

ISSUE #67

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

DEC. 2012

Special Holiday Issue

Special Event – The Blasters will reunite with Dave Alvin for a Phil Alvin benefit show on January 26, 2013 in Santa Ana, CA, at The Observatory to raise funds for Phil's medical bills. An all-star gathering of Los Angeles bands will perform including The Knitters, X, The Mike Eldred Trio, James Harman, and Big Sandy.

Phil Alvin is in good health now, but has a large amount of outstanding medical bills after being hospitalized in Spain during a Blasters tour. This event will be a gathering of Phil's friends, family and fans in support of a great man. There will be an auction or raffle of a Fender Custom Shop replica of Dave Alvin's infamous Mustang guitar, autographed by the band. – If you cannot make it to the show, but would like to donate to help Phil Alvin, you can send checks to

New Highway INC.,
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A NIGHT FOR OUR BROTHER PHIL ALVIN

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THE KNITTERS
MASTER OF CEREMONIES
BIG SANDY

AND

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ALL PROCEEDS GO TO PHIL ALVIN'S MEDICAL BILLS

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In This Issue: The 25th Anniversary of Dave Alvin's Romeo's Escape album, Ghost Brothers release announced, and latest news.

Blasters shows (Phil, John, Bill, Keith)
 3/10 San Francisco CA at DNA Lounge
Dave Alvin & The Guilty Ones
With Marshal Crenshaw
 2/21 W. Hollywood CA at Troubadour
 2/22 San Fran CA at Great Amer Music Hall
 2/23 Santa Cruz CA at Moe's Alley
 2/24 Sebastopol CA at Cultural Center
 2/27 Portland OR at Aladdin Theater
 2/28 Vancouver BC at The Fan Club
 3/1 Seattle WA at Tractor Tavern
 3/2 Grants Pass OR at Rogue Theater
Dave Alvin & The Guilty Ones
 5/31 St. Louis MO at Off Broadway
 6/1 Bowling Green KY at The Warehouse
 6/5 NYC at City Winery
 6/6 Somerville MA at Johnny D's
 6/7 Bellows falls VT at Roots on the River
 6/8 Pawling NY at Towne Crier Café
 6/15 Conroe TX at Crighton Theatre

Latest news: The soundtrack CD to the FX TV series Justified is scheduled to be released in January, 2013 featuring the Dave Alvin songs HARLAN COUNTY LINE and BEAUTIFUL CITY 'CROSS THE RIVER. -- Nick Curran, the highly revered Rockabilly/Blues/Roots Rock guitarist, died on October 6, 2012, at the age of 35 from cancer. Blasters fans knew him as a good friend of the Blasters and his duet song with Phil Alvin on the song FLYIN' BLIND. – Yep Roc Records will be releasing Dave Alvin's Ashgrove on vinyl January 22, 2013. It will include a bonus track HIGHWAY 61. Later, Yep Roc will release West of the West on vinyl with a bonus track called BOSS. – Bruce Robison and Kelly



Willis have recorded BORDER RADIO for their upcoming CD Cheaters Game due out February 12, 2013 on Premium Records. In press notes for the CD, they describe their version as a "busted samba refiguring of Dave Alvin's BORDER RADIO that turns up the woman's reality from the Blasters' original." -- Dave Alvin's SINFUL DAUGHTER is included on I Am What I Am, a compilation CD released by Yep Roc Records to mark the label's 15th anniversary. -- Yep Roc 15 is the Official Calendar celebrating the label's 15th anniversary. Artists featured in the calendar include Dave and John Doe. All proceeds will be donated to the American Red Cross' efforts to help people affected by Hurricane Sandy. Order the calendar at YepRoc.com – Dave Alvin plays guitar on the new album from the soulful LA band, Tremoloco, called Salsipuedes. Dave plays on CLAUDINE and THE RIVERSIDE. – Dave Alvin is a guest artist on Stranger In My Land by Roger Knox, an Australian Aboriginal Country and Western singer. The CD will be released in February by Bloodshot Records. -- Dave worked on the soundtrack to Saving Lincoln, the new film by Salvador Litvak that is scheduled for release in February 2013. U.S. Marshal Ward Hill Lamont served as the bodyguard to Abraham Lincoln and the film takes viewers inside the life and presidency of the 16th president. Lamont worked tirelessly to prevent many assassination attempts on Lincoln, but must answer for why he was not at Ford's Theatre. Dave recorded period songs for the film, including BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC and DIXIE. BATTLE HYMN can be heard on YouTube. Search They Shall Not Be Forgotten: Faces of the Civil War. — The Bopcats include a version of MARIE MARIE on their new CD 25 Years of Rock 'n Roll on EllerSoul Records. -- The Blanco Sessions, a posthumous album from singer Janis Martin on the Cow Island label, includes her version of Dave Alvin's LONG WHITE CADILLAC produced by Rosie Flores. Martin died of cancer in 2007 at age 67. ((cont.))



Phil Alvin with Nick Curran

Latest News Continued -- Bluesman Jimmy McCracklin died on 12/20/12 at age 91. His backing band, the Blues Blasters, was the inspiration for the Blasters name. -- Dave Alvin plays on Camper Van Beethoven's new CD La Costa Perdida due out January 22, 2013 The song is called COME ON DOWN THE COAST. — ~~AM~~

AMERICAN MUSIC: The Blasters / Dave Alvin newsletter
editor/writer: Billy Davis editorial assistant: Craig Frischkorn
contributing writer Tom Wilk

Publishing issues quarterly—ish. www.BlastersNewsletter.com



Dave Alvin "I'll Be Home for Christmas."

By Tom Wilk

Christmas is the holiday most associated with music, but Dave Alvin has not officially released any yuletide music to date in a career than spans more than 30 years.

