

This is a reprint of the second 'Blasters newsletter' as it was when I was printing it on an old word processor. My info came from Phil Alvin, when he picked up his phone, and from the first on-line services 'Compuserve' and 'Prodigy.' Remember those? The writing is primitive but here it is, 'warts and all.' The only thing I have changed is that I have included full color photos. Check out the Expanded section where I display extra photos from the period and share some recollections.

AMERICAN MUSIC

The Blaster Newsletter

Issue #2 May '94

Latest News: The Blasters recording sessions have just about finished. The six song EP is scheduled for an August release on Sony/CBS records. Phil Alvin is now in the studio finishing recording his HighTone solo album slated for a late May release. -- Dave Alvin is involved in two new HighTone releases - His own album to be released in late April called King of California, and the role of producer on Big Sandy and the Flyrite Boys new album called Jumpin' From 6 to 6..

Gigs: FAULTLINE SYNCOPATORS:

April 2 Los Angeles CA at The Derby

April 23 Los Angeles CA at The Derby

Gigs: The BLASTERS:

April 22 Solana Beach CA at Belly Up

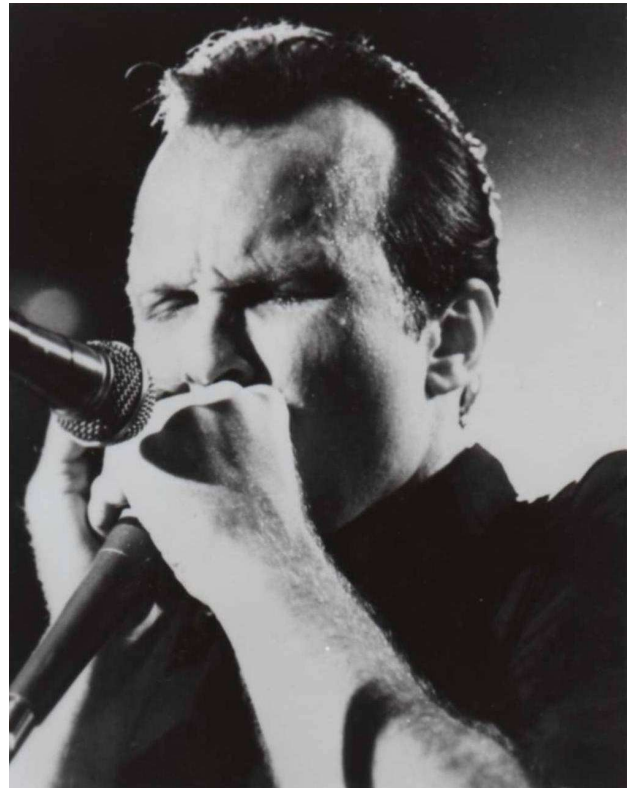
April 30 N. Hollywood CA at Palamino

May 18 Seattle WA at The Firehouse

May 19 Spokane WA at Outback Jack's

May 20 Portland OR at Roseland

May 21 Eugene OR at Milkham



A CONVERSATION WITH PHIL ALVIN

On March 28, 1994 I interviewed Phil Alvin on a variety of topics including: his upcoming solo album, the new Blaster album, other current musical projects, and what he has been doing in the period of time since he last recorded in 1986. In this issue, part 1 of the interview will cover Phil's solo album which is tentatively scheduled for release in late May '94. In the next issue of American Music, Phil will finish out the interview discussing the new Blasters album to be released at the end of the summer.

AMERICAN MUSIC: You mentioned in past interviews that you haven't made any records since 1986 for various reasons. For the benefit of the fans who have not been informed, tell us some of those reasons both professionally and personally.

PHIL ALVIN: When David (Alvin) left the Blasters, it was important to me to establish that, with as great a contribution as David's songs are to any band, including the Blasters, cause he's such a high level song writer, that the sound of the Blasters had not a great deal to do with David. The first time that David had ever played in a band was with the Blasters and all these sounds had been being put down by me and the guys that I had been playing with for 15 years before that. My intention was to then make a very fast record with the Blasters but first - I don't like to have bands that haven't played with each other, so we went out and we played immediately once David left. Hollywood Fats got the Gig and we went out on the road to develop the style with Fats in the band. In December of '86, we were planning to start to make a record, then Fats died. David

(Alvin) came in and filled in on some gigs that we couldn't have done without. Then there were gigs in Italy, Spain, and Finland and some other places in Europe that Billy Zoom came and played on. Billy never really joined the Blasters. He was just helping out during the time after Fats had died. Billy was tired of the music world and went back to school right after that time period.

AM: Were you still considering recording a new Blaster album?

PHIL ALVIN: From that time on it would have been unreasonable economically to have made a record because really the only way to get money from a record, the only way you make your living from a record is by going on the road. That's true for both the Blasters or the Rolling Stones. Then, given that I already replaced David with another irreplaceable object that had died, there was nothing else I could do except to say, 'we'll just build the band from the ground up with a guitarist who is a good guitarist.' And that was Greg Hormel, really a fine musician. Also I had put everything on hold because I was spending much more of my time now doing mathematics and there was no way I could go out on the road to really support a record. So between '87 and '92 I had to take a few classes in order to clear up my masters program at Long Beach State University and at the same time I was on the road about four times a year. We'd go out about 2 or 3 weeks just to keep the Blasters playing well and bring some money into the guys in the Blasters.

