

2025 re-print and expanded edition

AMERICAN MUSIC

The Blaster Newsletter

Issue #6 Mar. '95

THE BLASTERS TOUR THE U.S. for COUNTY FAIR 2000

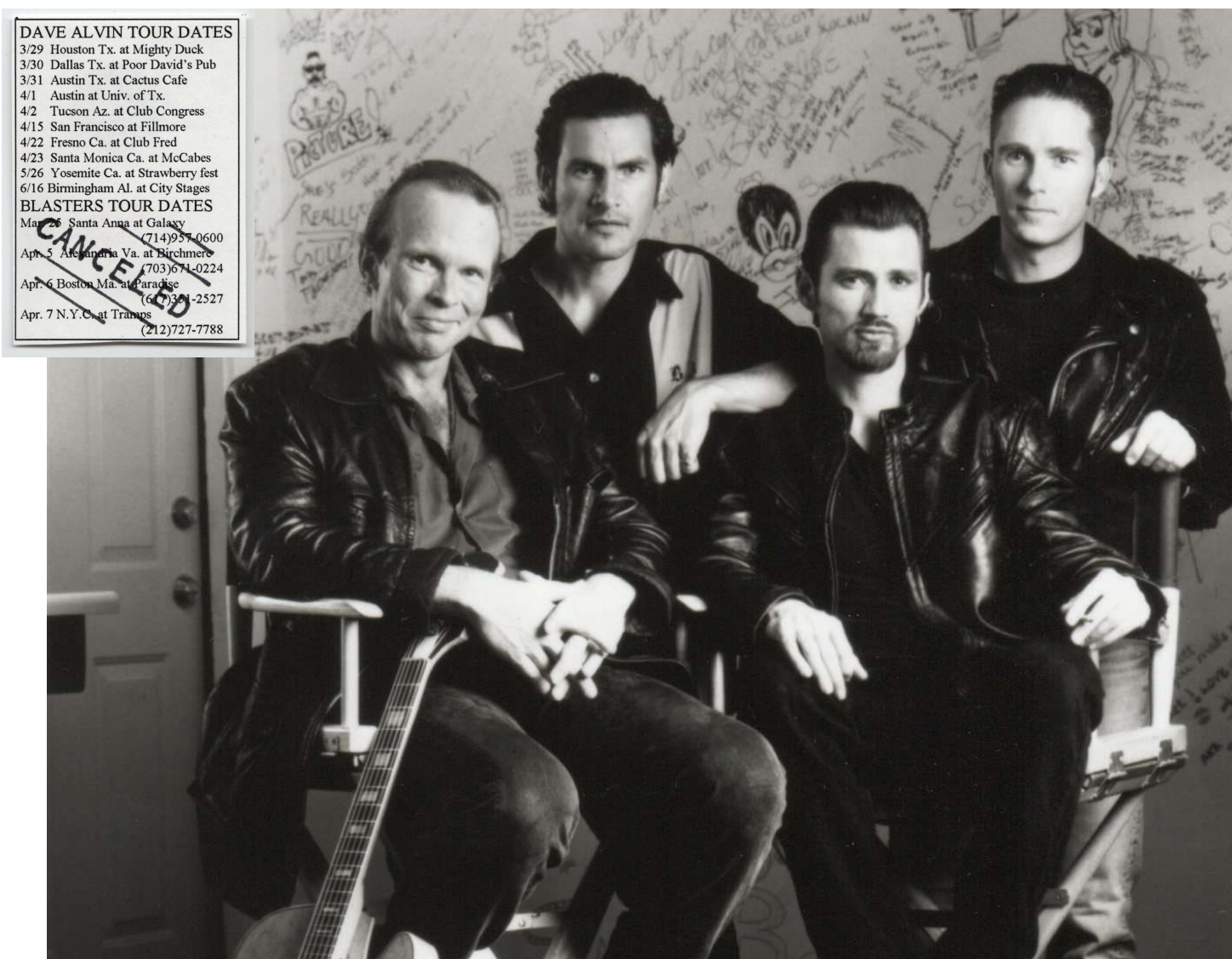
LATEST NEWS: : Phil Alvin's long awaited solo album is out in all the stores. The Blasters have been touring the U.S. in February, March and soon in April. They have done Texas and the south as far east as New Orleans, the mid-west including Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois. The band is touring a couple of weeks at a time, breaking for a week then doing another two weeks again. At the time of printing, the N.Y., Va., and Boston dates have suddenly been postponed. No reason known at this time. You will be updated by postcard if when these dates are rescheduled. Dave Alvin is out on tour with Tom Russell and Peter Case supporting the Merle Haggard tribute album 'Tulare Dust.' This isn't the latest news but Dave Alvin wrote and performed the theme to Jon Stewart's talk show. Listen next time and watch the credits.

