

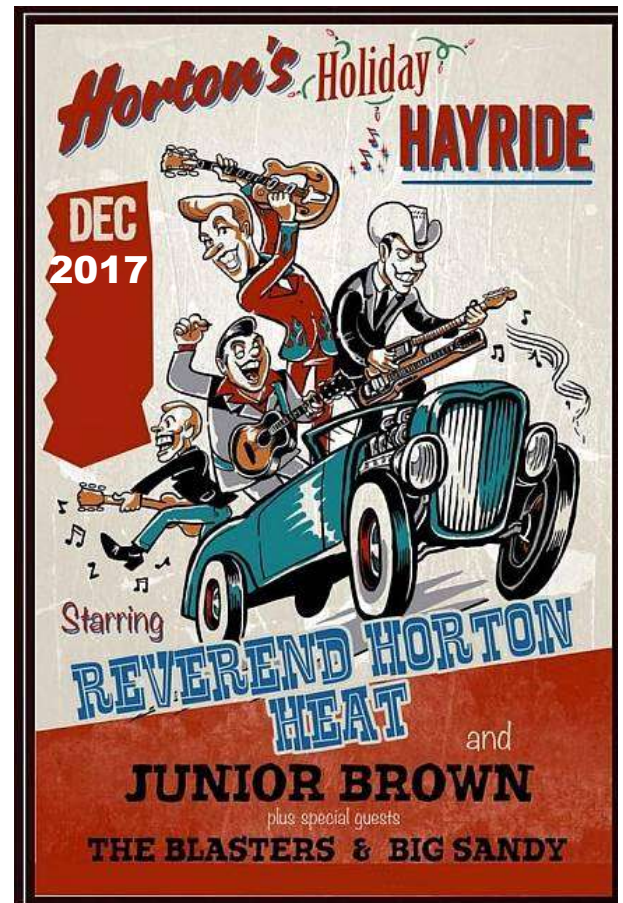
American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

Nov. 2017

The Blasters Join Horton's Holiday Hayride Tour

Latest News: Look for the Blasters on tour in December on the U.S. East Coast for the HORTON'S HOLIDAY HAYRIDE tour with Reverend Horton Heat, Junior Brown, and Big Sandy. -- Dave Alvin's punk band The Flesh Eaters will reunite in January 2018 for a series of eight shows along the West Coast of the U.S. and one in Canada. The Flesh Eaters, a band that once featured Dave Alvin, Bill Bateman, Steve Berlin, John Doe, and D.J. Bonebrake, released the album A Minute to Pray, A Second to Die in 1981. -- Rockabilly legend Sonny Burgess, who recorded for Sun Records, died on August 18 at age 88. The November/December issue of Vintage Rock magazine includes a 2014 interview with Sonny. Dave Alvin is included in a short story sharing his memories of Sonny Burgess. Dave produced Sonny's 1992 album Tennessee Border and Sonny was a guest on the Blasters' Going Home DVD and CD in 2004. -- Hard Travelin', the EP released on vinyl by Dave and Phil Alvin for Record Store Day in April, is now available as a CD. The CD can be purchased at the Yep Roc Web site (www.yeproc.com) and at Dave's concerts while supplies last. -- Dave Alvin is featured in A Perfectly Good Guitar: Musicians on Their Favorite Instruments, a new book by author/photographer Chuck Holley. Dave discusses his 1934 National Steel Body Resonator Guitar. Other musicians featured in the book include Cindy Cashdollar, Greg Leisz, and Louie Perez. -- Dave paid tribute to drummer Bobby Lloyd Hicks, a former member of the Guilty Men who died in February, at a concert at Fitzgerald's in Berwyn, IL, on May 6, 2017. Before an audience that included Bobby's daughter, Bailey, Dave discussed his memories of Bobby and then sang a lyrically revised version of CRAZY COUNTRY HOP, to honor his former drummer. It was a song that Bobby often sang with the Guilty Men. -- Dave Alvin and Jimmie Dale Gilmore have been doing acoustic duo tours this year. They have recorded some material together that may become a full album release. In March of 2017 they recorded an interview and in-studio performances for radio station KSUT in Ignacio, Colorado. Search "Dave Alvin" at KSUT.org to hear the sessions — **AA**



This Issue: A Farewell to Sonny Burgess, The Guilty Ones interview Part 2, Rick Shea's new CD, and Dave Instrumentals.

The Guilty Ones Interview Part 2

Chris Miller Lisa Pankratz Brad Fordham



In spring 2017, I sat down for a roundtable discussion with Dave Alvin's band The Guilty Ones - guitarist Chris Miller, drummer Lisa Pankratz, and bassist Brad Fordham. In American Music Issue # 80 we discussed the band members early careers and their formation of the Guilty Ones. In Part 2 of the interview, we talk about their solo work and playing with Phil Alvin—as well as the band's favorite songs and memorable moments.

**By
Billy
Davis**

American Music: Chris, you played in the Guilty Men from 2006 - 2008 and then the Guilty Ones 2011 to the present. What were you doing during the Guilty Women period of 2009 to 2011?

