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Equal parts primal, early rock'n'roll, deviant hill country blues & avant-garde art - Memphis, Tennessee's TAV FALCO's PANTHER BURNS are ramshackle, raw, unholy & utterly amazing. It's not just Music...it is a state of mind. Tav Falco is one of the truly original and romantic voices in American music - the voice that America lost and found. He is tender and virile, flamboyant, witty and dangerous. Falco brings daggers back to the stage, and HE is the one who always holds out a hand to the enemy.



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TAV FALCO'S PANTHER BURNS
L to R: Francesco D'Agnolo, Mario Monterosso, Riccardo Colasante, Tav Falco, Giuseppe Sangiradi (Photo: Maria Fernanda De Freitas)

AMIDST CRUSHED VELVET DRAPES AND THE GLOW OF BURNING CANDLES, THE STAGE IS SET FOR TAV FALCO'S CABARET OF DAGGERS

FEATURING NEW ORIGINALS AND SELECTIONS FROM 80 YEARS OF THE GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK, FALCO'S LATEST ALBUM FIND THE ARKANSAS TRAVELER AND HIS EMINENT TEAM OF ITALIAN ACCOMPANISTS EXPLORING HIS MOST CHALLENGING SELECTIONS TO DATE WHILE WEIGHING IN ON "THE PUPPET HEAD ORANGUTAN OF MALIGNANT RAGE"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / October 10, 2018 – Nearly four decades into his musical career, [Tav Falco](#) is poised to take centerstage with the provocative and timely *Cabaret of Daggers*. Recorded earlier this year in Rome, the album features newly-penned Falco originals which question the sanity of our troubled times, alongside carefully-curated selections from over 80 years of the Great American Songbook. Released by ORG Music, *Cabaret of Daggers* will initially be available as a limited edition, yellow colored vinyl pressing of 750 copies worldwide, exclusively for [Record Store Day](#), Black Friday, November 23. The standard black vinyl edition and digital download follow on November 30. Black vinyl and download can be purchased at <https://www.orgmusic.com>.

A fixture on the international music scene since 1981, Falco has been described by *The New York Times* as "A singer, guitarist and researcher of musical arcana who hasn't let his increasingly technical expertise and idiomatic mastery compromise the clarity of his vision."

Raised in rural Arkansas and a key figure on the Memphis music scene of the 1970s and '80s, Falco was a frequent visitor to Europe as the frontman for his storied and long-running band, [Panther Burns](#). He eventually fell in love with the Old World splendor of Vienna, and has been a resident of the Austrian capital since the late 1990s. Falco pays homage to his adopted city on "Red Vienna," co-written with *Cabaret of Daggers'* producer/guitarist, [Mario Monterosso](#). Benefitting from a rich musical palette which evokes Django Reinhardt, Italian neorealism cinema, and a nursery rhyme cadence, "Red Vienna" recounts the history of fascism's rise in Italy. Franz Ferdinand, Leon Trotsky, Sigmund Freud and Gustav Klimt all find their way into the lyric, and the dreamy, surreal song also acts as a warning to modern-day listeners as we witness, on a daily basis, the rise of similar authoritarian politicking across the world stage.

While "Red Vienna" addresses autocratic regimes from a historical perspective, "New World Order Blues" brings us bang up to date. A crowd favorite when premiered at this spring's Beale Street Music Festival in Memphis, the thumping, strutting "New World Order Blues" takes thinly-disguised aim at our current instigator of global chaos. "Dumb yourself down, or get out of town is the current message from the U.S. government," says Falco. "Is America going to sell out its ethical dignity for a pseudo bubble economy peddled on scorched earth policy? Moral bankruptcy and malignant rage reign down from the highest echelons, while honest Americans are either duped or forced off the grid."

Lodged at the fervent, beating heart of *Cabaret of Daggers* are a pair of legendary jazz standards which underscore the cabaret theme of the album's title. Falco's interpretation of the Chet Baker classic "Born to Be Blue" (written in 1946 by Mel Tormé and Robert Wells), fits the singer like a velvet glove. He pours his heart and soul into this outsider classic; the resonance of experience is palpable. Descending into an even darker shade of blue, Falco also revisits "Strange Fruit," undeniably the 20th century's most harrowing anthem of doom. "Billie Holiday is the mistress of 'Strange Fruit,' and always will be," says Falco. "Yet, after years of this dirge lurking in the background of my thoughts, I knew that one day I would be ready for it. Ready to sing it — not in a conscious way, but in an unconscious way. It is the supreme American song of dissent."

If you're at all familiar with Tav Falco's Panther Burns, the band's reputation as a world class rock & blues party revue looms large. Falco's current lineup of the group, which also backs him on this solo effort, is comprised entirely of Italian musicians *sympatico* with the dynamic Panther Burns legacy. Mario Monterosso, who has been at Falco's side since his 2014 solo album *Command Performance*, produced the album, provided arrangements, and plays the lion's share of guitar. Francesco D'Agnolo dazzles on acoustic piano, Hammond organ, and accordian. The nuanced rhythm section is provided by Giuseppe Sangirardi on electric bass and Riccardo Colasante on drums and percussion.

"Strange (Libertango)" is a tour de force which finds the band locked in a groove, certain to thrill anyone intimate with Astor Piazzolla's original or Grace Jones' reworking of the track as "I've Seen That Face Before (Libertango)." Album opener "Nobody's Baby" introduces the evocative world of *Cabaret of Daggers* with a similar tango rhythm. Falco's hip-shakin' interpretation of the Jaynetts' 1963 girl group classic "Sally Go 'Round the Roses" is so uproarious it could have featured in the Corny Collins Show dance contest in John Waters' *Hairspray*. Fans of David Lynch will swoon at the strains of Santo & Johnny Farina's 1959 chart-topping instrumental, "Sleep Walk." The proceedings take a bluesy turn with the haunting, Depression-era "Sugar Mama Blues" and the more recent Jolie Holland composition, "Old Fashioned Morphine." "Master of Chaos Theme" closes the LP with a moody instrumental tribute to the French crime hero Fantômas. The digital download (also free with LPs purchased directly at <http://www.orgmusic.com>) includes a bonus track, "The World We Knew," a new recording of a track which originally featured on Panther Burns' 1987 album of the same name.

TAV FALCO
CABARET OF DAGGERS
Label: ORG Music / Catalog: ORGM-1032

1. "Nobody's Baby" (Trupis, Wackwitz)
2. "Sally Go 'Round the Roses" (Lona Stevens, Zell Landers)
3. "Old Fashioned Morphine" (Jolie Holland)
4. "Strange Fruit" (Dwayne P. Wiggins, Maurice Pearl, Lewis Allan)
5. "New World Order Blues" (Tav Falco, arranger: Mario Monterosso)
6. "Sleep Walk" (Santo Farina, Johnny Farina, Anna Farina)
7. "Strange (Libertango)" (Astor Piazzolla, Barry Reynolds, Dennis Wilkey, Nathalie Delon)
8. "The World We Knew" (Carl Sigman, Bert Kaempfert, Herbert Rehbein) *
9. "Born to Be Blue" (Mel Tormé, Robert Wells)
10. "Red Vienna" (Tav Falco, Mario Monterosso)
11. "Sugar Mama Blues" (Hammie Nixon)
12. "Master of Chaos Theme" (Mario Monterosso, Tav Falco)

* Denotes digital bonus track (does not appear on LP vinyl)

REVIEW THE ALBUM

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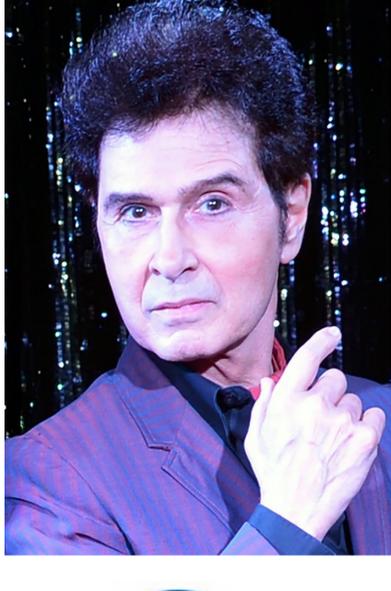
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TAV FALCO
Cabaret of Daggers (cover art)
Limited edition yellow vinyl released on RSD, Nov. 23 / Standard black vinyl & download released Nov. 30



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Tav Falco

PANTHER BURNS' SHADOW DANCER

What music are you currently grooving to?

Presently, I am enthralled with an exquisite, hip-shaking tune called *Blue Bossa* off the album *Exotic* by the **Atomic Leopards** out of Barcelona. **Childish Gambino** is a reliable hoot. I also enjoy **Antony & The Johnsons** and the stylings of **Paolo Conte**.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Easy. *Two Steps From The Blues* by **Bobby 'Blue' Bland** on Duke records. No connoisseur in Memphis would admit to not adoring the high-strung tonalities of a sissy blues singer, and when you hear Bobby –



Pooneh Ghana, Luca Ross

“little boy blue” – you know what being mistreated is all about.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

The first record bought for me was *I Was The One* by **Elvis Presley**, purchased by my mother at Stan's Record Shop in Shreveport, Louisiana. The first one I laid down my own cash for was the 45 *Al Di La* sung by **Emilio Pericoli**, from the movie *Rome Adventure*.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

None, but I long to master the *sprezzatura* [nonchalance] of **Dean Martin**, sing with the pipes of **P.J. Proby**, and incant with the operatic hillbilly splendour of **Charlie Feathers**.

What do you sing in the shower?

Louis Armstrong's version of *Kiss Of Fire* finds its way under my shower.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

The soundtrack *The Wild One*, composed and performed by West Coast horn player **Shorty Rogers** and his orchestra of jazz titans. This was recorded during a narrow window of jazz trajectory around 1953, when musicians celebrated moody washes of blue notes, arias of bleary horns, and sexy Beat girl hard bop. After this blip in the jazz continuum, poof! No one played like this again.

And your Sunday morning record?

I open the windows to errant breezes and listen to the guitar revelations of **John Fahey**. In particular, *Stomping Tonight On The Pennsylvania-Alabama Border*.

Tav Falco's Panther Burns come to Europe in February. **MOJO Feb. 2019**

TAV FALCO



CABARET OF DAGGERS

TAV FALCO CABARET OF DAGGERS

(ORG Music)

Latest from the perpetually suave Falco.

8/10

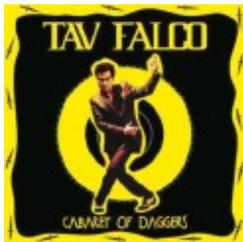
Close on to four decades into his musical journey, and Memphian maestro Tav Falco's rock/blues/jazz odyssey continues its intriguing path with this latest outing, a blend of Falco originals and judiciously selected songs from the 'Great American Songbook'. Having relocated to his current European location some years ago, Tav has infused his recent work with a certain touch of old-world charm – 'Red Vienna', as a prime example, weaving an evocative waltz around his adoptive city's historical backdrop. Falco's endearingly care-worn vocal cords work a similarly eerie magic on Jolie Holland's 'Old Fashioned Morphine', while a take on Billie Holliday's 'Strange Fruit' lends this eternally chilling number a troubling contemporaneity; if the inference isn't already clear, Tav expands on our troubled situation further with the biting vicious critique that is 'New World Order Blues'.

Hugh Gulland

Tav Falco

“Cabaret Of Daggers” ORGMUSIC

- **Rock & Folk, Paris**
- **20 Dec 2018**



Fut une époque où l'on pouvait s'informer en écoutant des disques. La musique, pensée pour passer à la radio, se mariait à merveille avec l'actualité et les singles s'enchaînaient comme un commentaire de leur époque. Aujourd'hui, le fil d'actualité étant fabriqué par tout un chacun, la musique a abandonné ce rôle aux instagrammeurs. Sur cette idée, Tav Falco, 73 ans, figure de l'underground de Memphis dans les années 80 (voire son unique représentant), exilé à Vienne depuis 20 ans, livre un nouvel album composé à la manière d'un tour de chant. Comme au cabaret, le répertoire est façonné, pour moitié, de standards et, de l'autre, de chansons originales. Le tout commente merveilleusement l'air du temps. C'est cela, aussi, la nouveauté : Tav Falco se présente à la fois comme chanteur et conservateur, présentant cette collection de chansons comme l'on monterait une exposition. Cette dernière pourrait s'appeler Chanson, l'air du peuple et aurait pour introduction cette phrase de Louis-Ferdinand Céline : "Pour aimer la chanson du peuple, l'air, il suffit d'aimer l'amour, d'avoir du sentiment, et puis les paroles, ça aide..." Les paroles, ici, sont celles de Billie Holiday chantant les pendus de "Strange Fruit" ou des gens nés bleus sous la plume de Chet Baker. Puis, Tav Falco chante ses maux, ceux qu'il se découvre en se réveillant en pleine nuit et regardant les news de son pays natal. "New World Order Blues" en est l'histoire quand "Red Vienna", hommage à l'âge d'or de sa ville d'adoption, narre la décadence du cœur de l'Europe quand, à chacune de ses frontières, se créait un totalitarisme nouveau. La violence a changé, pas la beauté des chansons. ♦♦♦ THOMAS E. FLORIN

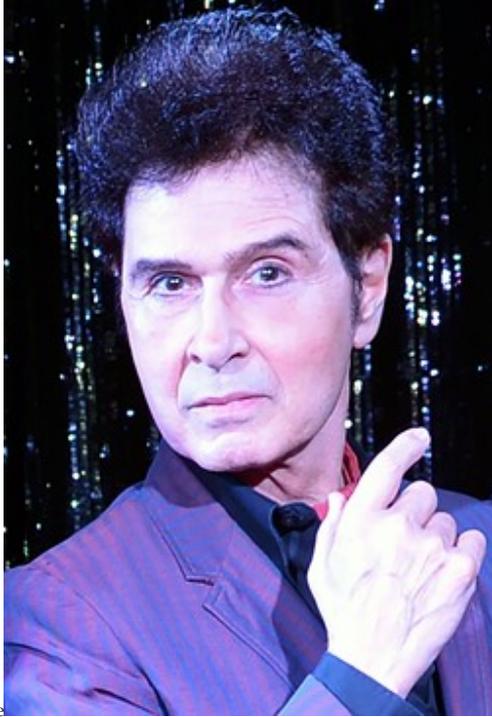
Love in the Ruins: Tav Falco's *Cabaret of Daggers*

by [ALEX GREENE](#)



The first track of Tav Falco's latest platter, *Cabaret of Daggers* (Org Music), opens with his stark, isolated voice intoning the song's guitar/bass motif, until at last the band falls in behind him. It's telling: the entire work evokes a fugitive in a hostile world, absentmindedly humming as he makes his way on the lam, watching from a box car. Yes, there is plenty of cabaret here, but it seems to come via a fever dream.

The tango of that first track is imbued with the cabaret spirit, but many surprises emerge after that. But as the band (and, significantly, the words "Panther Burns" are nowhere to be found on the LP) deftly navigates the stylistic shifts into folk blues, R&B, and jazz, the sense of romance in ruins is never far away. "You're sitting and watching the destruction of mankind," Falco declaims in the standout original, "New World Order Blues." A frisson of anguish emerges as that image colors even the tenderest ballads.



click to enlarge

• Tav Falco

As for the latter, Falco has always famously walked the land of crooners as if it was paved with eggshells and nails. From “Drifting Heart” to “The World We Knew,” his back catalog is littered with such decadence. (The latter is reprised here on the digital release, never straying far from the template laid down in the 1987 recording produced by Alex Chilton). As always, the point here is not purity of pitch, but character. His heartfelt, at times bewildered, delivery can, as they say, sell a song. He sells you on the drama, more convincingly than many a lounge lizard.

Having said that, Falco's singing here sounds more assured than ever, even on the challenging melody of the Mel Tormé and Robert Wells chestnut, “Born to Be Blue.” He also carries off the nightmarish gem, “Strange Fruit,” by virtue of his unique diction. The culmination of this may be “Red Vienna,” a hushed waltz evoking the revolutionary zeitgeist of that city a century ago, complete with haunting operatic vocals by Kallen Esperian.

Of course, Falco pulls off the earthier numbers, including Jolie Holland's "Old Fashioned Morphine" and Hammie Nixon's "Sugar Mama Blues," with the appropriate grit. The band (featuring the refined piano, organ, and accordion work of Francesco D'Agnolo) is equally adept at all these styles. Guitarist/producer Mario Monterosso, who cowrote a few of these, and composed the brilliant crime jazz track "Master of Chaos Theme," helps keep his groovy band of Italians on point. The one misstep, to these ears, is a rendering of "Sally Go 'Round the Roses," much beloved by old Hellcats fans, which sports highly processed drums straight out of an 80s disco. It's a courageous move, nonetheless. Such stylistic leaps would prove nigh impossible for many other singers. Falco and company make it look easy.

**PLEASE
KILL ME**

TAV FALCO: UTOPIAN ANARCHIST IN CUBAN HEELS

 TODD MCGOVERN NOVEMBER 23, 2018

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Tav Falco is a musician, photographer, filmmaker, and writer, who has led the psychedelic rock group Panther Burns since 1979. Todd McGovern talks to Tav about his new album *Cabaret Of Daggers*, growing up in rural Arkansas, Memphis' cultural underground, his work in film, and much more.

Tav Falco is not of this world. He is not easily explained to the uninitiated. A musician, filmmaker, and writer, it's hard to delineate where his persona begins and where it ends. He is both a man out of time and a man with his finger on the pulse. He's from the sticks, but he's a man of the world, internationally regarded. He's well-dressed and well-groomed, a great dancer, and musical raconteur. His is not easy music. It is by turns, greasy rock-n-roll with roots in Southern swamps and bayous and elegant waltzes and tangos. His new album, *Cabaret Of Daggers*, with longtime band Panther Burns, is a carefully curated collection of original songs, as well as selections from the *Great American Songbook*.

For the past two decades, Tav Falco has lived in Europe and currently calls Vienna home. He spoke to this writer via email on the eve of his new album's release.



Tav Falco – by Luccia Rossi, Paris

PKM: You grew up in a remote, rural area of Arkansas. What were the advantages and disadvantages of that?

Tav Falco: I lived with my parents on a 52-acre farm in Clark County, Arkansas, between Gurdon and Whelen Springs. As I had no friends other than a pet deer, I created imaginary ones. They were a merry bunch, and we had good times laughing and cavorting in the tall grass by the running water. It is always an advantage having

friends. On the occasions when actual visitors came by – mostly unannounced – it was very special and those friendships were valued and cultivated.

Disadvantages of living in the backwoods were having to drive some distance to a cinema or to a library, even further to see a stage play, and further than that to find an airport. With the abundance of publications and the advent of electronic media in the late 1950s, those disadvantages became less significant. Eventually, I was hired as a brakeman on the Missouri Pacific Lines working out of Little Rock, Memphis, and Poplar Bluff.

PKM: Can you describe the role television had in your creative development?

Tav Falco: After the electrification of the rural South, broadcast television had an enormous impact. Prior to that, home entertainment consisted mainly of sitting around the radio on Saturday nights listening to programs such as “The Shadow.” A creaking door was heard opening, then “Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows!” Those words were accompanied by an ominous laugh and a musical theme, Camille Saint-Saëns’ *Le Rouet d’Omphale* (“Omphale’s Spinning Wheel”, composed in 1872).

“... , the Panther Burn beat that was dredged from primal swamps around Memphis has carried me around the world and opened many doors onto creative and cultural landscapes.”

Growing up, the only telephone was located in the post office/grocery store beside the railroad track in Whelen Springs. It was a wall phone, and you had to crank it to get an operator. My stepfather brought home our first TV set when I was around 7 years of age. By comparison with radio, the tube made quite an impression. Although my mother would drive me to see the Saturday double feature matinee at the Hoo Hoo Theater (Hoo Hoo is the name of a concatenated order of lumbermen founded 1892 in Gurdon), my total immersion in cinema came about because the network television channels we received seemed to be short on programming. As a result, feature movies were broadcast three times a day, every day. This created an enduring fascination with

cinema. It was a black & white realm of the imagination while – like the many books around me – it was an open door onto the world in all of its sophistication and in its entirety. A commonplace, comedic, tragic, hollow, tantalizing, mysterious carnival of dreams.

When my cousin visited in the summer, she and I played roles outside on a two-wheel farm trailer that had a flat bed and was tilted up into the air with its long tongue pointing upward to the heavens. She and I became buccaneers on this mighty makeshift ship, and we sailed the seven seas in a frenzy of adventures. Dressed in remnants of my father's Navy uniforms and scraps of my mother's old clothes, she and I were the Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. and Merle Oberon of the piney woods.

PKM: What are some of the earliest memories you had of music and what do you think prompted your passion in it?

Tav Falco: My earliest experience with music was a shellac that I found in a closet, and spinning it on my father's battleship gray, Navy issue phonograph. The record was "Ride Of The Valkyries," the fourth opera from Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. I blasted it full volume out over the fields and heard it reverberate off of the lofty pines that surrounded us. Later, the music which really caught my attention was released by Sun Records out of Memphis. I would ask my mother to buy me 45s on Sun when we visited Stan's Record Shop in Shreveport. I also grooved to The Platters, Jimmy Reed, Patsy Cline, Wilbert Harrison, and Bo Diddley. All of these artists were on the radio most every day.



Tav Falco & Panther Burns -by Maria DeFreitas

PKM: It seems that a lot of your early work came after you arrived in Memphis. Can you describe the scene at the time and how it influenced your work?

Tav Falco: To answer that question in depth, I might refer you to my book on the topic, *Ghosts Behind The Sun: Splendour, Enigma, and Death, Mondo Memphis Vol. I* (Creation Books, 2011). It is 450-page encyclopedic history and psychogeography of Memphis' cultural underground and its demimonde. The book is an intertext of the urban legends, rural fables and literary clichés that have made the Bluff City simultaneously a metropolis of dreams and a necropolis of terrors. Also refer to my second book, *An Iconography Of Chance: 99 Photographs Of The Evanescent South*, published by Elsinore Press (2015).

My time in Memphis was a creative one. It was where I joined forces with working artists and learned my trade. I had migrated from a cabin in the hills of Arkansas to Memphis with all of my junk stuffed into a 1950 green Ford with a '48 Mercury v8 under the hood. If you wanted to go to the big city from Arkansas, the options were either Dallas or Memphis. I tried Dallas on a return trip south from the Haight-Ashbury, but became involved on the periphery of a satanic, Anton LaVey type cult and barely got out of there alive with the shirt on my back.

Then I had the intention to further myself as a photographer and a filmmaker in Memphis. In large part, I did that, but in a decidedly non-commercial way. I assisted William J. Eggleston on a number of ventures. He taught me how to use the camera and how to take and print pictures. Then I worked in a motion picture laboratory for a couple years making titles for films. Yet, out of frustration, I formed a rock 'n' roll band as Alex Chilton had urged me to do. My one and only band, Panther Burns, is named after a legendary plantation in Mississippi. Over a dozen albums later and after countless tours, the Panther Burn *beat* that was dredged from primal swamps around Memphis has carried me around the world and opened many doors onto creative and cultural landscapes.

With few exceptions, everything that was happening in Memphis when I arrived in 1973 was coming from the underground – at least anything that interested me. I was drawn to country blues, free jazz, free verse, and especially, experimental film. For me, experimental film was a dream carnival of the mind, a montage of delirium, emerging from a clandestine incubator of phenomenal fires. My experiences in Memphis placed me on the path to how I view myself now, as a Utopian Anarchist. Panther Burns is a band that always holds out a hand to the enemy.

PKM: You cite the myth of Orpheus in other interviews. What is it about that myth in particular that you find so interesting and inspirational?

Tav Falco: The Orphic vision looks not to the mystical heavens, but rather into the dark fertile waters of the unconscious. That's where my creative impulse originates, from stirring up those dark waters. In music, particularly, and in cinema, which in its purest

forms is visual music – this impulse is symbolized in Orpheus' descent into the underground to charm the wood nymph Eurydice. With his lyre, Orpheus lures Eurydice to follow him up into the conscious, rational world of light, lakes, and meadows. But as they crossed the portal of Hades, Orpheus looked back on his bride and saw that she had turned to stone. I have looked back on more than a few blocks of stone in my life. Although infused with metaphor, signs, and symbols, in my music — like in Voodoo music — the lyrical content may sometimes be seemingly superfluous, but the undercurrent is trance inducing, joyous, and revelatory.

PKM: What do you think is the role of an entertainer and what isn't that role?

Tav Falco: The entertainer has a job. He is an artisan. At best, he enralls, diverts, cajoles, humors, inspires, and celebrates his audience. The artist does all of the entertainer's job, yet he must do more. As Picasso noted, "*Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.*" That is certainly part of it, but in using the instruments of the entertainer, the height of the artist's expression connects us in the most thoughtful, meaningful, and sublime way to ourselves and to those around us. Elvis was an entertainer; Jim Morrison was a poet.

PKM: What art inspires you most today?

Tav Falco: There are many inspirations — from clever new pop music channeling rock 'n' roll to Childish Gambino to Antony & The Johnsons (now on hiatus). The stylings of singer/pianist Paolo Conte. The film oeuvre of comrade F.J. Ossang in Paris and his new award-winning Expressionist film *9 Doigts*. The funny and charming Wes Anderson movie, *The Grand Budapest Hôtel*. The revival of my favorite operetta, *Die Herzogin von Chicago* (The Duchess From Chicago) by Emmerich Kalman.

Yes, there are new films screened at Locarno and The Venice International Film Fest, but the better ones bring to the screen destruction, dissociation, and human violation that, although important to present, are too disturbing, numbing, and dismal for me to endure. I often attend the Vienna English Theater around the corner from where I live in Vienna, but I only go to see comedies. Similarly, Alida Valli remarked, "Now I only play in comedies" in her scenes as stage actress Anna Schmidt in *The Third Man* (filmed at *Theater In Der Josefstadt*, also around the corner). Comedy can be a low art or a very high art. At this point, I favor high comedy, not as an escape from the misery I see in this world, but as a relief in that there remains a shred of amusement and humanity in our existence.

PKM: Can you tell me about your film work?

Tav Falco: My short films (*courts métrages*) are in the permanent collection of the Cinémathèque Française in Paris, and I was invited there for a retrospective in 2006. One of them, "Masque Of Hôtel Orient," features the magician and underground film pioneer Kenneth Anger, transforming Tav Falco into Fantômas. Presently, I am wrapping up filming Part III of

my *Urania Trilogy* series of intrigue films in Venice. Inspired by Urania, the muse of the heavens, her avatar descends from the Bardo plane to Earth but in a most unlikely form — that of a disaffected young woman on the Arkansas River in Little Rock. Yet, this is more to this story of an American girl with a one-way ticket to merry/sinister old Vienna who becomes embroiled in a plot to uncover buried Nazi plunder. Rather, this film advances the shadowy Expressionism of my earlier oeuvre. It is a filmic poem infused with metaphor, mood and *Stimmung*, where the past overtakes the present, and the present overtakes the past. The film flickers with the fateful caprice of tarot cards fingered in a Viennese bordello. These films emerge as corporeal fables and offer cabalistic hygiene for a vital elegance.

Part I of the trilogy was screened at Silencio in Paris, The Metro Kino/ Austrian Film Archiv in Vienna, Anthology Film Archives in New York, The Oxford Film Festival in Mississippi, The American Cinémathèque in Hollywood, and The Roxie Theater in San Francisco as part of the 100th Anniversary celebration of DaDa hosted by City Lights Bookstore. Learn more: <http://www.urania-descending-the-movie.com/>



PKM: Your new album, **Cabaret of Daggers**, which will be released in limited edition yellow vinyl on Record Store Day – November 23 – and on black vinyl, CD and digital formats on November 30, is a mix of cover songs and original work. Do you see it as a collection of songs or as a piece of work with an overall theme and songs that reflect that theme?

Tav Falco: The assemblage of songs on *Cabaret Of Daggers* reflects a state of mind. There are thematic parallels in the songs reflecting gender-inflected issues, political subterfuge, narcotic dirge, lynching balladry, unrequited love, and identity loss. The lyrical thrust of the originals is reaffirmed by the content and stylistic gradients of the compositions we cover.

As for the “Daggers” in the title, that was an idea I picked up in Buenos Aires. Juan Carlos Copes and Maria Nieves were an eminent tango couple. Late in her career, Maria Nieves was asked what she thought about the younger tango dancers. She commented that there were many nice couples dancing intricate new figures, but where, she asked, were the *daggers*? These are the daggers — lost & found that I bring to our new album. The kind of dagger that hangs in a sheath from a silver chain around the waist of Hamlet, the gloomy Dane.

PKM: Your new song, “New World Order Blues” with lyrics like, “America and Korea just itchin’ to light the fuse/□The fuse our degenerate-in-chief, clown prince, god emperor/□Has already lit and there’s not a thing you can do/□About his fascination with nuclear annihilation” make your political position pretty obvious. What is your feeling about the United States in 2018, given that you’ve lived in Vienna for almost two decades?

Tav Falco: The fascist swagger of the imperialist dogs running the show in Washington is unmistakable. The whole world recognizes it for what it is. Independent, critical thinking, liberal minds contributed to gains in the recent elections, but we have a long, long way to go in reversing the damage.

In the 1960s, we did not cut Nixon any slack and we brought him down. I am a product of those turbulent times. I painted a psychedelic mandala and turned it in with my resignation from the railroad because I refused to work on train after train delivering military tanks, rockets, and weapons to fight a dirty war in Vietnam. I marched in Place de la Republic in Paris when Li'l Bush was elected to a second term. I raised my arms in Zuccotti Park and danced with the Occupy protesters. OK, I did not do much, but I did what I thought might be most effective coming from me.

For my 2010 album, *Conjurations: Séance for Deranged Lovers*, I wrote “Administrator Blues” about the last financial meltdown, which caused my parents to lose a sizable chunk of their savings due to exploitive and reckless market practices and speculation on Wall Street. For my last album, *Command Performance*, I wrote “Whistle Blower Blues” about the plight of the working man, and also “Doomsday Baby” against the ongoing massacres of Palestinians in Gaza. And now there’s “New World Order Blues” for the new album. I may be a little voice, but I say it loud. The artist can no longer remain silent; otherwise, he remains complicit. Where are the protest songs from my brethren? Where are the radicals? I do not care about Republicans or Democrats, but I vote against the unbridled *EVIL* propagated by the current iteration of the GOP. Yes, Senator Sanders comes closest to representing the true, authentic interests of the American people. Every attempt is made by the GOP to dumb down, confound, and to

exploit the American people. What happened to our great statesmen such as Sen. William J. Fullbright of Arkansas? Now we have total sycophantic Harvard flunkies like Tom Cotton representing us in the Senate of the United States. Graft and white nationalist bigotry run rampant through Washington like an open sewer, which leads to politicians with Alt-Right platforms once again rising to power in Europe. In Brazil, there is the tragic election of criminal fascist Jair Bolsonaro.

My two decades living abroad have afforded me a perspective onto my American origins and my stateside trajectory, and they've revealed how other parts of the world view my home country. I shall always be an American living in Europe, or South America, or wherever. I cannot change that, nor am I inclined to. I am what I am. Essentially, I feel I know more of myself living abroad, rather than when I lived exclusively in America, where much of my surroundings had become invisible to me because they were built into my existence.



Tav Falco – by Luccia Rossi

PKM: The song “Red Vienna” from your new album is a kind of homage to your adopted home. It also seems to serve as a warning of the recent rise of nationalism and neo-fascism around the world. Can you talk about this song?

Tav Falco: Earlier this year, I wrote this song with Mario Monterosso on a cold winter’s night in Memphis. Mario is the gifted producer of our last three albums. The contours and beauty of this anthem to a grand city are due to his remarkable aesthetic, harmonic understanding, and extraordinary musicianship. *Cabaret of Daggers* was recorded in Rome, and Mario had an intrinsic understanding of how to create the musical ambiance

most suited to “Red Vienna.” He even located and brought in the American opera singer Kallen Esperion to sing the closing aria.

In composing “Red Vienna,” I thought not only of the historical and cultural events that have transpired over its long and magnificent — yet at times dismal — tenure as a grand capitol standing on the threshold between the East and the West. I also thought of the nature of revolution itself, whether openly declared or covertly incipient. I thought of how much we sacrifice in a revolution. There are gains, but also irretrievable losses. How the social fabric becomes strained and separates, only to come back in a rougher and coarser weave. I thought of how style, eloquence, and cordiality can deteriorate when striving toward notions of progress, liberation, and often, false modernity. Austria enjoyed a provisionally enlightened monarchy for a thousand years, yet there were also grim social problems and rampant inequality.

After the industrialization, the electrification, and the digitalization of Austria we have come to the post-post-post-modern pinpoint upon which we now stand firmly, yet vulnerably as the future looms ahead. The notion of romance is mostly forlorn; we now have sensation in its place. Rather than a benign monarch, we have representative parliaments and judiciaries. But we must be careful of manipulation and machinations. We have instant travel, instant news, instant gratification, but we lose sense of the moment and become numbed.

“The assemblage of songs on Cabaret Of Daggers reflects a state of mind. There are thematic parallels in the songs reflecting gender-inflected issues, political subterfuge, narcotic dirge, lynching balladry, unrequited love, and identity loss.”

PKM: A friend of mine who saw you recently remarked to me that it was interesting to see an American performing using European musicians to perform uniquely American music. What’s your reaction to that?

Tav Falco: The fact that my band started as a Memphis combo and is still playing as such, but has matured and embraced other forms and genres, is much like the jazz musician who might have joined forces with Machito onstage to wail Cuban tonalities. *Cabaret Of Daggers* was recorded in Rome in April with Mario Monterosso playing guitar, Francesco D'Agnolo at the keyboards, Riccardo Colasante on drums, and Giuseppe Sangirardi on bass. This is the formation I have been playing with continuously since 2014. The world is no stranger to American music. Yet when I want to step outside the box and deconstruct a song, or transform it into something unpredictable, I can rely on my band to go along right behind me.



Tav Falco & Panther Burns -by Maria DeFreitas

When I was invited to the home of Chilean film director Alejandro Jodorowsky in Paris, he confided that he always uses Italian crews, because he said, “*nothing is impossible in the minds of Italian film makers.*” Let’s look at it another way. The Beat poets and writers were writing out of an American context – certainly at the beginning. However, many of them spent a greater part of their creative life outside U.S. borders. When Allen Ginsberg and I shared the bill at an anti-nuclear rally at the new Peppermint Lounge in New York City in 1982, he had two Parisian street musicians playing behind him while he played the harmonium. By the way, that night I gave Allen my first album, *Behind The Magnolia Curtain*, and dedicated it to him. A few years later I happened by his pad in the East Village. I literally threw a pebble up from the street toward a window that I thought might be his. He stuck his head out and invited the band and I up. I did ask him whether he had ever listened to the album that I’d given him, but he gave a vague reply. Some minutes later, I noticed that *Behind The Magnolia Curtain* was on his turntable!

Ha! You know, on that album I interjected lines from his poem "HOWL" into our electric rendition of "Bourgeois Blues":

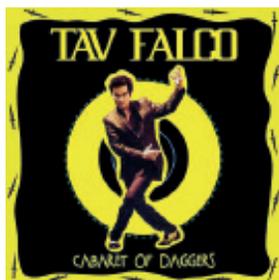
"I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix, angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night...."

Another example of a Beat writer who devoted a significant slice of his creative life outside the U.S. border is, of course, William S. Burroughs. Giorno Poetry Systems devoted considerable attention to its enterprises in Europe. When *The New York Times* devoted a full page to my early appearance at the Mudd Club on a split bill show with John Giorno, this event and another like it at Danceteria, resulted in Geoff Travis signing Panther Burns to Rough Trade Records in London. That was followed by an EP (*Blow Your Top*) on Chris Stein's Animal label with Iggy, James Chance, and The Gun Club. Eventually, Patrick Mathé went to London, pulled our masters out of Rough Trade and took them over to his label New Rose in Paris, where we went on to record and release nine albums and assorted singles. All this went down unsolicited. So in a sense, Europe found me.

PKM: Will you and the rest of Panther Burns be touring in support of the album?

Tav Falco: Definitely. Across three continents in all of the usual unreliable places.

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TAV FALCO
Cabaret of Daggers
ORG Music

Hijo adoptivo y cronista de Memphis, Tav Falco edita su undécimo disco en el que, en su particular cabaret, la mediocridad aupada por la estupidez reinante que nos invade no tiene cabida. Chaquetas brillantes, pasos de baile anticuados y melodías trasnochadas cobran su sentido, y reviven con la distinción propia de uno de los últimos baluartes de la autenticidad. Bajo la personal visión de su país, donde se instaura el “permanece mudo ante la venta de la dignidad ética en una tierra políticamente quemada o lárgate de la ciudad” como mensaje habitual desde las altas esferas, se lamenta de una sociedad en quiebra moral que amenaza a los honrados ciudadanos. Sumergirse en su mundo particular, fiel a unos principios y gustos extraídos de una sólida base cultural que mira notablemente a la vieja Europa, te conduce a un sinfín de estilos que siempre ha amado, ya sea cabaret, tango, rockabilly o jazz. «Red Vienna» se adentra en tu cabeza como un mal sueño y advierte del peligro de los totalitarismos revisitados de nuestros días en un ambiente inspirado en el neorrealismo italiano. Se siente preparado para rendir homenaje a ese himno angustioso de la fatalidad que eternizó Billie Holiday en «Strange Fruit». Pone toda su alma adaptándose cual guante de terciopelo a un clásico outsider como Chet Baker, y con ello descendiendo aún más en una oscuridad onírica que salpica el disco, digna del mejor David Lynch. **HECTOR FDEZ. BASELGA**



BRIAN JONESTOWN MASSACRE
Something Else
A Records

Con dos cojones y un flequillo super-glue, Anton Newcombe titula su último disco *Something Else*. Creo que los Kinks tenían un disco que se llamaba igual, ¿pero qué coño importa eso cuando el álbum lo firma con su pirotecnia el mismísimo rey padre de la psicodelia decrepita? Los Brian Jonestown de 2018 se hacen carne a través de Newcombe, su perenne panderetero y una suerte de becarios con cara de beber smoothies en el escaparate de la sanfranciscana City Lights. Bajo esta amalgama, el sumo sacerdote reconduce su proyecto hacia aquellos primeros trabajos en los que la juventud sudaba por sus huesitos y él jugaba al chiste del genio maldito. El retorno es acertado y el disco suena como uno imagina que suena el corazón de su compositor: una banda sonora celestial en la que después de una sobredosis de jarabe se puede vislumbrar a ángeles comiendo tripis mientras alcanzan la trascendencia entre chutas celestiales. El esfuerzo es honesto y esta psicodelia de tres acordes y melodías tan indolentes como perfectas es lo que mejor sabe hacer el alcalde de Jonestown. Volverle a oír da gusto, coloca, aunque este disco no sea más que un cunnilingus para su audiencia y no supere a ninguno de sus clásicos. Saca la keta y enamorémonos. **RAFA SUÑÉN**

WILLIE NILE
Children of Paradise
River House

Las diversas dificultades que han jalonado la guadianesca trayectoria artística de Willie Nile le han impedido, seguramente, ser tan popular como Lou Reed o Bruce Springsteen. Sin embargo el neoyorquino tiene su nutrido grupo de seguidores que lo reconocen como lo que es: uno de los grandes cronistas de la

Gran Manzana. Curiosamente ha sido en los últimos años, superados holgadamente los cincuenta, cuando su carrera no solo se ha estabilizado sino que ha entregado algunas de sus mejores obras, como la enorme *Streets of New York* (2006). A parecido nivel está este sorprendente *Children of Paradise*, en el que un setentón Willie da una lección de energía, vitalidad y clarividencia a la hora de analizar los tiempos que vivimos. No importa que el álbum incluya temas más viejos junto a otros recientes, todos encajan a la perfección en un combinado de garage-pop, rock urbano y punk-rock que recuerda a los mejores momentos de bandas como The Clash («Don't», «Earth Blues»), Ramones («All Dressed Up»), Johnny Thunders («Rock'n'roll Sister») o Springsteen y su E-Street Band («Seeds of the Revolution»). Hay espacio también, sobre todo en la segunda mitad del disco, para las canciones de amor y la observación callejera en ese formato más acústico marca de la casa que hermana tristeza y

orgullo. Bruce, espabila, te adelantan por la derecha. **FIDEL OLTRA**



JOSEBA IRAZOKI
ETA LAGUNAK
Zu al Zara?

Bidehuts
Al igual que el Kaoss Pad que maneja, Joseba Irazoki sabe procesar las señales de entrada que emergen de su imaginario y los convierte en materia sonora con pasmosa sencillez. Pero, recordemos, el navarro no es una máquina, aunque lo parezca. Irazoki arriesga, como lo hacen Willis Drummond o Borrokan, bandas coetáneas y amigos a los que hace referencia el título — ojo al matiz: colegas no grupo —, amén de Jaime Nieto, ahora en Atom Rhumba, y gestiona las voces que le hablan en su cabeza

para convertir lo difícil en fácil —escuchen con los cascos «Gose Naizelarik»—; en equilibrar los mantras de psicodelia en pop («Gezurrezko Bizia»), escupir guitarras («Salbatzaileak»), seguir experimentando por el camino («AAAAA»), improvisaciones incluidas —la canción escondida del disco cristaliza estas facetas— e idas de olla («Zu al Zara II»). Solo en ese sibilino riff que abre el disco y el tema «Lucio eta Durutti», converge la creatividad de las guitarras a la que siempre le asocian, mirando al Nueva York de los setenta desde la merindad de Pamplona y alimentada de los eternos viajes, entre Francia y España o Latinoamérica, entre los que Joseba curte su carrera musical. Un elepe grabado entre gira y gira y que pone el rock hecho en Euskal Herria en cuotas artísticas dignas de este siglo. **ÁLVARO FIERRO**

JOHN HIATT
The Eclipse Sessions
New West-PIAS

Con Hiatt pasa lo mismo que con Mellencamp o Springsteen: es uno de los nuestros. Le profesamos tanta admiración que a menudo le juzgamos con indulgencia o sin el grado de exigencia que debería acompañar cualquier valoración crítica. Viene a cuento la reflexión porque sus últimas entregas, casi todas ellas muy alabadas aquí y en otras partes, no me parecen tan buenas como se ha venido diciendo. Un repaso concienzudo a *The Open Road* (2010), *Dirty Jeans and Mudslide Hymns* (2011), *Mystic Pinball* (2012) y *Terms of My Surrender* (2014) lo confirma. Cada uno de estos álbumes esconde tres o cuatro piezas indiscutiblemente “top”, pero la impresión de conjunto es de un cierto agotamiento. Algo parecido ocurre con *The Eclipse Sessions*, su álbum número veintitrés. Parcialmente grabado durante el eclipse solar total del 21 de agosto de 2017, de ahí viene el título, mantiene un nivel notable sin llegar a lo excepcional. Hiatt suena más relajado que de costumbre. Eso parece deberse a la naturaleza del material, principalmente tranquilo y reflexivo, y a los cambios en la silla de producción, ahora ocupada por Kevin McKendree en detrimento de Doug Lancia y Kevin Shirley, los dos hombres que han orquestado su sonido, con resultados desiguales, en la última década. La inmediatez de los cortes que abren la galleta, «Cry to Me» y «All the Way to the River», dos inconfundibles medios tiempos marca de la casa, nos trae de vuelta al John más estilista, ese que a finales de los ochenta facturaba melodías de adicción instantánea. El prometedor inicio tiene continuidad con la balada de aires tristes «Aces Up Your Sleeve», pero a partir de ahí la cosa pierde enjundia. «Poor Imitation of Good», «Over the Hill» y «Outrunning My Soul», blues-rock de tintes literarios correcto sin más, no te enloquecen de placer. El folk de «Hide Your Tears», aún dejándose disfrutar, se queda algo corto para un compositor cinco estrellas como el que nos ocupa y el blues de «The Odds of Loving You» no termina de estrujarte el alma pese al meritorio trabajo con la slide de Yates McKendree, hijo adolescente del mencionado productor (el chaval, un virtuoso de las seis cuerdas ya a los 17 años, supera con nota el reto de adornar las canciones, aunque no impide que echemos en falta a Sonny Landreth). No es hasta el último corte, el magnífico «Robber's Highway», que recuperamos la sonrisa tonta en la cara y nos quedamos imaginando como habría sido el disco si todos los temas hubieran sido tan redondos como este. **JORDI PUJOL NADAL**



BlackBook

Curated Arts, Culture and Entertainment

BLACKBOOK INTERVIEW + PREMIERE: Tav Falco Covers Grace Jones' 'Libertango', Broods Intensely About America

Posted on November 19, 2018 by Ken Scrudato



Images by Lucia Rossi, Paris

Tav Falco is one of the largest legends that you just may have never heard of. Once upon a time, he exploded out of the Memphis post-punk scene with his “art damage” band **Panther Burns**, combining American roots music with punk attitude, and arguably helping to lay the groundwork for the alt-Americana style that has become an internationally recognized genre unto itself – though his heart is still with the classics.

He would go on to have a prolific career as an iconoclastic musician, author, filmmaker and actor. Indeed, several of his films have been archived into the permanent collection of the **Cinémathèque Française** – in the same city of Paris in which David Lynch invited him in 2015 to perform at his exclusive **Club Silencio**. He’s just recorded a cover of Grace Jones’ post-disco – and slightly re-titled – classic “Strange (Libertango)” (which *BlackBook* premieres here), reimagining the song as a Gallic-gothic cabaret tune, surely intended to be performed at 3am in some dark, underground lair in the Pigalle. It’s taken from his unflinchingly political new album *Cabaret of Daggers*, which will be released via **ORG Music** first on limited edition yellow vinyl this Friday, November 23 (**Record Store Day**), and then on black vinyl and digitally on November 30.

We caught up with him for a take-no-prisoners conversation about American fascism, the Great American Songbook, and “the fateful caprice of tarot cards.”

You’ve been pretty vocal about the current administration. Was that a primary inspiration for *Cabaret of Daggers*?

I stand in absolute, unequivocal opposition to the current POTUS, and to the present iteration of the GOP in Congress. All around me I see unrest and division as I have not seen in America since the 1960s. When I see bigotry, betrayal and oppression flaunted by our oligarchic, white nationalist leadership, I must speak out. To remain silent and play the facile card of entertainment and fun is to be complicit. The new album actually includes my take on quite possibly America’s greatest ever protest song, “Strange Fruit.”

Indeed, you reach back to the Great American Songbook for this record. How do those songs “converse” with your new, pointedly political songs?

That Songbook is stuffed with all kinds of tunes, and protest music is not a stranger to it. I’m thinking of Woody Guthrie and his songs that kept the spirits of the working man alive during the Great Depression; Johnny Cash’s songs in support of Native Americans and our incarcerated brethren; and the anti-racist messages of Gil Scott-Heron. Even Bob Dylan put on a work shirt and sang great anthems of protest in his youth. There aren’t many contemporary songs being written that approach these lofty heights.

American roots music has always been central to who you are. Is it reasonable to say you were a nascent influence on what we now call “Americana”?

My music represents the “Americana” that most people are trying to forget about. I celebrate the outsider: the subversive, sexually and spiritually liberated America of free jazz and atonal squawks.

You’re living in Vienna now – what drew you there?

I produced a record by an Austrian band named Krüppelschlag. Then a charming fraulein who resembled a wood nymph from a Gustav Klimt painting entered the picture. Concurrent with that liaison, I was offered my own radio show on **ORF**, Austria’s national public radio network.

The new track “Red Vienna” is actually about the rise of fascism in Europe. Do you see parallels with what is happening in America now?

It’s about the fall of the monarch and the socialist eclipse that followed – interrupted only by the rise and defeat of the Third Reich. There are definite parallels with the fascist era in Europe and contemporary America. We hear the same populist rhetoric that attempts to unite the population with fear, bigotry and white nationalist hatred for those seemingly unlike themselves.

In composing “Red Vienna,” I thought not only of the historical and cultural events that have transpired over its long and magnificent – yet at times dismal – history. It is a grand capitol standing on the threshold between the East and the West. I also thought of the nature of revolution itself, whether openly declared or in covert development. I thought of how much we sacrifice in a revolution: there are gains, but also irretrievable losses. I thought of how style, eloquence and cordiality can deteriorate when striving towards notions of progress, liberation, and often, false modernity. Austria enjoyed a provisionally enlightened monarchy for a thousand years, yet there were also social problems and rampant inequality.



“New World Order Blues” is pretty blunt in its assessment of the world condition. Are we on the eve of destruction?

We are as close to the threshold of mutual destruction as I have been in my lifetime, and as close as the world has ever known. With strategic motives diametrically opposed to one another, self-serving autocrats have their giddy fingers on top of instant MAD – Mutually Assured Destruction – buttons.

Do you miss America at all?

It is not easy to miss that which you were never totally part of; for the artist, by his very nature, is an outsider. I have angst about America for all of the obvious reasons: its self-destructive, pathological violence, its racial exploitation, the purposeful dumbing down of its population, and its weapons of mass distraction. Our social fabric is unraveling with little chance of mending. What I miss about America is its freewheeling, vast imagination that knows no limits. I miss the America of Whitman and Thoreau, and of the Beat poets. I miss riding with saintly motorcyclists into the western sunset.

You actually recorded this album in Rome. How did that come together?

In August 2014, I ventured to Rome with the intention of recording an album with a stash of funds from a label in Glasgow. My band in Paris was not available. Mario Monterosso showed up at the studio with his guitar, Francesco D’Agnolo came from the conservatory with his keyboards, Riccardo Colasante came in later on drums, and Giuseppe Sangirardi joined on bass. This is the formation I have been playing with continuously since 2014. When I step outside the box and deconstruct a song or transform it into something unpredictable, or create a completely new piece, I can totally rely on my band to go right behind me. This is a new dimension for me and for the group.

Mario Monterosso is also the gifted producer of my last three albums. The contours and beauty of *Cabaret Of Daggers* are due to his remarkable aesthetic and harmonious understanding, and to his extraordinary musicianship.

You were never shy about the range of your artistic influences, drawing on the likes of dada, Antonin Artaud, Beat poetry and Burroughs.

After Panther Burns’ appearance at the [Memphis] Beale Street Blues Festival in May, the music critic for *The Memphis Commercial Appeal* wrote, “Tav Falco is nothing if not sincere.” That was written in the wake of the full ferocity of our encore, “New World Order Blues.” I live and breathe the art I create, there is no separation between my life and my art. For that reason I am convincing, if not painfully entertaining.

What’s left for you and for music in general to accomplish?

A lot. I am not going to speak about music in general – too vague, speculative, and ends up back where it began at the beginning of a vacuous circle of hollow conjecture. About my own work I can be specific. Presently, I am wrapping up the filming in Venice of the final entry in my *Urania Trilogy* of intrigue films. I’ve always been a fan of cinematic music, and the *Urania Trilogy* brings together many of the skills I’ve honed over the decades: storytelling, photography, directing, acting, staging, and music composition. These films flicker with the fateful caprice of tarot cards fingered in a Viennese bordello. They emerge as corporeal fables and offer cabalistic hygiene for vital elegance. I’ll be bringing the *Urania Trilogy* to America next year.





THE SHINDIG INTERVIEW: TAV FALCO (https://shindigmusic.net/shindig-interview-tav-falco/)

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📌 Tav Falco 1 (https://shindigmusic.net/tag/tav-falco/)

On Black Friday, the legendary country/psych/blues/rock outfit **Tav Falco's Panther Burns** (<http://www.tavfalco.com/home.html>) will release their new album *Cabaret of Daggers*. The band, originally based out of Memphis, are led by the brooding, deviant and uber-talented Tav Falco. Falco's life began in Philadelphia, but his family eventually moved to a farm in Gurdon — a rural town about 85 miles south of Little Rock — before he hit his musical groove in Memphis. He's been fronting the psychedelic Panther Burns since the late '70s, and *Cabaret of Daggers* will be the group's first studio output since 2015's *Command Performance*.

The album was tracked in Rome, where Falco lives, with vocal overdubs done at the legendary Sam Phillips Recording Service in Memphis. The band are set to tour the U.S. early next year in support of the album.

Falco chatted with Shindigmusic via e-mail recently about life, growing up in Arkansas and Memphis, the new record and more. You can purchase *Cabaret of Daggers* on Friday as part of a selection of curated releases for Record Store Day 2018. Remaining stock will be available to purchase online or at participating retailers.

Shindigmusic: First up, let's talk about the new album, *Cabaret of Daggers*, which is scheduled for a Record Store Day release. Your music is a great blend of psychedelia, country, blues and rock. Your lyrics use lots of symbolism with clever references to the twists and turns of life and relationships. What can we expect on *Cabaret of Daggers*?

Tav Falco: You can expect all that you mention: psychedelia, country blues, rock 'n/ roll, and, I might add, an original tango ("Nobody's Baby") written by a fan in Dresden. The album is rich with symbolism. There are metaphors of the 'jelly sellin' woman;' symbols of the hangman's noose, and the stench of burning flesh; there are garlands of roses with their scent intoxicating sailors and lovers on a summer day; the romantic iconography of the 'train' leaving the station with its cargo of grief and black smoke; the symbol of Morpheus leading us down into the dark, fertile underground; and there is the French icon of *Fantômas* – the Emperor, Lord Of Night, Master Of Chaos.



Shindigmusic: What, or whom, are the major contributing influences to your life and your music?

Tav Falco: At this point, there are many. There is no separation between my life and my work. I will cite artists and their oeuvre whether as individuals or collectively: Antonin Artaud and his Theater Of Cruelty; The Futurists; The Expressionists in art & cinema; Beat Poets; the Group Theater in New York; dancer Vaslav Nijinsky; actress Alla Nazimova; actor John Barrymore and his psychoanalytic characterization of Hamlet; film directors F.W. Murnau and Pier Paolo Pasolini; photographers Baron de Meyer and Berenice Abbott; musicians Eric Dolphy, Sun Ra, and David Amram; singers Billie Holliday, Anita Ellis, and PJ Proby; the tango orchestras of Carlos DiSarli and Francesco Cannaro.

Shindigmusic: We know you're very into the arts and culture. What are your thoughts on the current state of the arts and cultural scene?

Tav Falco: Depends on the art and culture to which you refer. As for the western world, our art is a reflection of our culture, which is in decline morally, spiritually, and artistically. Especially in America, the social fabric is in decay. With rare exceptions, we live in the ruins of a nobler era.

Shindigmusic: Do you have any favorite artists or authors?

Tav Falco: With some artists everything they touch is magical, like Salvador Dali. Then there is Andy Warhol, with whom I hung out in New York for the proverbial 15 minutes. Banksy. William Eggleston, who showed me how to make pictures. The late, incendiary Arkansas poet Randall Lyon. And among the best and most cerebral, Arkansas artist Buz Blurr, whom I consider to be the Woody Guthrie of conceptual art.

Shindigmusic: Do you have a favorite album or musical artist?

Tav Falco: Among my favorite albums is *Two Steps From The Blues* (Duke Records) by the incomparable Memphis soul singer Bobby Blue Bland. When I saw him and his orchestra live on stage in Memphis, I was transfixed by his divine tonalities and spirituality. When you hear Bobby Blue Bland sing, you understand what it *means* to be mistreated, and you are *convinced* of something far greater than the song.

Bobby Bland - Two Steps From The Blues



Shindigmusic: *You grew up on a farm near Gurdon and spent time in Fayetteville before heading to Memphis. What are some of your favorite memories about your time living in Arkansas?*

Tav Falco: In Clark County, Arkansas, between Whelen Springs and Gurdon, I lived with my parents on a farm of 52 acres. As I had no friends other than a pet deer, I created imaginary ones. Most days before sunset, I met them beside a little creek or brook running through a field in front of our house. They were a merry bunch, and we had good times laughing and cavorting in the tall grass by the running water. I told my mother that one day I would bring them home to meet her. In Fayetteville I had my first exposure to art, music, literature, and to the stage at the University Theatre. It was a rewarding, formative period, and I soaked in all I could from every direction. I felt inspired, yet this was the turbulent 1960s, and I eventually became psychedelized and entered a protracted period of experimentation.

Shindigmusic: *Did you ever see the “Gurdon Light” during your time down there?*

Tav Falco: Although I worked as a Missouri Pacific brakeman on that very railroad where a section gang foreman reputedly lost his head in a scuffle with someone wielding a coal scoop, I never encountered ‘Gurdon Light’. As much as I did search those rails around the Womble Crossing in the dark of night, I never saw it.

Shindigmusic: *On a Memphis level, that city’s music history seems to be getting a lot of nostalgia lately between Stax Records and the Big Star documentaries. Your work with Alex Chilton, along with just being immersed in that scene, how do you view the city now and your time spent there?*

Tav Falco: To answer that question in depth, I would refer you to my book on the topic, *Ghosts Behind The Sun: Splendor, Enigma and Death, Mondo Memphis Vol. 1*. It is a 450-page encyclopedic history and psychogeography of Memphis’ cultural underground and its demimonde. An intertext of the urban legends, rural fables, and literary clichés that have made the Bluff City simultaneously a metropolis of dreams and a necropolis of terrors. My time in Memphis was a creative one. It is where I joined forces with working artists and learned my trade. I had migrated from a cabin on Markham Hill to Memphis with all of my junk stuffed into a 1950 green Ford, with a ’48 Mercury V8 engine under the hood. I had the intention to become a photographer and a filmmaker in Memphis. In large part I did that, but in a decidedly non-commercial way. Out of frustration, I formed a rock ‘n’ roll band as Alex Chilton had urged me to do. My one and only band, Panther Burns, named after a legendary

plantation in Mississippi. The same plantation that the Arkansas poet Frank Stanford often alluded to in his epics. Fourteen albums later, and after countless tours, the Panther Burns beat has carried me around the world and opened many doors to creative and cultural landscapes I could hardly have imagined.

Shindigmusic: How did the culture of living in Memphis in the 70s influence you either politically or musically?

Tav Falco: Actually my purview on the '70s is that of a lost decade. With few exceptions, everything that was happening in Memphis then was coming from the underground. At least anything that interested me: country blues, free jazz, free verse, experimental film, a dream carnival of the mind, a montage of delirium emerging from a clandestine incubator of phenomenal fires. You would not earn 10 cents in Memphis stoking these fires. But that's OK. That's all right. I'm not in this for the money. I do what I do in spite of money, which depending on how you get it, and what you do with it, can be unsanitary. I'm in this for something else, and it is not for the glory of it. From my experience in Memphis, I have evolved into a Utopian Anarchist.

Shindigmusic: Finally, as we primarily cover the local, budding arts and music scene here, what advice would you give to a young musician or band who is just starting out?

Tav Falco: May I leave you with a couple of pieces of practical admonition? Something I picked up as a Gurdon Go-Devil: *a quitter never wins, and a winner never quits*. From the actor James Dean: *if you don't believe in yourself, nobody else will*. Lastly, as the rockabilly pioneer Charlie Feathers in Memphis advised me, *if you ain't doing something different, you ain't doing nothing at all*.

To learn more about Tav Falco, visit [tavfalco.com \(http://www.tavfalco.com/home.html\)](http://www.tavfalco.com/home.html).

ABOUT AUTHOR



Justin Bates

Justin co-founded FayetteSound in 2016 and ShindigMusic! in the summer of 2017. He is a Pearl Jam enthusiast and avid collector of music from all genres in all formats, with a particular preference for vinyl. He's the spouse of artist Stacy, of Stacy Bee Art fame.

ADD A COMMENT

The Strange Brew

british rock music from the mid 60s onwards – podcasts, features and much more

Tav Falco

*Since bursting on to the music scene four decades ago with the classic **Behind the Magnolia Curtain**, Tav Falco has slowly but consistently evolved from his early avant-hillbilly noise roots to what now encompasses a strange brew of Latin tango rhythms, Depression-era blues, haunting cabaret standards, and party-starting rock 'n' roll. He continues to push boundaries with the release of **Cabaret of Daggers**, quite possibly the most ambitious album of his career.*

Tav speaks to Jason Barnard about this artistic high point, his roots, working with Alex Chilton and the current incarnation of Tav Falco's Panther Burns.



Cabaret of Daggers seems to draw from a range of arts. ‘Nobody’s Baby’ for instance is a tango. Is this something you’ve aimed for on this album and more generally in your music?

My music has always drawn on a diverse selection of genres and Cabaret of Daggers is a continuation of that approach. The assemblage of songs on this record reflects a state of mind. The lyrical thrust of the originals is reaffirmed by the stylistic impulses of the compositions we cover.

Cabaret of Daggers is a mix of original material and interpretations of previously recorded tracks like the haunting ‘Strange Fruit’ and classic ‘Sugar Mama Blues’. How did you identify what tracks would be the right fit?

One could argue that the diversity of the material on the record is united by an overriding concept, but a concept has inherent limitations. Instead, I would say that the mood, ambience, and the persona of the artist are the forces unifying this album. After all, that is all that people are really interested in – the deconstructing eye of the artist stoked by the strange phenomenal fires within. Each selection on this record plays inextricably into the next. Goethe once said that art exists in selection.

Why did you choose Cabaret of Daggers as the LP’s title?

A cabaret is an informal and intimate theatre. It has a semi-rounded stage with a curtain and a spotlight casting a white glow on performers emerging from the relief of darkness. Here, songs and dances are performed before a discreet orchestra, and before an audience who comes for the lively arts of the crooner and the showgirl. After a long day of doing what they must do, and being what they must be, they come to the cabaret for amusement – arcane yet familiar, titillating yet cozy, thoughtful yet diverting, dazzling yet charming.

And daggers? Let me put it this way. Juan Carlos Copes and Maria Nieves were a celebrated tango couple in Buenos Aires (where I once lived). Late in her career, Nieves was asked what she thought about the younger tango dancers. She commented that there were many nice couples dancing new intricate figures, but where, she asked, were the daggers in their tango? These are the daggers that I bring to the cabaret. The kind of dagger that hangs in a sheath around the waist of Hamlet.

‘New World Order Blues’ covers current events and skewers Donald Trump. Do you usually comment on politics through your art or is it the extreme nature of the world today that’s led you to making a stand?

I lived through the turbulent 1960s and currently I see an equal degree of unrest and division. When I see bigotry, racism, betrayal, and oppression flaunted by our oligarchic, white nationalist leadership, I feel compelled to speak out. To remain silent is to be complicit. Everywhere I look, there is the murderous glint of man’s inhumanity to man. The New World Order will drag us down into the

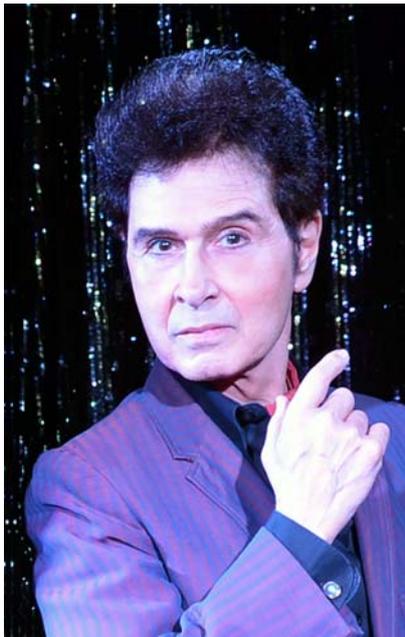
toilet and into the sewer if we let them get away with it. Like Jim Morrison said, they got the guns, but we got the numbers.

‘Sleep Walk’ works really well to follow ‘New World Order’. Was this a conscious decision to cover this track to mark a shift in tone on the album?

Even in the din of the storm or in the depthless void of narcotic recoil, there is always a space for lyrical tonalities and lush melody. One song seduces the other on this record, often in unexpected and erotic embrace.

Where did do you record the LP – was it a quick or lengthy process?

The germ of the album was conceived during a week of long winter’s nights in Memphis. I wrote lyrics through sunless hours while grass moaned under the weight of icy crystals outside. By springtime, the skeleton of the record was walking like a man. By April, we were recording the album at Terminal 2 Studio in Rome. The duration of the recording process was two and a half weeks, including rehearsals at La Conventicola degli Ultramoderni, where the cabaret photographs for the cover were made.