DAVE ALVIN TOUR DATES

3/29 Houston Tx. at Mighty Duck
3/30 Dallas Tx. at Poor David's Pub
3/31 Austin Tx. at Cactus Cafe
4/1 Austin at Univ. of Tx.
4/2 Tucson Az. at Club Congress
4/15 San Francisco at Fillmore
4/22 Fresno Ca. at Club Fred
4/23 Santa Monica Ca. at McCabes
5/26 Yosemite Ca. at Strawberry fest
6/16 Birmingham Al. at City Stages

BLASTERS TOUR DATES

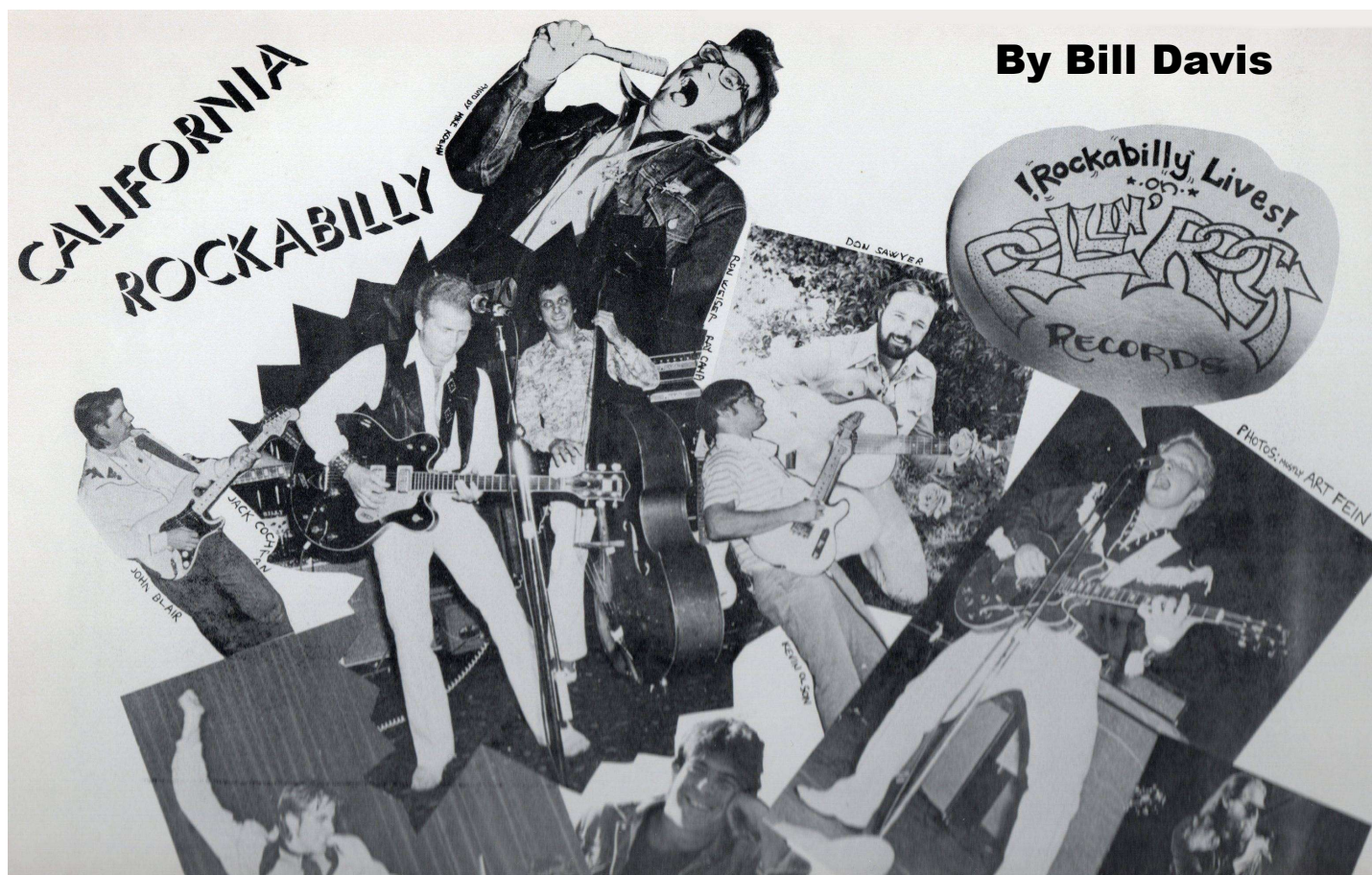
Mar. 26 Santa Anna at Galaxy
(714)957-0600
Apr. 5 Alexandria Va. at Birchmere
(703)671-0224
Apr. 6 Boston Ma. at Paradise
(617)334-2527
Apr. 7 N.Y.C. at Tramps
(212)727-7788



The ROCKIN' RONNY WEISER INTERVIEW

Rockin Ronny Weiser is a Sam Phillips type visionary who as a fan craved for original Rockabilly and Rock n Roll in the 1970's but couldn't find it in mainstream pop music. He started his own record company acting as owner, producer, engineer, promoter, sometimes distributor, and publisher. He called his label Rollin Rock records and recorded only authentic Rock n Roll by original 1950's artist's and new artist's who could reproduce the old sounds.

