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Chris Gaffney Tribute Issue

From the Los Angeles Times
OBITUARY

**Chris Gaffney, 57;
witty songwriter, Southern
California bar musician**

By Mike Boehm (Los Angeles Times
Staff Writer)

April 18, 2008

Chris Gaffney, a roots-music omnivore whose earthy aplomb and off-hand mastery of many styles made him a quintessential Southern California bar musician -- but who also earned international regard for his heartfelt and witty songwriting -- has died. He was 57.

Gaffney had been getting treatment for liver cancer that was diagnosed in February. His brother Greg said he died Thursday morning, April 17, at Hoag Memorial Hospital Presbyterian in Newport Beach, where family members rushed him after a fall in his Costa Mesa home.

Gaffney toured extensively over the last nine years as a member of Dave Alvin's backing band, the Guilty Men, playing accordion and guitar and adding vocals, and as lead singer of the Hacienda Brothers, in which he teamed with veteran San Diego guitarist Dave Gonzalez.

But Gaffney had been a presence on the regional bar scene since the 1970s, playing multiple sets each night in small clubs such as the Upbeat in Garden Grove and the Swallows Inn in San Juan Capistrano. It was a hard-won musician's existence that he and Alvin captured in their easygoing honky-tonk number "Six Nights a Week."

"One of the things that may have hindered him commercially was that he couldn't turn it on; he was a hundred percent honest," recalled Alvin, who considered Gaffney his best friend. "If Chris is in a good mood, you get an amazing show; if he was in a bad mood, he wouldn't hide it."

As a songwriter, Gaffney was a peer of Alvin, Los Lobos, X and the Red Hot Chili Peppers in chronicling the life of Southern California. In "Artesia," from the 1990 Chris Gaffney and the Cold Hard Facts album, he evoked memories of his teenage years cruising through the San Gabriel Valley -- remembrances stirred by the scent of cow manure carried on the wind from inland dairy farms.



(Continued on page 2)

"The Gardens," from the same album, and later recorded by Freddy Fender with the Texas Tornados, was an aching assessment of the void that gang violence leaves in a community's heart -- in this case, Hawaiian Gardens.

But many Gaffney songs reflect the dry, sometimes absurdist, sense of humor that stayed with him in his day-to-day life: "They made a mistake and they called it me," he sang in one jaunty tune; in another lyrical self-description he pegs himself as "a dancing cretin with faraway eyes."

Gaffney sang in a tuneful yet conversational voice that was both sandpapery and sweet. He had no pretentiousness about his music. In a 1992 Times interview, he described taking part in a songwriters panel at a folk festival: "The kids were asking, 'How do you write songs?' I said, 'I'm sitting in front of the TV, having a beer, and something comes to my mind, and I go 'what the hell' and write it down.'"

Born in 1950 in Vienna, Austria, he grew up mainly in Cypress, the son of a telephone company executive. Tall and solidly built, Gaffney excelled at track and cross country at Western High School in Anaheim and took his licks as a Golden Gloves boxer. "I always ascribed his cockeyed view of the world to being beat around the head a few too many times," Alvin said.

As he built a critically acclaimed recorded repertoire during the 1990s with three studio albums, including Mi Vida Loca and Loser's Paradise for HighTone Records, Gaffney was unable to capitalize on it with touring -- tied instead to his bar hero regimen on top of days spent scraping hulls at a Newport Beach boatyard.

Gaffney accepted the bar-musician's lot with equanimity: "I was a working guy before becoming an unheralded roots-music recording eminence, and I continue to do that. If they don't want to put out an album, I'll go and do my day job," he told The Times in 1999. What sustained him, he said, was "the music, and I love the people. You surround yourself with good friends, and you're good to go."

Starting in 1999, though, Gaffney got to live the life of a musical road warrior, with Alvin and then the Hacienda Brothers, touring extensively through the United States and Europe. Alvin said he soon learned not to give Gaffney a weekly advance on his meal money: "He'd give it to some homeless guy or a guy standing at a rest stop begging for change."

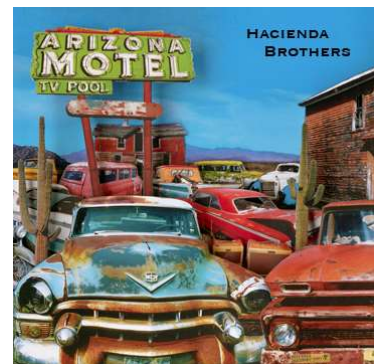
With the Hacienda Brothers, who blended classic country and rhythm and blues styles, Gaffney recorded two studio albums and a live release. In December, he and Alvin recorded the song "Two Lucky Bums," a mellow duet to friendship: 'Let's make a toast to the times we've had The good, the crazy, the rough and the bad. We've survived every one, a couple of losers who won, And when it's all said and done, we're two lucky bums.'

"He might have gone out early, but he did everything he wanted to do," said Greg Gaffney, who played bass beside his brother through many of the bar years. "He loved being on the road, happy in a van with a bunch of buffoons."

In addition to his brother Greg of Costa Mesa, survivors include his wife, Julie, of Costa Mesa; daughter Erika of Houston; sister Helen of Oakland; and brother Robert of Vancouver, Canada.



Latest News: The Hacienda Brothers will release their final album with Chris Gaffney on June 24, 2008 called Arizona Motel on Proper Records. -- Dave Alvin is organizing a Chris Gaffney Tribute album with performed by John Doe, Peter Case, Big Sandy, Los Straitjackets, Buddy Miller, Jim Lauderdale, Nick Lowe, Dave Gonzalez, The Iguanas, Dan Penn, Tom Russell, Robbie Fulks, and more. Freddy Fender's version of THE GARDENS will be included. Yep Roc Records will release it sometime next year -- Dave Alvin is planning a benefit / tribute concert for the Labor Day weekend for friends who have been sick this year -- Chris Gaffney, Candy Kane, Duane Jarvis, and Drac. Dave tentatively calls the concert series "Saints and Sinners," and he hopes this might



Blasters shows

(Phil, John, Jerry, Keith)

- 7/10 Pasadena CA at Levitt Pavillion
- 7/11 Long Beach CA at The Cellar
- 7/17 Portland OR at Berbatis
- 7/18 Seattle WA at Tractor Tavern
- 7/19 Winthrop WA at Winthrop R & B fest
- 7/23 San Jose CA at The Blank Club
- 7/24 San Fran CA at Red Devil Lounge
- 7/25 Santa Rosa CA at Last Day Saloon
- 7/26 Sacramento CA at Midnight Kiss
- 8/28 Reno NV at Nugget Casino

Dave Alvin & Guilty Men shows

- 7/5 Berwyn IL at Fitzgerald's
- 8/22 Fallon NV at the Oats Park

Knitters

- 8/24 New York City at Lincoln Center
- 8/29 Yosemite at Strawberry Fest

become an annual event. Dave said: "Day 1 will be punk night with Tex and the Horseheads and the Knitters. The second night will be The Cold Hard Facts, The Hacienda Bros. and The Guilty Men. Then the third night will be the Blasters and X." – The Gene Taylor Blues band show in Los Angeles this past December was recorded for a live album due out late this year. -- Dave Alvin has contributed a poem to Some For The Road, a tribute to poet/author/professor Gerald Locklin. The poem is called "Toad Meets Little Julian Herrera" and can be read at www.davealvin.net. Dave has cited Locklin, who taught him in college, as an influence on his work. (AM #15 featured a full length interview with Locklin). -- The Bob Dylan Encyclopedia by Michael Gray has been published in paperback by Continuum Publishing and includes an updated entry on Dave Alvin. – Topcat Records is releasing a live CD of Hollywood Fats and the Paladins on June 17, 2008. The concert was recorded in 1985. - ~~AM~~

Remembering Chris Gaffney

----- Dave Alvin -----

There were two first times I met Chris. First in 1980: The Blasters were starting to get a name and had a gig at club called the Golden Bear. We were opening for Doug Sahm and the Sir Douglas Quintet. Gaffney had a girlfriend who was a Blasters fan. She brought him to the gig with the intention of having him pitch his songs to us. He came and watched the show and then told her: "I don't think they need any help with my songs. They have that all sewed up." (laughs) Chris said we met after the show, but I have no memory other than meeting a lot of people after that show.

The first time we actually met was at a club in Hollywood called Raji's in '86 or '87. Raji's was a fun place to hang out at. I used to date the bartender. I might have still been dating her or we might have already broken up. I was down there when Chris's band played. I stood in front of the band yelling requests. Chris said something about 'Hawaiian Gardens' and I yelled: "Bullshit." Because it's an area in Los Angeles that's not 'Hawaiian', and not 'a garden.' It's a funky part of town, but near where I grew up. You never heard people make reference to it - ever.