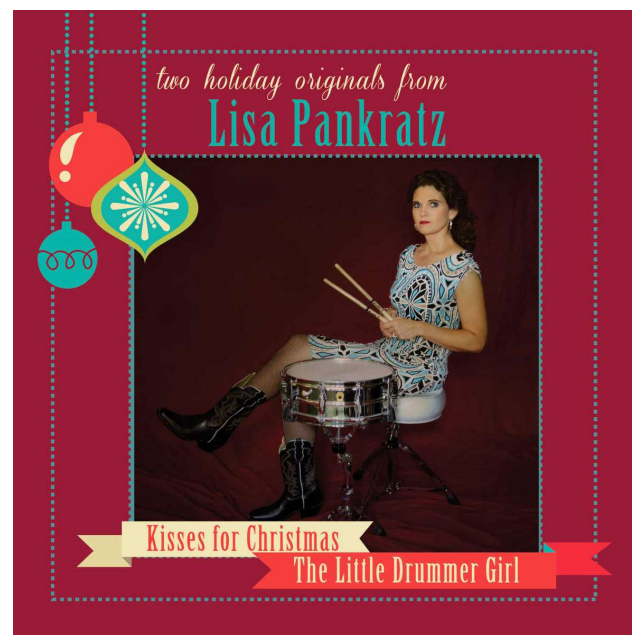
Chris Miller: A lot of session work. My brother and my sister had a band, so because I was spending a lot of time in Portland, OR. I started playing bass for them and I did a short run of shows with the Stone River Boys. I also started my own band that is still continuing today called Miller and Sasser. It's a duo country band with me and James Sasser. We do two-part harmony, Buck Owens-style music. Our first album was home-recorded: Step By Step. We have a brand new record that came out on July 14 called Tell It To the Jukebox that was recorded at Craig Parker Adams' studio in L.A. - the one Dave records at.

AM: Lisa, You released a Christmas single KISSES FOR CHRISTMAS / THE LITTLE DRUMMER GIRL where you sing - and very well, I might add. Why have you not stepped out front more often?

Chris: We've been asking her that for a long time (laughs).

Lisa Pankratz: It's funny. It's only recently that I started singing and that I figured out I could. I was too shy. I wish I had started earlier, but I am enjoying doing it lately. I'd like to do more of that, but I'm so busy working and touring. I did manage to squeak out that Christmas single, of which I wrote both songs. I've been getting good feedback, so I'm gonna keep on doing that.

I have written songs over the years, but didn't sing them. I had a band with one of my best friends, Susanna Van Tasel, and she made a few CDs and recorded a few of my songs. Marti Brom also recorded one of my songs.



AM: I remember you occasionally sing a song in Dave Alvin and the Guilty Ones shows.

Lisa: Yes, that's a Barbara Lynn song that I love called OH BABY WE GOT A GOOD THING GOING. The Stones covered that. I had the great pleasure of touring with Barbara Lynn and the Texas Guitar Women. Barbara is absolutely a "Texas Guitar Woman."

I've also played recently in blues rock bands like The Texas Guitar Women and Sis Deville's band. Those bands have various lineups including Cindy Cashdollar, Carolyn Wonderland, Shelley King, Sarah Brown and Floramay Holliday. I sing a bit in both bands. We'll be doing some recording very soon.

AM: How about it Brad, any solo stuff or aspirations?

Lisa: He's really good at it, but worse than me at making it actually happen.

Brad Fordham: Yeah. You know, I really like singing harmony with people.

Lisa: We've worked up a few songs together that we throw in when we're playing out with other acts.

Brad: I still like singing. I sang in rock 'n roll and rockabilly bands back in Toronto, but then I started playing with really good singers (laughs).

Lisa: When you play with so many great singers and songwriters, it will intimidate a little. Brad wrote some good songs with Chris Wall and Monte Warden of the Wagoneers.

Brad: Yeah, there are few floating around out there. They're co-writes. I've always been a good team player, singing and writing with others. I still play with Jerry Jeff Walker. He doesn't play much at 75 years old, but we just played his 75th Birthday party at the Paramount Theatre in Austin. You never know what he's gonna play. He has 33 albums worth of material. Another guy I play with is Chris Guage who has a studio in Austin. We like singing harmony together with Jerry Jeff.

There is just always so much to do in Austin when I'm not on the road. I get called often for recording sessions. I really enjoy playing upright bass too. I played that on the last few Dave records, but we just can't afford the space to bring it out on the road.

AM: Chris, tell me about the adjustment you had to make in Dave's band replacing Rick Shea who is more of a country guitar player and taking on the role of lead guitarist which is the role Dave plays.

Chris: Initially I was worried about it. I thought Dave's the dude, and I'll just sit back and play rhythm, but he didn't want that. Everybody in the band said: "You gotta bring it." I was a good soldier who knew how to back people up, but no, he wanted me to play right away. On that first tour, it took some figuring out to know what was expected of me. Joe Terry helped me a lot and kept telling me that Dave wanted me to take it as far as I could. Over time, Dave and I have come up with something that is unique to us. A lot of the progress happened on the duo shows. We did a tour of just the two of us on guitars. I figured out a lot of it on that tour. We never rehearsed, so we just did it right at the shows.

Lisa: For me, we started in the Guilty Women a little more acoustic-oriented, but morphed into the louder rock stuff later. I learned a lot. When we started doing the Guilty Ones, I already had a good idea of what it was gonna be like, but I made some adjustments to my playing. I've always tried to pride myself in having a certain amount of swing in my beat and not being a plodding rock drummer. But at the same time, I thought I had to beef up what I was doing to be more appropriate to the music. It's a little harder rocking and I really like it. I think it's been healthy to say to myself "Let's step it up."

For me, personally, I like the freedom, that Dave allows, to be creative. I've played in other bands where the leader says, 'I want the exact same thing every night.' Dave likes being in the moment and seeing what's



Jerry Jeff Walker and Brad Fordham

gonna happen. He gets people who like to play, and he lets them play. Only rarely does he say I want this or I want that. He really wants to hear what you have to say. We definitely have developed something sound-wise and arrangement-wise in the songs that are unique to this lineup.

Dave and Ronnie Dawson are a lot alike - good band leaders, great guitar players, and they like to play with their band. They aren't just out there singing their songs. Between the amazing verses, Dave likes to stretch out and hear the other musicians play.

AM: Brad, Dave's albums always have different bass players from those he uses on tour. To learn songs, what did you use as. . .