Occasionally, he has performed a Christmas song. On Dec. 25, 1992, he sang I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS for a nationwide radio audience as part of the Holiday House Party with Los Lobos show. The two-hour program on National Public Radio also featured John Hiatt, Syd Straw, Leo Kottke and Rickie Lee Jones.

A Top 10 hit single for Bing Crosby, I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS is written from the viewpoint of a military man missing his family during the holidays while serving his country. Crosby's version was released in 1943 and was quickly embraced by those serving in World War II and by those who remained behind on the home front.

As a preface to his performance, Dave mentions that he generally sings only songs that he wrote, but that I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS was a song he liked ever since he was a child. Backed only by pianist Rick Solem, Dave delivers a heartfelt rendition of the classic song that lasts just over two minutes. It's also a rare song where Dave sings without playing guitar. Heard today, the melancholy mood and wistful tone of the lyrics are reminiscent of Dave's EVENING BLUES and FROM A KITCHEN TABLE.

In a review of the radio show in The Los Angeles Times, Chris Willman called Dave's performance a "rough but modest bar version."

Dave's performance omits the opening lines of the song written by Kim Gannon and Walter Kent: "I'm dreaming tonight of a place I love / Even more than I usually do / And although I know it's a long road back / I promise you." Dave instead begins his version with the title of the song.

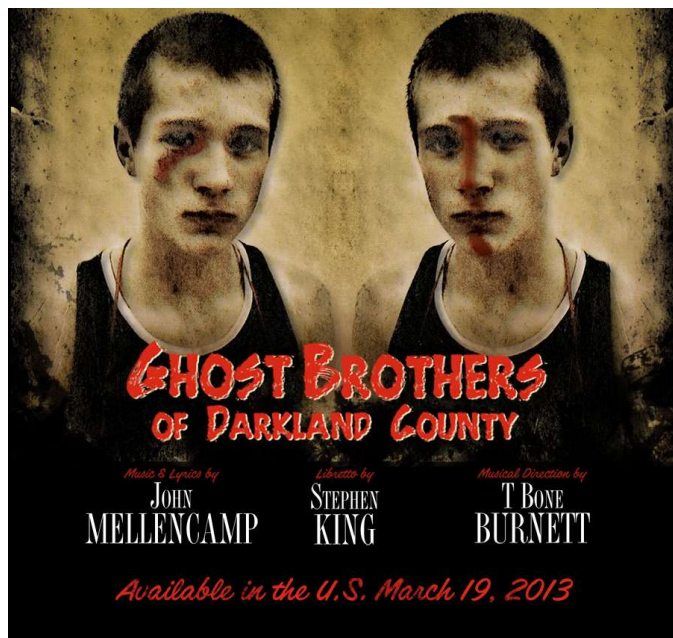
While the performance has not been officially released, the two-hour program can easily be found with a Google search on the Internet. Dave also sang DRY RIVER on the show.

Another, more abbreviated, Christmas performance came on Dec. 10, 2010, when Dave sang the first verse of WHITE CHRISTMAS without instrumentation before launching into TROUBLE BOUND while touring with the Gene Taylor Blues Band in Santa Cruz, Calif.



Ghost Brothers of Darkland County to be released March 19, 2013

Dave Alvin reports on his facebook page: "If you enjoyed hearing me and my beloved brother Phil singing together on my most recent album Eleven Eleven, you might enjoy Phil and I singing with pop music songbird Sheryl Crow on the soundtrack to Stephen King and John Mellencamp's latest project, Ghost Brothers."



The rock opera recording project by John Mellencamp and Stephen King of which Phil and Dave Alvin sing on, now has a CD release date of March 19, 2013

Mellencamp and King's dramatic "roots musical" has been in the works for more than a decade. A guest star-packed studio concept album was recorded a few years ago, but was held back from release while a theatrical presentation, of the same story, but with different singers and actors, ran through 2012 in an Atlanta, GA theater.

Hear Music / Concord Music group will release a variety of formats: The (enhanced CD) Standard Edition features the complete soundtrack, dialog excerpts, and digital libretto (text of lyrics and dialog). The (2CD/1DVD) Deluxe Edition contains the complete soundtrack (with and without dialog), deluxe art work, handwritten lyrics, specially printed libretto and the Making of Ghost Brothers mini-documentary DVD featuring in-depth interviews with King, Mellencamp and producer T-Bone Burnett along with other bonus material. Ghost Brothers of Darkland County digital editions for tablets, smartphones and e-readers will allow users to interact in unprecedented ways with the complete soundtrack plus digital libretto, as well as exclusive video and graphic materials.

The soundtrack features guest singers Elvis Costello, Sheryl Crow, Taj Mahal, Kris Kristofferson and Mellencamp himself.

Phil and Dave Alvin were recorded singing and acting out linking dialog between the songs that tell the story throughout the concept album. The Alvin Brothers acting dialog didn't make the final cut though, but their songs did.

Andy Greene from Rolling Stone Magazine reports:

Mellencamp got the initial idea for the musical in the late Nineties from his own cabin in Bloomington, which he claims is haunted. In the 1930s, two brothers got into a fight over a woman at the cabin, and one of them wound up dead. The surviving brother and the woman sped away in a car, but crashed into a



T-Bone Burnett, Mellencamp, and King

lake and drowned. "I called up Stephen King and told him I wanted to make a musical out of the thing," says Mellencamp. "It's outside both of our wheelhouses."

Stephen King only vaguely knew Mellencamp when he got the call. "He came to my place in Florida and it was the first time we ever met in person," says King. "He tuned my guitar and told me about this ghost story about a cabin he owned. I loved the idea that they were brothers, and then years later history repeats itself. Something in that resonated with me deeply."

King agreed to write a treatment of the story – which seesaws between the two sets of brothers going through a similar struggle 30 years apart at the same cabin – and Mellencamp began writing songs. They agreed early on that the songs wouldn't move the story forward. "It was

Steve's job to tell the story," says Mellencamp. "It was my job to develop the characters through songs. That's different than most musicals. The best example of that is My Fair Lady. They had a story with Pygmalion, so they just stuck songs in there."

