

ISSUE #45

American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

FEB. 2005

Blasters shows

(Phil, John, Jerry, Keith)

4/15 San Juan Cap CA at Coach House

DAVE ALVIN & GUILTY MEN

2/17-18 Austin TX at Continental Club

2/19 Houston TX at Continental Club

2/20 New Orleans LA at Mid City Lanes

2/25 Lake Worth FL at Bamboo Room

2/26 Tampa FL at Skippers Smokehouse

DAVE ACOUSTIC W/Chris Miller

3/3 Reno NV at Hacienda

3/4-5 Salt Lake City UT at Univ of Utah

3/6 Boulder CO at E-Town Radio show

3/16 Buellton CA at Firestone Walker

4/20 Charlotte NC at Evening Muse

4/21 Raleigh NC at Pour House

4/22 Alexandria VA at The Birchmere

4/23 Philadelphia PA at Tin Angel

4/24 New Haven CT at Cafe 9

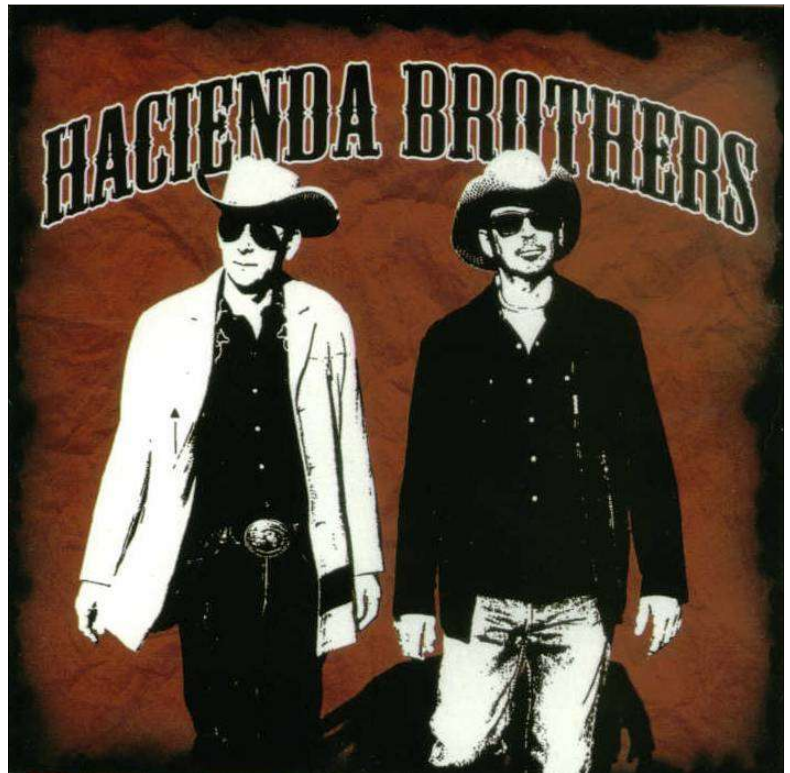
4/28 N. Hampton MA at Iron Horse

4/30 Pawling NY at The Town Crier

Chris Gaffney's New Record is Out

Latest News -- Chris Gaffney's new band, The Hacienda Brothers are releasing their first album on Koch Records on February 22, 2005 -- The Blasters are still in negotiations to

release 4-11-44 in the US. -- Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men recorded a show at The Great American Music Hall in San Francisco, CA for a possible DVD release. They filmed an acoustic show in January in Pasadena, which could be used as some bonus footage. They hope to release it in the fall. -- Dave recorded a re-arranged version of GOIN' DOWNTOWN for a Peter Case tribute record. Dave's band included Gaffney, Greg Boaz, Amy Farris and Bill Bateman. -- The Knitters have a new record ready for release. They are in label negotiations right now. -- Evangeline Records in the UK released The Blasters Going Home 2-CD set on January 31, 2005. Last year Shout Factory Records released The Original Blasters' Going Home DVD and a single disc companion CD in the US. The DVD and CD each included different songs. Evangeline's 2-CD set includes all the songs, as well as 2 bonus live songs from the current Blasters. This is a UK only release. Order it thru Evangeline or www.Amazon.co.uk -- Dave Alvin reports he made it safely out of the mudslides in CA. They just missed his house. -- Phil Alvin is hard at work building a pond on his property. -- Read this newsletter on www.BlastersNewsletter.com for expanded coverage, extra photos, and links to additional Blasters / Dave Alvin media. ~~ *AM*



This Issue: Chris Gaffney and Dave Gonzalez talk about the Hacienda Brothers record. The Dave Alvin / Joe Ely connection and The Blasters Scandinavian Tour Diaries Part 1.



On February 22, 2005 Koch Records released a CD: The Hacienda Brothers. The new band is led by Chris Gaffney and Dave Gonzalez, each a bandleader and songwriter. Chris Gaffney and the Cold Hard Facts released six albums between '89 and 2000 as Chris shared his time on tour as a member of Dave Alvin's Guilty Men. Dave Gonzales led the legendary rockabilly band, The Paladins as singer, guitarist and songwriter through 9 albums in the last 17 years.

The two credit former DJ and now Tucson, AZ music promoter Jeb Schoonover (who is now handling management of the band) as the reason for the alliance. They have assembled a top-notch backing band to play a fresh and unique blend of classic country and early soul. In their press bio Gaffney said: "We can absolutely turn on a dime, and play what ever we want, and that's how we made the record."