Brad: . . . As your "baseline"? (Laughs) I tried to go down the middle. Obviously, I love the studio recorded versions, but the live arrangements have always been great too. I was fortunate enough to see the original Guilty Men lineup a lot. Before that, Lou Whitney of the Skeletons was one of my heroes. I toured with Robbie Fuls, and he would often record in Lou's studio in Springfield, MO. So Lou would be his bass player and I would be there hangin' around. Then, Gregory Boaz came in and he's great. I've watched him play since back in his punk rock days. But learning songs is easier now-a-days with the luxury of YouTube. We can see what the live arrangements are like. So basically I listen to the studio version, check some bits of the live versions - and then put my own spin on it.

Lisa: Sometimes you have to be careful not to listen to the studio versions too closely because some songs have evolved over the years into something totally different.

AM: Any songs you'd like to bring back into the Dave Alvin and The Guilty Ones set - or any favorites that you haven't played?

Brad: I love the ballads. We played CALIFORNIA SNOW the other night and I loved it. I had never played it before. I think EVERY NIGHT ABOUT THIS TIME is one of the greatest country songs ever written. I'd like to see that return.

Chris: I like ABILENE. I enjoy that every night.

Lisa: I like playing FOURTH OF JULY. MARIE MARIE is on my list of songs that I never get tired of. I've heard a lot of bands play it, and I've played it with other bands, but I was so tickled playing it with Dave for the first time.

Brad: I also love SO LONG BABY GOODBYE. Most of the time we play it just instrumentally as an outro as Dave introduces us, but on occasion, he starts singing it and I get goose bumps.

Chris: There was one song I wanted to play for all these years and I was never gonna ask him to do it. It was an instrumental called ROCKIN LAFAYETTE from Art Fein's L.A. Rockabilly album. We ended up doing it in Louisiana. After we played it, I went to Dave and said: "I've been waiting forever to do that song!"

AM: 30 DOLLAR ROOM is a song that is 'SO' Alvin that he really should be doing that song.

Brad: Oh yeah, I love that song. It has a great bass line.

Lisa: That's one that has almost come up a few times. People always ask for it. I think he'll bring it back eventually. There are just so many. I'm really glad to have LONG WHITE CADILLAC back because it's such a fun song.

AM: Talk about the differences of having Phil Alvin in the band.

Lisa: Phil sat in with us a few times long before we did the CDs with him. That was certainly a thrill doing ONE BAD STUD and MARIE MARIE. It was not lost on me at all (laughs). I was thinking: "I'm inside one of my favorite records right now." It definitely was a different style and vibe. Some people think that Dave isn't letting Phil talk, but it's not like that; he just doesn't talk much. Even now with the Blasters, he's like that. The very first shows were kind of cute - It was almost like Dave was the ringmaster (Laughs). Like he was the host, but



it developed more from there. I like that those two are having fun together.

Brad: I like that we can bring it down so that you can hear a pin drop then go to full-on blasting. I enjoy hearing Phil play some acoustic guitar. That's goose-bumpily stuff.

Chris: When I heard the first Blasters album in the early 80s, and I heard Phil's voice, I was like, "F**K!" And then the first time I played with him in a sound check, I heard his voice come through the monitor and I was like: "Wow!" Danny Bland came over and said: "Yup, that's Phil Alvin's voice you're hearing right there man." Just amazing! I love Phil. We get along so well musically and everyway else. Those guys learned music the same way I did. We're about the same age, but there must have been something in the water at that time, because we bought all the same records and we talk about the same musical heroes. When Phil sings, I hear every little inflection from all the singers we used to buy records of.

Lisa: One of the coolest things I ever saw was at the City Winery in New York when Phil was sound checking with Blind Boy Paxton. He played this old blues song that I never heard of, accompanying himself on guitar. I couldn't get my recorder out fast enough. It's not like I would have shared it with the world, but it's just one of the spookiest, most beautiful things I ever heard.

Chris: I remember one night at the Belly Up Tavern in Solana Beach, CA, backstage; he played MAPLE LEAF RAG over and over again. I thought it was the best version of that song I've ever heard.

Lisa: Dave is a very good singer as well. It's just he has his own way of delivering things. He's not going to out-Phil, Phil.

Brad: I love singing harmonies with Dave. The first time I was gonna do it, I wasn't sure how it would go, but I really like it and it's an honor to sing along with some of my favorite songs.

AM: Favorite or memorable moments playing with Dave Alvin?

Chris: There's a lot in my 12 years. One memorable moment was when Dave's strings went on fire at the Troubadour in Hollywood.

Lisa: That's probably not Dave's favorite moment (laughs).

Brad: I remember we didn't know - should we keep playing, should we stop playing (laughs)?

Chris: Dave was getting shocked every time he touched the microphone. Typically it's a grounding problem, but it's a standard trick to touch your strings, without your hands on them, to the microphone stand. If it sparks, the polarity is wrong. Well, he put his guitar on there and not only did it spark, but it exploded. I've never seen that much voltage before. The string actually melted off the guitar as flames shot up. But we didn't stop playing (laughs). That's the rule. It was SO LONG BABY GOODBYE and we waited a long time before he came back.

Lisa: (Laughs) We weren't sure what was going to happen. It took a second to realize he was okay. Then he had to go up to the dressing room to change the strings that burned off. Meanwhile the stage people were trying to check the polarity. All through that, we kept playing - a testament to the fact that whatever happens, we're there for Dave.

Brad: Later, I saw it on YouTube, and the flash was really like a bolt of lightning. Terrifying.

Lisa: There have been a lot of little fun moments, like the first time I played a particular song: The first time I played MARIE MARIE. Hell, Yeah! I like when there are happy accidents or experiments that make Dave smile.

Chris: For me it was playing RAMBLIN' FEVER. It's a Merle Haggard song that we played at a tribute to California songwriters that have passed. I've played the song with other country honky-tonk bands through the years, but to play it with Dave at the Hardly Strictly Bluegrass festival in San Francisco was kind of awesome.



Lisa: Dave knows a lot of Merle Haggard songs, but he does his own style with them. That one, he "Daved it," playing it his way. That was a fun set.