He played a great song called AR-TESIA. After the set, he made a B-line right to me and we started talking and we've been friends ever since.

He's one of those guys you've known all your life but you just haven't met him yet. I walked out of Raji's that night with a best friend.

The first time we ever played together was on Chris's album Cold Hard Facts (ROM Records) on the song LIFT YOUR LEG in 1989. We recorded it out in Riverside. Gaffney came and picked me up from Orange County, and we drove an hour to Riverside so we could record the track. Then they drove me home and then back



Photo: Dennis Blanchard



Chris playing around with the 'Merch Man' title

to Riverside. I don't know why I didn't drive? Chris was a different guy back then to make all that effort (laughs).

I first started taking Gaffney on the road in 1999 and I couldn't pay him the same as the band – there wasn't enough money. So what he and I decided was that he would come on stage for the encores and I would pay him half of what everybody else was making. He would sell 'merch' and take half that money. If he had a really good 'merch night,' it would all equal out.

On that tour we played the Tin Angel in Philadelphia (2/25/99) and Gaff sang COWBOYS TO GIRLS. A few days later we saw a review in the

Philadelphia Inquirer newspaper. It was a real good review, but it said "The highlight of the evening was when the guy selling T-shirts got up to sing a song." Gaffney never let me forget that (laughs). It was after that that we made him a permanent part of the band.

I've got a million funny stories of Chris on the road. My favorite, though, is "The Dianas." It's the name of a low budget cigarette in Europe called 'Dianas.' I don't know who it's named after. Gaffney and Joe Terry got hooked on smoking Dianas.

We were driving through Italy coming from a festival in Milan. We were very hung over because the keg beer we were drinking at the festival called Ellison was 100 proof. We thought it was regular keg beer. The next morning we had to get up early and drive through the Alps.

Chris, Me, and Joe were in a minivan driven by a friend of Chris's. Me and Joe were in the back seat and Gaffney was in the front. Chris had his window down with his arm out the window and his pack of Dianas on the dashboard. We hit this hair-pin turn and in slow motion the Dianas slid across the dash and out the window and down a cliff. As this slowly happened, Chris didn't make a move to save the cigarettes and just said: "Well, there goes the Dianas." We had to pull over because we were laughing so hard. We all just lost it. It's the funniest thing Gaffney ever said. . . but it's not funny. It's all in the delivery - which made it the funniest thing he ever said.

One day I wrote a song while I was gardening. I called Chris up and said "Chris, I just wrote the worst song I have ever written and we have to record it." It was a really bad 70's-country-pop song called SANTA FE LOVIN'.

We started talking about doing a parody EP of really bad 70's-country-pop. That became one of our jokes. We would go like a half hour just cracking each other up with song titles and stuff. We planned the cover art for it with both of us in these Country pop outfits with big feather plumes – double-knit leisure suits with big turquoise belts. I'd have my arms around Morgan Fairchild, and he had his around Barbi Benton. We were gonna cut 4 songs. When he got sick, I got more serious about the idea. But we never got around to doing it. It was weird but very fortunate that we recorded the song TWO LUCKY BUMS before his health declined.

He had a tough life and a complicated life. There is a lot of stuff that no one knows. Chris was in a band with Wyman Reese called the Phantom Herd. They were a country rock band - sort of 'Eagles-esque.' They were very successful in the late 70's and had performed on a half hour special on PBS. Years later, someone found the video and got me a

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copy on VHS. I watched it, but at first I didn't recognize Gaffney – he wore glasses, really long hair, and a beard. I then realized it was him when he sang harmony vocals on the opening song. Then he sang lead on Graham Parsons' HICKORY WIND and he hits it out of the ballpark. I said: "Oh my God: that's Gaffney." They were a real good band.

I called him up and told him that I saw the Phantom Herd video and he asked, "What?!" I told him someone gave me a copy. He said: "What?!" A couple of weeks later he was over at my house helping with yard work. A week after that, I was looking for the Phantom Herd tape and realized it was gone (laughs). He went thru all my videos and stole it (laughs). Later, I was over his house and I saw it there. I didn't steal it back. He didn't want anyone to see it. But the funny thing is that he was great - even then - in that band.

He had a boxer's mind. He thought 'never show your weekness' - Keep your guard up. Near the end, he didn't want to see anyone or talk to anyone over the phone. I would let him call me when he felt up to it. I still have 5 messages from him on my phone that I won't delete.

He was a very complicated guy. In the months before he died, there was something that completely devastated Chris that he never really recovered from. His boxing trainer died. Georgie Vlapos was 93 and had Alzheimer's. Chris would always go see him. When he was in his eighties, he would come to Chris's gigs. But in the last few years he couldn't recognize anyone. That always depressed Chris. Vlapos trained Chris as a boxer and became a father figure when Chris's parents were breaking up.

The last time I saw Chris was a funny story. Dale Daniel and I went to Chris's house after Phil had called and asked to come see Chris. I had to help him fill out some paperwork. I called Chris and asked if he wouldn't mind Phil coming over. He said: "Sure." So we picked up Phil who had a ukulele with him. I asked why he brought it and he said: "To cheer Gaffney up."

So we get over there and I was helping Chris fill out a bunch of health forms at the dining room table. It's me, Chris, Phil, and Dale. Chris was weak and not feeling good. Meanwhile, Phil is banging away on the ukulele saying, "Hey, Chris, do you know this one?"

Chris suddenly said something that was funny, but was meant to be true. He said, "Phillip. Stop it. You're hurting me." It's all about Chris's timing (laughs).

Near the end, he was spending a lot of his time doing what he always did – watching TV, sitting in a chair that he called "The Man Chair," (It's a big comfy chair) with his remote controls. He would watch anything. One time Dale and I were over and we sat through an hour and a half of a marathon of My big white trash wedding. I finally said: "I can't take this crap anymore. I gotta go" (laughs). He would even watch the home shopping channel.

My image of Chris in heaven is: he has a king-sized smoking room in a very nice hotel with a refrigerator stocked with Busch Beer and Budweiser. He has a few cartons of Marlboros and a few girls waiting on him hand and foot. He has a remote control TV watching all 4 ESPN channels. And as he would say, he is "Dialed." -- Dave Alvin



Photo: Lisa Gilman

Dave Gonzalez (Hacienda Brothers) -- Chris Gaffney was so truly talented. He was such a rare and wonderful American treasure...one of the last of the real deal cats. He was an old cowboy, a soul soldier, a brother, absolutely a mentor to me, and a big brother too! I can only say he was the coolest - such an old soul and so humble.

I looked up to him in so many ways for such a long - long time. But once we joined forces and became the Hacienda Brothers, Gaff absolutely took me under his wing and changed my whole way of life. He taught me so much and gave me so many opportunities. He's still giving 'em to me. I think he really likes his new job!

I'm so very lucky to have been able to hang with him and to tour and record so much with him.

I was proud to be his bro, his guitar player, his driver and his mechanic! I will miss Gaffney soooooooooo much.

—Dave Gonzalez

----- *Jeb Schoonover (Hacienda Brothers manager)* -----

When we found out that Chris was sick, it was horrific, but it didn't come as a complete shock. For the past couple of years, Chris had a fatalistic approach to life. I know this sounds a little strange, but the outlook that he had I found refreshing, he use to say: "The hell with it. I'm not gonna live that long. I wanna do what I wanna do." I loved that attitude about him.

In contrast, I had just finished working with another country artist who would have done anything to get signed. Chris was the opposite – he didn't give a crap about major labels and certainly didn't want to be told what or how to record. He just wanted to just make great music with The Hacienda Brothers.

Oddly enough, when he learned he had cancer, he seemed a little relieved. I think he had been feeling sick longer than he revealed. In fact, in January he was out in Tucson recording – he didn't look good. I pulled him aside and asked if anything was wrong. He said: "Jeb, I'm just getting old." I was concerned about his health. So when he went back home; he did go see his doctor in February and they told him he had cirrhosis of the liver; in March they said it was cancer, and then a month later he was gone.

If there can be any solace in Chris passing, it was that he went quickly and he didn't suffer. Also during the final three months of his life, when the HelpGaff.com web site went up, he had a chance to read all the letters and and comments from people. There was an immediate outpouring of love and financial support. He was really touched deep down inside and he appreciated it so much. I liken it to getting the flowers before you die. He got that, and I can tell you from talking with him at that time that it was wonderful for him to know how many people cared for him and that he had touched so many people.