He recorded original Rockabillies Ray Campi, Mac Curtis, and Johnny Carroll, but his most famous album release came in 1980 with newcomers the Blasters. The debut album 'American Music' has become a classic and a very rare collectible. In this interview conducted On March 16 1995 he talked about the history of Rollin Rock, The Blaster sessions, and the future of Rollin Rock. Through the interview I found him to be a very opinionated man in business and politics. Sometimes he couldn't remember all the facts, after all its been about 23 years since he started Rollin Rock. But talk to him about music and the conversation goes on for hours. He's great for American Music and is still Rockin, so don't stand in his way.



AMERICAN MUSIC: How did Rollin' Rock records get its start?

RONNY WEISER: It started through the magazine for Rollin' Rock and the reason it was called Rollin' Rock was a spoof on Rolling Stone. Rolling Stone claimed to be the anti-culture or anti-establishment when in re-

ality they represented the interests of billionaire hippie type bands who were selling trillions of records and making billions of dollars just like they still do today. So Rollin' Rock was the under-under ground and basically it was an attack on all the hippie groups and the drug culture and all that hypocritical 60's crap

that Rolling Stone was promoting. Instead, I was promoting the original American traditional Music; Rock 'n Roll, Rhythm and Blues, Rockabilly and anything that was authentic American. So it was a cultural clash, the 50's against the 60's, America against a degradation and a perversion of American ideas. Those guys in the 60's said "Do your own thing," but their parents paid their bills, expensive college tuition and a car and everything else. Here were Blues singers and Rockabilly singers singing for thirty dollars a night and they glorified America, they loved America, they loved to get a nice big Cadillac car and a big house while the billionaire hippies that were making millions of dollars promoted by the big record companies, they were pissing on America.

AM: How were the sales of Rollin Rock records in the U.S. as opposed to Europe?

RW: Almost nothing in the U.S. It was a real struggle. I would go to Chuck Berry concerts and Little Richard concerts and hand out fliers and give away Rollin' Rock for free and pretty soon we collected a dozen or half dozen hard core aficionados and American rebels that were supporting Rock 'n Roll. So it was mostly Europe.

AM: Your recording studio was in your living room wasn't it?

RW: In the living room first, then the garage. Actually it wasn't even a living room it was like a den.

AM: What type of recording equipment was used?

RW: I started off with an AKAI recorder, a \$160 recorder. That was a two-track. Then we quickly moved to a four-track using the small tape, regular quarter inch tape. That's where a lot of Rollin' Rock material got recorded mixed down on the

AKAI. Then later we moved to an eight track, that was half-inch tape and that was a Tascam TX. Now they're being mixed down on a Technics, which is actually a semi-professional tape machine. When you listen to some of these records, some of the ones that were recorded on cheap equipment sound just as good. So I don't know, equipment goes only so far.

AM: How did you hook up with the Blasters?

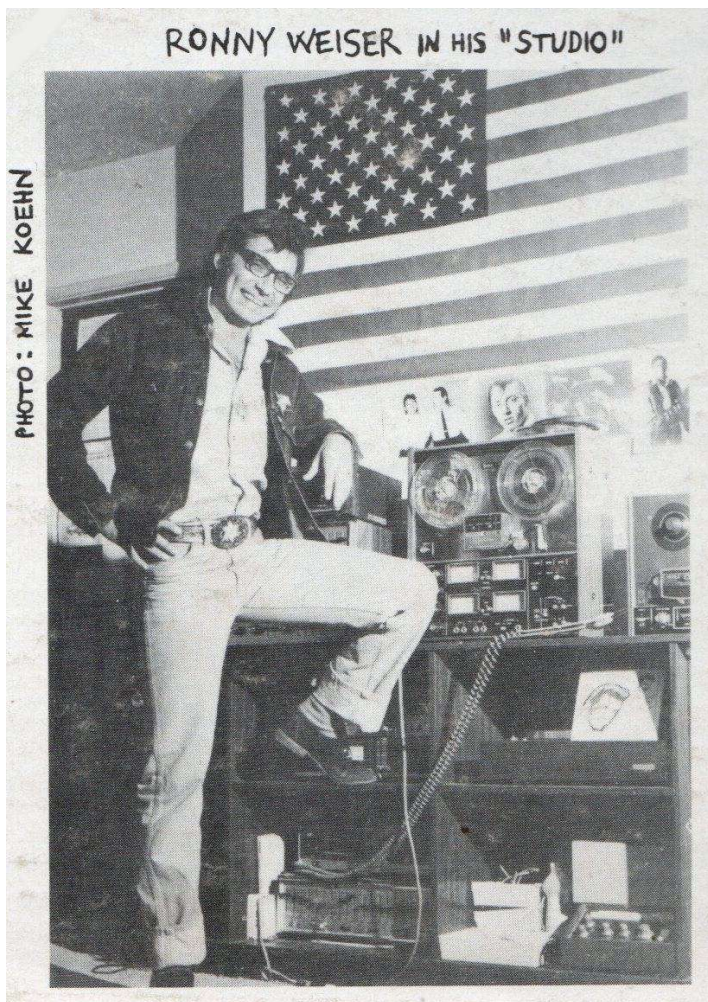
RW: Basically with artists, I either look for them or they look for me. With Campi and Jack Cochran, I looked for them. When it came to the Blasters, they looked for me. They had heard there was an American Rockabilly label and they had seen Ray Campi, but at that time Rollin Rock was a cult thing already even in the states and so it wasn't a big deal for the Blasters to say, "Let's go and see this guy and play him a tape." And that was it, I didn't need much convincing. A couple of weeks later they walked into the studio, in the garage and bingo.

