a bombshell who robs banks & a beautifully pale rock violinist who can barely dodge suicide. ICWD is much funnier & more satisfying than any other junkie rock'n'roll tragedy." – John Doe (X)

"Bland is a brutally funny and bravely honest writer. A perfect guide through the bloodshot streets and desperate bedrooms of the underground wilderness." – Dave Alvin (Blasters)

"In Case We Die is a poetic and elegant journey ... straight to the gutter." – Wayne Kramer (MC5)

"Beautiful, literary redemption." – Exene Cervenka (X)

"A great piece of work — full of filth and heart." - Steve Earle

"A suitably Peckinpah finale. Bravo. It has been like a traveling dream state and sometimes familiar look into the abyss." – Greg Dulli (Afghan Whigs)

"I am a believer in what Bland has to say. He writes with eloquence, candor, darkness, and humor....the good stuff!" – Duff McKagan (Guns N' Roses)

album. She died at age 40 in 2009, and her death was later ruled a suicide.

"Her death made me realize that time is not our friend," added Danny, who has served as Dave's road manager since 2004. Amy had urged Danny to write In Case We Die, and it contains the dedication: "I Wrote This Book For Amy Farris."

"Almost all of the book was written in Holiday Inns and Comfort Inns on a laptop, the tool of the road manager," he said with a slight chuckle. It took him about two and a half years to complete the book.

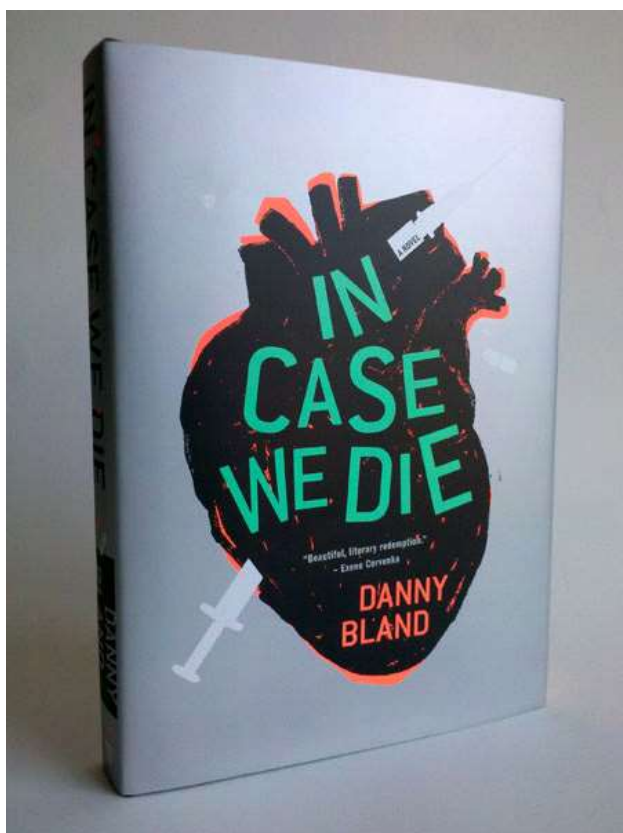
A former drug addict who also worked in a pornography shop, Danny based the character of Danny Hyatt on himself. "I've been clean and sober since 1992." The character of Carrie "is a combination of different people, including Amy," Danny said.

"In Case We Die," a phrase used by Carrie, features a gritty, unflinching look at the world of addicts where the quest for the next fix is of paramount importance.

Nicole Brodeur, a columnist for The Seattle Times, described In Case We Die as "chock-full of blood and needles, cigarettes and rumpled beds, sex and snorting, theft and strippers. You keep hoping someone will come through with a can of Febreze and order everyone into a fresh set of clothes and an AA meeting."

In addition to the traditional printed volume, In Case We Die is available as an audio book, read by a variety of narrators, including Dave, John Doe, Aimee Mann and Steve Earle. "It's a two-pronged attack," Danny says of offering a printed version and audio book. "I had access to all these people in the music world," he pointed out and ended up using 20 different narrators for the book's 31 chapters. "I picked the narrators for each chapter; some people read more than one chapter, including Dave," Danny said. "I wanted Dave to read the first chapter for the strength of his voice and to set the scene for the book."