Dave Gonzalez Interview 2/8/05

-By Billy Davis

The Roots of the Hacienda Brothers

Chris Gaffney has been on the scene in So.Cal. for so long, I already knew who he was. I met him at the Palomino Club (N. Hollywood, CA) in about '89. Dave and Gaff called us (The Paladins) to play the show with them. I thought that would be cool. Seeing Gaff, I said: "Wooo! Listen to this guy play accordion and he lives right here in So.Cal.." We played a lot of gigs together. So Gaff and I stayed in touch.

I've always wanted to do a record with Chris. I talked to our mutual friend, Jeb Schoonover, about this a lot and we thought 'if we could ever get him to do a project with us like this Wow! - because Gaff sings like a soul singer that sounds like Waylon.'

Finally, Jeb stayed on it and he made it happen. Gaff and I played a birthday party for Jeb. It was Chris's birthday too. Not only are they tight friends but have the same birthday. That's October 3. We sat in, had a ball, and took turns singing. It was a long time coming.

So we started getting together to write songs. Gaff is a great songwriter. It's great for me as a songwriter because I can write without worrying about my limitations as a vocalist or the limited instrumentation of a trio like the Paladins. I've always wanted steel and more instrumentation.

I've known Teddy Morgan about as long as I've known Gaff. Jeb suggested he join us. I thought it would be cool to just play acoustic guitar and write songs, and Teddy could play all the lead guitar. We played a few gigs in Tucson right out of the shoot and it was great.

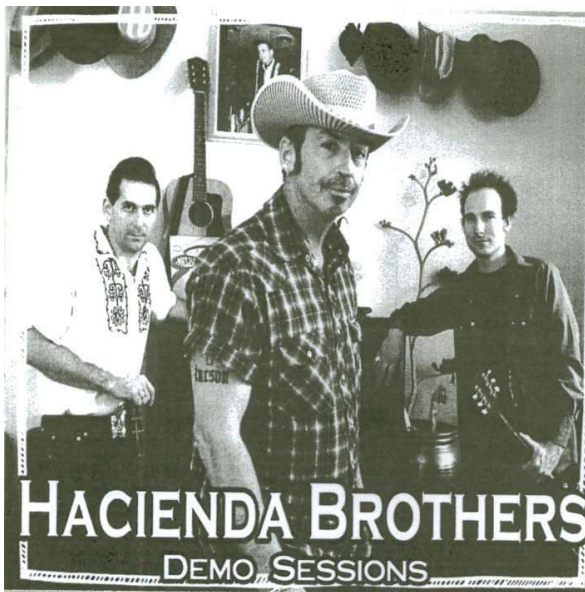
When we finally came up with a couple of good tunes, Gaff and I drove back to Tucson (many times). Being in Tucson has always been inspiring. Teddy came over to Jeb's house with his recording equipment and we recorded our demo.

We decided if we were gonna make a real record and we wanted to do it right, we needed a real producer. It was Jeb's idea to contact Dan Penn. Jeb knew that I knew Dan Penn for a number of years.

I remember I was at Gaff's house picking him up on the way to a gig and I had that home-made demo. I said to Gaff: 'I think we should just send this thing to Dan. What the heck? I think he is gonna dig it.' I wrote



photo: Jeff Smith



out a letter telling him: “I got my Desoto back on the road, found a motor for it and by the way here is a demo I cut with a great singer named Chris Gaffney, one of my favorite singers. I think you’re gonna like his voice.” Sure enough, Dan just loved it. He called me two days later and said, “Y’all don’t need a producer, but if you want one, I’m in.” But Gaff, Jeb, and I knew we needed a real producer, so we were sure lucky to get Dan on board.

Right about the same time that Dan said he would produce us, that’s when Teddy started getting real busy with some other cats doing production work and had to bow out from the Bros. Gaff and I had already been writing together and had the Hacienda Brothers A-team (the current line up) assembled out here on the west coast. So when Teddy bowed out, we were bummed, but we already had everything lined up, and we knew we could pull it on our own.

Producer / Songwriter Dan Penn

Dan is a veteran, a real record man. Dan was very instrumental in creating what is widely known as the ‘country-soul’ sound (The Muscle Shoals sound) and Dan wrote so many of those tunes for cats like Otis Redding, James Carr, Percy Sledge, Aretha Franklin, just to name a few.

Dan coined the Hacienda Brothers’ sound as ‘Western Soul.’ When Dan first called me up, the first thing he said was: “Ya know, Dave, I like that sound y’all got. It’s kind of like western soul.” Chris always says: “I’m a western singer, not a country singer.” He has that southwestern soul. Chris is a soulful singer that sings like Waylon. How hip is that? And Dan heard it too. So it’s such a trip that Dan dubbed The Hacienda Brothers sound ‘Western Soul.’

Dan Penn has produced and written hits for Otis Redding (YOU LEFT THE WATER RUNNING), the Box Tops (THE LETTER and CRY LIKE A BABY), Aretha Franklin (DO RIGHT WOMAN), Conway Twitty (IS A BLUE BIRD BLUE), James Carr (DARK END OF THE STREET), Janis Joplin (WOMAN LEFT LONELY), James & Bobby Purify (I’M YOUR PUPPET), as well as for many other artists like Solomon Burke, and Ronnie Milsap.

The Songs

SHE’S GONE – Jeb loved this song by Melba Montgomery. He always played her records for us. The original title is called HE’S GONE. We worked it up and arranged it Bros. style. When we finally decided to cut it, we realized it was written by Dallas Frazier and that’s heavy! (ed.note Dallas Frazier wrote many big hits including TELL IT LIKE IT IS for Aaron Neville)

MENTAL REVENGE – We cut this song the same day as SHE’S GONE and I’M SO PROUD. After cutting two slow songs, Jeb kept saying: “You gotta get some electric guitar on here. I wanna hear something rocked up.” He was really cracking the whip. Finally, I said: “Why don’t we do MENTAL REVENGE?; like Waylon did it Live at JDS in ‘64.” We cut it right then on the spot. Gaff said: “I love that tune. I can sing that one.” He nailed it.