Chris: And it wasn't that much earlier than that when we opened for Merle Haggard at a vineyard on a mountain. That was a great night for me. To be in a band that I'm really proud of and open for Merle Haggard. There's nothing better than that.

Brad: It was a beautiful California night with lots of our friends playing in Merle's band. It was a magical evening. -AM

Dave Alvin Remembers Rockabilly Legend Sonny Burgess

Rockabilly legend Sonny Burgess, who recorded for Sun Records, died on August 18, 2017, at age 88. Dave Alvin had a long friendship with Sonny doing live shows and recording together. Here Dave shares a few memories for the Blasters Newsletter.

AM: How did you first hear of Sonny Burgess?

Dave: Phil and I had the record SADIE'S BACK IN TOWN on the Phillips International label. That was the first time I put the name to the sound. I already heard his record MY BUCKET'S GOT A HOLE IN IT, but I didn't know who it was. When I heard the SADIE record, I was overwhelmed by his energy. I said to myself: "I have to find more records by him."

AM: SADIE'S BACK IN TOWN became a staple in the early 80's Blasters set, and it matched the Blasters style.

DA: That song was tailor-made for the early Blasters - a kind of intense energy. All of Sonny's great records have that feeling. I could have sworn we recorded it for the American Music Rollin Rock Records sessions. In 1997, when we pulled out the original master tapes looking for bonus tracks for HighTone's re-release of American Music, we couldn't find it. I could be wrong.

AM: You recorded the song on the 2002 Trouble Bound live album (HighTone Records) from the Blasters Original Recipe reunion tour.

DA: We weren't taking it too seriously in 2002, but then Sonny didn't when he originally recorded it. It's the vibe, the blowout of the performance of the song that counts.

AM: When was the first time you met Sonny?

DA: I met him when Jack Smith (a Rhode Island-based Rockabilly singer) asked if I wanted to do a gig with Sonny in Providence, RI. The only preparation we had was a long sound check. At the show, Jack played with his band the Rockabilly Planet; then Sonny played, and then I got up in the end to join Sonny. Jack suggested Sonny and I do a record together. I got along with Sonny, so I called HighTone owner Larry Sloven, who was a fan and he said yes. I produced the Tennessee Border album and shared



playing guitar with Sonny and Rockabilly Planet lead guitarist Jerry Miller. We recorded and mixed it in 5 days in Warwick, Rhode Island. The engineer was a guy named Bill Green, who has since passed away. He had engineered on all the New Kids On The Block records, (laughs) so it's amazing that he did this project so well.

DA: My favorite story from making that record is that I wanted to have a trumpet in honor of Jack Nance who played on many of Sonny's Sun Records. The only guy we could find in that part of Rhode Island was the music director at a local high school, who led the marching band. He was a youngish jazz-type guy who didn't know who Sonny was and had only a vague idea of who I was. I called him up and said I had a blues session for him. He said he'd love to do it.

At the session we started playing I DON'T DIG IT, and I stopped him and asked him to "play less than that." He had never heard Sonny's records, so I had to explain to him that he had to sound like a guy that doesn't know how to play trumpet that well (laughs). He hesitantly said: "I can try." It still wasn't what I was looking for, so I said: "Can you just play the same three notes over and over?" He was disappointed because he was looking forward to actually being on a record, playing great trumpet, and showing it to his family. I said "Look, I won't put your name on the record, if you don't want me to." He said: "Thank you very much." (laughs) He did catch the vibe on the recording, and it came out good, but he didn't want his name on the record (laughs). Sonny told me that every band in the old days had piano, sax, and guitar. He wanted something that made his band stand out from all the others - so he added a trumpet.

AM: In 2003, The Original Blasters performed and recorded the live DVD Going Home. You brought Sonny in to do RED HEADED WOMAN, SADIE BROWN and FLIP FLOP AND FLY.

DA: Yes, that was great. Phil swapped verses with Sonny on the songs. I was always blown away by Sonny because of his energy level. He was just wild abandon. He carried the whole Sun Records aesthetic. It was in his being. He was perfect for Sun Records. That was the thing that was different about Sam Phillips. He didn't mind mistakes as long as the song had the right energy. Some of the Cincinnati and Chicago Rockabilly recordings of that time ironed out the mistakes in their recordings while Sam let the Sun artists be all about the moment. And Sonny was exactly that.



This reminds me of my favorite performance with Sonny: A few years after doing the Tennessee Border album, I got a call from Sonny. He said: "I'm in L. A. playing at a private party. Do you want to come down and play a little?"

I didn't get details, rushed out and when I got there, they were already playing. There were all these fancy tables in a ballroom full of people. I ran on stage, set up my amp, and started playing. We did a few songs before I realized that Jack Clement (one of the producers and songwriters at Sun



records) was with us playing, and the drummer was DJ Fontana, Elvis's drummer from the 50's. Wow! The piano and bass player were young guys who I didn't know, but they were very good. I hadn't even looked out into the audience, because I had to keep my eye on the other musicians for cues because I didn't know the songs. In between songs, Sonny makes a little speech: "We have a very special guest here tonight. The man that gave me my start in show business: ladies and gentleman, Mister Sam Phillips." I was like: "What the F?" So Sam Phillips gets up on stage and gives a little speech about Sun Records and Sonny. It turned out to be a wrap party for a PBS TV Sun Records Documentary. So Sam Phillips goes back in the audience and sits down right in front of me. I was like "Oh Shit!" He was watch-

ing my every move, so for the rest of the set I was playing every Sun Records guitar lick I could think of - whether it was Roland Janes or Carl Perkins or Willie Johnson or Floyd Murphy - I pulled them all out. When we finished, I was walking off the stage and I heard this voice saying: "Hey Man, Hey Man, Hey Man!" It was Sam Phillips. In a 1985 Rolling Stone interview they asked him who he liked in recent music of the time. He said Bruce Springsteen and the Blasters. So here he said: "Boy, where are you from?" I said, "I used to be in the Blasters." He replied: "Yeah, I love that band, and I haven't heard guitar playing like that since I don't know when." We had a great conversation. I thanked him for all the music. That was my favorite memory of playing with Sonny, because how often do you get to play for Sam Phillips?