For chapters dealing with drug use, he turned to those who had a first-hand knowledge of the subject. In Case We Die has earned positive reviews and Danny has sold the rights to a producer to turn the book into a movie. He's considering a second book, which would be a sequel to In Case We Die. Writing, he learned, can be habit forming. "When I was done writing (In Case We Die), I really missed it."



For more information on In Case We Die, visit www.fantagraphics.com

Some words from the staff on the 20th Anniversary of
American Music: The Blasters / Dave Alvin Newsletter

Billy Davis American Music Editor Speaks

It's the 20th Anniversary of American Music: The Blasters / Dave Alvin Newsletter. Wow! It's been so much fun and I expect it will continue to be. I had to think for a minute: 'What can I write about this anniversary that I didn't say at the 10th Anniversary?' Looking back at how I felt ten years ago, I read my prediction from the tenth anniversary issue: "I'm sure I'll have more to talk about when the twentieth anniversary comes around."

What's so satisfying about the second ten years of the newsletter is that I am just as passionate about the great people associated with these bands and their music as I was during the newsletter's first ten years.

Growing up in NYC in the 70s and 80s, I came of age during the era of arena rock. But that was before I was enlightened by roots music and the world of the Blasters American Music. Superstars from my youth, like my favorite band Kiss, are not necessarily nice or real people you can identify with. They don't live normal lives. It's all about their music as entertainment, so it doesn't matter if you like how they live their life. On the other hand, American Roots music people tend to be the type of genuine people I admire. Their songs speak to us with a reality.

When I first got into roots music, I discovered that I actually admired the artists who write and perform my favorite songs as real human beings. This connection greatly enhanced my experience with the music.

In the second decade of the newsletter, I have realized even more how much I enjoy all of my friendships with fans and collectors of American Music. I have close friends I see on a regular basis, and there are some that I see once every year or two at a show. I always enjoy catching up and talking about music with them. The Blasters and Dave Alvin have always allowed me to hang out backstage at shows, but most of the time I choose not to, so that I don't miss out on saying hello to old friends and new ones.

American Music: The Blasters / Dave Alvin newsletter started out as a fan club. But fan clubs usually don't run twenty years. Often, when preparing the next newsletter, I wonder if the stories will be interesting enough for my readers, so that we're not rehashing what we've done before. But when every issue is finished, I'm astonished to find out something new about the world of American Music. Each time, I'm as proud of the issue as I am of any other.

Equal credit goes to two other key people. Tom Wilk started writing for the newsletter in May 1999; he continues to come up with a wide range of interesting, unique stories. I can't thank him enough for his tireless efforts. Tom also provides The Blasters Newsletter with all the latest news items. Craig Frischkorn has been with the newsletter since 1997 as copy editor; he cleans up all the grammar, spelling, etc., and makes it all shiny. He suffers the most when the writers have deadlines and he has to proofread everything in a small window of time before each deadline. He's the unsung hero. Thanks, buddies.

Speaking of deadlines, I need to explain the less-frequent newsletters. Recently, I've been busy playing in three cover bands, one of which has found some success. We're called Show No Mercy: NY's Slayer Tribute band. I also have a fourth band that is currently recording an original progressive metal concept CD. It's a project that I've tried to get off the ground since even before the newsletter started. None of these projects are roots-based, so normally you'll never hear about it in this newsletter. But I just want everyone to know that the gap between newsletters is caused by one passion delaying another

passion. Both areas make me happy, and I wouldn't want to live my life any other way.

So here's the part where I say something about the future: All I can say is: Wow! These musicians always find something new to get me/us/you excited about – and we'll cover it all in future issues of the American Music newsletter. Dave and Phil Alvin are recording a CD together and going out on tour. Nothing warms my heart more than to see those once 'battling brothers' playing music together and enjoying each other's company. I love Phil and Dave, and I consider them as my brothers. The next

newsletter anniversary will be the 25th, so maybe it will be time for a look back at the highlights of a quarter-century of American Music. — ~~AM~~



The American Music Team with Dave Alvin. L—R—Tom Wilk, Dave, Billy Davis, and Craig Frischkorn.

