

Dave Alvin – Bio

Dave Alvin was born in Los Angeles on November 11th 1955. Along with his older brother Phil [born Los Angeles, March 6th 1953], he grew up in the suburb of Downey. The pair grew up listening to the music of Elvis Presley, Big Joe Turner, T-Bone Walker and Jimmy Reed. In 1979 the brothers formed The Blasters, having already been members of a series of short-lived rock bands. The Blasters music was a marriage of rockabilly, country, blues and R&B. **“American Music”** their debut album, on the Rollin’ Rock label, brought the band to the notice of the already established punk label, Slash. They made four albums for Slash, and their final recording **“Hard Line”** showed the band attempting to cross over into the blue collar, hard rock territory already occupied by Springsteen and Co. At the outset of the eighties Alvin was involved in a side project band, The Flesheaters, and he appeared on the album, **“Minute to Pray/Second to Die.”** At that time, the band featured John Doe and D.J. Bonebrake of X, Steve Berlin of Los Lobos, Chris D., plus Bill Bateman and Dave Alvin from The Blasters. Following an internal disagreement within The Blaster, Dave Alvin left the band in 1985 and joined X. He had worked with D.J. Bonebrake, John Doe and Exene Cervenka of X, plus Jonny Ray Bartel in the country/folk punk band The Knitters. They had recorded the album **“Poor Little Critter In The Road.”** Alvin stayed with X for two years and his place in the band was then taken by Tony Gilkyson, brother of Eliza Gilkyson. Alvin made a guest appearance on the X album **“See How We Are,”** and supplied the song “Fourth of July.” Signed by CBS subsidiary, Epic Records, Alvin launched his solo career with **“Romeo’s Escape.”** His activities weren’t purely restricted to music and Dave published two books of poetry – *“Nana, Big Joe and the Fourth of July”* [1986] and *“Any Rough Times are Now Behind You”* [1995] - and has appeared on a number of spoken word compilation albums. Dave provided the original score for the movie **“Border Radio”** which starred Chris D., Luanne Anders, John Doe [of X] and Chris Shearer. Enigma Records issued a soundtrack album from the movie. Alvin subsequently supplied music to **“Wall Street”** and **“Cry-Baby”** [1990]. Switching to the independent label, Hightone, Alvin’s sophomore solo album surfaced in 1991. His solo career built slowly and critical acclaim for his recordings arrived with the appearance of **“King Of California.”** In 1992 he produced and appeared on the Sonny Burgess album **“Tennessee Road.”** He has also produced albums for Katy Moffatt, three for the Derailers, Tom Russell, Chris Gaffney and more recently, two discs by Christy McWilson [The Picketts]. Through the early nineties Alvin became involved in another series of side projects. The Pleasure Barons were a loose aggregation of musicians that featured principally Country Dick Montana [Beat Farmers], Dave Alvin and Mojo Nixon. The group released one live album on Hightone and at various times the line-up included John Doe, Katy Moffatt and Rosie Flores. Having begun a still active, but occasional, songwriting partnership with Tom Russell, the pair produced the various artists tribute to country singer Merle Haggard, **“Tulare Dust.”** Alvin cut the *live* set **“Interstate City”** in Austin, Texas with vocal support from Moffatt and local legend, Ted Roddy. His solo career gained momentum with each succeeding release and in 2001, Alvin won the Best Traditional Folk Grammy for his album of traditional songs, **“Public Domain.”** A *live* album titled **“Out In California”** was released in early 2002, and at his concerts **only**, Dave *offered for sale* a second *live* disc titled **“Outtakes In California.”** Leaving Hightone Records after seven consecutive solo releases, Alvin signed with the Chapel Hill, North Carolina imprint Yep Roc, and his first release, issued in the early summer of 2004, was **“Ashgrove”** – titled in memory of the one time Melrose Avenue, Hollywood music club where Dave *“gained his musical education.”*

Two decades after making their debut recording, The Knitters reformed and Rounder/Zoe Records issued **“The Modern Sounds Of The Knitters”** [2005]. In early 2006 Yep Roc released the live Alvin recording **“The Great American Music Galaxy”** and followed it in the early summer of that year with an album where he covered songs composed by contemporary California songwriters, **“West Of The West - Songs From California Songwriters - Volume 1”** [2006]. Alvin made his debut on Austin City Limits in April 1999 during season # 24 of this award winning music series, and his ACL performance was released on CD and DVD during early May 2007 by New West Records.

Discography :

with The Blasters - **“American Music”** [1980] ; **“The Blasters”** [1981] ; **“Over There”** [1982] ; **“Non-Fiction”** [1983] ; **“Hard Line”** [1985] ; **“The Blasters Collection”** [1990] ; **“American Music”** enhanced edition [1997] ; **“The Blasters Bootleg”** [1997] ; **“Testament : The Complete Slash Recordings”** [2002].

with The Flesheaters - **“Minute to Pray/Second to Die”** [1981].

with The Knitters - **“Poor Little Critter In The Road”** [1985] ; **“The Modern Sounds Of The Knitters”** [2005] :

with X – **“See How We Are”** [1987].

Solo - **“Romeo’s Escape”** [1987] ; **“Blue Boulevard”** [1991] ; **“Museum Of Heart”** [1993] ; **“King Of California”** [1994] ; **“Interstate City”** [1996] ; **“Blackjack David”** [1998] ; **“Public Domain”** [2000] ; **“Out In California”** [2002] ; **“Outtakes In California”** [2002] ; **“Ashgrove”** [2004] ; **“The Great American Music Galaxy”** [2006] ; **“West Of The West - Songs From California Songwriters - Volume 1”** [2006] ; **“Live From Austin, Texas”** [2007] :

Miscellaneous – **“Border Radio”** O/St. [1987] ; **“Tennessee Border”** with Sonny Burgess [1992] ; **“Live In Las Vegas”** with the Pleasure Barons [1993] ; **“Tulare Dust – A Songwriter’s Tribute To Merle Haggard”** [1994].

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 06/02, 07/04, 04/06 & 05/07.

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