As the musical got closer to completion they brought in producer T Bone Burnett to help flesh out the music. "The idea was for me to come in and create the vibe," Burnett says. "We took the songs and cast them with different singers and musicians, and began creating what I hoped would be a foggy, ghost sound – something that grew up out of the Mississippi."

For more go to www.GhostBrothersOfDarklandCounty.com

GHOST BROTHERS OF DARKLAND COUNTY

-Libretto by Stephen King
-Music & Lyrics by John Mellencamp
-Musical Direction by T Bone Burnett

-Featured cast: Kris Kristofferson, Meg Ryan, Matthew McConaughey, Samantha Mathis, Elvis Costello

-Featured musicians: Elvis Costello, Sheryl Crow, Phil Alvin, Kris Kristofferson, Taj Mahal, Neko Case, Dave Alvin, Rosanne Cash, John Mellencamp

CD track listing:

1. That's Me -- Elvis Costello
2. That's Who I Am -- Neko Case
3. So Goddamn Smart -- Dave Alvin, Phil Alvin, Sheryl Crow
4. Wrong, Wrong, About Me — Elvis Costello
5. Brotherly Love -- Ryan Bingham, Will Dailey
6. How Many Days -- Kris Kristofferson
7. You Are Blind -- Ryan Bingham
8. Home Again -- Sheryl Crow, Dave Alvin, Phil Alvin, Taj Mahal
9. You Don't Know Me -- Rosanne Cash
10. My Name Is Joe -- Clyde Mulroney
11. Tear This Cabin Down -- Taj Mahal
12. And Your Days Are Gone -- Sheryl Crow, Dave Alvin, Phil Alvin
13. Jukin' -- Sheryl Crow
14. What Kind Of Man Am I -- Kris Kristofferson, Phil Alvin, Sheryl Crow, Dave Alvin, Taj Mahal
15. So Goddamn Good -- Phil Alvin, Dave Alvin, Sheryl Crow
16. Away From This World -- Sheryl Crow
17. Truth -- John Mellencamp

Dave Alvin

The 25th Anniversary of ROMEO'S ESCAPE 1987 - 2012

by
Billy
Davis



A look back at Dave Alvin's first solo album on Epic/CBS Records

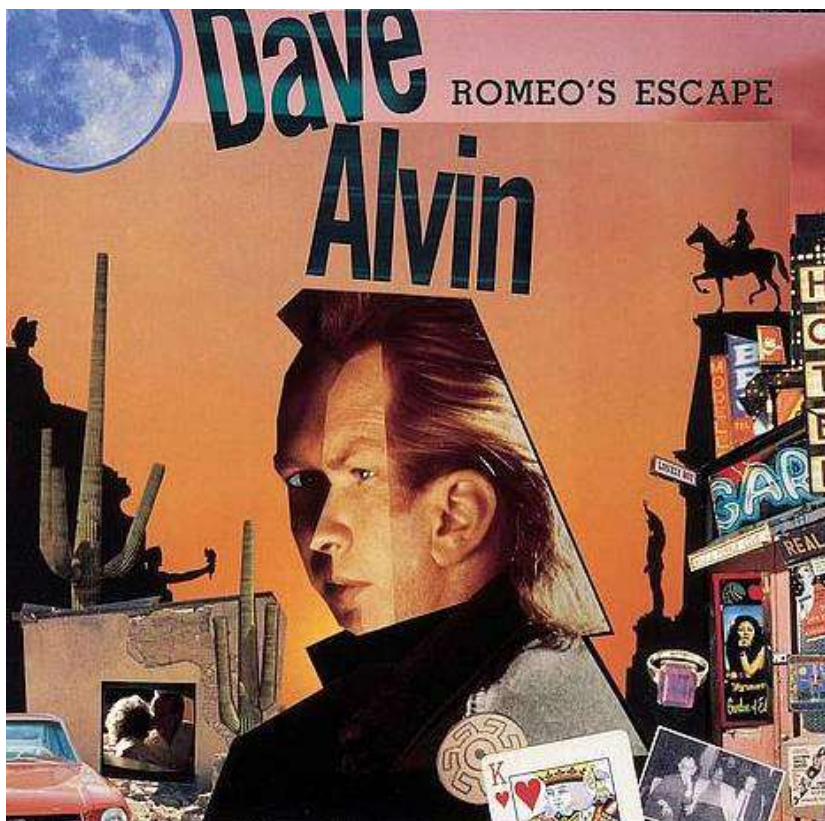
The Dave Alvin solo story started in late 1985 when he, as the primary songwriter for the Blasters, decided he would play his last shows with the band.

AM: You joined X but didn't officially leave the Blasters?

DA: We had a Blasters gig in Montreal (October 23, 1985) and we all were pretty frustrated and unhappy in the band. Gene Taylor walked out after the gig and got into the Fabulous Thunderbirds bus. They were opening for us. Gene quit the band that night and immediately joined the T Birds. I yelled that I was quitting the band too, which I said a lot back then. I flew to New York for a Knitters gig at Irving Plaza the next day. At the Knitters soundcheck, John Doe told me they had just fired (guitarist) Billy Zoom from X. They asked me to join and I said 'Yes.' The Blasters still had a few dates left on the tour, which I played on. Then in November, I went on a three week tour with X. The Blasters had some scattered dates and small tours running into early 1986. So I was making plenty of money working in two popular bands, but I had every intention of leaving the Blasters. I played my last show with the Blasters on March 28, 1986 at The World in New York City.

AM: What were the reasons for you leaving the Blasters?