AM: So the gigs in Europe during this period were not part of an extensive international tour?

PHIL ALVIN: No. We had been going to Europe usually once a year or so and we'd play the Pacific Northwest. We didn't go much to the East Coast - New York is such a high visibility thing, if you go to New York everybody expects you're plugging something down like a new record.

AM: Was there any tour specifically connected to promoting the Blaster Collection CD?

PHIL ALVIN: No, there wasn't. The record company did that and I'm glad they did. But it all came real fast. I hadn't been watching the contracts otherwise I would have anticipated them making a release without me knowing. They needed to do that to maintain ownership of the rights to our masters (recordings). They have to release something every seven years to keep that. I had been so wrapped up in the mathematics that all of a sudden our manager got the call, they wanted to put this thing out.

AM: Has there been any discussion of releasing the original Warner Bros. albums on CD?

PHIL ALVIN: No, there hasn't because they (Warner) pretty much covered what they wanted to on the collection CD. There has been discussion of releasing my solo record on CD, which has only not happened because Slash has been so nasty about it and they had violated a contract of ours, so much so, that I had to take them to court for it. We settled, and that's all I'm allowed to say according to the settlement. They had been unhappy about it, but they may find me on the telephone with them again because there are some other parts they have not done. When Sunra died, just even right before that I was trying to get them to release that and get some money to Sun. It was a lot of trouble. It wasn't Warner Bros. at all, it was Slash. The independent labels are much more ruthless than the big labels, as funny as that may sound. If Warner Bros. gives me a contract that's ruthless, that's alright, because at least they have the power to push promotion behind you. They have the money. The independent labels don't have that - even though they want the same contract as the big label gets. The only thing



they're going to succeed on, is your skill, Warner Bros. can at least make a star out of someone who is skill-less - as has been evident on the last five years of Warner Bros. recordings artists (laughs).

AM: Explain how mathematics were able to consume so much of your time in this period?

PHIL ALVIN: I had originally started the Blasters in 1979. I was a mathematician and was at UCLA to get my PHD. I couldn't find any advisors at UCLA who would allow me do my thesis on the area of 'natural languages.' The tools that I used to study 'natural languages' was a kind of 'set theory.' They neither liked what I was studying, nor the 'set theory' I was using to study it. They told me, 'this stuff is not mathematics.' I knew that was not true, because I had proved the stuff. But they wouldn't take the time to look at it. So that's when I said, "the hell with you, I'll go play music and get the money to build computers that will show you guys: 'This is mathematics.'" So that's when I started the Blasters, originally.

A thing called 'Cellular Automata' is very much related to the kind of 'natural language' studies I was doing. In 1986, there was a conference at M.I.T (Boston) on 'Cellular Automata.' I went to that conference and found out, they didn't know what I do. I thought it's my duty to now go back and write a master thesis at Long Beach State so people who know that I'm a good mathematician will leave me alone. This is, in a sense a humiliation because, for someone at UCLA in a PHD program to go back to Long Beach State to write a masters thesis instead of a PHD thesis - and then to also slow down his musical career, people would say, "God! What kind of nutty guy is that, he must have just lost his mind." It took quite awhile to do my thesis while keeping the Blasters alive. I finished my thesis in August 1992 at Long Beach State. It took so long because I was on the road and I could only take one class here and there. The guys who had graciously consented to be my advisors, did not understand what I was doing. When I finished the thesis Called "Individuals and the Anti-Foundation Axiom," I called the head set theorist in the world, a man by the name of John Barwise.



Photo: Gary Leonard

This guy is such a big shot! He called me February 3, 1993 and told me, he said he had no idea. He said, "This is fantastic, this is not a masters thesis, you can publish this." Within a week at Cal.Tech., the word had gotten around about my thesis. At UCLA, the guys who said it wasn't mathematics before, now sucked me in!

I've gotten so wrapped up in these two musical projects, I've ditched my whole second quarter, but I felt like playing music so much now. Because I had been highly vindicated on this thing, I didn't even think about mathematics anymore. Now all I want to do is play music.

AM: How much progress has been made in the recording of the two new albums?

PHIL ALVIN: The Blasters record is all done. It won't need a lot of overdubs - just the vocal. I was so hoarse during he making of it. I put a halt on it so I could start this solo record - which since I knew was coming out earlier. We'll put a couple of Blaster cuts on the solo record, so the Blasters will have something to tour behind and at the end of the summer the other record will come out.

AM: Will you be touring to support the solo record?

PHIL ALVIN: I want to tour hard. Usually, I like to keep those things separate, but it didn't make much sense, since the solo record is coming out first and I really wanted to tour with the Blasters. The Blasters right now are what I'm most interested in.

AM: How did the HighTone solo record deal come about?

PHIL ALVIN: During the whole time that I wasn't making records, I was being offered records both for the Blasters and solo records frequently. In September of '93, I called Hightone and said, "Alright I'll make a solo record for you guys."

AM: How is the recording of the solo record going at this point?

PHIL ALVIN: It's going pretty good. This solo record has so many projects in one thing. I have a ten piece band, the Dirty Dozen Brass Band. I've got like 30 different musicians on there, and man it just kicks! I'm learning. I've got much more respect now for Sunra, Fletcher Henderson or Duke Ellington and anybody who ever had more than four guys in his band, Geez!!