American Music Writer Tom Wilk Speaks

My first awareness of the Blasters didn't come through their music, but the printed word. The March 19, 1981, issue of Rolling Stone featured a nine-page cover story on Warren Zevon's battle with alcoholism, but another story also caught my eye on Page 16.

Under the heading "New Faces," there was a six-paragraph report on the Blasters, a band from Los Angeles, and their debut album called "American Music." The story by Chris Morris featured quotes from Dave and Phil Alvin that still ring true 33 years later.

Dave, downplaying the label of the Blasters as a rockabilly band: "We play American music. If you want to call us a blues band, you can say we're the only blues band that plays blues in all its incarnations."

Phil: "You can put me anywhere in the world. I don't care if they speak my language, they'll listen." Living in Southern New Jersey, I tried to find a copy of American Music without success. In November, I purchased The Blasters album on the Slash label at a now-defunct Wall to Wall Sound store and was hooked.

The first side of the LP grabbed my attention from the opening riff of MARIE MARIE to the closing notes of SO LONG BABY GOODBYE. It was a perfect set of songs, demonstrating the artistry of Phil and Dave, the rhythm section of Bill Bateman and John Bazz, pianist Gene Taylor and saxophonists Lee Allen and Steve Berlin.

With the Blasters, and later Dave as a solo artist, I've made a commitment to follow the music. It's a journey that has lasted nearly a third of a century and taken me from my mid-20s to late 50s.

The songs still speak to me. From the loneliness and hope that collide on BORDER RADIO to the quest to rise above life's daily challenges on ASHGROVE, Dave's lyrics allow space for listeners to find themselves and tap into universal emotions.

Phil's powerful voice sounds triumphant on AMERICAN MUSIC, still one of the best celebrations of the nation's artistic heritage, and foreboding on LONG WHITE CADILLAC. As an interpreter, he can make an old song sound new, such as BROTHER CAN YOU SPARE A DIME from Unsung Stories and LOW DOWN RHYTHM from County Fair 2000.

As a former music writer for newspapers and magazines, I got to interview Dave on numerous occasions and Phil once. I found them to be down-to-earth people, the kind you would enjoy having a beer with.

Since seeing the original lineup of the Blasters at the old Chestnut Cabaret in Philadelphia in October 1984, I have traveled from the Palace in Los Angeles to the Bottom Line in New York. I've managed to see the Blasters with and without Dave and Dave solo and with the Guilty Men, the Guilty Women, the Guilty Ones and the Knitters about 20 times. It's coming full circle with Dave and Phil touring together in 2014 and releasing an album under their own names.

I am reminded what Dave told me in a 2009 interview about recording with the Guilty Women: "The way to improve as a musician is to play with other musicians." It's a sentiment that he has followed, and Dave has left his listeners richer for the experience.

While I am not a musician, I'm satisfied to be a member of the audience and writer. After all, the audience plays an essential role in any artist's development in terms of support and feedback. There's also a pleasure derived from research and writing and introducing people to new music and musicians and hearing someone say, "Wow, I didn't know that."

Copy Editor Craig Frischkorn Speaks

I think I speak for all readers of American Music when I say how grateful I am for the music of the Alvin's, which remains a real source of personal joy. For all of us who work on the newsletter and for our readers, the music of these brothers matters deeply. And on the newsletter's 20th anniversary, I want to thank Billy Davis and Tom Wilk for their undying loyalty to covering and sharing information about the music of Phil and Dave Alvin. As a copyeditor, I say gladly that collaborating on American Music is a privilege, a pleasure, and an honor. --Craig Frischkorn