LEAVIN’ ON MY MIND – When I write songs, I get in a mindset like I’m writing especially for somebody. This is one I wrote pretending it was for Waylon. I imagined it was the mid-60’s and I was going to meet Waylon and pitch him the song.





Dave, Hank Maninger, Dale Daniel, Chris and Dave Berzansky

After we cut all the basic tracks in Tucson, we took it out to Dan's studio in Nashville to finish it. This was January of '04. In the studio, I just finished up singing LEAVIN ON MY MIND, and I walked into the control room, and there was another cat sitting there. It was Donnie Frits. He said: "This song sounds like Waylon." That blew my mind, because I was trying to write it to sound like Waylon. That was unreal.

I'M SO PROUD – That was one of the first songs we wrote. When we were coming out to Tucson to write songs, Jeb told us all

to show up with a couple of tunes, and I did. I had a song called DEEP WATER and I had I'M SO PROUD in my mind. We had just arrived after driving 500 miles to Tucson. Jeb was taking everybody out to dinner, but I wanted to stay in and write this song. I was in Jeb's living room, and I starting writing that song I'M SO PROUD -- although it was originally called I'M SO TIRED (laughs) because of that long drive. I kept writing and writing, and when they all came back, we switched the words around and turned it into what is now I'M SO PROUD.

I still have the original lyric sheet from when we we're finishing this song. It's dated 2/6/03. At the end of the second verse, we were having a lot of trouble with the last line. It really needed a clincher, killer, pull-the-whole-song-together, strong last line. I came up with a few, and they were okay, but Teddy kept saying we could use something better. I said: "I know." Finally, when we were cutting the demo of the song, I had it all written out on this piece of paper, but left an 'X' and a long line where that last lyric should be. I handed it to Gaff when he was standing in front of the mic. I said: "Here is all the words. When you get to that blank spot, you gotta just close your eyes and pull it - think of something right on the spot. I know you can do it."

Teddy hit the tape deck, I'm strumming the guitar, Chris is singin' and we get to that point: 'Lovin' each other, we've been through it all.' I looked at him, he closed his eyes and dug so far deep into his soul and pulled it right out and said: "You built me so high, honey. Don't let me fall." That is the epic line that just tightens the whole song up. It was so hip, Teddy and I looked at each other, looked at Gaff and said "We got it!" That was so cool !

With every record I've ever made, you go in with a handful of tunes and a couple of the ones that you know real well don't come off, and then a few surprise you and do. And then you always come up with a few on the spot because there is so much inspiration and creativity going down.

SOUTH OF LONESOME – Dan Penn had just driven out from Nashville to Tucson to start recording us. He arrived on Halloween of '03 and we were playing a big theatre in Tucson. Dan came to the gig and after the show, came back and said: "Man, you guys sounded great. That was the best version of SIX DAYS ON THE ROAD that I've ever heard. We have to cut that for sure." I said: "That's cool that you dug it so much, Dan. But you know as great as that song is, every country bar band has played it, and it's really over-played. Chris and I would never consider cutting it."

Don't get me wrong; it's one of the greatest truck-driving tunes of all time. Dan said: "No No! You have to do it. We need a truck-drivin' song." Dan was persistent about it." He said he knew the guy that wrote that song - Carl Montgomery – Melba's brother!!

So the next day we got to Jeb's and sat down with Dan to sing him about 15 tunes we had in mind. We sang SHE'S GONE, and he said, "That's Melba Montgomery." Jeb again pulled out the original album and there was that song called SOUTH OF LONESOME. Low and behold, it was written again by Carl Montgomery. We knew we could arrange it our way and make a great truck-drivin' type tune out of it, instead of doing SIX DAYS ON THE ROAD. So we finally convinced Dan into letting us cut it.

LOOKING FOR LONELINESS – For me, that song is absolutely the most awesome thing we got to do. There was a song I had written that Dan liked a whole lot called TAKE ME BACK, but it wasn't quite finished. Throughout the whole session, Dan pulled me aside a few times to say: "Brother Dave, we gotta finish that tune. We gotta split, take a morning off, and finish that song."

So towards the end of the sessions while we were cutting SAGUARO, working it up and getting the arrangement all together, Dan comes right up next to me, just as close as you can get, looked me dead in the eye, completely serious and said: "Dave, I'm looking for loneliness." He was describing how he wanted SAGUARO to sound. I said: "Dan, that is the tune that we need to go write." It struck me as a title immediately. I could already see the next song.

So the very next morning, Dan and I took off with a guitar up to a mountain lookout just outside of Tucson. We threw rocks, we talked about cars, talked about love - just about everything and then we then we started talking about LOOKING FOR LONELINESS. So while over-looking this giant, as far as you can see, desolation we wrote that song up on top of that mountain.

Then, we got back down to the studio at lunch time, played it to the Bros., and then worked it up on the spot.

Dan said: "When we get back to Nashville, were gonna get Wayne on it." He was talking about trumpet player Wayne Jackson. (*ed. note -- Wayne Jackson was the trumpet player / horn section leader on all the classic Stax records – Sam and Dave, Otis Redding, Mable John, Wilson Pickett, among others*)

When we put Wayne on it, it was completely killer and that's when it finally all came together as a full-on soul tune.