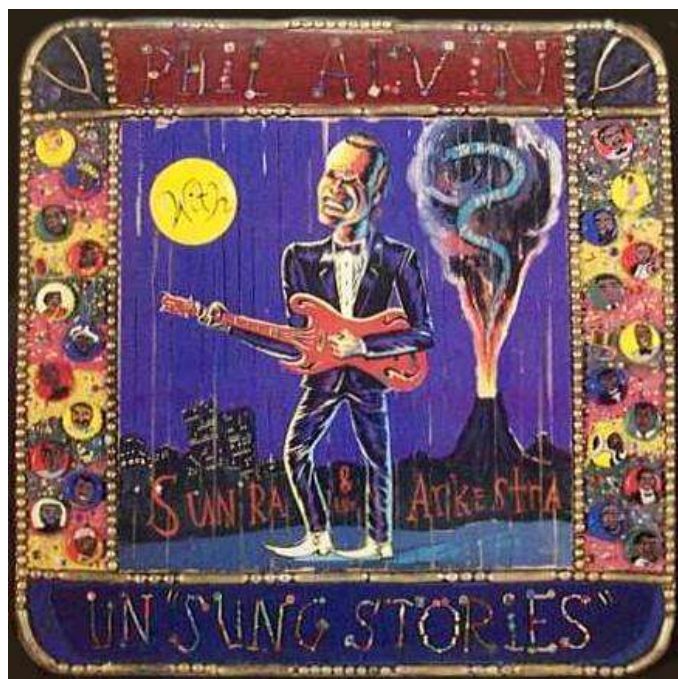
AM: What songs can we expect to hear?

PHIL ALVIN: When I set the budget at HighTone I told them what songs would be on side A and side B. They told me there are no sides anymore on these things called CDs. They said, "Your not very hep are you. (laughs)" So I said, "Ok, if you took away the sides, I will take away the tracks. I'm gonna do sort of a radio show or a play - where there is just gonna be guys talking and all of a sudden a song is gonna come out of it. It will like a play going on."

It will start off at the end of a Blaster's rehearsal over Johnny's (Bazz) house and his kids are gonna say, "Ahh, Uncle Phil why don't you play another song," and Johnny will say, "Why don't you play that old 'County Fair' tune - because I'm taking the kids to the County Fair tomorrow." The first Blaster song is called COUNTY FAIR. It's a great tune, sort of half-written by me and half by J.E. Maynor and it's probably an old minstrel song from ancient times.

The Blasters did a great version of it. I played it for the HighTone guy down in Austin at South by Southwest (March '94 and boy his eyes just lit up, he was just happy.

Back to the story. Johnny says, "Phil your taking the van? Do you have enough gas in there," but of course I won't and I run out of gas. Then, Billy Boy Arnold drives by and says, "Hey, can I help you out friend." and I'll say, "No I'm just priming my carburetor here. I seemed to have sucked up some scum off my engine." He'll say, "Speaking of suckin' up scum, ain't that you Phil Alvin, who was out with my girl last night." And he says, "You know Phil, I ain't a violent kind of a guy, and you know, brother I can't just let this go down. So I'm gonna have to wreck your V-8." Then were gonna do this tune that was Bob Hite's (of Canned Heat) favorite song - one of the records I was able to salvage from Bob Hite's collection. Its a very rare record that no one has ever heard. I've never met anyone that's ever heard it, except for Bob Hite. Its a tune by Petey Wheatstraw and Blind Teddy Darby called I'M GONNA WRECK



YOUR V-8 FORD. Then he's gonna drive me down to the Blue Line, which is a new train we have here in L. A., cause I'm trying to get over to my girlfriend Corrine's house. I follow her from New Orleans to Chicago to Harlem later on in the record and show her the different kind of jazz styles. I sing a tune called THE BLUELINE that I wrote. Then I'm walking, I get tired and I fall asleep. And when I fall asleep the ghost of music past and the ghost of music future is gonna come visit me. I'll say, "Where's the ghost of music present." They will say, "There has never been any music present, cause all you ever have is music past and music future (laughs)" Because singing is always in the present. The ghost will be played by James Harman.

A guy that almost inspired this whole project is named Jerome Bowman. He is a phenomenal guitar player and songwriter that I met in Pasadena playing on the streets. He stands straight up and plays like me. He's called 'The Scarecrow,' a strong lanky guy that sings loud. He and I are gonna do a lot of stuff. He, James Intveld are gonna be doing a lot of different kinds of songs.

AM: Sunra's Arkestra played on your first solo. Will we hear them again?

PHIL ALVIN: The Arkestra is going to be on one song, Joey Altruda from 'Jumpin' Joey' is doing all the charting and arrangements of all the large band songs. I can't do that, it's not something that I do much. I have already been down to New Orleans and cut an original song, a trio between Gregory Davis a trumpet player leader of the Dirty Dozen Brass band, James Intveld and me. James and I wrote a song in two and a half hours. down in New Orleans called TURNIN' BLUES INTO GOLD. We cut that and it was great. I'm just stoked over that song.



Photo: Gary Leonard

AM: I hope you'll have enough room on a CD for all this.

PHIL ALVIN: Oh yeah! I checked that already. They told me I've got an hour. Right now, I've got the Dirty Dozen stuff cut, one of the Blasters songs cut. There may be three Blaster songs.