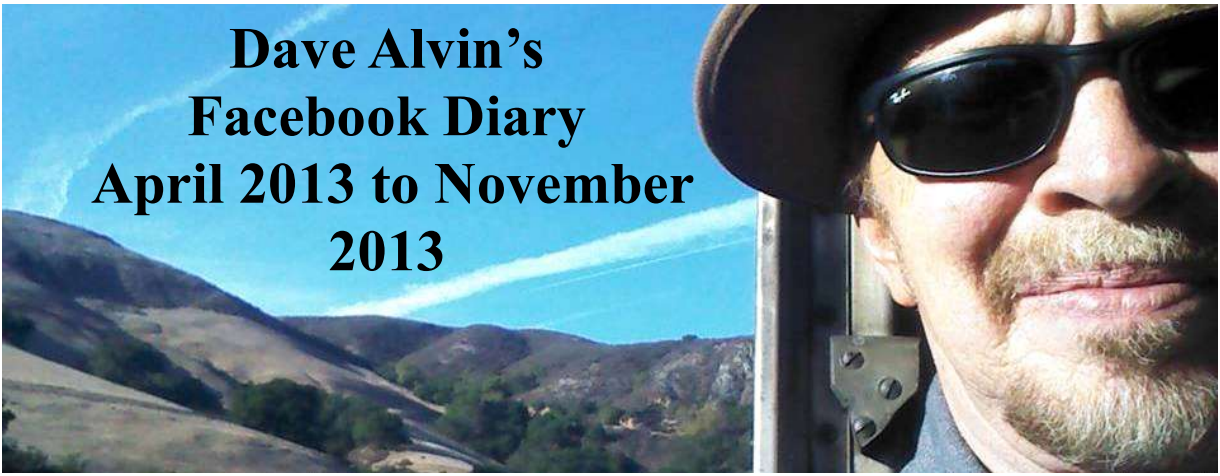
AMERICAN MUSIC: The Blasters / Dave Alvin newsletter

editor/writer: Billy Davis copy editor: Craig Frischkorn writer

Tom Wilk

www.BlastersNewsletter.com

Dave Alvin's Facebook Diary April 2013 to November 2013



Dave Alvin has been very active on facebook throughout 2013 posting photos and videos of his latest adventures. It's fascinating to read this public diary of his career. Here are a select few entries between April and November of 2013.

BLUES REVUE for JOHN "JUKE" LOGAN A Rock N Rollin' Lovefest & Fundraiser



Featuring

Dave Alvin
Rick Holmstrom Band
The Delgado Brothers
King Cotton
The Bonedaddys
The Mike Eldred Trio
The Gary Allegretto Band
Shawn Mafia & the Ten Cent Thrills
Joey Harris of the Beat Farmers
w/Mojo Nixon
Buddy Zapata's Junkshop Republic
Carla Olson, and surprise guests!

from 2pm-on
SUNDAY APRIL 14, 2013

\$10 at the door
benefitting the
AMERICAN INSTITUTE for CANCER RESEARCH
Cafe Fais Do Do
5257 W. Adams Blvd, LA
(323) 931-4636

4-9-13 -- If you're in southern California this Sunday, I'll be performing at a tribute to harmonica wizard (and a longtime musical accomplice of mine) John Juke Logan. Also playing are many distinguished blues/roots artists (most of whom Juke has worked with over the years) in a show of love and support for Juke who is battling esophageal cancer. I just heard that the dangerous harp master James Harman, the man who bought me my first guitar way back when, has just been added to the program. This will be a special afternoon/evening and I really hope some of you can make it.



4-11-13 -- A very rare 1981/82 photo of The Fleathers (Photo right — L to R: John Doe, Bill Bateman, me, Chris D, Steve Berlin - sadly percussionist D.J. Bonebreak is out of the camera frame) playing at the legendary and long gone Cathay de Grande. While reading a review of our album, A Minute To Pray A Second To Die, I saw the music critic term "post-punk" for the first time and I didn't know what "post-punk" meant. I still don't.

4-14-13 -- Blues Revue for John "Juke" Logan, A Rock N Rollin Lovefest and Fundraiser at Cafe Fais Do Do. — L-R: Rick Holmstron, Dave Alvin and Steve Mugalian on drums. Photo right by Larry Armstrong.



4-15-13 -- A great evening of blues music yesterday in honor of our friend and harmonica king, John "Juke" Logan. L to R: drummer Steve Mugalian, harp hot shots Jack Rudy and James Harman, me, event organizer Beth, unknown attendee, my brother Phil, drummer Stephen Hodges, guitarist Rick Holmstrom, bassist Jeff Turmes. An amazing collection of Guilty Men, Dangerous Gentlemen, Blasters and the Mavis Staples Band. I'm honored to be standing with the distinguished bunch.