Personally, one of the greatest accomplishments in my life was that I had the pleasure of knowing him all these years. When I first heard Chris sing, I wanted to get him signed and out touring.

Early on, I did everything I could to help. But in the music business there are lots of tough times. I was there when he got a rejection letter from Warner Brothers that said he wasn't good looking enough and his songs made fun of country music. We laughed about it, and Chris's attitude was basically that he didn't give a crap. Once again that is what I loved about Chris. From his perspective there were a lot more important things in life, like friends and relationships.

Back in the 80's, I was a DJ and had a show called Country Crossroads and I was promotions director with the radio station in Tucson. I loved Chris's Road to Indio record, so I called him up and was immediately struck by his great sense of humor. I then got him and his band out to Tucson for a concert in '89. That's when I hung out with Chris for the first time, and we became instant friends. In a year and a half, I brought him to Tucson four times for concerts.

Since I lived in Tucson, I spent a lot of time in a border town called Nogales. Chris' style of mixing in the accordion into country music was the coolest combination I had ever heard. I loved Flaco Jimenez and a bunch of other Norteño bands – so when I met Chris, that mixture was a huge thing we had in common.

I remember Chris doing a concert here with the Lonesome Strangers. I told him I had to take him to this great little Norteño bar. It was called Frank's Tavern, and that night we saw an amazing band. Chris and Wyman Reese (Cold Hard Facts keyboard player) went back to their hotel room later and wrote his classic song FRANK'S TAVERN. That was the little Norteño bar where I hung out. It's a true story. There was a young girl with a lace white dress and we couldn't take our eyes off her. That's where that song came from.

In the end, the thing I am most proud of is the fact that we could put together the Hacienda Brothers and have them tour all over the world. So Chris could get out and share his talent with so many people. It



Chris and Jeb at The Palomino in 1990



Jeb and Chris in Tucson 1990

really makes me feel good that Chris was able to spend the last 5 years doing that.

When Dave G. and I got the idea of having a country soul band, we both thought Gaff had to be the ideal singer. Then I threw my 40th birthday party (and Chris' party because we had the same birthday). I wanted to get all my buddies together to form a super group – so I did. I had Teddy Morgan and Billy Bacon, Dave G., and Gaff. Dave and Chris really connected.

Dave is such a road dog – he could put the band together, a van, and all the things you have to do to keep a band on the road. They sure did that, and now we look back and there are four albums out, and thousands of miles touring all over the world. I am happy to have helped create one of the greatest American roots music bands ever. And it was all made possible because of the immense talent of my friends Chris Gaffney and Dave Gonzalez. We will miss Chris more than anyone will ever know. -- Jeb



The 2002 Birthday party that gave birth to the Hacienda Bros.

----- *Dale Daniel (Hacienda Bros)* -----

In the early formation of the Hacienda Brothers the band was called the Tucson Ramblers. There was a split of membership between California and Arizona. Gaff and Dave Gonzalez were from southern California. Teddy Morgan, from Arizona, was in the band and Chris Lawrence was the original pedal steel player. That version of the band worked on demos in Tucson in 2002 - 2003.

I had toured with Chris Lawrence and Dallas Wayne - so Chris and I were buddies. Gaff and Dave were talking about getting together to play with Chris Lawrence in Southern California. They didn't have a set bass player – sometimes it was Gaff's brother Greg. Chris Lawrence called me to play drums doing Thursdays at the Doll Hut in Anaheim. It was basically a rehearsal in front of people. We never had an official rehearsal. They said 'Just show up and well do some country standards and songs from our demo.'

When Chris Lawrence told me Gaffney was in the band, I said: "Woo Yeah! Chris Gaffney? I'm in!" I knew that Teddy Morgan was in the band and they had another drummer that did the Arizona shows and recording. I just figured I'm in the rehearsal band and eventually they will give me the slip. But I was totally digging it and lovin' just doing that.

I don't know all the politics involved, but eventually Teddy and his bass player Steve Grams quit, and the name changed to the Hacienda Brothers. Teddy's drummer, Richard Medek, stayed in to record the first album and then Chris Lawrence left the band when he got busy with other stuff and was undecided about going on the road.

We were playing an anniversary party for Dave G's parents in San Diego and we got a sub-steel player which turned out to be the young genius David Berzansky.

Dave G. and Gaff had just done a Johnny Paycheck tribute in San Francisco and Hank Maninger was playing with another band. Dave G. asked Hank to come down to the Doll Hut and play bass and then Hank was in. It all happened in a short period of time.

After the album was finished they only did few shows with Richard on drums, then I was playing. So instead of getting canned because Teddy left, I slid right in. They were nice enough to put my mug on the album cover even though I didn't play on it, but I was now the full time drummer.

Gaff did not have patience to rehearse. We rehearsed at Hank's house in his studio when in San Francisco. Gaff would be in the house watching sports.

I remember one time we were rehearsing a Johnny Cash song for a tribute and there was this one chord that was giving the guys fits trying to figure out. They would listen to it over, and over, and say: "What's

that chord?" I walked inside the house to see what Gaff was doing. He said: "How's it goin' out there?" I said: "They're hung up on some chord, I don't know if they're gonna get it." He looks at me and says: "Do I need to go out there?" I said: "It might speed things up." He walks out there, opens the door and hears them saying: "I think it's this" and "I think it's that." Gaff says, "Play it." He picks up the guitar and forms the chord with his hand, strums it, and says: "There you go" and he went back in the house to watch some more sports (laughs). He was amazing.

He liked to get things done very fast. His knowledge of pop references is amazing. He was a master of knowing goofy stuff and pulling it out at weird moments.

In the van, Gaff and Berzansky (DB) were the masters of gags and pyrotechnics – major pranksters. Dave had a Sherlock Holmes magnifying glass to get a close look at the maps. Those guys would use the magnifying glass and the sunlight to try to set the map on fire or burn Hank's hand while he was sleeping (laughs). That kind of craziness always went on.

Here's another funny story. Gaff almost never played by himself acoustic. On the last Hacienda Brothers tour we were playing one of our three-nighters in Lincoln at the Zoo bar and Gaff said "I think I'll start up the show tonight just by myself." We were like: "What are you serious?" He just came up with that.

Gaff and DB had a thing goin' on that whenever someone made a mistake or hit a bad note, Gaff would make a fart sound like 'Brrrrr.' So DB said to Gaff: "What happens if you get up there and blow some lyrics?" Gaff said: "I'll just go 'Brrrrr.'"

So Gaff went up there - the place was packed - and Gaff just wow-ed them song after song. DB and I were sitting in the back watching. His third song was Waylon Jennings AMANDA – a big weeper. Everybody was real quiet and he gets to the second verse and gets stuck. He mumbles a few words and then goes 'Brrrrr.' He did it! Berzansky and I laughed so hard, we were dying. Then the audience turned around looking at us because they were confused and we were crying from laughing so hard. Berzansky came back stage and told everybody: "I don't know what else that guy is gonna do. But when he did that, I knew he was my friend for life." That was Gaff. It didn't matter if he actually forgot the lyrics. He probably just said: "Here we go."

He was the master of the absurd and doing stuff to crack you up – if you like that kind of stuff. Some people would just say what is up with this dude.

He was a great buddy – an amazing teacher. Just listening to him hit those notes and sing them like no one else could sing them. I was always blown away at how he could hit that note at the beginning of WALKIN' ON MY DREAMS. I asked him how he did it spot on every night. He said: "I just step up there and go for it." Dave Gonzalez wrote that soul classic. He wrote a song that you think always existed – and to have Gaff delivering it - Oh it's absolutely a gem.

With all the touring I did with the Bros., I always see Gaff on stage from the back. We did some gigs in the northwest opening for Dave Alvin, so Gaff was working in both bands. DB and I stood out in the audience while Dave Alvin was on, Gaff was just a side guy. But we said: "Wow!" Now that we get to watch him you realize what a presence he has standing there. He really had something. He had a coolness that others could only strive for. The Tractor Tavern show in Seattle was one I'll always remember. It was a Blast.

Gaff was such a no-bullshit guy. Great with people if he liked you. If he didn't like you, he didn't have any time for it. But he gave people a lot of room before saying: "I can't hang with that guy." He was so honest and really a singer's singer. That's for darn sure. One of the nicest guys I ever met.

I can't remember when I first met Gaff. It's like I always knew him. I heard his band The Cold Hard Facts from seeing them open for Dave Alvin - then I started checking them out on their own. I think they were one of the most amazing bands in the country. They used to do every Sunday at the Blue Café in Long Beach, CA for a few years (2000-2001). My wife Jennifer and I would go watch them for 4 hours each Sunday.



