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American Music

The Blasters/Dave Alvin newsletter

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Dave & Phil Alvin Set to Release Lost Time CD



In This Issue: Dave Alvin preview of Lost Time, Keith Wyatt's Blasters update, and Los Lobos' Dream In Blue book review.

Latest News: -- On September 18, 2015 Yep Roc Records releases the second Dave Alvin and Phil Alvin album titled Lost Time. -- Desperate Girl the new CD by Christy McWilson, features Dave Alvin. He plays guitar on CHIP ON MY SHOULDER. The album was recorded in 2004, but not released until 2015 and deals with her marital breakup. In the album's liner notes, Christy, a member of the Guilty Women, writes: "The songs, written in the weeks leading up to and during the marriage's demise, were recorded in their full, red-hot splendor. At the time it was so painful, I shelved it and tried to forget about it. I recently rediscovered it and realized I had an amazing portrait of that heightened time in my life." Visit www.christymcwillson.com to buy the album. Dave Alvin plays guitar on It's Everly Time, a collection of Everly Brothers songs recorded by Dead Rock West, the duo of Cindy Wasserman and Frank Drennen. Dave is featured on GONE GONE GONE, (YOU GOT) THE POWER OF LOVE and THE PRICE OF LOVE. -- Marissa Gomez and the Ghosts of Echo Park are nearing completion of their debut album, she reported in a Facebook post on June 23. Dave Alvin plays guitar on the CD. More than \$10,000 was raised to fund the album through an Indiegogo campaign. -- Billy Mize and the Bakersfield Sound, a documentary film about the California singer, has been released on DVD. Dave Alvin, who has recorded Mize's WHO WILL BUY THE WINE, was interviewed for the movie. Visit BillyMizeMovie.com. -- Dave Alvin is planning a 'West of the West train trip' with musical guests for 2016. Dates and the itinerary for the trip have not been finalized. Visit rootsontherails.com for info and updates. -- John Bazz and Bill Bateman of the Blasters appear as members of the Doghouse Lords in Cry Now, a new feature film. Visit Vincen-tandluz.com to see a promotional trailer for the film. The Doghouse Lords released DON'T DRIVE ME AWAY as a single in June. For details, visit DoghouseLords.com/site -- American roots band Cisco & Dewey are putting the finishing touches on their second release due out in January 2016 with Dave Alvin playing lead guitar on 7 songs. -- The HBO show Girls used the Blasters song MARIE MARIE in an episode this past season. -- Dave Alvin: "I've been touring in vans for over 30 years, and since the very first tour I've been making personal van tapes to keep the musicians entertained on the endless drives. These cassette tapes were my way of sharing the music I love and introducing the music to my various band members in hopes of inspiring them in the same way these old songs have inspired me my entire life. Thanks to Spotify, I can now introduce these songs to you as well. As we continue traveling down the road, I'll be adding more songs to this list. So hop in the van with us and come along for the ride." Follow Dave Alvin's Van Tapes on Spotify. -- ~~am~~

A Blasters Update from Keith Wyatt

"It has been a quiet summer in Blaster land. Plans for both a European jaunt and a Southeast US tour with our good buddies 'X' were brewing early in the year, but the European itinerary ultimately failed to materialize and as readers may know, 'X' guitarist Billy Zoom is currently undergoing treatment for a recurrence of cancer (his prognosis is good, but tour plans were put on hold). We completed a brief Midwest jaunt in June followed by the annual Roadshow Revival festival before joining 'X' in early July for Billy's last shows with the band until he's back in action.

As a result, we found ourselves with the summer off for the first time in a number of years - not what we were planning, of course, but it offered a chance to experience summer in full Los Angeles color rather than through

the window of a van somewhere else in the world. Unfortunately, the relaxed atmosphere was upset in mid July by two pieces of bad news: former Blaster road manager Tommy Pacheco suddenly passed away, and soon after that our current road manager Jaime Casillas suffered a mild stroke.