AM: You weren't recording in the den at this point?

RW: It was the garage. They walked in the



Dave Alvin preparing the tape to bring to Rockin' Ronnie



garage. We turned on the tape recorders and the mikes and my feeling basically was the less production, the better it is in this case. Not in all cases. In some cases you have to kick these guys in the balls and say, "Hey wake up, get the lead out. This is not country music, this isn't Nashville. Let's Go." And they'll say, "I haven't done this in twenty years." and I'll say, "Well were doing it now, ain't we! So let's rock!" Like for instance Ray Campi. He was a little mellow in the beginning, but he woke up real quick.

AM: How soon would you release a record after recording it?

RW: If you look at the date on the album, you can figure three months earlier it was recorded. It (recording) only took like a week or so, there were no lags as far as the release date and the recording. We didn't stall.

AM: The Blasters in interviews have said the

sessions went two days?

RW: That could be close. Two days to basically record and then they had to be mixed down and I'm sure that took a week or two.

AM: Did you mix down yourself?

RW: I think Phil (Alvin) was around too, and maybe Dave.

AM: Who picked the album songs?

RW: As far as the Blasters songs it was a hundred percent them. If you asked me about another artist I would say I picked them. There might have been two or three songs extra and I would say, "I like this one better, let's leave that one off." But that's as far as it went.

AM: I've heard numerous times that there were seven songs left off the 15 song album. In a recent issue of American music I interviewed Dave Alvin and he could only name five of the unreleased tracks. How many were there?

RW: I'm more inclined to think there were four or five, but its possible there might be more. They were basically blues and rockabilly classic songs. I don't think any were originals.

AM: Was the album cut live and were there any overdubs?

RW: It was recorded on eight-track live. But not all tracks were used maybe six or five. I don't know if the drums had one mike or two, I guess depending on the mood. And then if they had to have back ground voices, which most of them, I think they didn't have.

AM: Was this the first Rollin' Rock album that the bassist didn't use an upright bass?

RW: Yes, that was one of the very few. I still think though the sound is better on the upright?

AM: Did you try to push Johnny Bazz in that direction?

RW: No, because you don't need to have every act doing the same thing with the same instrument. I like better an upright bass no

matter what music. It just sounds so much better, but the Blasters had a sound and it worked great and so I didn't worry about it.

AM: How many copies of American Music were pressed?

RW: The first thousand were pressed and maybe another 500.

AM: The Blasters have claimed 4-5 thousand were pressed?

RW: They received a statement from me as far as how many were sold and what ever the statement had printed in it is accurate down to one or two percent. Maybe your right, I doubt 4000, but maybe there could have been a second or third pressing. A third pressing I doubt. Maybe it was two thousand. I don't want to say anything that is inaccurate.

AM: After the release of American Music, the Blasters got on a big tour with Queen. Did it help their sales?

RW: No. Even Sha Na Na was very popular on TV and they put out an album by Screamin Scott Simon. It didn't matter. I don't know how it works. I think its 80% politics.

AM: I've seen a bootleg copy of American Music. Have you heard of any?

RW: No, I don't know, I hear rumors but I've never seen one. There's actually several boot-

legs of Rollin' Rock records in europe of Ray Campi, Mac Curtis, there is quite a few over there. I've seen them advertised and listed. I've had people call me from Rollin' Rock records Switzerland, he knows more about Rollin' Rock than I do, and he's got them.

AM: After American Music was released, was a follow up Blaster record talked about?

RW: Yeah, but the problem was Phil. Phil is also the problem why there are bootleg Blaster records, if he would have allowed me to repress them and sell more. I don't know if anyone can explain Phil's ideology to you, or to me, or to anybody. He has his own ways. All the other Blasters wanted to have the record repressed, they loved it and so does everybody else. But Phil wanted more control. Phil got involved with his Century city lawyers and I don't have time for that kind of activity. I'm a one man operation, I have to put on twenty different heads a day and I don't have time for those types of games, to negotiate the royalties up 1% and then he wanted more back on the publishing, Forget it

AM: So this is why we will never see a re-release of it?

RW: Exactly that's the reason. I don't know if you know, but there were two Blaster tracks

on the Rhino CD and some how Phil had his manager call and his lawyers and so I said on the phone (to Phil), 'OK look I'm not going to talk about the publishing, if you want to talk about that, forget it, I'm hanging up right now. If you are willing to talk about the single record, fine. What ever arrangement you want, I don't care. We will let Rhino put it out on that CD.' So after, it happened. But after that Phil came over and we were going to do a whole Rollin' Rock deal. Basically I was going to be one out of six guys. I'm not one



the **BLASTERS**





of six guys, I went through the expense of putting this record out, I am the producer and the record company owner of this record. So we wasted the afternoon, but had a few laughs of course, and then he drove back to Downey. When I don't talk about business and politics, I get along real well with Phil, I like him a lot.