On those Sundays I always used to talk to Gaff and I got to know all those guys. When we were planning our wedding, I asked Gaff if he would be so nice as to play my wedding and Gaff said "Yeah."

We had moved our wedding date one time and then moved it again. Gaff called me one day and asked: "Is your wedding still on (that specific date)? Because, another guy asked me to play his wedding on the same day and said he'd pay me three times what you're paying me." I interrupted: "If you're asking if I can pay you what he's paying, the answer is; no." He got a little hot and said "That's not what I'm asking you. I'm asking you if the date is still on. I'm not gonna back out on you. A man's got his word and if he hasn't got his word, what has he got? I just want to make sure that's the date." I said, "Yes, yes."

So Gaff played the wedding and it was an absolute Blast. That's the first time I played drums with him too. "ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE" was our wedding song. The version I loved was from the Willie Nelson covers album, so Gaff learned it from there. Gaff later told me he and Julie (Gaffney) sat around and wrote all the lyrics down while listening to it. I still have the lyric sheet with our wedding stuff. Doug Livingston played keyboards – just he and Chris. Gaff nailed that song. He let the old lyric sheet fall to the floor and knocked the tune out of the park.

In my wedding photos, that's when I have my biggest smile. He was a masterful entertainer that day. He said to me "Do not worry about anything. I am here to entertain." I'll never forget those words.

The last time I saw Gaff was at his house when I went down there with Phil and Dave Alvin. Phil brought some kind of banjo/ukulele. Phil was talking to Gaff about sports and boxing. They were discussing some fighter, and then Phil went off on a tangent as Dave was having Gaff sign some medical forms. Then Phil jumps back in with the same boxer that they were talking about 15 minutes ago. Gaff says "Ohhh are we back to that again? Alright Phil lets rub this up, we have to bring this baby home." Phil tightened up his story and finished it (laughs). Even then, Gaff was still super funny.

Gaff was signing all these forms for Dave and Dave said: "This is the last one here" and Gaff says "Oh I think this is the one where you take my farm away from me." (Laughs). He still had that dry sense of humor. That was a super cool trip to Gaff's house – just to watch the Phil and Gaff interaction – It was a thing of beauty. Dave said that Phil had a great respect for Chris. They could work each other back and forth.

One of my favorite songs that Gaff did was Fred Neil's version of "I'VE GOT A SECRET." I used to always talk to the Cold Hard Facts band about that song. My wife and I would always try to get to the Blue Café Sunday show, before he played that song – but sometimes we didn't make it. Gaff knew how much I liked it because I'm one of those people that will always annoy somebody by asking for a particular song I like.

One time we arrived a little late and Gaff announced from the stage: "This is for the darling Daniels," Then they played that song. When I got to the break, John Senne, the Cold Hard Facts drummer said: "We already played that song before you got here." So I said to Gaff: "Why did you do that song twice?" He said: "I am here to entertain." ----DD

-- Rick Shea (Cold Hard Facts, Guilty Men 1998 - 2004) ---

I met Chris Gaffney sometime around 1987 or 88 through Wyman Reese when they asked me to play in the Cold Hard Facts. The band then was Danny Ott on guitar, Wyman Reese on keyboards, Tucker Fleming on Drums, Greg Gaffney played bass, I played pedal steel and some guitar and Chris, of course, sang and played accordion and guitar.

At that time we played The Palomino, The Music Machine, The Anti Club and some other places that were around back then. Chris was always a powerful singer and performer. The songs were great and the band was like a freight train when it got rolling.

We did some shows with Dave Alvin, which is where Dave and I really first met. I played on Chris's first album and we went to Austin, Phoenix, Tucson and San Francisco, and then I sort of drifted out of the band for a while. The deal-breaker was when I didn't go on a tour of Texas with them that, although they did real well with shows and audiences, was kind of a rough trip. I was busy recording one of my own albums at the time and playing shows of my own and with some other people as well. I kind of understood when I didn't hear from them a while after they got back.

I don't think I was ever officially back in the band after that, but before long I was playing with them pretty often again. Chris would call me to play guitar or steel at the Swallows Inn in San Juan Capistrano and



husband lady," and "that's the way we found him." It was probably from some old cop show, but when Chris delivered it, you knew that whatever position that guy was in, he had lost every shred of dignity he had. But more than that, Chris was reminding you that a fall from grace is really only a short step for all of us.

Comedy was important to Gaffney. I remember on one drive listening to one Sam Kinison tape 7 times, and Chris had a great sense of timing. There's a great clip of Chris on You tube doing ARTESIA at The Coach House and he does a spot-on routine about being in the Beatles. Usually, though, Gaffney chose to just use his voice and his songs to connect with an audience and I never saw him fail.

Chris was one of the greatest artists and performers I've had the honor to work with. I was a geeky kid playing country bars in San Bernardino when I joined the Cold Hard Facts. Through playing with Chris and the band, I met most of the people - musicians, other artists and fans - who made a difference for me in my career. I thank him for that. Many, many nights I saw him stand on stage with an audience in the palm of his hand, hanging on every word, just with the sound of his voice. I've tried hard to measure up to that.

I've had a chance to be part of a few memorials since Chris passed away and I've been surprised and overwhelmed by the number of people who have come out to celebrate and remember Gaffney, some who knew him from the last few years with The Hacienda Brothers, others who knew him for 20 or 30 years or more, and some who only knew him through his songs. The shadow he cast was long and wide indeed. I'm proud to have known you. Adios my friend. - Rick Shea

---Bobby Lloyd Hicks (Guilty Men 1991-2006) ---

On the road Gaffney rarely finished his evening meals. He'd get his leftovers to go - for what he called: "A little pillow talk for later." Many times after the gigs, I would venture 'round to Chris' room to shoot the shit and have a beer. He'd be propped up on his pillow finishing off whatever he'd saved from dinner and some times he'd toss me the TV remote and say, "Here Bobby, find us the funny."

It was always more of a suggestion than a command. There were the easy choices: Andy Griffith or the old Bob Newharts (Ah, Emily).

But he also hippped-me to a masterful comedic tour de force - A show that I'd always hated: "Mama's Family." Corny? You bet. Cliched? Absolutely. But also brilliantly performed by comic geniuses. At least that's the way it seemed, watching it with Chris. The guy had a way of making the most mundane stuff hilarious. And he taught me that "the funny's" are all around us, if we'd only look for it.

Thanks for the laughs, man. llater, llove, Lloyd

the long weekends in Pioneer Town at Pappy and Harriet's.

After I started playing full time in The Guilty Men in 1998, Chris came on board pretty soon after, and I got to know him a lot better. We did a few long drives just the 2 of us and roomed together a few times. We spent a lot of time along with Dave and the rest of The Guilty Men in the van out on the road on tour.

Chris could be a very charming guy and he always had an inside joke for you. He had a lot of obscure references to TV shows and movies and he knew which ones worked on who, so everyone had their own little personal greeting. One of my favorites was "That's your



Here Gaff is wearing a t shirt I sent to him Christmas of '04. I found it in the mall at a Christian t-shirts kiosk. It says: "Jesus Died For Pedro" in reference to Napoleon Dynamite. I dunno, it just said "Gaffney" to me. -- BLH

----- Gene Taylor (The Original Blasters) -----

I'd been quasi-acquainted with Chris Gaffney since 1976, when his dad used to be one of the late-afternoon/early-evening regulars in The Falcon's Nest, a bar where I used to play piano at in Long Beach, CA. I would show up at the bar around 8:00-8:30 (for a 9pm start) -- sometimes accompanied by Bill Bateman -- and often Chris' wheelchair-bound father would be leaving for home. Once in a while, Chris would be with him. We never really knew each other then; we just sometimes crossed orbits.

Flash ahead 20 years, while I was a member of The Fabulous Thunderbirds, and I was starting to hear, during my travels, about a country singer named Chris Gaffney, who was also, as it turns out, best-friends with my old Blasters buddy and band-mate, Dave Alvin (small world).

Still a few years later, when The Blasters were doing our 2002-2003 reunion tour, Chris came on the road with us as Dave's guitar tech and tour "liaison." Chris became my roommate and drinking/herb-smoking buddy for the duration, and we would reminisce about SoCal, Long Beach, boxing and music. We also became life-long friends in the bargain.

In 2003, after the sound check for one of the Blasters' reunion shows in Italy, I was approached outside the venue by 3 or 4 fans. They asked if I was a member of The Blasters, and with some pride, I answered in the affirmative. "May I ask you a question?" one fan inquired. "Sure," I replied. "Is it true you are traveling with the great Chris Gaffney?" "Ur, uh, yeah..."