AM: Anybody producing on the solo record other than yourself?

PHIL ALVIN: No. I've produced every Blaster record except those 2 cuts that Gehman did on the Hard line album.

On the first Blaster record they said, "You have to have a producer." The guy came in,

screwed up the cuts as much as he could, and spent all the money. They came to me and handed me the tapes and said, "Okay, Phil. Go and fix them." They did that on every Blaster album, I swear to you!

On Hard Line the record company had spent all the money, then brought in Jeff Eyrich (credited as producer on Hard line), who I went to high school with and wasn't good enough to play in my bands! But he wanted to produce me!

He spent all the money on our sessions and then took off to France to see his girlfriend and the record wasn't done. On Non-Fiction, they had a guy named Jim Hill who pushed us over into another studio that he was getting kick backs from, again all the money was spent. That time, the record company freaked out, and said, "Phil go fix 'em."

AM: Tell us about your jazz band called the Faultline Syncopators.

PHIL ALVIN: My real intention is, with Joey (Altruder) and these guys is to make a lot of good two beat charts. There is a lot of horn stuff going around the world now. The one thing that has always bothered me about horn arrangements in post 1936 music is that they go for 4/4 time - It's a very lazy thing.

The hotter music, "Hot Jazz" is 2/4 time - you count one-two, one-two, one-two. This makes players really have to work. If you have four beats you can take a long time to phrase stuff. Now, music has a tradition of

four beats, it's difficult to sell horn bands to youthful, energetic people. Two beats is what its gotta be, I don't need to hear Frank Sinatra doing a Tommy Dorsey arrangement. I will not have it - if I can do anything about it.

The money from this solo record will help in getting some charts up, which is what Joey and I are doing for an L.A. jazz band that we call the Faultline Syncopators. Were gonna play two-beat music to dig it into your ground. So far, we just had our first rehearsal the other day with Fayard Nicholas, other than that everybody has been meeting at the gig and just doing a great job under those conditions. This is a side project that I hope to do for the rest of my life.

AM: Are they going to be on the album?

PHIL ALVIN: Oh yeah. The Faultline Syncopators are doing a Fayard Nicholas tune called LOW DOWN RHYTHM. They're also gonna play on 2 of the Harlem numbers.

AM: With all you have accomplished musically, do you have any other aspirations for the future?

PHIL ALVIN: Well with all my sympathies, originally Sunra and I were to be on this record, our intention was to get kids from colleges, good players and link them up with some of the older players and more experienced players to make sure that two-beat music was handed down properly. If you look at history, you'll find that there are certain parts of art that are lost, things that have not been passed down generation by generation. To me the greatest musicians that ever existed as ensemble players are the Harlem bands like Fletcher Henderson's band, Ellington, Mills Rhythm Band, and even some of the Chicago bands. People do not know how to play like that anymore and its getting to the point that those who do know how to play like that are dieing off. So, to begin with - one project that will be ongoing with me is the Faultline Syncopators. I will make sure that, to the best of my ability, this style is not lost. -~~AM~~

THE FAULTLINE SYNCOPATERS PROFILE

Phil Alvin's latest project is one that he feels will consume a part of him at all times for the rest of his life. It is bringing into prominence 'Hot Jazz.' This two- beat music, as he calls it, can be heard on the new Phil Alvin solo album on HighTone records called County Fair 2000. Phil has assembled a talent- filled band called the Faultline Syncopators which have been charting music and playing gigs at "The Derby" in L.A. The band includes Bob Ringwald, the famous Jazz pianist. Phil Alvin holds him in high regard, "There is a very large traditional Jazz festival that occurs in Sacramento each year and Bob Ringwald was one of the guys instrumental in defining a style. He has a band called 'The Great Pacific Jazz Band' and for 20 years has carried on the tradition, and is one of the last of the two- beat Jazz players." Virtuoso clarinetist John Bambridge, who formed the Jack Teagarden Band and was also an arranger/ musician in Doc Severson's Tonight Show Orchestra is a Syncopator player. The other half of the Blasters Alvin/Intveld songwriting team - James Intveld is on lead guitar. James is also playing wooden bass and sharing vocals with Phil Alvin. The Faultline Syncopators are more than just an outlet for Jazz music, it is a platform for introducing to young musicians, the elements of an American Music that risks falling past arms length of the next generation.

COLLECTING BLASTERS:

Priority records has released two rockabilly compilation CDs with Blaster tracks: 1. Classic Rock Wild Vol. 3 has AMERICAN MUSIC on it. 2. Classic Rock American Music vol. 4 has MARIE MARIE. Slash records has re-released two CD's relating to the Blasters. The Knitters Poor Little Critter in the Road from 1985, a folk/country side project Dave Alvin did with members of the band 'X'. Also available is A Minute to Pray, a Second to Die from 1981 by the Flesheaters, also with Dave Alvin on guitar.