AM: Its a shame everyone can't get together on this because from the fans point of view we just love the music?

RW: I love the music too, but what can you do?

AM: What happened in the mid eighties when Rollin Rock slowed down?

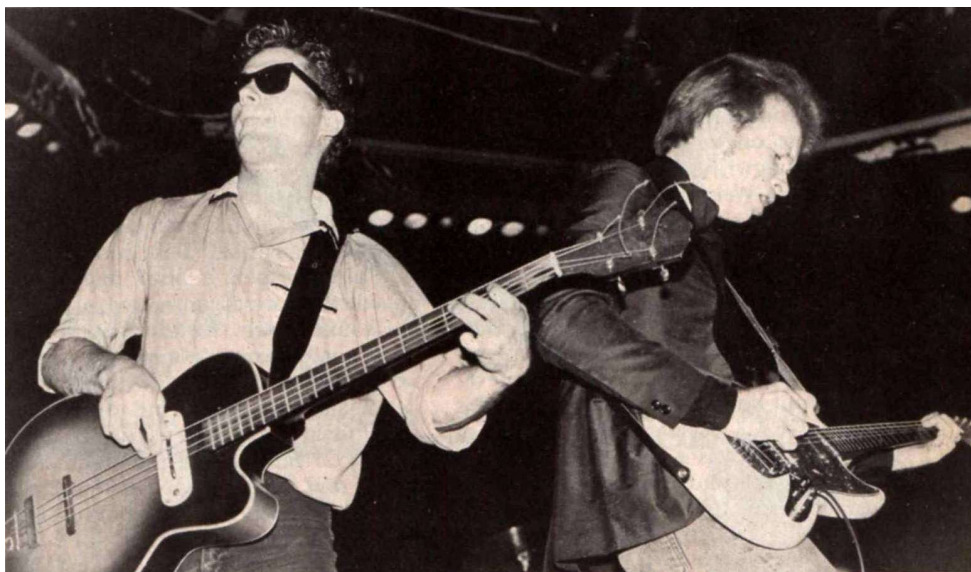
RW: We started hitting reality. I got married, started having kids. We're talking about 1987 and so Rollin' Rock Records would not bring in enough income for

three or four people. So I started learning to trade commodities. First I did research on playing the horse races. I still run Rollin' Rock Records. There have been a couple releases but no new recordings. From my point of view, almost anything that I have recorded has not gotten a wide enough audience yet to have to worry about too many.

AM: What can we expect from you and Rollin Rock in the future?

RW: I would like to do new recordings and I'm sure I will. What I'll call a new album, maybe I won't call it that but I'll use this slogan, '100% Cowboy Rock 'n Roll from the Wild Wild West. I'll have that slogan somewhere in there. I hope nobody will make the comment, 'Weiser's moving away from Rockabilly, he should do straight Rock 'n Roll,' that's such crap! It's all the same. It's like for example one band I recorded, and I'm not going to mention their name, and it's not the Blasters by the way. About three years later, I talked to the leader of the band and he said, "Were moving to rhythm and blues, were mature." I said, 'What the f--- is that? Is that supposed to say your above Rockabilly?' There is no such thing as rhythm and blues or Rockabilly, its just like you say - American Music.

—Am



The Blasters opening for Queen

State of the Blasters Today - A Brief Overview

Have the Blasters remained active in the years since their early eighties popularity? Why did Dave Alvin leave the band? Who has played in the band the last ten years? These are the most commonly asked questions of American Music since the Blasters recent return to notoriety.

By Billy Davis

With the release of Phil Alvin's new CD 'County Fair 2000,' many Blaster enthusiasts are coming out of the woodwork wondering what their favorite band has been up to for the last ten years. Past issues of this newsletter have explained that, but here it is in one package. Let's pick it up in 1985 after the Blasters had released five albums in five years.

You probably last remember the Blasters on their 1985 tour in support of the 'Hard Line' album. The band toured the world, made numerous television appearances, appeared on covers of rock magazines, had a hit single on the radio, and even made a Budweiser commercial. The first of many lineup changes occurred at the end of that extensive Hard Line tour of the U.S. It was November of 1985 in Boston and pianist Gene Taylor had played his last show with the Blasters. The band's notorious rigorous touring was a habit Gene felt it was time to break. The band took a much needed rest over the 85-86 holiday season. Meanwhile, Phil and Dave Alvin started working with Nick Lowe as producer on the Blasters' next album. They worked on the song '4th of July' with Phil of course singing vocals. Phil didn't hit it off with Lowe, he never believed in producers anyway, but Dave on the other hand got along well with his new producer and the first seed to go solo was planted when Lowe suggested Dave try vocals on '4th of July,' after Phil was being difficult and didn't like Dave's lyrics. These sessions remain unreleased.

Soon after, Dave filled in on guitar for three weeks in 'X' for the recently departed Billy Zoom. In April of 1986, Dave Alvin left the Blasters officially to join X. Dave cites the reason of not being able to write songs anymore that the meaning of the song could be related to by he and Phil, and it was just time for a change. Phil Alvin at the time was upset that Dave didn't leave to at least do his own thing. Instead, in Phil's opinion Dave was stepping backward into a band that already had a dominant songwriter. Within the year, Dave would be offered a solo record deal by Demon Records and would leave 'X' in same sudden and shocking manner that the Blasters had experienced.