I then proceeded to learn just how popular Dave's "guitar tech" was in Italy. Chris also was asked to be the opening act for The Blasters at our show in Glasgow, Scotland -- during that same tour -- and I felt most honored when he asked me to be HIS guitar tech. What a blast we had!

Chris Gaffney was my friend briefly, but he is my brother forever. Protect your sternum, bro! -- wherever you are. --Gene Taylor



----- John Bazz (The Blasters) -----

Wow, lots of memories but not too many stories, and Lord knows I heard a million of 'em chauffeuring Chris and Dave around Italy during the '03 Blaster reunion.

One of my favorite moments with Chris was the day I meet him on that Italian tour, in Milan. We were hanging around the hotel the next morning, killing time, and he and I took a walk to go look for some coffee. We talked about any number of things and eventually discovered that we had a bunch of similar friends, including my brother, and how, when first introduced to him, my brother had ridden his dog like a horse (small brother, big dog). Chris thought that was hilarious and continually reminded me of that story during the course of the tour.

At some point during our walk, Chris pointed across the street to a small coffee shop called 'Bar Johnny.' He took my picture under the marquee and we went inside and had some coffee and continued yakking. Good times.

A little latter in that tour, we were in Belgium to play a festival, and although the festival was huge, the town wasn't much bigger than a village. After the show, we were all bussed back to our hotel and Chris, Bateman and I wandered across the street to the only open bar in town.

We traded stories about any number of things, but I remember Chris telling a story about when he was a kid and his father took his brother and him into a bar and sat them down next to him on a bar stool and ordered a couple of cokes for "my men." It was apparent that Chris had the utmost admiration for his old man, but when he told that story, he got all choked-up. Those two words: "my men," coming from his old man, was like a big moment in his youth; some kind of affirmation between a father and his son. I got the feeling that Chris adored his pop.

Another great Gaffney moment on that Euro-tour was in Glasgow Scotland when Dave threw a band together to back-up Chris, and that band opened for the Blasters. The band was Dave, Bill, Gene and Gaff. And for me, that gig was the highlight of the tour because it was - by far - the best double-bill anywhere in Europe that night, and both Chris and Dave gave the audience one hell of a show and something to remember them by. -- John

----- Ben Gaffney (nephew) -----

It's hard to write something about someone close to you when so much about them has already been written. So the only way I know how to begin is to write about the Chris that I knew, my uncle.

I personally want to thank everyone who participated and pitched in to the HelpGaff site. Chris always knew that he was loved by his friends and fans, but through the posts and donations he truly saw how powerful that love was, which gave him the strength to fight.

I feel like there are only two people in my life that have ever made me feel completely comfortable in my own skin: my father, Greg Gaffney, and my uncle Chris. All three of us just got each other, our quirks, senses of humor, everything.

As a child I remember always wanting to be a part of the bond that was so obvious between my dad and Chris and as an adult that is exactly what I got. Chris was like a second father to me; between the two of them, someone always had my back. When I moved out of the house that I had lived in with Chris during my late teens, he told me that I could always rely on him no matter what, and he never broke that promise. No matter how much time had passed, it was always like we had never been apart.

Some of the best times of my life--growing up, becoming who I am today, were all spent with Chris. Half of my support team is gone now, and it's hard to come to terms with. But at the same time, Chris has made me a strong enough person to know that I will be able to make it through this.

Now, although it's hard to not have him here, in a way I feel like I still do. Everyday I am reminded of him and what he meant to me. In my memories, through articles of clothing, pictures on my wall, music on my iPod, and in conversations with our mutual friends, he is with me everywhere I go; he will never really be gone. Chris is more with me now than ever. His humor, music and spirit are still here, in me and in all of us. Maybe he's just on tour...

AIN'T IT FUN REMINISCING?

Chris Gaffney Memorial at The Cellar, Long Beach, CA April 30, 2008

By B.J. Huchtemann

Family, friends and fans came together to remember Hacienda Brothers front-man, soulful vocalist and one-of-a-kind cool cat Chris Gaffney at The Cellar in Long Beach, Calif., on April 30. Upstairs, a display of photos, art and memorabilia celebrated the singer-songwriter's life. On-stage downstairs, a purple accordion sat on a bar stool, with a display of purple roses underneath sent by some Minneapolis fans that Gaff had named "The Teardrops." A cap was perched on a microphone stand reading: "Gaff: Vaya Con Dios." A Mariachi band playing traditional Latin music greeted early arrivals to The Cellar.

The stories and tears flowed. The whole family was assembled, and Gaff's family members shared their memories. Andy Kindler, a friend of Gaff's and Gaff's favorite comedian, was the master of ceremonies. Dave Alvin, Gaff's best friend and longtime musical collaborator, offered a couple of his favorite Gaffney stories, noting that in life and in his distinctive sense of humor as in music, Gaffney's "timing and phrasing were perfect, "lending to a lot of nuanced, "skewed and skewering" comments.

Alvin, who often cited Gaffney as his "spiritual advisor," noted that he "took some comfort and consolation in knowing that now Gaffney knows all the secrets of the universe."

Gaffney's acclaimed and longstanding L.A.-area band The Cold Hard Facts played, followed by Alvin and the Guilty Men. Guest performers throughout the evening included Rick Shea, Joe Terry (who sat in with the





Photo: BJ Huchtemann



Photo: BJ Huchtemann



Photo: BJ Huchtemann



Photo: BJ Huchtemann



Photo: BJ Huchtemann

Penny from Gaff's 'favorite dive bar' tells a story about Cowboys To Girls

Hacienda Brothers, with whom he has recorded, as well as playing with the Guilty Men), Greg Leisz, Chris Miller, and the rest of the current Guilty Men line-up: Steve Mugalian, and Gregory Boaz. Former Guilty Men drummer Bobby Lloyd Hicks also sat in with the Guilty Men for the first portion of their set.

Alvin's set was blistering and emotional, especially when he and the band launched into two songs from his CD Ashgrove, songs written after the passing of Alvin's father, songs dealing with death and loss. On "Somewhere in Time," Alvin dropped lyrics and blinked back tears. Standing at the edge of the stage, I was crying too. On "Ashgrove," Alvin seared his way through the original lyrics and added Gaffney's passing to the list: "Now my mother's gone, now my father's gone, now my best friend Chris Gaffney's gone, and all the old bluesmen have all passed on."

Alvin got John Doe (X) up to sing "Fourth of July" with him, a song Alvin wrote that I'd always requested of Gaffney and the Haciendas. It was also the last song I heard Gaffney sing, with Alvin, at Austin's Continental Club in December.

On that December night in Austin, The Hacienda Brothers had the headlining slot after The Knitters. I remained glued to the side of the stage for the Bros. after watching Alvin tear it up with The Knitters. I remember looking over my shoulder and catching site of Alvin, standing unobtrusively in a corner behind the stage, watching his best friend "Gaff" transfix the audience. We never really discussed it, but I think we we were both appreciative of the fact that with the Hacienda Brothers, Gaffney had finally gotten the spotlight that his talents deserved. In the late 1990's, Gaff started going out with Alvin as a guitar tech and merchandise seller. It was a good time for both being on the road together, but it certainly seemed like a waste of Gaffney's great musical talents to find him selling merch at a gig. Little by little, Alvin brought him into the band's performance, first joining Alvin's Guilty Men in the encores, and finally performing as a full-fledged member of the band.

Gaffney's interpretive way with a song cut straight to your heart. Through his work with the Hacienda Brothers, so many people got to experience Gaff's great talents and big heart.

Dave often referred to Gaff as his "other older brother." Older brother Phil Alvin was there too, pretty much bursting out of the audience and singing a couple of songs with Alvin. Phil was joined by Doe for a rollicking version of "Justine."

The Hacienda Brothers performed in "missing man" formation, with co-founder Dave Gonzalez taking on all Gaffney's vocals. Their set was a tearful reality check. Chris Gaffney really is gone. The love and emotion in the room boiled over often, like when Gonzalez invited to the stage Gaffney's "favorite dive-bar bartender," Penny, from The Helm. She came up to tell a story about Gaffney, that launched the band into a song the band had not planned to sing, Gaff's signature tune "Cowboys to Girls." The song was Penny's favorite song on her bar's jukebox, and when Gaffney first visited the joint, he went to plug the jukebox and asked her if she had any requests. She asked for the song, and Gaffney didn't tell her until later that he was the one singing it. I'm sure there was not a dry eye in the house as the band smoked their way through the tune in memory of Gaff.