Dave Alvin On The Road

By Billy Davis

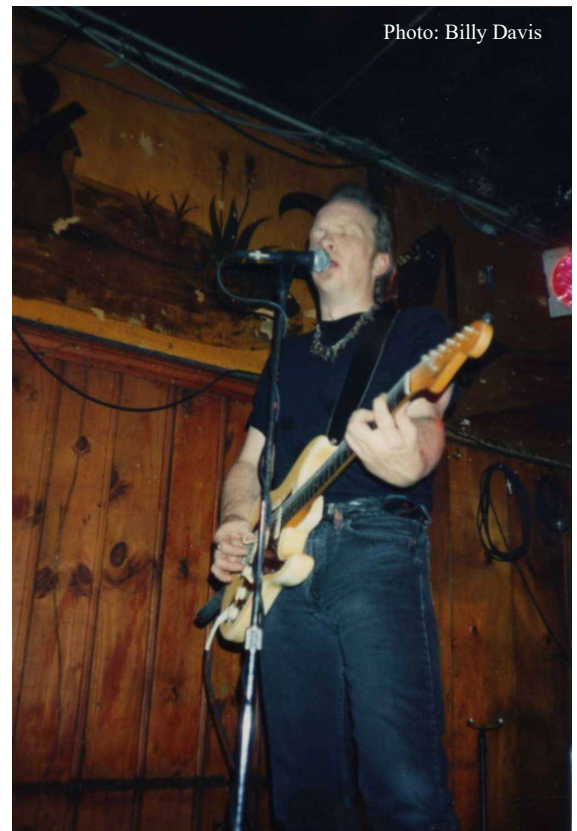
Dave Alvin is currently on tour in support of his latest HighTone records release Museum of Heart. His back up band called "The Guilty Men" includes Rick Solem on keyboards, Bobby Lloyd Hicks on Drums, and Gregory Boaz on Bass. The majority of songs played in his set are off the new album as well as the last HighTone CD, Blue Blvd and are accompanied by Dave's commentary on his inspiration for writing the songs. Throughout the tour, Dave has been opening the show with the new album's title track, MUSEUM OF HEART, an up tempo song taylor-made to the Blaster style.



Dave Alvin evenly divides the solo's between himself on guitar and Rick Solem on keyboards, and with all due respect to the guitar players who have played in Dave's solo bands in the past, its a pleasure on this tour to see Dave handling all the guitar chores and playing all those great licks he's known for. The band played 6 Blaster songs including two newly revived songs, TROUBLE BOUND and HOLLYWOOD BED with a real rockin' guitar solo, and set staples JUBILEE TRAIN, MARIE MARIE, and a song saved for the encore: AMERICAN MUSIC. With a growing repertoire of quality songs, Dave's set list seems to maintain a high level of enthusiasm throughout the show. If one song had to be named as a stand-out, it would be the bluesy version of LONG WHITE CADILLAC. On Dave's first solo LP, Romeo's Escape (Epic Records, 1987), he re-recorded the Blasters classic song but slowing it down. Now he has transformed it into a dig-down-deep blues number with an intro reminiscent of John Lee Hooker. This is a tune that has to be heard live. Finishing the set out, is the title track from his first solo album, Romeo's Escape. It's a tune Dave offered to Jerry Lee Lewis but he turned him down because as Dave recalled, "In the end he doesn't get the girl." So, Dave's lesson to us is, "If you go home tonight to write a song for Jerry Lee Lewis, make sure he gets the girl." Dave is currently in Europe and is tentatively touring the U.S. in June. Watch the dates and don't miss a show!

KING OF CALIFORNIA

Dave Alvin's fourth solo album is described as a "folk-blues record," of previously recorded material from his days with the Blasters and X and some new tracks recorded with friends. Produced by guitarist Greg Leisz, who also plays on most tracks such as FOURTH OF JULY and BORDER RADIO. Dave does duets on two songs, the first with Syd Straw on WHAT AM I WORTH and then with HighTone label-mate Rosie Flores on GOODBYE AGAIN. Other guests include Jimmie Wood on Harmonica on BARN BURNING and members of The Guilty Men. Other songs include the new song KING OF CALIFORNIA, the



John Doe songwriting collaboration song LITTLE HONEY, Tom Russell's BLUE WING, Memphis Slim's MOTHER EARTH, and the re-arranged and obscure EAST TEXAS BLUES originally by Whistlin' Alex Moore. The reason Dave has re-worked some of the Blasters song is as Dave says, "My vocals have changed, arrangements have changed, sometimes even the meanings change. I cringe when I hear myself on my first solo album, Romeo's Escape. I wanted to get the vocals right this time, record the definitive version of each song." King Of California will be available late this month. - **AM**

Dave Alvin TOUR DATES

4/15	Trondjem, NOR	at Bluesklubben	4/30	Terneuzen, HOL	at Porgy & Bess
4/16	Bergen, NOR	at Bluesklubben	5/1	TBA in HOLLAND	
4/20	Zurich, SWITZ	at Kamzlei	5/2	TBA in GERMANY	
4/21	Villingen, GER	at Scheuer	5/3	TBA in BELGIUM	
4/22	Thun, SWITZ	at Cafe Mocca	5/5	Rome, ITALY	at Big Mama Club
4/23	Biel, SWITZ	at Gaskellel	5/6	Piacenza, IT	at TBA
4/24	Zurich, SWITZ	at El Internacional	5/7	Recanati, IT	at Bar Fly
4/26-27	TBA in HOLLAND		5/8	Ongiate Comasco, IT	at Teatro
4/28	Amsterdam, HOL	at Paradiso	5/10	Bologna, IT	at Ruvido Club
4/29	The Hague, HOL	at R&B Fest		France and England	TBA