The Blasters went on and recruited highly acclaimed blues guitarist Michael Mann alias



Billy Zoom and Phil



‘Hollywood Fats.’ Phil didn’t want to take the time off to make a new record so he went right out on the road, so the public didn’t think that with the loss of their songwriter, they had disbanded. They toured most of 1986. Phil Alvin had recorded a solo album in late 1985 called ‘Unsung Stories’ which was originally intended as extra promotion for the Blasters. Here it became a valuable tool to promote the new Blasters.

By December of ‘86 the band was planning their next album when Hollywood Fats suddenly died, victim of the excessive lifestyle. The band had touring

commitments in Europe and the southern U.S. and needed an immediate replacement. Only one person knew their set, Dave Alvin. Dave finished out the tour to help out the Blasters into 1987.

In the summer of 1987 the Blasters took former ‘X’ guitarist Billy Zoom with them on a two week European tour. Zoom was another one who disliked touring and upon his return to the States, retired from music completely.

From this point on, the band took a lot of time off and resigned themselves to the fact that they would only tour and not put out records. Phil was disenchanted with record companies and found they could make more money touring. Phil Alvin spent most of his time pursuing a mathematical thesis ‘Individuals and the Anti-Foundational Axiom’ while attending U.C.L.A. In his time off the Blasters would do small tours of Europe and the western U.S.. First though, they needed a new guitarist.

In August of ‘87, the band added Greg ‘Smokey’ Hormel, a local guitar player who had played in a few side projects with Blaster drummer Bill Bateman. Originally Smoky was going to audition for the Blasters at Bill Bateman’s recommendation back in ‘87, but Billy Zoom got the job because he was already a big name with ‘X.’ So between ‘88 and ‘93 the band continued these small tours.

In 1990 Warner Bros. decided to release a CD compilation of the Blasters and let the band pick the songs. All of the Blaster albums were out of print, and still are today, so this would be the only Blasters recordings available in stores. The collection was surprisingly appealing to all their fans, all their popular songs and hits and previously unreleased tracks were included.

In the summer of 1991, pianist Gene Taylor rejoined the Blasters for some summer dates in the U.S. and in November tour of Europe. This was an exceptional tour with the band at their best with both Lee Allen and Taylor. The band played a mix of old songs, a few new songs, and some cover songs new to the Blasters set list. Gene Taylor continued to play with the band until late in 1992 when he left to pursue other projects such as playing in Kim Wilson’s band, and session work for the James Harman band.

In February 1993, Phil Alvin had successfully completed his mathematical thesis and gained much satisfaction when it was recognized by the top theorists in the field. This left the door open for Phil and the Blasters to make a full time return to music. First some personnel changes

were made.

Bill Bateman had formed a Blues band called the Red Devils which had divided his time with the Blasters. With the increasing activity of the Blasters now, he would have to choose one or the other. It was a tough decision, but with the thought that the Blasters could again go on hiatus while Phil fulfills his mathematical interests, Bill figured to keep steady work he would stay with the Red Devils. An old Downey friend of the band was chosen as a replacement named Dave Carroll. He had played on Phil Alvin's first solo album in '86. The next loss would be Greg Hornel who was doing a lot of work local to Los Angeles and also had an illness in the family that he was caring for. All these reasons kept him from touring.



In the spring of 1993 the Blasters landed the multi-talented James Intveld. As a lead guitarist who was also a great singer. He can be heard doing the vocals for Johnny Depp in the movie 'Crybaby.'. He is also a bass player previously in Rosie Flores' band and on Dave Alvin's King Of California album. And maybe he would be the songwriting lead guitarist that the Blasters have missed since Dave Alvin left.

James Intveld fit right in when he joined in a jam at one of Phil's solo gigs. Phil Alvin remembers that night, "James Intveld, a long time friend of mine, came down and played lead guitar with me one night. We were both a little drunk and I heard James, and James wasn't playing these silly little Rockabilly licks in any way! No. James was sittin' right down hard on like Otis Rush and really playing good American guitar! I thought, 'God, man! This is a great lead guitarist. What the hell do all these people have him playing bass for. So I had him come down to one rehearsal and that was it. He was just so damn good.'"


For years Phil and the Blasters had been offered record deals but declined, this time they accepted a deal from a new company, a division of Sony/CBS to do a six song EP. The band began gathering original material when in mid 1993 Phil was offered the opportunity to do a solo album for HighTone Records. With the prospect of the major label Sony/CBS album taking a while to be released, Phil figured he could do the solo album first. An independent label like HighTone can get an album out after the recording and mixing is done in eight weeks. Then when the touring and promotion on the solo album runs out, the Blasters would release their CD and do it all over again.