Can you introduce your current band?

Mario Monterosso is playing guitar, Francesco D’Agnolo is at the keyboards, Riccardo Colasante on drums, and Giuseppe Sangirardi plays bass. This is the formation I have been playing with continuously since 2014. When I step outside the box and deconstruct a song or transform it into something unpredictable, or create a completely new piece, I can totally rely on my band to go along right behind me. This is a new dimension for me and for the group.

Mario Monterosso is also the gifted producer of our last three albums. The contours and beauty of Cabaret Of Daggers are due to his remarkable aesthetic, harmonic understanding, and extraordinary musicianship. I can only compare his productions to those of Jim Dickinson and Alex Chilton. However, where they excelled, Mario is infallible.



Going back, can you tell me about growing up, your background and how/if this influences you?

I grew up in Clark County, Arkansas, between Whelen Springs and Gurdon. I lived with my parents on a farm of 52 acres. As I had no friends other than a pet deer, I created imaginary ones. Most days before sunset, I met them beside a little creek or brook running through a field in front of our house. They were a merry bunch, and we had good times laughing and cavorting in the tall grass by the running water. Later, in Fayetteville, I had my first exposure to art, music, literature, and to the stage at The University Theatre. It was a rewarding, formative period, and I soaked in all I could from every direction. I felt inspired, yet this was the turbulent 1960s, and I eventually became psychedelized and entered a protracted period of experimentation.

What artists, past and present do you admire and why?

Artists I might cite and their oeuvre whether as individuals or collectively: Antonin Artaud and his Theater Of Cruelty; The Futurists; The Expressionists in art & cinema; Beat Poets; the Group Theater in New York; dancer Vaslav Nijinsky; actress Alla Nazimova; actor John Barrymore in all his roles both tragic and comic; film directors F.W. Murnau and Pier Paolo Pasolini; photographers Baron de Meyer and Berenice Abbott; musicians Eric Dolphy, Sun Ra, and David Amram; singers Billie Holiday, Anita Ellis, and PJ Proby; the tango orchestras of Carlos DiSarli and Francesco Cannaro.

How did you get to meet Alex Chilton and what led to forming Tav Falco's Panther Burns? What was Alex like a person and musician?

I first encountered Alex behind the lens of a video camera at Sam Phillips Recording studio. I plainly saw that he was a singer, but I did not know who he was. Memphis is full of singers and guitar players. During the 1970s, and the eclipse of psychedelia, I retreated back to the realms of country blues and avant garde free jazz. In comparison with the '60s, for me what followed was a lost and vacuous decade, though a time for research and experimentation.

It was not until after I had picked up a second-hand Sears electric guitar, and had destroyed the instrument on stage at the grand Orpheum Theater at Main and Beale Streets, did Alex and I become acquainted, and soon after, collaborators. Alex urged me to form a band, and my one and only band resulted, the Panther Burns – named after a legendary plantation in Mississippi. The same plantation that Arkansas poet Frank Stanford alludes to in his epics. At the time I was playing a rudimentary form of country blues in the vein of RL Burnside, for whom I had recorded videos. I turned Alex on to my interest in blues – a genre in which he previously had little interest. He was enthralled with my cryptic, oblique, and roughly-hewn guitar playing. Alex showed me how to play some rock 'n' roll stuff – something I had never even considered, as it seemed to be real music of songbooks and playing within the complexity of a group.

Alex's own playing was among the most inventive of the handful of exceptional guitarists I have ever seen. The attack of his fingers on the fretboard expressed the convoluted, manic, exhilarating, sensitive, humorous, and often feral nature of his personality. He did not think of himself as such a guitarist, but I assured him that he was among the very best, and my personal favorite. As a singer, there was none better than Alex Chilton. He was the man of 1000 voices. When the Box Tops' "The Letter" was outselling the Doors' "Light My Fire," the Beach Boys tried to recruit him. During a trip to the west coast around this time, Alex met Charles Manson at the house of producer Terry Melcher (son of Doris Day).

For more on my time in Memphis, I would refer your readers to my **book Ghosts Behind The Sun: Splendour, Enigma, and Death — Mondo Memphis Vol. I** (Creation Books, 2011). It is a 450-page encyclopedic history and psychogeography of Memphis' cultural underground and its demimonde. I also have a second book, **An Iconography Of Chance: 99 Photographs Of The Evanescent South**, published by Elsinore Press.

What's your favourite material that you made together?

What I still play to this day every time I go on stage is the guitar solo Alex showed me for the rock 'n' roll tango "Drop Your Mask." We played it together on our very first show in a cotton loft in Memphis and recorded it on The World We Knew album (1987) at Phillips studio.

1981's Behind The Magnolia Curtain is an album that's particularly revered, including by Jon Spencer. Out of all of your albums, which LPs and songs are you most proud of?

Our new album, Cabaret Of Daggers, is the one I am most stoked about. This record contains all of the dramatic unities and the genres we are know for: rock 'n' roll, jazz, ballad, dirge, tango, deranged pop, and protest. Recurring themes are unrequited love, mistreatment, betrayal, brother-against-brother, hoodlums in government, the smoke of burning mansions, and liberation. What distinguishes the new album is the challenging nature of the material and the refinement of execution. I can play a blues like falling off a log, but to do justice to a Chet Baker ballad is another matter. There are songs on this album I had always admired, but never felt competent to undertake until we recorded them. I might add that the content on this record is something of a departure from what might be expected of my incendiary band, The Panther Burns. So much so, that we are presenting this as a solo album.

Which material is received best live today?

It is always hard to gauge what goes down best from the stage. How do you gauge? Is it how many dancer are moving on the floor, or how many people walk out, how much applause, how many jump up on the stage and tear off your clothes? We have evoked all of these responses. One can never be sure what someone in the audience will carry home with them. The residual effect is also critical. You can, however, sense when an audience is with you – breathing, sweating, hunching, howling, weeping, thinking with you. The encore of our current show, "New World Order Blues," has been eliciting a terrific response in all of these ways and generally leaves the crowd crying for more.

What are your plans as we go into 2019?

We hope there will be enough interest in Cabaret Of Daggers to warrant support tours on three continents because we are ready and raring to play them.

Cabaret of Daggers is available as a limited edition, yellow colored vinyl pressing of 750 copies worldwide. The standard black vinyl edition and digital download follow on November 30. Black vinyl and download can be purchased at atorgmusic.com See also Tav's website for further information tavfalco.com



ROCK
AND ROLL
GLOBE

REAL WRITING ABOUT REAL MUSIC.

Dark Cabaret Songs from Vienna

A conversation with Memphis maestro Tav Falco

November 28, 2018 J Poet



Tav Falco in Roma

Tav Falco never stands still. A restless, creative soul, he moved to Memphis from rural Arkansas in the late 1960s, intent on becoming an artist.

He began his career as a filmmaker and photographer but, at the urging of his friend Alex Chilton, he picked up a guitar and started Panther Burns. The band had an over-the-top, indefinable style some called Psychobilly, a term Falco finds abhorrent. “When it comes to my music, that odious term is not applicable,” he states strongly. “That term has come to denote a quasi-genre, but my work is far outside of that narrow purview. No adherents of that genre come to our shows, and they’re right not to, because there’d be little to interest them.”

Panther Burns played rockabilly, yes, but also blues, tango, pop, free jazz, noisy post-punk before the genre existed and, of course, rock’n’roll. Almost 40 years and 20 records later, Falco and Panther Burns are still going strong, with each new release demolishing musical and artistic boundaries. Falco moved to Vienna in the early 1990s, and still resides there, although his current incarnation of the band is composed of Italian musicians – Francesco D’Agnolo, keyboards; Giuseppe Sangirardi, bass; Riccardo Colasante, drums and guitarist, producer and arranger Mario Monterosso. The band’s latest album, *Cabaret of Daggers*, will be released on LP on Record Store day, Black Friday, November 23. Falco answered a few questions about his career from his home in Vienna.

You started your artistic career as a filmmaker and photographer. What led you to pick up the guitar?

I got hold of a second-hand \$5 Sears Silverstone guitar when I was a teenager, but I soon traded it for an open reel Webcor field tape recorder. Later in Memphis — during the time I was video recording artists, politicians and musicians with the TeleVista art-action group — I began to sense that there was no separation between the view from behind the camera and in front of the camera. I picked up another \$5 Silvertone guitar from a neighbor and began playing in the same rudimentary, hill country blues style of R.L. Burnside.

Why did you choose *Cabaret of Daggers* as the album title?

A cabaret is a theatre, informal and intimate. It has a semi-rounded stage with a curtain and a spotlight casting a white glow on performers emerging from the relief of darkness. Songs are sung and dances are danced before a discreet orchestra, for an audience that comes for the lively arts of the corner crooners, or for high-stepping showgirls, or for the

torch song tributes to loves won and lost. They come to the cabaret for amusement — arcane yet familiar, titillating yet cozy, thoughtful yet diverting, dazzling yet charming. And daggers? Let me put it this way. Juan Carlos Copes and Maria Nieves were a celebrated tango couple in Buenos Aires, where I once lived. Late in her career, Maria Nieves was asked what she thought about the younger tango dancers. She commented that there were many couples dancing new intricate figures, but where, she asked, were the daggers in their tango? These are the daggers — lost & found — that I bring to the cabaret. It's the kind of dagger that hangs in a sheath, from a silver chain, around the waist of Hamlet.

You include a couple political songs on this album. Can you say a few words about “New World Order Blues”?

I see unrest and division as I have not seen in America since the 1960s. I am a product of that turbulent era. When I see bigotry, racism, betrayal, and oppression flaunted by our oligarchic, white nationalist leadership, I must speak out. To remain silent and play the facile card of entertainment and diversion is to be complicit. I, alongside my humane, intelligent, critical-thinking brethren, will speak out and we will take action! Everywhere I look there is the murderous glint of man's inhumanity to man. Sure we get down and pray, we rub one another's hump, we praise the gods, we praise the politicians, we pin medals on soldiers. But at the same time we cut off our own arms and legs and those of our children. The New World Order will drag us down into the toilet, if we let the oligarchic elite get away with it. Like Jim Morrison said, “They've got the guns, but we got the numbers.”

The album is being released on vinyl and download, but not on CD. Do you still listen to records? What does vinyl have that digital recordings lack?

Like quite a few musicians I know, most of my stuff resides in storage units, one here (in Vienna) and one in Arkansas. That is where my turntable is stashed. My preference for listening is analogue tape and vinyl played back through analogue tube amplifiers. If I ever get to unpack in my lifetime, I will listen in this way. Analogue provides warmth of tone and background ambient ‘noise’ that most resembles natural acoustics. Vinyl produced today has the benefit of higher quality material than previously, and the mastering technology and playback options are better than ever. There is a small company in Tulln an der Donau, Austria, that has just announced a breakthrough in vinyl mastering and manufacturing technology. Vinyl has fast become the new standard in Europe.



Tav Falco outside Fleetwood's Rock n Roll Party

You sound more like a crooner than a rocker on this album. Would that be accurate?

Depends on how you define a rocker and what you call a crooner. Although I might admire a crooner such as Dean Martin, I will never sing with his ease. He loathes to 'sing serious'. I can appreciate that. Comedy is more demanding than tragedy. What I can do is

sing a ballad, a blues, a tango. I'm also equipped to sing rock 'n' roll and to play guitar behind it in my own perverse way.

You're an actor as well as a singer. What do the performance styles have in common?

An actor and a singer both have to invest a notion, whether a musical or a theatrical piece, with living and breathing animation. Both must invent characterization and invest that with their persona. Truly, all that anyone is interested in from an artist is the persona. Both actor and singer deal with pitch, rhythm, and form. Both must be convincing, and both must be prepared to do one another's job.

What's a live show like for you? How will these songs differ from the recording when you play them live?

Good questions. A live show is a compressed, heightened, moment of expression suspended in time. Its most fertile moments are spontaneous and unrehearsed. On stage before a live audience, these recorded songs will become freer, more unpredictable, yet more in control. Within a few performances, these songs will take on a life of their own in which the band and I are merely participants.

What has been your biggest challenge as an artist?

Staying focused and drawing all that I can possibly dredge up out of my inner coils. It's a matter of expressing the creative impulses that loom up from the dark waters of the unconscious. Technique can be learned well enough, but the ineffable cannot be learned. It must be lived.

Tav Falco Salutes 'Girl Group' the Jaynetts With "Sally Go 'Round the Roses" (premiere)

JEDD BEAUDOIN

20 Nov 2018

Photo: Maria Freitas / Courtesy of Prime Mover Media

Cabaret of Daggers is the new release from **Tav Falco** and the veteran rocker's first since 2015. The record arrives on Record Store Day (November 23) via ORG Music on limited edition yellow vinyl. The record will have wider release by the following week, including digital and standard black vinyl.

To celebrate, **Falco** has issued a cover (backed by his longtime band, Panther Burns) of the 1963 hit from the Jaynetts, "Sally Go 'Round The Roses." This rendition is an excellent hybrid of punk and pure rock 'n' roll, creating a fusion that at times seems surreal. One is reminded of Suicide and Alex Chilton's experimental post-Big Star work but **Falco**, of course, remains his own man, a singular force who walks a line between sweet, sentimental and sinister.

Chilton was a founding member of Panther Burns in the early 1980s when the group often shared the stage at clubs such as Danceteria and the Peppermint Lounge. Though Chilton checked out of the group by 1984, Falco continued to record and tour, garnering the attention of director David Lynch, who invited Tav and his Panthers to play Club Silencio in Paris in 2015.

Falco's CV is as impressive as one could want from an underground superhero. In addition to chumming with Chilton, Falco worked as an assistant to famed Memphis

photographer William Eggleston in the 1970s and ran with William S. Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Kenneth Anger and a host of others most would like to invite to a holiday dinner party.



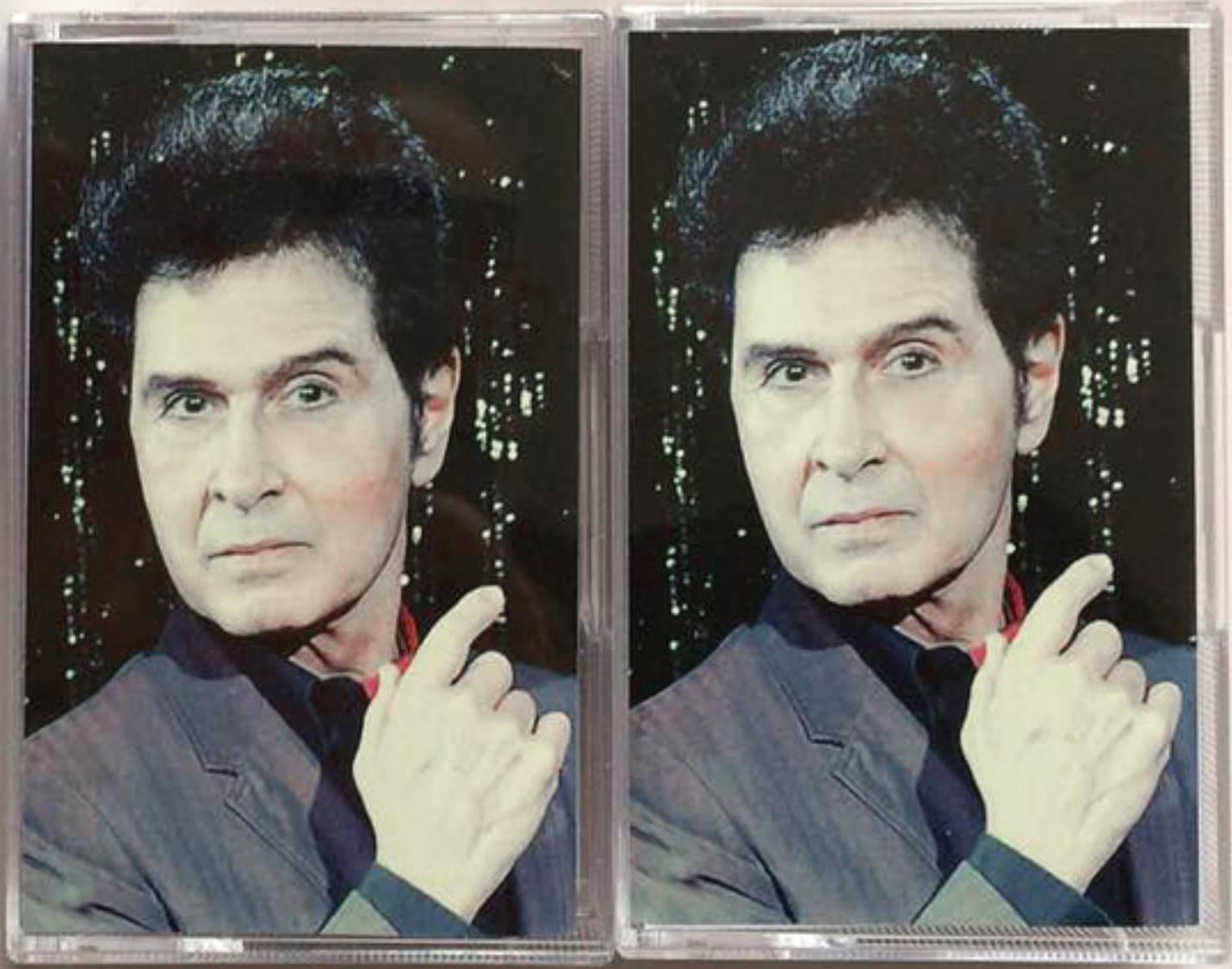
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LOUNTER LUTURE CHRONICLE 20 / HOK 1



Tav Falco delivers European sound to Beale Street Music Festival

The Commercial Appeal | Published 5:33 p.m. CT May 5, 2018 | Updated 10:26 a.m. CT May 6, 2018

Beale Street Music Festival: Saturday Performances performances



(Photo: Yalonda M. James/The Commercial Appeal)
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It's a safe bet that no artist in the history of the Beale Street Music Festival had cited both Pee Wee's Saloon on Beale Street and France's "Fantomax, the *fin de siècle* demon of popular literature" before Tav Falco.

It's also likely that no previous performer had delivered this admonition to an engineer, during sound check: "Can you make that drum sound less like a rock drum and more like a circus drum?"

Now located in Vienna, Austria, the better to add Euro-sophistication to his blues-punk-rockabilly repertoire, the Arkansas-born art-rock mage who became an icon of unpopular culture and underground rock-and-roll in Memphis in the late 1970s and '80s returned to the city of his rebirth to open the second day of this year's musicfest with a 70-minute performance on the Bud Light Stage.

Backed by the skilled latest incarnation of his band, the Unapproachable Panther Burns, which for this show was augmented by Memphis keyboardist Alex Greene, Falco was a nonstop photo op in his pointed shoes, jet-black pompadour and burnished Italian silk suit. (The current members of the Panther Burns hail from Italy, although bassist Giuseppe Sangirardi — with his Paul McCartney-style Hofner “Beatle bass” and skinny-tied black suit — looked more like a refugee from the British Invasion.)

Whether striking fixed heroic poses, bumping-and-grinding the microphone stand, abandoning his guitar for extended I-dreamed-I-was-Fred Astaire terpsichorean sorties, or dropping to his knees and folding his hands in prayer while facing in the direction of the musical mecca of Beale, Falco held the attention of even those born long after the heyday of his former stomping grounds, Midtown’s storied punk club, the Antenna, when Falco’s brand of “art-damaged” rock was shunned by Memphis in May promoters.

Appropriately if unfortunately, the crowd at first was not much larger than what one would find on an average night at the Antenna; but people — perhaps sensing an opportunity for a uniquely Memphisean experience — continued to gather as the show progressed.

In addition to missing a woozy cover of Wanda Jackson’s “Funnel of Love,” late-comers missed such homey moments as Falco’s onstage introduction by Panther Burns founding drummer Ross Johnson — “Once my employer, now my friend,” Johnson said.

The Panther Burns set was heavy on what Falco referred to as “deconstructed” covers of classic Memphis recordings by Charlie Feathers, Memphis Minnie and the late Panther Burns co-founder, Alex Chilton. Original compositions, meanwhile, tended toward subject matter that was pre-rock and outré: There were paeans to Marie Laveau, the Creole voodoo priestess; Fantomas, “the genius of torture, the master of chaos”; and Rome’s gardens of the Medicis, which date to the 16th century.

However, Falco ended the show on an entirely timely — even urgent — note. Ignoring the stage manager’s warning that he needed to wrap up the set in three minutes, Falco introduced an epic Panther Burns protest song, “New World Order Blues,” inspired by the current occupant of the White House.

The lyrics were pointed enough, but an essentially spoken-word interlude during the performance enabled Falco to condemn the president (whose name remained unsaid) as “our degenerate-in-chief” and an “orangutan-diaper of malignant rage” who “endorses pedophiles” and “praises lethal dictators” and neo-Nazis. If a resident of Austria can’t issue such a warning, who can?

Memphis Flyer



Beale Street Music Festival 2018: Saturday

by [Chris McCoy](#)
May 06, 2018

Nothing was going to stop the near sellout crowd in Tom Lee Park from having a good time on the second day of the 2018 Beale Street Music Festival.



Sunset over Tom Lee Park.

The day started early for Memphis music fans, with Chinese Connection Dub Embassy and Tav Falco & Panther Burns starting ten minutes apart on two of the festival's three main stages. CCDE greeted the crowds trickling into the park with a strong beat, and they responded with an ecstatic sing along to their song "Heavy Meditation".

We then hoofed it the quarter mile or so to the Bud Light stage where Memphis punk legend Tav Falco was holding court. The current touring incarnation of the immortal Panther Burns is a much tighter and more conventional band than the musical terrorists who set the standard for Midtown punk in early 1980s, but compared to the other acts on offer they were still bracingly raw. Sitting in on keys was Memphis Flyer music editor Alex Greene.



Tav Falco and Panther Burns tear it up on the Bud Light stage.

Falco was spry, loose, and utterly confident as he switched freely from shockabilly wildman to tango sophisticate. When he left the stage, the entranced crowd called for an encore, much to the visible consternation of the stage manager who called time as Falco returned for his victory lap. But the beleaguered staffer did not know who he was dealing with. He could only look on helplessly as Panther Burns held the stage with a blistering rendition of "New World Order Blues". Falco spit fire, poetically condemning Trump and the current state of America as the crowd egged him on. It was only the second act of the day, but already I had added to my list of all time great Beale Street Music Festival performances.

Keys And Chords NEWSBLOG

TAV FALCO'S PANTHER BURNS BRING A 'TOUCH OF LA DOLCE VITA' TO THE U.S.

5/4/2018



FOLLOWING SESSIONS IN ROME FOR A FORTHCOMING ALBUM, THE INTERNATIONAL BAND OF MUSICAL GYPSIES KNOWN AS TAV FALCO'S PANTHER BURNS ARE PRIMED TO BEDAZZLE U.S. AUDIENCES WITH THE GROUP'S STORIED BLEND OF AMERICAN AVANT-ROOTS ROCK, FLAMBOYANT PERFORMANCE STYLE, AND UNABASHED FUN

Falco's Band for the Dates Includes Producer/Guitarist Mario Monterosso (Dale Watson, Red Mount Trio) and Francesco D'Agnolo.

* TOUR DATES *

5/2: Little Rock, AR – White Water Tavern / TICKETS

5/4: New Orleans, LA – d.b.a. (7:00 PM show) / INFO

5/5: New Orleans, LA – d.b.a. (1:00 AM show with Quintron & Miss Pussycat) / INFO

5/5: Memphis, TN – Beale Street Music Festival w/ Jack White, Franz Ferdinand / TICKETS

5/6: Atlanta, GA – The Earl / TICKETS

5/7: Knoxville, TN - Pilot Light / TICKETS

5/8: Newport, KY – Southgate Revival House / TICKETS

5/9: Asheville, NC – Mothlight / TICKETS

5/10: Richmond, VA – Bandito's / INFO

5/11: Philadelphia, PA – Kung Fu Necktie / TICKETS

5/12: Rochester, NY – Abilene / INFO

5/13: Kingston, NY - The Beverly Lounge / INFO

5/14: Somerville, MA – Once / TICKETS

5/15: Brooklyn, NY - El Cortez / TICKETS

5/16: Buffalo, NY - Mohawk Place / INFO

5/17: Toledo, OH - Ottawa Tavern / TICKETS

5/18: Neenah, WI - Short Branch Saloon / INFO

5/19: Rock Island, IL - RIBCO / INFO

5/20: Grand Rapids, MI - Tip Top Deluxe / INFO

5/21: Chicago, IL - Reggies / INFO

5/22: Green Bay, WI - Lyric Room @ Keggers / INFO

5/25: Nashville, TN - Nashville Boogie & Vintage Weekender / INFO

Arkansas avant-roots icon Tav Falco brings his legendary and ever-changing Panther Burns back to the U.S. for live dates this May. Having recently completed sessions in Rome for a new album, the touring lineup of Panther Burns will feature the same Italian players from the album: musical director/producer/guitarist Mario Monterosso (Dale Watson, Red Mount Trio), keyboardist Francesco D'Agnolo (session player for legendary film composer Ennio Morricone), bassist Giuseppe Sangiradi, and drummer Riccardo Colasante. Monterosso and D'Agnolo have been key members of Falco's ensemble since his 2015 album *Command Performance*.

Robert Palmer declared of Falco in *The New York Times*, "He is a singer, guitarist and researcher of musical arcane who hasn't let his idiomatic mastery and increasing technical expertise compromise the clarity of his vision." Writing in industry trade *Variety*, Deb Sprague stated "Tav Falco has spent much of the past two decades crafting a revisionist pop culture history. He was post-modern when post-modern wasn't cool."

Raised in rural Arkansas, Falco embarked on his long and distinguished musical career upon arriving in Memphis in the mid-1970s. Teaming up with local music legend Alex Chilton (The Box Tops/Big Star) in 1978, the duo formed the long-running Tav Falco's Panther Burns. Despite Chilton's exit from the live lineup in 1984, Panther Burns carried on and the band's current discography includes ten studio LPs and numerous EPs, live albums, and compilations. A frequent participant in the early '80s club scene at The Peppermint Lounge and Danceteria in New York City, Tav Falco's Panther Burns continue to be the standard bearers of an evocative mélange of Southern Gothic-tinged roots rock that encompasses RnR, country, blues, tango, beat poetry, exotica, and performance art.

Living in Vienna, Austria, for the past decade, Falco has been exceptionally active in the 21st century. In addition to having recorded and released a myriad of albums, EPs and 7" singles, he has authored a pair of books for Elsinore Press and directed his first feature film. The books are *Ghosts Behind the Sun: Splendor, Enigma & Death: Mondo Memphis Volume 1* (2011) and *An Iconography of Chance: 99 Photographs of the Evanescent South* (2016). Tav's debut feature film, *Urania Descending* (2015), was the first in a proposed trilogy of films. Its synopsis: "An alienated and disaffected American girl, played by Falco's paramour Gina Lee, impulsively buys a one-way ticket to merry Vienna. In the cafe society demimonde of the imperial city, she becomes embroiled in an intrigue to uncover Nazi plunder buried in Lake Atter." The film received favorable notices and, after having premiered at David Lynch's Club Silencio in Paris, *Urania Descending* went on to be screened at Anthology Film Archives in New York and The Egyptian Theatre in Los Angeles, among other cities. An IndieGoGo campaign to raise funds for the second entry in the trilogy wrapped in December.

In December 2017, Gina Lee released a book of her tour photos, *This Could Go On Forever: On the Road with Tav Falco & Panther Burns* (Elsinore Press).

Tav Falco is one of the truly original and romantic forces in American music — the voice that America lost and found. He is tender and virile, flamboyant, witty and dangerous. Falco brings daggers back to the stage.



BEALE STREET MUSIC FESTIVAL 2018: DAY 2 RECAP

Submitted by - [Tom Joens](#) on Tue, 05/15/2018 - 7:49 am

David Byrne | Beale Street Music Festival | photos by Phillip Solomonson

[Tav Falco & the Panther Burns](#) is a legendary band who is relatively unknown outside of Memphis. They played the first set on Saturday afternoon on the Bud Light Stage at the [Beale Street Music Festival](#) as part of their "Conamination" tour - what a treat it was, for both long-time fans who were happy to see their heroes again, and for the curious who had no knowledge about the band.

Tav Falco & the Panther Burns' set was introduced on Saturday as consisting of the two original members of the band who "are still above the ground." Formed in 1979 in Memphis by Tav Falco and the late great Alex Chilton (lead singer of the Box Tops and Big Star), a book could be written about the Panther Burns' storied history with the Cramps and other similar acts from back in the day.



Tav Falco & the Panther Burns | Beale Street Music Festival

On stage, Falco was reminiscent of an early Elvis, with choreographed moves that were inspired and fresh. Opening with a cover of "Green Onions" and on stage for over an hour, Falco and his furious band played a style of music that might be characterized as voodoo rockabilly with a Memphis/New Orleans spin, or maybe not.

Falco was dressed impeccably, he never even unbuttoned his suit jacket, and Falco made sure to comb his pompadour before he reappeared on stage for his encore. If there is such a thing as "beyond cool," Falco fits the bill. He played homages to several musicians, which made sense given the long and storied history of Panther Burns. Falco also played music from the band's latest release, which was about the fourteenth album the bank is releasing.



Tav Falco | Beale Street Music Festival

Although Falco was born in Philadelphia, grew up in rural Arkansas and was based in Memphis for a while, Falco has lived in Europe for about the last ten years, currently living in Vienna, Austria. Because of the early set time, the crowd for Tav Falco & the Panther Burns was not as large as the band deserved, but those who were there walked away impressed.

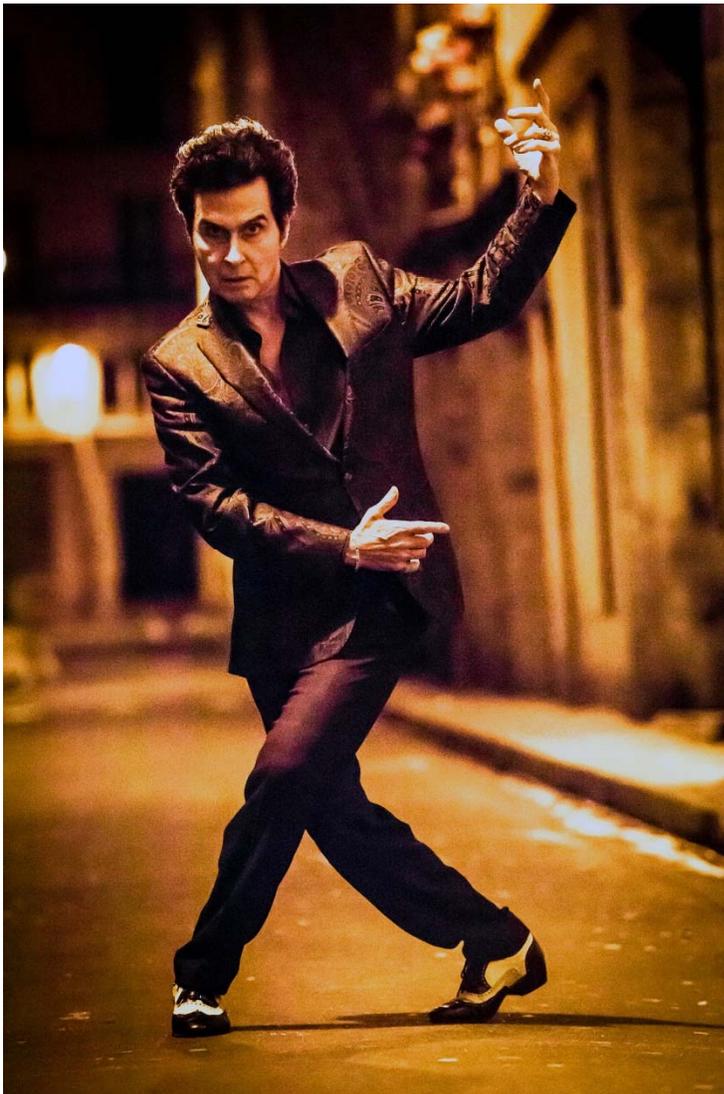
CityBeat

Sound Advice: Tav Falco's Panther Burns with All-Seeing Eyes (May 8)

Underground Memphis music legend comes to Newport, Ky.'s Southgate House Revival

MIKE BREEN

MAY 1, 2018 11 AM



Tav Falco PHOTO: LUCIA ROSSI, PARIS

Though he was born in Philadelphia, raised in Arkansas and has often lived in Europe in recent decades, Memphis is the city most tied to the legacy of underground Rock hero Tav Falco. When he moved to the city in the early '70s, he experimented with performance art, photography and filmmaking, the latter of which led to an artistic awakening. Shooting footage of Tennessee musicians like R.L. Burnside and Charlie Feathers, Falco became intrigued by Blues, Rockabilly and musical performance in general. Falco made his public debut as a “musician” in 1978 while doing performance art and dancing at a concert in Memphis by Jim Dickinson’s Mud Boy & the Neutrons, famously ending his appearance by chain-sawing his guitar onstage and then (allegedly) passing out.

That origin story is befitting of his eventual legacy. Falco is now named alongside bands like The Cramps and The Gun Club as innovators of a style of music that exploded the Blues and Rockabilly and then revived it by injecting 10,000 CCs of Punk-Rock spirit and avant-garde deconstructionism into its heart. Tav Falco’s Panther Burns was formed (with Big Star’s Alex Chilton, who was fresh off of producing The Cramps’ first singles) in 1979, and Falco’s work would go on to inspire Jack White, Jon Spencer, Primal Scream, Spacemen 3 and an innumerable number of Garage Rock musicians.

The band released its major label debut/swan-song in 1982, but Falco has kept Panther Burns alive with a rotating lineup ever since, releasing music and touring the world while also still working in film and other media. Late last year saw the release of *A Tav Falco Christmas*, a collection of holiday classics Panther Burned by Tav and a band that included Minutemen/firehose bassist Mike Watt.



[Plaza San Juan](#) / Irun | Fecha: **29 septiembre, 2018** | Promotor: **Men Of Rock**

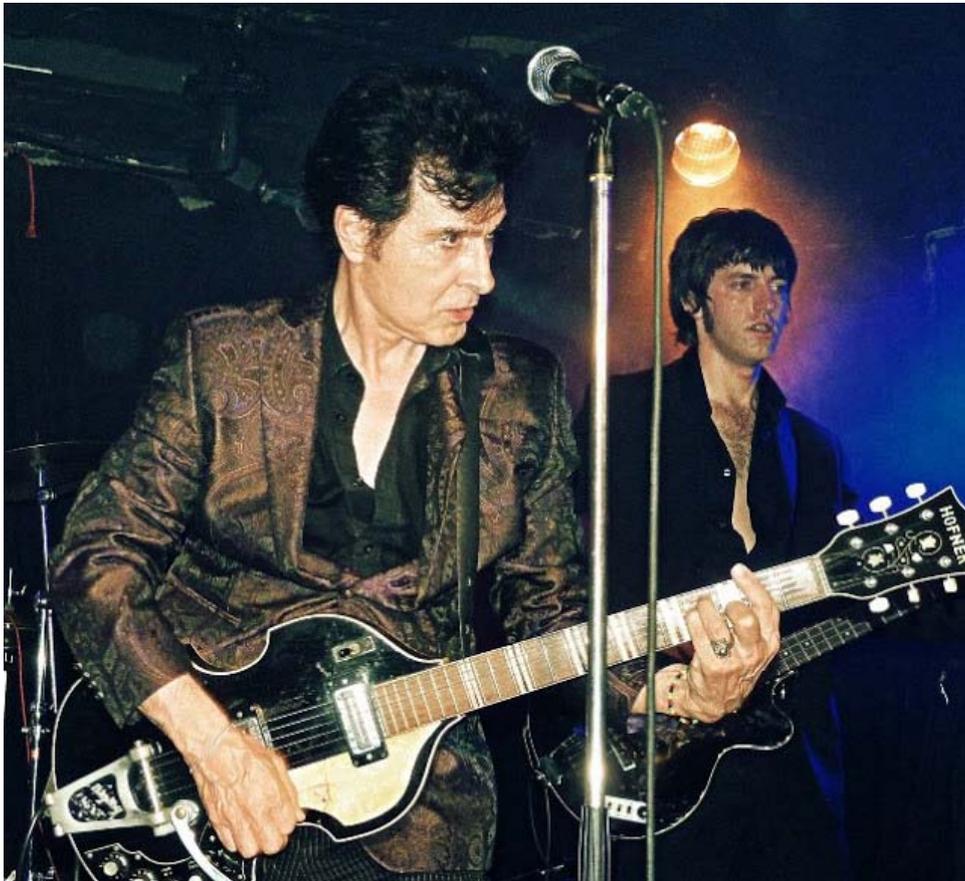
Irun despidió septiembre de la mejor manera posible, con la novena edición del festival **Irun Rock**, ya consagrado en la ciudad fronteriza. Diez bandas divididas en dos escenarios en plena Plaza de San Juan, que se llenó de buena música y gran ambiente, para una jornada redonda en la que meteorología y público acompañaron.

Y vuelta a Memphis para escuchar a **Tav Falco & The Panther Bruns** (foto inferior), uno de los indiscutibles platos fuertes del festival. De riguroso negro, y todos salvo Falco con gafas de sol, volvían a Euskal Herria un año después de pasar por Gasteiz y Bilbao. Fueron habladores, apelaron una y otra vez al público, y dejaron una ristra de buenos temas. Los estadounidenses llevan décadas pateándose los escenarios y conocen todos los entresijos de los directos, como en la introducción instrumental en la que Falco bailó al son de sus compañeros.

Tuvieron un buen sonido, y una amplia paleta con espacio para momentos rockabilly, swing, country, blues y tributar la archiconocida "Sway" de Dean Martin y "Me and my chauffeur Blues" de Memphis Minnie, a quien Falco reconoció idolatrar -momento en el que aprovechó para peinar su impoluto tupé. A falta de un cuarto de hora se dio cuenta de que solo contaban con una hora y no 90 minutos como él pensaba. Esos últimos 15 minutos fueron frenéticos. Pequeño pero matón. Y bailarín.

Con Tav Falco & Panther Burns (crónica concierto Loco Club, 27-9-2018)

Juanjo 'Johnny JJ' 28.9.18 conciertos , JJ , Tav Falco



Concierto: **Tav Falco & Panther Burns**

Lugar: **Loco Club (Valencia)**

Fecha : **27 de Septiembre del 2018**

...su parecido físico actual con el diestro Ortega Cano, unido a esos pasos o movimientos en su performance que en algún momento evocaron incluso al Chiquito de la Calzada, y una especie de psychobilly tan cercano a Link Wray como a los Cramps, dotaron al espectáculo de una autenticidad y originalidad inusual...

Por **Juanjo 'Johnny JJ'**

El legendario **Tav Falco**, junto a sus **Panther Burns**, dio una lección de sinceridad y honestidad musical, de esas que en los últimos tiempos se ven de uvas a peras en un estilo tan personal como es el suyo. Alrededor de medio centenar de afortunados asistentes nos congregamos en el **Loco Club de Valencia** para ver a una leyenda viva, un músico de culto que sobrevive con dignidad a través de las décadas.

Como bien me apuntaba mi tocayo Frontera sobre su parecido físico actual con el diestro Ortega Cano, unido a algunos pasos o movimientos en su performance que en algún momento evocaron incluso al Chiquito de la Calzada, y una especie de psychobilly tan cercano a **Link Wray** como a los **Cramps**, dotaron al espectáculo de una autenticidad y originalidad inusual. A ello habría que sumar cierta arrogancia e ironía marca de la casa.

Fue precisamente esa especie de pose excéntrica cual si hubiese salido del celuloide clásico, muy estudiada para cada una de las canciones de un repertorio que recorrió buena parte de su trayectoria, la que se convertiría en razón de peso para seducir a los allí congregados hasta quedar embriagados con su amalgama de estilos entre rockabilly, garage, punk, e incluso blues, swing o hasta tango.

Me quedo con muchos momentos, empezando por un clásico ochentero como **"Where the Rio de Rosa flows"**, noventero como **"Make me know you're mine"** o un tema más reciente como **"Memphis ramble"**, aunque esas versiones del **"Funnel of love"** de Wanda Jackson o el **"Bangkok"** de **Alex Chilton**, con el que mantuvo tanta admiración mutua, serán difíciles de olvidar.

Pues eso, estamos ante un genio oculto, un crooner atípico para minorías privilegiadas, que desde su segunda división es cosa seria y que, sobre todo, dignifica esto que llaman rock 'n' roll. Larga vida a **Tav Falco**, que vuelva pronto con sus panteras ardientes y a ver si a la próxima conseguimos ser unos cuantos más los que lo disfrutemos.

** Todas las imágenes incluidas son del archivo personal del redactor JJ. El vídeo a cargo de Alfredo Beltran.*

[Blogin Inthewind](#)

September 27, 2018 at 3:39 PM Seville



Carmen Bueno Russo 2018 Seville

El último dandy de Philadelphia nos visitó anoche y nos ofreció en la sala X un concierto que dejó contento a todo el mundo porque supo seducirnos con su elegancia en la interpretación y su amplio abanico de estilos a pesar de algunos altibajos en la ejecución de las mutaciones sensuales de su amplio repertorio y de un sonido que nos hizo llegar una voz demasiado terrosa y turbia durante la primera mitad del concierto y un exceso de reverb que hacía parecer en algunas de las ocasiones más instrumentales que escuchábamos un disco con fallos de velocidad. Pero nada que Tav no supiese superar con su enorme poder de absorción, que es cosa casi de brujería, como la que practicaba la mítica reina bruja de New Orleans, Marie Laveau, a la que rindió homenaje en una de las primeras canciones, "About Marie Laveau". Para entonces ya habían sonado la intro de la banda, que me perdí casi por completo debido a la cola para entrar (todos queremos entrar a la vez, no escarmentamos 😊:) 😊:)), y ya Tav armado con su característica Hofner, que casi parece más una viola que una guitarra, el "Funnel of love" de Wanda Jackson y el "Breakway" de Tony Basil, con la que demostró que además de todos los estilos que ya le conocíamos, el northern soul tampoco tiene secretos para él. Luego nos hizo olvidar a Carl Perkins y Jimmy Lloyd con su "Where the Rio de Rosa flow". Hasta aquí todo fue un calentamiento previo tanto de su voz como de sus caderas, que se movían como si sus coreografías se las hiciese el mismo que se las hace a Raphael, y el punto final a las contemplaciones llegó con "Sway", el mambo de Dean Martin, que todos en la sala coreaban con la letra que conocemos en español... "¿quién será la que me quiera a mí... quién será... quién será...?". A partir de ahí las guitarras comenzaron a atropellarse, el bajo a cortar el aire y la batería a atronar, porque Tav entró en los lujuriosos terrenos del blues. El "Make me know

you're mine" de Conway Twitty fue el primer momento en el que vi al Tav Falco verdaderamente genuino de aquel LP de promoción del que os hablaba ayer. Pero tanta intensidad seguida está reñida con 73 años de excesos y había que levantar un poco el pie del acelerador de nuevo; un "Garden of Medicis" con ritmos de Italia, el país del que son originarios los tres miembros de la banda de Tav, y un "Drop your mask" que sirvió sobre todo de diversión para el propio cantante, que abandonó la guitarra por un rato y se marcó un tango que hubiese ganado mucho si sube al escenario a alguna de las chicas de las primeras filas como partenaire. La solemnidad de Graceland estuvo presente en "He'll have to go", una canción que le hemos escuchado a Elvis, a Jim Reeves, a Ry Cooder, y que Tav Falco disuelve con su aire de desvergonzado cosmopolita que, sin solución de continuidad, da paso a una versión inflamable de "My and my chauffeur blues" para la que cambia de nuevo la guitarra por un peine, con el que se echa tól pelo p'atràs con el fin de convertirse en Memphis Minnie y bajar luego lentamente el pistón de nuevo con sus "Go on home" y "Rue de la lune". A partir de ahí Tav Falco y sus Panteras fueron un alud; la cruda adaptación del "Bangkok" de Alex Chilton es frenética, el "Lotus blossom" es una canción biliosa del gusto de los fans de Tav Falco y el "Jungle fever" de Charlie Feathers es el vehículo perfecto para el lucimiento general. Convertida en un crazy rock'n'roll que solo tiene sentido en un lugar del hony tonk sevillano como es la [SALA X](#), nos dejó muestras sobre todo de un bajo prodigioso en manos de Giuseppe (al que no conozco de nada ni hablé anoche con él, pero esta mañana me he encontrado en mi Facebook una petición de amistad suya, que he aceptado, claro... hey, [Giuseppe](#), good afternoon!) y de como los asistentes son capaces de ponerse de acuerdo para corear, guiados por Mario, el guitarrista, los oooooohs del estribillo, muertos de risa... ahora las mujeres solas... ooooooh ooooooh ooooooh... ahora los tíos... ooooooh ooooooh ooooooh... ahora tó la peña junta... ooooooh ooooooh ooooooh... una fiesta final que devino en un caos, del que Tav Falco es un maestro. De ahí la canción del final del set: "Master Of Chaos", dinamitaailable con guitarras esquizoides.

Para el bis salió la banda sola, con una adaptación instrumental en clave de rock muy paranoica del "Malafemmena" que cantaba Renato Carosone, a la que se unió más tarde Tav para terminar en loor de multitud, paseándose entre el público, explosivo y derrochando un poder que le pasó factura, para terminar cantando entre golpes de tos el "New world order blues" con el que terminaron el concierto.

Los ataques de nostalgia le llevan a uno, como fue anoche mi caso, a cambiar un Sevilla-Real Madrid que resultó ser pura fiesta, por un concierto de Tav Falco; y aunque, como os dije al principio, tuvo algunas caídas dignas de montaña rusa, no me arrepiento de haberlo hecho, porque Tav Falco y sus Panther Burns supieron poner el remedio mágico a la noche con su revitalizada arqueología musical, que sabe compaginar con un sentimiento que te atrapa. Cuando se es tan accesible como fantasmal no son necesarias obras maestras, basta con un soberano y magistral repertorio de oscuridades firmadas por venerables desconocidos para salir del concierto con la cabeza todavía restallando.

[Arts & Culture](#) » [Music](#)

Live Music in the Hudson Valley | May 2018

By [Peter Aaron](#)

Check out these five music events in the Hudson Valley—from pop and jazz, there's a little something for any music fan to enjoy.

Tav Falco's Panther Burns | May 13



Alberto Garcia-Alix, Madrid

The Beverly is the perfect place to host Ulster County's first visit from the suave sultan of Southern Gothic rockabilly/garage trash, Tav Falco, and his band the Panther Burns; besides having the early 20th-century architecture befitting of Falco's sepia-toned aesthetic, the nightry recently hosted an event honoring Panther Burns cofounder Alex Chilton. Raised in Arkansas and now based in Vienna, Falco formed the Panther Burns in Memphis with the late Big Star/Box Tops singer in 1978. Contemporaries of Chilton proteges the Cramps, the group debuted with the classic Behind the Magnolia Curtain before relocating to New York and becoming doyens of the Downtown punk scene. Falco's idiosyncratic cocktail of roots rock, blues, country, avant-noise, tango, exotica, and Beat poetry has influenced followers like the Gories and Jon Spencer. \$15. Kingston. (845) 514-2570.

Falco starts ‘Contamination Tour’ in LR

SEAN CLANCY
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE



Tav Falco and the Panther Burns — Francesco D’Agnolo, Mario Monterosso, Riccardo Colasante, Falco, Giuseppe Sangirardi — kick off a new tour tomorrow at White Water Tavern in Little Rock. Musician-filmmaker Tav Falco grew up between Gurdon and Whelen Springs.

Tav Falco has responded to a rather innocuous question with what turns out to be a wonderfully apt observation of his decades long career in rock ’n’ roll and other forms of the unhallowed arts.

“I’m known for doing things the hard way,” the musician-director-actor writes in an email from his pied-aterre in the theater district of Vienna, Austria.

Falco, who was born Gustavo Antonio Falco in Philadelphia and grew up in Arkansas on land between Gurdon and Whelen Springs, has gleefully avoided any sort of conventional approach to mainstream acceptance and has instead followed his own particular whimsy from gut-bucket blues freakouts, no-wave noise, Southern-Gothic garage punk and Latin-flavored music. He's directed expressionistic films, including 2014's feature-length *Urania Descending*, which was partially set in Little Rock, and he is an accomplished tango dancer.

On Wednesday, the singer-guitarist and his band Panther Burns will begin their latest tour at Little Rock's White Water Tavern. Bonnie Montgomery will open.

Are there ever any butterflies at the start of a tour?

"There is always a slight case of the pre-victory shakes before going onstage for the first show of a tour," Falco says. "Generally I take a good, stiff shot of branch water, dance myself up to the microphone, and turn the hounds loose from there."

Inspired by current events, the trek is being called the "Contamination Tour," which Falco says is "in response to the socio/political cross-contamination that we face on every level of our culture today. Especially in America. I have not seen our country so divided since the turbulent 1960s."

Falco, a 1964 graduate of the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, who was working as an assistant to Memphis photographer William Eggleston, made his onstage musical debut on Oct. 1, 1978, with an unhinged marriage of rock 'n' roll and performance art. The occasion came as part of a bill at the Orpheum Theater on Beale Street that was promoted by musician/producer Jim Dickinson featuring Dickinson's band Mud Boy and the Neutrons.

Calling himself Eugene Baffle and, according to writer Holly George-Warren, looking like "a down on his luck Errol Flynn in a vintage tuxedo and fingerless gloves," Falco strummed an out-of-tune electric guitar he didn't know how to play and made it through a cover of Leadbelly's "Bourgeois Blues" before attacking the instrument with a chainsaw.

"The audience went completely berserk," he told George-Warren. "Everyone was up screaming, hysterical. Then I passed out."

In the audience that night was Alex Chilton, who'd done time as a '60s teenage pop star in the Box Tops ("The Letter," "Cry Like A Baby") and whose early '70s power-pop group Big Star had failed to gain much commercial traction. Falco found a kindred spirit in the mischievous Chilton.

In 1979, the two formed the first version of Panther Burns and began laying down their own dramatic, avant-garde spin on rockabilly, north Mississippi blues and country music. An EP, *Behind the Magnolia Curtain*, was released in 1981 and committed the band's gloriously scuzzy, crashing-to-earth version of "Bourgeois Blues" — injected with a bit of Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl" — to wax. An LP, *Blow Your Top*, followed in 1982.

Chilton eventually left the band, but Falco and a rotating cast continued to record and tour. He has also appeared onscreen in films like *Great Balls of Fire*, *Wayne County*, *Downtown 81* and *Highway 61* and collaborated with writer Erik Morse on *Mondo Memphis*, a two-volume musical and cultural history of the city.

Last year saw the release of *A Tav Falco Christmas*. A book by photographer Gina Lee, *This Could Go On Forever: On the Road with Tav Falco & Panther Burns*, was published earlier this year and *Cabaret of Daggers*, a new album Falco is finishing up, will be released Nov. 23 on Los Angeles label ORG Music.

“It is a provocative, yet romantic record,” Falco writes from Vienna. “There are moments of introspection, heights of frenzy, some sensual R&B grooves, gender identity crises, strange tangos, and a lynching blues. A taste of something for everybody.”

The group on *Cabaret of Daggers* — guitarist Mario Monterosso, bassist Giuseppe Sangirardi and drummer Riccardo Colasante — is the same version of Panther Burns accompanying Falco on the road.

“Let’s put it this way: The band that records together allows no disappointments when they perform together,” says the singer. “Depending on ambient acoustics, what you get on record, you get onstage. Further, knowing there is a band behind you that has undergone the fiery ordeal of recording sessions and also the firestorm of the Panther Burns live show, imparts confidence — a feeling larger than fate that benefits in navigating the inevitable chaos of which we are masters on stage.”

Falco has spent the past few decades living in Europe, though returning to Arkansas is always a treat.

“Coming back to Arkansas is always special because each time I see our state, and its diverse landscapes and cultures, in a more clarified perspective. There is no other place quite like Arkansas. In Europe you might find similar topographies, but never the wild openness of the countryside, whether on forested mountain or rolling plain. Never the humid, diaphanous sunsets infused with the heavy fragrance of magnolia or gardenia. Nor the neighborly greeting, nor the genial spirits of lightness and darkness that give rise to song and balladry like we will hear from Bonnie Montgomery, with whom we’ll share the stage at White Water Tavern.”

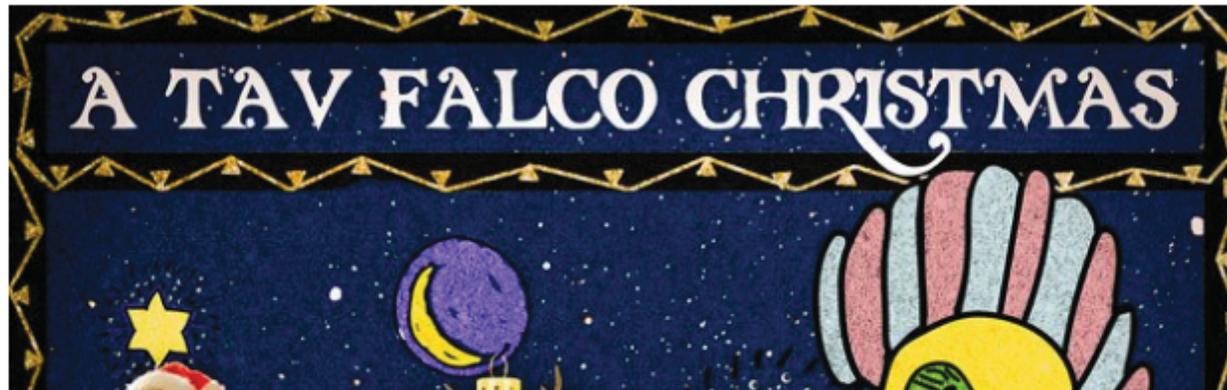
Opening act: Bonnie Montgomery 8 p.m. Wednesday, White Water Tavern, 2500 W. Seventh St., Little Rock Admission: \$15



The Mavericks, "Christmas Time Is Coming 'Round Again"

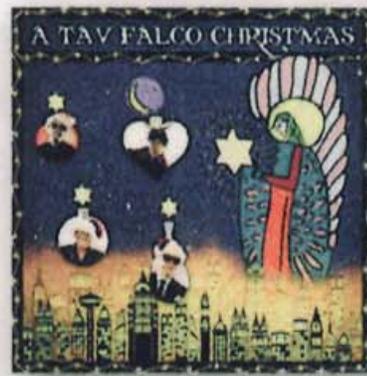
This unfortunately isn't a full-length record, just a 12-inch single, although it's hard to quibble with any release that tackles the staple "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)."

Buy it here at [Amazon](#).



Tav Falco, "A Tav Falco Christmas"

The cult rocker puts his inimitable, raucous spin on holiday classics such as "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "Blue Christmas," in conjunction with a band that includes bassist Mike Watt (Minutemen, Firehose), guitarist Mario Monterosso and drummer Toby Dammit (touring keyboardist for Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds).



TAV FALCO

A TAV FALCO CHRISTMAS

ORG MUSIC, OUT 24 NOVEMBER

Rockabilly eccentric gets weirdly festive.

Tav Falco is a Memphis provocateur who's been making deranged performance-art rockabilly since 1979 when he formed his first band, Panther Burns, with Big Star's Alex Chilton. With Chilton long gone, Falco's taste for the absurd has continued to spiral, culminating in this – his first Christmas album. Recorded with a line-up including bassist Mike Watt (of Minutemen and Stooges renown) and keyboardist Toby Dammit (a current live Bad Seed). Obviously, it's ridiculous but there's something enjoyably unnerving about these gnarled ne'er-do-wells tiptoeing their way through straight-faced renditions of Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer and White Christmas.

The John Lewis ad it isn't. ★★★

JAMES OLDHAM

Listen To: Santa Claus Is Back In Town | Christmas Blues



A TAV FALCO CHRISTMAS ALBUM

story by Ancient Champion

originally published: December, 2017

Tav Falco

A Tav Falco Christmas

ORG Music/FRENZI Music & Films

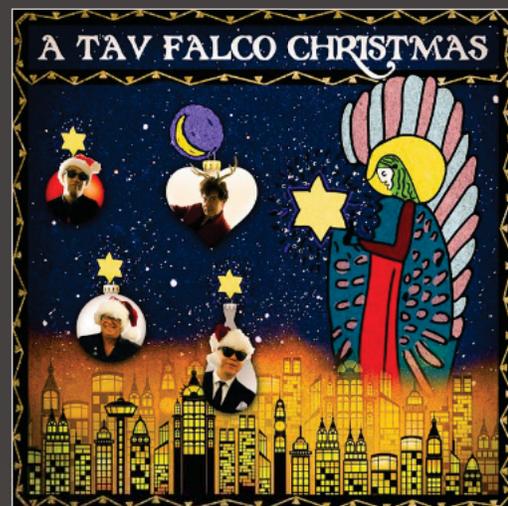
LP/CD/STREAM

Tav Falco has been a great friend to outsideleft over the years. Last Christmas, our [Christmas with Tav Falco](#) feature - consisting mainly of his photo shoot in Memphis and the story of how Tav spends the holidays, (at times on a Norton), is simply one of my favorite ever things in outsideleft or any magazine anywhere. So you can imagine our excitement when we heard about A Tav Falco Christmas Album. And now finally it is here, and it is perfect. It really does capture everything that is cool about Christmas and a dash of the miasma with which I recall christmases from my heyday. There was one once. Anyway, Awash with bells, dreamy teetering background vocals and authenticity. It's going straight into the car alongside the Ella, Mariah & Mary J Christmas Collections. It's that good. It's gonna get me through.

Recorded in Memphis at Sam Phillips Sound Recording Studio with a band of indie rock superstars Mike Watt on bass, Toby Dammit on drums, Mario Monterosso on guitars and pianist Francesco D'Angelo. Probably in July or something you know how these things go...

Of the record, Tav says, "I've had the notion of recording a solo Christmas mini-album for quite some time. I pitched the idea and a playlist to record labels, but labels come and go while the songs themselves seem eternal. Familiar Christmas tunes were tossed in the punchbowl - evergreens from genres of pop, jazz, and ghetto funk. In large part these were songs that I listened to as a young boy around Christmas time. The classic ones made a merry backdrop

as I ran my 1947 American Flyer steam locomotive on an oval track around our Christmas tree freshly cut in the backwoods of Arkansas where we lived. The music and the clickety-clack of the tiny wheels under the rustic freight train made a montage of sounds that will ever conjure the jaunty *bonhomie* of Christmas for me."



Featuring Santa Claus Is Back in Town, White Christmas, Jingle Bell Rock, Blue Christmas, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, Christmas Blues, Holly Jolly Christmas and Soulful Christmas. A Tav Falco Christmas is the perfect gift from Tav to you. And from you to anyone you love.

Essential Info

Main Photo: Jud Phillips jr.

[Tav's Website](#)

[Tav on Facebook](#)

[YouTube](#)

[What Is Tav Falco Doing for Christmas in Outsideleft](#)

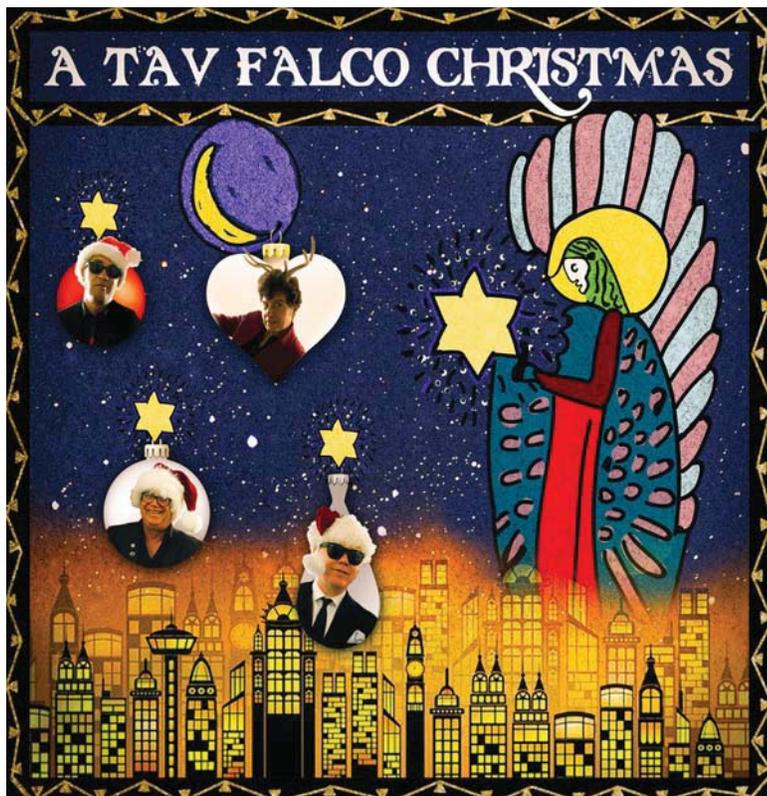
THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

Bob Mehr, USA TODAY NETWORK – Tennessee Published 10:00 a.m. CT Dec. 13, 2017

X-Mas Tav

Punk provocateur, roots music reinterpreter and art-rockers **Tav Falco** has gotten into the spirit of the season with a new LP. Released earlier this month, “**A Tav Falco Christmas**” finds the Arkansas native, longtime Memphian and current Vienna resident working up a clutch of holiday classics for the first time on wax.

“Although I have performed ‘Blue Christmas’ on stage now and again with my group, Panther Burns, I’ve had the notion of recording a solo Christmas mini-album for quite some time,” notes Falco. “I pitched the idea and a playlist to record labels, but labels come and go while the songs themselves seem eternal.”



Memphis roots-punk artist Tav Falco celebrates the season with "A Tav Falco Christmas."

Falco was finally able to realize the project earlier this year. He recorded the disc during a very un-Christmas-like Memphis July, at the **Sam Phillips Recording Service**.

The tracks feature backing from some prominent players, including regular Falco collaborators, bassist **Mike Watt** (Minutemen, The Stooges), drummer **Toby Dammit** (touring keyboardist with Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds), guitarist/producer **Mario Monterosso** and pianist **Francesco D'Agnolo** (former session pianist for Ennio Morricone). Other guests include locals **Lahna Deering** and **Tiffany Harmon** on vocals and **John Whitemore** on glockenspiel.

As Falco writes in the album's notes the project is rooted in his childhood. "In large part these were songs that I listened to as a young boy around Christmas time. The classic ones made a merry backdrop as I ran my 1947 American Flyer steam locomotive on an oval track around our Christmas tree freshly cut in the backwoods of Arkansas where we lived. The music and the clickety-clack of the tiny wheels under the rustic freight train made a montage of sounds that will ever conjure the jaunty bonhomie of Christmas for me."

The album is available on Amazon.com and iTunes.

A Tav Falco Christmas: Just Like Mom's Popcorn Balls

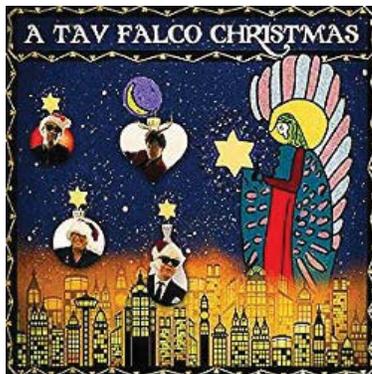
by [ALEX GREENE](#)

When I first discovered the early catalog of Charlie Rich, I cringed at the many tracks where Sam Phillips had overdubbed corny background vocals, no doubt in a bid to make the records more commercial. But after a time, I came to enjoy the

gooey overdubs as a sign of the times in which the great Rich lived. Imagine my delight upon hearing *A Tav Falco Christmas* (Org Music/Frenzi Films & Music), the art-damaged Arkansas cat's nod to festive fun, which is chock-full of those same cornball harmonies.