6-24-13 -- A rare treat to see this special trio including Dave Alvin, Christy McWilson and Chris Miller. If you missed this weekend at AMSD or McCabes, hopefully you can catch them at one of these upcoming shows: June 26th at Kuumbwa Jazz Center in Santa Cruz, June 27th at Sweetwater in Mill Valley, or June 29th in Laytonville at the Kate Wolf Festival. Photo by Dan Chusid.



8-15-13 -- In the studio today working on a cover version of my late friend Bill Morrissey's song, INSIDE. Wyman Reese played some beautiful piano and I'm trying my best with the vocals. Hard to equal Bill's heartbreaking original though, and I have no idea when or where this will ever be released - maybe never. It's just something I felt I had to do. At the risk of sounding nuts . . . I can feel Brother Bill's spirit floating around the studio looking for my cigarettes and something good and strong to drink.

8-18-30 -- My Museum of Heart shrine in my music room: Chris Gaffney's accordion, Bill Morrissey's harmonica and Big Joe Turner's cap. Photo left.

8-20-13 -- The first novel by my beloved troubleshooting brother-in-arms, confidante, comrade, road manager and fellow traveler, Danny Bland, is now available from Fantagraphic Books. In Case We Die is NOT for the squeamish or easily offended, but then a lot of great, powerful art isn't either. Check it out by either reading the beautiful print edition or by listening to the audio-book featuring various singers, songwriters, artists, actors, scoundrels, scalawags, and barroom guitarists reading Danny's intense prose. I'm very proud of and happy for Danny. You did it brother!

8-27-13 -- My post about the Big Steve Smith memorial show, tonight at Viva Cantina in Burbank, mysteriously disappeared from my FB page. So this is a reminder to come down and join as many of Steve's musician comrade's pay tribute to a Big man with a Big heart and a Big soul. Performers include Big Sandy, Rick Shea, Cody Bryant and the four blatin' knuckleheads from Downey in a rare reunion gig. Hope to see some of you there.

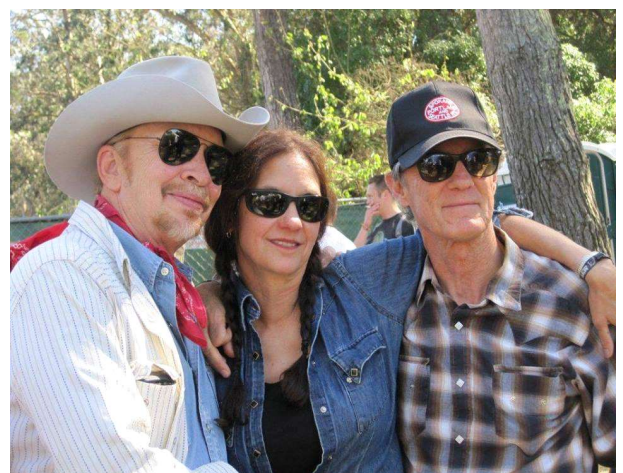
9-7-13 -- A nice photo (Thanks Libby) of my brother Phil, rock guitar god Wayne Kramer and me at Friday night's Jail Guitar Doors benefit. Now on to the SD Blues Fest on Saturday (Damn. That's today!) afternoon where I'm jamming with my special, one time only "Downey Blues All Stars" band featuring Blasters John Bazz and Bill Bateman, Guilty One guitarist Chris Miller and harmonica/maracas specialist Jack Rudy. Looking forward to playing some blues and seeing some of you at the festival. Photo Right.



9-11-13 -- A nice photo from a session I did Monday of guitar hot shot Elliot Easton, Dead Rock West's soulful bassist David Carpenter and me proudly showing off our Martin guitars. I was honored (and a bit intimidated) playing guitar alongside Mr Easton. He can play the styles of John Hurt, Chet Atkins, Skip James and Jerry Garcia, to name a few different guitar styles he's mastered, as well as his own legendary stylistic innovations from his time in The Cars. He's really damn good. The session was for Dead Rock West's upcoming tribute album to the Everly Brothers. I can't wait to hear it.