FROM THE EDITOR: The response of Blaster fans to this newsletter has been incredible, its great to see the Blasters are still on the minds of so many American Music listeners. Because of the cost of printing and postage there is now a subscription fee, but it is minimal. We would like to welcome all the new subscribers who will be coming aboard via the newsletters mention on Phil's solo album. We may not have a slickly printed publication though we could if we wanted to. But most importantly, you are able to recieve the most updated information as witnessed here in an issue released April 15 with a Phil Alvin exclusive interview conducted only 2 and a half weeks ago. Because of the quantity of new information in this issue, I've postponed the discography and Blastory part 2 which was to appear in this issue. Next Issue: Part 2 of The Phil Alvin Interview on the new Blaster album and Blaster Discography. - **AM**

Expanded Newsletter Content

Previously unseen photos from Blasters Newsletter archives compiled and added here in 2006

On March 9, 1994 I saw Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men for the first time. It was at a small bar in Philadelphia on South Street called J.C. Dobbs. Dave was touring for the Museum of Heart CD. I was blown away at the energy Dave brought to the performance. I could see it was the same as the Blasters that I had just seen a few months earlier. The Guilty Men were a 4-piece then. Dave, Gregory Boaz on bass, Bobby Lloyd Hicks on drums, and Rick Solem on keyboards. Here are more photos I took that night.

Photo: Billy Davis

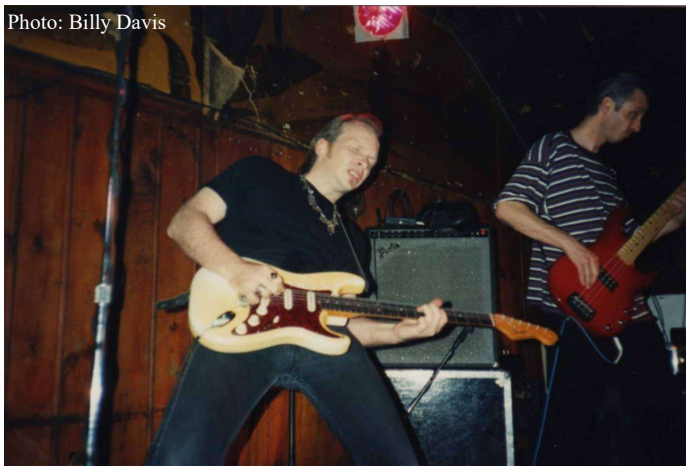


Photo: Billy Davis

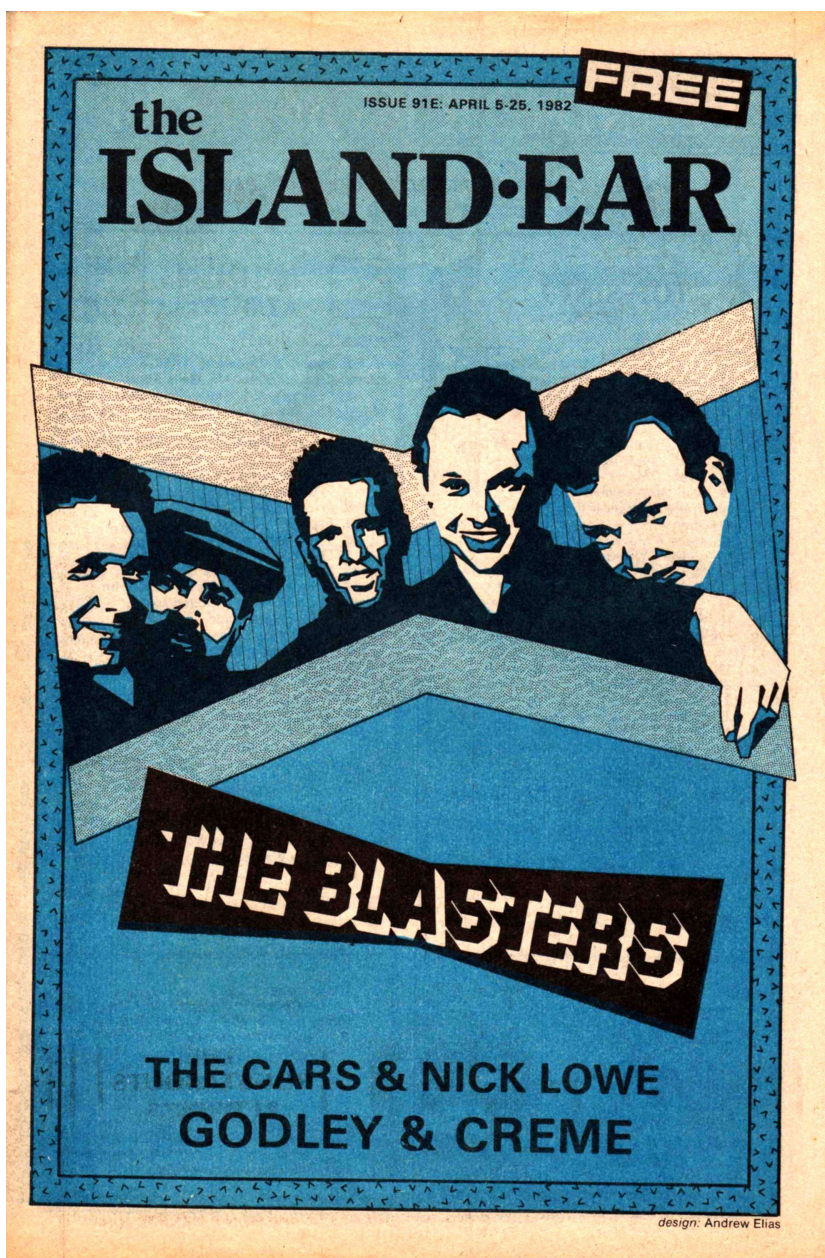


Photo: Billy Davis



Photo: Billy Davis

Here is an old Magazine I found based on Long Island NY with a rare Blasters interview. >>>>>>>>



the ISLAND-EAR INTERVIEW

THE BLASTERS

By Arie Nadboy



Left to Right: John Bazz, Bill Bateman, Phil Alvin, Dave Alvin, Gene Taylor.