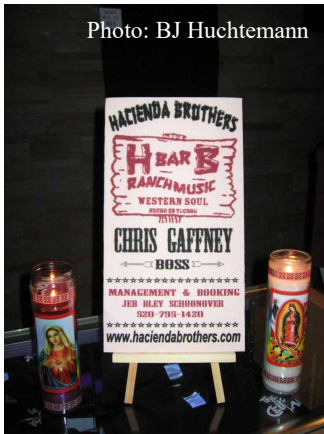


Photo: BJ Huchtemann



Photo: BJ Huchtemann



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Photo: BJ Huchtemann



Photo: BJ Huchtemann



Photo: BJ Huchtemann



Photo: Steve Joseph

I have to say thanks and send love to all the Hacienda Brothers: Dave Gonzalez, drummer Dale Daniel, bassist Hank Maninger and amazing pedal steel player Dave "D.B." Berzansky. I know it was tough for all of them to take the stage and play without Gaff...but for those of us who loved the music the band made through the last five years, it was a much-needed way to get

some closure, to show our respect and love, and to say goodbye to Gaff.

Bill Kirchen (Commander Cody founding guitarist) was a longtime friend of Gaff's. Gaff had toured with Kirchen's band in the 1990s and Kirchen had toured with the Hacienda Brothers backing him a couple of times in recent years. Kirchen stepped up and joined the Bros. for a number of tunes.

I'm not typically the sort of person who writes down set lists and this night was no different. With the exception of a few key tunes that stuck with me, I can't tell you the set lists for this night. And my apologies if I'm leaving out any musical guests who appeared.

Kid Ramos and his current band Los Fabulocos had the final musical slot of the evening. Los Fabulocos are Jesse Cuevas on accordion and vocals, Kid Ramos on guitar, bajo sexto and vocals, James Barrios on bass and vocals, and Mike Molina on drums.

Most family and close friends of Gaff's had been at the Cellar since 2 or 3 p.m. and the audience was winding down and saying their goodbyes after the emotional Hacienda Brothers set.

It was an amazing evening in honor of an amazing man, who leaves not just a musical legacy but gifts of love and friendship that will always be remembered. Despite Gaff's untimely passing, his family and his widow Julie are still faced with many medical bills to pay off. Though the Gaffneys have insurance, some treatments were deemed 'experimental' and not covered by the insurance company (which as I understand), is also questioning coverage of items such as Chris' final hospital stay, where he died.

HelpGaff.com is still up and running and offers various ways you can donate to the Gaffney fund if you would like to do so.

Benefits in Omaha and Lincoln, Nebr., have given local fans a chance to remember Gaffney and to help his family with the remaining medical bills. On Sunday, April 28, Omaha's Sunday Roadhouse crew raised over \$1000 that Dean and Gary sent directly to Julie Gaffney, Gaff's widow, to help her with any immediate needs.

The Zoo Bar held a multi-band tribute on Sunday, May 18, which raised over \$3000 that was deposited into the HelpGaff.com account. The day allowed all of Gaff's Zoo Bar friends to participate in a house-rocking musical tribute.

Benefits and celebrations of Gaffney's life were also being planned and held by friends in Minneapolis and in Austin. At HelpGaff.com you can also preview tracks from the final Hacienda Brothers CD, ARIZONA

MOTEL, which will be out in June. Gaff finished vocal tracks for the disc before he was diagnosed, leaving those who love him with one more recording of his amazing, soulful vocals to remember him by.

--B.J. Huchtemann

The majority of this column has appeared previously in my blues, roots, "Americana and Then Some" weekly column HOODOO BLUES in The Reader, Omaha, NE, copyright 2008, reprinted with permission. Catch up with the weekly music goings-on from my vantage point online at thereader.com/hoodooblues.php.

Chris Gaffney Memorial at The Cellar in Long Beach, CA

by Paul Zaich



Photo: Bill Herzog

I last spoke with Chris Gaffney on December 29th at the Café Boogaloo prior to the Gene Taylor Blues Band show. He'd driven to the show with Dave Alvin, and we greeted each other with the usual firm handshake. We talked briefly about the recent Hacienda Brothers show in Tuolumne and then returned to our tables. Gaff seemed fine that night. He even joined the band and sang a rousing LONELY NIGHTS. However, I noticed that Gaff did not drain a single Bud long neck. I didn't realize that this would be the last time I would hear my 'main' man Gaff perform live on stage. Less than 4 months later, on April 17th, 2008, Gaff succumbed to liver cancer.



Photo: Bill Herzog

A memorial was planned for Gaff on Wednesday, April 30th, at The Cellar in Long Beach. I realized this was a chance for everyone to say goodbye to Gaff in his or her own way. At 7:00 AM on April 30th I loaded up my truck and began the 6-hour trek from Stockton down to Long Beach to pay my respects to Gaff, his family and friends. The drive went smoothly with Gaff on the CD player. I picked up my cousin Paula in Hermosa Beach and headed over to Long Beach to meet up with my pal Brian Weatherby at The Cellar. We waited patiently in line next to James Intveld's parents for 30 minutes or so while a mariachi band played in the patio.



Photo: Bill Herzog

The upstairs portion of The Cellar was decorated with family photos of Gaff, memorabilia and dedications. We exchanged condolences and conversation with Gaff's sister Helen and the Hacienda Brothers then headed downstairs to wait for the memorial to begin. The downstairs portion of The Cellar contained a long bar, stage and speakers, basically a full-on nightclub. It seemed to be a perfect place to hold a memorial for Gaff.

The stage was set up with an empty mic and barstool with Gaff's accordion resting there. Dave Alvin began the tough job of opening the memorial, which was handled beautifully by a tough guy. Telling the noisy crowd to SHUTUP and listen up, Dave emotionally reminisced about Gaff, his 'other older brother.'

Family introductions were made to the crowd and heartfelt stories and dedications followed. Next up was Gaff's favorite comedian, Andy Kindler, who had spent time with Gaff during the last weeks of his life. Andy fictitiously commented about Gaff's appearances on The Ellen Show, his love for John Mayer and his fondness for The Sharper Image Catalog. These were the sort of "ha-ha, funny stuff" that added an appropriate lighter edge to the emotional proceedings.

Dave introduced Gaff's original band, The Cold Hard Facts, and joined them on stage for the first song: SIX NIGHTS A WEEK a Gaff/Alvin-penned song they often performed together; this tune set the tone for what would prove be a special



Photo: Bill Herzog

night of musical tribute to Chris Gaffney.

All incarnations of the Cold Hard Facts were in attendance: Danny Ott (guitar, vocals), Rick Shea (guitar, vocals), Wyman Reese (keyboards), John Senne (drums), Doc Pitillo (vocals), Gary Brandin (pedal steel), Mike Barry (bass), and

Greg Gaffney (bass). Danny and Wyman reminisced and expressed their love to Gaff's family and the crowd. Greg thanked everyone for coming and Rick Shea gave a heart-felt thank you to Gaff for giving him his big break when he was just a geeky kid who sang for tips at coffee houses.

Danny handled Gaff's vocals and did an outstanding job singing GLASS HOUSE, ARTESIA, and TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT WE FIGHT. Rick sang LONG BLACK VEIL and performed a duet with Danny on a blistering version of CINNAMON GIRL. Doc performed a couple raunchy rockers and John Senne sang COME ON IF YOU'RE COMIN' and THE SHAPE I'M IN. Danny also played an emotional instrumental version of LITTLE WING that seemed to move the crowd deeply. Dave Alvin returned to the stage and sang EAST OF HOUSTON WEST OF BATON ROUGE, a song he and Billy Swann penned for Gaff. Danny finished up by saying: "Vaya Con Dios, Chris."

Dave Alvin and The Guilty Men then took over the stage. The band included: Dave, Joe Terry, Bobby Lloyd Hicks, Greg Boaz, Chris Miller, Chris Mugallian, Greg Leisz (pedal steel), RJ Simensen (washboard) and 'special guests' John Doe and Phil Alvin. A good warm-up song – OUT IN CALIFORNIA led off the set, followed by a 'Gaff tune', ALBUQUERQUE, admirably sung by Dave. ROMEO'S ESCAPE was next on the set list, with Dave lamenting, "Romeo (Gaff) is gone". The band followed with a well timed, tear-jerking rendition of SOMEWHERE IN TIME, which eventually morphed into a thundering version of ASHGROVE.