Fortunately, Jaime is on the mend and we're looking forward to seeing him again when our break ends at the end of August with a few SoCal shows before Phil and Dave take off for a Fall tour in support of their new album, and upon their return we'll launch a West coast tour in December that will take us to Seattle and back - tanned, rested, and ready..." — Keith

Lost Time

preview by Dave Alvin

I have to be honest, we were very disappointed to not win a Grammy for Common Ground last year. All props to the great Johnny Winter, but as soon as we didn't win, I formulated an idea: "Well, damn it. Let's make another album right away." That was extra impetus. But I was already thinking that even though Phil's health has gotten much better, you never know how long you've got in this life. It's what I wrote in the liner notes to the new album. So, we got off the road and made a record right away.

I started with the idea that Phil is singing better than ever, so let's play to his strengths and do an album of what we're good at. After doing the Big Bill Broonzy tribute album, everyone asked who we would tribute next. Big Joe Turner was an obvious choice, because we've stated so many times about how much of an influence he was on us. But I didn't wanna do the same thing again. So instead, we thought of songs we always wanted to do.

We did four Big Joe Turner songs, including CHERRY RED, which I really like. The song MISTER KICKS opens the record and is a song we've loved since we were kids. With all the stuff that Phil has gone through, his voice has only gotten better. His harmonica playing has been great. He doesn't really want to play harmonica as much, but I've been forcing him because it's been so good.

The album has a very loose sound. It's so much easier when you don't have to write the damn songs (laughs). There are things on this record that sound to me like the Blasters, things that don't . . . it's just all over the place. Some of it has the best vocals Phil has ever done, in my opinion. I'm real happy we've documented that.

Basically we have all the musicians who were on Common Ground back again. Two songs have Gene Taylor, Bob Glaub and Don Heffington on them. Those were recorded back in February, 2015, when Gene was in town. Then in April, we went in the studio

with The Guilty Ones — Lisa, Brad and Chris Miller — and cut 10 songs in a week. Gene wasn't available, so I used Wyman Reese on 3 songs, who was Gaffney's keyboard player in the Cold Hard Facts. I also used David Witham, who was George Benson's keyboard player; he's on three songs. It was cool to have something different with David's jazzy feel.

The biggest difference between Lost Time and Common Ground is that this has a lot of loud guitars between me and Chris Miller. Phil plays acoustic, so the record is more like our live show — in a way. We'll do plenty of touring, and we'll head overseas next year. There will be a video for WORLD IN A BAD CONDITION. That will be part of a documentary being made about us by film maker Joe Murray. Did I mention touring (laughs)?

‘Lost Time’ Liner Notes -- Dave Alvin

"Lost time is not found again." It's one of those old sayings we accept as some sort of profound truth. Each of us can look back at our lives and regret time we've wasted or opportunities we missed or different roads we could have taken. Old sayings, though, aren't necessarily scientific truths. Every now and then, like man made laws, old sayings can be bent, broken or disregarded. Sometimes Fate, or God or the Universe or whatever you want to call it, gives you a rare chance to prove an old saying is wrong.

I had the chance to do just that last year when my brother and I recorded an album of songs written by one of our heroes, bluesman Big Bill Broonzy. After 30 years of not making music together regularly, we reunited after my brother's close brush with mortality and cut the album Common Ground. We spent the following months touring the world rediscovering how much fun it is bashing our guitars, playing the music we love with each other. We dug it so much we decided to do it again because, well, as another old saying goes, "Life is short."

On this album though, instead of focusing on one hero, we've chosen songs we've loved since we were kids that were written or sung by different artists who've had a lasting impact on us. The accent is again on the Blues.

All of these artists were masters of this transcendental form of American Music and they sang their blues in various styles from the profane to the sacred. From the iconic folk ballads of Leadbelly and the tough R+B of James Brown to Blind Boy Fuller's salacious swagger and Oscar Brown Jr's sly hep cat wordplay to Willie Dixon's playful, yet piercing couplets and the sadly undervalued genius of Leroy Carr to, finally, the sanctified blues of Thomas A. Dorsey (who reformed himself from bawdy, barrelhouse pianist Georgia Tom to became the prolific songwriting "Father Of Gospel Music").