Phil Alvin, ever the perfectionist took ten months to finish recording the solo album causing concern at HighTone records. In the course of recording Dave Carroll was replaced on drums by Jerry Angel. Angel played in Dave Alvin's Allnighters band in 1987, Carole King's band, The Divinyls, with Brian Setzer, and Dwight Yoakam. He has done numerous session work with these and other artists. He's definitely an accomplished drummer.

In the summer of 1994 the Blasters played often on the west coast in between work on the

solo album. In June and July they did a tour of select cities in Europe playing from England to Norway trying out the new material. By November of 1994 County Fair 2000 had been released but not without bad news. Blaster sax player Lee Allen passed away on Oct. 18 at age 68. The legendary musician was one of the greatest in Rock 'n Roll. Another chapter in music history has sadly ended.

With the solo album out, 1995 means touring, touring, and more touring to support it. Watch your town. In the future, we can expect to see the Blaster CD released sometime in 1996 but until then...Have a Blast. —**AM**



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REVIEW: **BOBBY 'FATS' MIZZELL :Beverly Hills Boogie**

Kim CD 501

by **JANNE KURUNSAARI**

The first time I heard of Bobby Mizzell was when Phil Alvin mentioned that when the Blasters need a piano player, they would call him. I got curious, who is this cat? Then I stumbled on this CD at a record shop and it immediately caught my attention. I was more than surprised when I found out Blaster James Intveld produced most of the tracks and played guitar and bass on 'em.

Bobby Mizzell himself is a die hard rock 'n roller who's career started in the 1950's in Jerry Woodward's band and he proves today in the 1990s on these recordings that he still rocks like a teenager. Aside from fronting his own band, he has done other session work, most notably playing on Ricky Nelson's last sessions in 1985. Unfortunately to this day, those recordings remain unreleased.

All of this stuff has been previously released on the California based Kim label between 1986-91, but now for the first time on CD, thanks to Mr. Bo Berglund (editor of a Swedish American Music magazine).

This whole CD is great Rockabilly stuff showing influences from Jerry Lee Lewis to Fats Domino throughout all of Bobby's original songs. Favorites are 'Ghost Town Rock,' 'Rockin' on the Skateboard,' and novelty classics "Rambo Rock," "How Could You Hurt Me," "Moron Rock," and "Go Get a Haircut."

James Intveld's guitar playing shows a lot of familiar influences - Chuck Berry, Don Rich, James Burton, and Dave Alvin. With the exception of James' first single with the Rockin' Shadows called "My Heart Is Achin'," these are the earliest recordings to hear James on lead guitar. So, if you wanna hear what kind of stuff this new Blaster has done with the guitar, this CD is a must to have.

If your visiting the Los Angeles area or you live there but weren't aware, go to see Bobby Mizzell perform at the Tam O' Shanter on Los Felez on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Fellow Compadres James Intveld and Ronny Mack visit the shows quite often.

To Order this CD: TEDDY RECORDS box 55, S-52421 Herrljunga Sweden.



COLLECTING BLASTERS: Phil Alvin made a guest appearance playing harmonica on the new 'Beverly Hillbillies' soundtrack. The song performed by Joe Walsh and Steve Earle is 'Honey Don't.' A various artists CD called 'Just Can't Get Enough...Vol.7' on Rhino Records has the previously released version of 'I'm Shakin.' Phil Alvin's 1986 album 'Unsung Stories' is still available from your local music outlets but only on cassette. In some cases you may have to order it but at least it is still in print. The LP is out of print, but is always available here from *American Music* for \$8 postpaid payable to editor Billy Davis. As for the recent Phil Alvin album on HighTone records, if you have trouble finding it in the rock section in your local record stores, check the blues section. Big chains like Tower records are sometimes stocking it there. I just came across a promo CD for a radio show called 'House of Blues,' which has the Blasters record version of 'American Music.' The shows theme is called American Music and aired on July 2, 1994.

FROM THE EDITOR: Well, postage prices have gone up again and with the 29 cent going to 32 its not enough to require a subscription hike, but where it is really felt is in small packages where there used to be a reasonable rate for third class mail. In 1994, I could send an album or tape third class for only \$1.33 but with the increase that same package now goes for just under \$3. They seem to be eliminating economy mail. I have been able to keep prices low on merchandise so far, but now you may see some increases in shipping.

I've been trying to get these issues out every two months but for issues four and five its been every three months. Sorry. I just bought a house and Wow!, do I have a lot of work to keep me busy. There is a new address but the old address will still be used as an alternate. Anyway, on to the interesting stuff. The complete interview from issue four on James Harman can be found in its entirety in the winter #29 issue of Blue Suede News. It's on the stands for \$4, but available here for American Music subscribers for \$3 postpaid payable to editor Billy Davis.