Big surprise - special guest John Doe joined Dave on stage to which the crowd responded with resounding applause. Dave talked about how much "Gaff enjoyed doing this next song." The band broke into FOURTH OF JULY with Dave and Doe offering stunning vocals. While FOURTH OF JULY nearly brought down the house, what happened next surely did.

Phil Alvin was in the crowd, and Dave announced: "Gaff was my other older brother." Phil's response could be heard, "He was your dumber older brother." Dave deadpanned, "Well, that's debatable." Phil climbed on stage, as Dave sarcastically thanked him for "dressing up for the occasion." Phil wore a t-shirt and jeans, with wind-combed hair. It was this element of Alvin brotherly love that added even more to the music that followed. MARIE MARIE was due up next, but Phil decided to call John Doe back on stage.

What followed next was an astonishing version of JUSTINE with John and Phil sharing vocals. More comedy relief ensued from Phil. With a smile on his face, he said, "I'd like to thank Andy Kindler [Andy is Jewish] for getting over Gaff's lifetime membership in the Nazi Party." There was silence, some giggling in the audience. A stunned Dave, in semi-disgust, stated, "Uh, Andy's here for the comedy. You're [Phil] here to sing." Phil grinned, manically replied, "I wasn't trying to be funny." The band played on. They finally busted into MARIE MARIE. Dave literally broke it down, playing his heart out as the band segued into SO LONG BABY GOODBYE.

Finally, The Hacienda Brothers hit the stage with Joe Terry on keyboards. All the Brothers were there - Dave Gonzalez, Hank, DB and Dale. The only person missing was the 'Boss' (as DG referred to Gaff). As usual, DG was the spokesman for the band. He gave a heart-felt testimonial about his love and respect for his friend, Chris Gaffney. It must have taken much strength for DG to get up there in front of everyone and let it all hang out. Not to mention, he sang lead vocals on 'Gaff songs,' no doubt a daunting task. DG pulled it off skillfully.

The Bros. led off with a soulful MIDNIGHT DREAM. DG then called up Gaff's favorite bartender Penny, who related a humorous story about how she met Gaff at the jukebox. She explained how he refused to put on COWBOYS TO GIRLS as she requested. Gaff thought she was putting him on. She thought he was a real jerk. At that time, Penny had no idea that he was Chris Gaffney, the guy that sang that song. It was quite funny.

After the story, DG unexpectedly broke into COWBOYS TO GIRLS and sang the hell out of it. The Hacienda Bros. followed with three more songs that more or less said it all: LEAVIN' ON MY MIND, WALKIN ON MY DREAMS, and NO TIME TO WASTE.

Special guest Bill Kirchen was brought up out of the audience. Bill had previously performed with the Hacienda Brothers, so this was a nice touch. Bill dedicated SOUL CRUISIN' to Gaff. He also sang HAMMER OF THE HONKY TONK



GODS and HOT ROD LINCOLN. The Hacienda Brothers proceeded to play, fittingly, GONE. In a dramatic finale, the band closed with "one of Gaff's favorites", an instrumental version of DANNY BOY, which left not one dry eye in the house. God Bless You Gaff, we love you, we miss you. Amen.

Dave Alvin & Yep Roc Records release more exclusive digital download tracks.

These digital singles are available for download on Yeproc.com in the Yep Roc Web Shop for just \$0.99.

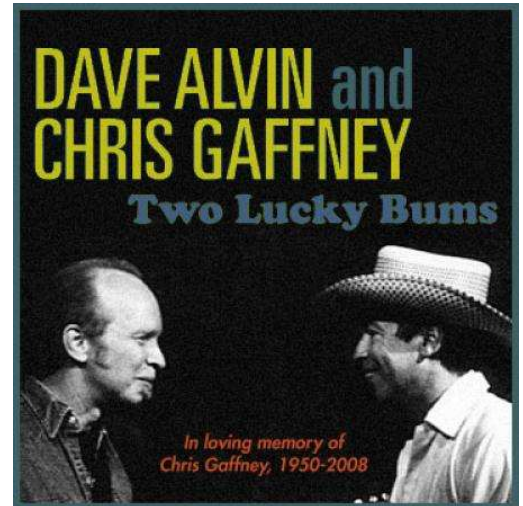
Dave Alvin and Chris Gaffney - "Two Lucky Bums"

Written by Dave Alvin Performed by Dave Alvin & Chris Gaffney Release December 7, 2007

Dave Alvin: Out in the lonely, high desert plains of New Mexico is a tiny, semi abandoned town called Cuervo. Fifteen or twenty mostly dilapidated buildings made of rock, adobe and wood. My best guess is that they were built around one hundred years ago but they could be much older. In their current state the buildings appear not to have been constructed by human hands but to have risen out of the surrounding sand, rock and chaparral landscape under their own power. That's about all I know about Cuervo.

Now, what does Cuervo have to do with "Two Lucky Bums", a duet that I wrote for myself and my best pal, Chris Gaffney (from the Hacienda Brothers)? Well, for many years after Gaffney and I first stumbled on to Cuervo late one night while on tour, he and I have fantasized about buying the quasi ghost town and moving there, dragging all our other friends along with us. Of course we don't have the cash to do it but it's a nice little dream for a couple of musician/bums. We've spent more than a few hours on various highways and continents making wildly improbable plans for our small desert paradise. Whenever we're driving near Cuervo, we always stop and say something wistful along the lines of, "Someday, Gaffney" or "Someday, Alvin." Eventually I figured if we ever did find ourselves in the unlikely position of possessing Cuervo, that the potentially ludicrous experience would probably be like an old Bing Crosby and Bob Hope "road" movie. The Road To Cuervo, I guess. And that movie would need some songs so I'd better write some. "Two Lucky Bums" might just be the theme song.

The song is a bit different for Gaffney and me. I've always been a fan of Crosby's laid back vocals and also a fan of the great 1930's and 40's pop songwriters but I have never attempted writing anything in that swing/pop style but I figured, "What the Hell?" I guess it's a tribute of sorts to Crosby, Hoagy Carmichael, Johnny Mercer, etc. Beside singing with me, Chris plays some sweet, accordion licks while I strum some rudimentary 40's jazz guitar. Craig Parker Adams did his usual superb recording job at his Winslow Court Studio in Los Angeles and our buddy Kurt Mahoney took the photograph. Gaffney and I had a real gas recording "Two Lucky Bums" and I sincerely hope you get a kick out of it. Until we meet again, see you in Cuervo. - Dave Alvin



Dave Alvin and Chris Gaffney - "Two Lucky Bums" Memorial Edition

Written by Dave Alvin Performed by Dave Alvin & Chris Gaffney Release April 20, 2008

My other big brother, Chris Gaffney passed away Thursday morning, April 17, 2008.

I had another song prepared for this month's download but with the recent sudden and tragic passing of my best friend Chris Gaffney, it just seemed proper to re-release TWO LUCKY BUMS. Nothing could better express what Chris's friendship meant to me than this duet I wrote for the two of us.

This version is a bit different than the previously released one. Just a few days before Chris died, I added two old pals of ours to the track, David Jackson on the stand up bass and Don Heffington on the drums. Both musicians have played on various recordings and in various barrooms with Chris and I over the years so it made sense to fill out the track a little bit with their subtle but invaluable assistance. Our trusted engineer, Craig Parker Adams, did a beautiful re-mix that brought much more dynamics and color to the track while keeping

its essential intimacy intact.

I really don't know what else to say right now, but I feel that I have to say something. First of all, I want to again thank everyone that sent messages to Chris and donated funds to his cause. It means more than you'll know to Chris, his family and me. We are still raising money at www.helpgaff.com to help with the existing medical bills and other various expenses including a forthcoming memorial service.

After twenty-some years I have thousands of memories of Chris. Through those years of songs, laughs, countless barrooms, eternal highways, broken hearts, screw-ups, bail outs, close calls, busted strings, elusive dreams, flat tires, stalled engines, hard hangovers, bad gigs, great gigs, in between gigs, tragedies, triumphs, secret jokes, bad TV, worse food and now, tears, Gaffney always had my back. I never had to worry about nothing or nobody if Gaffney was with me. I don't know what I ever did to deserve it but, God, I was blessed to have Chris Gaffney as my best friend.

Chris's and my friend, B.J. in Omaha, said it best for me in a email yesterday. She said that I now have a "wild angel looking out for me." Yeah, I do believe that's true. I'll still see you in Cuervo, brother. -- Dave

From the Editor — The people in these pages really got to know Chris Gaffney. I knew him for 9 years hanging out with him on Dave Alvin tours, Original Blasters tours, and the yearly Austin SXSW music fest. I might have only seen him 2 or 3 times a year, but he always treated me like a long time friend. I feel fortunate for that.