Of course, this is in keeping with the Christmas spirit. Every year, my mom would make holiday popcorn balls, stuck together with scalding hot corn syrup. Once they cooled and solidified, the bits that stuck in your teeth and gums would give you pause. This album is a bit like that. Having been recorded at Sam Phillips Recording, the vanilla background vocals are spot-on. The band, featuring Falco's touring outfit of Mario Monterosso on guitar, Toby Dammit on drums, Francesco D'Agnolo on piano, and the great Mike Watt on bass, is well stuck-together: solid and tight, moving deftly between slow burners like "Blue Christmas" and thumping funk like "Soulful Christmas." D'Agnolo's bluesy ivory-tickling is especially soulful, crafty but not too polished. And then there is Falco's voice. Fans, of course, know his earnest hepcat delivery well. It is, as Mose Allison would say, "loaded with rustic charm." The final effect of Falco crooning while his backing group plays it straight is unsettling, like some kind of feral karaoke.

[click to enlarge](#)



I mean it as a compliment when I say that, should David Lynch make a Christmas movie, this would be the soundtrack. Surely we have enough competently-sung Christmas albums already. What we need more of are singers with real character in their voice, and Falco delivers this in spades. For most of the album, the aforementioned pattern holds. The band plays with dogged restraint and Tav does his thing, as the background singers look on with a nod and a wink. The material is classic holiday fare: "White Christmas," "Jingle Bell Rock," "Rudolf the Red Nose Reindeer," and so on, book-ended with slightly more obscure numbers, the



Toby Dammit, Tav Falco, Mike Watt, & Mario
Monterosso

bluesy “Santa Claus is Back in Town” and James Brown’s “Soulful Christmas.” Only in the latter number does a bit of the old Panther Burns energy emerge, as the boys in the band bring on the slamming beat and Falco lets loose with echo-drenched howls that conjure up the legendary burning panther head. All in all, it’s a wacky, eclectic mix, a tray of backwoods bonbons to fill your hearth and home with good cheer.



2017 Christmas album roundup: Music for every mood this holiday



**** 1/2 Tavi Falco, “A Tavi Falco Christmas” (Org/Frenzi).** This may be the loopyest seasonal release this year. Actor, musician and performance artist Falco applies his “art damage” sensibility to the holiday music canon. The album boasts eight tracks, mostly classics, sounding gloriously demented enough to act as a tonic for anyone who can’t bear the thought of another dose of sugary sentimentality.

Q & A: Tav Falco

By [Ellis Widner](#)

This article was published December 10, 2017 at 2:00 a.m.



Left to right: Toby Dammit, Tav Falco, Mike Watt & Mario MONTEROSSO. 2017

Tav Falco, who grew up on a farm near Gurdon, has released his first Christmas album, *A Tav Falco Christmas*. Falco, who now resides in Vienna, Austria, answered questions in an email interview with the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* Sunday Style editor Ellis Widner.

A. My first Christmas lingers in my memory as only a child's vision can. Not only the visual images but

also the olfactory and audial impressions cannot be forgotten. There was the loden green of the little Christmas tree cut in a pine grove on our farm set in the woods between Whelen Springs and the Missouri Pacific Railroad terminal of Gurdon. The resinous scent of pine needles mingled with the clickety-clack of the tiny wheels of the freight train that my 1947 American Flyer locomotive pulled on a circle of track around the tree. There were ropes of silver tinsel swathing the tree and glittery glass bulbs and little cotton Santas. Tiny stuffed reindeer hung from the boughs, while placed on the highest branch was a sparkly white angel with a light inside and a frosty star on her head.

Christmas for me was mostly a time for railroading and rolling around on the floor under the tree. My locomotive made a chugging sound when it ran, and real smoke poured from its stack like a steam engine. The little windows on the red caboose were illuminated and cast a shadowy glow as they passed and receded down the track. I watched it go by again and again and again.

At night, when I lay in my bed and the moon shown through the lofty limbs of the pecan tree outside my window, I could hear a real steam engine train through the woods south of the farm rumbling, chugging, blowing, and hissing down the track heading for El Dorado. As moonlight fell across my blanket, I felt comforted by the train passing in the forest, and I thought of the conductor, and of the baggage man working in the cars, and of the passengers riding in their coach going to their destinations.

It was a cozy feeling for a boy living on a farm secluded in a world of often-imaginary friends. Later in life I worked on that railroad out of Gurdon as a brakeman; still enthralled by the transitory romance of the rails and the trains, and the people coming and going in a world that still seemed one with itself.

Q. What was the first Christmas album you bought?

A. Rather than an album, it was a shiny white Christmas book my mother bought for me that meant most. Every Christmas for as long as I can remember, I brought out the book with its big jolly Santa on the cover, with a little girl sitting on one knee and a little boy on the other and with reindeer, stars, and bugles floating around them. I still bring the book out at Christmas. It's called The Golden Christmas Book and it's full of stories, poems, songs, and puzzles.

Q. How often do you come back to the state?

A. I come back to Arkansas once or twice a year. Christmas is always enticing in mother's home, now situated on Lake Hamilton. Still, we miss our life on the farm in Clark County. While I was growing up, a deer took up with our cattle in the back pasture. We named her Bambi. She was a graceful, docile creature with the most sensitive ears -- as if they could see like her eyes. [The Democrat-Gazette] actually sent a photographer down and photographed mother feeding the doe for a little feature story. Later, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission brought a young buck as a companion for her. I named him Bonzo and he became as much a companion for me as for Bambi. He loved to be fed cigarettes, which he chewed up lickety-split. Bonzo came to a tragic end, though, when hunters spotlighted him on the highway across from our farm and blasted him with shotguns.

Q. What is your favorite Christmas song? Were you inspired by any particular artists or songs?

A. Seems that any Christmas song I like is a favorite. A good song is important, but maybe more important is the singer as much as the song. I really like the classic Christmas standards sung by Gene Autry. His voice is clear and melodic in a simple, direct way, and his phrasing is so essential. Many of the

singers whom I admire recorded Christmas albums: Jerry Lee Lewis, Dean Martin, Burl Ives, Elvis Presley with the Jordanaires and the fabulous Brenda Lee.

Although I've performed "Blue Christmas" onstage now and again, I've had the notion of recording a solo Christmas album for quite some time. Familiar Christmas tunes were tossed in the punch bowl -- evergreens from genres of pop, jazz, and ghetto funk. In large part these were songs that I listened to as a boy around Christmas time. Songs like a seemingly simple ditty such as "White Christmas" was a challenge to get on top of. Other tunes like "A Holly Jolly Christmas" were just a barrel of fun to record.

Q. You recorded A Tav Falco Christmas at Sam Phillips Recording Services in Memphis. What was that experience like?

A. I have recorded four albums at Sam Phillips recording studio in Memphis, and we are going back to record our fifth there. At this point in my checkered career, I cannot imagine recording anywhere else. Phillips studio is my creative and spiritual sanctuary. The studio managers, Jud [Phillips] Jr. and Jerry Phillips, live and breathe music. Without their dedicated support, A Tav Falco Christmas would probably have never been made, and certainly not to the standard you now hear.

When Sam Phillips decided to move out of the converted radiator repair shop known as SUN, he had this dedicated state-of-the-art analog recording studio designed and built in 1959 in a tropical deco-modern style. The studio is infused with the history of the origins of the music we now listen to everyday, and history is still being made at Phillips studio. The walls are hung with row upon row of framed gold records, but the kind of history that was made at Phillips transcends charts and gold and platinum. It is a story of talent, experimentation, growth, and perseverance. Above all it is the story of blind belief in the creation of all that provokes and satisfies the human spirit.

Q. With the album recorded in the heat of summer, did you do anything in the studio to set a Christmas mood?

A. First thing when we arrived at the studio was to hand a camera to Jud Phillips. Jr. and ask him to photograph the band in the upstairs wet bar adjacent to the Japanese rock garden with the miniature running waterfall. Each band member wore a Santa cap and I had a set of antlers growing out of my head. Those are the pictures you see on the album cover.

That was the end of our studio Christmas décor in July, especially after Jerry Phillips told us this story: When Elvis went into the studio to record one of his Christmas albums, also in the heat of July, the producers had put up a big Christmas tree and some other doo-dads to set the mood. Elvis, however, was going through a bitter divorce at the time, and when he saw the Christmas tree in the studio, he spun around with an extended karate chop and broke that tree in half with his foot. Any way you look at it, I discovered that you really have to psyche yourself up to record a Christmas album in July.

Q. Cool choice of songs ... arrangements, musicianship are very sharp.

A. What you hear is a brilliant band behind this music. The album is produced and arranged by Mario Monterosso whom I met when I decided to go to Rome to record my last album, Command Performance. It was in August, and although I have a band in Paris that I've worked with since I lived there, they were away on holiday, and nobody messes with the vacance of a Frenchman. I put out word in Rome for anyone who might want to record with me, and Mario Monterosso walked through the door. He arranged,

produced, and played lead guitar as brilliantly on that album as on our Christmas record, plus he has played lead guitar on a number of our tours in Europe and across the USA. We've acquired a visa for Mario to live in Memphis, and we will again join forces in January.

Further stalwart musicianship was provided on the Christmas record by Mike Watt on bass and by the multi-talented Toby Dammit on drums. I was very fortunate to have these career artists on board. They sure turned these sessions into a holly, jolly Christmas for one and all.

Q. Have your mother and step dad heard this yet?

A. As I played the burned CD of the album in our living room, mother and Ralph sat there expressionless. After it was all over, they said they couldn't understand a word. Seems they comprehend the hosts on Wheel Of Fortune much better than my record.

Q. Are you and the band going to perform a Christmas show?

A. There was talk of an East Coast and West Coast tour to support the album. We had a pretty good offer in New York where I have something of a profile. That venture was snuffed for this year because our bassist on the album, Mike Watt, has just completed a marathon tour of Europe and decided to chill at home in San Pedro, California, this Christmas season. So maybe next year we will take our Yuletide show around to all the usual unreliable places we tend to play.

Q. When do you tour again?

A. Nowadays our tours are booked six months in advance. At this moment, we have concert agents already organizing tour ventures in Spain and Scandinavia for March/April; USA coast to coast in May; and Australia in July where our band has toured on more than one occasion.

We would very much like to play in Japan some day because when we do, it's going to be an explosion. All of my 13 albums are in distribution there. European audiences are special, as I suppose the Japanese would be, in that our music is something of an exotic import, often celebrated, sometimes emulated and occasionally dismissed. Point is: audiences in Europe seem to really pay attention; they have a critical ear. Our music and our show is meaningful for them as well as entertaining, hence our music really matters to them outside of sheer diversion.

Q. New album on the horizon?

A. There is, in fact. We are going back to Sam Phillips' recording studio in January to record our 14th album, this time for the ORG Music label in Los Angeles. While A Tav Falco Christmas is a solo record, the new album will be recorded with my one and only band, Panther Burns, named after a plantation in Mississippi once owned by the Percy family of writers and poets. Legend has it that a cunning panther once stalked and terrorized the local population until it was corralled into a cane break and set aflame. According to witnesses, the shrieks coming from the panther were an unholy amalgam of animal lust and divine transubstantiation, which continue to curse the plantation. There were the Rolling Stones, Muddy Waters, Howling Wolf, and now there is the Panther Burns.

Q. The music business has changed so much in the past decade ... what's your take on streaming, downloading, etc.? How has it impacted creativity from your perspective?

A. Marshall McLuhan, the media theorist from the 1960s, presaged that the nature of electronics, both analog and digital, would exert a decentralizing influence across all levels of our existence. As a product of that turbulent era, I still pay attention to its thinkers, experimenters and innovators.

By virtue of our technology, we have morphed from an industrial, rail-head society organized around a central matrix of our inner cities into a vibrant mosaic of instantaneous pleasure and pressure points. There is no longer a center because everywhere is a center. We are more connected than we can possibly imagine, while digital technology races blindly ahead of our comprehension and ahead of our efforts to manage it.

Streaming and downloading of music new and old, are symptomatic of how this de-centralization is happening everywhere. Even those engaged in music production and creation are trying to come to terms with the significance of these dynamic developments. The thrust of technological advances and its meaning often baffles those who are most engaged in it. Streaming and digital downloading will not thwart creative impulses of the true artist because the artist learns early on to be resourceful, adaptive and elastic if he and his efforts are to survive.

The iPhone is the new recording studio, the new movie camera and the new printing press; the blog and vlog are the new newspaper and TV station. Personally, I'm not that impressed. Instant gratification can be a factor; instant communication can be convenient, yet maybe too convenient. We become impulsive and too eager to speak without reflection.

I'm an analog guy. I'm impressed by steam locomotives, I howl with delight riding on noisy motorcycles, I like to watch movies on celluloid in a movie house, I like to read books and to hold them in my hands. In many ways I'm a post-postmodern antiquarian, and in connecting the past with the present, I tread on the threshold of the future.

Q. What inspired the move to Vienna?

A. After a band tour in the '90s, I was drawn to Austria to produce a record for a band called *Krüppelschlag* in a town on the Danube [River] called Linz. Then I was summoned to Vienna for an interview on national radio due in part to a splash Panther Burns had made headlining a high profile festival in the Museums Quartier. Out of that interview I was offered my own radio show on ORF national radio. Somewhat at loose ends, I accepted the offer and proceeded to forge a lightweight career in Eastern Europe with Tav Falco's Wild and Exotic World Of Motion Picture Soundtracks show. The archive of ORF to which I had access housed every possible example of recorded music known to man, carefully organized by genre. For content rare and arcane, all I had to do was walk to the shelves, and then cut it together in the studio on ¼ inch ferrous oxide tape and deliver my monologues. That was a rewarding gig.

After a stint in Buenos Aires learning to dance tango, I decamped to New York and put together a new band of Panther Burns and struck out on a protracted tour of Europe. Afterward I settled in Paris where I had already released 9 albums on a French record label. Four years later, I found a window where I could return to the *fin de siècle* imperial city on the Danube. For some inexplicable reason I still don't fully understand, Vienna is a town I always seemed to miss being away from. Perhaps it is the legacy of its grand music and courtly gestures where gentlemen kiss the hands of ladies in the most unaffected way. Vienna is a city of gardens and statuary and fountains, and elegant horse-drawn carriages where art and theatre are a part of the fabric of everyday life.

Q. Do you have any new film or book projects coming up?

A. Both, in fact. My first feature film, a B/W 16mm film entitled *Urania Descending* premiered in Arkansas in 2016 at the Ron Robinson Theater in Little Rock. More info can be found on IMDB.com. In May, the movie premiered in New York at Anthology Film Archives and in June it was presented by The American Cinematheque in the Steven Spielberg cinema at The Egyptian Theatre on Hollywood Blvd. On February 10th of 2018, we are invited to present the movie at the Oxford Film Festival in Mississippi. Here is the Log Line: Arkansas girl on a one-way ticket to merry/sinister old Vienna becomes embroiled in an intrigue to uncover buried Nazi plunder. Now we are working towards the production of the sequel, *Urania Unbound*, Part II of my proposed *Urania* trilogy of films -- contemporary films, yet inspired by *Urania*, the timeless muse of the heavens. Thus far we have start-up funding from the Vienna film commission, and we are flogging a successful crowd funding campaign to launch the production. In 2016, my book, *An Iconography Of Chance: 99 Photographs Of The Evanescent South*, was published by my imprint Elsinore Press with University of Chicago Press distribution. Although the cloth bound limited edition sold out within six weeks, the hardcover edition is still available. There are quite a lot of Arkansas pictures in that book representing my early work when I was an assistant to the color photographer William J. Eggleston.

Prior to that, my book of psycho-geography entitled, *Ghosts Behind The Sun: Splendor, Enigma, and Death: Mondo Memphis Vol. I*, was published by Creation Books in New York and London. That book is also in current circulation.

A new book on the Elsinore imprint (named after the castle in Hamlet) was just today sent off to the manufacturer in time for the Christmas holidays. It's also a road book of photographs by poet and journalist, Gina Lee, entitled *This Could Go On Forever: On The Road With Tav Falco & Panther Burns*. Look or ask for it everywhere books are sold.

Q. Whose creativity inspires you?

A. It is all one song for me: whether music, performance, film, fiction, or photographs. Other than technique, there is little separation. For what I do, it is the *persona* that matters. All that people are really interested in is the secret eye of the artist.

Style on 12/07/2017

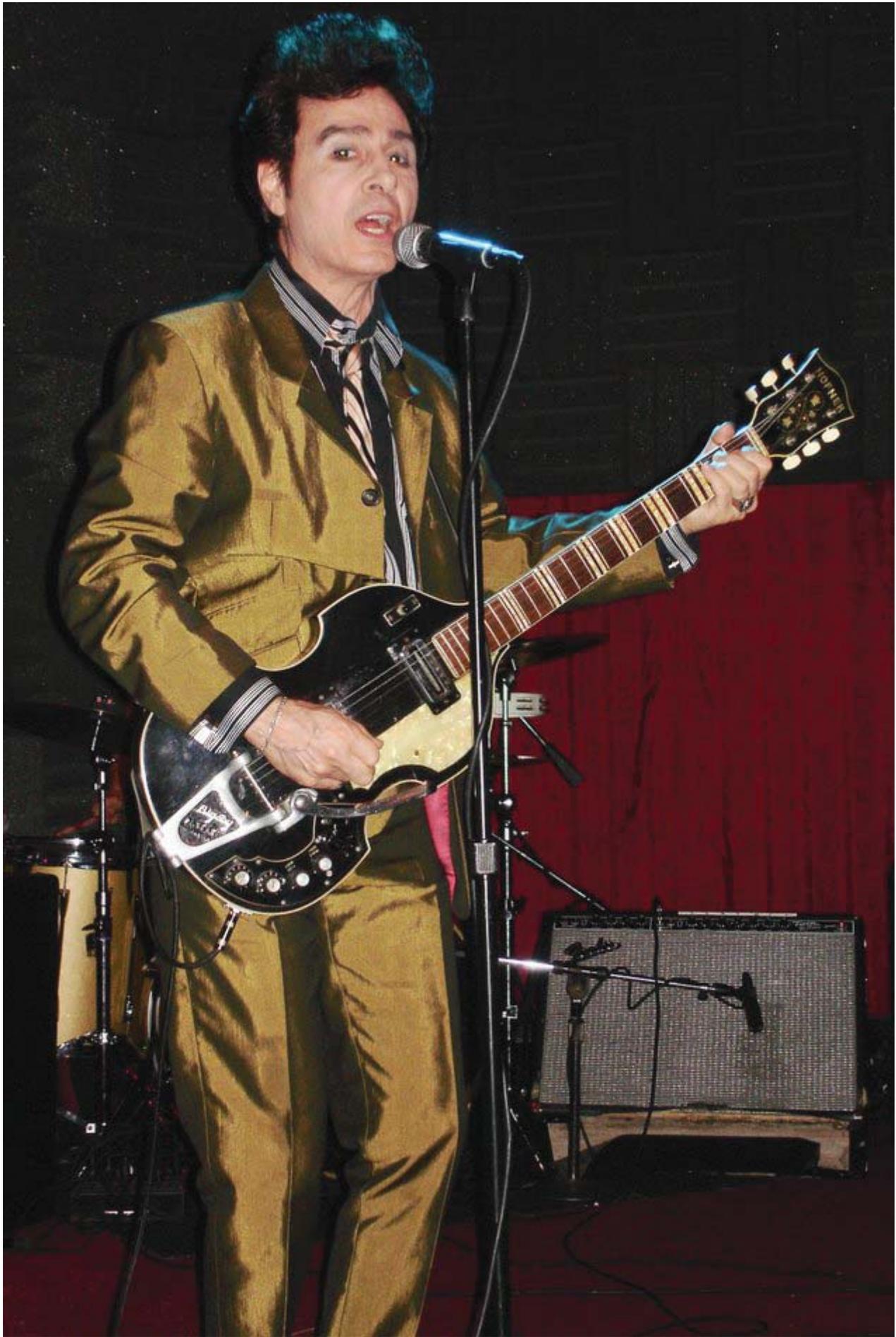
A Tav Falco Christmas, 2017 Tav Falco

Tav Falco and Rita Nelson, his mother.

Tav Falco in performance in New York, 2014









Discography Browser

Tav Falco's Panther Burns / Tav Falco
Command Performance

AllMusic Rating ★★★★★

User Ratings (10) ★★★★★

Your Rating ★★★★★

AllMusic Review by Thom Jurek

While [Tav Falco & Panther Burns](#) have never been entirely absent, they have gone for long periods without recording or performing. [Falco's](#) been a busy guy in the 21st century, living in Vienna, learning to dance the tango, producing, writing, and directing a film, acting in others, and writing *Ghost Behind the Sun: Splendor, Enigma & Death* (Mondo Memphis, Vol. 1), a musical history of the city from the Civil War to the present. [Command Performance](#) is a riveting new collection of originals and covers recorded and mixed in Rome for the tiny Twenty Stone Blatt label and produced by guitarist [Mario Monterosso](#). The band (as is typical) is almost entirely new with only drummer/percussionist [Giovanna Pizzorno](#) returning from 2011's [Conjurations: Seance for Deranged Lovers](#). Have no fear, however, both [Falco](#) and collaborators are in top form. The set opens with its outlier: a faithful yet somehow lecherous version of [Toni Basil's](#) 1966 Motown-centric hit "Breakaway" from Bruce Conner's classic film. There are also homages to fellow Memphians: "Bangkok" pays tribute to late Panther Burns founding member Alex Chilton and is presented as a shambolic, garage surfadelic number. "Jungle Fever," by rockabilly wildman [Charlie Feathers](#), is a rumbling, howling blues. [Memphis Minnie's](#) "Me and My Chauffeur Blues" is done straight, while [Joe & Audrey Allison's](#) "He'll Have to Go" (a hit for [Jim Reeves](#) in 1959) is done as a funk number -- check that bassline! Among the originals are the dark, distorted brooding camp of "About Marie Laveau" and "Doomsday Baby," which crosses [Alan Vega](#) with a '60s spy film soundtrack. "Whistle Blower" is a surreal country-blues with great acoustic slide guitar work. "Master of Chaos" is its own jagged, careening swirl of post-psych and tango, while "Fire Island" twins wah-wah guitars and accordions in a noir-ish swamp blues. "Memphis Ramble" melds Southern R&B to loungey pop/rock. The set closes with "Rumbetta" which, you guessed it, is rumba-by-way-of-surf-music sung in duet with [Pizzorno](#). The range of material on [Command Performance](#) is more narrow than on [Conjurations](#), but the approach is more immediate and daring. Sonically, this is the best record the Panther Burns have ever made. That said, with less grit in the mix, the decadent ooze in the band's aesthetic is all the more heady.



LIVE REVIEW: Tav Falco's Panther Burns, Ruby Lounge Manchester, 2nd June 2016

The small but extremely enthusiastic audience were clearly enjoying it hugely. They spotted another reviewer in the audience and there were loud shouts of 'five stars, it's a five star show'. I wouldn't dare disagree.'

Frank Roper



Tav Falco

Sometimes I like to just listen to new music or see bands and see what happens. This night was one of these times. My decision to review this gig was based on a quick skim of the press blurb and listening to around 15 seconds of a Tav Falco track. It became clear that both of these had given me an entirely wrong expectation of what I was going to hear but what the hey.

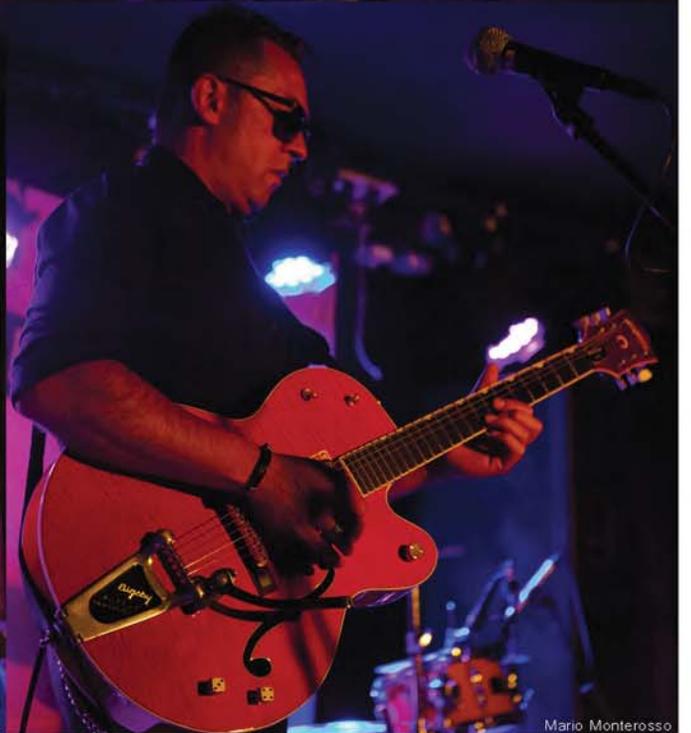
And finally on to our headliner Tav Falco's Panther Burns. The set opens with the band – who are brilliant – running through 'Green Onions' before Tav appears. He doesn't walk onto the stage he 'dances' onto the stage.

The set consists of a covers of country, blues, rock 'n' roll and hillbilly songs, all of which are given the Panther Burns feel. This is to give it that guitar twang thang. There's a couple of psych pop songs (think Strawberry Alarm Clock) which I think were originals although I can't be sure, some of the songs were introduced as Panther Burns' originals.

To be honest it took me a while to 'get' Tav Falco's Panther Burns. But it did dawn on me eventually that this is a show, the whole thing is a 'performance'. Once I got that the show suddenly started working for me, it was hugely fun. If I had bothered actually doing rather more than just skimming the press blurb I have found that that the show is usually called a Revue which would have made it obvious to me right from the start. Given that it's a 'show' Tav's sometimes rather mannered song intros and the rather strange dancing he does make complete sense.

So, I hear you asking, what was the music like. What it didn't sound like is parody. The Panther Burns' reworkings of the covers were interesting and Tav has a really good voice. They brought a new sound to the songs that really worked.

The small but extremely enthusiastic audience were clearly enjoying it hugely. They spotted another reviewer in the audience and there were loud shouts of 'five stars, it's a five star show'. I wouldn't dare disagree.





Buscar

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Conciertos

03-05-2017

Tav Falco. Planta Baja, Granada



1

A modo de calentamiento la banda interpreta la icónica "Peter Gunn", en cuyos postreros acordes sube el viejo Gustavo para seguir con "Funnel Of Love", potente inicio de la mano de gigantes, Henry Mancini y Wanda Jackson nada menos, arranque que enmarcará el mejor bolo ofrecido por este degustador de exquisiteces sonoras en nuestro país, o por lo menos el más redondo presenciado por un servidor. Atrás quedaron caóticas giras con vetustos amplificadores de válvulas que echaban humo y boicoteaban el ritmo del concierto, también variadas formaciones de los Panther Burns, que sobre las tablas o en el estudio de grabación han contado en sus filas con enormes músicos de la talla de Alex Chilton, Jim Dickinson, Rene Coman o el Bad Seeds Jim Sclavunus. Ahora las panteras ardientes son italianas, y en ellas destaca un jugueteón piano eléctrico que brilla especialmente en las partes más blues del recital. Lustrados antes de que a nadie se le ocurriese poner de moda lo *vintage*, nuestro hombre disfrutaba escarbando en oscuras grabaciones, dando nuevo ímpetu a música de sentimiento arraigado, ya sean prehistóricos blues del Delta, rockabilly arcaico, tangos del maestro Santos Discépolo o una tremendamente sentida lectura del clásico "Sway" popularizada por Dean Martin. Tav brilló como maestro de ceremonias y en algún solo de guitarra cortante, se lució con exóticos pasos de baile y puso a la platea patas arriba con encendidas versiones de "Mona Lisa" y "Bangkok", esta última en recuerdo al desaparecido Chilton. Afirmar que este concierto ya se postula como uno de los mejores del año es dejar en mal lugar a la escena musical contemporánea, pero negarlo sería faltar a la verdad.

Fotografía: Juan Jesús García

Autor: **Manuel Borrero**

Rolling Stone Germany April 2017

Tav Falco *The Drone Ranger* ★★★★★

TAV FALCO

THE DRONE RANGER / TRAM?



Der semilegendäre Maverick aus Memphis besinnt sich auf alte Stärken, setzt auf Zivilisationskritik im Gestus cooler Nonchalance. „The Drone Ranger“ macht kompositorisch nicht viel her, lässt aber nicht locker, drückt und drängt unbeirrt. Gewitzter ist „Tram?“ auf der Rückseite, ein Stück schlieriger, funkinformierter Rhythm & Blues. Und ein Remodel des Songs von Junior Kimbrough, der seinerseits auf dem Beat des genialischen „Tramp“ von Otis & Carla basierte und dessen amüsanten Text bloß weiterspann. Cheeky. (*Blang*)

«En la vida hay que tomar partido, mojarse»

Tav Falco Música

Leyenda viva del psychobilly, se subirá hoy al escenario de Hell Dorado precedido por Dave Graney & Clare Moore

:: LAURA ALZOLA

VITORIA. De vuelta de todo pero en pie y con el puño en alto. Tav –de Gustavo– Falco llega a Vitoria esta noche a los 72 años acompañado de su mítica banda Panther Burns, para inundar Hell Dorado de rockabilly, blues y lo que el público quiera bailar. Con el sonido de las calles de Memphis en las venas, Falco sigue en los escenarios impulsado por una silenciosa legión de seguidores para los que el autor de 'Behind The Magnolia Curtain', su álbum debut en 1981, merece un lugar entre los mejores. Precursor del psychobilly, con permiso de The Cramps, y con más de veinte álbumes a sus espaldas, para Falco la música debe tener como condición «agitar las oscuras aguas del subconsciente». Hoy, la sala del polígono de Oreitiasolo recibirá a esta leyenda viva con las puertas abiertas desde las 22.00 horas, junto con Dave Graney & Clare Moore.

–¿Agita la música de hoy en día las oscuras aguas del inconsciente?

–¡Inequivocamente, sí! Afro, blues, disco, romance, drone, toxic, garage, pop, ballroom, psych, surrogate. Todo, ¡todo!, nace de esas fértiles y oscuras aguas. El inconsciente es la incubadora de la música.

–¿Qué consejo daría a los artistas jóvenes que deseen subvertir el sistema y sacudir la complacencia de la gente?

–Este es el momento, de que todos, incluidos artistas, profesores y profesionales de la información y del entretenimiento, unamos nuestras fuerzas para educar a las masas en cómo sobrevivir con dignidad salvando nuestro planeta de la destrucción. ¡Hay que decirlo en alto, tomar partido, mojarse, hacer ruido! ¡El que calle será cómplice! El cobarde nunca gana y un ganador nunca se rinde.

–Fue un entusiasta del movimiento 'Occupy'. ¿Queda esperanza con Donald Trump?

–Desde 1968 hasta el movimiento 'Occupy', los revolucionarios hemos aprendido que el cambio tiene un precio, en ocasiones, uno enorme. En el calor de cada revolución, incluso en aquellos experimentos anarquistas utópicos llevados a cabo en España se ganan libertades, pero se sacrifica mucho ciegamente, y lo sacrificado nunca vuelve, sin importar cuánto lo desee uno. Trump y sus seguidores, los que lo creen un dios y un emperador, son un fenómeno populista que seguirá su curso. Su movimiento político se agotará. No tienen ideología. Basan su poder en la avaricia, la intolerancia, el racismo, el miedo, el sexismo, el odio hacia el prójimo, la amenaza

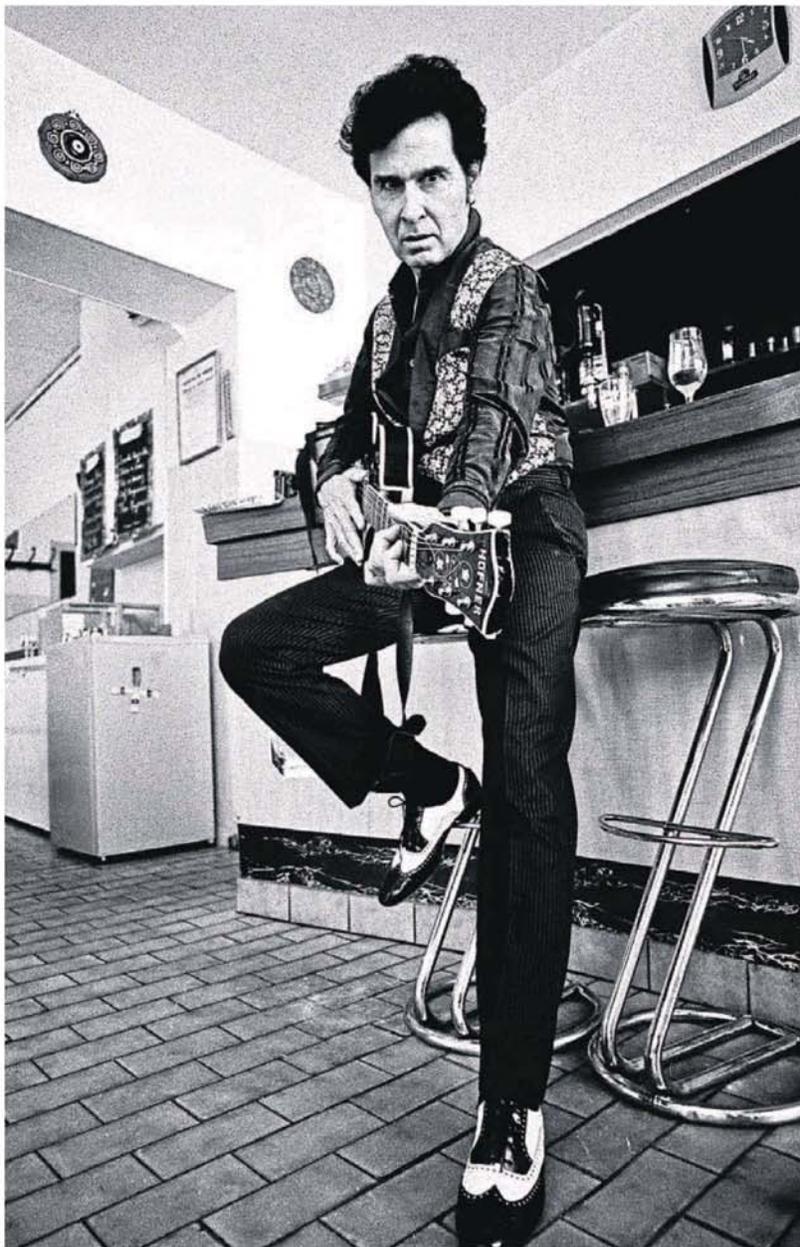


Imagen promocional de Tav Falco, un histórico del rock que hoy tocará en Hell Dorado. :: F. GRIVELET

de la aniquilación nuclear y el cultivo de la ignorancia, todo en nombre del patriotismo. El nacionalismo sigue siendo nuestra mayor amenaza. Trump y su gente nunca nos derrotarán, nunca vencerán a los breprensadores.

–¿No cree que ya está todo hecho? Usted escandalizó destrozando su guitarra con una sierra en un concierto, hace ya casi cuarenta años.

–Una vez, el gran productor Jim Dickinson, de Memphis, me dijo que hay que tener cierto desprecio por el arte que uno mismo hace. Nada es sagrado. O digamos que al

final todo lo es. La cuestión es que no se debe tener miedo. Hay que hacerse preguntas, investigar, reventar los iconos de referencia que uno tenga para después reconstruirlos. Porque, en ocasiones, cuando nuestros corazones se ablandan, necesitamos echar mano de nuestros iconos, santos y personalidades extravagantes para ponernos en pie. Yo puedo destruir un instrumento, como un gesto, un símbolo, pero no puedo destruir la música que éste hace. La música es una emoción abstracta, que, aunque sea invisible, toca nuestras almas.

LAS CLAVES

Actitud

«Debemos hacernos preguntas, investigar, reventar las referencias de cada uno y reconstruirlas»

Proceso creativo

«El inconsciente es la incubadora de todos los tipos de música»

–Si la violencia y el sexo se usan para vender productos, para llegar a la audiencia, ¿no es entonces el escenario otro lugar para la venta?

–El escenario es cualquier cosa que quieras hacer con él. Un escaparate para el sexo y la violencia, un santuario para tus iconos y fetiches, un templo para los dioses, un foro para compartir cierta curiosidad intelectual, un panfleto político, una escenografía del crimen, un cuento de amor. El teatro es nuestra forma del arte más antigua y nada, y desde luego ninguna tecnología, reemplazará el lugar del actor y del trovador.

–¿Qué es lo que mantiene vivo el rockabilly y el blues?

–Estos géneros son música folk, la mítica música folk expresando la naturaleza, el tejido de nuestra vida diaria. Como tal, esta música nunca se desvanecerá. Es eterna. Siempre habrá alguien tocando la guitarra a la vuelta de un callejón un sábado por la noche en Memphis. Siempre.

–¿Cuáles son sus mejores recuerdos de Memphis?

–Montar mi motocicleta Norton, en verano, a la orilla del río Misisipi. Esa sensación de regocijo y abandono.

–A pesar de su aparente romance con Memphis, salió de la ciudad hace años. ¿Es una decisión consciente el escoger sus lugares para vivir?

–Para un artista, su vivienda es de suma importancia. Ahora he hecho una transición a otra ciudad de la música y río: Viena, en el Danubio. Pero estoy considerando mudarme al Mediterráneo porque quiero ver el sol y la luna brillando sobre las olas todos los días.

–Panther Burns es una «banda de psicodelia para que la gente baile». Pero he leído que es usted un buen bailarín de tango. ¿Cómo se combina eso?

–Sí, somos una banda psicodélica de baile de salón. La danza psicodélica no tiene disciplina, es todo lo contrario, el dejarse llevar absoluto. Y el tango argentino también es altamente expresivo, pero muy disciplinado, formalista y tradicional, a la vez que improvisado. El baile social, el bailar agarrados, es uno de los sacrificios que hicimos al calor de la revolución de la psicodelia. La gente olvidó abrazarse y todos empezaron a bailar solos. Una pena.

–¿No es agotador reinventarse constantemente?

–Reinventarse sin perder la identidad es el trabajo del artista. El trabajo diario, además. Mantiene la vida interesante.

–En su libro 'Ghosts Behind The Sun' escribió que está aburrido de la mayoría de los conciertos de rock de hoy en día. ¿Qué artistas actuales le interesan?

–Mayormente aburrido, sí. Todavía hay algunos grandes artistas en la escena de la música alternativa: Memphis La Blusera, de Buenos Aires; Anthony & The Johnsons, de Nueva York; Bertrand Burgalat & AS Dragon, de París. Por nombrar sólo algunos.



Tav Falco: Voodoo mit Pomade

Karl Fluch 21. Juni 2016, 15:09 VIENNA



Schweiß und Glamour, Motoröl und Tango. Tav Falco tritt am Donnerstag mit seiner Band Panther Burns im Wiener Chelsea auf

Wien – Rock 'n' Roll ist eine verschwitzte Kunst. Der Schweiß gilt ihm als Gütesiegel, als Zeichen der Besessenheit, Blut und Tränen gelten als gerne in Kauf genommene Kollateralschäden. Dennoch schließt diese nach schwerer Arbeit anmutende Kunst die Eleganz nicht aus. Tav Falco vereint beides.

Mit seiner in den späten 1970ern aus der Musik- und Kunstszene von Memphis, Tennessee, entstandenen Band Panther Burns grub er sich tief in die wenig bekannten Musikwinkel von Memphis und interpretierte vergessene geglaubte Klassiker, die nie welche waren – bis sie dank seiner Hilfe solche wurden.

Die wesensverwandte Band The Cramps arbeitete zeit ihres Bestehens ähnlich. Anders als deren vor keiner fleischlichen Direktheit zurückschreckende Formation offenbarte sich bei Schöngest Tav Falco früh eine Vorliebe für den Tan-go, die europäische Boheme, für die schönen Künste. Dazu kam ein bisschen Voodoo aus den Sümpfen des Mississippi, das Öl schnittiger Motorräder sowie das Odeur einer allem trotzendem Pomade. Stil, Baby.

Aus diesen Zutaten entstand ein Lebenswerk, dessen aktuellen Stand Tav Falco mit Panther Burns am Donnerstag im Wiener Chelsea vorführen wird. Es ist gewissermaßen ein Heimspiel dieses Globetrotters. Falco lebt seit vielen Jahren in Wien.

Von hier aus betreibt er eine kleine Weltkarriere, die er in den letzten Jahren um sein Spielfilmdebüt *Urania Descending* sowie den Fotoband *An Iconography of Chance: 99 Photographs of the Evanescent South* erweitert hat. Diese zwischen Museum, Cinema und dreckigem Blues-Club oszillierende Figur zählt auf ihre Art zu den schillerndsten Erscheinungen des Musikbusiness.

Sein aktuelles Album heißt *Command Performance*. Es spannt den Bogen vom bluesinfizierten Rocker *About Marie Laveau* über Interpretationen von Memphis-Hometown Klassikern wie *Bangkok* (von Alex Chilton), *Jungle Fever* (von Charlie Feathers) bis zu dem Eifersuchtsklassiker *He'll Have To Go*.

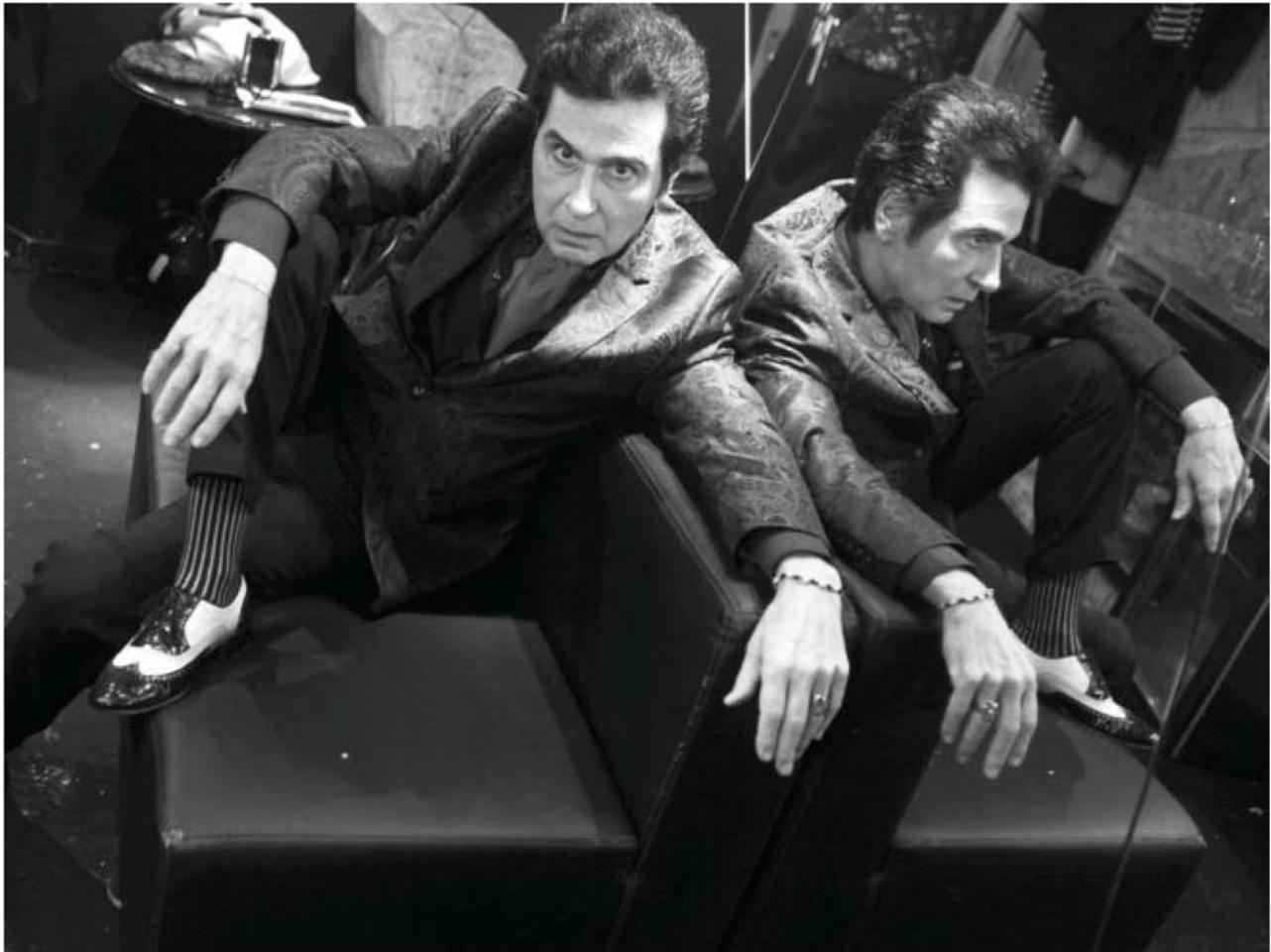
Der viel zu früh verstorbene Alex Chilton war ein Freund und Mitstreiter Falcos. Er selbst sieht sich als Veteranen unbekanntes Alters am Zenit seiner musikalischen Kraft. Hört man aktuelle Songs wie *Doomsday Baby*, wagt man nicht, dem zu widersprechen. (Karl Fluch, 21.6.2016)

Tav Falco's Panther Burns live: 23. 6., Chelsea, Lerchenfelder Gürtel, Bögen 29-32, 21.30

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

Mid-South ex-pat Tav Falco returns to scene of 1970s provocations with Lafayette's show



Multimedia artist and musician Tav Falco returns to Memphis for a concert at Lafayette's Music Room this week.

Oct. 08, 2015 By [Bob Mehr](#) of The Commercial Appeal

The last time Tav Falco found himself in the Bluff City, he was performing at the Memphis Heritage Festival in 2013. Playing in an alley off Main Street, on a hot August night, he looked up into a diffuse sky and experienced a moment of transcendence.

"I felt like I did 30 years before when I first came to Memphis," says Falco. "There was this palpable, ineffable atmosphere like Faulkner's 'Light in August' ... you could just reach out and touch the ether, infused with the ghosts of Noah Lewis and Furry Lewis and the string bands that played on Beale and on the street corners. I really felt something move through me, like some kind of tremor. You don't get that anywhere else but Memphis."

The 60-year-old Arkansas-bred, Memphis-rooted Falco is a writer, photographer, filmmaker and, for four decades, the leader and sole constant in deconstructionist rock group Panther Burns. Falco returns to town to play Lafayette's Music Room on Thursday, Oct. 15, 36 years after his first performances.

"All this time has elapsed, though it only seems like yesterday that we started out playing the cotton lofts on South Front Street," says Falco. "We have reinvented ourselves, over and over and over again, but our identity remains that of the Panther Burns — equal parts primal, early rock and roll, deviant country blues, and avant-garde art-action."

In recent years, the Vienna-based Falco has been focused on a variety of literary and artistic efforts as much as music. In 2011, he published "Ghosts Behind the Sun: Splendor, Enigma & Death (Mondo Memphis, Vol. 1)", a history of the Bluff City's cultural and criminal underground.

Next month, he will release book of his black and white images, "An Iconography of Chance: 99 Photographs of the Evanescent South." Published by the University of Chicago's Elsinore Press, the book also includes an introduction penned by celebrated Spanish photographer Alberto Garcia-Alix.

Many of the images of the book were shown as part of exhibits of Falco's photography at the Miro Foundation in Spain in 2009 and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans in 2012. The photos document the Southern underground musical and artistic demimonde within which Falco lived and created during the 1970s. Falco has two other photo books planned; the later volumes will represent his color work, into the '80s and '90s, respectively.

Earlier this spring, the Panther Burns released their latest album, "Command Performance." Recorded in Rome and produced by Mario Monterosso, it's a brilliant mélange of music that finds Falco's original compositions mingling with the songs of his heroes and friends: the disc includes covers of Memphis Minnie and Kansas Joe McCoy, Charlie Feathers and his late Panther Burns partner Alex Chilton.

The centerpiece of "Command Performance" is a country-blues track called "Whistleblower," which celebrates modern-day political dissidents like Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning.

"The whistleblower phenomenon and people like Snowden and Manning, in my mind, are the real icons of our age. We owe a lot to these people. In my opinion, these are the true Americans," says Falco. "[They've] tried to reveal what is really going on with our government, within our

society, so we can look at it and confront it and try and return to the critical thinking that we once had in America."

Falco, who has resided in Europe for two decades, says life as an expat has provided him perspective on both art and politics. "Living outside of the U.S., in Europe and traveling a lot, I can see very well where it is I come from now," he says. "And part of the role of a true artist is always to be an outsider, to be a gadfly. That's his job."

Falco's upcoming U.S. jaunt — dubbed "The Whistleblower Tour" — will see him backed by an intriguing band that includes Minutemen bass great Mike Watt. Watt heard "Command Performance" and tweeted out a message expressing admiration for the album. "I replied to him," says Falco. "I said, 'Mike if you wanna know how we made this record, why don't you just come play, bass with us when we come to the States?' He said, 'Why not? Let's just do that.'"

Though Watt and Falco have never met, they've traveled similar underground paths. "We've moved through some of the same joints, a lot of the same joints, at different times," says Falco. "Watt is interested in a lot of the same music as me — in Latin music, in Cuban music, in jazz. He's one of those players who can play just about anything he wants to play. We're also on the same page aesthetically, and politically, we share a certain outlook."

In addition to Watt, Knoxville native and Berlin resident Toby Dammit will play drums. Watt and Dammit served as the rhythm section for Iggy Pop and the latter-day Stooges — the drummer has also worked with Nick Cave, the Residents and Rufus Wainwright. The lineup will be rounded out by multi-instrumentalist Monterosso.

The Panther Burns' local appearance will take place at the revived Overton Square venue Lafayette's Music Room. Falco has history with the original Lafayette's, which launched in the early '70s. "I had just moved to Memphis from the hills of Arkansas when Lafayette's opened," says Falco. "Myself and a group of fellow artists, were asked by [owner] Frank Doggrell to do some design work on the walls of Lafayette's."

Years before he was even playing music, Falco would appear at Lafayette's, on bills with Jim Dickinson and Mud Boy and the Neutrons, with his art-action performance group, the Big Dixie Brick Company. "We did various theatrical pieces, art-actions, onstage. They were like happenings — we had a rubber chicken and shredded that. That's when I came up with "The Tube Man" — a man entwined in clear plastic tubing. Sometimes there was nudity, but it was always provocative," he says, chuckling. "It'll be interesting to go back to Lafayette's in its new incarnation with Panther Burns."

Tav Falco and Panther Burns feat. Mike Watt and Toby Dammit

9 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 15, at Lafayette's Music Room, 2119 Madison.
Cover is \$7. Go to lafayettes.com/Memphis

The WIRE London 2014

Tav Falco's Wild And Exotic World Of Musical Obscurities

Various

Stag-O-Lee CD/2xLP

The ideal compiler must have not only a keen sense of what sounds special, but also a certain erudite knowledge and charisma to make their chosen track selection flare back into life. Kudos then to German rock 'n' roll label Stag-O-Lee for inviting musician, performance artist, actor, film maker and photographer Tav Falco to dig through his collection and emerge with a selection of rarified rockabilly, bloodshot eyed blues, junked jazz, crazed country and weird waltzes, with a smattering of his own music thrown in to show how he was personally affected by what he had heard. Indeed, this album has a significant feeling of personal history about it, as though Falco is also telling his own story through the songs he has chosen. Music has always been at the centre of his art, from taking photographs and filming musicians he felt had been overlooked, to delivering Artaud inspired musical performances on various stages around the world.

Tav Falco moved from his parental home in Arkansas to Memphis in the late 1960s, drawn by the music and art scene that was flourishing at the time. Memphis, where Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash and many others made their recordings for Sam Phillips's Sun label, was the ideal location for Falco's artistic and musical ambitions. After forming the art action group TeleVista with fellow Arkansas artist Randall Lyon, his next, and most famous, move was to hook up with Alex Chilton of Box Tops and Big Star during the late 1970s under the banner of The Unapproachable Panther Burns. Describing their music as wreckabilly, Panther Burns were possessed by a wide range of influences that ranged from country and blues to La Monte Young styled drone, Argentinean tango, novelty numbers and punk rock – a motley crew that is reflected in Falco's restless compilation of global oddities.

The collection kicks off in fine wild style with The Johnny Burnette Trio's definitive version of Tiny Bradshaw's "Train Kept A-Rollin'", the piston powered rockabilly of which rattles down the same wobbly rails as Elvis Presley's "Mystery Train", and was later adopted as a rock standard by Led Zeppelin (the track is a particular favourite of Jimmy Page). Presley's presence also looms large on Benny Joy's astonishing

"I'm Doubtful Of Your Love", where his punctuated drawling vocal is enhanced with embellishments of Spanish guitar and the crescendo of a distant grand piano.

Rockabilly is prominent but not dominant, with several selections that concentrate on more far-flung genres. Drop the needle on the B side of the vinyl version, and out pours a bundle of tangos, waltzes and concertina music. All sound as though they belong to another age, which of course they do, but they still feel fresh and vibrant. Los Indios Tacunau's "Romance De Barrio" is a sprightly slice of Django Reinhardt styled guitar picking, as well as the theme tune for Falco's new movie *Urania Descending*. It's bookended by Anton Karas's zither piece "Harry Lime Theme" from *The Third Man*, a film set in the US occupied zone of divided postwar Vienna where Falco currently lives, and Carlos Di Sarli's edgy string driven tango "A La Gran Muneca", which sounds like the prelude to a bull fight.

Stories of a different kind waft through the third side, with bluesman Elmore James, the lost worlds of easy listening maestro Martin Denny and, best of all, trumpeter Chet Baker, whose weary vocal on "I'm A Fool To Want You" rivals Billie Holiday at her tragic peak. The final section returns to rock, albeit one step beyond the rockabilly of Burnette and Joy. Dion And The Belmonts' angst ridden teenage choruses jam up against Shorty Rogers's jazz brut biker noir anthem "Hot Blood". Alex Chilton and country singer Charlie Feathers, with whom Falco also worked closely during his lifetime, are fondly remembered.

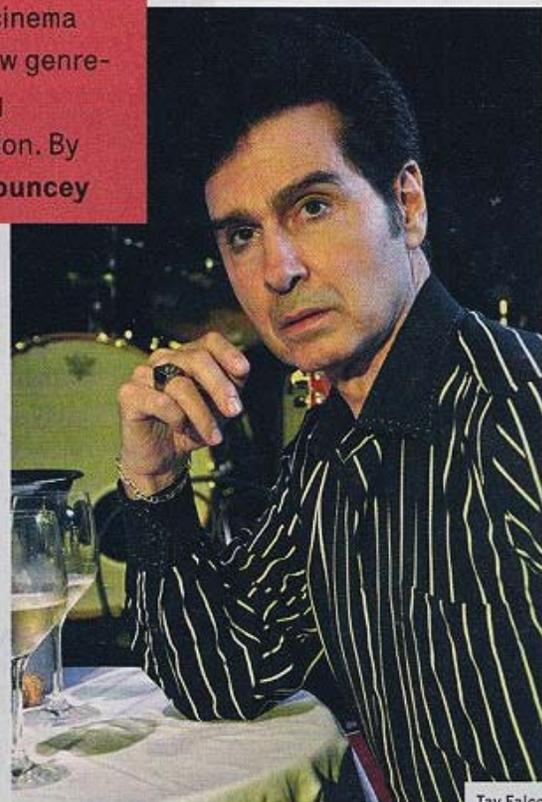
Feathers's "Jungle Fever" is, as its title suggests, a delirious hallucination made up of his trademark hiccupping vocal and the twang of a loosely strung electric guitar, while Chilton's "Bangkok" is punkily bent out of shape and ricocheting with bursts of machine gun fire.

It was around this time that Chilton was producing early sessions by The Cramps, elements from which rubbed off on his and Falco's Panther Burns group. Falco's "Real Cool Trash", which closes the collection, resists direct imitation, even as it channels the rock 'n' roll energy of Lux Interior and Poison Ivy, complete with a squealing backdrop of freeform feedback. "Real Cool Trash" can be read as a tribute to The Cramps, but it also demonstrates that Falco has earned the right to stand shoulder to shoulder with the musicians and artists he so fervently admires. □

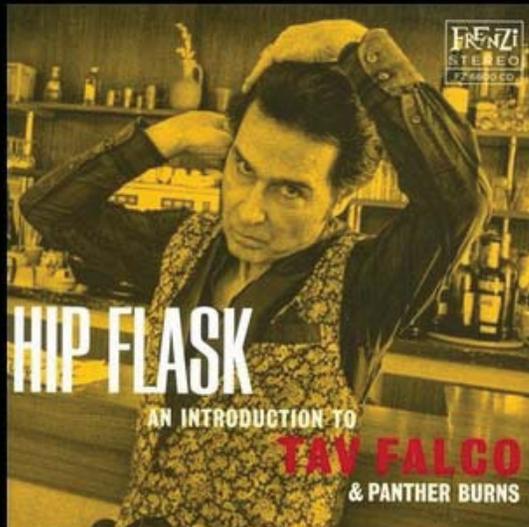


Anton Karas

Rockabilly renegade Tav Falco explores his highly personal vision of rock 'n' roll and cinema with a new genre-spanning compilation. By Edwin Pouncey



Tav Falco



Discography Browser



Tav Falco / Tav Falco's Panther Burns

Hip Flask: An Introduction to Tav Falco & Panther Burns

AllMusic Rating ★★★★★

Review by Thom Jurek

Anybody who has followed [Tav Falco](#) and [the Panther Burns](#) for any part of the last three-plus decades has some idea of what to expect from the 19 cuts on [Hip Flask](#). While it's true that all of the material has been released before -- often in multiple forms -- this marks the first time that [Falco](#) has curated and fully annotated a best-of compilation himself. Tunes from ten albums and two EPs are sequenced somewhat chronologically, telling a story that brings home all the connections the man himself has between blues, rockabilly, R&B, country, punk rock, tango, rumba, samba, and who knows what the hell else. The savage primitive ferocity the band is capable of can be heard in the first three tracks, "I'm on This Rocket" and "Pantherman" from the 1982 [Blow Your Top](#) EP and "Bourgeois Blues" (the latter with [Alex Chilton](#) on guitar) from 1981's [Behind the Magnolia Curtain](#) (both released by Rough Trade). But this is only a small part of the [Panther Burns](#) story. "She's a Bad Motorcycle," from 1987's [The World We Knew](#), weds surf, swamp, and rockabilly in a seamless, howling meld. "My Mind Was Messed Up at the Time," from [Life Sentence in the Cathouse](#) (1991), commences with a startling Latin guitar figure before it winds out into a '60s TV show go-go rave-up with horns and a piano crunch worthy of [Jim Dickinson](#) (complete with a female backing chorus that can't decide whether they are singing rock & roll or gospel). "Born Too Late," from 1995's [Shadow Dancer](#), is a slippery, off-kilter tango that allows for a dancer's improvisation, but in its longing never escapes the eternal sense of drunken loss that fills the true lounge lizard's heart. Just as important as the music are [Falco's](#) notes. In picture-perfect grammar and flamboyant eloquence worthy of his stage persona, he describes his first public performance, tales of terror and depression on the road, and seemingly arcane moments in the studio that emerged as major moments of inspiration. Taken as a whole, [Hip Flask](#) is a bounty of killer tracks and neurotic ditties that frame the band as one of Memphis, Tennessee's most auspicious creations. What's more, the sound on this set is phenomenal -- especially considering how trashy some of the more "unofficial" re-releases of his recordings have been. While the already initiated probably don't need an excuse to jump back in and get boiled in [Falco](#) oil, newcomers should take this opportunity as one hell of a place to start. Do yourself a real favor: forget everything you think you know about rock & roll, get this, and get your head fixed by it.

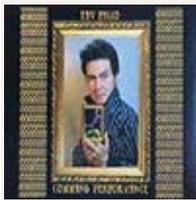


*Real Rock Action from Sydney, Australia
via The Bowery and The Motor City...*

Sydney, Australia 2015

Command Performance - Tav Falco (Twenty Stone Blatt)

Written by The Barman on 08 October 2016.



Memphis-born Tav Falco has been drawing inspiration from a deep musical well of swamp blues, soul and psychedelia since the early '80s. "Command Performance" is his first LP for five years.

Even though there aren't many places he hasn't toured, much of the world is yet to catch up with his music so "Command Performance" is another chip at that wall of mainstream indifference.

The man has assembled a significant body of work. At last count it was about 15 studio albums and nearly twice as many EPs. Now living in Europe, Falco likes to extend himself not only via music, but as an actor, photographer, filmmaker, author and artist across different media

"Command Performance" is a wildly varied bag that reeks of Falco's role as champion of the obscure. It runs from bluesy rockers to a Dylanesque ballad, to a dash of zydeco, a Latin duet and all the way back to Americana rock and roll. This is a strength and a common thread on Falco's records.

The re-working of his former collaborator Alex Chilton's "Bangkok" is one of the best versions to date, its jarring yet almost jaunty delivery contrasting with the dark and troubled lyrics. The original, "Master of Chaos", could have been written about Chilton and it's delivered drily with a brief intrusion of fuzz guitar that works perfectly.

Charlie Feathers' "Jungle Fever" gets the Falco treatment and ends up sounding like a Cramps song with a pop edge, but the bulk of these songs are written by Falco and his Italian bandmates. "Breakaway" could be a Stax soul song and "Whistle Blower" borrows heavily from Dylan, but Falco's own edgy delivery makes every song his own.

The biggest surprise (although it shouldn't be) is the cover of "He'll Have To Go", a song made famous by Elvis, Bryan Ferry and (way back) Jimi Reeves. Falco and band lock into a strident groove and deliver a stunning and slightly psychotic version.

The thing that pervades this record is a sense of fun. Tav and his band sound like they're having a ball. Falco is a man operating without the weight of label or public expectations and long may that be the case.

"Command Performance" is essential for fans and for if you're not, it's a great place to start. Score a copy from [here](#).



1/2

Disques pop rock

Matthew E White

"Fresh Blood"

DOMINO

Chéri des branchés, et pas seulement pour sa pilosité de graphiste du onzième arrondissement parisien, l'Américain Matthew E White affole plus généralement certains amateurs de bonne musique depuis son premier album solo ("Big Inner", en 2012). Ce type venu de Virginie possède il est vrai un talent certain pour ourler les morceaux arrangés avec élégance. White aime le piano, les cuivres, la batterie jouée avec des baguettes en bois. Il préfère certainement écouter chez lui de la vieille soul et des songwriters antiques que le dernier Nicki Minaj. A l'image de son étrange pochette pourtant, le disque part très vite dans des territoires intrigants, certes référencés mais pas vraiment



rétrogrades. White d'abord, possède une voix grave lascive et traînante qui rappelle Kevin Ayers. Ensuite, ce trentenaire sait composer. Une science indéniable lui permet de trouver sur son piano des suites d'accords un peu plus riches que la moyenne. L'intérêt ici réside dans le faste entourant les morceaux, ses cordes soyeuses, chœurs, trombones et trompettes impeccables. "Fresh Blood" dévoile un bel artisanat : des couplets gospelisants, des titres mid-tempo façon soft rock 70, les ballades pour cœurs brisés...