AM: What more can you say about Sonny's music?

DA: I hate to keep using the word 'energy.' but what amazed me is that he still had it, even in his old age, and that was a such an inspiration to me. He always seemed just like it was when he started out. It's the energy and vibe of one chance to make a record, so he and his band said, "Let's go for it, balls to the wall" - the 1950s equivalent of Megadeth (laughs). They were wreckless abandon - kids hopped-up on rhythm and blues. Sonny was definitely one of a kind and it took Sam Phillips to recognize that.—~~AM~~

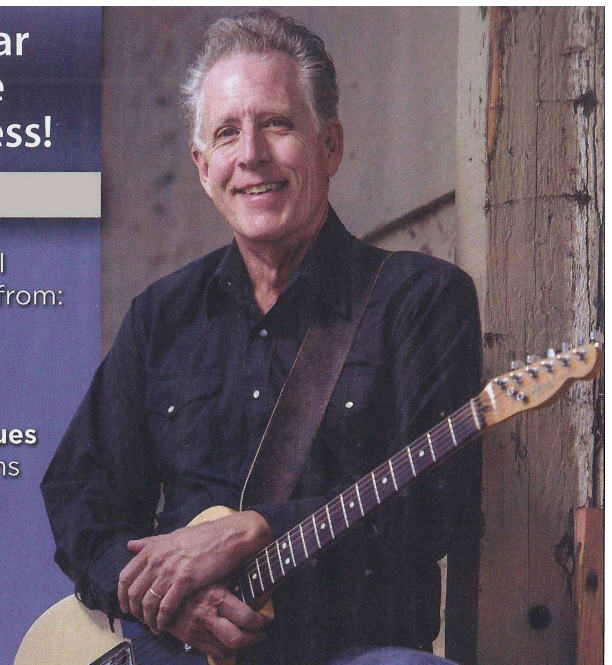
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RICK SHEA & THE LOSIN' END

THE TOWN WHERE I LIVE

Rick Shea is a former member of Dave Alvin's Guilty Men with a continuing successful solo career. Supporting his latest album The Town Where I Live, Rick stopped by during an Eastern U.S. tour to discuss his new album, released on August 18, 2017, on the label Tres Pescadores Records.

American Music: In 2013 you released your previous CD, Sweet Bernadine. Tell me what brought you to the new CD from the last?

Rick Shea: The biggest difference in the two albums is that this one was done as a band album. That's why it's titled 'Rick Shea & The Losin' End.' In the past when I would record, I would use different musicians on different songs. This time, as I was preparing the songs, it felt right to keep the four of us as the core band.

I have Dave Hall on bass who sings harmony with me. I've played with him for the past 20 years. Steve Mugalian has been on drums with me for the last 6 years; he played with the Guilty Men before that. My second guitarist for the last two years is Stephen Patt who also plays accordion and sings back ground vocals. On this album he plays keyboards and a few other instruments.

AM: Did the band contribute songwriting?

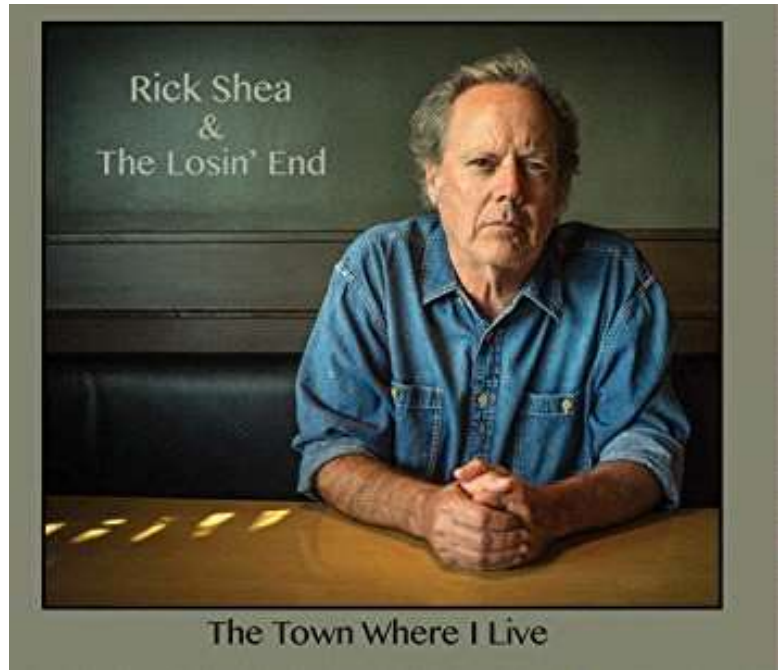
RS: They are all my songs. I'd be happy to share songwriting, but it just seems to happen this way. There wasn't a plan. The songs for this album are simpler - no complicated chord progressions. My thinking was that some of the best songs heard on a jukebox are some of the easiest ones that bands hear and would cover. I'm jumping ahead thinking anyone would hear mine and cover them, but the idea of simple and direct songs in big major keys appealed to me.

AM: Tell me about the recording process.

RS: We recorded as much live as possible. The bass and drums are live. I took the tracks back to my studio and worked on my own guitar parts. I played mostly acoustic and electric guitar; Stephen also played electric. I also played pedal steel and dobro.

AM: You've been with Tres Pescadores Records a long time.

RS: Yes. Tres Pescadores is a label run by friends of mine, Tim and Brian. They were friends before we started making records. They started the label for a live Chris Gaffney album (Live and Then Some, 1999) and then I came on board and I've done six albums with them. They have been tremendously supportive.



The Songs:

GOODBYE ALBERTA - I have a big book of folk and blues lyrics that when I'm looking for inspiration, I'll flip through it. I landed on an old folk song that says "Alberta, Alberta where you been so long" - so that's where that came from. I just wrote the song from that.