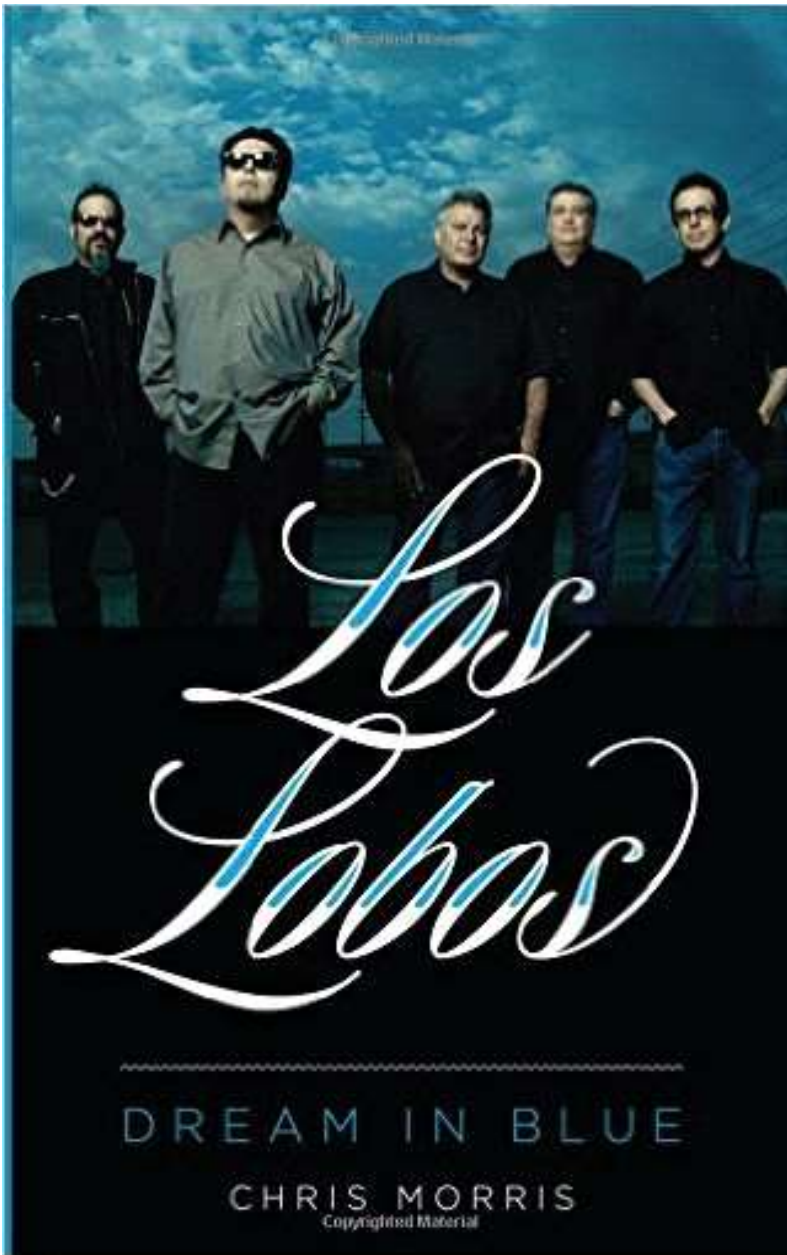
There is one artist, however, that we pay tribute to on this album who holds a very special place in my brother's heart and mine: the legendary blues shouter Big Joe Turner. Phil and I were barely teenagers when we were blessed to become friends with and be mentored by the decades older, larger than life Mr. Turner. We remained friends with him the rest of his life and we remain Big Joe's humble students to this day. In his memory we lovingly cut 4 of his songs for this record and I proudly believe not many other singers today can do Big Joe justice like my brother Phil can.

We tried our best to honor all these magnificent musicians, songwriters and singers as well as expose them to new listeners and perhaps raise some ghosts up from their graves for a minute or two. And, hopefully, my brother and I have also again found some damn lost time. - Dave Alvin, May 2015

Los Lobos: Dream In Blue

A book by Chris Morris

reviewed by Tom Wilk



The Blasters and Los Lobos both rose through the ranks of the Los Angeles music scene in the early 1980s. The Blasters, who grew up in Downey, Calif., and Los Lobos, who hailed from the East Side of Los Angeles, were separated by just a few miles geographically while finding common ground musically.