Des réussites car Matthew E White ne chique pas ici au Blanc qui veut sonner Philly soul. Plutôt mélancolique et introspectif, l'album n'atteint jamais un tempo susceptible d'exciter la piste de danse. White joue en revanche l'éditorialiste distancé sur "Rock N' Roll Is Cold", titre qui ne plaira pas à Little Bob, mais single valable néanmoins, désabusé, mais fort beau. ★★★

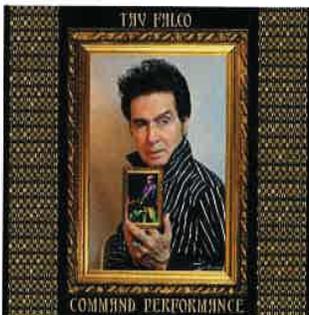
BASILE FARKAS

Tav Falco

"Command Performance"

TWENTY STONE BLATT

Dans sa jeunesse, ce natif de l'Arkansas empruntait les codes d'une aristocratie sans pouvoir, avec sa préciosité bohème et son snobisme de gentleman-farmer. Bref : il portait la moustache. Dans les insouciantes seventies, alors que le tableau mondial commençait à se noircir d'une couleur pétrole, le snobisme voulait qu'on se place au-dessus du discours politique. Posséder les références nobles, choisir les esthétiques avant-gardistes étaient des gestes suffisamment politiques pour l'époque. Puis, cette génération à laquelle appartient Tav Falco, ayant traversé leur vie en jabot et l'auriculaire en l'air, se sent désormais poussée dans l'agora. Fini le temps où l'évocation de référence obscure suffisait à la musique : Tav Falco, désormais, veut s'engager. Parce qu'ils n'ont plus le choix, la vérité géant devant eux sans détour : leur monde va disparaître avec eux. 2015, année apocalyptique. Si ce sursaut fait sourire chez certains, il faut reconnaître que Gustavo Tav Falco (toujours flanqué de ses Panther Burns) livre ici son meilleur album depuis "Shadow Dancers". Sur les chansons "Breakaway", on se libère de nos chaînes ; "Whistle Blower" dénonce "la conspiration des espions et leurs mensonges" ; "Doomsday Baby" donne le programme : invasion et



apocalypse. Et doit-on sous-titrer "Master Of Chaos" ? Les textes sont pleins de feux et de cendre, de figures occultes. Musicalement, Falco a profité de la récente réédition de son œuvre pour reconstruire sa maison musicale au plus proche de l'os. En sort la délicieuse reprise "Me And My Chauffeur Blues", cette scène bourgeoise qui, avec le répertoire précité, prend ici un sens inédit. ★★★

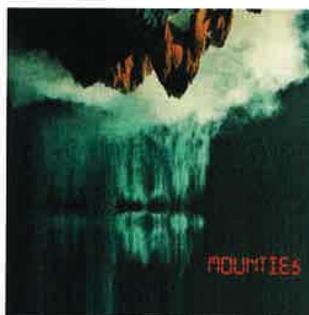
THOMAS E. FLORIN

Mounties

"Trash Rock Legacy"

DIFFER-ANT

Phénomène publicitaire apparu relativement tôt dans l'histoire du rock, la notion de supergroupe est un concept qui marche bien depuis Cream, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, The Plastic Ono Band, les Traveling Wilburys et tout un tas d'autres associations ponctuelles à but lucratif. La plupart du temps, ça passe ou ça craque, mais le monde continue de tourner. Dans le cas qui nous concerne, Mounties nous vient du Canada et est constitué de trois des plus talentueux musiciens/producteurs du monde du rock indépendant au pays des caribous surgelés. Pour faire court, le trio magique est constitué de Hawksley Workman (producteur de Tegan & Sarah, Hey Rosetta, etc), Ryan Dahle (Limblifter, Age Of Electric) et Steve Bays (Hot Hot Heat) et tout ce beau monde



s'est enfermé en studio uniquement au prétexte qu'ils étaient amis et soucieux de collaborer ensemble pour l'amour des choses bien faites. C'est très louable ! Surtout dans une époque aussi mercantile que la nôtre... Reste l'écoute du disque. Pas mal dans l'ensemble. C'est même un très beau mélange, entre influences dansantes et cold wave du passé avec des groupes plus actuels. On appréciera (ou pas) "Tokyo Summer" et sa lecture du "Love Will Tear Us Apart" de Joy Division, le côté glam rock bien dépouillé de "Pretty Respectable" et de tout un tas d'autres chansons admirablement bien tournées, comme la très belle "If This Dance Catches Me", sans doute la meilleure de l'album, mais l'auditeur zappera sans problème les remplissages de circonstance que sont "Edible Cannibal" et l'ultra longuet et dispensable "Garanteed Blonde Enough" qui ont, cependant, l'immense mérite de montrer aux auditeurs normaux que mêmes les surdoués de la musique ont des passages à vide en studio. ★★★

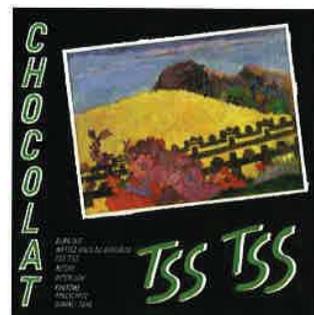
GEANT VERT

Chocolat

"Tss Tss"

BORN BAD

"L'homme au chocolat est mort dans un effroyable état de pourriture, dévoré par les vers." Honoré Balzac en croquait pour la graine, bien que son hyperactivité le portait plus vers celle de café. A sa formation en 2007, l'excitant chez Chocolat semblait venir de la feuille de coca. Le groupe tournait au 80 % de Cocoa. Voici qui explique pourquoi son EP homonyme se mâchait la mâchoire. Puis s'ensuivit un album en 2008, "Piano Élégant", titre ironique pour un groupe que la réputation répudiait des salles de son Montréal natal. Après une mise en zone de quarantaine durant laquelle Jimmy Hunt et Ysaël Pepin vaquèrent à leurs activités respectives (faire des albums en solo, faire des enfants à deux), les voilà de retour avec ce "Tss Tss", signé pour la France chez Born Bad. Le label né mauvais laisse donc ouverte sa parenthèse enchantée qui, après Dorian Pimpernel et Forever Pavot, explorait le psychédéisme élégant. Comme les deux groupes précités, les Chocolat ont un savoir-faire, évoquent beaucoup d'ancêtres tout en évitant le banal, ont même des idées et un chanteur remarquables. C'est bien. Mais est-ce assez ? L'onirisme, la détente du jeu, l'envie de faire aérien ou clinique, toutes ces formules qui collaient si bien à la fin des années 60 semblent en complet

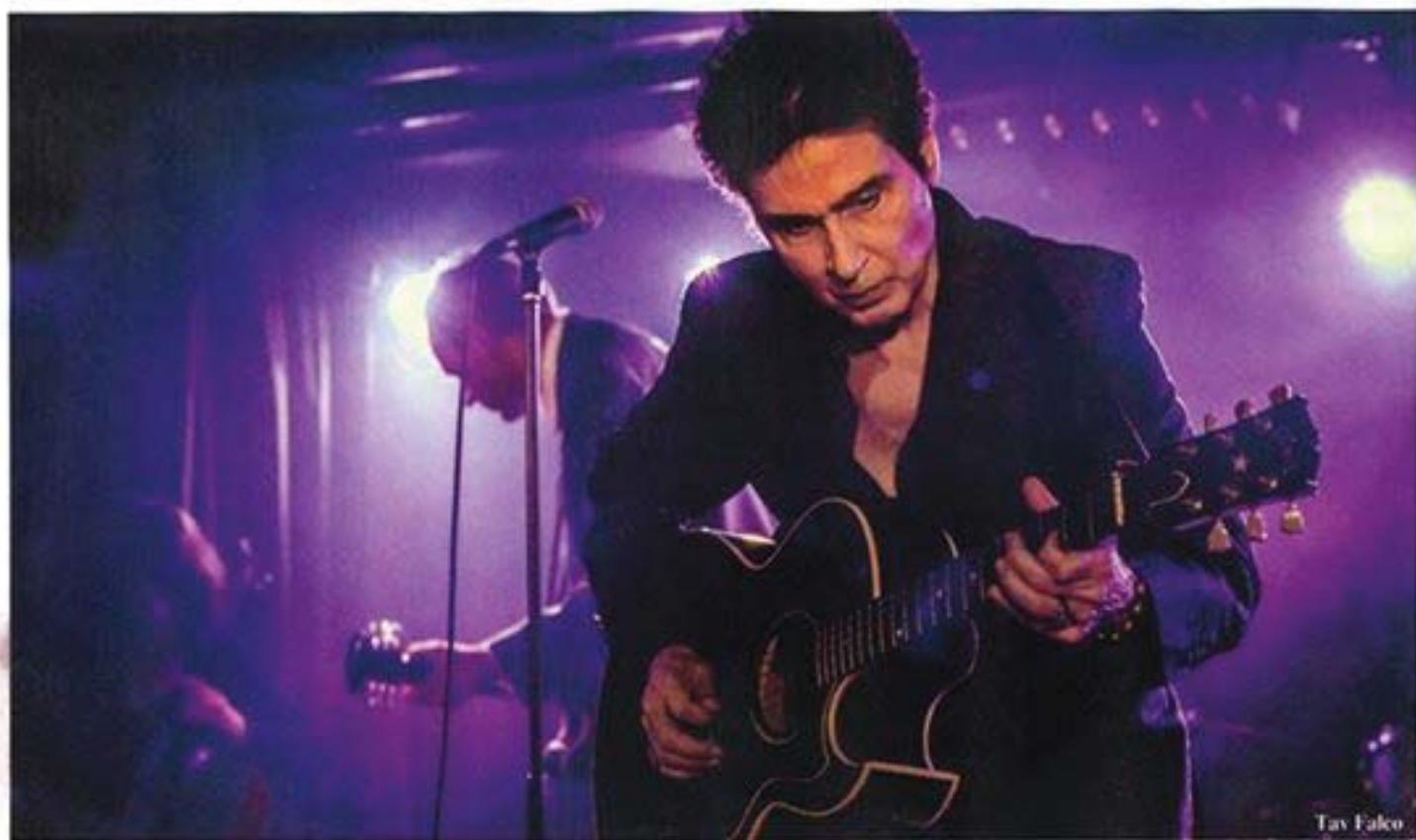


décalage avec l'époque. Pour qu'une musique puisse survivre à cette ère de disparition, il faudrait qu'elle descende dans les limbes, se baigne à la source de tous les mensonges, à l'endroit où tout s'efface, et en remonte grandie. Au fond, nous le savons tous, et Chocolat également qui a nommé un morceau "Apocalypse". Aussi aurions-nous aimé qu'ils nous la fissent entendre. ★★★

THOMAS E. FLORIN

Absolutely live

Les absents ont eu tort



Tav Falco

16 JANVIER, SILENCIO (PARIS)

A deux pas des Folies Bergère, le club privé imaginé par David Lynch en 2011 laisse ce soir-là carte blanche à Alberto Garcia-Alix. Le photographe espagnol de la marge (souvent associé à la Movida) a convié Tav Falco dans ce décor conçu par le réalisateur de "Mulholland Drive" qui sied à merveille à l'univers visuel underground de l'extravagant chanteur. Entre Chaplin pour le look et Feathers pour le son, Tav Falco est Charlie aussi. Accompagné du guitariste Grégoire Garrigues, d'une redoutable section rythmique et d'une belle et mystérieuse demoiselle de Detroit qui monte sur scène pour danser avec lui le tango de la lune, le plus Européen des artistes américains — il vit aujourd'hui à Vienne — reprend "Bangkok" d'Alex Chilton et nous un autre cocktail.

Tav Falco hypnotise avec maestria son monde et descend jouer dans le public, alternant morceaux de son excellent nouvel album, "Command Performance", ceux du précédent enregistré en France, ainsi que quelques pépites oubliées qui font danser les filles.

VINCENT HANON

Tav Falco

Photo Lucie Rouss

Rank #1



Tav Falco - Panther Burns

Alternative / Ballroom / Psychedelic Paris, FR

Live at the Voodoo Rooms - Edinburgh, 2014

Photos



All Photos

Members

Who Is In This Band?

Songs

Play All | Queue All | Share All

Like 31

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Share

Become A Fan

- BREAKAWAY Like 0

[Share](#) [Lyrics](#)
- SYMPATHY FOR MATA... Like 0

[Share](#)
- SWEET LOTUS BLOSSOM Like 20

[Share](#)
- My Mind Was Messed... Like 4

[Share](#)

The Paris Charts

1



Tav Falco - Panther Burns
Alternative

2



Abakuya-Minsili and the TAG Music
Alternative

3



Tcheli
Alternative

4



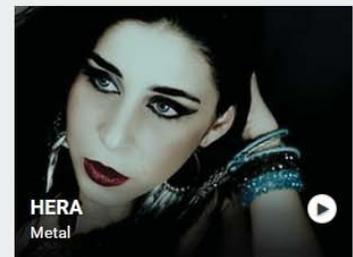
Kevin Thorez
Alternative

5



FAST UNITY
Alternative

Sponsored Artists



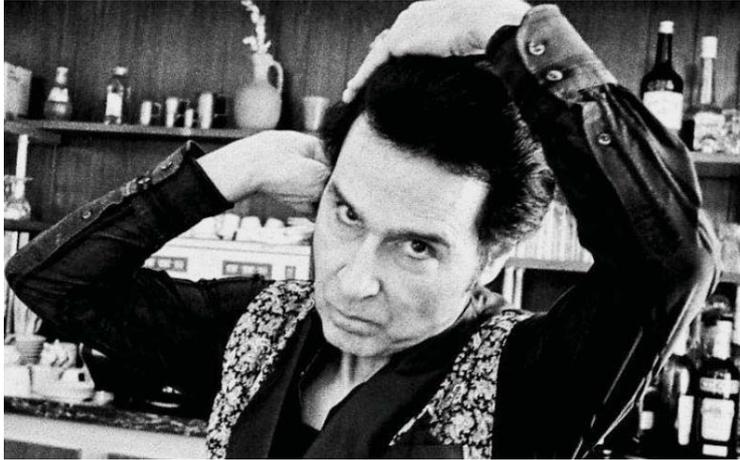
sun 08/03/2015

Reissue CDs Weekly: Tav Falco

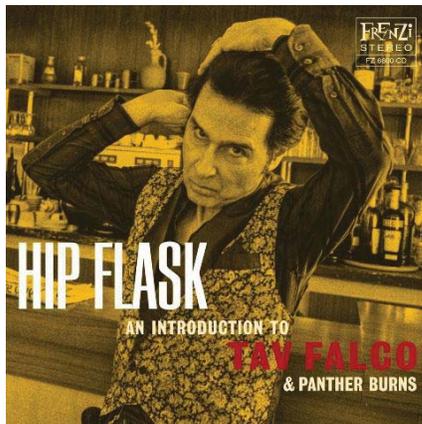
Four decades of fun from the king of wreckabilly

by Kieron Tyler

Share



Not Steven Van Zandt but great American maverick Tav Falco



Tav Falco & Panther Burns: Hip Flask – An Introduction to Tav Falco & Panther Burns

Start with track three. “Bourgeois Blues” is a one-take, six-minute grind through the Leadbelly song, which also draws on Johnny Burnette and the Rock ‘n’ Roll Trio’s “The Train Kept-a-Rollin’”. The words of Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl* are underpinned by base-level rockabilly. When a guitar solo comes, it’s as unhinged as that of The Velvet Underground’s “I Heard Her Call my Name”. Aptly, Tav Falco dubbed his music “wreckabilly”.

“Bourgeois Blues” was first heard on *Behind the Magnolia Curtain*, 1981’s classic Panther Burns album – the first chance record buyers had to consider Falco’s particular take on America, its music and culture. Since that debut release, Falco has never stopped. His most recent album, *Command Performance*, was issued last year.

Hip Flask – An Introduction to Tav Falco & Panther Burns is a handy 19-track overview tracing Falco's four-decade path through the America's artistic nether regions. Beyond rockabilly, his fascinations include his home-town Memphis, carnivals and their sideshows, Latin-American influences on America, the French side of New Orleans, blues and surf music, and their iconography. And sex. On "Ditch Digging", he proposes a dance craze involving shovels and excavation. "You got to stay loose now, so you can dig all night," he sings. "We're going to dig so deep we dig a hole in the floor".



Fellow travellers in the ever-changing cast of Panther Burns have included the eccentric ex-Big Star member Alex Chilton, nutty Memphis producer Jim Dickinson and future [Nick Cave](#) associate Jim Scavunos. Early on, Panther Burns were billed alongside The Cramps and The Gun Club, two contemporary bands with similarly kaleidoscopic takes on America's music. The suave Falco was not aiming at the mainstream.

Falco and his Panther Burns began as something more art project than band though. In his entertaining liner notes, Falco recalls his first appearance on stage. As support to Dickinson's band in 1979, he decided a symbolic gesture was needed. An on-stage TV relayed live imagery filmed in black and white video by the nine-year-old son of photographer William Eggleston. After "Bourgeois Blues", in front of this ghostly vision of himself, Falco began blowing on a police whistle and took a chainsaw to his guitar. No album could have the impact of that debut, but *Hip Flask* is packed with treasures. From the affecting "Ballad of the Rue de la Lune" to the Stax-inflected strut of "My Mind Was Messed up at the Time", the compilation does what was no doubt intended: it paints Falco as a great American maverick whose body of work stands proud against that of both his contemporaries and others – including [The Fall](#) – who subsequently mined these particular seams.

But what screams loudest is a sense of fun. Tav Falco obviously takes what he does seriously, but he is no po-faced merchant of pomposity. May he have many more decades at the coalface of cultural mutation.

"CLASSIC ROCK"
3/2015

Tav Falco's Panther Burns

Hip Flask & Reissues **REISSUES**

The Panther back catalogue gets reignited. While many of his post-punk contemporaries have died or disappeared, Tav Falco is one of the few from that era to have maintained a relentless level of creativity and quality. Since roaring out of late-70s Memphis with running buddies Alex Chilton and Jim Dickinson, he has ridden ever-changing Panther Burns lineups through 12 idiosyncratic albums of southern gothic hoodoo, primal rockabilly and hellbound blues plus several EPs but, in the process, his voluminous back catalogue has become a sprawling, rarity-studded beast.

Hopefully, 2015 will see that situation rectified with a new reissue programme on Falco's reactivated Frenzi label, starting with compilation *Hip Flask* (8/10) straddling the 34 years between 1981's chaotic "wreckabilly" debut *Behind The Magnolia Curtain* to tracks from his forthcoming latest album *Command Performance*. It's followed by double-CD releases of 1987's Chilton-produced cyclone *The World We Knew* (8/10), mixing coruscating originals like *She's A Bad Motorcycle* with astutely-judged covers such as RL Burnside's *Jumper On The Line*, coupled with 1986's Jim Dickinson-produced *Shake Rag* EP and bonus disc of rafter-rocking '87 Bordeaux show (8/10); 1990's Memphis thunderbolt *Return Of The Blue Panther* bolstered by barnstorming 1989 Memphis set (7/10) and 1992's also Chilton-helmed *Life Sentence In The Cathouse* (7/10) joined by a rampant 1988 Vienna show.

Roped together, these fiery missives sound like compelling rebel-yell dispatches from another time, delivered by one of music's most enigmatic wild cards.

Kris Needs

Feline groovy:
Tav Falco

Tav Falco & The Panther Burns

Command Performance

★★★★

Twenty Stone Blatt BAMB-49

Tav Falco's Panther Burns

Hip Flask

★★★★

Frenzi FZ 6600 CD

The Panther ignites

First appearing in anarchic "wreckabilly" happenings with Alex Chilton in the late 70s, Tav Falco is now riding his fifth decade as an idiosyncratic cultural polymath dedicated to celebrating his Memphis heritage, the vanishing spirit of romance and primal rock'n'roll. 2014 saw him premiere his noir-intrigue movie *Uranis Descending*, curate the evocative *Tav Falco's Wild & Exotic World Of Musical Obscurities* compilation, record a new Panther Burns album and organise the imminent reissues of a tangled discography stretching back 34 years.

Recorded in Rome with faithful cohorts and new collaborators such as former Posies/Big Star multi-instrumentalist Ken Stringfellow, *Command Performance* further explores Falco's world of twilight swamp rhythms, Stax vamps and ballroom damage, also tackling bare-knuckled protest blues on *Whistle Blower* and *Doomsday Baby*. Though he's been based in Vienna since the 90s, part of Falco's heart still resides in Memphis, where he lived for 17 years. It's reflected here in homages to the city (Memphis Ramble) and rip-roaring covers of Charlie Feathers' *Jungle Fever* and departed friend Alex Chilton's *Bangkok*.

Hip Flask is a seductively compelling 19-track collection straddling all 12 Panther Burns albums. It heralds the reissue campaign, which will begin in April through LTM with 1987's Alex Chilton-produced *The World We Knew* (joined by that year's *Shake Rag* EP and bonus disc of a barnstorming Bordeaux show), 1990's *Return Of The Blue Panther* (bolstered by 1989 Memphis set) and another Chilton-helmed set, 1992's *Life Sentence In The Cathouse* (with bonus plus 1988 Vienna

hoedown). They're vivid earlier dispatches from a remarkable life which shows no sign of slowing down. Kris Needs

Q&A Tav Falco

A definite Memphis flavour seems to reappear on *Command Performance*...

I said, "Let's work on a song that's going to be like an Italian movie soundtrack from the 60s and sounds like something from Stax that's gone haywire in 1967." I thought, "It's got to be Memphis. It's walking down Beale Street. It's got to be Memphis Ramble." The Memphis Ramble is when black people would come every Saturday night and enjoy a night at the Palace Theatre. I started writing lyrics about Beale Street and this song just came out. Memphis isn't something you sleep off overnight.

This extended to the cover versions on the new album...

I always wanted to cover *Bangkok*. That's my favourite Alex Chilton song and this is our tribute to him. I wanted it to be pretty loose, but maybe it's a little tighter than Alex's version. I never thought I could play it – it took a while for the group to get it. Even Alex couldn't get on top of it live. It's very weird and unusual, but so much fun. Another song I wanted to do for a long time was *Me And My Chauffeur Blues* by Memphis Minnie. She had beautiful lingerie but a very salty, edgy personality. I think I captured something of that.

Jungle Rock consolidates your relationship with Charlie Feathers...

There is no finer operatic voice in US music than that of Charlie Feathers and his particular vision of US folk music. I've been studying *Jungle Fever* for a long time. Nothing like it ever came out of Memphis. I never thought I could do that song justice but I learned how to do it and, with the help of my band, we created the song. I've only nailed a few songs in my career, but I nailed that one. As told to Kris Needs

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what I was up to. I don't think beforehand, I think afterwards. I find that plans ahead, concepts ahead limit you."

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dominorecordco.com/artists/robert-wyatt



Tav Falco's Panther Burns

The master of a raw and shambolic fusion of rockabilly, blues, and fractured noise, Tav Falco was, along with The Cramps, one of the earliest purveyors of what would come to be known as Psychobilly and he anticipated the fractured but hard-hitting blues wailing of The Gories and Jon Spencer Blues Explosion. Born in Arkansas, Falco moved to Memphis, Tennessee in 1973 and introduced himself to the city's creative community as a filmmaker and performance artist while supporting himself with a variety of odd jobs. In 1979, Falco put together the first version of his band Panther Burns (named for a famous Tennessee plantation), a group whose revolving membership included Alex Chilton (Big Star) and James Luther Dickinson in its early incarnations. In 1981, Falco recorded his first album, 'Behind The Magnolia Curtain' which was released on Rough Trade the following year. Tav Falco's Panther Burns soon found a home at the New Rose label with headquarters in Paris, France. They released a string of records which together with relentless touring cemented Tav Falco's cult status. His last studio album 'Conjurations' was

1. Metal Urbain Paris Maquis
2. Cabaret Voltaire
3. Do The Mussolini (Headkick)
4. Kleenex Hedi's head
5. The Little Pop Heathrow
6. Little Fingers Rough Trade
7. Monochrome Set
8. Symphonie Des Grauens
9. Miles Fa Ce La
10. King of Kings
11. Group
12. 's A Will There's A Way
13. 'no Pope
14. 'mer
15. 're In America?
16. 'ts
17. 'ng out loud
18. 'ter Spies
19. 'ect
20. 'y)
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28. 'y)
29. 'ect
30. 'y)

**Best of Rough Trade
3-record set March 2015**

SHINDIG!

EDITORS' BLOG

Tav Falco's Panther Burns live review

Posted on [March 5, 2014](#)



TAV FALCO'S PANTHER BURNS

Broadcast, Glasgow

February 9th

Can it really be 35 years since Tav Falco first introduced the world to the phenomenon that remains The Panther Burns? Three and a half decades on Tav the eternal troubadour finally makes it to Glasgow, to be greeted by the sight of a capacity crowd shoehorned into the subterranean soul-hole that is

Broadcast, as the sound of Shorty Rogers' bop-driven score from *The Wild One* marks the countdown to showtime.

It's been a long trek along a lifetime of dusty back roads that have taken the luxuriously pompadoured Falco from his spiritual home and original stomping ground of Memphis to his current abode in Vienna and the current configuration of The Panther Burns. So it's only appropriate that tonight's performance should acknowledge his substantial stash of past recorded glories, while also featuring a wedge of material from what remains Panther Burns' most recent communique – 2011's *Conjurations : Sceance For Deranged Lovers*.

We start out with the stripped-down backwoods carney exotica of 'Oh How She Dances' with drummer Giovanna Pizzorno a vision in diaphanous harem garb shimmying around the stage, before taking her place behind the traps for the remainder of the show. From here on the hot spots pile up thick and fast – JP Loudermilk's 'Tobacco Road', Leadbelly's 'Bourgeois Blues', 'Funnel Of Love' and Cordell Jackson's 'Dateless Night'.

A lively excursion through 'Drop Your Mask' has the ever dapper mainman cast as the lost matinee idol momentarily abandoning his beloved Hoffner six-string to get seriously cheek to cheek with a tango dancer who suddenly appears from nowhere. Not even the prospect of a looming curfew can knock Tav off his stride on 'Mona Lisa' and 'Goldfinger', before he slips in an affectionate nod to one time comrade-in-spirit Alex Chilton on a rousing take on 'Bangkok'. When it finally arrives the end comes wrapped in the gloriously melancholic deconstruction of 'Brazil' as immortalized on *Behind The Magnolia Curtain*.

Tav, Shindig! salutes you. Long may the untamed spirit of The Panther Burns continue to light up stages with their mystical connection to the wellspring of the very essence of time-warped cool.

Grahame Bent



Tav Falco: Voodoo mit Pomade

Karl Fluch 21. Juni 2016, 15:09 VIENNA



Schweiß und Glamour, Motoröl und Tango. Tav Falco tritt am Donnerstag mit seiner Band Panther Burns im Wiener Chelsea auf

Wien – Rock 'n' Roll ist eine verschwitzte Kunst. Der Schweiß gilt ihm als Gütesiegel, als Zeichen der Besessenheit, Blut und Tränen gelten als gerne in Kauf genommene Kollateralschäden. Dennoch schließt diese nach schwerer Arbeit anmutende Kunst die Eleganz nicht aus. Tav Falco vereint beides.

Mit seiner in den späten 1970ern aus der Musik- und Kunstszene von Memphis, Tennessee, entstandenen Band Panther Burns grub er sich tief in die wenig bekannten Musikwinkel von Memphis und interpretierte vergessene geglaubte Klassiker, die nie welche waren – bis sie dank seiner Hilfe solche wurden.

Die wesensverwandte Band The Cramps arbeitete zeit ihres Bestehens ähnlich. Anders als deren vor keiner fleischlichen Direktheit zurückschreckende Formation offenbarte sich bei Schöngest Tav Falco früh eine Vorliebe für den Tan-go, die europäische Boheme, für die schönen Künste. Dazu kam ein bisschen Voodoo aus den Sümpfen des Mississippi, das Öl schnittiger Motorräder sowie das Odeur einer allem trotzendem Pomade. Stil, Baby.

Aus diesen Zutaten entstand ein Lebenswerk, dessen aktuellen Stand Tav Falco mit Panther Burns am Donnerstag im Wiener Chelsea vorführen wird. Es ist gewissermaßen ein Heimspiel dieses Globetrotters. Falco lebt seit vielen Jahren in Wien.

Von hier aus betreibt er eine kleine Weltkarriere, die er in den letzten Jahren um sein Spielfilmdebüt *Urania Descending* sowie den Fotoband *An Iconography of Chance: 99 Photographs of the Evanescent South* erweitert hat. Diese zwischen Museum, Cinema und dreckigem Blues-Club oszillierende Figur zählt auf ihre Art zu den schillerndsten Erscheinungen des Musikbusiness.

Sein aktuelles Album heißt *Command Performance*. Es spannt den Bogen vom bluesinfizierten Rocker *About Marie Laveau* über Interpretationen von Memphis-Hometown Klassikern wie *Bangkok* (von Alex Chilton), *Jungle Fever* (von Charlie Feathers) bis zu dem Eifersuchtsklassiker *He'll Have To Go*.

Der viel zu früh verstorbene Alex Chilton war ein Freund und Mitstreiter Falcos. Er selbst sieht sich als Veteranen unbekanntes Alters am Zenit seiner musikalischen Kraft. Hört man aktuelle Songs wie *Doomsday Baby*, wagt man nicht, dem zu widersprechen. (Karl Fluch, 21.6.2016)

Tav Falco's Panther Burns live: 23. 6., Chelsea, Lerchenfelder Gürtel, Bögen 29-32, 21.30

Tav Falco: Ein wenig Voodoo für die Josefstadt

KARL FLUCH

5. Dezember 2014, 17:06



vergrößern (800x532)

foto: regine hendrich

Rockabilly, Nazigold und Tango. Das sind Zutaten, mit denen der US-Amerikaner Tav Falco sein Spielfilmdebüt "Urania Descending" würzt.

Musiker, Autor, Fotograf und Filmemacher. Der in Wien lebende US-Amerikaner ist ein Undergroundstar auf vier Kontinenten. Nun hat er seinen ersten Spielfilm gedreht: "Urania Descending"

Wien - Begonnen hat seine Karriere mit einer Motorsäge. Damit zerstörte Tav Falco 1978 auf der Bühne des Orpheum Theatre in Memphis, Tennessee, eine Gitarre, nachdem er den *Bourgeois Blues* von Leadbelly gespielt hatte. Es war die drastische Geste eines gerade etwas vom Nihilismus gestreiften jungen Mannes, der fünf Jahre zuvor aus Arkansas in die große Stadt gezogen war, um Film und Fotografie zu studieren.

Im Publikum stand Alex Chilton. Zehn Jahre zuvor war der ein Weltstar mit der Band The Box Tops (*The Letter*). 1978 war er weitgehend vergessen, er selbst ein Getriebener zwischen Exzess und Phlegma, zwischen New York und Memphis. Chilton empfahl Tav Falco, eine Band zu gründen: Tav Falco's Panther Burns.

Daraus resultierte eine bis heute anhaltende Undergroundkarriere, die eine enge Verbindung zu Österreich prägt. Nach ersten Aufenthalten auf Pump in den 1990ern lebt Gustavo Antonio Falco heute seit zehn Jahren in Wien. Ein Southern Gentleman in der Josefstadt. Bourbon nie vor sechs, dann gerne. Wie alt er ist? "Das fragt man keinen Künstler."

Nun hat diese Diva ihren ersten Spielfilm gemacht: *Urania Descending* wird kommenden Mittwoch im Wiener Metrokino gezeigt. Der US-Kultur überdrüssig, beschließt darin eine junge Frau, nach Wien zu gehen. Dort trifft sie Diego Moritz (Tav Falco), der, im Sold Schweizer Auftraggeber stehend, Karl Heinz von Riegl nachstellt. Dieser "Von" ist Nachkomme eines SS-Angehörigen und im Besitz eines Planes, der die Lage eines Nazigoldschatzes im Attersee markiert. Zudem hat er eine Schwäche für junge Damen - hier kommt Gina Lee ins Spiel. Moritz bewegt sie dazu, ihm zu helfen.

Chaplins verlorener Sohn

Beeinflusst von Expressionisten wie Erich von Stroheim und der Montagetechnik Sergej Eisensteins, drehte er in Wien und am Attersee einen Film, der an *Der Dritte Mann* erinnert, nur zeitgemäß und experimenteller.

Tav Falco spielt sich als Diego Moritz quasi selbst. Ein Mann

auf Mission, den es dorthin treibt, wohin seine Auftraggeber wollen. Nur dass im richtigen Leben der "Underground Drifter" selbst die Richtung vorgibt.

Tav Falco sieht aus wie ein verlorener Sohn Charlie Chaplins. Er trägt dunkle Anzüge und eine Frisur wie Elvis. Einen Finger ziert ein Totenkopfring. Er ist ein Underground-Held auf vier Kontinenten. In seiner Kunst trifft die Dramatik des Theaters auf die niederen Triebe des Rock 'n' Roll, paart sich sturer Country-Blues mit elegantem Tango.

"Als ich Chilton traf, konnte ich kaum Blues spielen, ich dachte nicht, dass es je für Rock 'n' Roll reichen würde. Aber dann kamen die Cramps nach Memphis, Chilton produzierte sie, und deren Gitarrist, Bryan Gregory, konnte noch weniger spielen als ich. Doch was sie aus Songs von Roy Orbison oder Charlie Feathers machten, war fantastisch."

Für ihn waren die Cramps eine zeitgenössische Version von Antonin Artauds Theater der Grausamkeit. Mit seiner eigenen, nach einem Südstaatenmythos benannten Band Panther Burns ging er nach New York. Die dort damals "narkotisierte und blutleere No-Wave-Szene" bestaunte diese Landeier mit ihrer wilden Voodoo-Musik - und mochte sie.

Tav Falcos Musik atmet den Geist der Freiheit, schert sich wenig um Takt, sondern vertraut dem Instinkt ihres Schöpfers. Das zeitigt Rockabilly-Bastarde, gehetzte Liebeserklärungen, aus dem letzten Loch pfeifende Balladen über Damen und Motorräder.

Zu hören auf Alben wie *Behind the Magnolia Curtain*, *Shadowdancer* oder *The World We Knew*, das die Musik aus Memphis großflächig abdeckt. Tav Falcos Kunst ist angewandte Musikarchäologie mit den Mitteln des Punk, dessen Attitüde er schon in den turbulenten 1960er-Jahren erlebt hat. Rund 15 Alben sind so entstanden.

Tango statt Walzer

1987 führte ihn ein Engagement der Wiener Festwochen erstmals nach Wien. "Wir waren in schlechter Verfassung, unser Promoter karrte uns im Laderaum eines Lkw von Spanien nach Wien." Wieder in Memphis, vernahm er eines Tages ungewöhnlichen Lärm. Er sah einen Rollstuhlfahrer, der sich über die Rampe quälte, die Tav für sein Motorrad errichtet hatte.

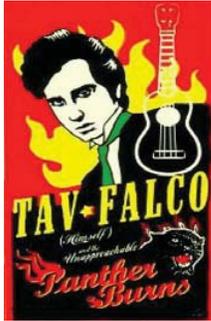
Es war Gustav Dornetshuber von der österreichischen Band Krüppelschlag. Er bat Tav, seine Band zu produzieren. So kam er erstmals länger nach Österreich.

Andere Leute entdecken in Wien ihre Liebe zum Walzer, Falco entdeckte seine zum Tangotanz und weist sofort auf die frühen Gemeinsamkeiten von Tango, Jazz und Blues hin. Andere musikalische Vorlieben aus Alter und Neuer Welt sowie diversen Zwischenreichen sind auf der eben veröffentlichten

It's a ****thing

Tuesday, 11 February 2014

Tav Falco's Panther Burns - Broadcast - Glasgow (09/02/14)



Very often, too often for it to be merely coincidentally, and probably the result of an ancient curse that has been levelled at my family, I have found myself in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In the game eeny, meeny, miny, your fucked I have bucked the laws of statistical probability and been the 'you're fucked' more often than most could realistically believe.

I even have a recurring dream that ties in with being born under a bad star wherein a fiery ball drops from the sky into a large crowd and lands on me.

Everyone else is injury free, but I'm in tiny bits.

The last thought that flits across my mind just before I die is "bloody typical".

That's not to say every day is filled with the toast landing butter side down though. Sometimes everything works out fine, and that's what happened with the Tav Falco show in Glasgow.

On Sunday morning I was all geared up to see the man himself hit the stage of Broadcast on the Monday evening, when in a casual conversation it was mentioned that I had the wrong date, meaning that I missed out on being in the right place at the wrong time by a happenstance stroke of luck.

Keeping with the theme of superstition, curses and cosmic jokes by Gods, this was my moment of the stars aligning that bucked the normal trend.

I was on a roll when a matter of minutes later a friend posted online that they had a spare ticket to.

All my luck was being used up in the one day it seemed.

So in a matter of mere hours I had went from ignorance to awareness, and then to a seat in a booth in Broadcast and enjoying a candle lit meal with my girlfriend Kelly.

Not bad for a Sunday with three bands still to play.

First support band of the night was The Reverse Cowgirls.

Describing themselves as a psych tinged garage rock act they haven't missed the head of the nail as they powered through a bunch of songs that sound like the material from the Pebbles collections after they have been forced to do the "Tough Mudder" assault course run.

Sounding battered and bruised, but screaming that they are alive, song after song reinforces that the garage sound of the west coasts underground garage scene is still as relevant as it has ever been to those who gravitate towards a less slick, but ultimately more vibrant take on rock and roll.

Even some technical gremlins making an appearance couldn't diminish the on-going onslaught. Huge thumbs up from me.

Kompilation *Tav Falco's Wild & Exotic World Of Musical Obscurities* zu hören.

Der andere Falco

Eine von ihm verfasste, biografisch durchwirkte Kulturgeschichte von Memphis ist 2012 erschienen: *Ghosts Behind the Sun: Splendor, Enigma & Death: Mondo Memphis Volume 1*, im kommenden Jahr wird der erste Bildband des Fotografen Tav Falco publiziert, ein neues Album sowieso.

Tav Falco ist heute eine Figur wie der Chef der legendären britischen Band The Fall, Mark E. Smith. Smith ist The Fall, Tav Falco ist Panther Burns. Nur gesünder, aber natürlich haben die beiden schon einmal gemeinsam in Memphis Whiskey getrunken. Vor sechs.

Wenn jemand hierzulande den Namen Falco trägt, drängt sich eine Frage auf: Was denkt er über den anderen? Mit der Musik seines Namensvetters kann Tav wenig anfangen, böses Wort kommt ihm keines über die Lippen. Eines aber muss er dennoch festhalten. "Falco bewies ein gutes Gespür, sich mit diesem Namen zu schmücken. Er musste dafür aber einen Skispringer beleihen. Ich hingegen wurde damit geboren." (Karl Fluch, DER STANDARD, 6./7./8.12.2014)

Urania Descending: 10. 12., Metrokino, 1., Johannesgasse 4, 19.30. Der Eintritt ist frei.

Das aktuelle Kinoprogramm finden Sie auf derStandard.at/Kino

encuentros

TEXTO: ROGER ESTRADA

Tav Falco VIEJO CONOCIDO DE ESTA CASA DESDE SUS PRIMEROS PASOS JUNTO A ALEX CHILTON EN LOS PANTHER BURNS, ESTE MÚSICO QUE ASOCIAMOS A MEMPHIS ES UN ARTISTA TOTAL: CINEASTA, AUTOR, ETC.

PEQUEÑO GRAN CUENTACUENTOS

Muchos venderíamos nuestra alma al diablo por haber vivido la mitad de experiencias y haber conocido a la mitad de increíbles personajes que ha conocido Gustavo Antonio Falco en sus 70 años sobre la faz de la Tierra. Figura clave, junto a The Cramps, X o The Gun Club, para entender la revalorización que géneros genuinamente americanos como el blues o el rockabilly experimentaron a finales de los setenta, su excéntrica personalidad y el espíritu más rompedor, vanguardista con el que él y sus Panther Burns acometían sus actuaciones quizá alejaron a la banda de un mayor reconocimiento por parte del aficionado rockero medio. En cualquier caso, nunca fue esa demasiada preocupación para un Tav Falco que se las ha apañado para mantener a flote su elegante leyenda, siempre embarcado en todo tipo de proyectos paralelos —libros, películas y fotografías dan cuenta de su multidisciplinaria inquietud— y tirando siempre de su mejor baza, un enciclopédico conocimiento de la historia de la música de raíces americana y una proverbial, hipnótica habilidad para narrar su propia odisea vital. Un "raconteur" en estado puro, un pequeño gran hombre.

Háblame de *Urania Descending*, la última película que has dirigido.

Es una intriga protagonizada por una chica estadounidense que, desencantada con su vida, siente el impulso de huir de su rutina y subirse a un avión destino a Viena, la alegre pero también siniestra ciudad del Danubio. A su llegada, pronto se ve envuelta en una oscura trama para desenterrar un tesoro nazi que permanece oculto en las profundidades insondables del Lago Attir. La película es un poema en blanco y negro inspirado en el mito de Urania, la musa de los cielos, donde el pasado impregna el presente y el presente evoca al pasado. Es una cinta modesta, rodada en 16 milímetros y luego digitalizada, que evoca el cine del pionero Louise Feuillade, autor de títulos clásicos como la serie *Los vampiros* o el díptico sobre *Fantomas*. Hicimos una proyección privada en Los Ángeles, gracias a la que recibimos una elogiosa reseña del reputado crítico Guy Maddin y ahora estamos viendo las mejores opciones para estrenarla en Europa [finalmente se presentó en septiembre en Londres y en diciembre en Viena].

Esperemos que, llegado el momento, la proyección del filme en España no acabe como

el concierto que diste en Barcelona hace ya unos años...

[Risas] Yo diría que eso fue más bien un happening, ¿no? Hubo un percance con el batería, era un tipo algo complicado; empecé a tirar las baquetas al público, siguió con el bombo y las cosas se pusieron feas. El público nos pedía que tocáramos más, así que invité a quien quisiera seguirme a que me acompañara a un bar cercano donde acabé tocando unas cuantas canciones a la guitarra. Fue una noche distinta, pero la historia de The Panther Burns está repleta de noches singulares, de situaciones imprevisibles y de personajes atípicos que se han cruzado en nuestro camino...

Para aquellos que no conocen vuestra música, ¿cómo les atraerías al universo Panther Burns?

Somos el eslabón perdido entre las primeras formas del rock'n'roll y sus mutaciones contemporáneas. Cuando empezamos nuestra aventura en 1978, yo escuchaba country-blues por un lado y a Karlheinz Stockhausen y Eric Dolphy del otro; de la fusión de las raíces más underground y de cierta vanguardia musical surgió nuestra música.

¿Y cómo se había forjado este espíritu inquieto en el joven Gustavo, el chico que vivía entre Whelen Springs y Gurdon, en Arkansas?

En la universidad leía muchos libros, asistía a obras de teatro, charlaba con otros estudiantes... Era un joven hambriento de experiencias y sabía que quedándome allí

Somos el eslabón perdido entre las primeras formas del rock'n'roll y sus mutaciones contemporáneas. Yo escuchaba country-blues y a Karlheinz Stockhausen y Eric Dolphy

no sacaría mi apetito. Hay quien prefiere el confort o la tranquilidad del entorno que reconoce, sus vecinos, su ciudad, pero yo siempre quise conocer de cerca aquello a lo que había sido expuesto a través de las fotografías de Man Ray o de la música de John Coltrane y Sun Ra. Fui a San Francisco a mediados de los sesenta porque quería conocer a Big Brother & The Holding Company y pude verles en directo; quise conocer a Dr. John y viajé a Nueva Orleans y sabía que tenía que experimentar Nueva York y cuando llegué a ella fue como aterrizar en la luna. Visité los Anthology Film Archives del director Jonas Mekas, pasé largas horas en The Kitchen o The Knitting Factory y entablé amistad con la gente de la productora de vídeo experimental

+ INFO

"Actúe por primera vez aquí en 1988 —explica Falco de sus incursiones ibéricas— y desde entonces he regresado en distintas ocasiones, siempre de forma bastante underground o modesta, si exceptuamos mi actuación en el Festival de 1996, cuando fui invitado a participar en una sección de poesía junto a John Cale, Lydia Lunch y otros autores locales.

Con los años he ido conociendo al público español, e intuyo que *Urania Descending* podría serle interesante a aquellos que, además de entretenimiento, buscan un diálogo intelectual con el arte".

Global Village y los miembros de la compañía Squat Theatre, que residían cerca del Hotel Chelsea. Todo esas experiencias tuvieron un enorme impacto en mí.

¿Y qué te llevo a instalarte en Memphis en 1973?

Trabajaba como guardaferenos en el ferrocarril Missouri Pacific que cubría la ruta por el oeste del río Mississippi. Vi Memphis por primera vez desde uno de sus vagones; el río, el skyline, fue una visión muy estimulante, un flash que me reveló que todo iba a ser posible en esa ciudad. Enseguida fui golpeado por el ritmo y el rugir de sus calles, con la música revoloteando por el aire, saliendo a través de las ventanas de las casas de Beale Street. En los sesenta hubo una explosión del blues, con gente como Furry Lewis o Mississippi Fred McDowell que se habían instalado en Memphis u otros que la visitaban para tocar y a los que tuve la posibilidad de ver en directo, como Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, Johnny Taylor, B.B. King o mi favorito, mi ídolo, Bobby "Blue" Bland. Era increíble, tenía una voz prodigiosa, muy aguda, que le confería un tono espiritual a sus canciones. Oías su voz, ese lamento, y notabas que había sido alguien que había sufrido mucho.

¿Cómo te influyó otro artista local, el fotógrafo William Eggleston?

Fue mi mentor, aprendí mucho de su manera de trabajar, cómo observaba la realidad y extraía arte de ella. Teníamos maneras de ser distintas, sobre todo a nivel político, pero el arte nos unió, nos sirvió para trascender esas diferencias y conectar gracias a una misma visión creativa. Hay un idioma universal con el que nos comunicamos aquellos con cierta sensibilidad artística, con el que superamos las barreras que puedan existir entre nosotros por diferencias en nuestro background. Gracias a Eggleston y a otros personajes que tuve la suerte de conocer pude establecer un diálogo con Memphis muy estimulante, pues en la ciudad confluían distintas corrientes artísticas llegadas desde otras partes del país y desde otras partes del mundo.

Y así surgió TeleVista, el colectivo de "arte y acción" que liderabas con Randall Lyon.

Exacto. Cuando fundamos TeleVista nuestra intención era documentar todo lo que hervía en la ciudad. Grabamos a bluesmen como Jessie Mae Hemphill o R.L. Burnside en su honky tonk antes de que Alan Lomax hiciera lo propio pero con más medios; grabamos a la gente de Sun Records, al gran Charlie Feathers, a los artistas que nos habían cautivado, como el escultor John McIntire... Todo con un estilo muy cinema vérité. Pero TeleVista iba más allá del vídeo, no había separación entre videoarte, música y teatro de la acción; como dijo Charlie Parker "es labor del artista derribar las fronteras entre las distintas artes". Esa máxima y el Teatro de la Crueldad de Antonin Artaud son esenciales para entender cuáles eran nuestras intenciones... Unas intenciones que, a finales de los setenta y en Memphis, no nos granjearon precisamente popularidad sino más bien dificultades para subsistir y una gran frustración.

¿Esta frustración canalizada en ira explicaría esa sonada actuación en la que destrozaste una guitarra en escena con una sierra eléctrica?

Algo de eso habría, sí. Y de octubre de 1978, concierto de Mud Boy & The Neutron Boys [influyente banda local liderada por Jim Dickinson] en el Orpheum Theatre. Fui invitado a participar en el evento y en plena interpretación del «Bourgeois Blues» de Leadbelly subí al escenario con una sierra mecánica y empecé a destrozarme mi guitarra. El público se volvió histérico, en esa época la gente no estaba acostumbrada a ver algo así. Solo The Who y Plasmatics habían hecho destrozos similares, pero en Memphis no tenían ni idea de que algo así podía pasar en un escenario. Tuve que ser yo, en mi primer concierto, el que les mostrara como se hacía, para horror suyo [risas].

Esa performance captó la atención de Alex Chilton, que estaba entre el público.

Nos habíamos conocido antes, cuando Randall y yo nos acercamos a filmar las sesiones de grabación de su disco *Like Flies on Sherbert*. Pero fue la noche del concierto en el Orpheum, en una fiesta posterior, cuando Alex y yo empezamos a conversar y vimos que existía una conexión. Desde el primer momento me insistió para que montáramos una banda juntos; él venía del rock and roll, yo del blues y la vanguardia y fue la mezcla espontánea y apasionada de nuestros respectivos mundos lo que le dio esa personalidad tan especial a The Panther Burns. Alex era alguien increíble, un artista muy intuitivo y con una sensibilidad imponente.

¿Qué supuso para ti que la editorial Creation Books te propusiera escribir uno de los volúmenes de *Mundo Memphis*, ambiciosa obra que recorre la historia de la ciudad que cambió tu vida?

Pensé que podría servirme de catarsis, para depurar cierto desajuste emocional que todavía, tantos años después, sentía respecto a Memphis por haber vivido allí en mis años formativos. Pero era tanta la información que tenía acumulada, por vivencias propias y documentación ajena, que cuando me enfrenté al libro no tenía ni idea de cómo enfocarlo. Me di cuenta que no podía ceñirme solo a los años que pasé en ella, sino que tenía que retroceder mucho más en el tiempo para dar cierta perspectiva histórica que ayudara a entender por qué la ciudad era como era cuando yo la descubrí. Y así fue como cree a Eugene Baffle, mi alter ego, un personaje que viaja en el tiempo y a través del cual sabemos de Memphis antes de que existiera como tal, cuando solo era una región poblada por indios Chickawaw. Pero también está presente en la detención del gángster "Machine Gun" Kelly en 1933, cuando el asesinato de Martin Luther King en 1968 o esa noche en el Orpheum cuando su historia y la de Tav Falco se cruzan y empezamos a narrar mis años en esta ciudad tan especial. Dijo la poeta alemana Gertrud Kolmar que el arte existe a través de la selección, no puedes contarlo todo; eso es lo que hace Eugene Baffle en *Mundo Memphis*. Y yo hago algo parecido cuando me subo a un escenario: presento una selección de las vivencias acumuladas, de las músicas aprendidas y los personajes que se han cruzado en mi camino con el objetivo de remover las oscuras aguas del inconsciente del público. ¶



Tav Falco en París: "Creo poder detectar las peculiaridades del público español!" (foto: F. Grivelet)

CRÓNICA CONCIERTO

Publicidad

Tav Falco's Panther Burns

Wurlitzer Ballroom [Madrid]

04 de Marzo de 2014 - Aldo Linares (Fotos: Olga López)



Dentro de una situación de sentido común y justicia poética este concierto tendría que haber estado hasta arriba de gente. Pero realmente daba igual, quien estuvo sabía a lo que iba. El argumento es sencillo: **Tav Falco** y sus **Panther Burns** son fuego puro.



Esto se refuerza aún más cuando hablamos de un músico que desde 1979 firma discos de rock'n'roll vibrante y que, con el tiempo, ha conseguido que su sonido y propuesta sea tan intensa como lo que quiere reflejar en sus canciones. Una propuesta que esta noche dejó como testigo a un concierto de esos que hacen que el frío se reduzca a cenizas para que, por una hora y algo de sonido y luz, todos lográsemos viajar hacia historias de desamores, truculentas andanzas o fognazos carnales.

Sirviéndose de su nuevo álbum, "**Conjurations: Séance For Deranged Lovers**", como grata excusa, el norteamericano volvía a estas latitudes después de varios años de distancia y lo hacía junto a **Giovanna Pizzorno**, **Grégoire "Cat" Garrigues**, **Raphaelle Santoro** y **Laurent Lanouzière**, robustos **Panther Burns** que arropaban a un **Falco** que, desde el principio, se adueñó de un escenario en el que zapatos rojos y dorados pisaban pedales y marcaban ritmos a su merced.



Sí, lo hizo desde el principio y con maneras de crooner de arrabal, con los ojos levemente maquillados para que, desde lejos, se resaltara una expresión que iba de la intriga a la entrega romántica según iban transcurriendo los minutos.

Desde la lascivia de "Oh How She Dances", con ondulantes contoneos de **Giovanna Pizzorno**, y "Real Cool Trash" hasta las reptante "Gentleman In Black" y "Blind Man", desde la conjura de "Garden Of The Medicis" y la alegórica "Where The Rio Del Rosa Flows" hasta la lúbrica lectura de "Funnel Of Love" y el misterio de "Lady From Shangai"... todo era rock 'n' roll, blues, garage, hipnosis, magia y grosería, como deber ser. Y en medio, con la más absoluta naturalidad, arrebatos pasionales en forma de versiones como "Sway" o "Brazil", que además abrieron la puerta a un exotismo en el que era fácil pensar en las películas de aventuras de **Simbad**, **Fantômas** o **The Green Hornet**.



Encima, para que todo fuese aún más camal, nos regaló una versión de ese gran tango que es "La Cumparsita". Pero lo que hizo grande el momento fue ver a un serio **Tav Falco**, con peine en el bolsillo de la chaqueta, dándole al tango cual dandy enardecido cogiendo de la cintura a una esbelta señorita. Sendos pasos tangueros para un

god is in the tv

Tav Falco's Panther Burns –
Brudenell Social Club, Leeds, 8th February 2014
February 9, 2014 by Simon Godley



Tav Falco is the missing link between primitive rock n roll and the modern day Delta blues. It is a connection Falco has been forging for more than thirty years now, bridging entire continents and their very best traditions as he has done so. A contemporary of **Alex Chilton**, **Lux Interior** and **Jeffrey Lee Pierce**, the former resident of Memphis, Tennessee now lives in Vienna, Austria. Either side of the Atlantic, though, Falco has broken down the cultural barriers of art as he has merged the blues, country and rock n roll with his love of tango and the aesthetics of Expressionism and the Italian new wave. It is both an honour and a privilege to see him here in Leeds tonight.

Looking like a much older Michael Corleone, Falco exudes all the style, class and determination of **Al Pacino**'s character in *The Godfather Trilogy* without feeling the need for vengeance. He is flanked tonight, as he has been variously for more than four decades, by the **Panther Burns**. The current rock-steady incarnation of this really quite exquisite ballroom band exude similarly overblown cinematic characteristics to Falco, not just in their physical appearance – bassist **Laurent Lanouzière** resembles some mid-sixties Bond villain whilst exotic drummer **Giovanna Pizzorno** looks just like **Dorothy Lamour** in the Road to...movies – but also in the way that their music wholly convinces.

For two whole hours Tav Falco's Panther Burns cook up a colossal musical stew. Though there is an undoubted relationship with the Gothic, the Parisian jazz age and the Río de la Plata – something that the 2010 album *Conjurations: Séance For Deranged Lovers* from which a number of this evening's songs are taken, and an erotic tango between Falco and poet and performer **Via Kali** will confirm – this is essentially the sound of Memphis and it is to that city and the Southern states of America that Falco always returns for his core inspiration and innovation. And it is to there that he takes us tonight. It is a journey that will linger long in the memory.

Monday, 24 February 2014 21:27

TAV FALCO'S PANTHER BURNS + THE PRIMEVALS + THE REVERSE COWGIRLS BROADCAST, GLASGOW, SUNDAY 9TH FEBRUARY 2014

Written by Paul Kerr



Freakin' at the freakers' ball, y'all. Shel Silverstein's ode to the outsiders could well have summed up some portions of the crowd that flocked to see Memphis legend and ultra cool dandy and spiv **Tav Falco** return to Scotland after an absence of almost three decades. If there are indeed tribes of rock then this was a tribal gathering, wizened and wild haired elders mixing with indie kids along with the eccentrically attired, the somewhat altered (state-wise), journalists, bloggers, other musicians, dancers and at least one buffoon. For this was an occasion, an opportunity to see an original, one of the few left (with Lux, L X and Jeffrey all gone south) of those late seventies and early eighties rabble rousers who plugged into rockabilly with a punk twist and laid waste to all about them.

Falco was always a bit different, not as unhinged as his peers and with a fine sense of irony as he plucked songs from tin pan alley and the rat pack along with the usual blues and rock backpack. Lacing psychobilly with tango and vaudeville he eventually abandoned America for Europe basing himself in Vienna. **Panther Burns** morphed into a European crew who on tonight's showing can snarl and thrash with the best the South can throw up as they rattled the venue for a two hour show that was eventually curtailed by the venue as the clock struck midnight robbing us of a three song encore promised on the (rapidly pinched) set lists.

As on the *Live In Memphis* album (which celebrated their tenth anniversary) they opened with Jim Dickinson's carney tale *Oh How She Dances* with keyboard player Raffaele Santoro handling percussion as drummer Giovanna Pizzorno shimmied out behind Falco in her finest Turkish delight belly dancer garb illustrating the song. A great curtain raiser but when Pizzorno settled on the drum and they launched into the triple whammy of *Funnel of Love*, *Tobacco Road* and *Blind Man* the true glory of the supposedly unapproachable Panther Burns was revealed. With guitarist Gregoire Cat's

guitar squalls approaching the mythical death screams of the beast that gave them their name. Fierce, loud, chaotic but with Falco in control, almost choreographed at the mic, his iconic Höfner violin guitar slung back as he danced tango steps (with a partner in tow during the rendition of, of course, Tango) they careened through their bludgeoning of classics like *Bourgeois Blues* and *Where The Rio Del Rosa Flows* in a helter skelter style. The ever present exotic underbelly was well represented with *Sweet Lotus Blossom*, Dean Martin's *Sway* (a crowd favourite), *Goldfinger* and *Mona Lisa* and they became a dream country outfit for a superb *Fresh Out of Prison* while a finely knocked out *Bangkok* was a nice nod to their late comrade Alex Chilton.

In the midst of the exhaustive set there was a brace of songs from the latest Panther Burns' album, *Conjurations: Seance for Deranged Lovers*, their first in a decade although now over a year old. *Gentleman In Black* has been in the live set for years but *Garden of the Medicis* was unveiled as a jangled rocker with an almost Beatlesque middle eight while *Administrator Blues* tumbled out as a stream of consciousness diatribe against the moneymen. *Sympathy For Mata Hari* showed that Tav can still plumb primitive rock and hit a nerve. Ending with a thrilling *Brazil* from the first album this was two hours of sheer brilliance.

The two hour set from Panther Burns was preceded by almost another two hours of pummelling and primitive rock'n'roll provided by two local bands. First up were **The Reverse Cowgirls** who slammed into their frenetic garage rock with some compelling use of feedback and a fine handle on zombie tales. Glasgow veterans, **The Primevals**, who shared a label and an Edinburgh show with Falco back in the eighties, stormed through with frontman Michael Rooney showing he has maintained his mojo on a frighteningly invigorating and piledriving rendition of their eighties masterpieces *St. Jack* and *Eternal Hotfire* while *Hit The Peaks* from their last album *Heavy War* had some of the audience dancing up front. The twin guitar attack from Tom Rafferty and Martyn Rodger approached maelstrom intensity at times, so much that by the end ears were ringing. All in all the night was an assault on the senses but in the Rimbaudian sense derangement was what the audience was after.

The Primevals have been doing their thing since the early eighties, and shared stages large and small with pretty much everyone.

After that amount of time there are only two real reasons why that longevity is possible.

One is that they are obstinately unaware that they aren't that good, and like the families of tone deaf reality talent show contestants their nearest and dearest haven't found a way to break the news to them, or that they are simply damn good at what they do and know it.

Thankfully the latter is what is going on with these guys, and with all those years under their belts you are guaranteed a quality show.

The garage tag is one that has been applied often enough, and not without reason, but The Primevals are much more than just a garage act, and are able to bring the best of RnB to the table as they expel enough kinetic energy to light up a small town while doing so.

Double thumbs up.

Tav Falco and his Panther Burns are a whole different story again.

If Rod Serling took on the mantle of Dr Frankenstein and made himself a rock star to exist in the word of the Twilight Zone then his creation would be Tav Falco.

The man, the legend, lives in the worlds between fact and fiction, fantasy and reality.

It's a world of shadows where ladies of the night, burlesque show barkers, petty thieves, shining pompadours, tightly woven zoot suits and the glint of a switchblade exist under neon lights.

An alternate universe where the romanticized lives of the denizens of the gutter are celebrated with more panache than most would be able to consider possible.

As he strode onto the stage a friend remarked on how young he looked.

It's true.

He could be the Dorian Gray of rock and roll.

Although a continental lifestyle could be the secret rather than any supernatural portrait hanging in an attic, his healthy persona is worth mentioning as an aside.

Worth mentioning as it isn't something that is reflected by the males of the Scottish audience who were in attendance.

In the main we appear to have the complexions of men who consider dooking* for mars bars as they are being deep fried as a normal weekend pastime.

Maybe we should take a leaf out of his book, or then again we could cling to the belief that dying young with a decrepit looking corpse is the way to go.

What about the music though?

In one word it was 'stunning'.



A mish-mash of The Cramps, Johnny Thunders, Dean Martin and Rudolph Valentino mixed together and delivered in a manner that takes the individual parts and creates something that is stronger as a whole.

It's his ability to take these multiple strands and weave them together to conjure up a show that is like no other that attracts people to the Tav Falco's Panther Burns fold again and again.

On this night we had a Turkish belly dancing intro from the bands attractive drummer, a whole slew of rock and roll and Spanish stroll, and an interlude where Tav and a dancing partner used the stage to display their skills as they danced the tango in a set that time wise would have given Springsteen a run

for his money if it hadn't been cut short by the licensing curfew.

This was not just a rock show in a club, but an artistic representation of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" where the reality gives way for the surreal, albeit draped in a robe of fifties, early sixties, rebellious teenage culture.

There's still one Scottish date to go and that is in Edinburgh tomorrow night (Wed 12/02/14), and it has to be said that if the above sounds like your thing then please don't miss it.

Ó. C.

Peina tupé y a veces se recorta un bigotillo el bueno de Tav, poliédrico héroe del r'n'r underground capaz de reivindicar el rockabilly pantanoso en los 80 y seguidamente bailar un tango con su micro entre el respetable que le sigue sabiéndole maldito o le mira ignorando por completo su figura.

Gustavo Antonio Falco (1945), criado en el campo de Arkansas, aspirante a artista en Memphis, Tennessee, donde se mudó a finales de los 70, y hoy afincado en Europa, es cineasta, fotógrafo, escritor y músico, y sujeto a su espectro melómano nos visita para dar un apropiado 'bolo' carnavalero liderando a sus legendarios Panther Burns, quinteto de sucio y desvenado rock and roll, entre los Cramps y Jon Spencer, y compuesto esta vez por Grégoire Cat (guitarra solista), Laurent Lanouzière (bajo), Giovanna Pizzorno (una fémina a la batería) y Raffaele Santoro (teclados), presuntamente músicos parisinos y romanos. El arcano Falco nos atendía desde Toulouse, Francia, antes de su gira española de diez noches sin descanso.

—¿Dónde vives, en Europa?

—Ahora vivo en el distrito de los teatros de Viena. Otra ciudad...

«No soy artista por el dinero»

Tav Falco. Teatral por su bagaje de actor, el creador yanqui abarcará mañana del blues al tango en su show carnavalero de Irun



—¿Hablas español? Un idioma cada vez más popular en USA debido a la inmigración

—Es cierto que el español es ya la segunda lengua de Estados Unidos. Pero el español que yo conozco es el porteño de Buenos Aires. El lenguaje del tango es el lunfardo.

—¿Qué significa el rock and roll para ti?

—El r'n'r cobra sentido cuando deviene más grande que el propio género. Como cuando el jazz abrazó a otros géneros; la música cubana, por ejemplo. Cuando Stan Getz trajo a Machito a Nueva York.

—¿Puedes definir qué es el rockabilly?

—Es country blues mezclado con música 'hillbilly' de las montañas. El rockabilly puro no tiene batería.

—¿Por qué interpretas una música tan melodramática, a veces tan oscura y triste?

—Como hombre del teatro que soy, lo que yo interpreto refleja la vida en todos sus aspectos, desde lo trágico a lo cómico.

—Cumplirás una gira española de diez noches, sin días libres. ¿Cómo haces para dosificar fuerzas y descansar en la carretera?

—La música pantera [se refiere a su grupo y su estilo] me da vida y poder para seguir adelante.

—¿Qué te gusta más de Espa-

gendarios Panther Burns, quinteto de sucio y desvenado rock and roll, entre los Cramps y Jon Spencer, y compuesto esta vez por Grégoire Cat (guitarra solista), Laurent Lanouzière (bajo), Giovanna Pizzorno (una fémina a la batería) y Raffaele Santoro (teclados), presuntamente músicos parisinos y romanos. El arcano Falco nos atendía desde Toulouse, Francia, antes de su gira española de diez noches sin descanso.