Man, that was one of the coolest things ever. Here we wrote the song in the morning, worked it up after lunch,

7 Little Hacienda Brothers Questions for Chris Gaffney

1. How Did the Hacienda Bros get started?

CG: Dave Gonzalez, Teddy Morgan and I were playing at Jeb Schoonover's birthday party in Tucson in late 2002. I knew Dave G. for years but at that time we talked seriously about getting a band together. In 2003 we played a few dates in Tucson and then recorded a demo in Jeb's living room and then a little more at Teddy Morgan's house.

2. Who is Jeb Schoonover?

CG: Jeb is our manager. Jeb managed the Forbidden Pigs and worked with Candye Kane and The Paladins. He was a DJ at WCXI and a booking agent in the Tucson area.

3. Any of those demos make it to the new CD?

CG: Yes. MENTAL REVENGE, I'M SO PROUD, NO TIME TO WASTE, and SHE'S GONE.

4. Teddy Morgan was the third Hacienda Brother and is pictured on the cover of your demo. Why did he leave The Brothers?

CG: Teddy Morgan had an offer to produce Troy Olsen in Nashville. It was a question of whether he wanted to stick it out with the Hacienda Brothers or take what seemed to be a better deal. It certainly wasn't personal but a financial decision.

5. How did Dan Penn come to produce the new album.

CG: Dan Penn is a legend. He is a well known as a songwriter and producer. We wrote I'M YOUR PUPPET, DARK END OF THE STREET, CRY LIKE A BABY, DO RIGHT WOMAN by Aretha Franklin - the list goes on.

Dave Gonzalez met him at a festival in Europe. They stayed in touch. When we did the demo, we sent it to Dan Penn. He came out to Tucson to produce us at Cavern Studios. Later we went to Nashville to Dan Penn's studio to finish up parts.

6. I heard that Dan Penn wrote a song specifically for you called THE YEARS THAT GOT AWAY.

CG: Dan came to Tucson with that song and pitched it to me. He thought it was suited to my voice. We cut the song right then and there.

7. Who is in the band besides you and Dave Gonzalez?

CG: Dale Daniel on Drums -- I knew Dale Daniel from Dallas Wayne's band. Dale isn't on the new CD because he was brought into the band after we finished recording it. Hank Maninger on Bass -- Gonzalez knew Hank from rehearsing with him for a Johnny Paycheck tribute show (3/19/03 San Francisco at the Elbow Room). David Berzansky on pedal steel - We got him on a recommendation. He came down cold and just played with us and we liked him right away.



and we were listening to it at dinnertime.

WALKING ON MY DREAMS – I wrote the song as if I was gonna pitch it to Willie Nelson - just as a dream. I was pretending to write the B-side to NIGHT LIFE. NIGHT LIFE is one of my all-time favorites – Willie wrote it and his version is unbelievable and then of course there's the 1963 Ray Price version and the LP, which is in my top-five favorite records of all time.

I went over to Chris's house and I remember chasing him around his house trying to play it for him. Sometimes he gets antsy and elusive, so I followed him around from room to room - out into the back yard - into the front room - back and forth. Finally he listened to me and then said: "Alright, I'll sing that one now."

RAILED -- That was a little instrumental built around a guitar lick I had. I was playing the baritone guitar and thought 'If Freddie King lived in Bakersfield...' That was my concept. But we didn't have a title for it yet.

In the middle of the session, Gaff had to fly out to play a big gig with Dave Alvin in Washington. While Gaff was gone, Jeb took Dan, his wife Linda, Linda's mother Anna, me and the band down to Mexico for Linda's birthday. We had a ball. When we crossed the border coming back, Gaff had just gotten back to Tucson. I checked my voice mail and it was Gaff saying: "Call me. I'm back in town. I lost the dog!" Jeb had just gotten this dog that was jumpy and freaky. Gaff got back, opened the door, and the dog bolted out.

We were an hour outside of Tucson and the phone rings again. It was Gaff saying: "I found the dog." Just as he was hanging up, he said "Railed." We would always say: "We got railed on that deal." We were cracking up so hard. We wanted to put the phone conversations on the record but never got to. So that's how we came up with that title.

NO TIME TO WASTE – I wrote that tune the morning of the day we were gonna cut the demo. As usual, when I get up, the first thing I do is grab my acoustic guitar and I start writing. Gaff was walking in and out and throwing things in like: "Play an A there," or adding a lyric like: "No where to go." It came together pretty quick.

Every time I came out to Tucson I would be so happy to be back out in the desert at Jeb's - out of the crowded city. I cruise around in an old car with my 8-track playing. I've had about 40 old cars now. I live in a little old town called Escondido and I'm so burnt on the high-paced yuppie thing that's closing in on me. 'I

ain't livin' like that; I gotta get somewhere where the pace is slow." That's how I wrote that song. I have no desire to keep up with what ever is the latest thing.

YEARS THAT GOT AWAY – Dan Penn wrote that beautiful song for Gaffney. Dan told me about finally pulling his old Studebaker out of his barn with his tractor. He had finally decided that the car was so far on the backburner that he was gonna let it go. After pulling that car out, he was walking towards the house. When he turned back to look at the car the song hit him. He said: "That car just gave me that song."

He said he was so inspired to write and then he thought of Gaff. That's an incredible compliment. It blew us away. And he is so humble about it. He said: "I got a little song for you boys and I want to see how Chris likes it."

Gaff immediately took to that tune. Dan and Gaff are story-tellers and both very deep cats. They are really connected in that way. When we got Spooner Oldham to play on it later in Nashville, that was the icing on the cake. His piano style is just timeless.