The groups shared a label (Slash Records), as well as concert stages, recording studios, the occasional songwriting credits, and even a band member (saxophonist Steve Berlin) for a short time. It's a musical and personal friendship that's still going strong midway through the second decade of the 21st century.

It's among the stories long-time music writer Chris Morris tells in Los Lobos: Dream in Blue (University of Texas Press: \$22.95), a comprehensively researched and well-written biography of the band to be re-

leased in September 2015. The book traces the band's rise from an acoustic act in the 1970s specializing in traditional Mexican and Central American folk songs to international hit makers (LA BAMBA and the accompanying soundtrack album in 1987) to a well-respected group that effortlessly blends genres on such albums as 1992's Kiko and 2006's The Town and the City. "I've known the guys in both bands for more than 30 years," says Morris, a Chicago native who moved to Los Angeles in 1977 and has followed and written about the city's vibrant music scene ever since for a



Author Chris Morris

variety of publications. He wrote the liner notes for The Blasters Collection in 1990 and contributed notes for El Cancionero Mas y Mas, a Los Lobos box set in 2000, and Wolf Tracks, a single-CD compilation, in 2006.

His book is particularly strong on the band's origins in the early 1970s. Morris tracked down Frank Gonzalez, a charter member of the group who left the band in the mid-1970s, and sheds new light on its formation. "That's my favorite part of the story," Morris says.

With the release of the American Music album in 1980, a mix of classic rockabilly and blues and Dave Alvin originals, the Blasters began to attract the attention of other Los Angeles groups, including Los

Lobos. "When we discovered the Blasters," Los Lobos guitarist/drummer Louie Perez told Morris, "we said 'Wow, here is a scene that we might fit into.'"

Perez and guitarist/vocalist David Hidalgo gave a demo tape of Los Lobos songs to Phil Alvin after a 1981 show by the Blasters. Impressed by what they heard, the Blasters invited Los Lobos to open for them at the Whisky a Go Go in Los Angeles on Jan. 24, 1982. That served as a springboard for the band and would lead to their signing with Slash Records. The Alvin brothers lobbied heavily on the group's behalf with their label.

"The Blasters' existence gave the Lobos faith that a fusion of roots elements could draw an audience on the punk scene," Morris says in looking back at the Blasters' importance on the band's development. Los Lobos won a Grammy for Best Mexican-American recording in 1984 for ANSELMA, a song featured on ...and a time to dance, the debut release on Slash.

As a songwriter, Dave Alvin served as a role model of sorts for Los Lobos, with such story songs as BUS STATION and LONG WHITE CADILLAC that rose above the norm and reflected his poetic sensibilities.

"Dave's writing was a big influence on us," Hidalgo told Morris. "What we loved about Dave's writing is that it was so clean and to-the-point," Hidalgo observed. "His style was never too flowery. It was always right."

"The Blasters influenced any L.A. group working the roots-punk terrain," says Morris, pointing to such bands as Lone Justice, Rank and File, and Blood on the Saddle as examples.

It was Dave Alvin who told the band they needed an anthem and Hi-

dalgo and Perez responded with WILL THE WOLF SURVIVE? Playing off the band's name (Los Lobos is Spanish for the Wolves), the song remains a mainstay in their concert sets today.

From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, members of the Blasters and Los Lobos came together in the recording studio. Hidalgo played mandolin on LITTLE HONEY and accordion on HEY GIRL on Hard Line, the original Blasters' final studio album.

When Dave Alvin left the Blasters to pursue a solo career, he chose Berlin to serve as a co-producer of Romeo's Escape, his first studio album. Berlin also plays saxophone on the album. Hidalgo contributes eight-string guitar and backing vocals on FOURTH OF JULY, eight-string guitar on FAR AWAY and violin on BROTHER ON THE LINE.