—¿Dónde vives, en Europa?

—Ahora vivo en el distrito de los teatros de Viena. Otra ciudad muy musical con un río; como Memphis, de donde provengo.

—¿Principales diferencias entre el estilo de vida europeo y el americano?

—En Europa, el énfasis se pone en la cultura y en la forma de vivir. En América lo importante son el dinero y las posesiones.

—¿Te crees más querido y conocido en la vieja Europa?

—Tengo el mismo reconocimiento en América y Europa, pero soy más querido en el viejo mundo.

—Eres un artista de culto, underground y te pluriempleas de actor y fotógrafo; ¿eres músico profesional o tienes otros empleos?

—Mi vida es sólo la de artista. No trabajo en nada más. La vida es demasiado corta para otras evasiones. Yo no soy artista por el dinero.

—¿Cuáles con tus músicos favoritos, tus influencias?

—Howlin' Wolf y Carlos Di Sarli... El blues y el tango.

—¿Por qué te gusta el tango?

—El tango, al igual que el blues, palpa y conmueve el cuerpo y el alma. Ambos géneros corren paralelos en cierto sentimiento. Durante un tiempo viví en Argentina para aprender el baile del tango.

ÚLTIMOS DISCO Y FIESTA

Intérprete: Tav Falco.

Título del disco: 'Live In London At The 100 Club' (2012).

Concierto: Smoke Deluxe, Temblores, Tav Falco (fiesta de Carnaval: DJs, sorteos, concurso de disfraces...).

Fecha: mañana, sábado 1 de marzo.

Lugar: Sala Tunk! (Irun).

Hora: 20.00h.

Precio: 10-12 euros.



Tupé en crecimiento. Gustav Falco es toda una enciclopedia de afronterizos sonidos populares.



—¿Por qué interpretas una música tan melodramática, a veces tan oscura y triste?

—Como hombre del teatro que soy, lo que yo interpreto refleja la vida en todos sus aspectos, desde lo trágico a lo cómico.

—Cumplirás una gira española de diez noches, sin días libres. ¿Cómo haces para dosificar fuerzas y descansar en la carretera?

—La música pantera [se refiere a su grupo y su estilo] me da vida y poder para seguir adelante.

—¿Qué te gusta más de España?

—El alma perdurable de los españoles.

—¿Cuál es tu último disco? No es fácil seguirte la pista.

—El último álbum de estudio es 'Conjurations: Séance For Deranged Lovers' de 2011. Nuestra obra maestra, con todas sus composiciones originales. Y nuestro último lanzamiento es '100 Club - Live In London', un directo de 2012, cuando recreamos en el primer pase mi álbum de debut, 'Behind The Magnolia Curtain' (publicado en 1981), y en el segundo pase tocamos el vigésimo álbum, 'Conjurations'.

—¿Cómo serán tus conciertos en esta gira con The Panther Burns?

—Nuestros shows en España recorrerán toda la gama de emociones humanas. No hay otra banda como los Panther Burns, que agitan las aguas oscuras del subconsciente.

—¿Crees que la música, las canciones, pueden salvar las almas de las personas?

—La música, al igual que sucede con todas las otras formas de arte, redime nuestra existencia, anima al espíritu cuando el corazón se debilita y eleva nuestra aura hasta nuevas alturas.



Tav Falco & The Panther Burns

Despite his extensive musical pedigree and profound influence on contemporary music, Tav Falco eschews the descriptor 'musician'. Through his principal outfit, Tav Falco & The Panther Burns, Falco has explored musical styles from blues to rock'n'roll, from jazz to tango, influencing artist from Alex Chilton to Kim Salmon to Jason Pierce. "I'm not much of a musician," Falco says in his soft, laconic southern drawl from his current home in Vienna. "I'm more of a stylist".

Born Gustav Falco in Arkansas, Falco moved to Memphis in 1973. "If you wanted to go to the big city, you went to Dallas or Memphis," Falco says. "But Dallas is a terrible place, so I made the transition to Memphis because of the music and arts scene – there were film makers, photographers, musicians and visual artists." Shortly after moving to Memphis, Falco bought himself some film equipment and teamed up with to start documenting the local music scene, with a particular emphasis on those musical styles Falco believed warranted broader public attention.

It was this amateur cinematic project that provided the genesis for Falco's career in music. "Pretty soon there was no separation between what was going on behind the camera, and what was happening in front of the camera," Falco says. At a show in 1978 to celebrate the final performance of local legend Jim Dickinson's Mud Boy group, Falco engaged in the theatrical event that would lead to the creation of Tav Falco's Panther Burns.

"My idea of Panther Burns came of out my performance work," Falco says. "I was encouraged to start a group after my performance destroying a guitar on stage at the last ever Mud Boy show in the late '70s. I performed *Bourgeoisie Blues*, and destroyed my guitar with a chainsaw. It was quite a cacophony, and it was also a gesture. It was rather an hysterical performance," Falco laughs.

Not long after, Falco was hosting a party at his house, and playing some rudimentary guitar "like RL Burnside". Former Big Star guitarist and songwriter Alex Chilton had rung the house in search of Falco; hearing Falco's guitar playing, Chilton quickly came over and, after a night of sharing musical and philosophical ideas, began encouraging Falco to start a band. Chilton would become a founding member of The Unapproachable Panther Burns, and go onto produce a number of the band's early records.

The name of Falco's band derived from a local southern legend of a wild cat. "I had heard this name, Panther Burn, around Memphis," Falco says. Dropping into a dramatic, hushed storyteller's voice, Falco explains the story of a panther that prowled a plantation in Mississippi, just off Highway 61. When the land was being cleared, the panther eluded all attempts to capture it. One night the cat was corralled into a cane break, and set on fire. The resulting demonic screams laid the foundation for a curse that is said to continue to the present day.

For Falco, the story of Panther Burn was more than colourful local legend. "There was the Rolling Stones and Muddy Waters, and now there is Panther Burns," Falco says. "There was a critter that had somehow outlived the frontier – this panther was the symbol of the type of music that is untamed and uncontrolled. Panther Burns became the ditch diggers of American music."

After Chilton left the band, the Unapproachable Panther Burns became Tav Falco's Panther Burns, utilising the services of a rotating lineup musicians through the '80s and '90s (the present lineup of Falco, Peter Dark, Giovanna Pizzorno, and Michael LO has remained stable since the 90s). Falco's eclectic and stylish indulgence of different genres has remained at the core of Panther Burns.

"It's the job of the artist to break down barriers between the arts," Burns says. "In the '60s you had a lot of concepts that were thrown out, and then started again. People threw out terms like creativity, and they picked up their instruments and just started playing them. In Panther Burns the idea was that genres were not sacred. But that doesn't mean that we're not reverential. And we're not just a revivalist outfit. The idea is to deconstruct a genre or song or idea, and then reconstruct it, and re-interpret it."

Over 15 years ago Falco moved to Vienna, a move he says preserved his artistic edge. "Without a doubt this transition that I've made isn't for everyone," Falco says. "I could've stayed in Memphis as a rocker – but Panther Burns is more than a rocker, it's much more complex than that." While Falco isn't a political agitator, his role in elevating oft-neglected genres – many of which have strong political undertones – has a political context. "An artist can't be totally apolitical," Falco says. "There comes a time when you have to speak out. I'm not a crusader, but when I'm asked, if I have to speak out, then I will."

BY PATRICK EMERY

TAV FALCO & THE PANTHER BURNS play [The Tote](#) on Saturday March 30 and Monday April 1, Boogie Fest in Tallarook on Sunday March 31 and Byron Bay Bluesfest on Thursday March 28.

The Beat – Victoria, Australia March 21, 2013

ENTER THE FALCO

THE TAIL DRAGGER IS IN YOUR TOWN

BY LANCE WILLE

It could only have happened in Memphis, where country music and rhythm & blues collided in a train wreck known as rock 'n' roll, where blues and jazz riffs had floated up and down the Mississippi with each passing steamboat, a once-relevant cultural hub. One day Memphis awoke and music history had moved on — to Nashville, Los Angeles, New York and New Orleans — taking the music and leaving only the history to crumble in upon itself amid an uncaring populace.

Entire books have been written about this tragedy, and if you're in the mood for a sad tale, there's one to be found. The last chapter, however, the epitaph of a grievous history, was yet to be written. While a thick melancholy floated in the humid Memphis breeze, Tav Falco, staggering through midtown replete with pompadour and razor-thin mustache, formed the Unapproachable Panther Burns in 1979.

Tav had moved from the nearby farmland of Arkansas several years earlier, finding a Memphis filled with dust-laden oddballs like William Eggleston and Alex Chilton. Artists creating for the hell of it more than any financial gain, and more than one bottle of cheap whiskey was certainly drained while lamenting now forgotten heroes of The South's not-too-distant past: Bobby Lee Trammel, Johnnie Burnette, Leadbelly.

What Tav Falco started as an art video collective aimed at bringing attention to the underappreciated evolved into a musical tribute group, honoring and eventually performing with the likes of Charlie Feathers and Jessie Mae Hemphill, preaching their forgotten gospel to the next generation.

Alex Chilton had returned to Memphis after a stint in New York, working amid a burgeoning punk scene, still wounded from a mainstream disregard for Big Star. He brought the musically like-minded and still unknown Cramps to Memphis to produce their first sessions, a twisted take on rockabilly that sparked a sleeping musical ethos buried deep under the grit and broken glass that littered the streets, a conscience that could not be denied as much as the city might try.

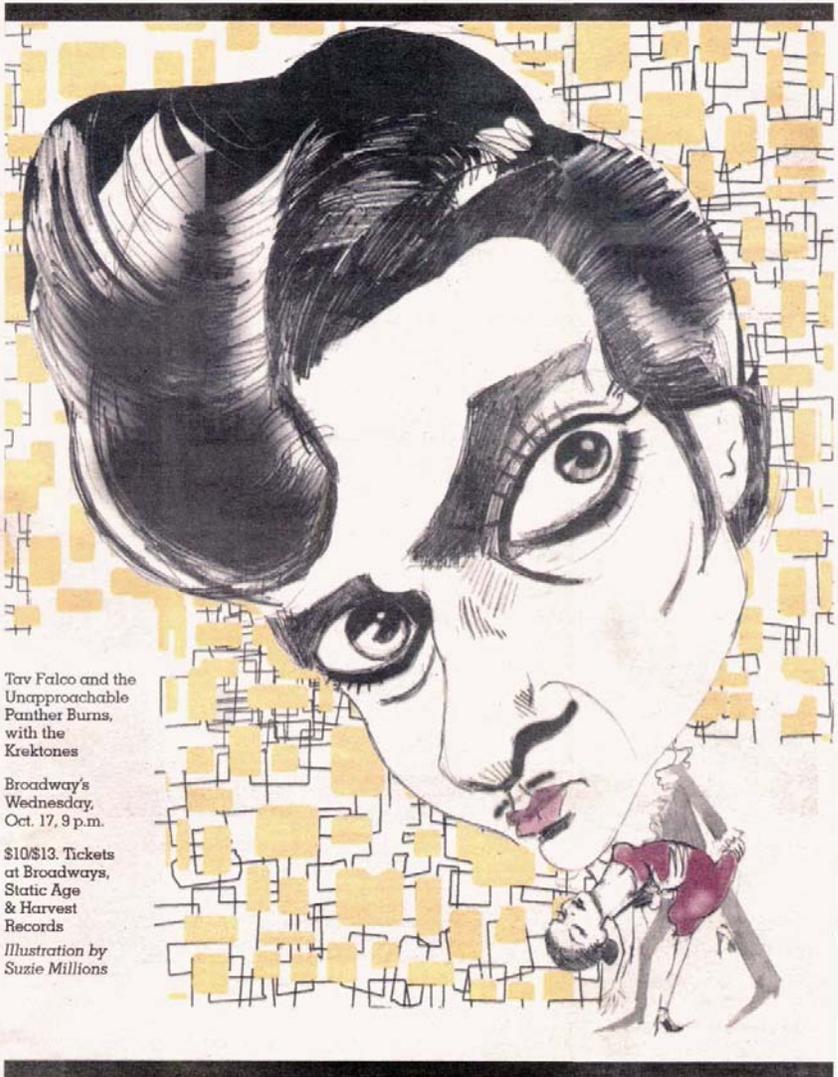
An underground scene began to evolve, where musicians and artists came together in a working-class alternative universe centered around the dive bar known then as The Well, later renamed Antenna Club. The Well provided the drinks, Tav Falco, Alex Chilton and an evolving army of enthusiastic amateurs provided the noise, embracing unbridled enthusiasm over sterile musical standards.

At their best (or worst), the Panther Burns combined anarchist literacy, Dada humor and antiestablishment disdain into a swirling Southern Gothic psychedelic country mishmash. Though easily and often dismissed, the band defined the Midtown Memphis scene for years and set the stage for a still thriving musical underground.

That was all nearly a lifetime ago, and these days most devotees know the music of The Cramps, The Gun Club, even Charlie Feathers, yet the Panther Burns continue to ply their trade in relative obscurity. This may be the secret of their longevity, but it's more likely the unfettered drive of a half-insane Arkansas curiosity, dressed as an Argentine tango dancer, quoting Antonin Artaud.

Because he lives primarily in Europe, where the dressing rooms are cleaner and the audiences more astute, bringing Tav Falco to America, let alone our town, is noteworthy, probably money-losing and unlikely to be repeated. ☒

*Full Disclosure: Lance Wille plays drums in The Krektones.
The man knows his music.*



Tav Falco and the Unapproachable Panther Burns, with the Krektones

Broadway's Wednesday, Oct. 17, 9 p.m.

\$10/\$13. Tickets at Broadways, Static Age & Harvest Records

Illustration by Suzie Millions

The Vinyl District

**FOLLOW
THE
VINYL
DISTRICT
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**Graded on a Curve:
Tav Falco's Panther Burns, *Red Devil* BY
JOSEPH NEFF | JANUARY 17, 2013**



Tav Falco's Panther Burns are one of the truly inspired entries in the annals of fringe-roots musical science. They ruled the roost throughout the '80s, uncorking the potent zest from bottles labeled blues, rockabilly, R&B, country, small-scale rock 'n' roll, and even tango music, combining it all with an amateurish verve that was unlike almost anything else happening at the time. Their essence still kicks with undiminished strength and one of their most forceful records was 1988's tidy and dynamic *Red Devil*.

Much has been made of the importance of the city of Memphis in the history of 20th century music, but what sometimes gets overlooked is the weirdness that hovered around the edges of all the greatness. Looking back upon what all happened provides essential insight into creative synthesis and mutation, but basking in it all too often ignores how these big steps in the march of modernity weren't consciously conceived as such, far more often simply being the survival tactics of poor people, their very actions frequently ignored or even derided by the arbiters of taste at the time.

Robert Gordon's indispensable book *It Came from Memphis* did a fantastic job of relating some of the low-culture kookiness that fueled the city to its current renown as a true hub of modern culture, its chapters alternating tales of whacked disc jockey Dewey Phillips and professional wrestler Sputnik Monroe with considerations of far more well-established Memphis phenomena like Sun Studios and Stax Records, classic early blues survivors like Furry Lewis, and the fascinating career of the late great Alex Chilton. But an exalted, museum-like air does persist in being attached to the achievements of that truly crucial locale. This doesn't really do Memphis' cultural history a disservice as much as it only imparts a portion of the picture; how it all relates to right now. Maybe that's why Gustavus Nelson, more (in)famously known as Tav Falco, remains such a divisive figure. Many complain that he can't sing, and still others gripe that he's an eccentric non-talent whose sideways swagger endeared him to far more legitimate artists from his home city

like Chilton, drummer Ross Johnson, and the truly indispensable Memphis denizen, Jim Dickinson.

But others, this writer very much included, find in Tav's best material an enduring rumination upon the oddball disposability of a time that now seems very far away but continues to hold a huge impact upon contemporary art, music most especially. What's missing is the anonymousness and occasional opprobrium that accompanied those unself-conscious groundbreakers of yore.

The existence of Tav Falco's Panther Burns is very much analogous to the trash culture gush of The Cramps, a group that struck a chord with Chilton, who brought them to Memphis for recording in the late-'70s. But there is an important distinction to be made between the two. Where The Cramps, or more accurately the vast majority of their fans and followers, identified Lux and Ivy as merely a reaction against the dominance of middle and highbrow culture, the attitude of Falco and his cohorts was a bit more complicated, combining a rejection of the antiseptic safeness of the modern with an engagement with very up-to-date and occasionally avant-garde modes of expression.

It's important to note that Falco's twisted trip began as a video maker in the late-'70s, notably documenting the sessions for Chilton's wondrously convoluted masterpiece *Like Flies on Sherbert*. This circumstance resulted in a long connection between Falco and the former Box Tops/Big Star lynchpin, the meeting having an almost immediate effect, with Chilton joining the first lineup of Panther Burns on guitar and drums in '79.

Along with Tav, the other members were Ross Johnson on drums and Eric Hill on synthesizer. The very inclusion of that last instrument should be a tip off that the point of Panther Burns was very far from any stale retro trip. With the "She's the One That's Got It" 7-inch (recently reissued by Mighty Mouth Music), they knocked out an absolutely killer 4 songs of crap-fi mayhem, all covers, with nary an iota of pretense toward originality. This was followed by the *Behind the Magnolia Curtain* LP in '81. Co-released by Panther Burns' label Frenzi and Rough Trade in the

UK, the record is easily one of the most bent bits of business to have arisen from its decade. Finding Jim Duckworth replacing Johnson on drums, Ron Miller added on bass, and including on four tracks the Tate County Fife & Drum Corp (a group that included blues legend Jesse Mae Hemphill), *Behind the Magnolia Curtain* remains the single most essential document in the groups' discography. About a thousand miles away from the much more well-behaved roots excavation of The Blasters (while exploring many similar rudiments), it was reissued a couple years back by Fat Possum on 2LP/CD with the band's far less damaged 1982 EP "Blow Your Top." But if *Behind the Magnolia Curtain* is Panther Burns most necessary album, there's really no consensus on the release that lands in second place. They issued a handful of highly worthy records as the '80s progressed, and this writer's pick as the best of that bunch is '88's *Red Devil*, a 10-song dilly of a disc that expresses in concise fashion exactly what made this band so special. It was issued way back when by the prolific French label New Rose and also licensed to Citadel in Australia, but my well worn though still sturdy copy was waxed up for Canadian consumption by the ultra-obscure label Right Side. Part of the appeal of Panther Burns was their general lack of concern for polish and even consistency, but *Red Devil* presents the band at their most together and lively, with all the songs save one from a wildly disparate yet quite complimentary group of sources. The first, "Oh, How She Dances" comes from one of *Red Devil's* numerous instrumental contributors and producers Jim Dickinson, the song first heard on his brilliant '72 LP for Atlantic *Dixie Fried*.

"Oh, How She Dances" finds Falco impersonating a sideshow barker, and as he stumps for lurid, freakish spectacles and eventually breaks into song, the decidedly outsider vibe of his voice combines with the looseness of the music to legitimately conjure the atmosphere of a traveling troupe offering their oddities under a meager tent in the early, far less proper decades of last century. And yet it's also tweaked enough to register as part of the '80s underground's rejection of the advances of refinement.

A swell take on "Driftin' Heart", one of Chuck Berry's less celebrated and also somewhat eccentric early songs comes next, the group choosing not

to alter the tune but instead enhance the original's instrumental majesty with some simply gigantic bass playing and the gently lounge-kissed strains of piano and trumpet. It successfully radiates the aura of a dive where everyone is dressed to the nines and the all drinks are colorful and on fire.

How swank.

Next is a terrific reading of the Lee Hazelwood classic "Poor Man," the unusual nature of Falco's pipes a fitting extension of the huge, booming voice found on the original version. And the way the band locks into a simplistic but warmly inviting groove, never too busy or touched with flash, really emphasizes their understanding of the non-showboaty instrumental grandeur that made the '50s and '60s such a deep well of musical delights.

From there the group transforms "Two Little Puppies (and One Old Shaggy Hound)," a song credited to old-time blues songster Jim Jackson, into a raunchy racket that's sorta comparable to a skuzzy garage-punk combo falling under the spell of the minimalist blues that oozed from the fingers of R.L. Burnside. It's a twisted, tremulous mess, and it also serves to prove that while Tav is definitely left of center as a singer, he is also capable of great power in front of the microphone.

"Tram," a stomping and massively basic take of Lowell Fulson's chestnut "Tramp" (more famously covered by Otis Redding and Carla Thomas) rounds out side one, and it locates a ludicrous firestorm of stripped down funk, the kind that raised the rafters on those now mythical backwoods dives that got so over-packed with cavorting revelers that drinks were spilled, glasses and bottles ended up smashed, and by the end of the night everyone's sweat ended up mixed together and the whole beautiful throng somehow managed to momentarily forget the horrible burden of life's troubles. Yes, all this and Tav even managing to briefly shift the song's smack-talking lyrics into an unexpected riff on class-structure in the long gone South of yesteryear.

Side two opens with the sole original "Ode to Shetar," co-penned by Tav and Panther burns guitarist George Reinecke, and it's a burning slice of '60s-garage rock motion informed by the sort of appealingly stilted, Eastern-tinged mysticism that's totally disappeared as globalization has brought the realities of the other side of the world right to our computer screens.

From there the band tackles "Ditch Digging," an Eddie Floyd/Sir Mack Rice song recorded by Memphis titan Rufus Thomas, and the grand Stax-like strut is in full effect. Interestingly, this song also proved to be the inspiration for the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion's "Ditch" as found on their classic LP *Orange*. The version here stays much closer to the vibe of the original however, and its infectious dance-craze attitude is hard to top.

A fresh, torrid take of Crazy Cravan and the Rhythm Rockers' "She's the One to Blame" keeps Red Devil's examination of roots knowledge steadily on course, giving the proceedings a touch of rockabilly inspired flavor. And that previously mentioned instrumental simplicity returns with a cover of the Betty James obscurity "I'm a Little Mixed Up." One of the record's high points, it provides a fine example of the hotwiring of R&B sizzle and C&W gusto, the very ingredients that R&R was made of. A tightly-wound, cooking version of The Nightcrawlers' "Running Wild" completes the album with true panache.

Red Devil was also issued on CD by New Rose with the entirety of the "Sugar Ditch Revisited" EP tacked on, but it omitted "I'm a Little Mixed Up," which to these ears is a real drag. This album served as my introduction to the warped world of Tav Falco's Panther Burns, and none of its tracks are disposable. If not the peak of this one of a kind group's powers, it does come very close. The record's general obscurity is undeserved and a reissue of its charms would be a very righteous maneuver.

Tomc On The Range

The Falco Has Landed: Tav Falco Interviewed

Richie Troughton, January 20th, 2013 04:16

Richie Troughton talks with the Panther Burns frontman about his life in music, his new book and the majestic legacy of Memphis



Tav Falco and Norton by William J. Eggleston

Onstage at the Orpheum Theatre in Memphis, 1978, Tav Falco, in the guise of his alter ego Eugene Baffle, chainsawed a \$5 Silvertone guitar in half after performing a version of Leadbelly's 'Bourgeois Blues'. The combination of rock 'n' roll destruction and avant-garde spectacle caught the eye of attendant Big Star frontman Alex Chilton, and the pair went on to form influential

'wreckabilly' outfit the Panther Burns, named after the "legendary plantation in Mississippi where a panther was burned alive in a cane break".

In his book, *Ghosts Behind The Sun: Splendor, Enigma & Death - Mondo Memphis Volume 1*, Falco traces back the city's origins, and the rich flow of sounds that inspired him. The story is told with accounts from those who witnessed events unfold, from the civil war massacre and the treaty that formed the city, through to yellow fever outbreaks and political events that shaped Memphis as it is today.

Memphis's extraordinary contribution to the popular music canon provides the focus of Falco's book, as home to the Sun Records label that produced so many great artists, from Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis to less well known, but no less influential figures like Charlie Feathers. *Mondo Memphis* contains exhaustive interviews with everyone from the artists and those who knew them, to radio presenters and concert promoters, even Elvis's favoured Beale Street tailor. Falco captures insights into the inner workings of the music machine, such as groundbreaking recording techniques, like the echo chamber, to early methods of promotion, and of course, the incendiary act of the live performance. In the book, Feathers told Falco: "We come from right here in the Delta, man, and that kinda music couldn't happen nowhere else but right in here. These other people, they tickle me to death. Sometimes I sit and laugh about it. Doin' this music here, man. *They just could not do this music.*"

Events that captured the attention of the national press are also uncovered, as Falco delves deep into incidents like the Machine Gun Kelly kidnappings, unions securing worker's rights, murders and underworld crime, providing a bigger picture with revealing insights into groups like the Ku Klux Klan, Hell's Angels and various secret societies.

Falco was fortunate enough to attend live shows in Memphis from the mid '60s and witnessed first-hand Delta blues, country and rock 'n' roll artists at events that shaped the countercultural scene that he would later play his own part in, first documenting many of the old bluesmen for the small screen as part of the Televista 'art action' group, before making the transition to stage himself. The early Panther Burns were inspired by everything from country, blues and La Monte Young, to the Sex Pistols, who had recently passed through on their ill-fated tour of the southern states.

More than three decades in, while many of their contemporaries are no longer with us, the 'unapproachable' Panther Burns remain pure and true to their original artistic vision, and can lay as good a claim as any to being the last "psychedelic backwoods ballroom band" standing.

The Quietus caught up with the self-styled 'Beale St. Bopper of Bluff City' via Skype on topics covered in *Mondo Memphis*, which Falco describes as "a long winter's read". When we spoke Tav was back home visiting family "about a couple of hundred miles from Memphis, between Little Rock, Arkansas, and the Texan border, a little railroad town here out in the backwoods, where I grew up". When Tav is interrupted by the arrival of a cup of tea he informs us that he will enjoy "a shot glass of bourbon" later.

How did the young Tav from Arkansas first come to visit Memphis?

Tav Falco: You had two choices if you wanted to go to the big city from Arkansas. You had Memphis, or Dallas. You could go to either of those, because we had no big cities in Arkansas.

I was drawn to Memphis for the music and the artists, film-makers and photographers working there, but mainly the music. In fact it was the Memphis country blues festivals that were produced by the Memphis Country and Blues Society, formed by turned-on psychedelic experimenters and music lovers. It was these music events at the Overton Park Shell that I would go to, starting around 1966, and they had those every year until, I think, until about 1969. These events were really life changing, and they introduced so many of us to the indigenous music of Memphis, and of course you know, Memphis music is not so much Memphis, as it is the music of the country, the music of Arkansas, Mississippi, rural Tennessee, even Louisiana.



Charlie Feathers by Eugene Baffle

The book features interviews conducted over a number of years. How long were you working on the book and how did it come to be a reality?

TF: Once I was approached by Creation Books founder James Williamson and my collaborator Erik Morse, the journalist and art and music writer, who wrote Volume 2 of *Mondo Memphis*, I realised I had quite a backlog of research ready on audio tape and on video.

I thought it would be good to take this project on, so I took the advance and signed the contract and realised once I sat down to work that maybe this was going to be a much longer task than I had imagined; I realised that it was... monumental. But, it was too late, I had to do it. It took three years of organising research into Memphis. Three years of research and writing and we would go back to Memphis and talk to people I had known before and had not known before. I sat down to transcribe recordings and to organise the material and the reading, because there was a lot of research to be done outside of my own narratives, and my own experience.

So, then I had the problem; how to start the book? I didn't know where to begin. I had everything I wanted to say, everything I wanted to cover - but how do you start? I'd never written a book before, and it hung me up for a while. That was the hardest part of the whole process. Then it struck me: the persona of the time traveller, that time honoured literary device. Then I knew I had it, I knew I could write it; it was a matter of labour. And I had help. Gina Lee Falco helped me with the organisation, we worked together, and in fact the last six months was pretty much night and day writing on this book.

Tell us about the second volume of *Mondo Memphis* by Erik Morse?

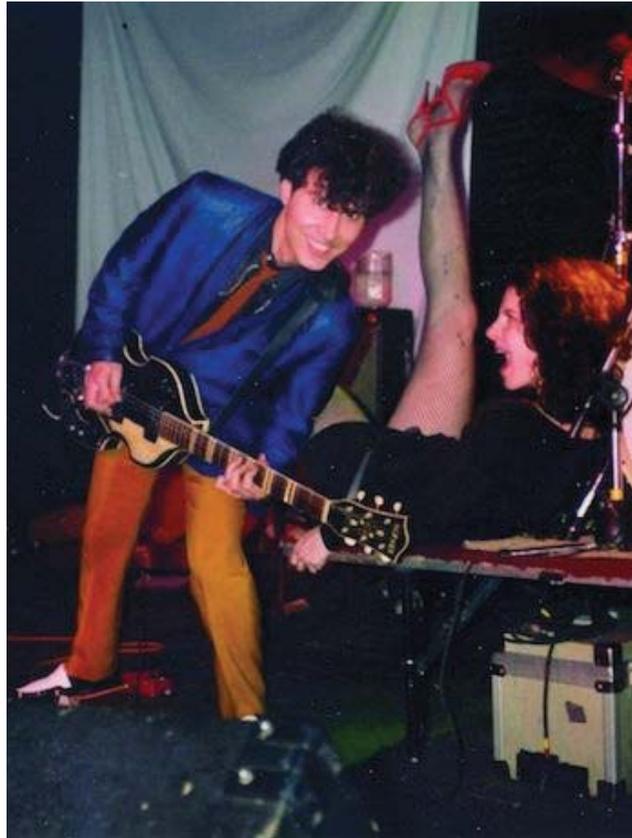
TF: Well, in my opinion, Erik Morse is the most fascinating and thought provoking journalist working in America today, in the area of art, culture and philosophy. His style of writing is just totally enthralling. His knowledge and background is absolutely exceptional.

He writes with the utmost authority on most any topics he chooses, but in a very discreet and humble way.

It's totally a privilege to have been able to work with him on the *Mondo Memphis* book and do research with him in Memphis. You couldn't find someone better to work with, even though we wrote two separate volumes we did research together and traded a lot of ideas.

You describe many memorable musical performances in the book. How did seeing these artists in their prime and up close on their home turf inform your career as a performer?

TF: We were witnessing a number of moving performances and this was, many of them, long before I started the Panther Burns. I had had never thought of performing on stage in that way, on the musical stage. I was a performer, kind of an actor, an alternative one, who worked in a video 'art action' group and a performance group that had little to do with actually making music with instruments as such. It was more of a performance - 'art action' you might say. We were under the influence of Antonin Artaud, primitive theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, that kind of thing.



Tav Falco onstage in Memphis (anon.)

In Memphis, and anywhere an artist lives, you work with what is at hand, and what was at hand, in Memphis, was music. So these performances I saw, and we'd go out and see, you know, Albert King, Bukka White, Mississippi Fred McDowell, made a large, very subliminal and a very intense mark on my consciousness and influence on my perception and thinking.

I came under the spell of the blues, especially the way black artists played. I met a number of them in Memphis, and also on a personal level, and went into their homes. I eventually began filming and making video and film and photographs with these artists; John 'Piano Red' Williams, Little Laura Dukes, dancer on Robert Nighthawk shows, and Van Zula Hunt, who had performed with Bessie Smith in road shows traveling across the South. These were real Memphis people who had met performers in the 30s and 40s, who came to Memphis and became their friends. There was kind of an unbroken connection of the music, the black music that came upriver from New Orleans to Memphis. It had a profound influence, and then later, when we started Panther Burns. All of this early exposure, in a sense, was natural to draw from in starting the band. There had been Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and the Rolling Stones, and then there was the Panther Burns. It's cut from the same cloth, at least in titular form.

Of your early concerts you describe the band as "not fully gelled", and at the same time you could transform the cotton loft, where you regularly played, into a "flying saucer"...

TF: Well, we played the cotton loft shows for the first few months when we started the group, because we had little interest in playing in clubs and joints – we had our own place. And that's how we were used to doing things. In our 'art-action' group in Memphis, in the underground that I worked through, we used to do things on our terms, in our own space. We didn't consider ourselves a part of the establishment, and we didn't really want to be.

We wanted to work outside of all of that. We wanted to come up with something different. That's the product of thinking in the 1960s, you see: a view that we had to throw out certain ideas and conventions and start over. Like, throw out the word 'talent' – It doesn't mean much, so we got rid of that. What else? Well, that's one example, okay, another – the barriers between artists, like okay, you are a painter, and you over there, you are a musician and okay, this other person over there is an actor. And then we have someone who is a photographer, and you're all doing different things, and you are all separated in what you do. In the '60s we threw out those ideas.

We broke down the barriers between the arts. That is part of our mission, part of the ideology – to try to create something new. So, you throw out a number of ideas, you throw out certain concepts, and you have to be careful because in the process of revolution you can sacrifice sometimes too much. You can sacrifice some of those things that maybe later you wish you hadn't thrown away. Certain things, that could be of a tradition, that you may want to keep. You may find out it's too late and you've already destroyed it.

Around the time you started Panther Burns, you mention encounters with members of the Gun Club, and The Cramps, who came to town to get the authentic Memphis sound for themselves (on their Alex Chilton-produced 1980 debut, *Songs The Lord Taught Us*), groups that were also playing blues and rock n roll, and updating it with a punk attitude...

TF: Well, The Cramps had a profound influence on the music of the Panther Burns. We were excited about their sound, and then, of course, once we saw them live, the stage performance was totally, totally over the top, totally fascinating and brilliant. Of course, I'm talking about the early Cramps. The presentation of Lux Interior changed quite a bit over time – I prefer the earlier image. But he was brilliant, of course, all the way through. Just like Elvis he was brilliant to the last moment.

What The Cramps did was true rockabilly music and some blues. They had one guitarist who didn't know guitar much more than I did at the time (Bryan Gregory); who only knew three chords. Then they had Poison Ivy who was, and still is, very proficient as a guitarist and had very, very pure rockabilly sound on the electric guitar. When you rub the two together you create an explosion, and I had never heard anything like that before.



The Cramps by Eugene Baffle

Your early Panther Burns colleague Alex Chilton was also a member of Big Star. As self-confessed Anglophiles, how did you view their impact on the musical scene in Memphis?

TF: During the time they were working their influence was not as broad as it is today. I think there were listeners who were influenced by their music, but maybe not so many as there are today. [Big Star guitarist] Chris Bell travelled in England and he was into the Vox guitar sound particularly, and heavy guitars, harmonic guitars. It didn't affect me much; It didn't even hear that music of theirs until quite some time after I met Alex. Our group kind of formulated an aesthetic, and of course, it was much, much different.

Something else you describe in the book is the Panther Burns playing with an all-girl 'sister group' in the '80s. Jack White of the White Stripes is currently touring with a girl band and a boy band, and depending on his mood he might play with one or the other each night. Had you heard about this, and what were your ideas when you were doing something similar?

TF: I hadn't heard that Jack's doing this, but I'm sure he'll find that it can be very rewarding. On the other hand, it might turn into a nightmare! It sort of happened with us. We put together a girl group in Memphis, the Hellcats, and Giovanna Pizzorno, who still plays with the Panther Burns) was the first drummer in that group, so we worked together quite a bit and recorded a couple of records. We mitigated for them to record, we got them on record, but they kind of self-destructed from within. You

find with most groups that go under it comes from within, rather than from without. A group has to have its own identity and its own access, and I never put it on myself to prop up. We tried to open some doors for them and work together.

In the book you said something about being bored at most rock concerts these days. What current artists are you interested in?

TV: Quite frankly, not so many. There's Antony and the Johnsons in New York – I'm impressed with what they do. I heard their new recordings, but I haven't seen them live in about five or six years. Their music, with their approach, with their songs, with the performance of Antony and his group: no one else is doing what they do. But not only that, aesthetically, they make uncompromised, meaningful, moving music; very romantic. I met Antony after a concert in New York as he stood outside after the performance greeting members of the audience as they left the venue. He was humble, very dedicated. I have a lot of respect for that.

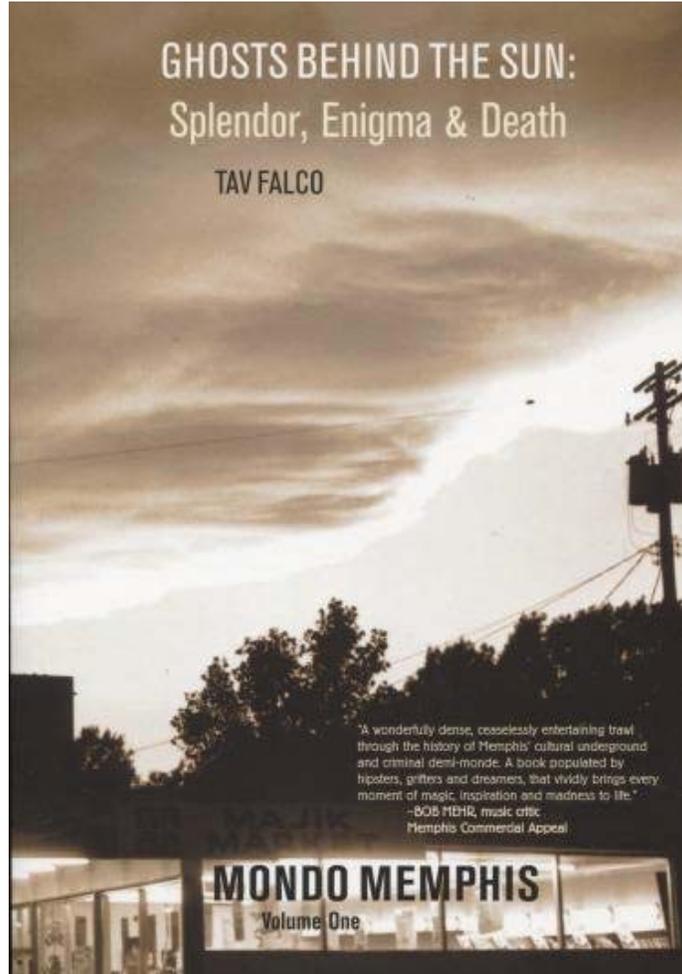
Another is a group called Elyson Fields, another New York band, also elegant, brilliant song writers. A little on the gothic side, and very sexy. Everything is tasteful with this group, tasteful and well thought out. I hope they can survive.

The book describes in great detail hundreds of years of history in Memphis. If you were to go back today and could take our readers around on a tour of some of the places mentioned, what is still standing and where would you show us?

TF: Well, Beale Street is still there, architecturally at least, for the most part. It has been a victim of urban development in the '60s, but about two to three buildings are still standing. A large part of downtown is architecturally still there - at least we have that, and I could take them to those places.

There's a good book in the bibliography of my book, *Beale Street Talks, A Walking Tour Down The Home Of The Blues*, by Richard

Rachelson. It's a small book, but it traces every address in Beale Street, almost from after the civil war to the present. The saloons, the movie houses, the theatres and it gives you the addresses, the locations, how the buildings changed, who owned the buildings, what businesses were there, doctor's offices, everything, it's really a great little book. That's where I would take them, and I would take them with that book. With blues and rock 'n' roll, Memphis was the great contributor, if not the innovator, and is pretty much the founding place for that music. This is where I would take somebody.



Ghosts Behind The Sun is out now, published by Creation Books

Post-Punk Monk

5 HOURS AGO

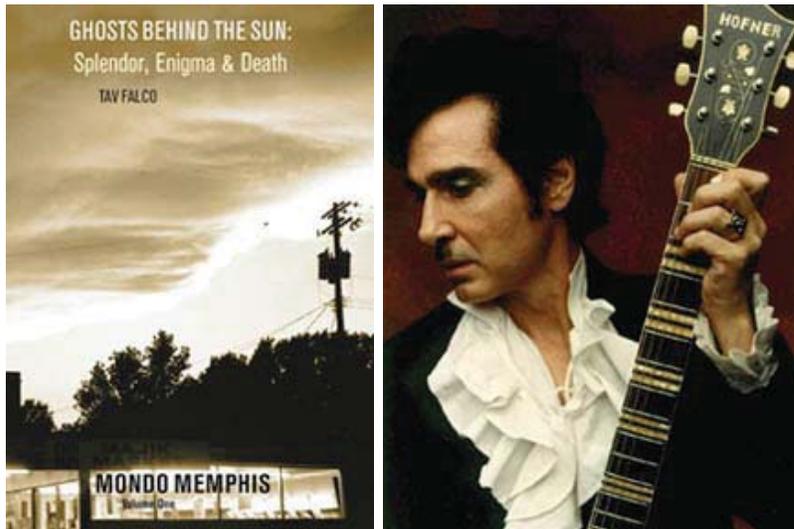
One of my highlights musically, last year, was finally seeing Panther Burns in my home town after reading about [but never hearing] Mr. Falco for 31 years. Never have I seen someone with such a balanced grasp on the Apollonian and the Dionysian. He was a real artist and gentleman who managed to be humble, dignified, and loose at the same time. Like a synthesis between Bryan Ferry and Lux Interior! I need to read his book. I'm certain it would be impeccably researched and presented. <http://postpunkmonk.wordpress.com>

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'Ghosts Behind the Sun: Splendor, Enigma & Death' by Tav Falco - A Review

By John Beifuss on November 28, 2011 10:19 AM



In his new book, Tav Falco describes his influential art-trash-punk band, Panther Burns, as recreating the sound of a feline predator in flames -- "an unholy amalgam of animal lust and divine transubstantiation."

That phrase also might be applied to this cultural history of Falco's "adopted home town and spiritual sanctuary," Memphis. The book is an illustrated 300-page literary

"unholy" road that stretches from the days of slavery and the Fort Pillow Massacre through the 1980s, when Falco and such fellow travelers and active influences as the late Alex Chilton, the late Jessie Mae Hemphill ("The She-Wolf"), the late Cordell Jackson (the "Rock 'n Roll Granny"), photographer William Eggleston and the all-female band, The Hellcats, parted the magnolia curtain to reveal, in the words of Falco's subtitle, "Splendor, Enigma & Death."

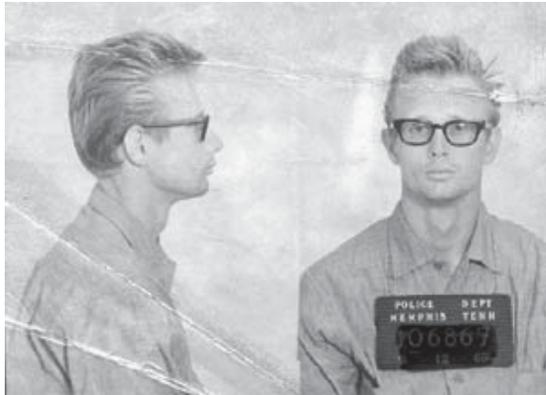
Reading "**Ghosts Behind the Sun**" ([Creation Books](#), \$24.99), one would think that Memphis, like Buffy's Sunnydale High, is located above some sort of Hellmouth, but this one disgorges artists, aristocrats, inebriates and lunatics rather than vampires and demons. This notion becomes almost literal in Falco's prologue, when he points out that "Memphis is built upon the New Madrid fault line -- a geological fissure." No wonder Memphis is, in the author's words, "the city of murder necrolatry, and music."



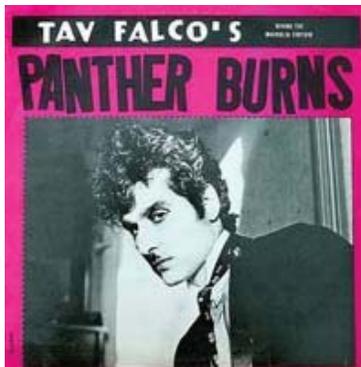
"**Ghosts Behind the Sun**" functions almost as an accidental companion volume to Robert Gordon's definitive history of the local underground music and culture scene, "**It Came from Memphis.**" It might be the latest chapter in the Panther Burns mission, as described by Falco during the band's infamous 1979 appearance on Marge Thrasher's WHBQ-TV talk show: "We create an anti-environment to make visible that part of Memphis and of life that is normally overlooked."

If Gordon's narrative has appeal for anyone interested in popular culture, Falco's is for specialists. The first part of the new book is a slog, as Falco recounts the eras of Civil War, Yellow Fever and E.H. Crump, with the conceit of the author imagining himself a participant in various artistic renaissances and violent crises: He's a soldier under the command of Nathan Bedford Forrest, a "papoose" in a forlorn Indian tribe, a reveler on historic Beale Street, a member of the posse hunting Tennessee's notorious 18th century Harp brothers, known as America's first serial killers. The identity games continue even

when the author chronicles events he experienced; he speaks of the "Tav Falco" of Panther Burns fame as a separate individual. (Falco's photos are credited to "E. Baffle.")



The book becomes much more interesting when it reaches the era when Falco was an active presence on the Memphis scene. A cultural archeologist and archivist as well as artist, Falco presents very candid transcribed interviews with such figures as eccentric rockabilly pioneer Charlie Feathers, "Flying Saucer" rock-and-roller Billy Lee Riley and musical Zelig Jim Dickinson, whom Falco identifies as "Godhead, protector, muse, comrade." The interviews are so long and dense that Falco -- an Arkansas native who now lives in Austria -- seems to be functioning more as a researcher than a writer, as if he is offering this material as a gift to future biographers. Music is just one aspect of the content, however: Falco also exhumes the violent histories of the Tiller family, topless nightclub kingpin Danny Owens and serial killer George Howard Putt; probes the murders of guitarist Lee Baker and Booker T. & the MGs drummer Al Jackson; and tours Memphis high society, visiting the Snowdens, the Burches and the Hohenbergs.



Softbound and oversized, the book -- which resembles a self-published volume -- could have used an editor or at least a proof reader. The creator of "**The Twilight Zone**" is Rod "Sterling," while the composer of the theme from "**Shaft**" is "Issac" Hayes. Typos abound. As if to balance the misspelling of simple words, Falco garnishes his prose with fun jawbreakers: grisaille, manumission, "bodily frottage." He also favors epigrams: "Out of the death rattle comes the fresh wailings of

the newborn." Such pronouncements seem as natural as breath when delivered by the self-styled thaumaturge, dramaturge and demiurge of a peculiarly influential Memphis demimonde of the 1970s and '80s.

"Ghosts Behind the Sun" is presented as "[Mondo Memphis: Volume One](#)," the first half of a "dual encyclopedic history of Memphis" that will be completed by cultural critic Erik Morse in an upcoming noir novel, **"Bluff City Underground."** Interestingly, the book arrives just three months after the day-after-Elvis Death Day passing of filmmaker Gualtiero Jacopetti, whose **"Mondo Cane"** (1962) transformed mondo (the Italian word for "world") into an international synonym for shocking, transgressive subject matter.

Tav Falco will read from and sign copies of 'Ghosts Behind the Sun' at 4:30 p.m. Thursday (Dec. 1) at [Burke's Book Store](#), 936 S. Cooper. At 7 that night, he will host a screening of six of his short films -- produced from 1971 to 1996 -- at the [Memphis Brooks Museum of Art](#).

Scare 'em a Little

BY ROBERT GORDON

When Tav Falco announced his entrance on Memphis's music scene, his caterwaul hardly seemed like the overture to a multi-decade career. In 1980, for his self-released, 4-song 7" debut, Falco silk-screened each album cover by hand and paid more attention to separating the ink colors than to separating the sounds of the instruments. He christened his band Panther Burns, after Panther Burn, Mississippi, named for the dying, frying yowls of the terrorizing beast they burned alive in a canebrake.

After decades of releases and revolving band members, Panther Burns' sound has become more refined (if sometimes to their detriment). Falco's punked-up rockabilly music has influenced The White Stripes, Primal Scream, The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, and many other roots and shade-tree artists.

Born in Gurdon, Arkansas, Falco pulled into Memphis in the early 1970s, leaving behind his career as a brakeman on the Missouri Pacific railroad and quickly finding the city's bohemian edge. In Memphis, he worked as a photographer, a videographer, and a performance artist. Music became the next incarnation in his unfolding artistic development. "Here was an art form that I could participate in by just picking up the instrument—like a Kodak Instamatic camera," Falco once told me, referring to the electric guitar at the root of his approach to music. "It was the feeling and aesthetic that mattered, more than musicianship or virtuosity. I didn't feel hindered by my lack of conventional guitar knowledge. I just went into it full tilt."

More than thirty years after his musical debut, he's still tilting, far from center and ever forward. His first book, *Ghosts Behind the Sun: Splendor, Enigma & Death: Mondo Memphis Volume 1*, is a chronicle not only of his own peregrinations against the grain, but also of the Memphis political radicals, independent-minded artists, and occasional ax murderers who preceded and inspired him. Overall, *Ghosts Behind the Sun* is delightful and engaging, an innovative work. That it could have used an

editor is no surprise; but if Tav Falco ever had an editor, he'd never have had a career. Someone always would have told him, "You can't do that," and the world would have been denied his contributions—musical, cinematic, photographic, cultural, and now literary. Like Falco's music, parts of his book exhilarated me.

As an author, Falco's technique is to write himself into history—he's as present during the 1860s as he is during the 1980s. He bears a striking resemblance to Charlie Chaplin, with a touch of Errol Flynn, so it's not hard to imagine him as from another time, a silent screen star (supported by a squalling, trance-dirge-blues soundtrack). This creative memoir begins with his 1973 arrival in Memphis atop his cherished Norton motorcycle and then shifts into his imagined experiences in the Civil War. Falco writes,

I beheld Memphis on the bluff as I would never see it again—majestic, lofty, and

infused with promise, pleasure, grandeur, and every possibility and human act imaginable. . . . My gaze drifted upriver and my thoughts began to penetrate the mists 40 miles north of Memphis to the 1st Chickasaw Bluff. . . . It was during a rain and mud soaked mid-April in 1864, at not more than 16 years of age, that I joined the ranks of a Confederate Cavalry squadron 1,500 strong under the command of Major General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

He also gives us a first-person account of DeSoto's sixteenth-century expedition into Tennessee; joins a posse in the late 1700s tracking America's first serial killers, the Harpe brothers (whose demise will soon give name to Harpe's Head Road); visits with Jim Canaan during Beale Street's heyday under E. H. Crump; and offers gun-barrel views of several notorious murderers in action.

When Falco catches up with his own time, the Norton motorcycle (his faithful companion) shifts into high gear. He writes about his intro-





Cyd Fenwick with Rick Ivy at the Memphis Academy of Art's masked ball, ca. 1980



William Eggleston's legs, 1977

duction to the Arkansas poet and artist Randall Lyon and Lyon's Big Dixie Brick Company of performance artists at the University of Arkansas, and how they brought avant-garde culture to the campus.

In a farewell burst of histrionic art, we staged a Happening just a few yards off campus. . . . We further enlisted the talent of go-go dancers who had come with [the band Moloch] from Memphis. I appeared with a huge EYE painted on my chest, wearing a black top hat with a large gold hat band emblazoned with the logo that read: FUCK OFF. . . . The finale featured a blond Venus from the art department elevated on an artist model's dais, wrapped only in a full-length mink coat, which she flamboyantly shed at the appointed moment. Chaos broke loose in the steamy room, but at the height of the frenzied ovation,



R. L. Burnside on guitar at the Brotherhood Sportsman's Lodge, near Como, Mississippi, 1974

a posse of city police and sheriff's deputies came crushing through the front entrance, somehow tipped off that our so-called, and by now notorious, "mime troupe" was performing in the nude. As the fuzz came in through the front entrance, our troop managed to hightail it out the back door, down the fire escape and out into the frosty night air of Washington County—some of us never to return.

Falco's migration to Memphis wasn't an attempt to assimilate into the big city. Instead, he was captivated by life at the margins. Some of the nonconformists, misfits, radicals, and artists he encountered were wealthy, such as the pioneering color photographer William Eggleston, who hired Falco as his camera assistant. For Eggleston, Falco writes, "every frame was intrinsic and essential in a literary way, yet stood alone as a non-verbal abstraction of deconstructed composition and tones." Others at the margins were dirt-farm escapees, including musicians Falco introduced to punk and post-punk audiences, like R. L. Burnside, Charlie Feathers, Cordell Jackson, and Othar Turner. What has distinguished the career of Tav Falco and his band is that they've seen art where others have seen trash. Theirs is the story of the late twentieth century, of rock & roll, of democratic art in action. In *Ghosts*, Falco continues to offer keen and celebratory insight into lesser-known artists like Randall Lyon, and like the brooding, beautiful Solip Singers, whose music was "pure gold, deep country folk blues." Writes Falco, "Johnny Cash nor Bess Hawes nor Woody Guthrie couldn't have touched [their] exquisite darkness."

Several pages of the book are simply transcribed interviews with the author, and Falco's questions elicit unique, intimate responses. Dean Phillips tells about Charlie Rich sleeping in his car in front of her house so that he could play a new song first thing in the morning for her husband, Jud, the brother of Sam Phillips. Or Roland Janes brilliantly summarizes Memphis: "Of course Los Angeles and Nashville both are highly successful, we know about their success. I think Memphis was a more loose location. The music is less inhibited, as are the musicians. I think that's the basic difference. I think Nashville and Hollywood are more business-as-usual. In Memphis, you never know what to expect."

Falco's transformation from documentarian into musician occurred in the early 1970s while videotaping R. L. Burnside at his honky tonk in the backwoods of Mississippi's



Lux Interior's ring, 1980



The Cramps at the Arcade Restaurant, Memphis, 1980

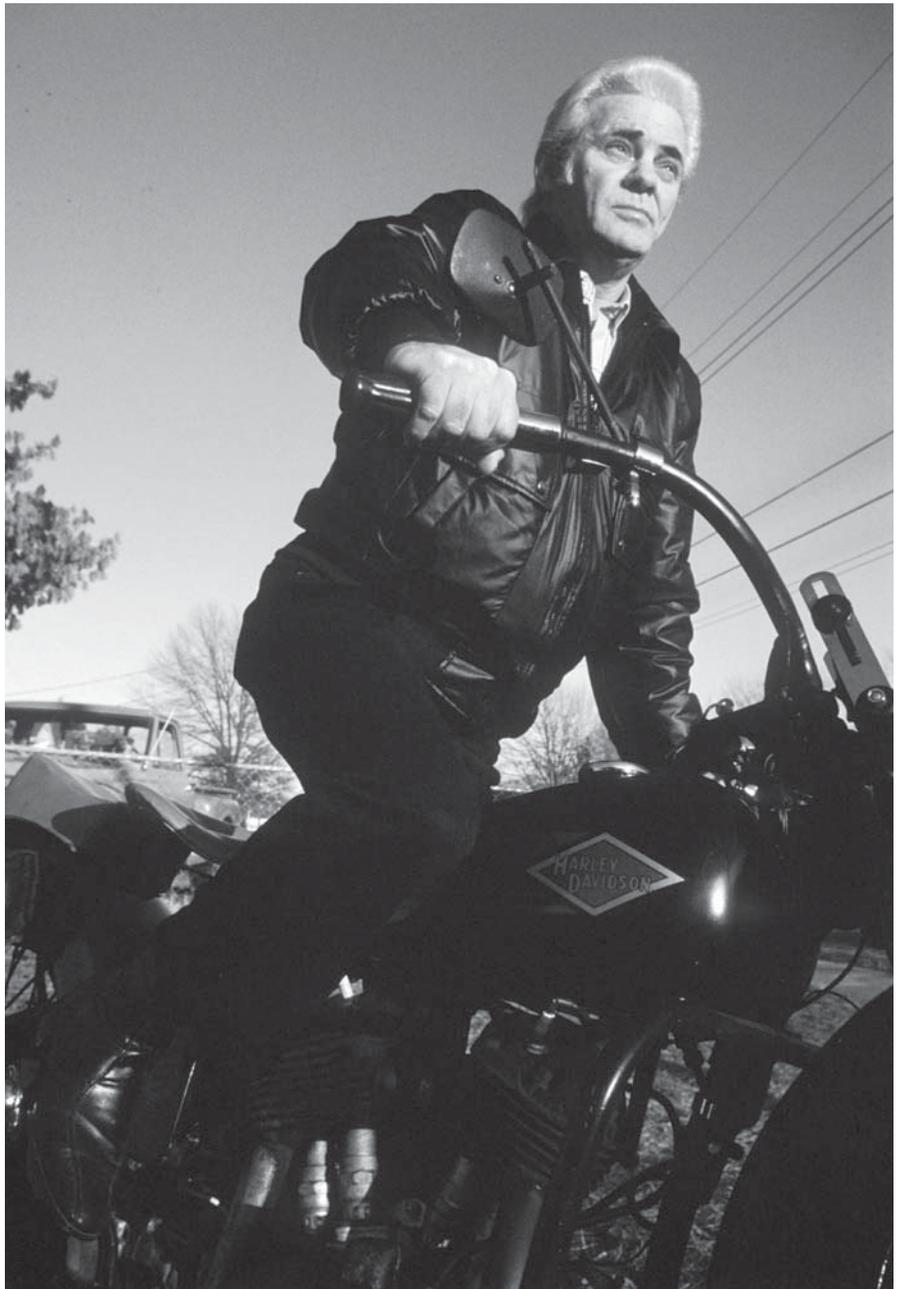
Panola County. In *Ghosts* he writes that he “fell then completely under the spell of [Burnside’s] snaking, swamp infested rhythms ... these darkly melodious strains of erotic yearning and torment that seemed to flow effortlessly from his body and from his battered, de-tuned electric guitar.” The honky tonk itself was “like a secular church,” the scene of “serious merrymaking ... [where] the tenant farmers and tractor drivers came for the camaraderie, for the chicken frying all night in an iron skillet, for the endless cases of cold Schlitz, and they came from miles around to wager on the vagaries of the tumbling dice shaking in a leather dice horn, and for the girls working the back room.” Subsumed by what he was documenting, Falco began to lose the distinction between the observer and the observed. He found himself in front of the camera instead of behind it, and he found the six-stringed instrument of the devil.

A guy steps out on that stage and does his thing despite all the reasons he shouldn’t. Sometimes that’s when we, as an audience, feel the deepest empathy—when we’re exposed to raw and untutored expression. Falco’s art, whatever the medium, penetrates deeply because it comes from a place of honesty and conviction, rather than a preoccupation with technical skill. Charlie Feathers told him a secret about performing that Falco still uses today: “Now you gotta scare ’em a little,” Feathers said. “You know, the audience, you gotta scare ’em just a little.” Perhaps Falco occasionally goes too far; I’ve seen him empty a room full of diehard fans. His motto has always been the same: “You compose ’em, we decompose ’em.”

Early in their career, Falco and his band performed for a Memphis morning TV talk show. This was during their noisier days, and the band included a rudimentary synthesizer, a trumpeter, and Alex Chilton on guitar (with a mischievous grin). At the end of the first song—Johnny Burnette’s “Train Kept a-Rollin’”—the hostess said, “That may be the worst sound I’ve ever heard come out on television.” Complimented, Falco steered the discussion to what he saw as Panther Burns’ role within the historical context of Memphis performers, explaining, “[As a society] we can’t see what’s around us. There are blues people here who don’t have exposure, rockabilly artists who don’t have any exposure. They don’t really exist here, they’re part of our environment, we see them every day, yet they’re invisible to us. We take them for granted. It takes a group like us to create contrast, to create focus.” *Ghosts Behind The Sun* makes visible those heroes whom the shadows have absorbed. 🐦



Lillian entertaining one of her admirers, Memphis, 1976



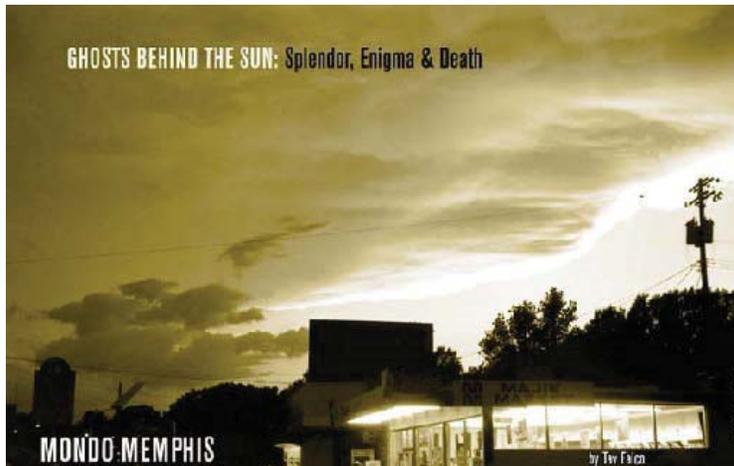
Charlie Feathers on a 1934 Harley-Davidson VLD



May 2012 London

Ghosts Behind The Sun: Splendor, Enigma & Death (Mondo Memphis, Volume One) by Tav Falco All the way Memphis masterpiece

After over 30 years of mating rock'n'roll's primal catharsis with enigmatic art-tuned visions as the Panther Burns, a sizzling book debut might be expected from Falco. But, in recounting the history of his beloved Memphis through landmark events, musical peaks and savage criminal lows, while interweaving his own autobiography via his Eugene Baffle alter-ego, the result is a brilliantly-executed hybrid of rock'n'roll



blockbuster, evocative portrait of a vanishing city's dark side and personal mission. Or, as Bobby Gillespie puts it, "the Bible of Dixiefried, rockabilly psychosis and Memphis beat art underground true crime myth."

Partnering cultural critic

Underground, Baffle's eloquently surreal account starts with Civil War

massacre, eerily placing himself in the thick of the action, before steering his trusty Norton motorcycle through the last century's criminal underbelly, serial murders, sickening racism, motorcycle clubs, Beale Street action and strip bar tussles, often enhanced by first-hand accounts.

While Elvis and Jerry Lee loom large throughout, the rich musical cast mixes Sam The Sham and Charlie Feathers with lesser-known but equally as fascinating players. The "Utopian anarchy" of the Panther Burns doesn't appear until page 223, a riot of its own enlivened by mentor-members Alex Chilton and revelatory dynamo Jim Dickinson. To finish, Falco interviews himself on blazing form: a perfect finale for his monumental triumph.

★★★★★ *Creation Books | ISBN 9781840681819, 312 pages*

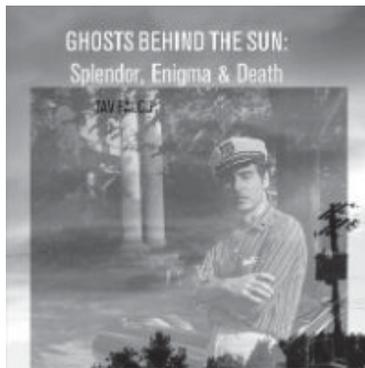
Reviewed by Kris Needs



LONDON

Tav Falco Reads!

1:31 PM GMT 22/05/2012



One of the truly original and romantic forces in American music, **Tav Falco** has just written his first book - the semi-autobiographical [Ghosts Behind The Sun: Splendor, Enigma & Death](#) via Creation Books. A fascinating tome, it manages to include a historical perspective on Memphis and its environs harking back to the the American Civil War and then fast-forwards into the musical mores that spawned the likes of **Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Jim Dickinson** and Falco's great friend, **Alex Chilton**. Tav's own psychedelic rock'n'roll adventures with the **Panther Burns** also feature heavily in the book.

The tome itself is reviewed in the new issue of **MOJO** but London fans wishing to get a first hand appreciation of the book should head to one of two readings that Falco is conducting in the capital. Tav can be caught in full flow at the following two venues on **Wednesday, May 30**.

3.00pm
Rough Trade East
Dray Walk, Old Truman Brewery
91 Brick Lane
London E1 6QL
(Tel. 0207 392 7788)

6.30pm

6.30pm
Big Green Bookshop
1 Brampton Park Road
London N22 6BG
(Tel. 020 8881 6767)

In celebration of his imminent arrival, watch the man making a deeply personal statement on this video: [Born Too Late](#).



Tav Falco London in-store

18th May 2012

Post-modern pop classicist TavFalco makes rare appearance in London to promote psychogeographical book.

Tav Falco was cool before cool was cool. Or so the internet would have us believe.

He is, in part, to blame for the resurgence and use of the 50s anachronism to elevate teenage rebellion into an art form. The idea that you could use the camp fashion cosmology (togo-graphy?) of your parents older siblings to be original wasn't totally Tav's but he took it into new and exciting places with a conviction that left many others run out like a spent 7".