SEVEN LITTLE NUMBERS -- The whole time we were going out to Tucson, Gaff was telling me about this idea he had for a song called DON'T MAKE THAT CALL. He said: "You have these numbers that you know. You could call, but you cant, and then you want to, but you don't want to."

Months went by and by and we were finally on our way to Tucson to record with Dan. We were getting close to town and it was real late at night, and I turned to Gaff and asked him: "What about that tune? Any more about it?" Gaff said: "I don't know." But I could tell he was thinking about it again. Then I asked him: "What if we think about it this way: What would Willie do? Willie would write a song about the matchbook or each one of the numbers on a matchbook. He would really get inside the song."

The very next morning, unfortunately, I had to go to a funeral and Gaff said: "When you get back, I'm gonna have the first verse written." I came back and sure enough he had it. I was blown away. Then, I had to go to the airport to pick up our bass player, Hank. Chris said: "When you get back, I'll have the second verse ready." He did it again!

We sat down with the guitars and bass and started moving it around a little bit. I had this Paycheck tune in my mind called THE COWARD, where he was gonna jump off this bridge. It had a unique chord change in it and I had wanted to write a tune like that, so I threw that chord change at Gaff. At first it didn't match the lyrics and Gaff didn't like it, but me and Hank did. We kept messing with it and Gaff finally took to it and when he did it became like a tribute to Ray Price. We all have no many influences that we draw from to create the Hacienda Brothers sound.

I'VE GOT A SECRET -- Gaff has been singing that for a long time. It was written by folk-hero Fred Neil. We played it at the Halloween show and Dan mentioned he really liked that song. He knew who it was written by and he suggested we cut that one, too. Gaff sings it great and everybody really likes it.

TURN TO GREY – Again, I was over Jeb's house and he played Chris's live record (Live and Then Some, Tres Pescadores Records 1999) for me and that's when I first heard that song.. Wow! What a great tune. I said to Jeb: "We should think about re-cutting that tune," but when we asked Gaff about it, he wasn't really into it. But the Bros all talked about it and agreed it's a great song - there are a million people who would love to hear TURN TO GREY. We really believe in that song. Towards the end of the session, we finally cut it. Gaff was pretty grouchy that day.

SAGAURO – I was playing a lot of baritone guitar and I actually had some words to it. Gaff said: "You know what? Forget those words. I can see that as a motion picture soundtrack instrumental." So we did it that way.

When we were in Nashville finishing up the song, I thought how about some Mariachi trumpets, which would be super cool. So I asked Wayne if he might want to play on one more song? Wayne said: "You know, I used to play with Marty Robbins. I love that stuff. I'd love to," and it turned out awesome.

When Wayne was leaving, he gave me a big hug and said: "Listen Dave. Next time you guys are out there cutting in Tucson, call me because I can eat Mexican food every night of the week and never get tired of it. (laughs) He was so great.

Dave Gonzalez After thoughts

I've had dreams for a long time of doing a project like this and working with Gaff and Jeb too. I never thought it would actually really happen. But now, Wow! Here we are with a really great band, being produced by Dan Penn, and our record is finally out. What a trip. It's cool. —Am

Dave Alvin and Joe Ely: A "Night" to Remember.

By Tom Wilk

Dave Alvin and Joe Ely have seen their careers develop in parallel ways. Both started out as member of groups (Dave with the Blasters; Joe with the Flatlanders) before launching successful solo careers. Both reunited with their groups in 2002 for new albums Trouble Bound for the Blasters; Now Again for the Flatlanders. They both did it again in 2004; Going Home for the Blasters and Wheels of Fortune for the Flatlander.

Both have had successful side projects (Dave with the Knitters and Pleasure Barons; Joe with the Grammy-winning Los Super Seven). Both recorded for the HighTone label with Joe releasing solo albums in 1987 and 1988 and Dave releasing seven solo albums between 1991 and 2002.

The writer Chris Morris noticed a vocal similarity between the two. Dave has "a raw, obviously untutored, but strong, appealing voice which often resembles Joe Ely's," he wrote in a September 1987 article. "I have heard Dave and Ely sing together and their phrasing and unconventional timbre bear remarkable similarities."

The concert trail was a common bond for both artists in the early 1980s. "We toured a lot with the Blasters in the early 1980s," Joe recalled in a 2004 interview. Members of his band and the Blasters got to know each other well as they shared a common love of blues, country and rockabilly. "We had some great times together, staying up all night singing and playing," Joe said, Occasionally they would share a stage. On April 4, 1982, Phil Alvin sat in with the Joe Ely Band in Boulder, Colo., for a rousing version of Jimmy Reed's BRIGHT LIGHTS BIG CITY.

Joe also has been an admirer of Dave's songwriting and recorded EVERY NIGHT ABOUT THIS TIME as the closing track on Love and Danger, his 1992 album. Music critic Geoffrey Himes has described the song as "a country ballad about sex as helpful but ultimately inadequate substitute for love" in a 1994 concert review of a Dave Alvin performance. "I loved the song the first time I heard it," said Joe, calling it "a perfect country song." Joe's version is more fully arranged and captures the woman's pathos in the song. Dave: "It was a great honor for me that he recorded my song. I thought Ely's version was great. Joe is a great singer and songwriter; so to have him do one of my songs was the ultimate compliment. His version was more hard rock, for lack of a better term."