On Blue Blvd, Dave's 1991 studio album, Hidalgo contributes background vocals on WHY DID SHE STAY WITH HIM. The soundtrack to Border Radio, the 1987 independent feature film, is probably the closest to a collaboration between the Blasters and Los Lobos. Dave Alvin and Steve Berlin co-wrote four songs, all instrumentals, for the soundtrack album.

The highlights of the album are two versions of MI VIDA LOCA, Spanish for "My Crazy Life." It's a Dave Alvin original. The first version is called MI VIDA LOCA (ACOUSTIC) and is built around a lilting guitar figure that recalls some of the traditional Mexican music played by Los Lobos.

MI VIDA LOCA (BORDER RADIO THEME) is played in its entirety at the end of the movie and over the closing credits. It's also the final song on the soundtrack album. It's a driving, electric instrumental. The song sounds like a merger of the Blasters and Los Lobos with the former's rhythm section (bassist John Bazz and drummer Bill Bateman) and lead guitarist (Alvin) and the latter's accordionist (Hidalgo) and saxophonist (Berlin).

In 2004, Hidalgo, Perez and Dave Alvin collaborated on SOMEWHERE IN TIME, a song that appeared on The Ride by Los Lobos and Ashgrove by Al-



Los Lobos with Phil Alvin

Photo by Joel Aparicio



Dave Alvin and Cesar Rosas

"Like Los Lobos, who played at my first wedding in 1983, Phil and Dave were drafted into similar service: They played the reception when I remarried in 1993," he says. "Marriages don't last, but the bands are always good." -- ~~AM~~

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vin. He also contributed vocals on the Los Lobos version. Los Lobos has occasionally performed MARIE MARIE in its concerts and released a version of the classic Blasters' song on Ride This, a seven-song EP, in 2005. Dave Alvin recorded the Los Lobos song DOWN ON THE RIVERBED on West of the West, his 2006 CD.

Los Lobos, Dave Alvin, and Phil Alvin have shared stages or performed together in recent years, including Cinco de Mayo shows and "Brotherly Love," a benefit in January 2013 to help Phil pay off his medical bills.

Morris continues to follow Los Lobos and members of the Blasters. By coincidence, Los Lobos (Gates of Gold) and Dave and Phil Alvin (Lost Time) will be releasing new albums within a week of each other in September. Morris also holds the singular distinction of having Los Lobos and Dave and Phil Alvin perform at his two wedding receptions.

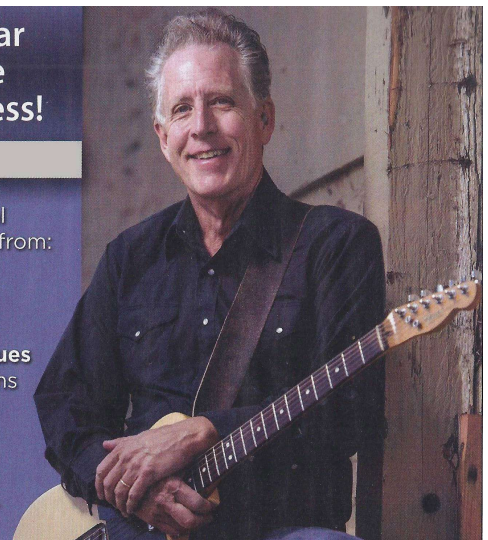
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Dave Alvin's Facebook Diary November 2013 to September 2014



Dave Alvin has been very active on facebook throughout 2013 posting photos and videos of his latest adventures. It's fascinating to read this public diary of his career. Here are a select few entries between November of 2013 and September 2014.

11-27-13 -- Here is a few shattered, rearranged and stunning seconds from the 1969 Forum concert by Jimi Hendrix. I was 13 years old when I attended this show with my pal, Joe Cencak, as my patient and understanding mom waited out in the car. It was the second time I'd seen Mr Hendrix that year and, needless to say, nothing has ever been the same since. Happy Birthday Mr. Hendrix. Thanks for stopping by this beat up, beautiful old planet for a while.