In the same way that this new 50's is a time out of time, psychogeography is a place on top of a place. Literally the psychology of a city, mapping it's fistulas and conduits, creating new trails for predator and prey alike, psychogeography can be a fascinating investigation that is so much more than who was where when.

It's augmented reality in a printed form.

Wed 30 May 3pm

Rough Trade East

TAV FALCO

INTERVIEW BY MARA WILLIAMS

This is but an excerpt of a long and interesting conversation between Mara Williams and legendary Memphis music decomposer Tav Falco, he of The Unapproachable Panther Burns...

There's not much written about your early life in Arkansas, and I remember reading a story where you said you had a late start. What did you mean by that?

Well, I don't think that I matured as quickly as others had. I underwent a long period of naivety. I was only exposed to the outside world through reading, and then with the advent of TV, we got television in our area when I was 11 years old, and that opened a little bit of a window on the world. I began watching rerun movies 3 times a day on television, movies from the 30s up to the late 50s. I really became immersed in these and I wanted to someday make movies myself. It was in a sense fantasy and in a sense an exposure to a sophisticated notion of the world that I had no other exposure to. And so this was a formative time, and later I went through another formative period when I met poets and musicians at the University of Arkansas. It was a slow process really understanding what I was exposed to all of a sudden. It took a while to really assimilate the import of what art really means. You have to mature to a certain extent to understand Joseph Conrad or to understand Mozart or Christopher Marlowe. There was a point where I went to Memphis, because from Arkansas, where do you go? You go to Dallas or Memphis. I did go to Dallas for 6 months, but it turned out to be the most evil places I'd ever been to in America. That was during the Psychedelic revolution. It was a great time of awakening but also a time of heavy psychedelic experiences; of cults... certain Satanic cults were afoot there. There was also a conservative element in Dallas that was oppressive. That whole combination thwarted my sensibility and I was glad to get out of there. I got out of there just with the shirt on my back.

But I did go to Memphis, and I dug in in Memphis for 17 years, and there I met artists and film makers and writers. Some of whom I'd known in Arkansas who had also made the transition to Memphis. There I was able to grow and mature in Memphis in an environment that

TAV FALCO'S BEHIND THE MAGNOLIA CURTAIN

PANTHER BURNS



had right tempo and the right pace, and there I could be myself and look into my own being without being swept up in trends and movements as I might have been in New York. In those days, for me going to New York was like going to the moon. I couldn't really fathom what that must have been like. It was just something I knew from movies. Eventually with the Panther Burns I did go to New York and that's where we really broke through in an underground way.

But to get back to your question, there were some dark chapters in Arkansas and also some rewarding chapters, and what happened there was initial exposure to literature, music, the blues. And also in thinking and perceiving. But it was also tied into the movements of the late 60's, and Arkansas was not exempt from that.

Why did you eventually decide to make Vienna home?

Well, it's another river town, like Memphis. Another music town that like Memphis has a special rhythm. It's a rhythm that appeals to a certain type of artist, one who is introspective, yet social. Here we have a kind of merry sinister atmosphere that's tempered over the centuries by music lovers and extraordinary artists and musicians who were able to do what they did because they had great audiences. So what we have here, like in Paris, is a culture that reaches ▶

TAV FALCO UK 2011 BY JOHN KENNETH SMITH

TAV FALCO

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TAV FALCO BY JOHN KENNETH SMITH

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10 EMBEY



out to artists, in which art and music is really a part of the basic fabric of existence, something the people cannot live without. And Vienna, maybe unlike the rest of Austria, is not just Austrians. Vienna is an international city. For decades and decades it's been a crossroads between the east and the west, just like Memphis. Memphis stands on the Mississippi between the east and the west, and it's a crossroads of regional music, between Arkansas and Mississippi and Tennessee. It was a hub for the formation of blues and rock n roll, with the radio and the venues it had. With Vienna, on the Danube, there are parallels. Here, you had patrons, who patronized art, and you had the monarchy, and you had the church as supporters. You can be critical of all those institutions, and rightly so, but on the other hand those institutions sustained and supported the commission of art and music and the culture that formed around this. It wasn't just money that kept artists going around here, it was the culture and the interest in the advancement of their work. So, I'm a foreigner here, I'll always be American in Europe. Whenever I go I'll be some guy from Memphis, I can't change that, not trying to change it, but after 17 years living in the Bluff City I think I'm eligible to experience another culture. And I've learned a lot more about where I come from, from living in Europe.

I'm really interested in the story that you went to South America to learn how to dance the tango.

Yeah. I was really drawn by the music and the dance, and I spent four months there. I got off the plane and I was dancing that afternoon. I guess I hung out at every *milonga* of any significance in Buenos Aires at that time. It was a remarkable experience. I began to understand tango in a way I had not known it before. I began to recognize thematic and musical parallels with American blues and early jazz. A certain sentiment appears in both forms of music, a sense of betrayal, longing, humour... a certain erotic quality. A feeling of being mistreated, vengeance, and subterfuge, all of these themes are paralleled in slightly different ways.

"Dallas turned out to be the most evil place I'd ever been to in America... certain Satanic cults were afoot there"



Panther Burns Logo

Now the dances themselves, in terms of jazz dances, the Black Bottom, the Charleston, Slow Drag, are different from Argentine tango. Tango is a dance that came out of indolence, but so were the American dances in that sense. The American dances all came from down south, and they went up river. All those New York shows in Harlem, the Blackbirds of 1926, that's all southern inspired stuff, and consequently it moved downtown to Broadway. But in Buenos Aires, the difference there is tango is the music of the city right from the beginning, it's not a music of the country, but it was the music of indolence in that it came out of brothels and bordellos where people had a lot of time on their hands during the day. There was unemployment too, and many of the men were far from their home countries, many Hungarians and Italians came to Buenos Aires with the promise of economic betterment. When they got there, it was not so promising. They were living in tenements, had a lot of time on their hands, hung out in bordellos, and they began to fight among themselves. Lots of knife fights, and the tango actually came out of these knife fights the men were having. In the beginning, the tango was only danced between men, and it was only later that they brought the women in the bordellos into their dance. But even then the dance was performed among men before they danced it with the female partner, because they wanted to be good dancers and experienced before they danced with a woman. These were the early days, 19th century.

American jazz and blues had a little different origin because that music came out of New Orleans, and it came out of the countryside, out of the plantations, jigs and blues and quadrilles and all that kind of stuff, so it was a little different relationship between the men and women in blues and hot jazz to that of Argentine tango.

Tell me about your new album...

It's an album of all original songs. I felt that I wanted to do a complete record that for better or worse was strictly the vision of the Panther

Burns, without interpretation of other material. So we made these demos for *Conjurations*, and I pitched and had them rejected by every independent record label on three continents for 9 years. And that's when I knew I really had something. Something that nobody else had. And I knew that this was the record that had to be made. And that it has been made we owe in large part to Stagolee Records in Europe, who licensed our entire back catalogue except for one live record, and we were able to go to a secret studio in Paris and record *Conjurations* the way I wanted to do it. It's not a perfect record, as few things are in this world, but what's important is the vision is there. The vision of The Panther Burns stirring up the dark waters of the unconscious. The Orphic vision of the Panther Burns descending into the underworld: that's what this record is about. ■

Conjurations: Songs For Deranged Lovers is out now on Cosmologic Records.

Tav's new book *HOW TO BE MEMPHIS: Ghosts Behind The Sun, Splendor, Enigma, and Death* is out now through Creation Press, distributed locally through Polyester Books.

www.monmemphis.wordpress.com

To read the entire interview or listen to the audio (recommended for Tav's gentlemanly southern accent and unique diction), visit www.pbtfm.org.au/astor-elowe/blog

Radio FM4 Melbourne, Australia GABEY 11

Ghosts Behind The Sun: Splendor, Enigma & Death/Mondo Memphis Volume One

Tav Falco

Creation Pbk 300pp

Tav Falco is the bohemian art dandy who created the wild 'irresponsibly' band Panther Burns in the early 1980s. That unit, still extant, featured folks like Alex Chilton and Jim Dickinson at their most unhinged, and blazed a uniquely weird path through the post-punk landscape of the day. Tav had a crazy back story as well, which he was always eager to share when you interviewed him. He'd been the assistant

of photographer William Eggleston; the founder of TeleVista – a video collective dedicated to documenting rural blues musicians of the Delta; and a major proponent of all sorts of Memphis-based actionist-art tomfoolery. In *Ghosts Behind The Sun*, Tav brings all these threads together into a single bewitching narrative, all of it revolving around his chosen hometown.

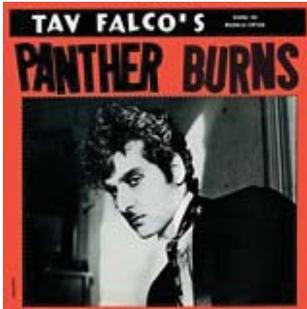
Ghosts is actually several books crammed into one. The first is a picaresque history of Memphis from colonial times onwards, told in a series of first person vignettes, canted towards the seamy and violent

side of things. The second is a series of interviews Tav did with various musicians and other locals who were associated with the cultural life of Memphis. These are quite detailed and some of them, like the one with Charlie Feathers, are revelatory. The third is Tav's personal history of the Memphis underground, from the era of Insect Trust (Robert Palmer's exquisite group) to the Memphis Blues Festivals. This is an amazing tale, with dense details on Mud Boy & The Neutrons, The Klitz and other legendary musical units about whom little hard data exists. The fourth section is Tav's sprawling interview with Jim Dickinson (the uncrowned

King of Memphis) and his own (largely unpublished) interview by *BOMB* magazine.

Some parts of the book might feel a bit overloaded with Tav's flamboyant personality, but that actually fits the subject matter. And I must say, reading *Ghosts* made me yearn to visit the place again. Even though most of what he writes about no longer exists, the magic of his descriptive language makes Memphis seem incredibly compelling. Nice damn book. The second volume, a noir novel by Erik Morse entitled *Bluff City Underground*, is due soon.

Byron Coley



[March 13, 2012](#)

Tav Falco's Panther Burns
Behind the Magnolia Curtain/Blow Your Top
([Fat Possum](#))

In October 1978, when Tav "Gustavo" Falco made his live debut as part of the final show by Memphis rock institution Mudboy & the Neutrons, Alex Chilton was in the audience. Falco sang Leadbelly's "Bourgeois Blues," running his guitar through the speaker of a movie projector and taking a chainsaw to the instrument. Chilton was impressed. By then Big Star had come and gone, a commercial flop despite its peerless brilliance. He was about to begin work on his raw first solo album, *Like Flies on Sherbert*, and he started hanging out with Falco, forming a band with him called Panther Burns. For Chilton, chewed up and spit out by the music biz, it was a chance to play blues and rockabilly guitar while staying out of the spotlight.

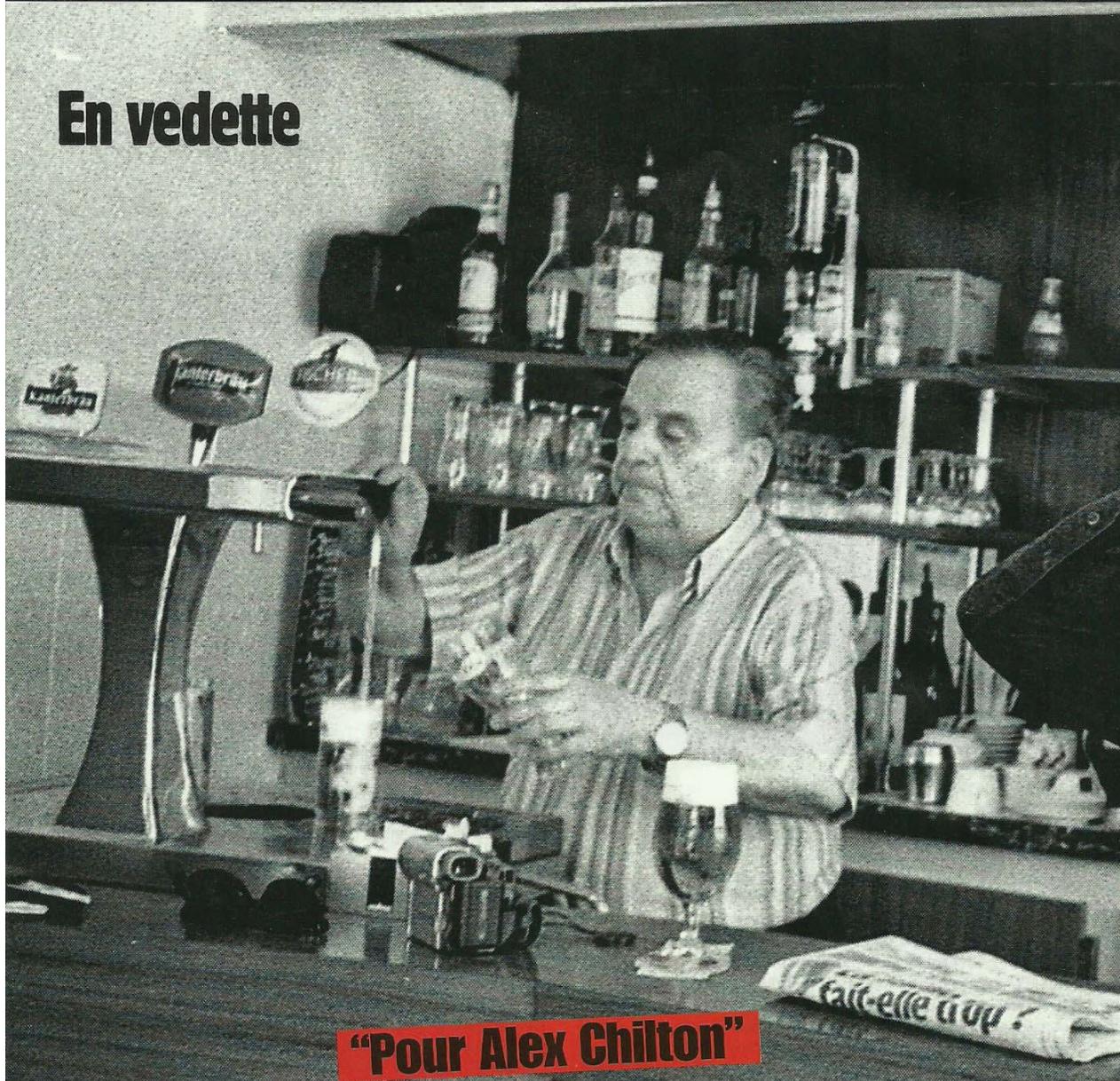
Chilton had been producing the Cramps' early material, and those songs informed both *Like Flies* and Panther Burns. His band with Falco, though, made Lux Interior and company look like a

precision drill team—when they signed with Rough Trade in 1980, they were such a mess that the label interceded to get some relatively reliable players involved. Drummer Ross Johnson, who played on *Flies*, was shown the door—Chilton and fellow guitarist Jim Duckworth ended up alternating on drums—and bassist Ron Miller was added. In 1981 that lineup cut *Behind the Magnolia Curtain* in wild single-take performances, occasionally joined by members of the Tate County Fife & Drum Corps. The songs are all covers: obscure nuggets of trashy rockabilly,

bloodied takes on songs by Junior Wells and R.L. Burnside, even a spin on the Ary Barroso standard "Brazil."

Fat Possum's reissue also includes the four-song EP *Blow Your Top*, recorded in New York in 1983; by then the band, sans Chilton, was more professional, with future Bad Seed Jim Sclavunos on drums. But the thrillingly sloppy *Magnolia Curtain* is the real business, a triumph of raw guts, and it captures the singular spirit of rock 'n' roll in Memphis—where American traditions have long collided in bizarre ways—as well as anything ever has.

En vedette



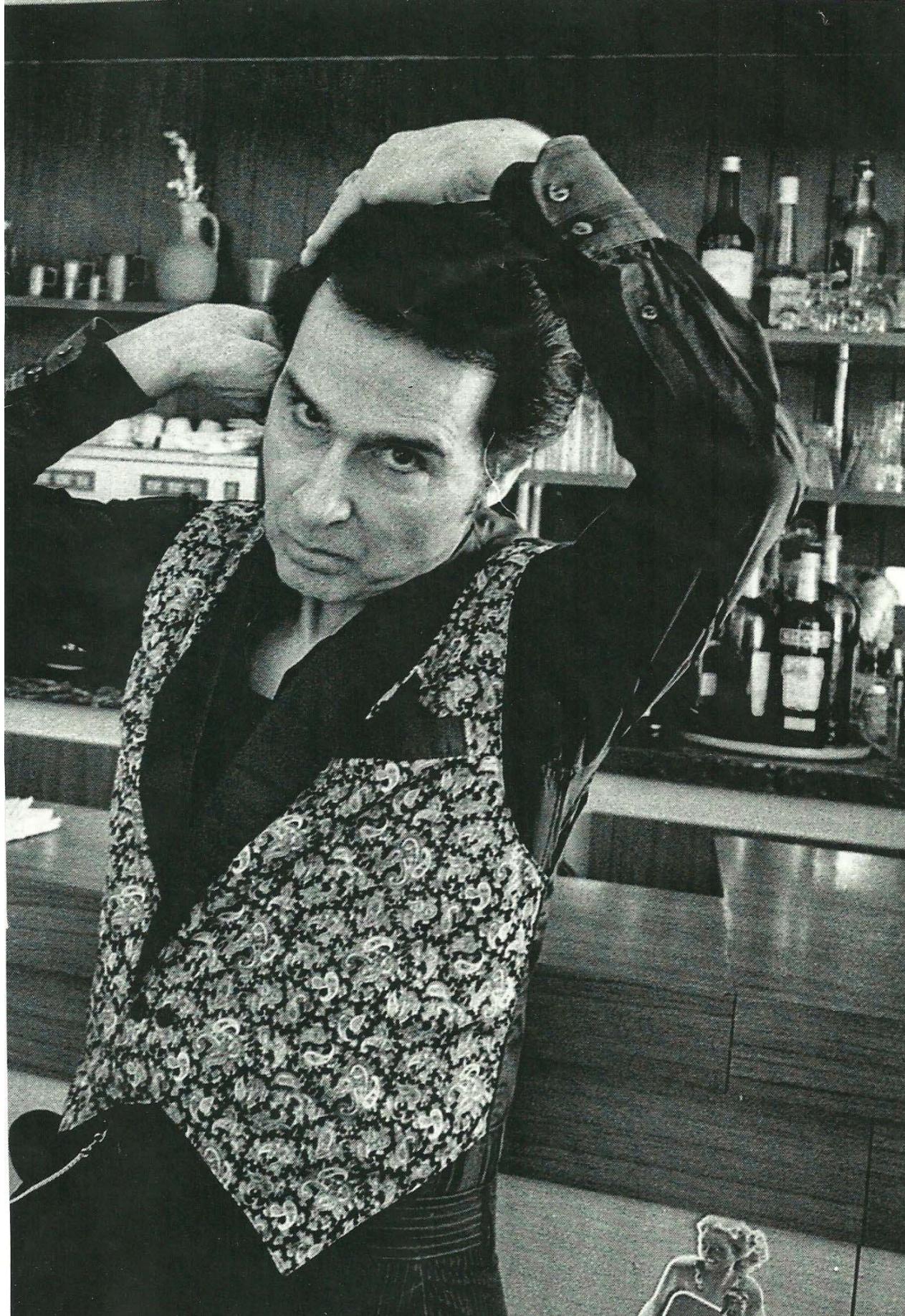
“Pour Alex Chilton”

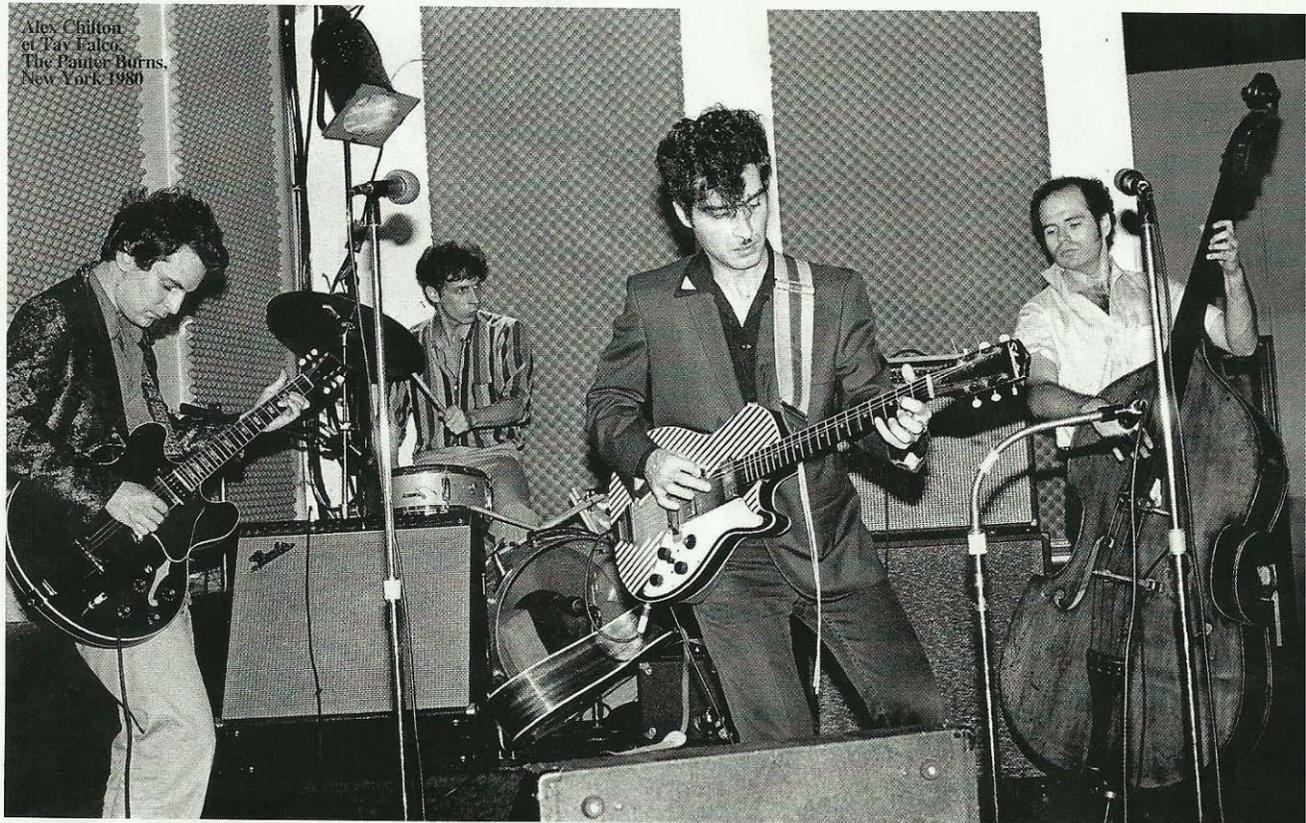
TAV FALCO

Légende du Memphis underground, l'élégant chanteur était récemment de passage à Paris. L'occasion rêvée d'évoquer un parcours admirable et peuplé de fantômes.

25 mai 2012 à Paris, 0 h 30 : Tav Falco vient d'exécuter deux heures de concert, passant en revue le tracklisting de 25 ans de carrière, finissant un rappel en forme de combat de fuzz, à genoux, la guitare Höfner Violin au-dessus de la tête. Le public tout sourire a du mal à croire ce à quoi il vient d'assister, tout simplement à un concert de rock'n'roll, fougueux, parfois hors du rythme, mais composé de cette matière faisant le sel de cette musique : la vitalité. Compacte, la foule jubile d'avoir renoué quelques heures avec ce sentiment

d'interdit, traduction adolescente des accords magiques venant des contrées rurales du Texas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas... Tav Falco, pur produit du métissage musical de Memphis, est façonné de ces centaines de mains blanches et noires qui, en construisant le country blues, créèrent le flamboyant du rock'n'roll originel. Au comptoir, un homme d'une cinquantaine d'années commande le verre de trop, exultant de trinquer une nouvelle fois avec ses amis : “Pour Alex Chilton”, crie-t-il. Encore un enfant de Memphis.

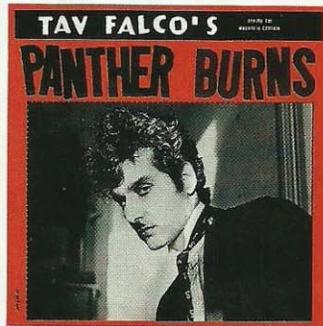




Alex Chilton
et Tav Falco
The Panther Burns
New York 1980

Photo Ebet Roberts/ Getty Images

Quand Gustavo Tav Falco débarque à Memphis au courant des années 70, la capitale du vieux Sud n'est plus que l'ombre d'elle-même. Les boîtes ferment sur Beale Street et Stax s'évapore. Sur le trottoir de l'ex-grand label de soul sudiste, des bandes traînent à même le bitume. James Luther Dickinson, sur la légende duquel on reviendra plus tard, en récupère quelques-unes, découvrant par hasard l'œuvre de Sir Mack Rice. Nègre (sic) pour Stax, Rice avait composé "Mustang Sally" et pléthore d'autres chefs-d'œuvre jamais sortis sur galette vinyle. Tav Falco utilisera deux de ses chansons inédites pour son EP de 1985 produit par ce même Dickinson : "Sugar Ditch Revisited". Fouiller dans les poubelles de l'Amérique, une tendance très en vogue à l'époque où les journalistes inventent le concept de *trash music*. Plus qu'une attitude réactionnaire, cette génération de musiciens américains prenait à nouveau conscience que le rock'n'roll venait de loin, la traçabilité de sa naissance ne s'arrêtant pas à l'enregistrement de "That's All Right" par Elvis. Tav Falco, après l'explosion (dans tous les sens du terme) du rock par sa période psychédélique, ne s'intéressait plus qu'aux compositeurs avant-gardistes européens et au country blues. N'étant pas Stockhausen lui-même, il jouait ces chansons typiques du Nord du Mississippi qu'il avait pu découvrir à l'aide de la Memphis Country Blues Society montée notamment par Dickinson (encore lui), Bill Barth (d'Insect Trust) et qui intéressait beaucoup son ami Robert Palmer, futur rock-critic au New Yorker et producteur de disques de country blues pour Fat Possum Records dans les années 90. Depuis 1968, cette association faisait traverser la rivière à des bluesmen tels que Fred McDowell et Bukka White, à l'occasion d'un festival annuel. Le country blues, dont John Lee Hooker reste l'ambassadeur le plus connu,



avait transité à Memphis dans les mains de Sam Phillips. En enregistrant avant 1954 James Cotton ou Howlin' Wolf qui tenait ses plans guitare de Charley Patton, cette musique répétitive, syncopée, sexuellement chargée et quasi-chamanique influença en grosse partie les jeunes rockeurs blancs de l'écurie Sun. Il suffit d'écouter la première version de "Mystery Train" par Little Junior pour s'en persuader.

Acte de malédiction

Voici l'héritage musical de Tav Falco : celui d'un petit Blanc obsédé par le surréalisme français, figure arty

underground légèrement connue pour être danseur, performer, photographe et réalisateur, qui, à la manière d'un Alan Lomax nouvelle vague, partit filmer RL Burnside dans son honky tonk. Mais la carrière de rockeur de Falco, nous la devons à Jim Dickinson. Relégué à l'arrière-plan de l'histoire du rock, ce producteur/pianiste n'est autre que l'homme ayant taquiné les ivoires sur "Wild Horses" des Stones ainsi que sur "Teenage Head" des Groovies. Le personnage débuta à Memphis en chantant sur le dernier grand disque de Sun Records : "Cadillac Men"/"My Baby" avec les Jesters, groupe du fils cadet de Sam Phillips. Proche de Chilton pour avoir produit le Waterloo power pop que fut le troisième Big Star ainsi que "Like Flies On Sherbert" (dont les séances furent filmées par Falco), il enregistra un morceau avec les Cramps lors de leur passage dans la vieille capitale du Sud : "Red Headed Woman". Notons dans cette injustement courte biographie que ses fils Cody et Luther ont enregistré un album avec Jon Spencer : "The Man Who Lives For Love" et nous tenons le portrait d'une des figures de l'ombre les plus influentes d'un certain rock'n'roll.

Photo François Givélet

Retour en octobre 1978. Afin de créer un événement dans une ville endormie et mourante, Jim Dickinson et son groupe Mudboy & The Neutrons organisent une Last Waltz où Falco et la troupe Big Dixie Brick & Co doivent danser. Tav Falco propose un entracte où il chantera le "Bourgeois Blues" de Leadbelly. En plus d'interpréter la chanson dans un style bruitiste et brutal, le jeune Falco découpe sa guitare Silvertone à cinq dollars avec une scie mécanique puis une tronçonneuse et s'évanouit finalement sur scène. Alex Chilton est dans l'assistance. Quelques jours plus tard, l'ancien Big Star entend, en téléphonant à une amie, la même chanson noyée dans le bruit de fond d'une fête. C'est Falco qui amuse l'assistance. Ni une ni deux, Chilton fonce le rejoindre et lui propose de monter un groupe mélangeant le country blues et rockabilly. Tout ce qu'il leur faut, dit-il, c'est un nom, un batteur et une identité. Pris au mot, l'acte fondateur du groupe reste un hommage déguisé au blues. Le nom Panther Burns vient d'une région proche de Grenville (Mississippi) où un féroc félin dévoreur de troupeaux aurait été brûlé vif lors d'une battue soldée par l'incendie d'un champ. Les cris de l'animal, perceptibles à des kilomètres à la ronde, avaient fait acte de malédiction

sur ces terres. De ce son effrayant, la première formation retiendra des concerts approximatifs, brutaux et noyés de larsens de guitare. Une sauvagerie captée live en six heures sur l'ultra lo-fi premier album de Falco : "Behind The Magnolia Curtain". Sorte de "White Light - White Heat" sudiste, ce premier album vit sa formation d'origine privée de son batteur (et de son mini-Korg !) mais rejointe par un bassiste d'Ann Arbor (patelin de Stooges) Ron Miller et un nouveau guitariste Jim Duckworth (qui partage la batterie avec Chilton !). De plus, Falco insiste pour y inviter un groupe de blues percussif : The Tate County Fife Drum Corps avec Abe Young à la grosse caisse et la grande chanteuse de country blues Jesse May Hemphill à la caisse claire.

Monomaniacque du tango

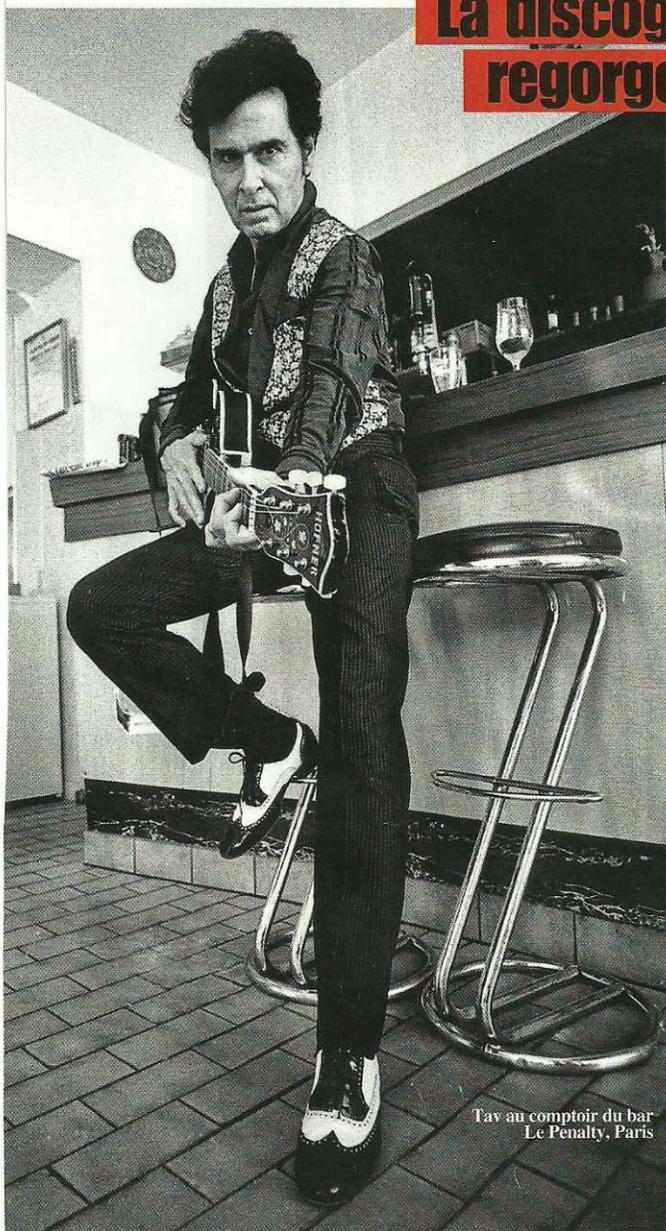
Sorti par Rough Trade Records, ce premier album en forme de chaudron du diable avait été conçu comme un document sonore, non comme un produit ayant une quelconque chance commerciale. Le type d'acte fou qui donne un ticket d'accès au statut légendaire, non à une villa de 99 chambres avec piscine en forme de guitare. Voilà le destin de Tav Falco : de son jusqu'au-boutisme et son inintérêt pour les formes les plus pop de la musique, il vivote encore aujourd'hui entre l'écriture, des rétrospectives

de ses films et des concerts organisés au lance-pierre par des amoureux du mythe. Bien que les Panther Burns avaient bénéficié de l'estime du milieu punk new-yorkais des années 80 (reconnaissance cristallisée par l'apparition de Falco dans le film "Downtown 81" aux côtés de Basquiat et tout le gratin hype de l'époque), leur carrière n'aurait pu exister sans l'immense foi d'hommes et de femmes amoureux de cette musique, allèle de l'ADN américain. En France, le groupe bénéficie du soutien de New Rose, comme tous ceux qui continuaient à faire du rock'n'roll dans les abominables eighties : Chilton en solo, les Cramps, Roky Erickson, Gun Club et tant d'autres. Aujourd'hui, le label allemand Stag-O-Lee a pris le relais, bien qu'il fallut neuf ans pour sortir ce nouvel album, "Conjuration : Séance For Deranged Lovers". Malgré cette vie faite de vaches maigres et des changements de personnel inimaginables — on dénombre 74 musiciens ayant joué de près ou de loin avec les Panther Burns — la discographie de Tav Falco regorge de trésors cachés. A la manière d'un Willy DeVille du Dixieland, Falco rechercha le métissage dans sa musique en fouillant au-delà des folklores de son seul pays. L'utilisation monomaniacque du tango, qu'il fut le premier à mélanger au blues et au rock'n'roll, n'est pas si surprenante. Cette culture apportée par les émigrés italiens en Argentine utilise non seulement les trois accords du blues mais bénéficie des syncopes africaines et incarne la véritable musique de voyou. La danse tango elle-même, qui ne s'exécutait qu'entre hommes à ses débuts, est née en partie d'un étrange duel appelé *danse des couteaux* dont le but était d'attraper la lame de l'adversaire avec un foulard. Une obsession décadente qui fait les lettres de noblesse des albums "Shadow Dancer" et "Disappearing Angels" enregistrés dans les ninetyes. Puis, le cabaret blues de "Sugar Ditch Revisited", le garage rockab de "Red Devil" et "The World We Knew"... Autant de sous-cultures défendues corps et âme par un groupe d'outsiders qui ne connut jamais la lumière. Une vie ressemblant à un inventaire dressé à la bougie dans l'arrière-boutique du grand magasin des chansons populaires. De celles qui sont taillées pour faire danser, transpirer et atteindre la transe : seul salut possible pour les âmes mornes de nos sociétés endormies. ★

THOMAS E FLORIN

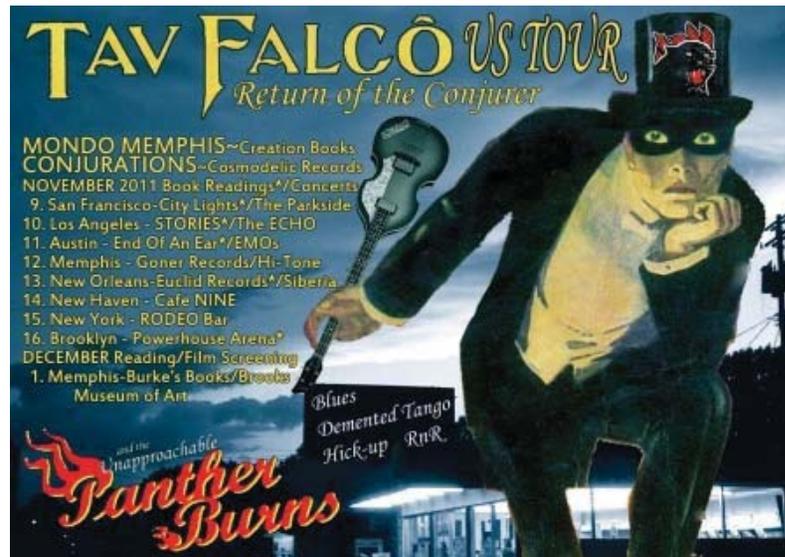
Album "Conjuration : Séance For Deranged Lovers" (Stag-O-Lee)
Livre "Ghosts Behind The Sun : Splendor, Enigma & Death" (Creation)

La discographie de Tav regorge de trésors



Tav au comptoir du bar
Le Penalty, Paris

Tav a fait des lectures de son bouquin dans le cadre d'une tournée aux USA fin 2011.



Dans un style qui lui est propre, Tav raconte l'origine de Bluff City, construite sur la fissure du New Madrid. La configuration de Memphis est en effet due à un violent tremblement de terre.

Memphis est passée de 1 239 habitants en 1830 à environ 1 000 fois plus aujourd'hui, le hissant ainsi au rang de deuxième ville principale du Tennessee, après Nashville (je vous laisse revisiter le reste sur Wikipédia).

Après en avoir évoqué l'aspect historique, se mettant parfois en scène lui-même (Tav s'imagine en 1864, jeune engagé de 16 ans chez les confédérés), Tav raconte l'histoire de personnages hauts en couleur comme celle de Piano Red Williams, tué à coups de crosse de revolver (il ne méritait pas de perdre une balle !) par ses voisins, celles du politicien Boss Crump et du bandit Machine Gun Kelly, et encore de ses voisins de l'époque (cette dame qui élevait des chats) au destin parfois tragique ...

Tav raconte son arrivée à Memphis au milieu des années 70 sur sa vieille Norton qui lui faisait prendre des bains d'huile de moteur, alors qu'un type venait de sauter dans le Mississippi.

Il enchaîne avec ses ballades sur Beale street - la rue commerçante construite dès 1840 avec ses boutiques comme Lansky's où Elvis s'est habillé durant toute sa carrière -, dans les clubs (Hernando's Hideaway ...) et les studios de la ville (Sun, mais pas que). Il raconte aussi ses courses poursuites - son pote Don « Red » West et lui à Norton, la police à leurs trousses -, sa rencontre avec Rendall Lyon qui reste aujourd'hui pour lui à ce jour une source d'inspiration permanente. Rendall lui fit découvrir un tas d'univers (le tango, notamment) et lui trouva son « nom de guerre », comme il dit : Eugene Baffle.

Un chapitre intitulé « en allant du paradis à l'enfer, on passe forcément par Memphis » détaille un tas d'affaires policières, la plupart sanglantes, certaines impliquant la police.

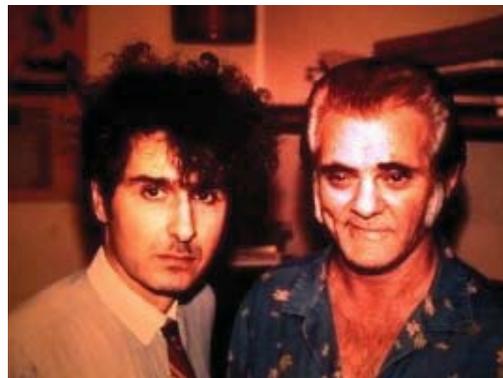
La plus grosse partie du bouquin est consacrée à ce qui nous intéresse le plus, je veux bien sûr parler de musique (et non pas de politique).

Son côté intemporel, sûrement, en tout cas, Tav ne cite jamais de dates. En dehors d'événements précis que les lecteurs pourront dater en fonction de leur culture ou de leurs aspirations, seules les photos qui illustrent le bouquin permettent de se situer dans le temps.

Allant trouver l'inspiration directement à la source, Tav allait aussi s'intéresser à la vie de tous ces bluesmen tel Rural « RL » Burnside, ou blueswomen comme Jessie Mae Hemphill, une des pionnières de la guitare électrique dont on recommande vivement au passage une réédition vinyle récente sous forme de compiles de ses early work sur le label Moi J'Connais (la bande à Mama Rosin).



Jessie Mae Hemphill
LP « Moi J'connais records » - 2011



Tav et Charlie Feathers, au début des 90's

Tav devint ami avec de nombreux musiciens, tel que Charlie Feathers, qui a largement inspiré Tav. La version de « Tram » (au lieu de « Tramp »), prononcée « à la Charlie ».

Un large passage du bouquin est ainsi consacré à Charlie Feathers, en interview direct par Tav ou via les souvenirs émouvants de son fils Bubba (guitariste renommé localement, qui accompagnait son père sur le sublime album « Charlie Feathers » sorti sur Elektra en 1990 et produit par Ben Vaughn) ou de Shirley Richardson, une des « girls », comme Charlie appelait les filles de son fan club qui le suivaient partout. Shirley, qui en était la présidente, a également été l'inspiratrice de Charlie pour sa chanson « Too Much Alike » (1957), tellement on disait de ces deux - là qu'ils se ressemblaient.

Sur Charlie Feathers, on apprend notamment que ses parents ont vraisemblablement pensé au fils de Charles Lindbergh, kidnappé et assassiné peu de temps avant sa naissance (1932) et qui s'appelait Charles Augustus Lindbergh - tout comme Charlie – et que, contrairement aux idées reçues, celui-ci ne buvait ni ne fumait.

On comprend également les raisons du peu de succès rencontré par Charlie mesuré à l'aune de son talent : manque de chance et arnaque. Arnaqué par le co-auteur avec lui du million seller « I Forgot To Remember To Forget », qui n'a rien rapporté à Charlie. Et puis c'est Charlie – l'inventeur du hiccup avec notamment son morceau « Tongue Tied Jill » qui sera une des composantes du succès d'Elvis qui a incité ce dernier à aller faire un tour au studio Sun que Charlie fréquentait depuis son ouverture. Sam Phillips se concentra alors uniquement sur le succès d'Elvis et celui de Carl Perkins. Puisqu'on cite ces deux personnages, on peut évoquer le geste classe d'Elvis, qui a repris « Blue Suede Shoes » pour assurer des revenus à Carl, alors que celui-ci semblait décider à tout arrêter après avoir eu un accident qui avait coûté la vie à son frère.

Toujours en lien avec Sun, Tav côtoie aussi Billy Lee Riley et Roland Janes, présents sur la plupart des enregistrements Sun jusqu'en 1959. Ils servaient aussi de backing band à tous les chanteurs démunis de groupe lors d'une tournée. Le combo, composé notamment du batteur J.M. Van Eaton, s'était baptisé The Little Green Men et a ainsi accompagné notamment Jerry Lee Lewis. D'ailleurs, Billy aurait pu avoir un succès bien plus conséquent grâce à « Red Hot » si Sam Phillips n'avait pas consacré toute son énergie sur la promo du « Great Balls Of Fire » de Jerry Lee. Reste que Jerry Lee était un performer hors pair, embarquant tous les musiciens dès les premiers accords d'un morceau même pas répété, le cas échéant.

Dean - l'épouse de Jud, le frère de Sam Phillips -, qui s'occupait du secrétariat et de la comptabilité chez Sun, explique à Tav que Sam était DJ pour une radio de Florence, Alabama (home d'Arthur Alexander aussi), dont toute la famille Philipps est originaire, et où Jud et elle avaient leurs propres groupes, dès 1946. Dean raconte la façon dont le studio – puis label Sun s'est mis en place, la rencontre avec les Jordanaïes, qui allaient devenir le backing band d'Elvis ...

Sam s'occupait du studio – dont on disait que tout l'équipement était fréquenté par des fantômes, nul ne pouvant prédire ce qui serait couché sur la bande définitive ! - tandis que Jud avait davantage un rôle de tourneur / promoteur. C'est grâce à ses contacts par exemple que les musiciens noirs avaient un endroit où se restaurer et se reposer lors des tournées dans le sud du pays, qui n'acceptait pas leur présence dans les endroits réservés aux blancs, dont bon nombre membre du KKK. Dean raconte également l'histoire des Prisonniers, le groupe de résidents du pénitencier de Nashville, le leader Johnny Bragg y purgeant notamment une triple peine de prison à vie.

Le passage teinté d'humour sur le Colonel Parker – qui allait devenir le manager d'Elvis – vaut le détour. Dean explique que le Colonel était quelqu'un de très drôle, en plus d'avoir un sens inné des affaires. Une fois la barrière du parking fermée, il allait taxer les spectateurs venus voir un concert gratuit : free show, mais c'est 2 dollars pour le stationnement !

Tav raconte le concert au cours duquel Sir Mack Rice, venu tout droit de Detroit dans un rade de Memphis, interprète entre autres « Tina The Go-Go Queen ». Cette chanson n'est jamais sortie, elle est restée à l'état d'acétate, Mack Rice recycla juste vaguement la mélodie pour un maxi disco par les Fiestas sous le nom de « Tina The Disc Queen ». Tav l'a en revanche enregistrée en 1985, mini LP « Sugar Ditch Revisited » chez New Rose et cette chanson est depuis devenue un des highlights de ses concerts.

On savait Tav féru de photographie. Au début des 70's il a travaillé en tant qu'assistant pour le plus célèbre photographe de Memphis : Bill Eggleston. Bill avait l'habitude de shooter trois ou quatre pellicules chaque jour au moment de ce qu'il appelait la « egglestonian light », au crépuscule, quand le soleil se couchait sur Memphis.

Lors d'un passage hilarant, Furry Lewis explique que, tellement confiné au fond de la limousine des Rolling Stones, sa jambe artificielle a bien failli se décrocher. Je me rappelle d'Lx Chilton expliquant sur scène que les Stones avait fait leur carrière sur le riff de « I'll Turn Your Money Green », un morceau de Furry Lewis datant de 1928 (pas loin du riff de « Honky Tonk Women », c'est sûr). Les Stones, à qui on ne peut pas reprocher de ne pas savoir renvoyer l'ascenseur à ceux dont ils se sont inspirés, avaient engagé Furry Lewis pour l'ouverture de leur show à Memphis en 1976. Tav nous fait également faire connaissance avec Lee Baker, un guitariste étonnant, qui a accompagné Furry Lewis durant quinze ans.

Avant d'être emporté par une mort violente, Lee Baker allait faire partie de Mud Boy & The Neutrons, le groupe formé par Jim Dickinson, légende de Memphis, qui a notamment produit le troisième album de Big Star et le premier solo d'Lx Chilton. Parmi les membres de Mud Boy & the Neutrons figurait aussi un certain Sid Selvidge, un artiste blues / folk, qui allait intriguer Tav avec ses propos sur « Panther Burn », le nom d'une plantation de Greenville, Mississippi, située sur Highway 61 et qui allait devenir le nom du groupe qu'allait former Eugene Baffle.

J'écris Eugène Baffle car, pour décrire les débuts des Panther Burns, Eugene parle de Tav Falco comme s'il s'agissait de quelqu'un d'autre, un alter égo ayant les mêmes goûts : Norton pour les motos, T-Bird côté voiture, et Antonin Artaud, Murnau et Stockhausen pour les volets non mécaniques.

Première apparition solo de Tav, oups, Eugene, en première partie de Mud Boy & The Neutrons. Entracte, plutôt que vraie première partie, durant lequel Eugene avait installé un écran télé sur scène avant de jouer une version dépouillée du « Bourgeois Blues » de Leadbelly sur une guitare rudimentaire achetée cinq dollars à un voisin.

Il allait peu de temps après faire la connaissance d'Lx Chilton, via une copine commune, la bassiste du all woman band The Hitz. Lx allait passer la soirée à jouer « 96 Tears » de ? Mark & The Mysterians sur la guitare de Tav (une autre, toujours à cinq dollars). Tav fut conquis par LX et « ses longs doigts à la Chuck Berry ». Lx allait faire découvrir tout un pan du Rock'n'roll que Tav connaissait mal, ce dernier faisant découvrir à Lx un certain blues qu'il ne connaissait pas.

C'est Lx qui conduisit Tav à former un groupe, lui proposant de tenir la guitare un petit moment. Il ne manquait plus qu'un batteur, un nom et une identité musicale. Le nom, Tav le trouva tout de suite : The Unapproachable Panther Burns. Lors de la première session, les deux acolytes se firent les dents – Tav décrivant sa voix comme du « Marlene Dietrich sous torture » - sur le « Red Headed Woman » de Sonny Burgess. Le morceau ouvrit aussi le premier show donné par le groupe - composé de Tav et Lx seulement, le batteur ayant oublié de venir – et fut enchaîné par le tango « Drop Your Mask », qui laissa dubitatif le public du Court Square, le bar où avait lieu cette première prestation.

Pour le second show, Tav dessina l’emblème qui reste à ce jour celui des Panther Burns : une panthère noire coiffée de flammes rouges. Comme ils n’avaient répété que huit morceaux qu’ils ne pouvaient décemment pas jouer plus de deux fois chacun, Tav appela en renfort Mud Boy & The Neutrons. Pour ce premier vrai concert, le 11 février 1979, les Panther Burns étaient composés de Tav, Lx, Erik Hill, un copain gay non musicien, au synthé, la copine des Klitz, Amy Gassner, à la basse et Jimmy Crosthwait, prêté par Jim Dickinson, aux percussions. Ce show, un mix de blues, rockabilly et tango, fut qualifié de « sublime cacophonie », le mot d’ordre étant « you compose ‘em, we decompose ‘em (vous avez composé ces chansons, nous les décomposons) ». Il fut suivi par de nombreux autres, sans la moindre pub, le bouche à oreille attirant parfois du beau monde, comme Charlie Feathers et son fils Bubba.

Le groupe, désormais composé par Tav, Lx et Ross Johnson, allait rapidement s’entourer des Burnettes, un groupe de filles (mais pas seulement) assurant les chœurs et agrémentant le show par leur danse sexy –Tav estime d’ailleurs que les Panther Burns sont avant tout un groupe de danse. Après avoir vu « She Devils On Wheels » d’Herschell Gordon Lewis, Tav allait avoir l’idée de faire des Burnettes un groupe à part entière ; elles deviendront les Hellcats : « we are the Hellcats, nobody likes – maneaters on motorbikes ... » (ce morceau, « Get Off The Road » sera repris par les Cramps en 1986, le seul morceau chanté par Ivy).



Les Panther Burns actuels : Grégoire Garrigues, Tav Falco,

Giovanna Pizzorno, Laurent Lanouzière; avec au premier plan Tav et sa muse Via Kali. Auto-Photo:
Tav Falco

Le fan numéro un des Panther Burns était Cordell Jackson à qui ils rappelaient un groupe qu’elle avait produit (CJ est considérée comme la première femme producteur) sur son label Moon Records en 1956 : Allen Page & The Big Four, dont les Panther Burns allaient reprendre « She’s The One That’s Got It » et « Dateless Night », deux morceaux fabuleux qui figurent encore à leur répertoire actuel. Tav contribuera à faire (re)découvrir Cordell Jackson en organisant notamment un concert mémorable à New York, avec elle et les Hellcats.

Lors d’un passage télé mémorable transformé en happening (un écran géant installé par passait des scènes avec des filles nues) au cours duquel les Panther Burns interprètent « The Train Kept A Rollin’ » (du Johnny Burnette Trio), le présentateur leur demande s’ils espèrent gagner de l’argent avec ça ! « We’re not in it for the money » rétorquera Tav.

Tav assistera à l'enregistrement du premier album des Cramps (produit par Lx) en tant que « spermophile » (gopher) dit-il. Les Cramps demanderont aux Panther Burns d'ouvrir pour eux à New York, Irving Plaza, show des PB jugé désastreux par Tav. Mais les autres shows New Yorkais seront meilleurs et les PB seront repérés par le boss de Rough Trade, label sur lequel sortira leur premier album. Les PB ouvriront à nouveau pour les Cramps, revenus à Memphis pour le mixage de leur premier album « Songs The Lord Taught Us ». Tav cassa sa guitare en mille morceaux ce soir - là. Il se rappelle de Lux Interior bondissant de l'orchestre sur la scène, tel un Dracula, pour un show fabuleux, surréaliste. Les Cramps embarquèrent les Panther Burns à la Nouvelle Orléans et en Californie, où lors d'un show d'Halloween, Vampira fit une apparition en sortant de son cercueil. On peut dire que les Panther Burns, à l'instar des Cramps, allaient utiliser la méthode de recontextualisation de vieilles paroles et mélodies pour en faire des chansons nouvelles.

Cette connexion avec les Cramps suscita l'intérêt de Patrick Mathé qui allait organiser une tournée dans toute l'Europe et sortir les disques suivants (et même une vidéo) des Panther Burns sur son label, New Rose. Pour clore le chapitre Cramps, on peut signaler que ces derniers feront appel à Jim Sclavunos (en 1991-92), qui avait officié auparavant (1983) comme batteur des Panther Burns.

De son côté, Jim Dickinson estime que les deux albums les plus importants enregistrés à Memphis sont le deuxième Box Tops « Cry Like A Baby » (qu'Alex Chilton a toujours détesté, pour sa part) et le « Dusty In Memphis » de Dusty Springfield, sorti à peu près au même moment.

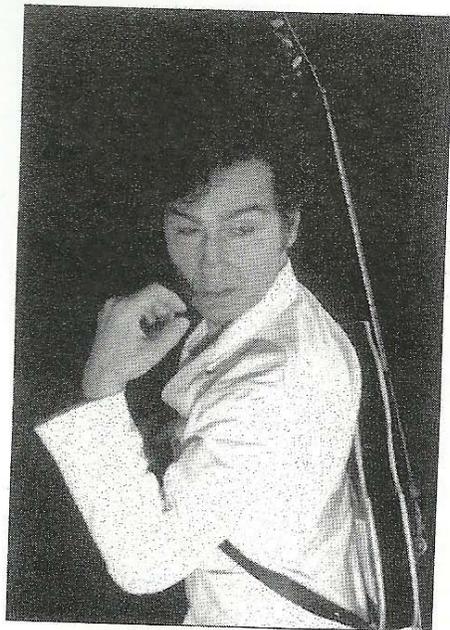
Sur Lx, Jim Dickinson précise que c'est à 14 ans (un peu avant son quinzième anniversaire) qu'il enregistra « The Letter », et que c'était la deuxième fois seulement que le jeune chanteur se postait devant un micro. On apprend aussi que la voix d'Lx a été complètement métamorphosée lors de son séjour à NY en 1977 et que jamais plus il ne retrouvera sa « voix d'avant ». Jim Dickinson détaille par le menu les séances d'enregistrement et l'histoire des chansons qui composent « Sister Lovers » et « Like Flies On Sherbert ». Lors de l'enregistrement de leur troisième album Big Star n'était déjà plus un groupe, « Sister Lovers » étant le nom du groupe qu'Alex et Jody Stevens comptait monter avec leurs petites amies respectives, qui étaient sœurs. Comme Jim Dickinson n'avait pas permis à Lx de participer au mixage de « Sister Lovers » (« il aurait tout bousillé ... »), Alex a fait de même pour le mix de son album solo « Like Flies On Sherbert », ce qui explique, selon Jim Dickinson, le côté inachevé de l'album (« on ne peut pas prendre tel quel ce qui sort des Sun studios, il faut retravailler le tout au mixage ... ». Quelques détails croustillants sont donnés sur l'origine de certains morceaux. « Kangaroo » parle par exemple d'une fille qu'Lx a dragué à mort, Jim Dickinson jure qu'il a même vu Lx en soirée se masturber littéralement sur les fesses de la jeune fille (« Oh, I want you, Like a kanga roo»). Jim Dickinson confirme aussi la présence du photographe Bill Eggleston au piano sur la reprise du « Nature Boy » de Nat King Cole.

Tav, dont le bouquin se termine par la nécrologie d'Lx Chilton, explique que celui-ci a décidé de quitter définitivement Memphis juste après la mort très rapprochée de ses deux parents pour aller s'installer à la Nouvelle Orléans.

On dit que les gens de Memphis ont la musique dans le sang. Le public présent dans les clubs danse, met de l'ambiance, contrairement à ce qui se passe à Nashville, par exemple. Les artistes qui ont quitté Memphis pour se rendre à Nashville reconnaissent tous que ça équivaut de passer du fun au business. Cet exode de Memphis vers Nashville trouve son origine au moment de la fin du label Stax à cause d'un mauvais plan de la part d'Atlantic records.

Tav a aussi son idée sur ce qui caractérise la musique de Memphis : elle est moins contenue – tout peut arriver -, moins commune qu'ailleurs, sans oublier le côté « lazy », à la cool ... Patrick Baine

TAV FALCO



Artiste à multiples facettes, Tav Falco a sorti, l'été dernier, un bouquin intitulé *Mondo Memphis*. La première édition était un magnifique tirage à... 75 exemplaires. *Mondo Memphis* a depuis été réédité dans une version moins luxueuse et donc à un prix plus abordable, sous le nom de *Ghosts Behind The Sun : Splendor, Enigma & Death*. Il n'existe pas d'édition française pour l'instant.

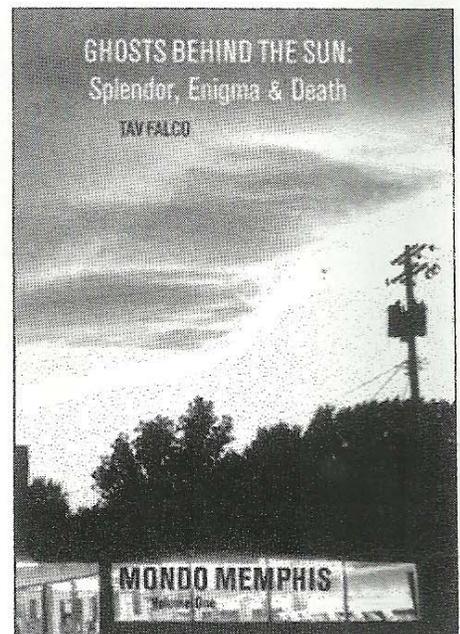
Dans un style qui lui est propre, Tav raconte l'origine de Bluff City, construite sur la fissure du New Madrid. La configuration de Memphis est en effet due à un violent tremblement de terre. Memphis est passée de 1239 habitants en 1830 à environ 1000 fois plus aujourd'hui, passant ainsi au rang de deuxième ville du Tennessee, après Nashville. Après avoir évoqué l'aspect historique, se mettant parfois en scène lui-même (Tav s'imagina en 1864, jeune engagé à 16 ans chez les confédérés), il raconte l'histoire de personnages hauts en couleur comme Piano Red Williams, tué à coups de crosse de revolver ("il ne méritait pas qu'on gaspille une balle !") par ses voisins, ou le politicien Boss Crump, le bandit Machine Gun Kelly, et évoque ses voisins de l'époque (la dame qui élevait des chats) au destin parfois tragique... Tav raconte son arrivée à Memphis au milieu des années 70 sur une vieille *Norton* qui lui faisait prendre des bains d'huile de moteur, alors qu'un type venait juste de sauter dans le Mississippi.

Il enchaîne avec ses ballades sur Beale Street, la rue commerçante construite dès 1840 avec ses boutiques comme *Lansky's* où Elvis s'est habillé durant toute sa carrière, dans les clubs (*Hernando's Hideaway*) et les studios de la ville (*Sun* bien sûr, mais pas seulement). Il raconte aussi ses courses poursuites, son pote Don "Red" West et lui sur la *Norton*, police aux trousseaux, et sa rencontre avec Rendall Lyon qui reste toujours aujourd'hui une source d'inspiration permanente. Rendall lui fit découvrir un tas d'univers (le tango, notamment) et lui trouva son "nom de guerre", comme il dit : "Eugene Baffle". Un chapitre intitulé "Sur la route du paradis à l'enfer, on passe

forcément par Memphis" détaille un tas d'affaires policières, la plupart sanglantes, certaines impliquant les flics eux-mêmes. La plus grosse partie du bouquin est consacrée à ce qui nous intéresse le plus, la musique bien sûr. Bizarrement, Tav ne cite jamais de dates, son côté intemporel sûrement... En dehors d'événements précis que les lecteurs pourront dater en fonction de leur culture perso ou de leurs aspirations, seul les photos qui illustrent le bouquin permettent de se faire une idée de la chronologie. Traquant l'inspiration directement à la source, Tav va aussi s'intéresser à la vie de tous ces bluesmen tel Rural "RL" Burnside, ou blueswomen comme Jessie Mae Hemphill, une des pionnières de la guitare électrique dont on recommande vivement au passage une réédition vinyle récente sous forme de compilation *early works* chez *Moi J'Connais Rds*.

Tav devint ami avec de nombreux musiciens dont Charlie Feathers qui l'inspira largement. La version de "Tram" (au lieu de "Tramp"), prononcée "à la Charlie"... Un large passage du bouquin est consacré à Feathers, interviewé directement par Tav ou via les souvenirs émouvants de son fils Bubba (guitariste renommé localement, qui accompagnait son père sur le sublime album *Charlie Feathers* paru chez *Elektra* en 90 et produit par Ben Vaughn) ou de Shirley Richardson, une des "girls", comme Charlie appelait les filles de son fan club qui le suivaient partout. Shirley, qui en était la présidente, inspira Charlie pour sa chanson "Too Much Alike" (1957), tellement on disait de ces deux-là qu'ils se ressemblaient. Sur Charlie Feathers, on apprend notamment que ses parents ont vraisemblablement pensé au fils de Charles Lindbergh, kidnappé et assassiné peu de temps avant sa naissance (1932) et qui s'appelait Charles Augustus Lindbergh - tout comme Charlie - et que, contrairement aux idées reçues, celui-ci ne buvait ni ne fumait. On comprend également les raisons du peu de succès rencontré par Charlie mesuré à l'aune de son talent : manque de chance et arnaque. Il fut escroqué par le co-auteur de leur million seller "I Forgot To Remember To Forget", qui n'a rien rapporté à Charlie. Et puis c'est Charlie l'inventeur du *hiccup*, avec notamment son morceau "Tongue Tied Jill", qui sera une des composantes du succès d'Elvis et qui incita ce dernier à aller faire un tour au studio *Sun* que Charlie fréquentait depuis son ouverture. Sam Phillips se concentra alors uniquement sur le succès d'Elvis et celui de Carl Perkins. Puisqu'on cite ces deux personnages, on peut évoquer le geste classe d'Elvis, qui a repris "Blue Suede Shoes" pour assurer des revenus à Carl, alors que celui-ci semblait décidé à tout arrêter après avoir eu un accident qui avait coûté la vie à son frère. Toujours en lien avec *Sun*, Tav côtoie aussi Billy Lee Riley et Roland Janes, présents sur la plupart des enregistrements *Sun* jusqu'en 1959. Ils servaient aussi de *backing band* à tous les chanteurs démunis de groupe lors d'une tournée. Le combo, composé notamment du batteur J.M. Van Eaton, s'était baptisé The Little Green Men et a accompagné Jerry Lee Lewis entre autres. D'ailleurs, Billy aurait pu avoir un succès bien plus conséquent grâce à "Red Hot" si Sam Phillips n'avait pas consacré toute son énergie à la promo du "Great Balls Of Fire" de Jerry Lee. Reste que Lewis était un performer hors pair, embarquant tous les musiciens dès les premiers accords d'un morceau même pas répété.