To many of you The Blasters aren't exactly a household name. Why should they be? Except for a few college stations they are getting virtually no airplay on the area's commercial radio stations off their excellent Slash Records album *The Blasters*. Then again, last year the Go Go's didn't mean much to many of you and their record crept up on an unexpected public till it reached the number one position on the charts. The Blasters LP is quietly climbing up the charts and at last look it hit number 57. Not bad for a band from Downey, California, who break all the rules leading towards commercial success by playing a straightforward brand of Americana roots rock & roll, blues & rockabilly, for a small independent label out of L.A. (Slash). Things may change soon since the band recently signed with Warner Brothers Records, in order to accelerate the pace of mass exposure.

The Blasters hit *My Father's Place* last month and lived up to the sensational sounds that came off their vinyl offering. Prior to the show I stopped by their dressing room and chatted with Dave Alvin, Phil Alvin & John Bazz.

Keep an ear out for this band. They are hot!

Could you give me a little background as to the history of the band?

Dave: We're five guys from Downey, California. We grew up together playing in different bands. In about 1979 we decided to try to play the music that we've always played, which is the type of music we play now because all our bands have been in this style, and try to give it a more contemporary slant.

Coming from California where you have your Eagles type of rock and roll and your hardcore slammers, where do the Blasters fit in?

Dave: We don't really fit.

John: Somewhere in between.

Dave: We've played with every band in L.A. When we were starting out as an opening act we opened for every type of band in L.A. from slam bands, to

pop bands, to country bands, to blues bands, you name it. In one two week period in 1980, we opened for X, The Cramps, Queen and Asleep At the Wheel. You recently signed a deal with Warner Brothers.

Dave: They signed a deal with us and Slash Records. We're technically with Warner Brothers and technically with Slash. We get their distribution and we maintain creative control.

So now the records will be released with the joint logos and a whole new campaign will begin?

John: As far as Warner's is concerned it is.

Dave: For us, we're still playing. Now the only difference is they get to get on the guest lists to come to the shows.

You've constantly been compared to Creedence. How do you feel about that comparison?

Dave: It's alright. Creedence is another California band that played roots music. They came out of the tail end of the psychedelic era and we're coming out of the tail end of whatever this era is. They played what was basically an updated Sun Records sound and Chess Records sound and they were doing original songs, like what we do. That's where the comparison lies. You're not going to come to a Blasters gig and hear us do "Proud Mary" and you wouldn't go see Creedence do "Marie Marie." It's just that we use indigenous American forms and we play it in a rock and roll style as opposed to a sort of museum piece blues or hillbilly style.

What kind of music did you grow up listening to?

Dave: You name it. Elvis, Hank Williams, Muddy Waters.

John: Frankie Lee Simms!

How has it been working out with two brothers in the same band?

Dave: We have little sibling rivalries but in general we see eye to eye on most things. We both do different things. I can't sing so I write, and he sings.

The album cover featuring "that face" is an eye grabber. Where did that concept come from?

Dave: There's this woman who made the movie

called "The Decline of Western Civilization" and her husband is the president of Slash Records. We couldn't think of anything for an album cover and she was at a show of ours and she just pointed at Phil's face when he was singing and she said, "That's your album cover." When you see us live, you will see Phil's face.

You had a record previous to the current one.

Dave: It was on a real tiny record called Rolling Rock. It was like a hardcore rockabilly label. The owner had been burnt with distributors and all that, so he didn't want to use distributors so he decided to sell it mail order. So we bought boxes of records from him, put them in our cars and drove them around to record stores in Los Angeles and asked them to put them out on consignment. We had only about four thousand or so pressed up and they disappeared pretty quick.

How did you then get signed to Slash?

Dave: The guys from X took us under their wing and gave us a lot of gigs. And they were bugging the guys at Slash to sign the Blasters, saying we'd sell lots of records. Finally, they came down to see the band and we got together.

They seem to have done well for you, as your album continues to climb up the charts.

Dave: The thing about Slash is that it's a lot better to have a small group of people doing a lot of things than a lot of people doing small things. I can go over to Slash and sit down and they'll give me a beer and shoot the shit. And at Warner's if we sell a million copies we can walk in and paint the place green.

John: Don't malign Warner's.

Dave: I'm not maligning Warner's, I'm telling the truth. It's like when you go to a small school with five hundred kids and you know everybody, to a university with thirty-two thousand kids. We're trying to go half the day in the small school and half the day to the University. You need Warner's. You need that major label distribution. The people at Warner's aren't bad or anything.