THE ROAD TO JERICHO - I had the basic idea and structure for over a year and played around with different approaches. The "Road to Jericho" is a road between Jerusalem and Jericho. In biblical times, it was a much traveled road between

those two cities that was considered to be treacherous with robbers and thieves. This is where the "Good Samaritan" story took place. I wrote it in the traditional folk song style.



THE STARKVILLE BLUES - Starkville is a town in Mississippi where in 1965, Johnny Cash got thrown in jail. It's become a legendary story. A friend of mine grew up there and is not fond of the town. I wrote the song imagining how Johnny would have felt after leaving Starkville.

THE TOWN WHERE I LIVE - Most of the songs came along very easily like this one. It was complete in a day or so. My youngest son does things the hard way - he kind of takes after his dad (laughs). He's very interested in racing and cars and the specialized aspects of the industry. He's

happy where he is now, but I remember him belly-aching about being out of work. Sometimes that causes you to lose faith in the town where you live - so I wrote about that.

HOLD ON JAKE - It came out of nowhere. Musically it's a good band-playing song - they really like it. Jake was a friend of mine's dog who lives in Hawaii. Jake was in a bad way when they were visiting here from Hawaii, so they kept calling home to check on him saying: "Hold On Jake!"

TROUBLE LIKE THIS - This is first song we recorded about two years ago. Stephen Patt produced that and really got us going into this album. It's a beautiful gospel arrangement. He and Cindy Wasserman sing the background vocals. It's such a beautiful song, that has gotten a great response from people.

(YOU'RE GONNA MISS ME) WHEN I'M GONE - It's another up-beat song. When I wrote that, I was thinking about when a person is in a relationship and frustrated, they think they want to be somewhere else. This is what runs through that person's head.

THE ANGEL MARY AND THE ROUNDER JIM - That's about the country singers Jim Ringer and Mary McCaslin who sang beautiful duets of their own songs as well as many folk songs. They lived in the town of San Bernardino where I lived. It was a time when I was young and was trying to figure out the dream of playing music for a living. They toured, put records out and were local heroes to a lot of us. Years later, I recorded one of Mary's songs on the album Trouble and Me (2002 Tres Pescadores Records), which I did with Brantley Kearns. Dave Alvin helped produce the album and suggested I record songs by each of them. Jim and Mary both had solo careers after working as a duo. I recorded SAN BERNARDINO WALTZ by Mary and RACHEL by Jim Ringer. After the album was out, we were on tour in Santa Cruz; Dave Alvin knew Mary McCaslin and introduced us. I became good friends with her and did a few musical things informally and some shows in Southern, CA. I later approached her about doing some shows with me, doing Mary and Jim duets. She said yes, and that was a lot of fun. Mary and I have gotten to be close friends. She's a wonderful person, tremendous artist, and she's a big influence on me. I wrote this song about her and Jim from things I learned from Mary. There are troubles that come from a couple working together with success in the music business. I sent it to Mary and she liked it. Mary has been having some health issues and hasn't performed for a few years.

GUESS THINGS HAPPEN THAT WAY - That's a Johnny Cash song that I've been doing live for about 15 years. We put a Buddy Holly drum beat on it. I always thought it could be done like this, so we did it. I do two solos on there, an electric guitar solo first, then one on pedal steel.

SWEET LITTLE MAMA - It's a blues that I thought would be good to close the album. I had a groove in mind that I thought would fit. I like blues that has a country flavor. The lyrics are a "lost love" theme.

Get the new CD at TresPescadores.com, Amazon.com, CD Baby or iTunes.

Check out the official music video on YouTube by searching for "Rick Shea - The Town Where I Live"

Dave Alvin Instrumentals

By Tom Wilk

In a musical career that spans four decades of writing and performing, Dave Alvin has always focused on lyrics. However, at the same time he has also featured instrumentals on his albums, film projects, and collaborations. Those instrumentals can be hard to find, but are worth searching out. Here is a look at those recordings.

ROCKIN' LAFAYETTE could be considered Dave's first solo recording. It was released in 1983 on the Art Fein Presents: L.A. Rockabilly album put together by the former Blasters manager; it also included contributions by Los Lobos, James Intveld and Billy Zoom. In a May 2012 Facebook post, Dave described it as "an instrumental version of an old Cajun music standard with the enthusiastic rockabilly band The Red Devils (Johnny Ray Bartel – stand-up bass, David Lee Bartel - rhythm guitar, Willie Campbell - drums) backing me up." The track is available on YouTube.

The Border Radio film soundtrack, released in 1987, is the closest Dave has come to recording an instrumental album. Six of the album's 12 songs are instrumentals by Dave, including four co-written with former Blasters saxophonist Steve Berlin. The songs create an atmospheric mood (LA FRONTERA I and LA FRONTERA II) and a sense of apprehension (DRIVING TO MEXICO). MI VIDA LOCA, Spanish for "My Crazy Life," is heard in two versions. The first is a lilting, acoustic instrumental, while the second is a driving rocker that sounds like a musical merger of the Blasters and Los Lobos with Bill Bateman on drums, David Hidalgo on accordion and Berlin on saxophone.