Dean, l'épouse de Jud, le frère de Sam Phillips qui s'occupait du secrétariat et de la comptabilité *Sun*, explique à Tav que Sam était DJ pour une radio de Florence en Alabama (home d'Arthur Alexander aussi), dont toute la famille Phillips est originaire, et où Jud et elle avaient leurs propres groupes dès 1946. Dean raconte la façon dont le studio, puis le label *Sun* se sont mis en place, la rencontre avec les Jordanaïres qui allaient devenir le backing band d'Elvis, etc... Sam s'occupait du studio, dont on disait qu'il était hanté, matériel compris, nul ne pouvant prédire ce qui serait couché sur la bande définitive, tandis que Jud avait davantage un rôle de tourneur/promoteur. C'est grâce à ses contacts par exemple que les musiciens noirs avaient un endroit où se restaurer et se reposer lors des tournées dans le sud du pays où on n'acceptait pas leur présence dans les endroits réservés aux blancs. Dean raconte également l'histoire des Prisonaires, le groupe de récidivistes du pénitencier de Nashville, le leader Johnny Bragg y purgeant une triple peine de prison à vie !



Le passage teinté d'humour sur le Colonel Parker, qui allait devenir le manager d'Elvis, vaut le détour. Dean explique que le Colonel était quelqu'un de très drôle en plus d'avoir un sens inné des affaires. Une fois la barrière du parking fermée, il allait taxer les spectateurs venus voir un concert gratuit : *free show* peut-être, mais c'est 2 dollars pour le stationnement ! Tav raconte le concert au cours duquel Sir Mack Rice, venu tout droit de Detroit dans un rade de Memphis, interprète notamment "Tina The Go-Go Queen". Cette chanson n'est jamais sortie, restant à l'état d'acétate, Mack Rice recycla juste vaguement la mélodie pour un maxi disco par les Fiestas sous le titre "Tina The Disc Queen". Tav l'a en revanche enregistrée en 1985 sur le mini LP *Sugar Ditch Revisited* chez *New Rose* et cette chanson est depuis devenue un des grands moments de ses concerts. On savait Tav fêru de photographie. Au début des 70's, il était assistant du plus célèbre photographe de Memphis : Bill Eggleston. Bill avait l'habitude

de shooter trois ou quatre pellicules chaque jour au moment de ce qu'il appelait la "egglesonian light", au crépuscule, quand le soleil se couchait sur Memphis.

Lors d'un passage hilarant, Furry Lewis explique que, trop confiné au fond de la limousine des Rolling Stones, sa jambe artificielle a bien failli se décrocher. Je me souviens d'Alex Chilton expliquant un jour sur scène que les Stones avait fait leur carrière sur le riff de "I'll Turn Your Money Green", un morceau de Furry Lewis datant de 1928 (pas loin du riff de "Honky Tonk Women", c'est sûr). Les Stones, à qui on ne peut pas reprocher de ne pas savoir renvoyer l'ascenseur, ont plus tard engagé Furry Lewis pour l'ouverture de leur show à Memphis en 1976. Tav nous fait également rencontrer Lee Baker, un guitariste étonnant, qui a accompagné Furry Lewis durant quinze ans. Avant de disparaître de mort violente, Lee Baker allait faire partie de Mud Boy & The Neutrons, le groupe formé par Jim Dickinson, légende de Memphis, qui a notamment produit le troisième album de Big Star et le premier solo d'Alex Chilton. Parmi les membres de Mud Boy & The Neutrons figurait aussi un certain Sid Selvidge, un artiste blues folk qui allait intriguer Tav avec ses propos sur Panther Burn, le nom d'une plantation de Greenville, Mississippi, située sur la Highway 61 et qui deviendra le nom du groupe formé par Eugene Baffle.

J'écris "Eugène Baffle" car, pour décrire les débuts des Panther Burns, Eugene parle de Tav Falco comme s'il s'agissait de quelqu'un d'autre, un alter ego ayant les mêmes goûts : Norton pour les motos, T-Bird côté bagnoles, et Antonin Artaud, Murnau et Stockhausen pour les volets non mécaniques. Première apparition solo de Tav, oops, d'Eugene donc, en première partie de Mud Boy & The Neutrons. Un entraîneur plutôt qu'une vraie première partie. Eugene Tav avait installé un écran télé sur scène avant de jouer une version dépeuplée du "Bourgeois Blues" de Leadbelly sur une guitare rudimentaire achetée cinq dollars à un voisin. Il allait peu de temps après faire la connaissance d'Alex Chilton, une copine commune, la bassiste du groupe de filles The Hitz. Lx passera la soirée à jouer le "6 Tears" de ? Mark & The Mysterians sur la guitare de Tav (une autre, toujours à cinq dollars). Tav est conquis par Lx et "ses longs doigts à la Chuck Berry". Lx fait découvrir à Falco tout un pan du Rock'n'roll qu'il connaît mal, ce dernier ouvrant Lx à un certain blues...

C'est Chilton qui conduit Tav à former un groupe et lui propose de tenir la guitare un petit moment. Il ne manque plus qu'un batteur, un nom et une identité musicale. Le nom, Tav le trouve tout de suite : The Unapproachable Panther Burns. Lors de la première session, les deux acolytes se font les dents sur le "Red Headed Woman" de Sonny Burgess. Tav trouve que sa voix sonne comme "Marlene Dietrich sous la torture". Le morceau ouvre le premier show du groupe (composé uniquement de Tav et Alex, le batteur ayant oublié de venir) et est enchaîné avec le tango "Drop Your Mask" qui laisse dubitatif le public du Court Square, le bar où a lieu cette première prestation. Pour le second show, Tav dessine l'émblème qui reste à ce jour celui des Panther Burns : une panthère noire coiffée de flammes rouges. Comme ils n'ont répété que huit morceaux qu'ils ne peuvent décemment pas jouer plus de deux fois chacun, Tav appelle Mud Boy et ses Neutrons en renfort. Pour ce premier vrai

concert, le 11 février 1979, les Panther Burns se composent de Tav, Lx, Erik Hill un pote gay non musicien au synthé, la copine des Klitz, Amy Gassner à la basse et Jimmy Crosthwait, prêté par Jim Dickinson, aux percussions. Ce show, un mix de blues, rockabilly et tango, fut qualifié de "sublime cacophonie", le mot d'ordre étant "you compose 'em, we decompose 'em" (vous avez composé ces chansons, nous les décomposons). Le concert est suivi de nombreux autres, sans la moindre promo, le bouche à oreille attirant parfois du beau monde, comme Charlie Feathers et son fils Bubba.

Le groupe, désormais composé de Tav, Lx et Ross Johnson, va rapidement s'entourer des Burnettes, un groupe formé majoritairement de filles qui assurent les chœurs et agréablement le show de leurs danses sexy. Tav estime d'ailleurs que les Panther Burns sont avant tout un groupe de danse. Après avoir vu *She Devils On Wheels* d'Hersehel Gordon Lewis, Tav a l'idée de faire des Burnettes un groupe à part entière. Elles deviendront les Hellcats : "We are the Hellcats, nobody likes, maneaters on motorbikes"... Ce morceau, "Get Off The Road" sera repris par les Cramps en 1986, c'est le seul chanté par Ivy. La fan numéro

ne tel un Dracula assoiffé pour un show fabuleux et totalement surréaliste. Les Cramps embarquent les Panther Burns à la Nouvelle Orléans et en Californie, où lors d'un show d'Halloween, la fameuse Vampira fait une apparition et sort de son cercueil sur scène. Les Panther Burns, à l'instar des Cramps, utilisent la méthode de recontextualisation d'antiques paroles et mélodies pour en faire des chansons nouvelles.

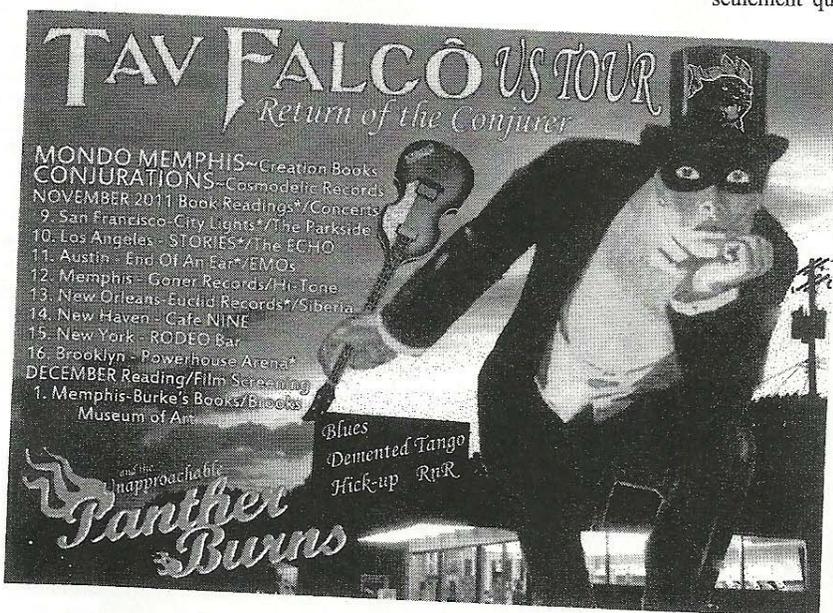
Cette connexion avec les Cramps suscite l'intérêt de Patrick "New Rose" Mathé qui organise une tournée à travers l'Europe et sort les disques suivants (plus une vidéo) des Panther Burns sur son label. Pour clore le chapitre Cramps, on peut noter qu'ils feront appel à Jim Scavunos (en 1991-92), qui avait officié auparavant (1983) comme batteur des Panther Burns. De son côté, Jim Dickinson estime que les deux albums les plus importants enregistrés à Memphis sont le deuxième Box Tops, *Cry Like A Baby* (que Chilton a pourtant toujours détesté), et le *Dusty In Memphis* de Dusty Springfield, sorti à peu près au même moment. A propos d'Alex, Jim Dickinson précise que c'est à 14 ans (un peu avant son quinzième anniversaire) qu'il enregistra "The Letter", et que c'était la deuxième fois seulement que le jeune chanteur se postait

devant un micro. On apprend aussi que la voix d'Lx a été complètement métamorphosée lors de son séjour à NY en 1977 et que jamais plus il ne retrouvera sa "voix d'avant". Jim Dickinson détaille par le menu les séances d'enregistrement et l'histoire des chansons qui composent *Sister Lovers* et *Like Flies On Sherbert*. Lors de l'enregistrement de leur troisième album, Big Star n'est déjà plus un groupe, Sister Lovers est le nom du band qu'Alex et Jody Stevens comptaient monter avec leurs petites amies respectives, deux frangines. Comme Jim Dickinson n'a pas permis à Lx de participer au mixage de *Sister Lovers* ("il aurait tout bousillé"), Alex en fait de même pour le mix de son album solo *Like Flies On Sherbert*, ce qui explique, selon Jim Dickinson,

le côté inachevé de l'affaire : "on ne peut pas garder tel quel ce qui sort des Sun Studios, il faut retravailler tout au mixage". Quelques détails croustillants sont donnés sur l'origine de certains morceaux. "Kangaroo" parle par exemple d'une fille qu'Lx a draguée à mort, Jim Dickinson jure qu'il a même vu Lx en soirée se masturber littéralement sur les fesses de la fille ("Oh, I want you, Like a kangaroo"). Jim Dickinson confirme aussi la présence du photographe Bill Eggleston au piano sur la reprise du "Nature Boy" de Nat King Cole. Tav, dont le bouquin se termine par la nécrologie de Chilton, explique que celui-ci a décidé de quitter définitivement Memphis juste après la mort très rapprochée de ses parents pour aller s'installer à la Nouvelle Orléans.

On dit que les gens de Memphis ont la musique dans le sang et que le public des clubs où on danse y met de l'ambiance, contrairement à ce qui se passe à Nashville par exemple. Les artistes qui ont quitté Memphis pour Nashville reconnaissent tous que c'est comme passer "du fun au business". Cet exode de Memphis vers Nashville trouve son origine au moment de la fin du label Stax, à cause d'une mauvaise manière de la part d'Atlantic Records. Tav a aussi son idée sur ce qui caractérise la musique de Memphis : elle est moins contenue, tout peut arriver, moins commune qu'ailleurs, sans oublier son côté "lazy", à la cool...

Patrick Bainé

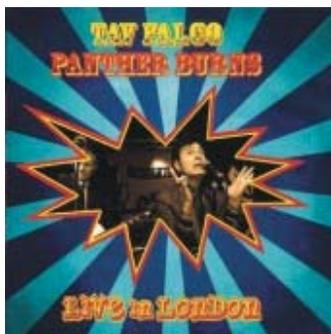


un des Panther Burns est Cordell Jackson à qui ils rappellent un groupe qu'elle a jadis produit (CJ est considérée comme la première femme producteur) sur son label Moon Records en 1956 : Allen Page & The Big Four, dont les Panther Burns reprendront "She's The One That's Got It" et "Dateless Night", deux morceaux fabuleux qui figurent encore à leur répertoire actuel. Tav contribuera à faire (re)découvrir Cordell Jackson en organisant notamment un concert mémorable à New York avec elle et les Hellcats.

Lors d'un passage télé mémorable transformé en happening (un écran géant diffuse des scènes avec des filles nues) au cours duquel les Panther Burns interprètent "The Train Kept A Rollin'" du Johnny Burnette Trio, le présentateur leur demande s'ils espèrent gagner de l'argent avec ça ! "We're not in it for the money" rétorquera Tav. Qui assistera ensuite à l'enregistrement du premier album des Cramps (produit par Lx) en tant qu'"homme à tout faire" (gopher) dit-il. Les Cramps demanderont aux Panther Burns d'ouvrir pour eux à New York, au Irving Plaza. Tav juge désastreuse la prestation des PB. Les autres shows new yorkais sont meilleurs et les PB attireront l'attention du boss de Rough Trade, label sur lequel sortira leur premier album. Les PB ouvriront à nouveau pour les Cramps, revenus à Memphis pour le mixage de leur premier album *Songs The Lord Taught Us*. Tav casse sa guitare en mille morceaux ce soir-là. Il se souvient encore de Lux Interior bondissant de l'orchestre sur la scè-

STAG-O-LEE Records

Tav Falco Panther Burns – Live In London



2 x 10" (vinyl only)

stag-o-029 Rel.:
Nov. 1, 2012

Tav Falco is an American legend. And it is time to acknowledge that. The All Music Guide states the following: „The master of a raw and shambolic fusion of rockabilly, blues, and fractured noise, Tav Falco was, along with The Cramps, one of the earliest purveyors of what would come to be known as wreckabilly, and he anticipated the fractured but hard-hitting blues wailing of the Gories and the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion by close to a decade.“

After releasing a handful of classic albums with his band Panther Burns on various labels – most notably Paris-based New Rose Records – Tav's recording career slowly fizzled out and the maestro stranded in Vienna of all places. About three years ago, the new founded Stag-O-Lee label (part of Glitterhouse Records) contacted Tav Falco about properly re-releasing his prized back-catalogue. The man was notorious of being hard to deal with, but Stag-O-Lee encountered a well behaved and educated Southern gentleman and a deal was quickly struck.

2010 saw the release of a new album with fresh original tunes titled „Conjurations: Seance For Deranged Lovers“ which met with great critical acclaim. In 2011 the reissue campaign slowly started with his amazing debut Behind The Magnolia Curtain (plus the Blow Your Tops EP as added bonus) receiving the deluxe treatment it deserved. The Sunday Times had the following to say: "Must have reissue! Today's rockabilly revivalists such as Imelda May and Kitty, Daisy & Lewis, revere their sources. In the late 1970's, however, degenerate New Yorkers and track-marked Australians pointed their quiffs at the future and bled post-punk noise over the music's bones. This collection of Tav Falco's early recordings finds the fabled Memphis polymath howling off-key over perfectly out-of-sync broken blues from the Panther Burns band, which features Big Star's Alex Chilton on uncharacteristically sloppy guitar and Jim Scavunos on drums, later poached by an indebted Nick Cave.“ (Sunday Times)

The second installment of the reissue series is in the works and will follow in early 2013 featuring an unreleased concert from that era as added bonus.

In the meantime Tav Falco Panther Burns started to tour again, playing selected dates around Europe – and recently even toured the fatherland - the United States. In September 2011 Tav Falco Panther Burns travelled to London to perform at the respected 100 Club – a holy grail of live music. The Behind The Magnolia Curtain reissue was promoted by playing the album in it's entirety (first set) as well as newer tunes in the 2nd set.

The document of said gig is now being released via Stag-O-Lee as a limited edition double-10" (vinyl only).

Französische Kammermusik

In Laufenburg und Riehen

Die Konzerte der Reihe «Connaissance» finden an zwei Orten statt: in der Kirche St. Johann in Laufenburg und in der Dorfkirche Riehen. Das aktuelle Programm des von Thomas Wicky-Stamm geleiteten Zyklus bringt Musik von Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Albert Roussel und Henri Dutilleul zur Aufführung. Es spielen unter anderem Ursula Holliger und Peter-Lukas Graf.

St. Johann, Laufenburg, Do, 26.1., 19.30 Uhr.
Riehen, Dorfkirche, So, 29.1., 17 Uhr.

Sprachpoeten im Wettstreit

Grenzgänger Slam in Basel

Es ist der letzte Sonntag des ersten Monats dieses Jahres und im Kulturpavillon heisst es bereits zum 20. Mal: Poetry Slam. Während James Gruntz als Special Guest ausser Konkurrenz steht, führt das Ausnahmetalent Laurin Buser für einmal mit fast normaler Konversation durch den Abend und die Auftritte der sechs Slam-Poetinnen und -Poeten. Unbedingt reservieren! nab

Kulturpavillon, Freiburgerstrasse 80,
Sonntag, 29.1., ab 19 Uhr.
www.kulturpavillon.ch



Bekannt. Der junge Laurin Buser ist bereits ein alter Hase. Foto: Janick Zebrowski

Tanzende Ambivalenzen

Anna Röthlisberger Co. im Roxy

«Freaks and Friends»: So heisst die neue Tanzreihe unter der choreografischen Leitung der Baslerin Anna Röthlisberger. Wie stellen die Geschlechter sich selbst dar und wie inszenieren sie sich in unserer heutigen Welt? Welche Rolle spielen sie und welche haben sie tatsächlich inne? Dies fragt sich die Choreografin nicht nur einmal, sondern gleich dreimal, und erntet auf jede Frage von Neuem eine faszinierende Antwort.

Die Produkte der Fragestellung und der Antwortsuche sind drei abendfüllende, interdisziplinäre Bühnenstücke, die zwischen 2012 und 2014 das Licht der Bühne erblicken werden. Mit «vents souterrains – subterranean winds» steht bereits das erste der drei Stücke premierenfertig in den Tanzschuhen. Uraufgeführt wird die Koproduktion beider Basel mit dem Theater Roxy natürlich in Letzterem. Im Duett mit der israelischen Tänzerin Ayala Frenkel und vor dem Klangteppich Marc Rossiers entwickelt die Baslerin im spielerischen Raumdesign von Brigitte Dubach ein feines Netz aus der ambivalenten Beziehung zwischen Ablehnung und Anlehnung. Die interkulturelle Produktion hebt Aggregatzustände des Menschen auf die Bühne und fängt gekonnt die Wirkung deren Resonanz ein. nab

Theater Roxy, Birsfelden, Premiere:
Do, 26.1., 20 Uhr. Danach: 27./28.1., 2.–4.2.,
jeweils 20 Uhr. www.theater-roxy.ch



Verschmelzung. Wann ist es Anleihen und wo beginnt das Ablehnen?

Der Blues der Postmoderne

Tav Falco mit Panther Burns in der Kaserne Basel

Von Stefan Strittmatter

Als Tav Falco Mitte der Siebzigerjahre zum ersten Mal mit einer Gitarre auf die Bühne trat, hatte er nebenbei noch eine Kettenäge dabei. Vom Instrument blieben nur Holzsplitter übrig, während sich der Musiker das Image des kurligen Kerls in Stein meisselte. Nebenher näherte sich Tav Falco der Musik über den filmischen Umweg an, indem er Dokus über Blues-Legenden aus Tennessee und Mississippi drehte.

Fünf Jahre später stellte er die Band Panther Burns zusammen, mit der er 1981 sein Debüt «Behind The Magnolia Curtain» einspielte und grösstenteils auf positive Resonanzen stiess. Nach seinem Umzug nach New York wurde Tav Falco oft voreilig der florierenden New-Wave-Szene zugeordnet – er, der doch stets dem archaischen Rock'n'Roll und Blues treu blieb.

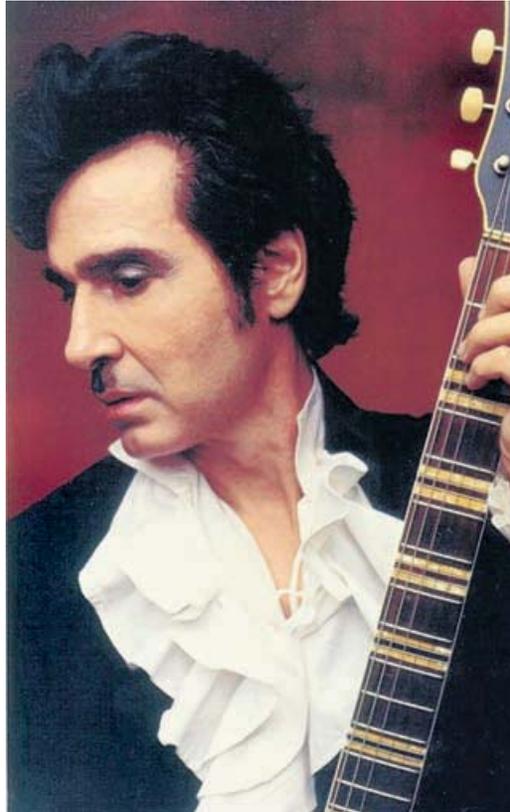
Ungreifbares Gesamtkunstwerk

Es dürfte wohl vor allem an seinem gestrengen Dandy-Look zwischen David Byrne von den Talking Heads, Bryan Ferry von Roxy Music und Ron Mael von den Sparks gelegen haben, dass man Tav Falco gerne diesem Trend der Achtziger zuordnete. Indem er aber Einflüsse aus den verschiedensten Stilen und Kunstrichtungen in sich aufsaugt, ist Tav Falco am ehesten als postmodernes Gesamtkunstwerk zu begreifen. Greifbar ist er dennoch nur schwer.

Dafür sorgt der seit 20 Jahren in Europa lebende Künstler, indem er sich stets neu erfindet, so etwa mit einer späten Ausbildung zum Tangotänzer. Auch über Tav Falcos Alter kann man nur spekulieren. Man darf sich in dieser Frage aber gut an den Titel seines (äusserst sehenswerten) expressionistischen 35-Millimeter-Kurzfilms von 1999 halten: «Born Too Late».

Kaserne, Basel, Klybeckstrasse 1b.

Freitag, 27.1., 22 Uhr.
www.kaserne-basel.ch



Im Dandy-Look. Sänger und Künstler Tav Falco bleibt bewusst alterslos.

Schillerndes, glitzerndes Geld

«The Great Gatsby» der American Drama Group Europe im Theater Basel



Von Nadine A. Brügger

Der Erste Weltkrieg ist zu Ende und Amerika scheint in Wohlstand und Sicherheit zu stagnieren. Familien geniessen die Rückkehr ihrer Männer aus dem Krieg, ehemals Arme schöpfen aus der vor Übermut florierenden Wirtschaft und Schmuggler schielen lächelnd Richtung amerikanischer Prohibition, während sie zu einem Glas Wein ihr Geld vermehren.

Es ist der Sommer 1922, in dem das Karussell aus Liebe, Lüge, Macht und Geld für eine Handvoll New Yorker sich plötzlich nicht mehr schneller dreht, sondern abrupt stehen bleibt. Jay Gatsby, ein ehemaliger Offizier im Ersten Weltkrieg, hat den amerikanischen Traum Realität werden lassen: Nachdem er als Kriegsheld aus Europa zurückgekehrt

war, verdiente er sich bald und – wie sich herausstellen sollte – nicht ganz legal ein grosses Vermögen. Als geheimnisvoller Millionär lädt er zu ausschweifenden Festen, bei denen er jedoch wie ein Schatten hinter seinen Gästen steht, von denen er die meisten selbst nicht einmal kennt. Es ist die Liebe zu einer unerreichten Frau, die seinen Lebensweg geformt hat und schliesslich auch sein Schicksal besiegeln soll.

Ein englischer Genuss

Beobachtet und auf weiten Strecken auch selbst miterlebt wird das matt glänzende Märchen der 20er-Jahre von Nick Carraway. Er beobachtet die Welt aus schnellem Geld, Dekadenz und dem schillernden Schleier der Täuschung und verfällt bald seiner fesselnden Bewunderung für den geheimnisvollen Reichen.

Den Klassiker aus der Feder F. Scott Fitzgeralds, der Amerika stolz machte und gewisse Gesellschaftsschichten hinter erhobenen Gläsern erröten liess, hat der Regisseur und Begründer der Tour De Force Theatre Company, Peter Joucla, mit einer sehr aktuellen Note für die zeitgenössische Bühne adaptiert, ohne dabei ein Tröpfchen des perlenden Charmes und der glitzernden Faszination dieser Zeit zu verschütten.

Klingend und swingend entführt die typische Musik dieser überschäumenden Zwischenkriegszeit in die Vergangenheit. Gespielt wird der amerikanische Klassiker von fünf Landsleuten Fitzgeralds, von Schauspielern der American Drama Group Europe, in englischer Sprache.

Theater Basel, Schauspielhaus, Gastspiel:
Di, 31.1., 20 Uhr. www.theaterbasel.ch



Sopran-Diva. Montserrat Caballé gastiert im Stadtcasino. Foto Keystone

Das Geheimnis einer Sängerin

Montserrat Caballé in Basel

Es ist das Geheimnis mancher Sängerrinnen und Sänger, dass sie auch noch im fortgeschrittenen Alter gut bei Stimme sind. Neben den Tenören Plácido Domingo und José Carreras gehört die 1933 geborene Sopranistin Montserrat Caballé zu den Stimmen mit einer ganz langen Haltbarkeit. Die Katalanin, die ihre Laufbahn 1956 am Basler Stadttheater begann und später auch durch das Crossover-Duett mit dem Rockstar Freddie Mercury berühmt wurde, lässt sich heute vom Pianisten Manuel Burgueras begleiten. Nach 2003 und 2006 gibt die Sopranistin am Sonntag erneut im Basler Stadtcasino einen Liederabend.

Musiksaal, Stadtcasino Basel.
So, 29.1., 18 Uhr.

Klaviertrios der Romantik

Matinee mit dem Brahms-Trio

Lange bevor die Triobesetzung im Jazz Schule machte (dort meist mit Klavier, Bass und Schlagzeug), war das Klaviertrio eine der beliebtesten Gattungen der klassischen Kammermusik. Haydn und Mozart schrieben für Violine, Violoncello und Klavier und nach ihnen viele andere. In der Sonntagsmatinee spielt das Brahms-Trio Moskau Trios von Schubert (Es-Dur) und Brahms (c-Moll).

Musiksaal, Stadtcasino Basel, So, 29.1.,
11 Uhr. www.konzerte-basel.ch

Zivilisation ausser Atem

Thornton Wilder im Theater

«Wir sind noch einmal davongekommen» ist die nach Luft schnappende Geschichte unserer Zivilisation. Das Kopf-hoch-Stück von Thornton Wilder setzt kurz vor dem Einbrechen der letzten Eiszeit ein. Knapp entkommt Familie Antrobus dem drohenden Unheil und erreicht die Gegenwart. nab

Theater Basel, Premiere: Fr., 27.1., 20 Uhr.
Danach: 30.1., 1./2./6./8./12. (16 Uhr)/14./15./
17.2., jeweils 20 Uhr. Weitere Vorstellungen
im März. www.theater-basel.ch

Fontanes zartes Zeitbild

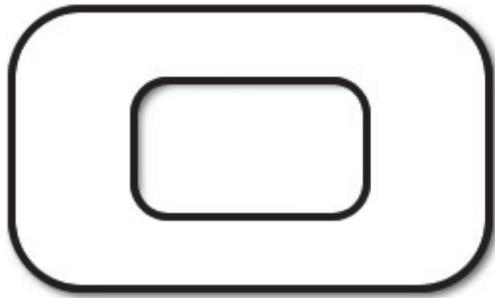
«Stine» als szenische Lesung



Lesespiel. Chantal Le Moign liest und spielt als Wintergast. Foto Judith Schlosser

Auch die Warnung durch ihre ältere und realitätsnähere Schwester, die Witwe Pittelkow, hält die junge Näherin Stine nicht davon ab, sich Hals über Kopf in einen scheinbar todglücklichen Grafen zu verlieben. Theodor Fontanes (1819–1898) gesellschaftskritisches und pointiertes Zeitbild wird von den Schauspielern Marie Jung, Chantal Le Moign und Stefan Saborowski szenisch gelesen. nab

Palazzo, Liestal, 18.30 Uhr.
Burghof, Lörrach, So, 29.1., 11 Uhr.
www.baseland.ch



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AMERICAN IDOL IN LONDON: TAV FALCO'S PANTHER BURNS THE 100 CLUB ALIVE



artist, musician, filmmaker, Tav Falco is an inspiration to us all. A real
American Idol.

Tav Falco's Panther Burns

Live at the 100 Club, London

Tav Falco and Panther Burns played a couple of rare UK shows last week and fortunately for us, we roused ourselves, got out of the house and got along to the show at the 100 Club. What a treat it was.

To celebrate the reissue by Stag-o-Lee of their first two, now legendary recordings, (damn! they were legendary then, legendary even before they were originally released!) Behind The Magnolia Curtain LP and the Blow Your Top EP, Tav Falco brought the whole Unapproachable Panther Burns to the stage of London's renowned 100 Club.

Look I don't know anything about Stag-o-Lee records but putting out those early Panther Burns records is an idea so great I wish I'd had it myself. I mean, Behind the Magnolia Curtain still sits on the turntable here so often, who'd have known it was even out of print?

Anyway, to the 100 Club and a Panther Burns set both blistering and languid, such is their nature, punctuated by a suit change - into the sharkskin item I'd say, (although my eyes are old and I can't really tell mohair from microfiber even), pretty well brought the house down. The songs were drawn mainly from those two aforementioned records, with a smattering of newer material sprinkled about too. It was great. As an artist, musician, filmmaker, Tav Falco is an inspiration to us all. An American Idol.

Afterwards we headed way East for more fun and a DJ set. Don't know what happened there. Really, just don't know what happened.

Meanwhile aside from buying the records - check out [Tav Falco's 10 Favorite Tunes](#) published on the website Louder Than War. Or go to the Stag-o-Lee website and listen to Tav's Administrator Blues on their player. Wow!



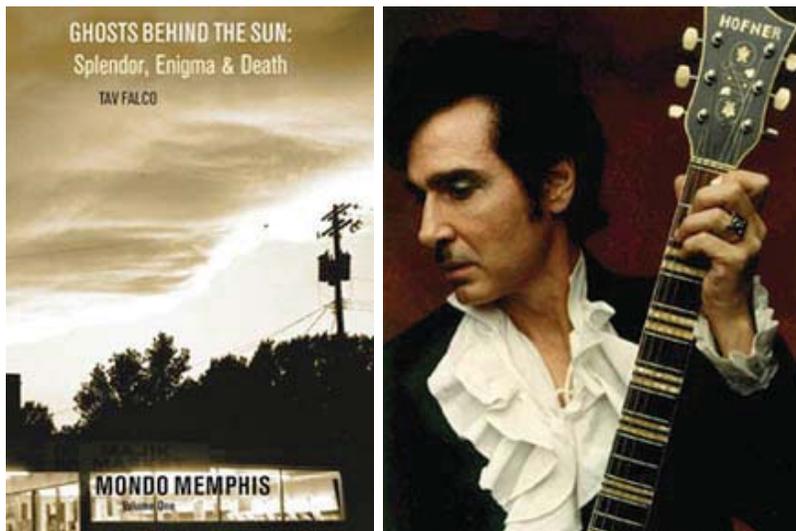
Hamilton High was born on Doheny Ave in the gutter, is a poet, writer and observer of popular culture. Likes fashion and cares less for style. He's on the move, he's an alter ego and we hardly ever hear from him. ([biography/all stories](#))

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

commercialappeal.com

'Ghosts Behind the Sun: Splendor, Enigma & Death' by Tav Falco - A Review

By John Beifuss on November 28, 2011 10:19 AM

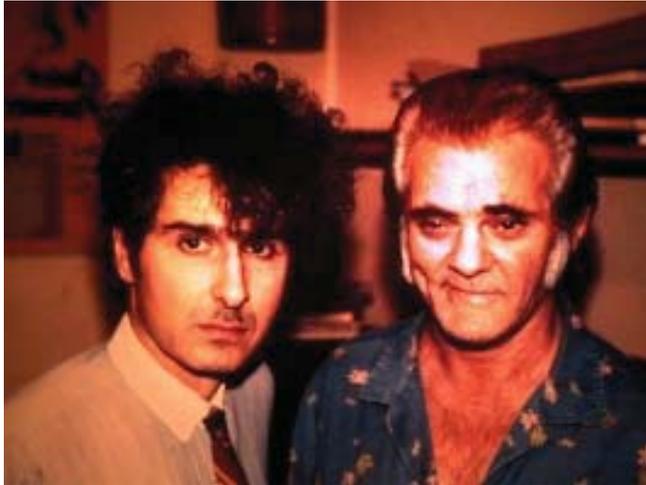


In his new book, Tav Falco describes his influential art-trash-punk band, Panther Burns, as recreating the sound of a feline predator in flames -- "an unholy amalgam of animal lust and divine transubstantiation."

That phrase also might be applied to this cultural history of Falco's "adopted home town and spiritual sanctuary," Memphis. The book is an illustrated 300-page literary

"conjunction" that drags -- *guides* would be too comforting a word -- readers along an "unholy" road that stretches from the days of slavery and the Fort Pillow Massacre through the 1980s, when Falco and such fellow travelers and active influences as the late Alex Chilton, the late Jessie Mae Hemphill ("The She-Wolf"), the late Cordell Jackson (the "Rock 'n Roll Granny"), photographer William Eggleston and the all-female band, The Hellcats, parted the magnolia curtain to reveal, in the words of Falco's subtitle, "Splendor, Enigma & Death."

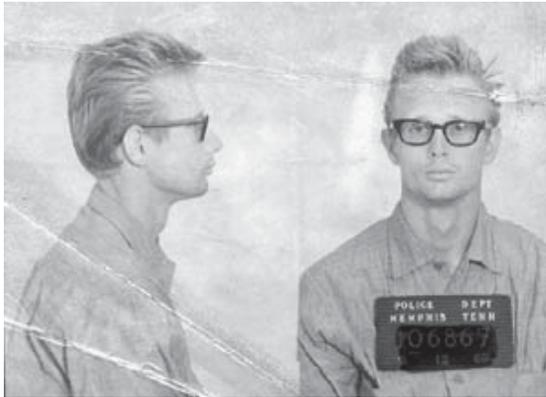
Reading "**Ghosts Behind the Sun**" ([Creation Books](#), \$24.99), one would think that Memphis, like Buffy's Sunnydale High, is located above some sort of Hellmouth, but this one disgorges artists, aristocrats, inebriates and lunatics rather than vampires and demons. This notion becomes almost literal in Falco's prologue, when he points out that "Memphis is built upon the New Madrid fault line -- a geological fissure." No wonder Memphis is, in the author's words, "the city of murder necrolatry, and music."



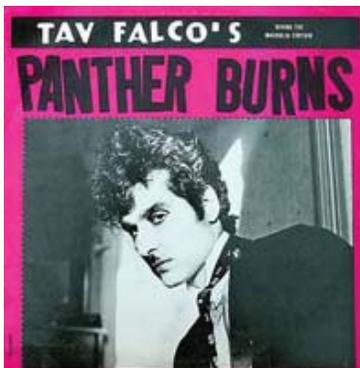
"**Ghosts Behind the Sun**" functions almost as an accidental companion volume to Robert Gordon's definitive history of the local underground music and culture scene, "**It Came from Memphis.**" It might be the latest chapter in the Panther Burns mission, as described by Falco during the band's infamous 1979 appearance on Marge Thrasher's WHBQ-TV talk show: "We create an anti-environment to make visible that part of Memphis and of life that is normally overlooked."

If Gordon's narrative has appeal for anyone interested in popular culture, Falco's is for specialists. The first part of the new book is a slog, as Falco recounts the eras of Civil War, Yellow Fever and E.H. Crump, with the conceit of the author imagining himself a participant in various artistic renaissances and violent crises: He's a soldier under the command of Nathan Bedford Forrest, a "papoose" in a forlorn Indian tribe, a reveler on historic Beale Street, a member of the posse hunting Tennessee's notorious 18th-century Harp brothers, known as America's first serial killers. The identity games

continue even when the author chronicles events he experienced; he speaks of the "Tav Falco" of Panther Burns fame as a separate individual. (Falco's photos are credited to "E. Baffle.")



The book becomes much more interesting when it reaches the era when Falco was an active presence on the Memphis scene. A cultural archeologist and archivist as well as artist, Falco presents very candid transcribed interviews with such figures as eccentric rockabilly pioneer Charlie Feathers, "Flying Saucer" rock-and-roller Billy Lee Riley and musical Zelig Jim Dickinson, whom Falco identifies as "Godhead, protector, muse, comrade." The interviews are so long and dense that Falco -- an Arkansas native who now lives in Austria -- seems to be functioning more as a researcher than a writer, as if he is offering this material as a gift to future biographers. Music is just one aspect of the content, however: Falco also exhumes the violent histories of the Tiller family, topless nightclub kingpin Danny Owens and serial killer George Howard Putt; probes the murders of guitarist Lee Baker and Booker T. & the MGs drummer Al Jackson; and tours Memphis high society, visiting the Snowdens, the Burches and the Hohenbergs.



Softbound and oversized, the book -- which resembles a self-published volume -- could have used an editor or at least a proof reader. The creator of "**The Twilight Zone**" is Rod "Sterling," while the composer of the theme from "**Shaft**" is "Issac" Hayes. Typos abound. As if to balance the misspelling of simple words, Falco garnishes his prose with fun jawbreakers: grisaille, manumission, "bodily

frottage." He also favors epigrams: "Out of the death rattle comes the fresh wailings of the newborn." Such pronouncements seem as natural as breath when delivered by the self-styled thaumaturge, dramaturge and demiurge of a peculiarly influential Memphis demimonde of the 1970s and '80s.

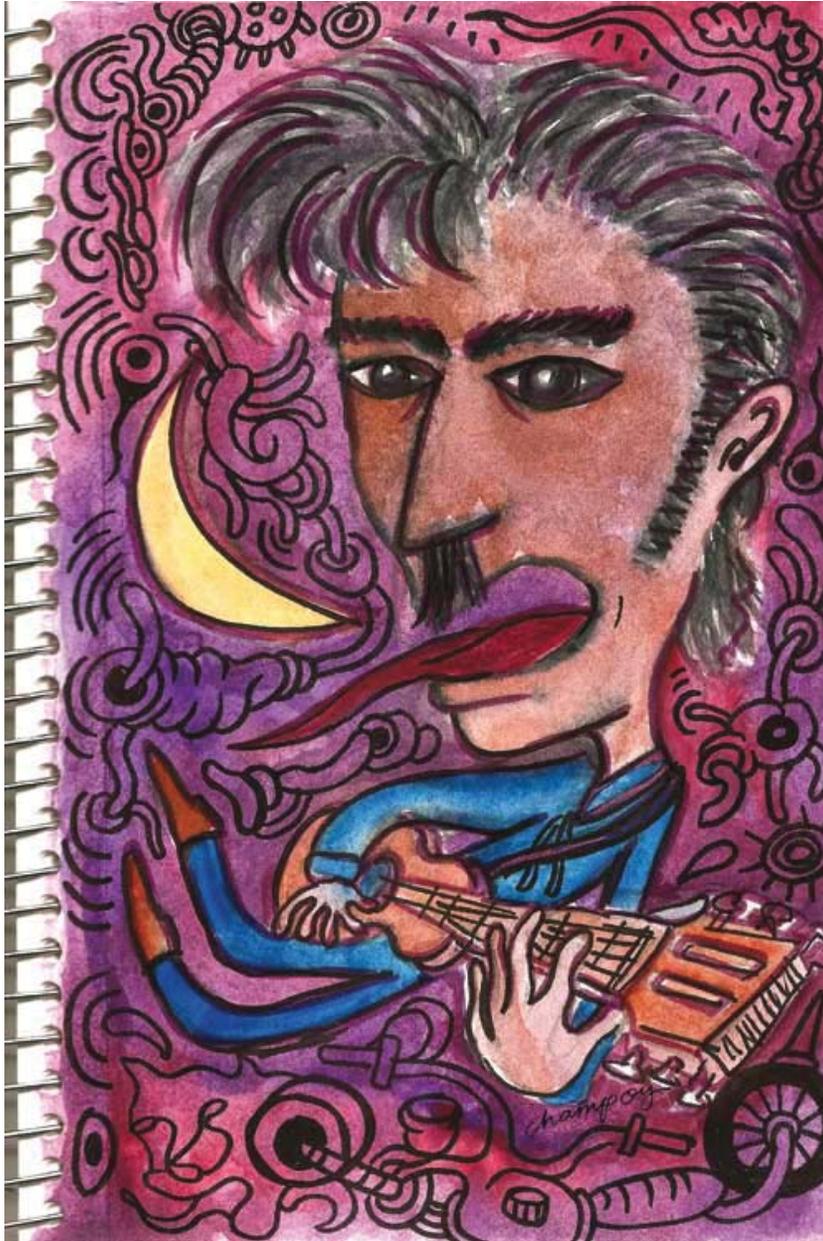
"**Ghosts Behind the Sun**" is presented as "[Mondo Memphis: Volume One](#)," the first half of a "dual encyclopedic history of Memphis" that will be completed by cultural critic Erik Morse in an upcoming noir novel, "**Bluff City Underground**." Interestingly, the book arrives just three months after the day-after-Elvis Death Day passing of filmmaker Gualtiero Jacopetti, whose "**Mondo Cane**" (1962) transformed *mondo* (the Italian word for "world") into an international synonym for shocking, transgressive subject matter.

Tav Falco will read from and sign copies of 'Ghosts Behind the Sun' at 4:30 p.m. Thursday (Dec. 1) at [Burke's Book Store](#), 936 S. Cooper. At 7 that night, he will host a screening of six of his short films -- produced from 1971 to 1996 -- at the [Memphis Brooks Museum of Art](#).

L.A. RECORD

TAV FALCO: SEXUAL, ABANDONED, POLITICAL

November 10th, 2011



champoyhate

Singer/songwriter/historian/preservationist/deconstructionist/filmmaker/photographer/provocateur/lover/actor/rebel/tango dancer/best hair in the world/expatriate American original Tav Falco is truly all of these things. In 1978 he ended his infamous performance at the Orpheum in Memphis by chainsawing a guitar in half—some sparks hitting Alex Chilton, which led to the two of them igniting the Unapproachable Panther Burns, an "art-damage" poly-rhythmed rockabilly freakshow with a manifesto to "stir the dark waters of the unconscious" through the reinterpreting of some of the best blemishes of early American music. Thirty-three years later, we see the release of Conjurations: Seance For Deranged Lovers, which happens to be Tav's first album of all original material and, according to him, the band's "mission statement." He also just finished a book, "Mondo Memphis," a roman noir historical study of the storied town. I listened intently to the man for 45 minutes out of our two-hour long interview before I could ask a question, and I didn't want him to stop. He almost didn't. This interview by Gabe Hart.

When did *Conjurations* get released?

It came out last year, in July, in Europe. It came out on Stag-O-Lee Records, part of Glitterhouse Records. It's gotten around pretty good in Europe. We worked for quite a while toward getting a release in the U.S.A. We were turned down by every independent label in the United States—in North America. Rejected, tossed out, thrown in the trash and ignored. So finally we broke through with Cosmodelic Records. We went to Revenant Records, Rhino Records, we went to everybody, you know, for domestic release. Rounder, Matador, all of them. They all thought they had their Panther Burns in someone else, but they'll never get it. They'll never get it. It's one of the things, really, that drove me away from the States. You know, like Robert Mitchum said, 'In the United States, if I'm an actor and I happen to be out of work, I'm a bum. If I'm an actor in Europe and I'm out of work, I'm an artist.' ... So, we brought out this record [*Panther Phobia*] on In the Red, and Larry Hardy wanted a certain kind of record from Panther Burns, and I had come back from Europe to test the U.S.A. once more—it was a big mistake, of course, but anyway, I came back for a couple of years and I was surrounded by a group of people who could only make this kind of record, period. And Larry wanted this kind of record, so he came up to me after a show in Memphis and put \$6000 in my pocket and asked for this record. So I thought, 'Why not?' I can do this kind of record like falling off a log. So I did it, and I stand behind it, but it was only one side of Panther Burns, and Larry didn't want the whole banana. You know, a lot of people aren't ready for the whole banana. They think they are, but they're not. We wanted to do something different, we wanted to experiment. They have an idea of what Panther Burns is, but they're not really willing to consult with the group and look at what is really possible. So I did that record, and I talked to Larry later about the *Conjurations* album. I sent him the demo—the first demo I ever made for a record, which was also a mistake, I should never make a demo, I'll never make another one—so that demo was turned down. Larry said, 'Oh, it's too lounge. I'll buy the record when it comes out, it's just my audience isn't gonna buy it.' I said, 'OK.' So it took about nine

years to get this record released without compromise. I knew I had something when everyone turned it down. I knew then that, artistically, for Panther Burns, it was going to be an important record and it turns out, it is an album of all original songs, and it is the manifestation of the vision of Panther Burns. It is a career statement. Thirty years later—actually, going into the 33rd year of Panther Burns. So you have something of a culmination of our thinking, of our vision. Even though the lineup has changed over time, even though we have reinvented ourselves, but always within the identity and within the context of the original Panther Burns. We haven't changed the Orphic vision of Panther Burns. It is still our job, our mission, to stir up the dark waters of the unconscious, and that's what we do. We're the last steam engine train left on the track that don't do nothing but run and blow. That's the way it was from the beginning and that's the way it always will be, although we have evolved. As any art form—like jazz, or even rock 'n' roll, we have embraced other art forms, like tango, like samba, rumba, uh ... jazz, standards—we've played and drawn from a number of genres. I could have stayed in Memphis. I could have been a rocker in Memphis all this time, and been that, and maybe I could have done alright. And maybe I'd have a larger audience. Maybe people would understand us better. But for me, it's not what I want to do. Alex Chilton used to criticize me. He said, 'You know, this is entertainment, Tav. You're trying to make it into something else. You're an entertainer.' Well, that's part of it for sure, but for me, I started the band out of frustration. I came to Memphis from Arkansas to be a filmmaker and a photographer, and I did that. But there came a point, a very frustrating point, where I felt like I couldn't go any further in Memphis and I began to feel very anti-establishment there. I was always considered trash from Arkansas in that town anyway.

How were you perceived in Memphis?

I started from the underground in Memphis. And when I go back, on November 12, it'll still be the Panther Burns from the underground. I'm gonna make a little appearance at Goner Records, but those people even turned down the *Conjurations* record. They laughed at it. You see how particular our vision is.

The garage scene can be very close-minded.

They like what they like, but it's like Charlie Feathers told me once. He said, 'Tav, if you're not doing something different, you're not doing anything at all.' You can't create art or a band out of a vacuum. It's never going to be totally original, uninfluenced by anything. But you can constellate your own vision out of what is given you in your environment, and to what you are drawn—spiritually, artistically, musically, and otherwise. With that, you can create something original. And I think there is an original gradient in Panther Burns, and that's what we cultivate. And if it's out of style or out of trend, we'll live through that, we'll survive it. ... You know, we tend to polarize an audience, but invariably there are those in that audience who are elated and who are moved to emotion and to dance, and there are others who greet us with howls of contempt.

I've tried to turn other people on to you before, and half are like, 'This is one of the most compelling things I've ever heard,' and the other half say, 'What

the hell is going on?’ But I think the latter is one of the biggest compliments.

The thing is, now I can sing, whereas in the beginning I didn't sing so well, But when you work with Alex Chilton long enough, you're around someone who's an incredible singer—one of the best of his generation, one of the best guitar players of his time. So I learned from good people, the best in Memphis, and that's something you live with and you grow with, and it stays with you. It's not something I would ever deny or turn my back on simply because there's no place for me in that cutthroat town, or places like L.A. or New York. I mean, yeah, I could survive in New York and I'm able to make money there—there are people who understand me in New York, but it's the job of the artist to make himself understood. We have an audience in Europe, we have an audience in the United States. I'm not complaining, I'm grateful that there are people there who embrace the Panther Burns and who are looking forward to the music we record and to our shows and to us coming back and performing there. But I have trepidation about the States. I feel that Memphis is a place that kills artists. I've seen them murdered. I've seen it in New Orleans. It's a very violent scene. I've seen it in L.A. L.A. is a hard scene, you know. It can be. If you don't have money. If you don't have insulation. If you don't have a cozy little pad in Hollywood Hills, uh, it can be kind of edgy. There are wonderful people in Los Angeles—I have quite a number of good friends there. I'd like to spend more time there, but I get a little nervous because I don't know what's going to happen next in the sense that I'm trying to bring something out from the interior. I'm not trying to do something that's totally commercial and I feel like I'm in a commercial environment, for the most part.

Beyond geography, what kind of world do the Panther Burns try to conjure?

The Panther Burns evoke the Orphic vision—it's not a mystical vision—it is the vision of Orpheus, it's the vision of music, it's the vision of going down into the underground, into the underworld, into the unconscious. That is our domain. That is our realm. It's not the mystical heavens, it's a different kind of poetry. It's the poetry of not the shiny side of the moon, but the darker side.

Luciferian?

Not really. Because Lucifer called himself the Prince of Light. We're not Satanic. It's a poetic vision. It's a vision of music, it's a vision of the interior—an expressionistic vision. ... The symbolist poets—Rimbaud, Baudelaire—they were under the spell of the Orphic vision. They weren't mystics—it was something different. And this is the realm in which we work.

Is there a reason you chose American roots music initially to express this?

This is what I was surrounded with in Memphis—was blues music, was early rock 'n' roll music, was Karl Heinz Stockhausen, was Eric Dolphy, was John Coltrane, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf—these are all people I saw come to Memphis, except Stockhausen, of course. I saw Dizzy Gillespie and some other jazz people. John Fahey ... An artist draws from what's around him, and this was the environment. To me, John Fahey was the epitome of the American guitarist, a visionary. Also a product of the Orphic vision, in my view. ... You listen to Fahey and it's totally original, totally Orphic, totally transcendent, totally poetic. I don't know anyone like him. That's why I took this

up because that was what was around me. ... I started playing rock 'n' roll because it was an extreme form of Dionysian ritual and celebration. It was freeing and liberating and erotic, sexual, abandoned, political—all of these things. I felt there was something I could do within this medium, but mainly it was a nonintellectual-type release. I was playing blues, strictly, and filming blues people. And when I met Alex, I did this happening at the Orpheum Theatre with Mud Boy and the Neutrons—I was a dancer in his band ... It's all in my book, *Mondo Memphis*.

Is that where you chainsawed the guitar?

Yeah, I chainsawed the guitar playing 'The Bourgeois Blues' by Leadbelly. [Alex] was in the audience that night, among those who became rather hysterical during this happening, where I did destroy the guitar. I did meet him about a month or so later at a soiree at my house in Memphis, on the wrong side of the tracks. He knew rock 'n' roll, and I knew something of rudimentary blues, so, I don't know, there was just some sort of kindred spirit there when we met, and Alex urged me to start a band, and he said he would play guitar in it for a while.

Should we talk about *Mondo Memphis*?

Yeah, sure. That book turned out to be a massive undertaking. Had I known it was going to be that much involvement, over three years, I'm not sure I would have signed a contract on it. It came through a journalist who had interviewed me on a long piece on noise music. He wanted me to answer a number of questions, so I spent a week answering those questions, and turned in almost twenty pages. We started corresponding a lot. His name is Erik Morse. ... He worked for the San Francisco Bay Guardian, still writes for them, writes for Frieze ... Anyway, Erik got this overture from Creation Books, which had started with Creation Records in the U.K. So, we got this deal to do a book on Memphis. Erik has volume 2, I've got volume 1. Erik has turned out to write a fictive account—a shorter piece. Mine is rather lengthy, maybe too long. It's kind of a historio-fictive account up to the period in Memphis in which I was living. So the book starts before the Civil War and it goes through each epoch and ends in the 90s, with Panther Burns and with Tav Falco. Tav Falco enters the book rather late—the last two chapters out of thirteen deal with Tav Falco and what happened around him. The book is in first person, but not in the name of Tav Falco. It's Eugene Baffle, which is the alter ego of Tav Falco. Eugene Baffle is the one who came out on stage at the Orpheum Theatre and destroyed the guitar, with Mud Boy and the Neutrons. Eugene Baffle met Tav Falco some months after that event.

How do the two personalities differ?

Well, Eugene Baffle was a little more reticent, and a little more introspective. He's an observer, he's someone who deals more with experiential knowledge. When they met—they looked a lot alike. They had similar interests in a lot of areas. Falco was more of a hipster and he was more of a—well, is, he's still out there, playing and touring around in godforsaken places—more of a performer, an instigator of happenings, anti-environment actions, publicity stunts, jokes, double entendre. Baffle was more of a sincere type individual, not so complicated. Basically a kind of a litmus, kind of observer, more of a follower. ... Baffle had more of a political consciousness than Tav

Falco, and more of a social conscience, whereas Falco is more of a rock 'n' roller. Not that he didn't have sensitivity, because he was an interpreter. That's what Falco is. That's what Jerry Lee Lewis told me he did once. He said, 'You know, I interpret songs. That's it. I'm an interpreter.' Jerry Lee didn't write songs. But on this last album, Falco ended up writing some songs, and I think he did a surprising job with it. Eugene Baffle lives in Paris and he runs with Gypsies. He lives a very carefree, although frugal, existence.

You described Tav Falco as a 'hipster.' Unfortunately, that word is used as more of a slur today.

In the outlook of Tav Falco, we're talking about people who he would idolize—a hipster is like Chet Baker, or like Allen Ginsberg, who he knew personally. Or someone like William S. Burroughs, who dressed in a canary yellow suit and hung out in the Orient and Tangiers and smoked opium and had hallucinations. These were elegant people on one side, and on the other side these were people who would travel on the road, like Jack Kerouac. I don't know how in touch people still are with that in the States, with that movement in the 50s and 60s. When I came to do that show for *Arthur* magazine at the Palace Theatre, I saw a lot of bearded and sandaled hipster-looking-type people. I saw people looking like a lot of the hippies I knew in San Francisco when I was out there. It's an ethos to embrace; it's an ideology. Timothy Leary, you know, and that group of writers and experimentalists in his cabal. They were interesting people. They made a lot of interesting experiments, there was a revolution. On the one hand, we sacrificed a lot in that revolution. We gained a lot and we sacrificed a lot. We sacrificed a certain social fabric. We sacrificed a certain sense of style. We sacrificed social dancing. That went out the window. The embrace in dancing was gone with psychedelia.

It's interesting because psychedelia identified itself with communalism and togetherness.

The form, and the embrace, and certain formalistic and ritualistic attributes. But, I suppose those had to be sacrificed to some degree for there to be an all-encompassing revolution like we did have. ... Now, people who survived the revolution—they're going back and they're retrieving that which was important to retrieve; that which was lost and discarded they're bringing back, and they're preserving that and celebrating it once again.

Do you see that as a form of nostalgia?

Nostalgia is a diversion—it's a form of entertainment. I'm saying when people go back to celebrate certain forms and rituals and social practices and dances and certain kinds of art or music, there's nostalgic revival on the one hand and then there's going back and reinventing genres that were shut out. To use dance as an example. Social dancing is being rediscovered again—not in a revivalist or nostalgic way, there's a gradient of nostalgia there, but it's become part of the fabric of day-to-day life. People are going out and dancing Cuban dances—the *habanera*—again, because they feel it. They want to do it. It's more than just sheer nostalgia that's drawing them back.

Do you ever see a revolution happening again in America?

I think there is a threshold where you can push people too far. What it would take would be a kind of class revolution. It would take some real starvation, some real deprivation in the United States before there would be any kind of serious response to political and cultural organizing. ... It would have to be like the 1930s or like the 1960s in the sense that we have a mandatory draft and a huge military conflict. ... All the great hopes we had for the Obama administration, and I still hope, if he's re-elected—and of course I will vote for him—hopefully he will be more of himself in the second term. But we do have these huge military engagements today that are destroying our country, destroying our credibility in the world, undermining our creative and moral fiber in the United States. Really undermining the American ideal. America once had a noble vision and I don't think it has it anymore. Most people in the States seem to me totally concerned with materialistic well-being. They go and they pray on Sundays, and they give lip service to these Christian ideals, and they go out during the week, and they're hypocrites and they don't even realize that. All through the bible belt and in California too, our politicians prey off these people and their thinking and their mentality. ... I can't live over there right now.

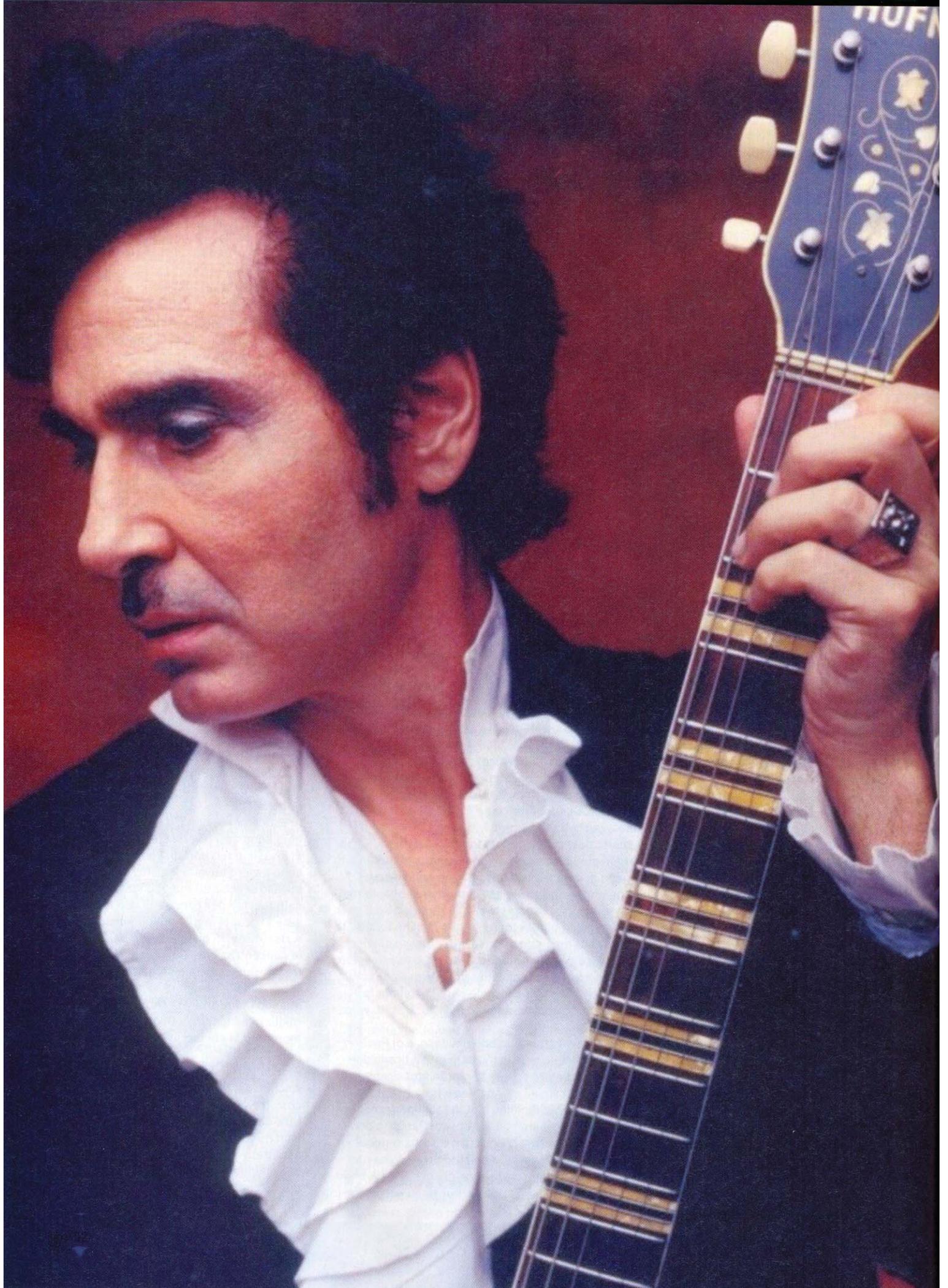
Do you feel like living over here affects your integrity?

I just feel like I would be destroyed. I think, artistically, I would be reduced on a certain level that I'm able to pursue in Europe. Hey, Europe's had its dark chapters. It has a culture here of art and music and theater. We have that, to an extent, in the United States, but here it's the fabric of everyday existence. It's open to everybody. I don't have to be rich to lead the kind of life here that I would have to have a lot of money in the United States. I would have to work two jobs in the States to survive, and I'd be caught up in materialistic things. Here, I can live *la boheme vie*—a bohemian life—without degradation.

The argument we use here in L.A. is that the anxiety and the oppression—when you feel like your artistry is being pushed in a corner—it makes you work harder and good things come out of that. Do you think that's a delusion or do you find any merit in that?

It can produce some very vital responses, and can generate a lot of thoughtful work. This is how I started—I'm a product of those kinds of forces and pressures, but I must say that my best work, I think, has come out since I've been in this environment, in Europe. I'm not on the rock 'n' roll scene here; I don't hang out with rock 'n' roll people. I hang out with dancers and theater people and artists and filmmakers. Not that I don't like rock 'n' roll people, but I'm in a city that's not a rock 'n' roll city, for one thing. So I have the distance, culturally, to look at my own culture in the United States—I'm able to look into the culture as an outsider, and then I have the distance to come into my environment in which I live, and be able to get in touch with myself without distraction, and to learn more about what I'm thinking and who I am and who the people around me are and how I really want to cultivate what I'm doing. I didn't have this kind of perception when I was living in the States. It was always these other pressures involved just to stay alive, just to survive, to scratch out an existence as an artist. And it takes a lot of time to do that.

TAV FALCO AND THE PANTHER BURNS WITH KEN STRINGFELLOW AND JAIL WEDDINGS ON THURS., NOV. 10, AT THE ECHO, 1822 SUNSET BLVD., ECHO PARK. 8:30 PM / \$12 / 18+. ATTHEECHO.COM. TAV FALCO READS FROM HIS BOOK, *MONDO MEMPHIS*, ON THURS., NOV. 10, AT STORIES, 1716 W. SUNSET BLVD., ECHO PARK. 7:30 PM / FREE / ALL AGES. STORIESLA.COM. VISIT TAV FALCO AND THE PANTHER BURNS AT MYSPACE.COM/PANTHERBURNS.



BURN, PANTHER, BURN!