DA: Phil and I were moving in opposite directions. I just couldn't write songs for someone else anymore. Until then, I had tried to find similar experiences that Phil and I shared so I could imagine him singing the song. But those experiences ran out. I wasn't thinking of a solo career. I





The Allnighters— L. to R.—Angel, Logan, Leisz, Gil T., and Alvin

They hadn't come up with a replacement yet. (ed. Note – Hollywood Fats joined the Blasters in June 1986)

AM: Tell us about the early 1986 sessions for that next Blasters album.

DA: I think it was January or February that Nick Lowe came over from England to produce the album. At this point I was done writing songs for Phil. I just wrote what came into my head, which was *FOURTH OF JULY* and *BROTHER ON THE LINE*. When I went to meet Nick, I showed him those two songs and he said: "Phil can't sing *FOURTH OF JULY*. It's not his kind of song. You should sing it." I said: "I can't sing." Nick said: "I can't either and I've made a career out of it." So those were the guiding words of my life ever since.

So we recorded the tracks with me singing. That's when the absurdity of the situation struck me: We were doing these songs, so the Blasters could go out on tour -- but Phil's not singing them? Dave is, and Dave isn't in the band anymore? (Laughs) Wow!

So at some point Phil sang vocals on the songs without Nick Lowe there, but by then the record company dropped them anyway. So that was that.

So I continued playing with X, but on my spare time I started jam sessions at a club called Raji's in the afternoons with a band that would eventually become my first solo band, The Allnighters. I had Gil T. from Top Jimmy's band, Juke Logan on keys and harmonica, Tony Gilkyson on guitar, and a drummer Tony recommended named Jerry Angel. Tony also brought in Greg Leisz who would go onto become my record producer at HighTone Records. So we just jammed 1 PM to 6 before the club opened. It was just something to do, not that it was intended to become a band.

This eventually led to me bringing in songs, and when

didn't think I could sing. I sort of already left the Blasters but there was a clause in the contract with Warner Brothers called a "leaving member clause." It said: "If Phil or Dave leave the band, Warners has the right to drop the band." There was a possibility that the Blasters were gonna lose their record deal, so I agreed to write some Blasters songs and play on a record. That would give them something to tour on.

This is the way I viewed it, that I was already out of the band.

Press Release 1987

My name is Dave Alvin and Romeo's Escape is my first solo album. Some of you may know my work, first as songwriter and lead guitarist for the Blasters and later with X. I wouldn't trade my experiences with either of these bands for anything, but part of being a musician is following your heart, and mine was definitely telling me to do songs my way. That's why some of the songs on Romeo's Escape might be familiar.

Blasters manager Greg Lewerke came up with a record deal for me with the UK label Demon, I already had a band ready to record.

I think he might have gotten me the deal figuring I'd get the solo idea out of my system and then rejoin the Blasters. At the same time, I was playing in X and was having a fun time, but I was missing my style of music. I thought I could cut the solo record and do an occasional show, but I wanted to stay in X.

AM: Did X encourage you to write songs?

DA: Well once they heard FOURTH OF JULY, they asked what else to you have? Later on, John wanted to cut ROMEO'S ESCAPE, but I was already working on the solo record and wanted to save that one. They were always open to collaboration, but X already had two songwriters and didn't need a third.

When I returned to the Blasters to help them cover gigs after Hollywood Fats died, I started to realize even more how much I missed these songs and my style of music

AM: Tell us about the solo album recording sessions.

DA: When I was offered the solo album, Steve Berlin was starting to produce records. I always liked him so I asked him to produce it. We recorded in two sets of sessions. What a great band.

Dave Alvin—Interchords

Since his first solo album came out on a major label, Dave Alvin received an extra marketing push to promote his work. In 1987, Epic Records released Romeo's Escape Interchords to radio stations and journalists to promote him as a solo artist. The vinyl LP, which was not intended to be sold, features the title track and five other songs from Romeo's Escape. Each track featured Dave discussing the song as well as his music and solo career in general. The album came in a black-and-white cover.

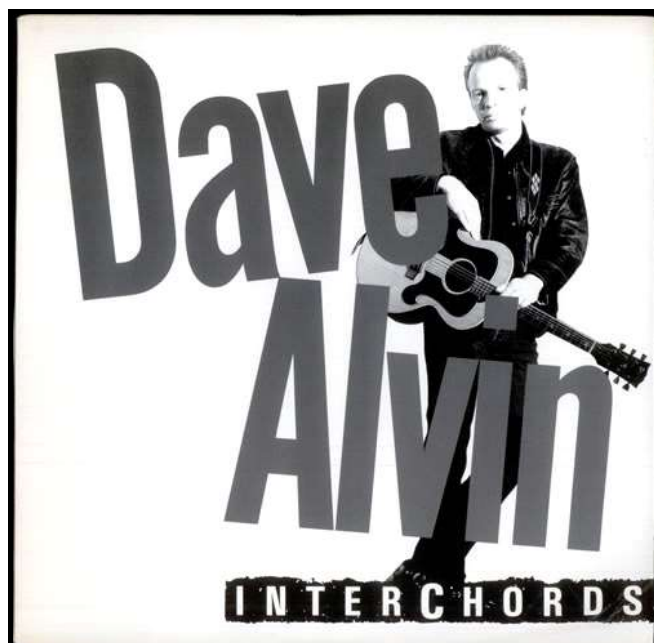
David Marguiles, then the associate editor of the CMJ New Music Report, conducted the interview, which was designed to be played on radio stations.

The selections on the LP included new versions of songs recorded by the Blasters (LONG WHITE CADILLAC and BORDER RADIO) and X (FOURTH OF JULY) alongside new solo material (ROMEO'S ESCAPE and BROTHER ON THE LINE) from the Romeo's Escape album. The tracks were chosen to represent a mix of uptempo and slower songs from the Romeo's Escape album.

As a bonus, Dave also recorded a song for Interchords that was not included on the Romeo's Escape album. He introduces ONE WAY GAL as "a old pretty song by a guy named Bill Moore." It's a mid-tempo blues song that Dave performs solo on guitar. William "Bill" Moore, a Virginian who was known as the "Barber Bluesman of the Rappahannock," recorded the song for Paramount Records in 1928. Dave's version of ONE WAY GAL, which features some changes in the lyrics, can be heard on YouTube.