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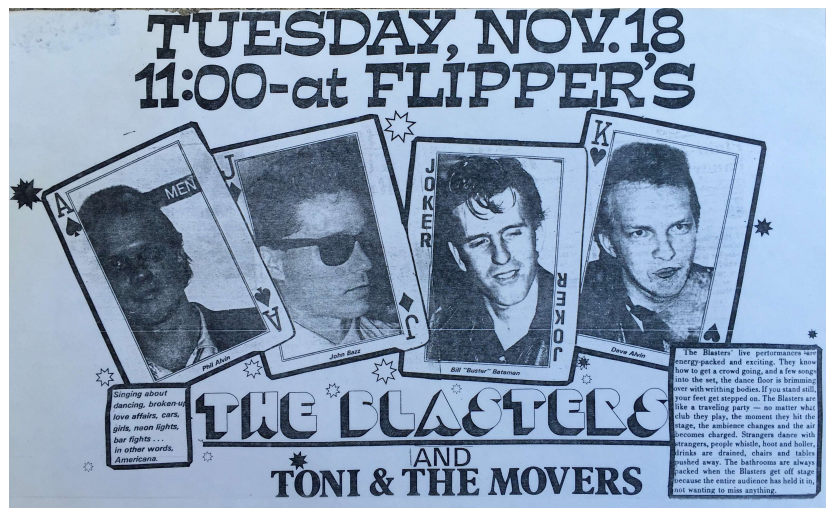
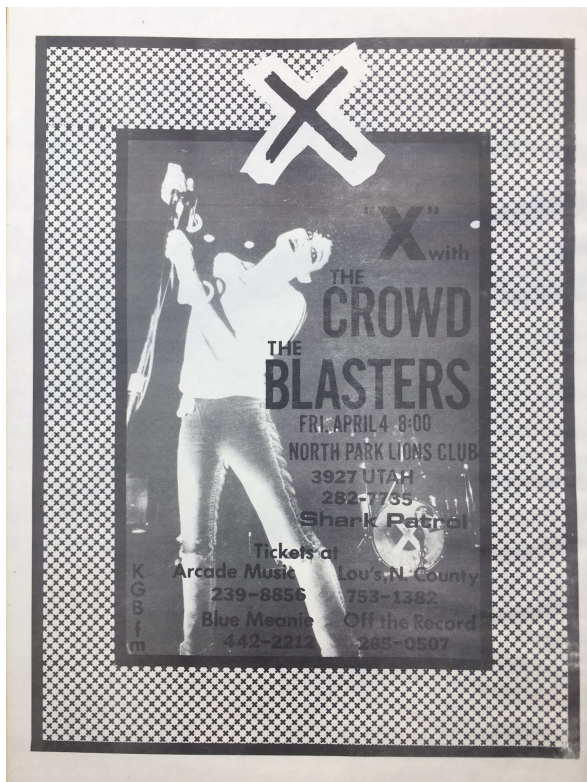
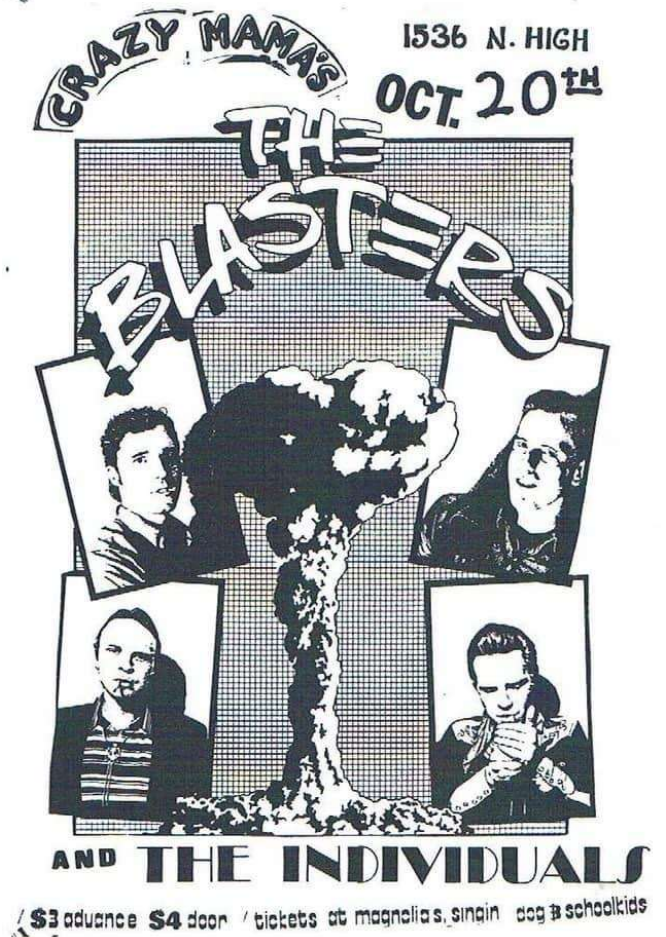
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The Blasters Belly Up Tavern, Solana Beach California 1/21/95
Photos by Barbra Balaban







Ed Boswell showing off a new Blasters shirt design.



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BACK ISSUE COPIES: \$1 per issue in the U.S. Overseas \$2 per issue

- #1. Blastory part 1, James Intveld profile.
- #2. Phil Alvin interview Part 1, Dave Alvin's "Museum" tour review, Faultline Syncopaters profile.
- #3. Phil Alvin interview Part 2, complete Blasters Discography.
- #4. James Harman interview, Blasters 91 Finland tour.
- #5. Lee Allen tribute issue. Dave Alvin interview. Lee Allen profile. Phil Alvin Foothill club review.