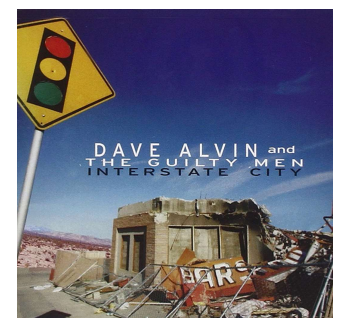
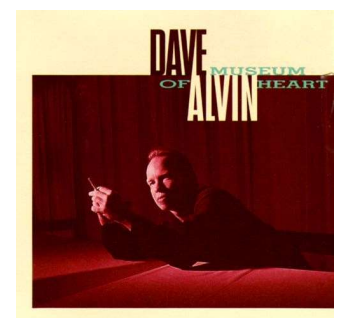
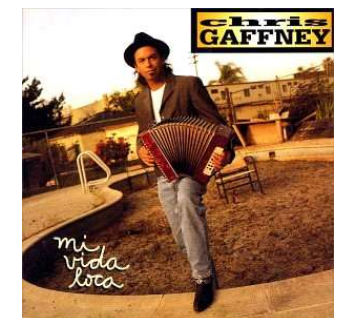
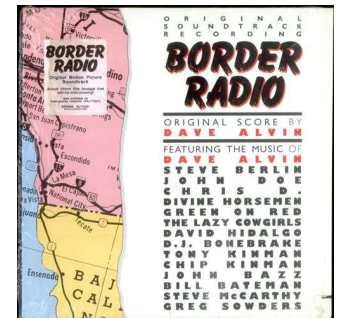
The songs have had a shelf life beyond the film. Oliver Stone used BURNING GUITAR for the soundtrack of his Oscar-winning Wall Street movie. Chris Gaffney made MI VIDA LOCA the title track for his 1992 album on HighTone Records. The Border Radio soundtrack has never been released on CD, but copies can be found on LP and cassette.

Museum of Heart, Dave's third solo album, features a pair of short instrumentals: ONE EYE'S BALLAD and FLORENCE AVENUE LULLABY. ONE EYE'S BALLAD, which features Lee Allen on sax, serves as a jazzy transition between the ruefully humorous BURNING IN WATER, DROWNING IN FLAME and the bluesy ballad LONGER THAN I THOUGHT.

The title of ONE EYE'S BALLAD was inspired by his dying cat. "He had been a stray and had one good eye and one full of pus," Dave recalled in a 1993 interview shortly after the album's release. The cat was "down to skin and fur and had to be put to sleep."

FLORENCE AVENUE LULLABY, the album's concluding track, offers a soothing sense of release after the emotional intensity of AS SHE SLOWLY TURNS TO LEAVE, the preceding song. Dave recorded a longer version of the instrumental as NEW FLORENCE AVENUE LULLABY, for Interstate City, his 1996 live album.

Public Domain, Dave's Grammy-winning album, features an instrumental as a hidden track at the end of the CD. SATURDAY NIGHT RUB, credited to Big Bill Broonzy, is a lively, acoustic track that spotlights Dave's guitar work. The song was revived for the final song on Common Ground, the 2014 album released by Dave and Phil; this shorter version



clocks in at just over 2 minutes. The longer Public Domain version clocks in at 2 minutes, 50 seconds.

On Out in California, his 2002 live album, Dave and the Guilty Men wrap up the CD with a lively, but abbreviated, version of EVERYTHING'S GONNA BE ALRIGHT, written by blues harmonica wizard Little Walter. Dave has used the number as a walk-off song to conclude his set. EASY GOIN' SUNDAY, the leadoff track on The Modern Sounds of the Knitters, is a brief snippet (about 30 seconds) of an instrumental that could serve as a western soundtrack. The song is credited to the five members of the band.

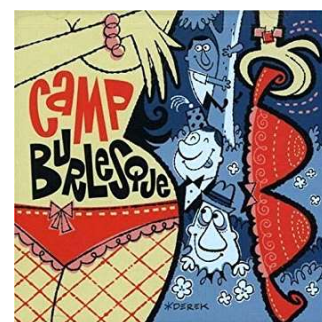
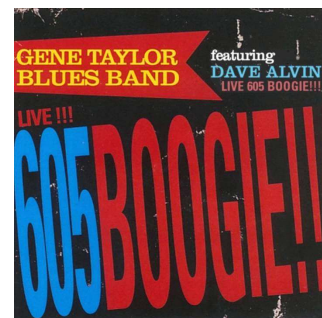
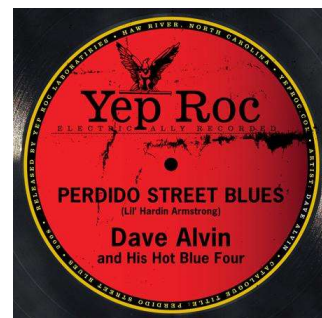
Since signing with Yep Roc Records in 2003, Dave has released a series of instrumentals, both as bonus tracks with albums and as digital singles.

On West of the West, his 2006 concept album of songs by California songwriters, Dave recorded two instrumentals by groups from the Golden State for a bonus CD that came with early pressings of the album. BOSS, originally recorded by the Rumlbers from Downey, CA made it to No. 52 on the singles charts in early 1963, according to the All Music Guide. MISTER MOTO is a 1961 song by the Bel-Airs from the South Bay section of Los Angeles. Dave gives a short introduction before playing each. Both tracks spotlight Dave's skills on electric guitar.

KRAZY AND IGNATZ, a download available for early purchases of the Dave Alvin and the Guilty Women CD, is a rootsy, folk/blues instrumental co-written and performed by Dave and Cindy Cashdollar.

Dave has released a series of digital singles on Yep Roc and has included three instrumentals. He reached back to the pre-rock era for a catchy version of Louis Armstrong's PERDIDO STREET BLUES. Dave replicates Lee Allen's horn parts on guitar on WALKING WITH MR. LEE, a song the Blasters often featured in concert and released on the Testament collection in 2002. On EARL'S RHUMBA, Dave pays tribute to guitarist Earl Hooker with a rendition that spotlights the members of his backing band. Dave later did a version of EARL'S RHUMBA with the Gene Taylor Blues Band on the album 605 Boogie! That album's title track is a Gene Taylor instrumental that features Dave.