12-3-13 — Been away lately from Facebook, and many other things, working hard in the recording studio on a new album that should be released this coming June. More info on that soon. I spent part



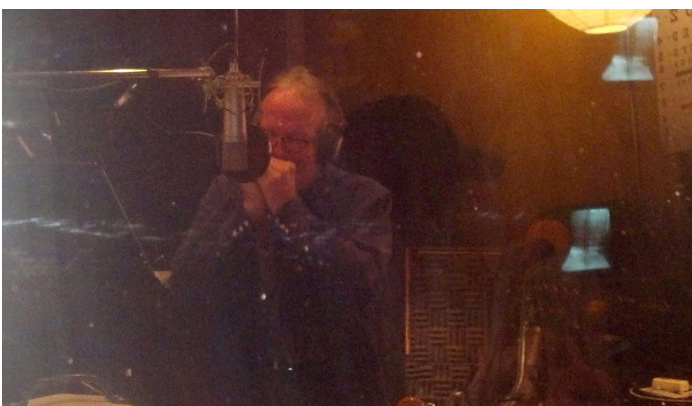
of today playing some guitar on a couple songs by the great, smokey, jazzy songbird Marissa Gomez and then I took a quick hike by the river as the afternoon storm clouds

rolled in. As my old man used to say, "All in all, it ain't such a bad life."

12-26-13 — Hoping that all of you had a beautiful and relatively stress free Christmas (or whatever you celebrate) surrounded by those you love, either in person or in spirit. Me? I celebrated the official homecoming of my stolen baritone guitar where she was reunited with her family of musical noise-makers. A kind stranger rescued her from a Tenderloin pawnshop and then tracked me down and returned her to me a year after she was stolen. Sometimes it's the little things that give you a little faith to get through this insane world. Happy Holidays to all of you.

12-27-13 — My Twin Reverb amplifier blew up at soundcheck for tonight's Gene Taylor Blues Band show at The Rhythm Room in Phoenix. Fortunately I brought another Twin but, Hell, it could blow up too. Hopefully it will survive tonight's show as well as tomorrow's show at The Boondocks in Tucson and our Sunday night show in San Diego at The Casbah. Hope some of you folks can make it out to one of these gigs with Gene. I may need to ask one of you if you have an damn amp I can borrow.

12-30-13 — My dear pal, critically acclaimed novelist and road manager, Danny Bland, snapped this photo (right) of me yesterday out in front of a beat up old adobe bar in Tucson. Sadly, it shut down. I don't think they named the joint after my song, but there is a great bar in Rochester named after my song Abilene, so Hell, you never know.



1-13-14 — Been away from Facebook while finishing my new album with my brother Phil. We're calling it Common Ground and it's a tribute album to both bluesman Big Bill Broonzy and to brotherly damn love. The other day I snapped this fuzzy photo through the control room window of Phil blowing some harmonica. Something about this out of focus

shot captures the intensity of his playing. Phil has always been a great, though shy, harmonica player but he plays more harp on the new record than on all our old Blasters records combined. I can't wait for you guys to hear this album when it comes out in June. I think you might really dig it.

1-28-14 — I never met Pete Seeger face to face. But I did talk to him late one night in 1989 on a radio call-in show. I was broke, trying to live in Nashville and trying to write harmless songs that might get covered by whatever Nashville-Pop-Country artist was big at the time. Mr Seeger was a guest on a late night talk radio show on a station from somewhere in Ohio and I, feeling desperate, called and was put on the air with him. I told him my situation and he gave me some career advice. "Write about what moves you." He said. "Write from your heart and experience. Write about what you love and what you hate. You can't go wrong that way and you won't feel miserable all the time." Not long after that, I went back home and have tried my best to follow his advice ever since. Thank you for your true words and for everything else, Mr Seeger.

2-15-14 — I like record stores. I like spending hours flipping through the racks, talking to folks about what's new (or old) that's good, bad or in between. So it's been frustrating that the 4 surviving stores I've been to the past week have been sold out of the new Michael Bloomfield box set. "We'll have more in a week," they all say. A week?!? Damn. It's almost enough to make me go to Amazon. But I'll hang with the record stores cause they've hung with me. As the young Mr. Bloomfield says in this rare clip, "It's all groovy." Yeah, it is.

2-28-14 — From my road manager and brother in arms, Danny Bland. (right)

3-12-14 — The gang playing at SXSW, recording some live performances with Yep Roc Records.