Interestingly, ONE WAY GAL is not mentioned on the album cover, but is listed on the record label as the final song on side two. The song is unavailable elsewhere, making Interchords a Dave Alvin collectible. Copies of the LP can be found on eBay and other Internet sites. I was able to pick up a copy for \$2 in a used record store in the 1990s.

Both Columbia and Epic Records released Interchords LPs on many of their artists in the 1980s, including Rosanne Cash, Rodney Crowell, Wynton Marsalis, and James McMurtry. (by — Tom Wilk)



It was different from the Blasters – There wasn't any arguing (laughs), there wasn't any baffles being punched. It was so liberating after spending five years fighting when recording. When I started singing to myself, I realized I could write exactly what I wanted. It wasn't that Phil forced me to write in a certain way. . . It was more a self-censorship. When I wrote for myself, the self-censorship went away.

At the time, the record deal was just for Demon Records in the UK. When I left the Blasters, Greg Lewerke stayed as Blasters manager and Shelly Heber went with me. She tried to get me a deal in US, but the big problem was I had pedal steel on the Demon recordings. That proved problematic for the rest of the life of that band. In those days if you had pedal steel, rock & roll people called you 'a country act.' And I wasn't – but I loved pedal steel.

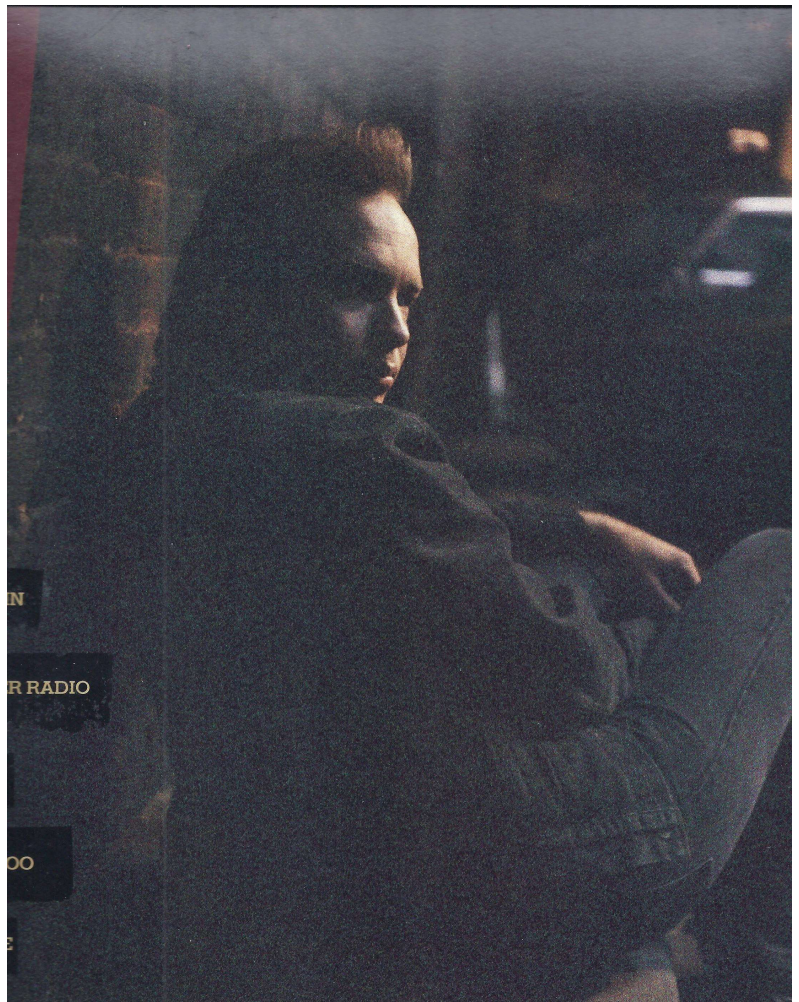
AM: You eventually did get a deal with CBS/Epic.

DA: When I did get signed to CBS in the US, I had an opportunity to take a band out on the road to promote the album. CBS offered tour support money, so at that point I had to leave X. I knew I couldn't do both. It wasn't fair to X, but at least at this point they added a second guitar player in Tony Gilkyson, so I realized they don't really need me in X. So Tony chose X over the Allnighters, and I, the opposite.

At that time, in we were trying to change the sound of X so it would not be just based on eighth notes all the time, but on something else—and we did to some extent. But I'm a songwriter and when I die I'll be remembered for a couple of songs and not as a guitar player. I can play guitar pretty good, but when I'm 'on' as a songwriter I'm 'really on (laughs).' That's my one little bit of ego (laughs).

AM: In the press release for Romeo's Escape your management announced they would be targeting EVERY NIGHT ABOUT THIS TIME to country radio as a single, and NEW TATTOO to rock radio.

DA: That was the plan, but it was a confusing time at CBS Nashville. They had an A & R guy named Larry Hamby – a really nice guy. He wanted to shake things up at the label, because at this point in time roots music was doing really well. You had Los Lobos and Robert Cray at the peak of their success, and the beginning of Dwight Yoakam's success. Because I was affiliated with those artists, I fit into his plan to change CBS Nashville into more of, what is now called 'Americana' - As opposed to a straight country label. He failed magnificently (laughs), but he tried. He signed me and some other acts and brought us into a culture that was geared for country music. In those days, country is not what it is today. It was real country, so it was hard for me to reach that audience. So, I was also supposed to be promoted through CBS Pop in New York. The guy that ran pop radio promotion repeatedly said: "I love you Dave. I'll go to the wall for you, but get that god-



Katy Moffatt on
Romeo's Escape vocals



I'd begun work with Steve Berlin and Mark Linett on what would become my album called Child Bride, and Steve asked me to sing on a record they were finishing up. This was my introduction to Dave and his music. I was there to overdub, so it was me, Dave, Steve and Mark and the tracks in a smallish studio. There was a lot of space in the BORDER RADIO track and I was encouraged to counterpoint Dave's vocal. It was a natural fit, as was the harmony on the energetic JUBILEE TRAIN. The tracks were strong and beautiful, and the atmosphere I was invited into was fearless and relaxed. Altogether, it's one of my favorite recording memories as a guest vocalist - and the beginning of a lasting friendship with Dave.