I first met Chris in January 1999 in Austin, Texas on the weekend of Dave Alvin's Austin City Limits taping. I was just going through my archives looking for old Gaff photos when I came across an unpublished tour diary of mine from that weekend.

Here is entry #1 meeting Gaffney for the first time at a Dale Watson gig at Ginny's the night before the ACL taping. *January 28, 1999 -- Chris Gaffney came in and stood on the side of the stage. He's another roots rock singer from California. Dave Alvin has produced his albums and considers him one of his "Best friends in all of the world." Dave told me he brought Gaffney to town for his moral support at the taping. Dave was really nervous and Gaffney is a barrel of laughs, so Dave had him there to ease his tension. I actually think Dave had other intentions, as I will explain later.*

So when Gaffney walked into Ginny's, I saw him lean over to talk to Dale between songs. I later learned that Gaffney joked to Dale, "I didn't know you started playing gay bars?" Dale responded, "I never had until you walked in.

(laughing)" Gaffney recounted the exchange to me the next day. That had to be one of the funniest come-backs I ever heard.

I introduced myself to Chris and asked about the bands' schedule for the night. He told me that The Guilty Men went to a Mexican restaurant while Dave headed back to the studio (producing the Derailers). He mentioned that he was assigned to make sure Dave got up at 9:45 in the morning. Chris was very serious, I guess because at that point I was still a stranger. It wasn't until later that weekend that he got to know me and loosened up and started cracking the jokes he was known for. So that night I kept some distance.

The next day the band rehearsed all afternoon in the TV studio. Near the end of the complete run through rehearsal, Dave surprised the producer and Chris Gaffney himself by announcing he was bringing Gaffney on stage to play accordion on the final song MARIE MARIE.

Before the evening-live-taping we all went to dinner at Threadgills – a famous Austin restaurant known



Gaff at Austin City Limits

for its Chicken Fried Steak. Gaff was the center of attention at the dinner table. I was immediately captivated by his sense of humor. Here is diary entry #2:

The joke at the table was that Chris kept saying, "So I'm gonna be on TV!" He made jokes about what he was wearing - like that he would come out with a mop mopping the floor and then Dave would invite him on stage for Marie



Photo: Billy Davis



Marie. Everybody was laughing over that vision! Chris was wearing a baseball hat, a Busch Beer work jacket, rolled up cuffs on his jeans, and cowboy boots. He said he was going to have to borrow clothes somewhere. Chris left the table to call his wife about the turn of events. He came back and recounted the dialog with his wife. He said, "Guess what Honey? I'm gonna be on TV!!" He quickly imitated her, "Whatever. When are you gonna be home?" He said he repeated, "I said I'm gonna be on TV!!!" Again she said, "Whatever. When are you gonna be home to work on the house?" He just kept laughing as we did too. He told us how he just bought a house which needed a lot of work. Dave later told me, "Chris has a stand-up comedian's perfect timing."

In the following years I never passed up an opportunity to hang out with Gaff on the Dave and the Guilty Men tours. In 2003, on the Blasters reunion tour of Europe I roomed with Gaff in Amsterdam for a few days. Every night I would fall asleep laughing as Gaff stayed up watching TV and cracking jokes about the programming.

Later in 2003, the Original Blasters taped a DVD in Santa Ana. I went out there to cover it for the newsletter and Gaff insisted I stay at his house. I stayed in Gaff's trophy room – a room with all his celebrity and boxing photos and memorabilia. It was like a museum in there – great stuff to look at in 'Gaff history.'

Gaff introduced me to his dogs Hudson and Lullabelle and showed me how well-trained they were. Gene Taylor dropped by that evening and we drank some beer and listened to Ray Price and Johnny Paycheck albums. When I was ready to go to sleep, Chris said: "You only get the best at the Gaff-

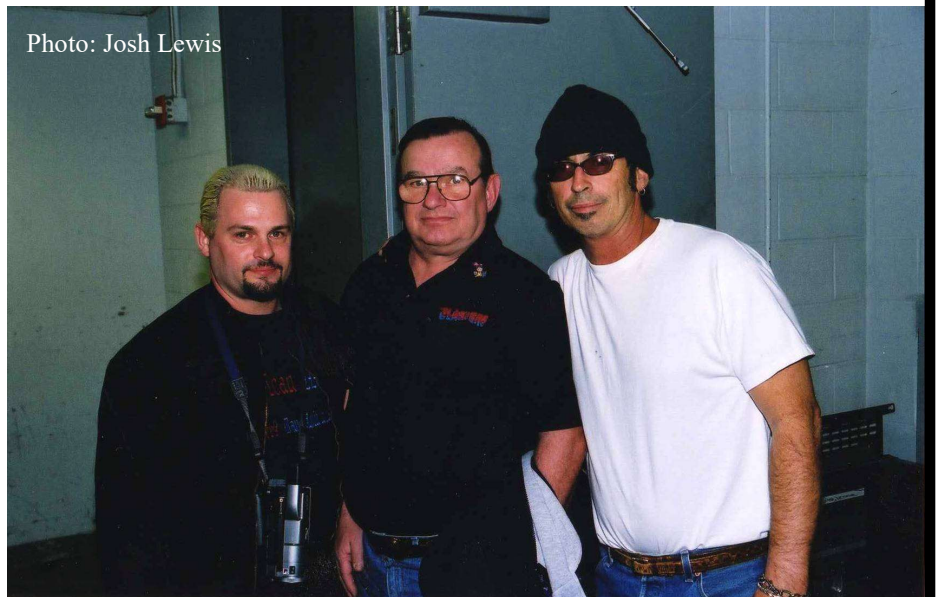


Photo: Josh Lewis

Me, my Dad, & Gaff. At BB King Club in NYC



Photo: Josh Lewis

Gaff backstage and the mean bouncer

pass. Gaff pleaded with him: “Come on. You’re not gonna throw his old man out are you?”

It’s difficult to come to terms that he is really gone - but the legacy of his music and sense of humor has a life of its own. It won’t be long before any memory of Gaff only brings about smiles and laughter to all of us who knew him. He really was a true original.

Gaff always was up for a gag or posing for a funny photo. I’ll end this newsletter with these photos I shot at 3 AM after a sold out Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men gig at The Bowery Ballroom in NYC in 1999. Gaff descends into the New York City subway. —Billy Davis

ney House. Breakfast will be steak and eggs.” I thought he was joking. I woke up hearing a sizzling steak on the stove. He was serious! And I kid you not – that was the biggest steak I ever had in my life. I could barely finish it. Gaff is the coolest.

I remember in 2002 the Original Blasters came to play BB kings in NYC. I brought my father to the show so he could finally see “who these Blasters are that Billy is always raving about.” Gaff immediately hit it off with my Dad and went to bat for us when a big mean bouncer tried to throw my father out of the backstage area after the show because he didn’t have a



Photo: Billy Davis

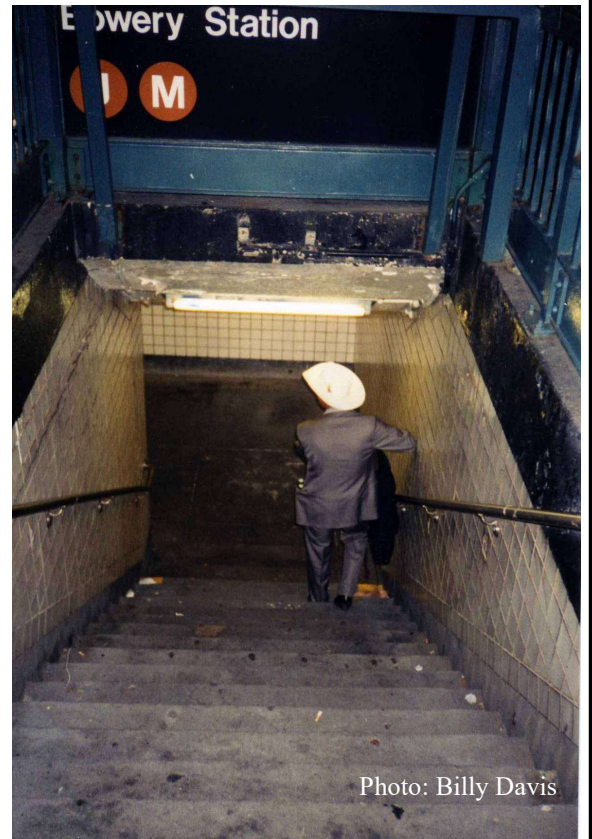


Photo: Billy Davis

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