EVERY NIGHT ABOUT THIS TIME first appeared on Romeo's Escape, Dave's first solo album in 1987. The song served as the title track of the album when it was released in England. Dave has said he had a singer in mind when he wrote the song. "This is a song I wrote and I was really hoping George Jones would do it," Dave said before playing it at the Tin Angel in Philadelphia on Feb. 28, 1997. "A couple of years after I wrote it, George was actually going to do it. Then somebody in Nashville, a manager or record company, decided it was too country for George Jones. That's a true story."

After Romeo's Escape went out of print in the early 1990s, Joe's version gave the song a new visibility and spurred Dave to record it again when choosing songs for the King of California album. "I wanted to recut songs from Romeo's Escape because, to be perfectly honest, I can sing 'em better now," Dave said in a press release accompanying the 1994 album. ~ *AM*



BlastoScand'04 Tour Diaries Part 1

The Blasters September 2004 Tour of Scandinavia

--By Billy Davis

Tuesday September 14, 2004

I met the four Blasters (Phil, John, Jerry, and Keith) and soundman Rick Brown in London where we all were connecting towards Stockholm, Sweden to start the tour. I was along to cover the tour for the newsletter and website, as well as working as a roadie, sometimes tour manager, and bus bartender. We all sat in the airport for a few hours as our flight was delayed. Phil showed us his latest computer art titled *Blasto – Scand –'04* on the cover of his tour itinerary. This tour now has a name.

We flew in to Stockholm and were picked up by Micke Finell of the Refreshments band (not to be confused with the American band by the same name). He also happens to be the boss of 'Rock Around The Clock' productions who are promoting the tour. He wanted to welcome us personally to Sweden.

Phil couldn't stop talking about a magazine he picked up on the flight called *Business Life* that pictured a man on the cover that Phil thought looked like himself. We drove a few hours to a 'Bed and Breakfast' hotel in Hofors. It was a beautiful place far from the city, right on a lake bank, and only a few kilometers from where we would play the show the next day. The Blasters had stayed here before playing this same venue and loved it.

Wednesday September 15, 2004 Tengergården at Enviken, Sweden

After breakfast, a big red tour bus arrived to pick us up. We met our driver for the tour, Göran Pårs. He does it all when needed – driving, tour managing, soundman, and stage set-ups. Göran turned out to be a great friend of the band and we all agreed we couldn't do a tour here again without him – the best.

The Tour bus was really cool. It had a big Rock Around The Clock Logo on the side. We had 7 comfortable seats inside and two sleep bunks, tables, and only one window that opened – on the driver's side.

It was raining as we arrived for sound check at Tengergården in Enviken. A few guys in vintage American 1950's cars led us there. It's a little roadhouse type place out in the middle of farm country with a cool Blasters poster on the wall advertising the gig.

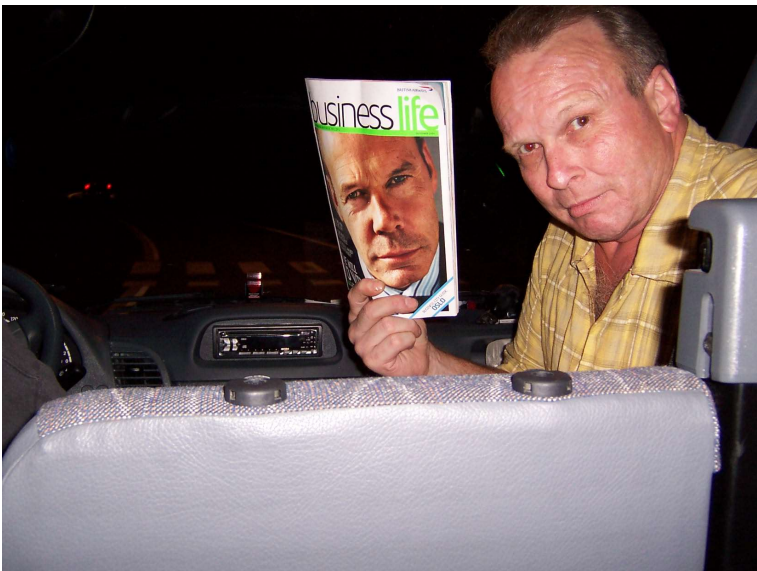
Phil found a piano inside and entertained as Göran, Rick, and I set up the stage equipment. The backline instruments (which is everything but guitars) were rented for the tour. Because we would be playing some unusual places, we were carrying everything needed to put on a rock show. We had a full PA, soundboard, cables, amps, and even lights. Jerry Angel worked with the road crew on setting up his drums every night to his exact specs. As he was setting up, I came up with the

idea of putting the Blasters logo on the

bass drum head. I found a Blasters poster, cut it up and with Jerry's approval, taped it on the kick drum.

Rick Brown was in charge of the sound. Rick has been the Blasters soundman since 1985 and knows everything to the smallest detail about how to make the Blasters sound exactly like the Blasters every night of a tour.

The Blasters started off their first Blasto-Scando sound check jamming on Led Zeppelin's *WHOLE LOTTA LOVE* then a new R&B version of Dave Alvin's *DRY RIVER*. Phil joined the band for *PRECIOUS MEMORIES*, *A LITTLE WALTER SHUFFLE* with har-





monica, a complete version of DRY RIVER, YOUR KIND OF LOVE, and another harp tune called BLUES WITH A FEELING. Phil played a newly acquired 1973 Stratocaster, which he is using as his second guitar. Keith Wyatt had his '74 Gibson Les Paul Gold Top.

We went back to the hotel where we were served a delicious Swedish meal with red wine and were joined by the promoter, a great guy named Ulf Back, and a few of his friends that helped set up the show.