Child Bride was 2 or 3 years in the making, and the song SETTIN' THE WORLD ON FIRE (duet with Dave) was cut during one of the later sessions for it, but yes, in a meandering way my work on Romeo's Escape did lead to Dave's work on Child Bride. There were a lot of nights of sitting in on live performances, some drinking, partying, and good conversation in between. Recording SETTIN' became a natural thing to do.

(interview by Tom Wilk)

damn pedal steel of the record."

Meanwhile, Joe Casey, a real character, ran radio promotion for CBS Nashville and would complain: "The drums are too loud. Those aren't country drums." So I didn't belong anywhere.

AM: In a June 1987 Musician Magazine story, Phil said: "My original design was that Dave would go on with the Blasters while I went back to school. I consider myself a mathematician first."

DA: That is true. He said: "You take the band, and name, and lead it. I'm gonna go study mathematics." He could have done that, but I knew as similar as Phil and I are musically, we're different in other ways. The big way is that I can't sing like him. You could call it the Blasters and go out and do some Dave Alvin songs, but I couldn't sing songs like I'M SHAKIN.' That would have been a tidy solution for Phil, but nothing but headaches for me.

———— The Songs ————

1. **FOURTH OF JULY** – This version is very similar to the demo I recorded. My only regret is we didn't spend enough time on the vocals. I fault me and Berlin for that, but we did what we could in only two nights. I call my singing voice on this album 'Vodka and Beer' because that's what I was on. And I don't mean buzzed: I was drunk. The only time I ever sang was in the Blasters rehearsals to show them a song. We would rehearse it 10 or 20 times with me singing and then Phil would take over. So this was new to me.

2. **LONG WHITE CADILLAC** – Gregg Sutton from Lone Justice played bass on this song. That was Berlin's decision. Gregg played the groove better than Gil. T. That was a big drama thing. Gregg also played bass on a few other songs.

3. **EVERY NIGHT ABOUT THIS TIME** – I wrote that song while flying on a plane to Houston with my then girlfriend. I was looking out the window and started thinking about a woman I used to know and whatever happened to her. A week later, I had the song done, but it felt like a country song – which opened up years of trouble for me (laughs). It was a straight country song with pedal steel. I thought it was just like the Blasters **HELP YOU DREAM**, which I considered a straight country song as well. During the Blasters Hardline sessions, I put pedal steel on **HELP YOU DREAM**, but Phil made me take it off.

In 1989, CBS Nashville's A&R guy Larry Hamby was working with George Jones doing an album of duets with people like

James Taylor. He tried to get George Jones to record this song, but someone in George's camp said this song was 'too country' even for George Jones. In their defense, country music really changed in the 80's. If he had gotten this song in 1982 when country radio played ballads, his people would have chosen this for him. But by 1989 things had changed.

4. **ROMEO'S ESCAPE** – I was in a few different relationships back then. I had a girl over for the weekend and right after driving her to the airport, on the way back home, I wrote the first two verses in the car. I was all jacked up on girl (laughs). My car radio was broken, so I wrote more to entertain myself.

5. **BROTHER ON THE LINE** – This was one of the songs I wrote for the Nick Lowe Blasters sessions. The original version was something like Booker T and the MGs or an Al Green version. We tried it that way at Raji's with the All-nighters. When we got into the studio, I decided it was probably better - with my voice - to do it acoustic.

That's a live vocal I did. In the writing of this song, it might have had a little bit of saying-goodbye-to-the-Blasters, but it really was about a small town being set against each other. (ed. note – The Hormel Strike in Austin, Minnesota and a copper miners' strike in Arizona). The strike lasted so long, and tore the town apart - It really caught my interest. Dave Hidalgo played fiddle on that one.

6. **JUBILEE TRAIN** – On the original version of this, on The Blasters' Non-Fiction album, we played it very fast. Here, we said: "Let's slow it down and let the lyrics come out a little more." One of the secrets of the Blasters, in a weird way, was to not put much emphasis on the lyrics. We wanted people to think for instance; maybe **BORDER RADIO** is a dance song, or **LONG WHITE CADILLAC** is about a car. I like when people hear the song for the tenth time and say: "Oh my God. That song is about something else!" But that can be a bad thing, if they don't get around to listening for the tenth time (laughs). Katy Moffatt and some other professional singers were brought in to sweeten up the vocals. That's how I got to know Katy. I had heard her on the local folk radio. When Berlin brought her in, I was like: "Wow." We just hit it off, and have been friends ever since.

7. **BORDER RADIO** – This was a live vocal. After recording this I remember we weren't necessarily goose-bumpy, but we thought it was pretty cool. I originally saw this song to

Gregg Sutton on Bass



I'm listening to this record right now after not having heard it for eons.

I remember how much fun it was to play on this record. Because of the personnel, and the fact that Steve (Berlin) and Mark (Linett) were producing made the whole process feel organic. We'd all been playing gigs together in different bands and for various acts for many years. Having Jerry Angel, Tony Gilkyson, and Steve made it like just playing with the homeys. Dave was a nicer guy than I realized, and he was easy to play for. It's always strange to me to hear records I've played on. It's like listening to someone else really, but I think he (bass player, me) did a good job. There are some really affecting songs on this record. **EVERY NIGHT ABOUT THIS TIME** and **FOURTH OF JULY** really get to me. Also the title track is a lot of fun. We had our own way of playing rock & roll – Jerry, me, and Tony. Was Greg Leisz on this record? Yeah, I remember they had him set up upstairs out of eye shot of the rest of us. It's easy to forget a man you didn't see. But Greg is one badass mofo, and plays very memorable stuff.