Phil: Slash has got a great deal of street sense that Warner Brothers had to necessarily lose in order to become that big of a distribution system.

You guys have a great reputation preceding you.

Dave: Part of the thing that we did was, because we couldn't get any type of a record deal for so long and because we kept touring and self-financing our tours, we started having a name before we had a record. We could pack a club in Milwaukee just on our reputation. A lot of bands think if they just stay in a studio making demos you're going to sell records. It can be done. It's harder to do it like we did it just because it's more grinding. It's better because you build up a closer relationship with the audience. The audience feels like "I know these guys somehow. I've seen them grow from nothing to whatever we are now. When you put a record out it's like, "Wow, they finally put a record out!" We were talking to our friend Scott on the way down here who's in a band called The Dictators and a friend of his in a band here called Twisted Sister or something? And he was telling us how he doesn't ever think they'll get a record deal but they sell out three thousand seat places here.

How do you envision things for the future now that things are starting to snowball?

Dave: I don't think things are snowballing, that's just sort of an illusion. We're just beginning to walk into some sort of a limelight. Things are going real good, it just depends on how you define success

and all that. If you define success as twenty-four hour security guards and limousines and all that, it's not so appealing. If you define it as going into a club or concert hall and you can fill it full of people and they're having a good time and you have a good time playing for 'em, well, that's what we want. Our expectations were so low. We thought that if we'd sell 12-15,000 copies of this record, we'd be in heaven. Now we've sold 70,000 and we're on The Billboard Top 100...We're still mentally back somewhere else. It's real good that we are, cause you avoid the headtrips that go along with it. Our idea of success is not everybody else's. I don't want all the trappings and all the snobbery that goes along with being a rock and roll star. As much as you can avoid that shit, avoid it. It's all phony and music is not supposed to be phony.

John: The nature of our music is not the next big thing. What we have to do is go out and play.

Have you hit England yet? They seem to take to your brand of music.

Dave: NO. We never had the money to go to England. For a while when things were looking gloomy and it was hard to get anybody interested besides some press people, we thought if we went to England we'd be stars, like The Straycats and certain other people did. Then about a year ago we thought why do we have to go to England? Why can't we make it in the United States? Now, we'll be one of the first bands of this genre since Creedence that will ever go to England without having to go to England first to get our reputation.

It just seems that England is more receptive to American roots rock and roll than America is.

Dave: Everybody is, but Americans seem to forget what they have. Like if I lived in Paris life would be romantic and I wouldn't have to feel depressed and alienated like I am in New York City. They think that and anything overseas has a romantic tinge to it.

You sounded great during the soundcheck and you seemed to enjoy it almost as much as if you were doing the actual show.

Dave: When we get onstage to play and actually be the Blasters, I would rather be doing that than anything. Rather than having sex, or taking drugs, or drinking or living in a mansion. I'd rather be onstage playing and everybody in the band feels that way. So when we play, the honesty comes across.

Are you working on writing new material?

Dave: Not really, I can't write on the road. I don't want to write songs about record companies and being on the road or drugs or lawyers. I like writing songs that people can understand.

What's so great about the album is that all the songs sound like they're classic rock and roll songs that I might have heard before.

Dave: Rock and roll is the new folk music or it has been for twenty years. We can go onstage and play a note on guitar and it registers right in your gut immediately. I can g . up and play da da da da da and the images will cram right in your brain.

Have other people approached you to write songs for them?

Dave: Yeah, and I always keep fucking it up.

Phil: Video. That's what there's a lot of. It's like in the sixties and seventies everybody got an acoustic guitar or anybody could be a folk singer. Now they pawned their guitars and they call you to do videos. "Hello, have you thought about videos, are you into videos?" No! I'm into records, man!

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Have you learned anything by watching so many L.A. bands getting signed for record deals with little happening as a result and some bands having bad experiences?

Dave: I've seen a lot of friends in a lot of different bands who were at one time bigger than us in L.A. and now...It's just that they follow bad advice. We don't trust too many people. We come from another part of L.A. and we're just real suspicious of everybody. I see bands go right from clubs to major labels and the major labels have no idea of how to promote them. One day they sign a contract and everybody's taking photos of them and shakes their hands and smiles and all that, then four weeks later they're back on the streets.

Say we didn't get picked up by Warners and the most we ever sold on Slash is seventy thousand records, on Slash Records we are stars. With Warner's had we sold seventy thousand it would alright. If we only sold twenty thousand for Warner's we'd be out on the streets.

Has Warner Brothers now approached you about bringing in an outside producer for your next record?

Dave: Yeah, there's a little bit of that pressure.

Phil: But they ain't been to a Blasters recording session. If they can bring a guy in there who could kick me and Gene Taylor's (piano) ass while we're pounding on the walls...We pound on the walls.

Dave: We've had engineers sitting there while five guys are screaming at the top of their lungs, "Hey, the guitars sound like shit!"

Phil: Fifteen thousand dollars and a few points and that's the bottom line. For what? Here's a quote from Jerry Wexler, famous producer, "Hey, heard your album. It was really great, really liked it." We thanked him and told him it was the first time we produced ourselves and he said, "Who the hell cares about production. You got songs?" Some people need producers. Someone who's going to take them over their knee and say, "Hey look, this is how you're going to do it and you're going to do this song." They can't think for themselves. With us it's just that we've listened to records for so long, we know how records should sound.