We arrived at the venue and Phil decided to sit in the bus for some quiet time. A few fans spotted the door open and forced their way into the bus past me. I asked them to see Phil after the show, but one guy who was already drunk proceeded to sit himself down next to Phil and said: "Only after I ask Phil a few questions." Other than that I couldn't understand a word he said - I figured

there was a language barrier, so I asked our driver to translate. Göran got the guy out of the bus and said he spoke perfect English, but was already pretty liquored up. It turns out all he required was that Phil sing BLUE SHADOWS tonight. Even though Phil is very cool in handling these situations, now I knew: Don't leave the tour bus door open.

The show started with the Blasters familiar set opening song ALL YOUR FAULT. Phil announced: "The Blasters have a new record coming out next week. Buy it if you want. Don't buy it, at your own risk."

Phil dedicated BLUE SHADOWS to Stig. That was the guy who forced his way on the bus before the show. Phil dedicated ONE BAD STUD to: "This man right here (pointing to a guy in the audience) because I think he is gonna kick my ass after the show - and also to Finnish Merchant Marines. They don't even know how bad they are." Phil explained his dedication: "The first time we played in Helsinki, there was a guy like this standing in front of me and there was a mosh pit off to the side. We started ONE BAD STUD and the guy goes 'Yaaaa!!' He reaches into the mosh pit and pulls a guy out of it. The guy doesn't want to go, so he grabs him by the hair and goes 'Bam!' and blows his face open with blood and then twirls it thru the whole song going 'Yaaaa Yaaaa' and then drops him at the end."

The Blasters came out for a second encore and Phil signed an autograph for someone in the crowd. They started off playing the JOE TURNER MEDLEY. John Bazz's bass didn't come on right away and everybody looked confused. But Keith held it together and played a long opening solo.

The Blasters played very well for an opening show of a tour. They played 9 songs not heard on last year's Original Blasters tour, so it was a fresh and entertaining set for me. The good-sized crowd of 250 had a few crazies in front, but the rest of the audience was a little sedate. Everyone was very satisfied.

Set list: all your fault, rebound, border radio, your kind of love, red rose, i'm shakin', dry river, american music, blue shadows, boneyard, slip of the tongue, so long baby goodbye, daddy rollin' stone, long white cadillac, marie marie, one bad stud. Encore: precious memories, 4-11-44, joe turner medley. Beer: Carlsberg.

Thursday September 16, 2004 Umeå, Sweden at Droskan

We drove 6 hours up the East coast of Sweden to Umeå. We passed some beautiful country, lots of paper plants. We learned that John Bazz loves barns and that Phil loves to call John's barns 'BlastoShacks.' Phil educated us on facts such as 'Racecar' is the longest word that when spelled backwards is the same. Hmmn? Good to know.

The Blasters came on and sounded good considering they didn't do much of a sound check. Phil's voice was a little weak in the beginning but got better as the show went on. They are playing a great version of Dave Alvin's DRY



RIVER, which appears on the Blasters 4-11-44 album. The Blasters call it an R&B Memphis Stax Records version. Keith Wyatt plays some soulful guitar licks and Phil finishes it off with a big vocal finish. The song is very different from Dave Alvin's version. Phil intros the song playfully saying: "Here is a song I fixed for my brother."

DARK NIGHT was a highlight. The band really steps it up a notch on this one with great solos by Keith. There were many requests from the audience. Of course, calls of MARIE MARIE came, prompting Phil to say: "You can cut my toe off with a brick if I don't do that one." Another request was for ONE MORE DANCE. Phil responded: "That's a good call. Come backstage and I'll sing it for you."

Phil uses the same dedications and intro statements for certain songs. The band often hears what Phil says and knows right away what song Phil is calling for them to play. This time there was some confusion: Lately before DADDY ROLLIN STONE, Phil says: "This is a little braggadoccio. It means making yourself look good." Phil said it and Keith must have thought he meant another song. Keith responded "You played that song already." Phil assumed Keith was right and said: "You're right. I'll change that. BLUE SHADOWS."

A girl named Marie requested MARIE MARIE near the end of the set and then thanked Phil by grabbing him around the neck and giving him a tongue kiss. I guess her husband didn't mind. Maybe he was such a serious Blasters fan that he even told her 'don't wash that spot.' Ha!

Phil was ready to sing his song with a harmonica but forgot to grab the mic to play the harp through. Rick Brown ran from the soundboard right up to Phil and told him to use that mic. Phil said: "Oh?" Got the mic and then poetically announced: "That was Rick Brown. He follows us around."

It's rare to hear Phil announce the individual members of the Blasters, but tonight he did it before the instrumental BONEYARD: "Featuring the fantabulous guitar styles of master Keith Wyatt, the ever stick and drums of Jerry Angel, the subtle, but still illegal, bass trappings of John Bazz - and I have very little to do with this song." The Blasters put on a good show that was essentially in a restaurant. The buffet was good – Scandinavian tacos and pizza.



Set list: *all your fault, border radio, rebound, dry river, i'm shakin', red rose, dark night, 4-11-44, long white cadillac, so long baby goodbye, slip of the tongue, boneyard, blue shadows, American music, marie marie, En-core: one bad stud. Beer: Spendrups (twist on/off cap)*



Friday September 17, 2004

This was a travel day so we had a few hours in the morning to walk around Umeå and visit some music stores, a record store and see a little of this college town. But we didn't have long because we had to drive towards Norway for our next gig. The plan was to drive 10 hours to a hotel in Steinkjer, which is the nearest hotel to the Norwegian gig. Again we saw some beautiful country as we headed due west across Sweden into Norway. We also stopped at McDonalds for lunch; yes, they are in Sweden too. The band couldn't resist posing with Ronald.