To finish my thought of having our own playing style - I'm glad we got it down just the way it is. Hearing our 'lil rhythm section churning out the soul, takes me back to a hundred gigs at places such as The Lighthouse, Central, Blackie's, King King, and more. That's where we played these grooves and brought them to this record. **JUBILEE TRAIN** and **ROMEO'S ESCAPE** are good examples of that - Jerry is just smokin' on drums.

be a bit more 'country.' I wrote it with Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn in mind.

8. FARAWAY – This is a song I wrote, thinking about when I was a kid. I haven't played this live in a long time. I did it once on a radio show with Joe Terry and earlier with Rick Solem on The Folk-scene radio show.

Al Kooper played Hammond organ on this. We lived only a few blocks from each other and we were friends, so he played on this as an overdub.

9. NEW TATTOO – My ex-fiance Jill Jordan got tattooed and was in the process of becoming the world famous tattoo artist she is now. She broke up with me, so I wrote a song. She even liked it.

10. YOU GOT ME – This was just a blues that we were fooling around with. Steve Berlin said: "Hey, finish the lyrics and we'll have a song." So I did and that's as close as I've ever gotten to 'instantaneous song composition.'

11. I WISH IT WERE SATURDAY NIGHT – The song title kind of says it all, but it's a perfect bookend to FOURTH OF JULY on the album. This was a hard one to sing and play live. I took a lot of drubbing because of my voice on this album. Two things kept me going: One was Nick Lowe's encouraging comment and the other was people saying: 'Yeah, but I've heard worse (laughs).' You can only take so much, and some songs suffer because you equate those songs with the drubbing - SATURDAY NIGHT and FARAWAY.

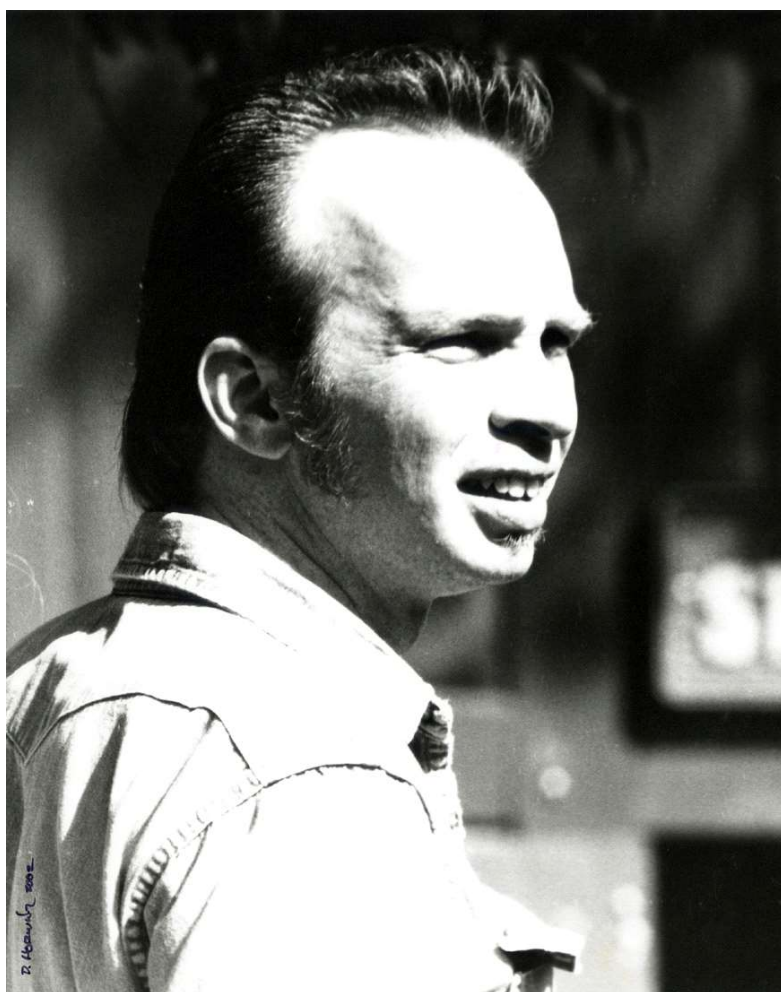
AM: Were there any unreleased songs from that period?

DA: MY OLD GIRL and THIS TIME were demos for the album that I didn't feel were finished. There was another song called THE PARTY'S OVER and WHAT DO YOU TELL YOUR MAN. They were recorded for a second album on CBS/Epic before I was dropped from the label. Years later, we unsuccessfully tried to locate the master tapes for these other songs. They're probably in the bowels of the CBS vaults somewhere. THE PARTY'S OVER was a BORDER RADIO – styled rocker that became part of our live set. It's not a song I would record now, but good for that time.

AM: How did the artwork come about for the cover of the album?

DA: Artist Lou Beach designed it. I wanted something that was unique. There are a few differences between the European and US covers, besides the title. For whatever reason, Demon records in the UK insisted that the record be called Every Night About This Time. I never was given a reason why. I thought Romeo's Escape was the perfect title. I was leaving the Blasters and took myself for Romeo.