9-22-13 -- One of my favorite humans/musicians is Bobby Lloyd Hicks. After 14 years as the faithful drummer of The Guilty Men (and also eternal powerhouse for Springfield, Mo's legendary rockers The Skeletons), Bobby has been touring lately with his dream band NRBQ. He and I have been through a lot and I couldn't be happier or prouder for him.

10-8-13 -- My dear pal (and favorite bartender), Annie Whiteside, snapped this nice photo of my long time friends and musical comrades Christy McWilson and Greg Leisz with me before we hit the stage at last weekend's Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Festival. To say we were nervous would be a big understatement. To say we had fun would be an even bigger understatement.



10-14-13 -- Been in the studio cutting and polishing my version of contemporary blues master Chris Smither's song, LINK OF CHAIN, for an upcoming tribute album to him. This collection features Bonnie Raitt, Emmy Lou Harris, Jorma Kaukonen, Loudon Wainwright and more, performing Chris's unique and underrated songs. It's kinda funny that it took 4 musicians (me and The 3D Band: drummer Don Heffington, bassist David J Carpenter, guitarist Danny Ott) to attempt to capture the big soulful sound Chris gets with just his guitar and his musical feet.

10-16-13 -- Shocked, stunned and extremely damn f***ing happy that my stolen baritone guitar has been returned to me! She was stolen last year in San Francisco and was recently found in an SF pawnshop. She's a rare, Jerry Jones 3 pick-up Neptune model and I truly believed I'd never see, touch or play her again. Just goes to show that you have to, in Adam Clayton Powell's famous phrase, "Keep the faith, baby."

10-18-13 -- If you're driving through the Cahuenga Pass tonight, stop by the little but legendary club, The Baked Potato, where I'll be sitting in with the little, but legendary, supergroup Jack Shit. You've probably seen Val, Pete, and Davey backing everyone from Elvis Costello to Jackson Browne to Buddy Guy, but seeing them do their own thing is some amazing fun.

10-20-13 -- Kicking off the infamous Kings of California train adventure up the west coast to Seattle with 2 shows tonight at the world famous McCabe's Guitar Shop in Santa Monica with songwriting masters Chris Smither and Peter Case (along with the talented Mr Rick Shea and maybe a surprise guest or two). Looking forward to seeing some of you there, but if you can't make it tonight, maybe see you Wednesday night at the also world famous Tractor Tavern in Seattle. Come on, grab your bags and get on board.

10-31-13 -- I just got off one amazing train tour and now we're already planning and selling seats for the next musical railroad excursion this coming spring. This trip will circle the wild west (and the wild mid-west as well) and will feature some truly astounding musical artists, friends and family who'll be announced soon. You can either sign up for short segments of the trip or for the whole damn ride if you're feeling adventurous. Maybe see you soon on the rails.

11-14-13 -- A few weeks ago I played a few songs from West of the West for the folks over at Sawyer Sessions.

Photo right



11-18-13 -- For those of you who couldn't make it to the Los Lobos/Blasters reunion and love-in at the Whisky A Go Go last Thursday, here's a remarkable photo (taken by the very talented Peter Dervin) of my brother Phil and me at the end of our show. It was one hell of a night. I only wish the Whisky was big enough to fit all of you. Photo by Peter Dervin, Whiskey A Go Go, West Hollywood CA 11/14/13



11-20-13 -- Four kids who grew up at The Ash Grove who aren't quite kids anymore. We got together a couple days back to play some Big Bill Broonzy blues at Craig Parker Adams's studio. My amazing brother Phil, deeply soulful drummer Don Heffington, deeply soulful bassist Bob Glaub and me. We're all older, hopefully wiser and they can still deliver the goods. Perhaps more now than ever. Photo courtesy: Bob Glaub



11-27-13 -- Youtube Video linked; *Jimi Hendrix LA Forum resynced 1969-04-26 by Jammin Jimi*. -- A few shattered, rearranged and stunning seconds from the 1969 Forum concert by Jimi Hendrix. I was 13 years old when I attended this show with my pal, Joe Cencak, as my patient and understanding mom waited out in the car. It was the second time I'd seen Mr Hendrix that year and, needless to say, nothing has ever been the same since. Happy Birthday Mr Hendrix. Thanks for stopping by this beat up, beautiful old planet for a while.

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