One of Dave's harder-to-find instrumentals is PASSION POOL, a song featured on the 2007 soundtrack album for the documentary film Camp Burlesque. Dave wrote that with Tony Marsico who made the movie. Dave's lead guitar takes center stage on a freewheeling song that has its roots in surf music. — ~~AM~~



Andrew Hardin with Dave Alvin on BLUE ACOUSTIC

By Tom Wilk



Andrew Hardin made his mark in music serving as Tom Russell's guitarist in the studio and on the road for about a quarter of a century. Hardin lifted the song to another level with his distinctive acoustic playing on a live version of THE ANGEL OF LYON from Russell's The Long Way Around CD in 1997. On the same album he also contributed guitar and backing vocals to Alvin / Russell duets on BLUE WING and HALEY'S COMET. Hardin credits Dave with serving as the inspiration for his own Blue Acoustic album, a CD of Hardin instrumentals, featuring two collaborations with Dave. In August, Hardin discussed working with Dave in an email interview with Tom Wilk:

American Music: Could you share your memories of how you came to work with Dave on Blue Acoustic and how you came to record EL CAJON and MEXICALI CHINATOWN?

Andrew Hardin: I had known Dave for a while. He and Greg Leisz had produced an album for Tom Russell entitled The Rose Of The San Joaquin. Tom and Dave also produced the songwriters' tribute to Merle Haggard: Tulare Dust, which featured artists Iris Dement, Peter Case, Dwight Yoakum, Robert Earl Keen, Joe Ely, Rosie Flores, Steve Young, Marshall Crenshaw, Barrence Whitfield, Lucinda Williams, Billy Joe Shaver, Katy Moffatt, John Doe, and Dave Alvin, and Tom Russell. Both these projects were around 1994 as was Dave's classic album King of California. Tom Russell and I were invited to the session for the song KING OF CALIFORNIA at a studio on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood. It was a memorable session -- lots of people in the control room. Greg Leisz was producing, and he had to ask everyone to hold it down. (Dave usually has some sort of entourage with him...) Anyway, the actual take was AMAZING. Bobby Lloyd Hicks (of the Skeletons, and also Dave's longtime drummer) on snare drum and Dave on guitar and vocal. Greg Leisz's dobro was overdubbed right away, if I remember correctly.

At some point I got to play Dave's National resonator guitar and said, "Man, I would love to play this on a recording." This particular guitar, from the 1930s was very easy to play all the way up the neck, and it was, in fact, very resonant! I think that was the seed of the idea I had to record guitar duets with singer-songwriter-guitarists, except with no singing or songwriting.

My job was often accompanying these otherwise self-contained entities in live performance or in the studio, and I knew a bunch of them. They usually played guitar simply, leaving me room to color the chords or embellish the rhythm patterns with solos or flourishes. So my idea was to improvise with some of these folks - all of whom I enjoyed playing with and admired - and record simply and organically on locations (not in a studio). The listener would get to experience an intimate jam session as if they were sitting right there. I had a portable Sony DAT recorder and battery-powered RODE stereo condenser microphone. I planned a trip from my home near Austin, Texas, to Los Angeles to record with Dave at his home in Silver Lake. I had my girlfriend GiGi Benno with me -- we loved West Texas and the Southwest -- and we had an adventure together. Dave was gracious and generous when we arrived. We just played 2 or 3 improvisations, traded guitars back and forth, and I sorted it all out later in the studio with Mark Hallman (at Congress House Studio in Austin, which is the recent subject of the excellent documentary film The Shopkeeper).

I titled the tunes with vaguely Spanish/Southwestern names. On the tune EL CAJON, Dave played the resonator guitar and I played my 1945 Gibson LG-2. On Mexicali Chinatown, I played the coveted resonator guitar and Dave played one of his other acoustics, a Martin or a Gibson. Dave later gave the song its title when we were talking on the phone and he told me the story of Mexicali Chinatown, an underground settlement near the US-Mexico border around the turn of the century where Chinese immigrants in Mexico were imported to the US to build railroads, and the underground part housed "dens of iniquity": opium dens and brothels, among other things. I had never heard of this, of course, but Dave knows his history, and the title fit the vaguely "Oriental" feel of the music.

AM: I know you recorded the songs with Dave at his California home rather than at a recording studio. Do you think that made it easier to collaborate?

AH: Yes. That was the idea. I also recorded at Eliza Gilkyson's home in Austin and Tom Russell's home in El Paso. Ray Wylie Hubbard is my neighbor -- he came over to our house. We recorded Washtub Jerry at the McDonald Observatory

in the Davis Mountains of West Texas, and Don Edwards was recorded in a hotel room in Elko, Nevada, during the Cowboy Poetry gathering. I recorded the solo pieces at an empty, echoey room near our home.

AM: How did you and Dave meet and did you play together much onstage?

AH: I was aware of the Blasters, but had not followed them that closely. I was living in San Francisco, and they were based in L.A. I later learned that The Blasters were kind of the godfathers of the punk/retro scene and mentored acts such as Los Lobos and Dwight Yoakam. I was a big 'X' fan and had seen Dave perform with them in New York. In 1990, Dave did some gigs on the East Coast with the Tom Russell Band. Our sound was stylistically similar to what Dave's bands would sound like -- literate country-rock with some punk attitude and retro rock and roll influence. I was somewhat aware that his band with his brother had broken up, that he was trying to start a solo career, and that the young fans that would show up at the gigs - which boosted his confidence. There is also an anecdote that I have heard from Dave that he was making a go of it as a songwriter in Nashville and getting pretty depressed - when he heard the song BLUE WING by Tom Russell, and it inspired him to write "what he felt," as opposed to trying to be "commercial."

AM: Have you ever considered working with Dave on another musical project?

AH: Well, that would be fine with me. I see Dave occasionally if he plays at the Continental Club or the Cactus Cafe in Austin. We also are connected to an organization called Roots On The Rails, which arranges train trips with performing Americana music artists.

In closing, I would just say that Dave is one of my most admired musicians and people that I know. He's always treated me respectfully and with friendliness, and he's a great guitar player, bandleader, and performer. He's well-read and writes classic songs and he writes poetry. And he has a lot of energy and toughness to constantly take it on the road.

— **AM**

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