There were a few image differences on the cover. On the UK cover, in the lower left, is a TV with 2



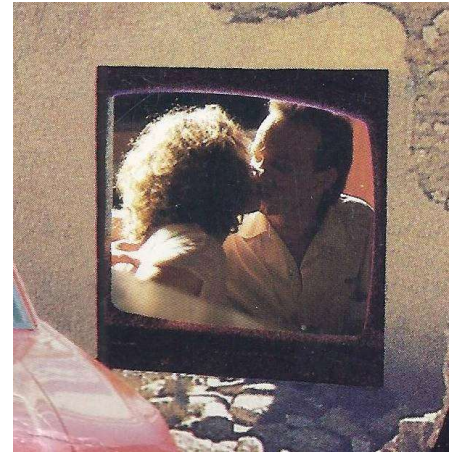
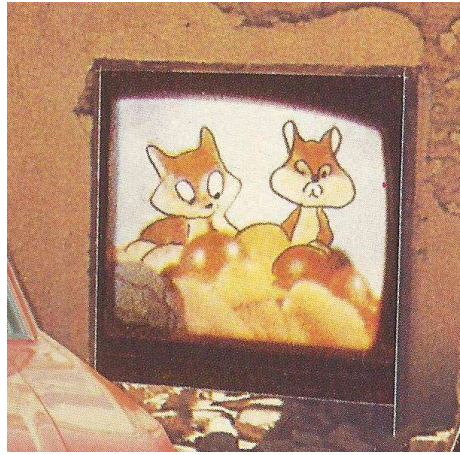
chipmunks – Chip and Dale. The US version has me and my then girlfriend kissing. Next to the King of Hearts card on the UK cover is bluesman Tampa Red. On the US cover, that was changed to an old photo of me, my mother, and Big Joe Turner. None of the images mattered to Demon Records, but it did to the CBS Records legal department. We don't own these photos, so we had to pull them. The guy on horseback is a monument on Monument Avenue in Richmond, VA, where my girlfriend was from.

AM: How did it come about that you were dropped from the CBS/Epic label?

DA: I had tour support money from CBS Nashville until the band played Nashville and the execs saw us perform. We were loud, we weren't dressed right, and we just didn't fit in. We were

a bar band from Hollywood and they didn't like the image of the band. The day after we played Nashville, I had a meeting with a guy who approved our tour support named Roy Wensch. Roy was a great guy, but was a country guy. He said: "Can you play more country music?" I said: "No." So they pulled the tour support. I took all the money I saved from the Blasters and X and put it into keeping the band on the road to finish a long tour we scheduled opening for Los Lobos and other gigs. We started with a 5-member band and 3 crew members in 2 vehicles with tour support money. By the end of a 6 month tour, we were down to one road manager, and everyone crammed into a van (laughs). After they pulled the tour support, my manager said you'll have to cancel the tour. I said: "Bullshit!" Nobody in Nashville, or anywhere else, is gonna tell me I can't plug in my guitar and make a racket." And that attitude is what has carried me through the years, just like Nick Lowe's advice. And my advice to myself is "Fuck You. I play music, and that's what I'm gonna do. If it costs me every cent I have, you're not gonna tell me I can't have a band and make noise if I want to."

I got to talk to Rick Blackburn, the head of CBS Nashville. He said: "The half-pop, half-country thing is not working. You'll have to choose one or the other." He was a pretty hot producer in Nashville at the time and he said: "Here is what I am offering you: We will do another record with you in Nashville, with Nashville musicians and songwriters. You can write three or four songs, and the rest will be guaranteed hits out of Nashville songwriters. I will go to the wall for you." I



thought about it for a week. I was kind in shock. But I realized, it wasn't who I am. I'm a loud rock & roller, and I've got more blues in me than anything. So to suddenly try to become this other thing . . . It's not me. I'm a songwriter. I have to write the songs. There are times I think that might have been interesting to hear, but I just wasn't comfortable with it. Everything I've ever done in my career to this day, I have felt artistically comfortable with. So they moved me to Epic Pop, but said: "No pedal steel." Basically they wanted a Blasters record out of me, so we started working



on one. At the same time, the A&R guy they gave me, Bob Pfeifer, who was previously in a band called Human Switchboard, was giving me records by the Eurythmics saying: "Can you sound like this?" (Laughs) I'm not kidding. He said: "This is pop music. This is where it's heading." He was just doing his job. That led to me being dropped from Epic/CBS. Bob was very sweet. He was in tears when I was dropped from CBS Pop. But I was like: "Thank You!! I don't like it here. This has not been good. Bye." He was surprised like, "Really??"

The downside was that I wound up massively in debt, trying to keep that band on the road. Basically, I used the same business model as the Blasters, but with diminishing results. The Blasters could always go out on tour, even if we didn't have a new record out, and we always made good money. As a solo artist, I couldn't achieve that. So for three years I walked around shell-shocked.

But the thought suddenly dawned on me that. . . in March of '79, we started the Blasters. Then in a blink of an eye I'd gone through the Blasters, through X, done a solo record, my mother died, and almost got married two times.

Where the fuck am I? I'm broke, in debt, what the fuck just happened? It took me three years to wrap my brain around that, and then my stubbornness came back. I said to myself: "I'm gonna play music, nobody will tell me I can't. I'll find a place that understands me musically, and I won't have to explain myself. I can write blues, country, rock & roll, or whatever I want." That's when I found HighTone records and I said: "This is it. I am happy."

AM: Any last thoughts or overall impressions of Romeo's Escape on it's 25th Anniversary?

DA: The record had a great band, but I have mixed feelings. I wish we had three or four more days to work on the vocals - maybe a vocal coach in there with me, other than vodka and Budweiser. All in all, it's a pretty good record. I view it now as the beginning of my solo career, but for a long time I viewed it as a descent to hell with dealing with record companies. I never had those kinds of problems in the Blasters. Romeo's Escape was my learning experience of how record labels screw with your brain. One of the things I've learned, and I've seen this with friends who are on major labels: if you don't sell x amount of copies, you are dead. Then your record goes into the cheapo bin, they stop printing them - you're dropped and you're out pumping gas. It's because one guy or girl decided to not let you make records anymore. When I looked for a label after CBS, I wanted a label that would be there and keep my records in print—no matter what. — **AM**