We passed some high points with clouds flowing down the hills across our road. We passed so many beautiful lakes as Phil would repeatedly exclaim, "God Damn it!" He just wanted to jump out of the bus a few times to go fishing. Along the way we made our first stop in what would later be our favorite petrol station / snack bar called Stat Oil.

We stayed at a hotel in Steinkjer just over the border into Norway. Some of the band ate pizza for dinner and then went to a local bar where we watched a lounge style keyboard player who took requests. We were invited to go to a private party by some Norwegian bikers. We didn't think that was a good idea. They might not understand that we had to get up early the next morning.

Saturday September 18, 2004 Saetervika, Norway at Kongo Pubhous

The next morning we drove 2 hours further into Norway where we saw mountains and lots of rock formations. Phil entertained everybody playing guitar in the front of the bus. As we approached big rock formations and lots of water, we knew it must be the Norwegian Sea. We finally reached the sea completely across Sweden and Norway east to West. It was worth it. Phil said: "This must be the Viking fishing village."

Everyone got out of the bus and immediately ran to the water to see the view and get some photos. What a beautiful place – rocks formations rose from the water in the distance and the shores were solid rock. There was a lighthouse out in the distance just up the coast. I later asked one of the staff at the venue if I could walk to it. They said it was across a waterway, so they offered to take me there on a small boat. That was very kind of him but I didn't take him up on the offer. I took a walk up a mountain that looked right down on the fishing village and the venue which in a green-roofed building far on the far edge of the village.

We had dinner over at the restaurant that closed at 18:00 hours. I guess people don't go out to dine after 6 PM even on a Saturday in this little town. – Great place though and great people.

The venue was completely made of pinewood inside and out. It had a decent sized stage and was all standing room. The full band got together at sound check and played a full version of JULIE, which is a song from the new album. This is the only time the band would play this on the whole tour. Why I don't know. Also they did PRECIOUS MEMORIES, WINDOW UP ABOVE and JUST TO BE WITH YOU.

The band had to wait around until show time because the hotel was two hours away in Steinkjer. The backstage



room was very small so we used the tour bus as the dressing room.

We all sat in the dark and counted the people coming in to the show. We saw one taxi with a light on top that said #479. The Taxi returned every five minutes with more passengers. We were about 90 minutes from the nearest big town, so it was hard to imagine where he was picking up all the passengers from. It became a game to try and recognize the headlights of #479 in the distance among other cars coming to the show. Each time he passed us heavy with passengers, we would cheer for #479. But the creepy thing was that we could never see a driver. He was always in the shadows, or very short, or was there any driver at all?? Was this the Twilight Zone?

Lots of conversation was spent considering if there were 478 more taxis somewhere in Norway. Norway is very sparsely populated so I doubt they need that many taxis. Just before show time, Cab 479 made its final trip, parked right in front of our bus and a driver came running out to go into the club. We didn't get a good look at him as it was raining.

Showtime: Phil came to the stage and said: "We're here at the eighth annual - We're here on the ocean - the west coast." We were told that they only do a big name Rock n Roll show once a year in this place. Over the stage were concert posters numbering from 1989 to the present featuring artists such as Dave Edmunds, The Leroi Brothers, The Tail Gators, Jim Suhler, and The Refreshments. The crowd acted like it was a once a year gig. They were all different ages, dancing, and very excited to hear live American Music.



In SLIP OF THE TONGUE Keith takes a long solo in the beginning. Phil uses the opportunity to take his shirt off or light up a cigarette. Though a lot of these clubs have a no smoking policy. Phil gets away with it because as he says: "It's part of the act."

This was a memorable show because the crowd was so enthusiastic and it was such an unusual place. But Phil's voice was very hoarse and he couldn't hold notes smoothly at any time during the show. Rick Brown, the soundman, is very skilled at mixing Phil's voice so that any weaknesses don't show.

In the encore, Phil dedicated LONG WHITE CADILLAC to: "This goes out to Cab 479." That prompted me to call the song 'Long White Cab-illac.' Any-



Photo: Billy Davis

way, Phil was hoping to identify the driver of Cab 479, but he never came forward. They played ONE BAD STUD and then the house music came on, but the crowd wouldn't let the Blasters leave. They returned for one more.

Set list: *all your fault, rebound, border radio, dark night, i'm shakin', precious memories, 4-11-44, dry river, red rose, daddy rollin stone, slip of the tongue, boneyard, so long baby goodbye, American music, marie marie, En-core: long white Cadillac, one bad stud, blue shadows. Beer: Dahls Pils and Ringnes.* —Am

—**BlastersNewsletter Contest** — Win a Keith Wyatt autographed Blues Guitar Instructional video. Question: Name 6 Guitar players who have been Blasters members over the years. Correct answerers will be entered into a random drawing. Deadline 5/1/05. Mail answers to: Contest, Po Box 210071, Woodhaven, NY, 11421 or email at Davistb@aol.com

— **Last Issue Blasters Newsletter Contest** — We Have A Winner — Mike Moreau from Montreal Canada won a Dave Alvin Ashgrove tour autographed Poster. Question: Name 3 record labels that have released Dave Alvin albums. Correct answers were: Yep Roc, HighTone, Epic/CBS, Razor & Tie / Sony, Demon (UK)

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SUBSCRIPTION INFO: Publishing 4 issues quarterly. Send \$10 for 4 issues (worldwide). If paying by check, payable to **BILLY DAVIS**. Mail to: **PO Box 210071, Woodhaven N.Y. 11421** e-mail: davistb@aol.com **BACK ISSUE COPIES:** \$2.50 per issue worldwide