3-12-14 — The debut of Dave Alvin and Phil Alvin Common Ground live at SXSW at Dogwood now at Cary Baker's Conqueroo Party. (below)

3-13-14 — Dave tears it up on Hendrix' Hear My Train a Comin' for a crowd of thousands! (below)



3-13-14 — Phil joins Dave for Killing Floor backed by Wayne Kramer and band. (right)



3-17-14 — For St Patrick's Day: My favorite half Irish, soul singing, accordion smashing, spiritual advising, smog smoking, heart breaking, beer consuming, adventure sharing, Golden Glove champ and non-blood blood brother, Chris Gaffney, proudly shows his Celtic roots. If you're raising some toasts tonight, please raise one for Chris. I know I will.



3-27-14 — All the way from England, Uncut Magazine made it to the SXSW The Continental Club performance. Check out their review. Looking forward to bringing the show there in fall!

3-28-14 — Spent the afternoon being interviewed and photographed with two of my favorite survivors, my brother Phil and my tough old feral pal, Tom. Both have had some rough times and come through somehow. Back when he was living in the hills near my house, I watched Tom survive a coyote attack by doing a back flip over the coyote while, at the same time, slashing the coyote's face. I can't tell you how glad I am that both these mellower and wiser, yet still a little wild, cats are still with me.

4-28-14 — I can't begin to tell you how much legendary New Orleans sax man Lee Allen means to me (and to my brother Philip Joseph Alvin, Gene Taylor, Steve Berlin,

Bill Bateman and John Bazz) and how much I miss him. To say that he was a mentor, teacher, friend and lifelong inspiration would be a huge understatement. Here he is making the world a better place (and us a better band) for a few glorious minutes. Thanks to my exceptionally knowledgeable friend, Hudson Marquez, for sharing this old yet magical clip.

4-29-14 — The GRAMMY Museum show in Los Angeles last week. The host is Bob Santelli, and that's Bob Glaub on bass and Don Heffington on drums. Photo credit: WireImage.com / R. Sapp (right)



5-18-14 — In honor of today being the birthday of Big Joe Turner, my brother and my lifelong inspiration/mentor as well as the greatest blues shouter to ever walk the Earth, here's a photo of The Blasters relaxing with Mr. Turner in his backyard many, many summers ago. Big Joe was like a mythological hero from a magical but not-so distant land of musical giants. We were truly blessed



to know him, play music with him and to call him our friend. Happy Birthday to The Boss Of The Blues!

6-15-14 — Don Heffington with Dave and Phil Alvin, Bob Glaub and Paul Body last night. They tore it up! (right)

6-15-14 — My friend, the extremely talented photographer/filmmaker, Joe Murray, snapped this evocative shot backstage at The Troubadour last night



right before I walked onstage. He captured my pre-show and nervous-as-Hell state perfectly. (below)

9-17-14 — A recent photo of old pals David Hidalgo and Louie Perez, of Los Lobos, with my brother Phil and me (taken by sharp eyed Deena Wolf Guerin) to help get in the mood for this Saturday's Make The Music Go Bang Festival at The Observatory in Costa Mesa, Ca. My brother, The Guilty Ones and me will be playing along with Lobos, X. Wanda Jackson, Junior Brown, The Knitters, The Paladins, Los Straitjackets, Candy Kane, The Buzzcocks and many, many more fine, notable orchestras. If you're anywhere near southern California this weekend, you do not want to miss this show. Hope to see a lot of you there.

9-22-14 — Three Close Brothers: Phil Alvin, me and Guilty One guitar master, Chris G Miller, backstage at the Make The Music Go Bang! Festival last Saturday. It was a stunning, amazing and flat out fun day and night of music, old friends, new pals and laughs.

There were even a few moist-eye moments for those of our musical family who have passed on. Much thanks to Mike Rouse (manager of X), the staff at The Observatory and X for making this unique event happen. If you were there, I hope you had as much of a blast as I did and if you couldn't make it, well, hopefully we'll meet up soon somewhere up the highway. Photographed by my friend, Annie Whiteside.