Dietro la cortina di magnolie di TAV FALCO

di eddy cilia

*Home of the brave, land of the free –
I don't want to be mistreated by no bourgeoisie.
Now you people, listen to me
Don't try to find a home in Memphis, Tennessee
Cause it's a bourgeois town
It's the Bourgeois Blues,
Spread the news all around'
(Bourgeois Blues, Leadbelly)*

COSA NON PAGHEREI per essere stato all'Orpheum Theatre di Memphis quella sera di dicembre del 1979 in cui Gustavo Antonio (oppure Gustav Anthony Nelson: nemmeno sulla sua identità anagrafica le fonti sono concordi) Falco tenne il suo primo spettacolo. E che spettacolo! Occasione una sorta di *Ultimo Valzer* organizzato per celebrare gli idoli locali Mudboy & The Neutrons, l'eroe di questo racconto chiedeva al leader di costoro il permesso di inscenare, fra il primo e il secondo tempo, una performance che a suo dire avrebbe dovuto farsi metafora dello scioglimento di una rock'n'roll band. "Come no?", accondiscendeva magnanimamente Jim Dickinson. Platea bella affollata e bella calda, il giovanotto – pompadour alla Little Richard, baffetti alla Charlie Chaplin, smoking e guanti bianchi – si presentava alla ribalta strimpellando una Silvertone acquistata per cinque dollari da un vicino di casa e amplificata da un non meno malandato Stromberg-Carlson degli anni Cinquanta, collegato a sua volta a un altoparlante di trenta centimetri di diametro incastrato dentro la struttura di un proiettore. Con davanti un microfono che di quanto prodotto riversava ogni sospiro nel potente sound system del teatro. Falco eseguiva con stile a dir poco approssimativo il classico di Leadbelly *Bourgeois Blues* e alla fine, appoggiata la chitarra fra due sedie, prendeva a tagliarla in due con una sega elettrica. Immaginate la mostruosa cacofonia che si produceva per alcuni istanti, prima che le due metà dello strumento cadessero sulle assi del palco con un tonfo cui seguivano alcuni secondi di stupefatto silenzio. Soddisfatto, il Nostro tornava dietro le quinte a godersi da lontano il tumulto scoppiato fra il pubblico.

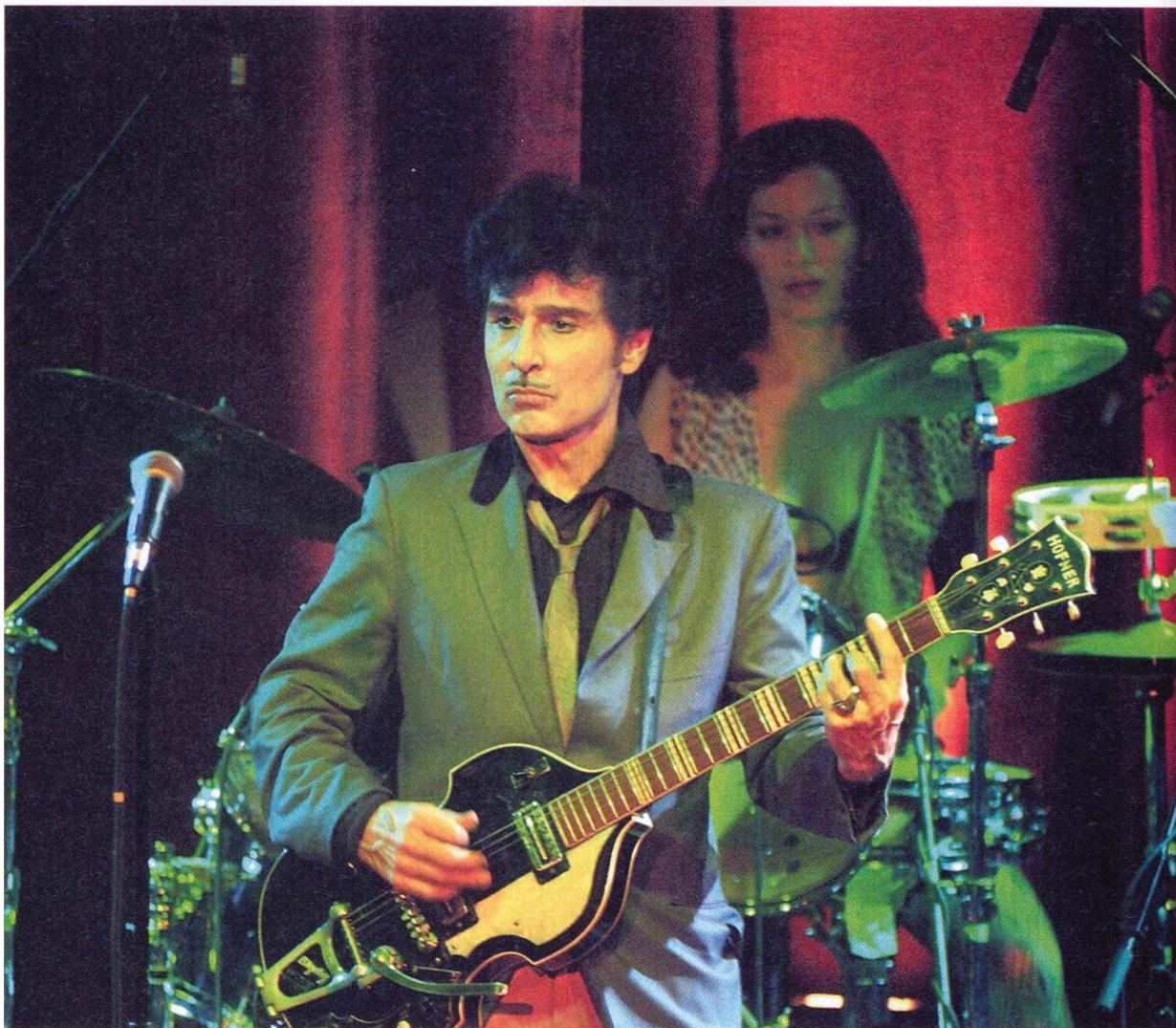
Una volta comunque l'ho visto Tav Falco, dal vivo. Fu al Big Club di Torino, era la primavera del 1987 e un po' ne restai deluso. Non devo ricorrere a ricordi sbiaditi per affermarlo. Mi basta riprendere in mano un pezzo che scrissi all'epoca per un noto mensile e in cui esprimevo le mie perplessità per un concerto non selvaggio come mi sarei aspettato. Essendo fra il resto fresco di ascolto di un trascinantissimo live, "Now", allora da poco sottratto a un'esistenza clandestina in forma di cassetta da una ristampa in vinile allegata alla prima tiratura di un dodici pollici, andai attendendomi i Cramps e fui colto in contropiede da un'esibizione sì vigorosa ma nel complesso irrisolta, con tratti singolarmente sofisticati in un assieme – concedetemi l'ossimoro – moderatamente selvatico. Forse i ragazzi (mi resta un dubbio: Alex Chilton era uno di loro?) non erano in serata, o magari non lo ero io. Molto di quello che si trova in Rete (fatevi un giro su YouTube e di Tav Falco scoverete la qualunque) mi induce oggi a propendere per la seconda ipotesi. Mi piacerebbe avere una controprova e chissà...

Nel 2010 il non più baffuto Gustavo ha pubblicato un ottimo album, "Conjurations", di cui all'uscita non si è accorto praticamente nessuno (neanch'io) e sono cose che possono succedere se, non essendo una supercelebrità, fai trascorrere un tondo decennio dalla tua precedente produzione in studio. In compenso il 2011 ha visto, al confronto, quasi una sovraesposizione mediatica (si fa per dire, eh?) del nostro uomo. Verso fine anno prima è andato nelle librerie il suo *Ghosts Behind The Sun: Splendor, Enigma & Death*, un volume di oltre trecento pagine in cui una storia della musica a Memphis dalla Guerra di Secessione ai giorni nostri si mischia a una sorta di autobiografia dell'autore. Poi è tornato nei negozi di dischi, come parte (lo completa il mini "Blow Your Top") del cofanettino "Lore And Testament Vol.1" (Stag-O-Lee), quel "Behind The Magnolia Curtain" che fu nel 1981 lo strepitoso debutto dei Tav Falco's Panther Burns. Nessuna casa di un lettore di questo giornale do-

vrebbe esserne priva. E allora - avendo in mano un libretto di una ventina di pagine e a disposizione altri materiali nel mio archivio di vecchie riviste e un sito che ne ospita una messe di rarissimi - mi sono fatto prendere dalla voglia di rinnovare il culto di un grande artista e ho proposto un articolo allo Stefano Isidoro. Che idea del cazzo. Non avevo tenuto conto della tendenza che ha da sempre a fare mitologia di se stesso del Nostro, né del numero ridotto (e tanti sono purtroppo morti nel frattempo) dei testimoni delle sue imprese e della loro mediamente scarsa affidabilità. Per capirsi: nel succitato libretto scritto a più mani quello di gran lunga più lucido sembra essere il batterista Ross Johnson, uno dei Panther Burns originali e nondimeno, al tempo in cui fu inciso il disco, alcolista perso, tanto da venire licenziato dal gruppo prima ancora che si andasse a registrarlo. Insomma: provare a ricostruire le vicende di Tav Falco e della variabile combriccola dei suoi accoliti si è rivelato un incubo. Tolti pochissimi punti fermi, non c'è un resoconto che coincida con un altro e spesso su aspetti niente affatto secondari. Impossibilitato a mettere insieme un romanzetto sufficientemente attendibile, mi sono rassegnato a raccontarvi i dischi o poco di più. Ma in fondo quelli vi interessano, no?

"Tav Falco era già postmoderno quando il postmoderno non era alla moda. Questo cantante e chitarrista, che ha collaborato tanto con il regista Kenneth Anger che con il pioniere del rockabilly Charlie Feathers, ha dedicato la sua vita a redigere una narrazione revisionista della cultura pop nella quale l'estetica di Dean Martin e quella di Jerry Lee Lewis si fondono senza soluzione di continuità." (David Sprague, su "Variety")

"Furono lui e i Cramps a iniziare un'intera nuova generazione ai distorti piaceri del rock'n'roll." (Jason Pierce; Spacemen 3 e poi Spiritualized)



gionevolmente certo:
ane, nato a Philadel-
inque anni in su nel-
si a Memphis intorno al
ecchio frequentato la
nta (doveva essere a
nte) in quello che era il
all'Oro della culla della
uindi del rock e del
voletta la storia (che fa
s e anche solo per que-
re sospetta) raccontata
stro, e cioè che si sa-
a prima volta da quelle
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vece assodato (ci sono
di foto a testimoniare)
tà dei Settanta Falco
ennessee con una cine-
lo e immortalando gi-
nosciuti, più o meno
dodici battute, da
Johnny Woods, da Phi-
rdell Jackson, da Furry
de. Di quest'ultimo, di
accorgerà che un buon paio di
pisce uno stile che, nel suo es-

sere estremamente primitivo, evidenzia con l'uso di bordoni e la struttura ad anelli del suo riffeggiare bizzarre prossimità a certa avanguardia. Lo eleggerà a modello. Sfrondata di ogni leggenda, la figura di Tav Falco si staglia nitidamente come quella di un fine intellettuale con salde radici nella cultura europea (colpiranno nel segno quanti definiranno talune sue performance situazioniiste o dada) e contemporaneamente profondamente affascinato da quella afroamericana e dal problematico rapporto a livello di classi infime fra bianchi e neri, vicinanza colma di sovrapposizioni quanto di conflitti. Musicista lo diventerà per emulazione e per caso e approfittando di una propizia e irripetibile congiuntura temporale: lo sbocciare di punk e new wave che riallacciava il rock alle sue origini e toglieva importanza al canonico "saper suonare".

Altra fortunata coincidenza: fra il pubblico all'Orpheum Theatre c'è tal Alex Chilton (non offendo chi mi legge aprendo una parentesi per spiegare chi fosse costui; so che lo sapete), che lungi dallo scandalizzarsi si diverte immensamente. Un giorno una comune amica telefona

all'ex-leader di Box Tops e Big Star e alla conversazione fa da sottofondo Tav che in quella stessa stanza si sta esercitando. Incuriosito Chilton domanda chi sia il chitarrista e, saputo, traversa la città per farselo presentare. Si piacciono e dopo che umano il sodalizio si fa artistico. Nei primi Panther Burns (nome ispirato dalla leggenda di una belva bruciata viva da dei contadini che non erano riusciti a catturarla e ucciderla altrimenti) già si profila quel consistere (dis)armonioso e funzionale di professionismo e dilettantismo che li caratterizzerà per vent'anni: doppia coppia con ad affiancare il navigato Chilton un contrabbassista sopraffino con tanto di diploma di conservatorio quale Ron Miller (spacciato a lungo per fratello del capobanda) e a far da controaltare a Falco il batterista totalmente improvvisato Ross Johnson, presto sostituito da un Jim Duckworth virtuoso sì ma di chitarra jazz. Parimenti composto da opposti il pubblico dei primi spettacoli: giovani punk e vecchia spazzatura bianca, universitari scapigliati, l'occasionale proletario di colore. Tav Falco lo arringa con stile da MC di James Brown non fosse che i versi che declama a mo' d'

zione sono datati 1925 e apparso al surrealista spagnolo Luis Buñuel. E poi parte sferragliante uno stile rockabilly che è idra con ben due teste. Sovente la ghenga è stata sul palco dal già nominato Pinky & the Brain. Talvolta dal papà del rock roll Charlie Feathers.

Un ideale film il primo album dei Panther Burns dovrebbe essere registrato fra le mura che sono testimoni della nascita del fenomeno Elvis Presley, quelle della Sun e di Sam Phillips. Ci provano, ma i risultati disastrosi e di quei nastri si dice di non farne nulla (verranno rielaborati nel '92 in una raccolta di "Unrehearsed Sessions"). Va bene lo stesso come ricominciare - buona la seconda, sette prove con pause alimentate a polso - bourbon - "Behind The Magnolia" viene catturato in studi come i mitici, quelli della Ardent già frequentati dai Big Star. Un capolavoro da sistemare in bacheca.

È difficile intendere oggi (al tempo né lo aveva né lo si colse) come mai, nei ristretti confini del wave di quella New York nella quale l'effigie della sua uscita traslocavano per un soggiorno i Panther Burns, il disco venne accolto con entusiasmo. C'era comunanza di idee nella visione della vita (loro più esistenziale, lui più dionisiaco) e della musica fra i Beatles, James White, Arto Lindsay, Lydia Lunch e il Falco. Il suo primo LP (che andava dietro a un paio di singoli ancora più ispidi) brucia il cervello e lascia esilarati come whisky fatto a casa, rubinetto di botte da cui sgorgano rocce deraglianti e blues scorticato, rulli di rulli Bo Diddley ed epilessie chitarristiche di Ray Charles. Tutte le cover (fino a metà Novanta il nostro non firmerà che un brano), alcune celeberrime - c'è il *Bourgeois Blues*, naturalmente, e *Brazil* in un colpo iconoclasta e sentimentalissima - e la più parte oscurissime, ma tutte e di quelle più famose sono ai limiti dell'indiscutibile: tipo il *St. Louis Blues* pietra miliare del jazz risolto come un tango dislessico e una *Moving On Down The Line* di Roy Orbison che non è più gatto ma - insomma - gatto. E poi una *You're Undecided* di Johnny Cash che da rock'n'roll si fa blues e una *Man* che sarebbe di Muddy Waters e però di John Lee Hooker. Tutto grandioso, da una *On Little Mama* che parte fingendo di essere gli Stray Cats ma getta immediatamente la maschera e sono i Cramps, subito a un *non ultra* di frenesia Eddie Cochran nella successiva *She's The One That's Got It*. "Behind The Magnolia Curtain" è il "Songs The Lord Thought Us" che manca nei vostri scaffali.

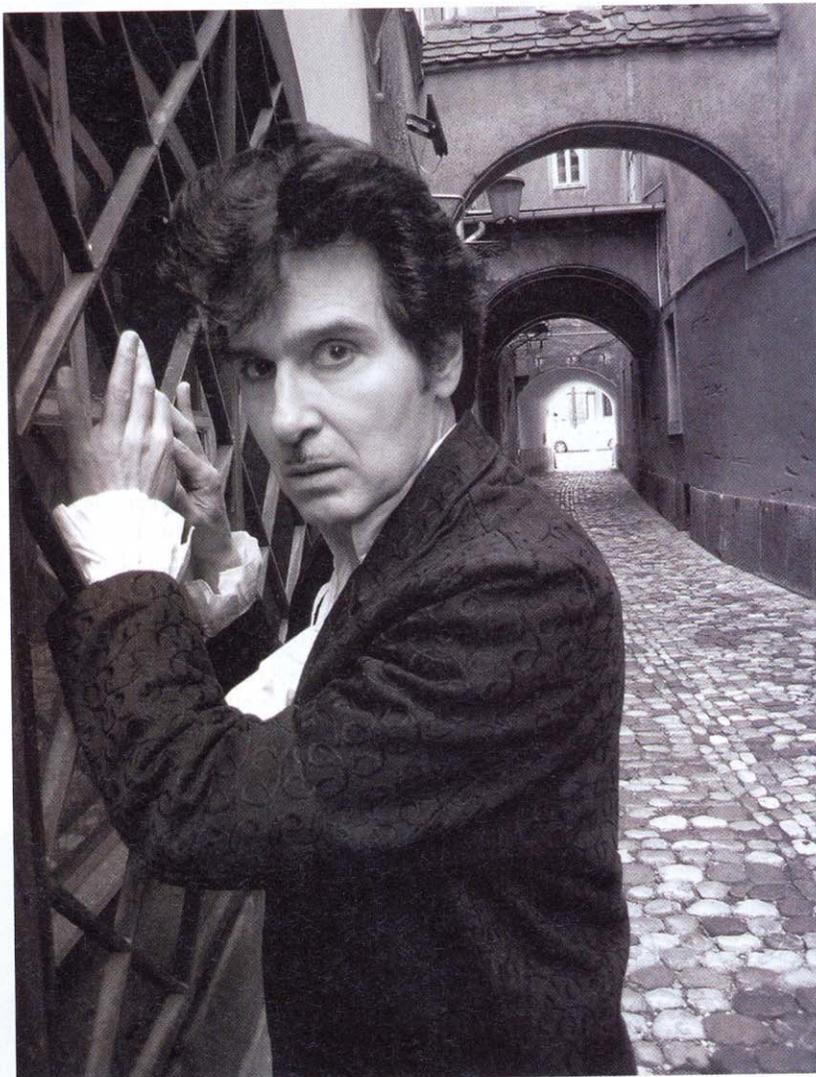
33 giri vede la luce nel 1981 sia negli Stati Uniti che in Gran Bretagna per un'etichetta indipendente quale Rough Trade e sembrerebbe il preludio di una carriera seria. Per propiziarla bisognerebbe non farlo invecchiare ed è invece

ciò che accade. La permanenza all'ombra della Big Apple non frutta che i quattro pezzi di "Blow Your Top", EP datato '83. Suono relativamente più "educato" di quello dell'album (a una grintosa *I'm On This Rocket* e un'iperkinetica *Pantherman* si accoppiano una *Love Is My Business* quasi da *American Graffiti* e l'azzardo surf *Bertha Lou*), uscendo per la Animal di Chris Stein (Blondie) resterà per Tav Falco il momento di maggiore vicinanza a un'area major. È l'Europa, e in particolare la Francia, ad adottarlo a questo punto. La tanto controversa quanto benemerita New Rose mette sotto contratto i Panther Burns e fra l'85 e l'88 griffa in esclusiva mondiale un composito poker costituito da un mini, un EP e due LP.

I sei brani di "Sugar Ditch Revisited" (1985; sul podio un programmatico *Arkansas Stomp*, il lento e dissonante blues di Doc Pomus *Lonely Avenue* e una *Working On A Building* da consigliare a John Fogerty) e i quattro di "Shake Rag" (il mio preferito è lo squassante eretico *Shade Tree Mechanic*) sono succulenti antipasti per l'album di una

stupenda, immatura maturità, "The World We Knew" (1987; produzione firmata Chilton): forte di un paio di clamorosi tanghi (di nuovo? altri ce ne saranno) quali *Drop Your Mask* e *Doubtful Of Your Love* e del ballo diddleyano *Do The Robot*, della funkeggiante *Pass The Hatchet* e di uno squillante *Big Road Blues*, di una *It's All Your Fault* in quota Jimmy Reed e di una *She's A Bad Motorcycle* in quota Lux Interior, della malevola *She's My Witch* e dell'iperballabile e romantica *Mona Lisa*. Fra il resto. Le dettagliatissime note di copertina firmate dallo stesso titolare del 33 giri fanno definitivamente giustizia del mito del buon selvaggio e invano Falco prova a rinverdirlo, dichiarando in un'intervista a "Bucketfull Of Brains" di saperne poco di musica, di non essere un collezionista di dischi e che, se potesse permettersele, collezionerebbe piuttosto motociclette.

Nell'88 "Red Devil", che è un dieci pollici ma contiene ben dieci brani e può dunque essere conside-



Tav Falco (2006, autoscatto)



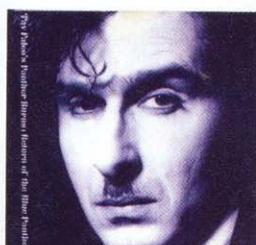
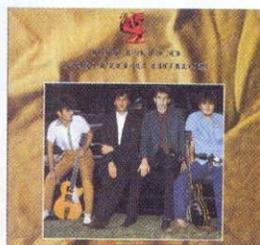
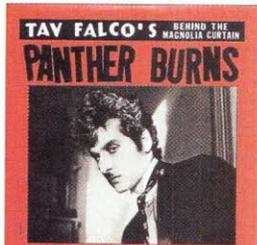
disco con due versioni solo strumentali (la prima breve e surfeggiante, la seconda in chiave country'n'roll e meglio sviluppata) di *Malafemmina* del sublime Antonio De Curtis in arte Totò, la cucina Panther Burns ammanisce quindi i soliti speziati manicaretti (il più piccante *Love Whip*, che è a momenti un secondo *Bourgeois Blues* concedendosi giusto un paio di portate apparentemente qualunque: ma in *I Got A Woman* si rintraccia un'anima rockabilly in Ray Charles e *Rock Me Baby* toglie eleganza e rende in cambio afrore di sesso a B.B. King. Opera piacevole e "di passaggio" così come "Life Sentence" (1992; negli Stati Uniti "Life Sentence In The Cathouse") fra i cui tredici brani risaltano, sveltando dalla cintola in su, *My Mind Was Messed Up At The Time* e *What's Wrong* (mai sentito in precedenza un Tav Falco così classicamente rhythm'n'blues), una programmatica *Vampire From Havana* e - udite, udite! - *Guarda che luna* e sì, è proprio quella.

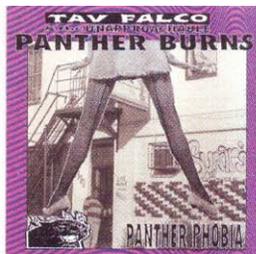
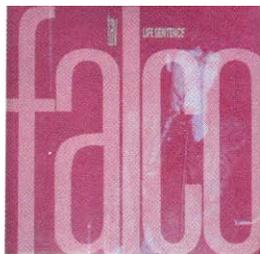
A cosa porti la transizione lo spiega nel '95 "Shadow Dancer" che per me è, in ordine cronologico, il terzo disco del Nostro da avere. Per quanto spassose, non per le riletture "in lingua" di *Quando vedrai la mia ragazza* e di *Guarda che luna*. O per il bluesone denso di soul e preso per mano dall'organo di *I'll Take Care Of You*, o per una trotante *Have I The Right*, o per il country con tanto di singing saw *Funnel Of Love*. Bensi per i tanghi *Swaye Born Too Late*, per lo stiloso piglio confidenziale di *Love's Last Warning*, *Lotus Blossom* e *Music Maestro Please*. Ehilà!

Born Too Late e *Love's Last Warning* sono firmate da Falco che, quel che più conta, autografa pure una *Invasion Of The Shadow Dancer* spazzante ed eccezionale nel suo fare il verso a tanta exotica, a tanta *space age music* da Martin Denny ed Esquivel in giù. Viene a completarsi un canone e da qui in poi a Tav Falco si guarderà da una prospettiva diversa. In tal senso nel '96 "Disappearing Angels" (un secondo 10" oltre che un CD per Sympathy For The Record Industry) raffiederà gli entusiasmi non offrendo in quella vena che una *Kiss Of Fire* che è cartolina d'amore dai bassifondi di Buenos Aires. Frizza e si dimena ognimmodo che è un piacere e al Chris Isaak fatto Mr. Hyde dalla pozione di *He'll Have To Go* io non rinuncerei a cuor leggero.

rato a tutti gli effetti un album, chiude in tono un po' minore la seconda fase di questa saga. Trattandosi di raccolta di ritagli non c'è da esser severi e in ogni caso qualche episodio memorabile o perlomeno intrigante lo regala. Ad esempio: una *Drifting Heart* che è di Chuck Berry ma la penseresti di Van Dyke Parks, una *Tram* negrissima e l'urlo psycho-metal (!) *Ode To Shetar*.

Attesa ingannata da un fumigante "Midnight In Memphis Live", non bisogna aspettare chissà quanto ancora per il seguito vero di "The World We Knew". Esce nel 1990 e se all'ascolto "Return Of The Blue Panther" vi sembrerà in quasi perfetta continuità con il predecessore, be', vi do ragione. A marcare una cesura fra la prima quadrilogia e una seconda che si completerà entro il '96 sono dappriocipio cambiamenti non precipuamente musicali. Uno che Falco e soci (in Europa ancora per due lavori su New Rose) ritrovano finalmente un contratto statunitense accasandosi presso un marchio di prima fila del punk quale Triple X (ma non durerà). Il secondo è che una formazione che si era da tempo assestata come quartetto di base con George Reinecke alla chitarra solista, Rene Coman al basso e il redivivo Ross Johnson alla batteria comincia a perdere pezzi. "Return" è inoltre il primo album alla cui realizzazione Alex Chilton (di nuovo in squadra nei tre seguenti) non offre apporto alcuno. Sorpresi e deliziati i fan italiani aprendo e chiudendo il

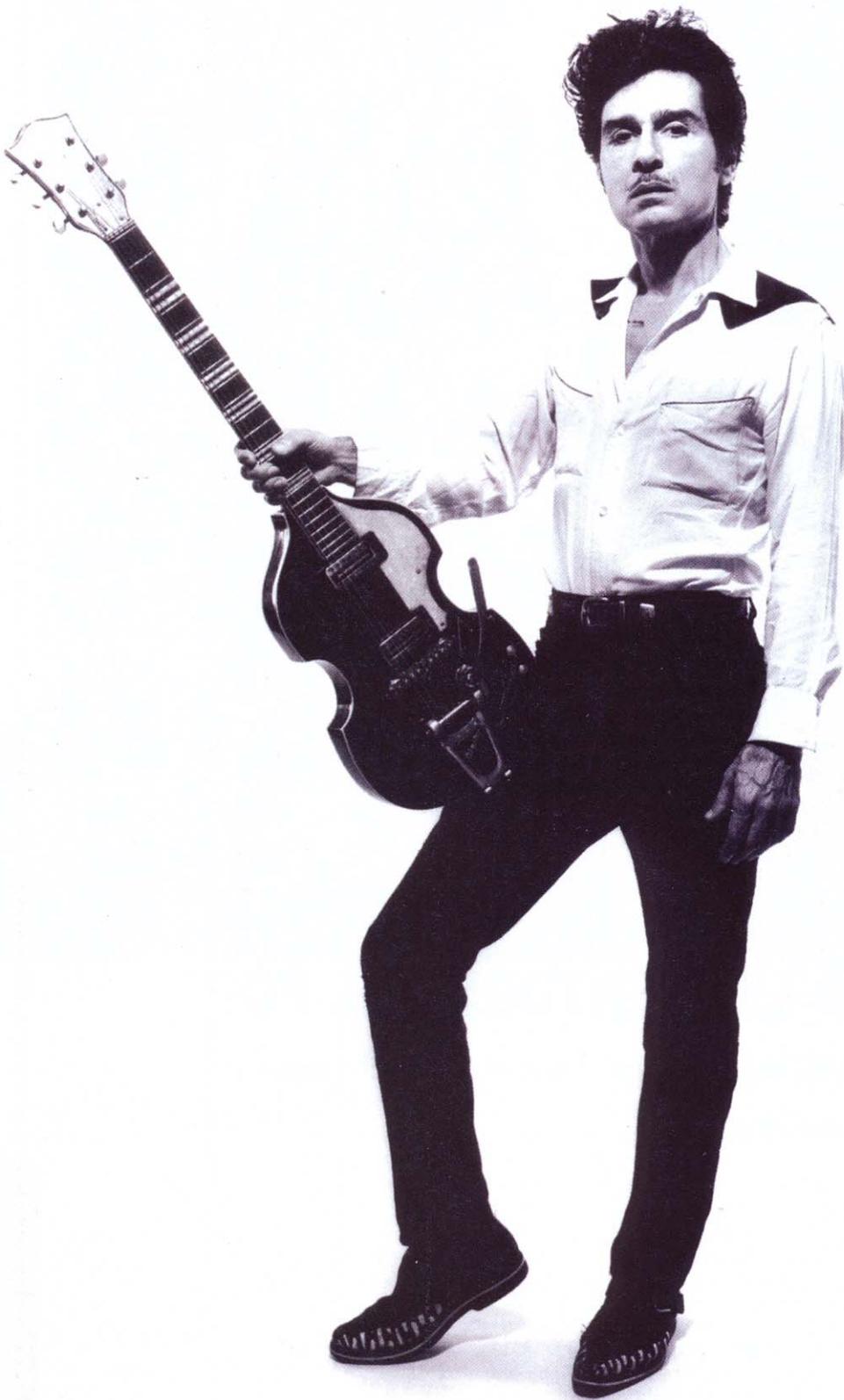




"Rockabilly disastro e atonale influenzato da Arnold Schoenberg." (definizione data da Tav Falco dello stile chitarristico applicato da Alex Chilton alla musica dei Panther Burns; da un'intervista concessa dopo la prematura scomparsa di costui nel marzo 2010)

Ho solamente accennato (per raccontarlo sarebbe servito un articolo a parte e comunque non ne so abbastanza) al Tav Falco cineasta, indeciso fra documentario e avanguardia, e fotografo. Non ho detto nulla del Tav Falco attore, che ha avuto i suoi momenti di massima gloria comparando a fianco di Winona Ryder nell'89 nella biografia di Jerry Lee Lewis *Great Balls Of Fire* e con un ruolo da protagonista nel '93 nell'epopea biker *Highway 61*. Qualche soldo dovettero farglielo guadagnare, ma niente di che. Probabilmente stanco di non essere profeta in patria, all'alba del secolo nuovo il nostro eroe si trasferisce in Europa, Vienna per essere precisi ma concedendosi innumerevoli puntate nell'amatissima Parigi. Da Memphis si congeda con "Panther Phobia", album per In The Red registrato in presa diretta e in mono che solo molto di recente mi sono portato a casa. Mi ha appiccicato al muro. Belluino e ululante, autentico "Behind The Magnolia Curtain" vent'anni dopo, non concede un attimo di requie che all'attacco dell'ultima dell'undici canzoni in scaletta, *This Could Go On Forever*. Che si tratti di cerchio che si chiude lo sottolinea pure un organico che comprende non soltanto Ross Johnson ma anche tal Eric Hill, uno che dai Panther Burns era transitato per un nanosecondo nel 1980. Affermare che suona il sintetizzatore sarebbe inesatto. Più che altro lo stupra.

Racconta un altro mondo, da lì a un decennio punteggiato giusto da qualche tour, "Conjurations: Séance For Deranged Lovers". Da non credersi: tutto firmato da Falco (il suo esordio autentico come autore a quasi trent'anni da quello da cantante e - più o meno - chitarrista) e inedito nel suo tratteggiare un uomo pacificato. Del tempo ribelle che fu permangono vestigia in un granitico e rovente *Administrator Bleus* e nel monocorde riffeggiare di *Gentleman In Black*. C'è tanto tango, ci sono schegge di Balcani e di Bosforo, accenni di psichedelia, persino un harpsichord che baroccheggia. C'è addirittura, ad aprire, una *Ballad Of The Rue De la Lune* sull'orlo del jingle-jangle. All'Alex Chilton dei Big Star sarebbe piaciuta un casino. ■



Memphis Flyer



Panther Burns Returns



Tav Falco

It's not possible to overstate the influence that Panther Burns has had on Memphis music since they roared into existence in 1979. The band set the template for the Memphis underground that has mutated and thrived ever since. Whether contemporary Memphis rockers know it or not, they all owe a debt to that original chaotic, noisy groove.

Leader Tav Falco got his start as a backup dancer in Jim Dickinson's Mud Boy and the Neutrons. "He embodied Memphis music like no other; he lived it, breathed it, and gave birth to a good part of it," says Falco, who went on to team up with Alex Chilton, then adrift in the wreckage of Big Star, and drummer Ross Johnson in a group that set out to upend Memphis music by raking the roots of rock and soul over the coals of the punk spirit.

"Panther Burns are the missing link between earlier musical forms and the current world," Falco says. "We would say, 'You composed it, and we decomposed it.'" Their influences ran far afield. "I was going to the Paradise Club and listening to soul music. I was

listening to country blues and avant-gardists like Karlheinz Stockhausen, Sun Ra's Solar Myth Arkestra, Eric Dolphy, people like that. When I started Panther Burns, it was coming back to a form that I had gotten away from," Falco says.

Recordings of the band's early performances and their 1981 album *Behind the Magnolia Curtain* are revelatory. Blues and early rock songs, and even tangos, are cut down to their core and slathered in reverb, feedback, and random synthesizer noises. Perhaps the nearest contemporary analog to their early sound would be Animal Collective's bizarre noise-folk, but Panther Burns has always defied description.

The band's intentionally sloppy style made them a polarizing presence. On their first local TV appearance, they were publicly berated by host Marge Thrasher as "the worst sound to ever come out on television." They became the darlings of the nascent Memphis punk scene, playing legendary shows at the Well, and were the opening-night headliner at its successor, the Antenna Club. After refusing to allow a Budweiser banner to hang behind them at the Beale Street Music Festival, Falco started Counterfest.

"This was the underground in Memphis, where not only musicians but visual artists, graphic artists, sculptors, performance artists came together and created our own festival in a different location every year," he says. "We were the anti-environment in Memphis."

But at the same time they were leading psychedelic bacchanals, they were introducing audiences to Memphis' overlooked musical heritage. They played alongside such performers as R.L. Burnside, Mississippi Fred McDowell, and Furry Lewis.

"We brought Charlie Feathers onstage to play with us for the first time when the Memphis music establishment thought he was just a quack," he says. "I think Memphis is a lot more aware [now] than when Panther Burns started of its own cultural integrity and how that needs to be cultivated. It's not just another commodity that can be used up and tossed out like yesterday's papers. If Panther Burns did have an influence, it was in that area."

These days, Falco lives in Vienna, Austria, and serves as a sort of expat ambassador for Memphis music. "Memphis has opened a lot of doors for me all over the world. I've toured with the band in Australia and in Europe from Moscow to Barcelona, from Sicily to Oslo."

With an all-European lineup, Falco has continued to explore musically, with a new album, *Conjurations: Seance for Deranged Lovers*, just released in the United States. "This record is the masterpiece of the Panther Burns," Falco says. "It is composed of all original songs drawn from real-life incidents: ranging from a steamy tango, 'Secret Rendezvous,' to an electric noise-driven indictment of Wall Street entitled 'Administrator Blues.'"

Memphis Photos

SEE LARGER



PHOTO BY MICHAEL DONAHUE

Tav Falco (second from right) brought his Panther Burns band to Memphis for the Center for Southern Folklore's Memphis Music & Heritage Festival (from left): Peter Mavrogeorgis, Billy Mitchell, Gina Lee and Amanda Morelli.

Singer/guitarist Tav brought his Panther Burns group to Memphis for the annual event. The band, which includes Peter Mavrogeorgis on lead guitar, Amanda Morelli on bass and Billy Mitchell on drums, played Saturday on the Greyhound Stage at Gayoso and Peabody Place at the two-day event that ended Sunday.

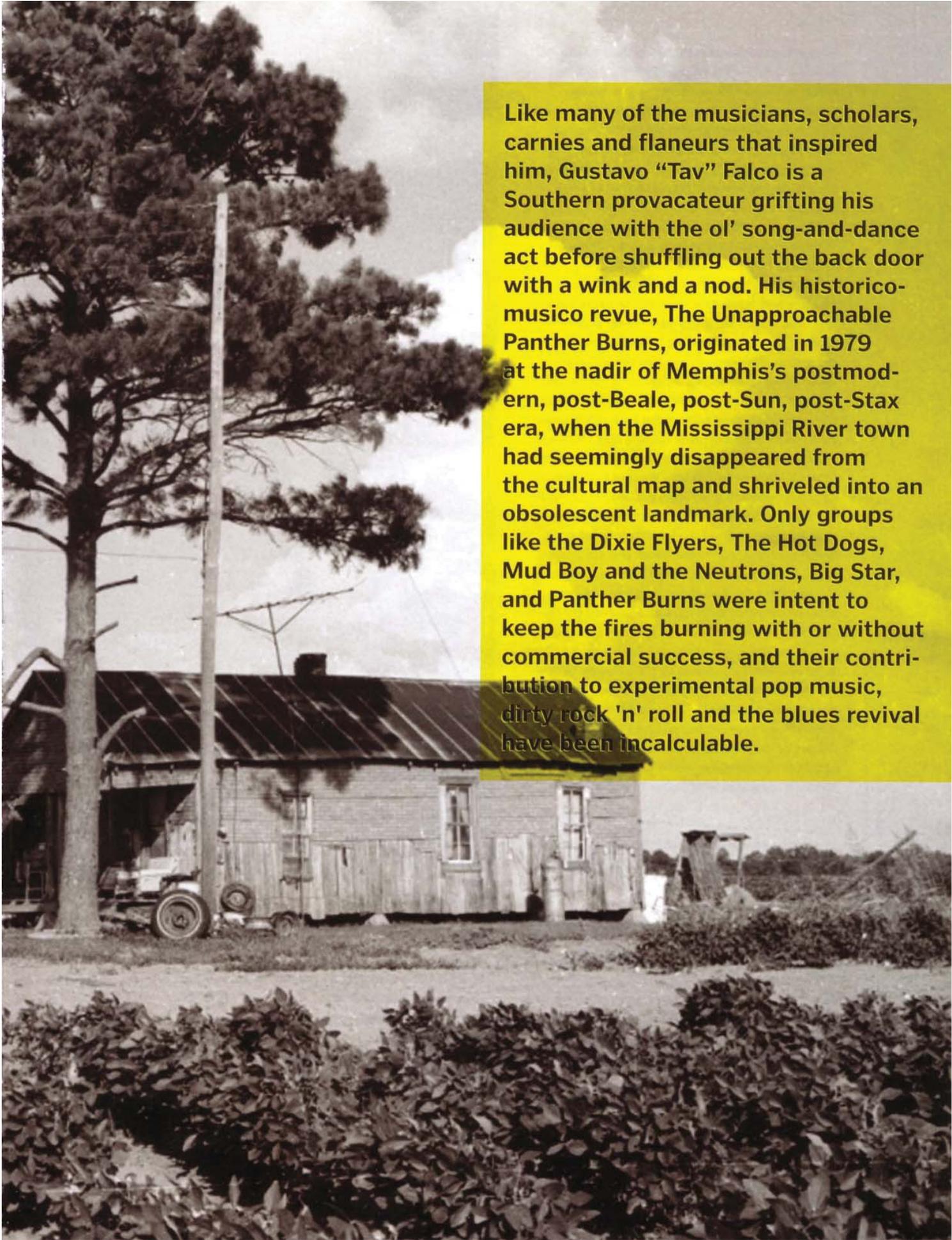
Memphis Music & Heritage Festival featured rock, rap, soul, blues and pop, but it's probably safe to say Tav Falco and Gina Lee were the only couple doing the tango on stage. Tav and Gina were dressed to the nines.

- Michael Donahue 2013

TAV FALCO

by ERIK MORSE





Like many of the musicians, scholars, carnies and flaneurs that inspired him, Gustavo "Tav" Falco is a Southern provocateur grifting his audience with the ol' song-and-dance act before shuffling out the back door with a wink and a nod. His historico-musico revue, *The Unapproachable Panther Burns*, originated in 1979 at the nadir of Memphis's postmodern, post-Beale, post-Sun, post-Stax era, when the Mississippi River town had seemingly disappeared from the cultural map and shriveled into an obsolescent landmark. Only groups like the Dixie Flyers, The Hot Dogs, Mud Boy and the Neutrons, Big Star, and Panther Burns were intent to keep the fires burning with or without commercial success, and their contribution to experimental pop music, dirty rock 'n' roll and the blues revival have been incalculable.

Falco spent his formative years in the country between Gurdon and Whelen Springs, Arkansas, before landing in Memphis in the late 1960s. Founding the art-action group TeleVista in which he worked alongside arch provocateur, Randall Lyon—both under the tutelage of famed photographer William Eggleston—Falco spent the next decade filming and photographing the city's legendary cadre of blues, rockabilly, and country musicians, expanding his lens to the outer realms of the Mississippi hill country and the Delta. In his travels he documented Sam Phillips, R. L. Burnside, Charlie Feathers, James Carr, Cordell Jackson, and Jessie Mae Hemphill to name but a few. Throughout his thirty-year career in photography, video, film and music, Falco has merged the grainy portraiture of a gonzo documentarian with the spellbinding mythos of a backwoods raconteur. None is more illustrative of this *raison d'être* than the band he founded with fellow musician and Memphian enfant terrible Alex Chilton—The Unapproachable Panther Burns. A reference to an ol' Mississippi tall tale, Panther Burn was a large 19th century plantation outside of Greenville where legend had it a malcontented panther stalked and terrorized the local population until it was corralled into a cane break and set aflame. According to witnesses, the screams coming from the panther were an unholy amalgam of animal lust and divine transubstantiation, which continue to curse the plantation.

I began corresponding with Tav—who now lives in Vienna—in the summer of 2005 shortly before my first excursion to Memphis to begin research for my own book. Since then, we have discussed, debated and pontificated on every topic from the history of the blues to Louis Feuillade's silent serials; from screen sirens of the Italian New Wave to the traditions of Knecht Ruprecht and Krampus.

ERIK MORSE Your work in Panther Burns makes aesthetic connections musically and stylistically between the raucous traditions of the Deep South and the sophisticated traditions of European art and literature. As a musical and cultural historian in your own right, from where do you think the histories of blues and hillbilly music merge with European and Gothic traditions? It really does seem to be everywhere in 20th century American music, from the paradigm of Robert Johnson meeting the Devil at the crossroads to the murder ballads of Hasil Adkins to the skulls and coffins of Screamin' Jay Hawkins.

TAV FALCO Once there was a notion afoot that America was an extension of Europe. As in most such aphoristic statements there is a particle of truth in it. More than other Americans, Southerners, culminating with New Orleans, seem more connected, consciously or unconsciously, to European legacies. The lineages



are there to be traced and ruminated over...the persecutions, the migrations, the witch-hunts, the hangings, the burnings, the exaltations, the apostasies, the betrayals, the avarice, the enslavements. More recently in the last century, further sinister and distorted evocations from devastated lands in Europe entered our consciousness in the shadowed form of Expressionism. Burying-ground ballads, hellhound blues, ghostly military waltzes, vigilante gavottes were played by Southerners who picked

PREVIOUS SPREAD: Sharecropper's shack, Arkansas Highway 71, 1976.
THIS SPREAD: Rural Burnside in his honky tonk, Como, Mississippi, 1974.
All photos by Tav Falco.

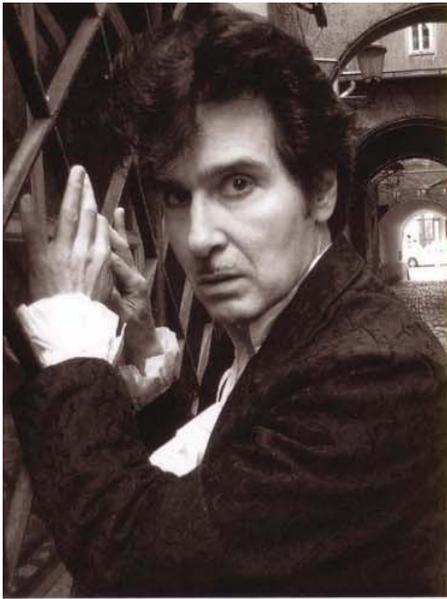


up European instruments and pressed them into the service of music and song that was reflective of parallel events, and of a spiritual nature shared with their European ancestors and brethren.

EM A journalist once said something to the effect of "Tav Falco was postmodern before postmodern was cool..." While Panther Burns was steeped in the tradition of the blues, the band went beyond mere revisionism, *reinventing* obscure songs of the past rather than simply performing old classics—

TF This is the literal part of our mission and how we approach it.

EM Also much of your music has its own sonic palette, using heavy feedback and distortion, synthesizers, and incorporating other kinds of exotica. I'm interested in this lineage of influences which contributed to the experimental-meets-traditional blues of the music. Musicians like Booker T. and the MGs, Ray Charles, and Otis Redding were a focal inspiration on '60s bands like the Velvet Underground, the Stooges, and the



I was introduced to the charismatic, magical individual known as Rural Burnside in the backwoods of north Mississippi. I heard his haunting, trance-dirge guitar and filmed him through an interminable night in his honky tonk and I fell then completely under the spell of his swamp-infused rhythms.

MC5, who also fused elements of the European avant-garde. So once again there is this interplay between the European and southern American traditions . . .

TF In the '60s, one could not help being exposed to everything at once. Histories and glyphs from the European avant-garde overlaid with strains of gypsy violins and Transylvanian harpsichords and with gradients of the Italian Futurists' noise-generating devices were laid out side by side with country blues traditions, hillbilly hollers, and motorcycle exhausts.

EM You've mentioned Artaud in your past as a particular inspiration.

TF Artaud certainly had a profound impact on my thinking. When I first saw the Cramps on stage, I was sure that I recognized the significance and a contemporary manifestation of Artaud's Theater of Cruelty . . . for this is a multifaceted theater beyond hardcore. There must be lyricism, eroticism, Dionysian upheaval and thrashing, masks, and the forked tongues of vipers. This theater is further embodied in our era by groups such as Throbbing Gristle and Fura dels Baus in Spain. Panther Burns, however, are not consciously or unconsciously adherents of the Theater of Cruelty.

EM Might you compare, say, the monologues of Artaud with the pop records of Hasil Atkins, Johnny Ace, James Carr, etcetera?

TF How far the avant-gardists' influence may have extended, outside of France and Spain, and the narrow strata of those who explore the extremes of theater and poetry, to equally marginal Southern musicians and bluesmen is difficult to imagine. Perhaps one can compare the rants of Hasil Adkins in some sort of Artaudian context, but the nature of most of these Southern musicians and bluesmen was essentially agrarian. As disenfranchised as they were, however mistreated they became, as much as their tolerances warped once transplanted to the cities, whatever complexities, anxieties, and uncer-

tainties they underwent, they all possessed a thread to an inner peace, an inner clear spot or memory of it; a pastoral numinous beatific oneness that infused the lives of those who lived or had once lived in the country. The poetry they created, however dark or haunted, was always composed as a measure of their inherent connection to universal mysteries, but expressed in compelling everyday barnyard terms and metaphors. Whereas the awareness of Bataille, Genet, and Artaud was self-conscious, erudite, spewing, disassociated, psychoanalytic, subversive—involving a perception of the so-called natural order of things from an inverted, convoluted and irrationally angular view . . . as Bataille's vision of his syphilitic father's sightless eyes transforming into eggs as he was straining to piss.

EM I understand you collaborated with Charlie Feathers on some projects in the '80s. How exactly did you come to work with him?

TF When I first laid eyes on Charlie Feathers it was behind the lens of the TeleVista video camera. Before long I was hanging out at his house—a tiny brick structure on the outskirts of Memphis with an old Chevy that didn't run parked in the weeds out front. Many mornings I'd find Charlie sitting up in his front room chain-smoking Viceroy's, alone with



a big pan of cat-head biscuits Rosemary had freshly baked before she trundled off to the factory. With the utmost enthusiasm Charlie would play songs for me on an antiquated eight-track tape cartridge player of the type that was once installed in automobiles. During this time he was occasionally driving a dump truck for a gravel company, and at night he was spending his money gambling in shuffle board games on Lamar Avenue at the Rebel Inn Motel and Tavern. Finally Charlie's legs gave out due to advanced diabetes, and he pretty much stayed home except for the occasional shuffle board tournaments or a trip to Bad Bob's Vapors Club to watch his son Bubba playing guitar in the house band.

EM What is your opinion of his role at Sun Records? There's been so much mythologizing on his central importance to the whole scene—

TF By the time I met Charlie he was already being ridiculed as a quack by the professional music establishment in Memphis due to his outspoken behavior on stage denouncing sound technicians and musicians as well. Point is: Charlie knew exactly the sound he was after, and he knew just how brilliant he *could* sound when the conditions were right. After all, when a flatcar load of PA equipment and technologically encumbered amplification gear was stacked up on stage, and trained engineers were darting around like smug laboratory technicians, why couldn't they produce a simple effect like a pleasing echo? Charlie was stone country—not in the least educated—and he was hotheaded, afraid of nothing and nobody. When he came out on stage he invariably captured the audience on the very first note and held them in the palm of his hand till the finish with sparks of charisma shooting out of his body 90 miles in all directions. He never played loudly, but his voice had the vocal power and range of Pavarotti. The only sense of intimidation that he ever felt, I think, was connected to his relationship with Sam Phillips. Charlie was among the first white artists to be recorded at Sun before Johnny Cash and Elvis were recording albums and performing successfully on stage working out of a genre and synthesis so innovative that there was not even a name for it. Charlie rightfully felt responsible for this new form that became known as rockabilly. This was his notion of combining hillbilly mountain music with cotton-patch country blues; the kind of blues that he grew up with as played by and shared with his lifelong friend, the honky-tonk bluesman, Junior Kimbrough. Eventually, Charlie had to leave Memphis to record his music in Cincinnati, and he always confided that Memphis was a seething den of cutthroats.

EM I am fascinated by the style and image of the studio musician as a kind of alchemist sitting in his laboratory channeling unknown forces through various alembics. . . .

TF The image of the artist or musician as alche-

mist is utterly fascinating for me as well. Music—an unseen force—magic, the occult, and alchemy all seem to be interconnected. One cannot deny that the spell of music is mysterious. The first thing I do when I go onstage is cast a spell. Then people surrender to our rhythms and dance without inhibition, and go home thinking about it the next day. Casting a spell in the crucible of a recording studio is another matter.

EM But in their time alchemists were feared as magicians and occultists—in the same way, certain musicians who played bagpipes, the hurdy gurdy, and other drone instruments were executed for invoking evil spirits. Do you see a connection between the status of the noise musician and, say, the Outlaw or the Witch or the Alchemist?

TF In Venice one day I saw a strange man in the shadows of a portico playing bagpipes constructed with white flour sacks and long pitch pipes; he drove part of the instrument with an extended foot pedal. The Italians were captivated by the atmospheric droning he was generating, as was I. He was not entertaining with his deadpan grinding as much he was saturating us with ancient, penetrating, and ominously wheezing tonalities that could not be easily forgotten or dismissed. In our work I have witnessed Panther Burns polarize audiences—those reaching out in ecstatic embrace side by side with others spewing howls of contempt and derision. An overt, but no less subliminal reaction as that generated by the bagpipe player.

EM You've mentioned your connections with female rockabilly and blues musicians like Jessie Mae Hemphill, Cordell Jackson, and Memphis Minnie. However, the contribution of women, and, in a larger sense, the feminine mystique seems scarce in the rough 'n' tumble world of rockabilly—

TF Jesse Mae Hemphill and Memphis Minnie were country-blues artists. Cordell Jackson was more of a rock 'n' roll player than rockabilly. Yet she was one of the noisiest, most spontaneous thrashers of an electric guitar (a red Hagstrom) that I have seen on stage anywhere of any gender. Extraordinary. She attacked the guitar like a field hand driving a post hole, while her femininity remained intact and uncompromised.

EM You started your career as a film documentarian in an art-action group called TeleVista, traveling around the South in search of blues and country figures before deciding to pick up the guitar yourself. I'm guessing it was through that work that you encountered so many great musicians like Charlie or Rural Burnside?

TF I was introduced to the charismatic, magical individual known as Rural Burnside in the backwoods of north Mississippi. Upon hearing his haunting, trance-dirge guitar tonalities, we managed to film him through an interminable night in his honky tonk and I fell then completely under the spell of his

swamp-infused rhythms. I had never heard anything quite like these snaking, lyrical, melodious strains of erotic yearning and torment that seemed to flow effortlessly from his body and from his detuned and decorticated electric guitar. His honky tonk was more like a secular church. Sharecroppers and their women came there for serious merrymaking, for the voluptuous guitar sounds, howling vocalizations as heard from the seemingly farthest reaches and corners of hell itself, and they came for the camaraderie, for the chicken frying all night in an iron skillet, for the endless cases of cold Schlitz, and they came from miles around to wager on the vagaries of the tumbling dice shaking in a leather dice horn, and for the girls working the back room. At some point during this period I began to see no separation between what was in front of the camera and what was behind it, no separation between the observer and the observed.

As a youth I had acquired a cheap Sears Silvertone guitar but never learned how to really play it, I only made sounds on it, because I had no live models to learn from. Eventually, I traded it for a Webcor field tape recorder. During these times when I encountered Burnside and Charlie Feathers and others, I had models playing before me for the first time. And I had made films and tapes of them playing, so I could now play back their sound and picture ad infinitum. It was then, and it still is, just as natural to reach for a funky guitar as it was to pick up a film or video camera.

EM Getting back to Memphis—I understand it was during the time you were making the transition from TeleVista to Panther Burns that you met Alex Chilton. Had you already heard of him around town before you guys began working together?

TF “The Letter” I had heard on the radio, but I had little awareness of a group called the Boxtops. The woods were full of hit records in Memphis and rock ‘n’ roll stars on every corner. During the ‘60s and ‘70s I was listening to cotton patch blues and to Karlheinz Stockhausen and Sun Ra.

EM Did you know [music producer] Jim Dickinson? Wasn’t he a one-man institution in Memphis back in those days?

TF Jim Dickinson is hardly a one-man institution, rather he is representative of a community of artists and their audiences. Jim understands the axiom that for there to be great poets, there must be great audiences. In that sense, Jim Dickinson is a spokesman for “the people” in the most poetic and robustly independent and American sense.

EM After all the conflicting stories I’ve heard of your solo debut during the farewell performance of Dickinson’s band, Mud Boy & the Neutrons—where you supposedly played a chainsaw and destroyed a guitar—would you mind describing what transpired that evening?

TF This was to be the last-waltz performance of Mud Boy at the famous vaudeville house of the south, the Orpheum Theater at Main and Beale Streets. Of course, Mud Boy did not terminate with this show, and is still with us. I had been appearing as a dancer with Mud Boy & the Neutrons and as a performer within the context of the art-action troupe, Big Dixie Brick Company, which had formed parallel to Mud Boy and as an appendage. On this occasion I felt I should deliver a gesture symbolic of the splitting asunder of a farewell performance by a rock ‘n’ roll band. I asked Jim Dickinson if I might make a statement between acts. Thereupon, I prepared the stage behind the curtain with two straight-backed chairs center stage, and an electric skill saw placed on a stool stage left and an electric chain saw placed on a stool stage right. On a stand further downstage, I placed a large black-and-white television monitor facing the audience, and hooked into it a portable video camera operated by Little Bill, the nine-year-old son of photographer William J. Eggleston. The curtain rose, and I stepped out alone onstage dressed in a black frock coat and tails and white gloves with the finger tips cut away so I could pick and chord the electric Silvertone guitar I had purchased from a neighbor for \$5 and which I had plugged into a 1956 Stromberg-Carlson monophonic amplifier scavenged from a phonograph apparatus. The amp was output to a Bell and Howell motion-picture projector cabinet housing a 12-inch speaker which in turn was captured by a microphone connected to the massive sound re-enforcement PA system of the theater. As I stepped up to the vocal microphone placed center stage, I noticed three formidable broadcast TV cameras from the network affiliates moving close in on me. I then launched into a rudimentary rendition of the “Bourgeois Blues” by Leadbelly picked in the country blues style of Rural Burnside. At the height of this anthem, and with the audience becoming increasingly restive under the avalanche of verbal innuendo and detuned guitar dissonance, I produced a police whistle from my coat pocket and began to blow it in the shrillest fashion possible. I then unstrapped the Silvertone, laid it across two chairs, and picked up the electric skill saw. With the circular steel blade whirling, I sawed halfway through the back of the guitar. Throwing down the whizzing circle saw I reached for the electric chain saw, wielded it overhead, and lay its grinding chain deep into the wood of the guitar, finishing it off until wire, knobs, tuning keys, and wood splinters were flying everywhere. The ensuing exploding, popping, grating, frying sounds seemed to be gaining in an uncontrollable intensity raised to a terrifying threshold, and then poof! It was over. ☉

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A Quietus Interview

Vienna And Voodoo: Tav Falco Interviewed

Kris Needs , November 17th, 2014 14:26

Pure cinema is black and white, mythology is truth and the American military industrial complex is destroying us. Panther Burns' Tav Falco discusses his new film, *Urania Descending*, among many other things. Kris Needs listens and learns. Photographs courtesy of Tav Falco



"I thought of Urania, the muse of the heavens, the muse of the stars and celestial movements, and of her avatar as she comes to Earth. But she comes to Earth in a most unlikely form; of a disaffected young American woman in the southern region of America on the Arkansas river in Little Rock."

A warm mid-September Saturday afternoon and London's West End is teeming with antsy shoppers, but the rear bar deep inside the Bloomsbury Hotel is like another world, harking back to a more elegant time. Sultry 50s Coltrane complements the low lighting and flickering candles but, although every table is set for dinner, the bar is empty - apart from the secluded corner alcove where Tav Falco is sitting with partner Gina Lee, sipping a manhattan cocktail.

The proprietor of the Panther Burns name and legend is in London for this evening's premiere of his first feature-length movie *Urania Descending*, just round the corner at the venerable arts mecca The Horse Hospital.

This remarkable labour of love was over three years in the making, coming after his acclaimed 2011 book *Ghosts Behind The Sun: Splendor, Enigma & Death: Mondo Memphis Vol 1* and before a sizzling new Panther Burns album called *Command Performance*, to be released in February as part of a new deal with the Twenty Stone Blatt label, which will also see the reissue of his gem-studded back catalogue. If that wasn't enough, Falco has also compiled a soon-to-be-released book of his photographs and a CD - *Tav Falco's Wild & Exotic World Of Musical Obscurities* for German label Stag-O-Lee, which presents an evocative selection of the primal rockabilly, dramatic pop, arcane blues and flickering jazz which has played a major role at some point in his remarkable life.

With his trademark quiff, immaculate suit and two-tone leather shoes, Falco is an engaging, softly spoken southern gentleman with an underlying intensity born out of a desire to explore the artistic fields that stimulate his ever-questing muse. While all of his relentless activities receive a rare degree of care and attention, today he is focussed on his self-described "black and white filmic poem infused with metaphor and mood". Later we'll leave the Bloomsbury Hotel and walk the few blocks to The Horse Hospital, where the evening will start with Falco and Gina Lee dancing the tango to three musical pieces before the screening; the dancing is another long-standing passion.

Sitting through *Urania Descending* for the first time conjures a gamut of emotions, starting with sadness and sympathy at Gina Lee's plight in the redneck-infested shopping malls of Little Rock, Arkansas (close to Falco's birthplace). She spontaneously buys a one-way ticket to Vienna after spotting its romantic image on a poster. Most of the film's intrigue takes place in the city which Falco has called home for several years, as Gina frequents Cafe Central and the Hotel Orient, and becomes

fatally ensnared by Karl-Heinz Von Riegl and his plot to recover the Nazi plunder buried deep in Lake Atter. The film's surreal atmosphere is enhanced by its jumping energy, flashpot glitches and decaying, timeless ambience.

Hailing from the deep south, coming of age in Memphis and now living in Vienna, Falco works from a unique perspective; this becomes even more apparent as he elaborates on this latest labour of love. He describes how the idea for *Urania Descending* came from watching expressionist films at the Cinemathèques in Vienna and Paris. The latter added the short films he started making in 1971 with *71 Salvage* into their permanent collection in 2003. Others include *Shadetree Mechanic* (1986), *Memphis Beat* (1989), *Helene Of Memphis* (1991), *Born Too Late* (1993) and *Love's Last Warning* (1996).

"I'd made a number of short films, but at this point felt like I could do a big feature movie," he explains. "I had already sat down for six weeks in August three years ago and written a real screenplay for this film, but I didn't plan to sit down and write a screenplay then the next month make the movie. The inspiration came from a variety of sources and influences that just came together before the screenplay started coming out."

Ultra-prolific French silent filmmaker Louis Feuillade is a major influence on the film. Although he made over 600 films between 1906-1924, Feuillade is best remembered for the 1915-16 series *Les Vampires* with Musidora who, according to Tav, was "the celebrated French actress who dressed in a black body-sock, wore a mask and stole the diamonds off the necks of the most elegant mademoiselles." Feuillade casts an even bigger shadow over Falco's film with his five-part *Fantômas* series, released between 1913-14, including such episodes as *The Man In Black*, *Haunted Villa* and *Burgling Judge*.

Falco also cites "the expressionist influence of Fritz Lang, who grew up around the corner from where I live now, and Erik Von Stroheim, who grew up in the next quartier. Joseph Von Sternberg was also in the area of Vienna where I now live. These directors and filmmakers were immigrants who had gone to America when the Third Reich took over in Vienna. It's funny how these tyrants and madmen can sway the popular public opinion to go in their direction, but this happened in Vienna; similar to Great Britain and America later."

Falco showed his screenplay to Paris-based Lamplighter Films, having appeared in their documentary on celebrated Memphis photographer William J Eggleston, a friend of Falco's "who taught me photography, pictures and how to use a moving picture camera". They felt the screenplay was so dense it could happily accommodate three feature films, but offered funding after Tav insisted he could turn it all into one body of work.

He knew where he wanted to film. "I thought, it's going to be an intrigue, and it's going to take place in America and Vienna. It can't be just an ordinary intrigue, it has to have a poetic aspect. I thought, look at the muses and look at the muse Urania, the muse of the heavens, the muse of the stars and celestial movements, and of her avatar as she comes to Earth. She has not been exploited and mined so deeply in the literature of the world. Urania comes to Earth in the most unlikely form of a disaffected young American woman in the southern region of America on the Arkansas river in Little Rock.

"This young woman becomes somehow alienated and disaffected by the treatment she's receiving, fed up with this kind of barbaric machismo from these redneck individuals. She's trying to get this redneck who's just accosted her out of her mind, so impulsively puts on her white go-go boots and drives her BMW convertible down to the shopping mall. She walks into a travel agency and sees a travel poster on the wall and sees Vienna. There are two white horses pulling an elegant Fiacre carriage by the blue Danube and she says to the agent, 'I want a one-way ticket to Vienna on the next flight.' She gives the agent her credit card and next we see her flying off into the grey horizon towards Vienna."

After Gina Lee arrives in Vienna, the city becomes a major star of the movie. He was particularly happy to film around the Attersee in Austria's Lake District in the foothills of the Alps, where the movie reaches its dramatic climax.



"I'd heard of this lake where the artists of Vienna would go every year to walk on the country lanes around its clear blue waters. We filmed the ending at the villa where Gustav Klimt went every summer with his companion Emily [in the late 19th century] and made many of his famous pastoral paintings. Her father was the monarchy's court carpenter and he built this villa in the special style of Attersee lake architecture."

The Attersee provides the backdrop to one of the film's major plot strands. As Falco puts it, "It's an intrigue predicated on Nazi treasure being carried by an aircraft on Hitler's last mail dispatch from Berlin to Munich, containing gold and platinum ingots in a cargo of worthless mail which was shot down by American forces over Lake Atter. That treasure is a metaphor which symbolises all of the treasure hoarded in all of the treasuries of Great Britain and Fort Knox in America.

"The treasure was shot down then sought by Karl-Heinz Von Riegl, the grandson of the SS officer in charge of the radio dispatches of these aircraft. He is one of the film's central characters, obsessed all his life by this treasure buried in the bottom of the Attersee. His grandfather bequeathed a map to

him, and he knows the treasure's still there, beneath the dark, treacherous waters, buried under trees which have fallen into the lake over the decades. Many divers lost their lives going down searching for that treasure. Von Riegl hired his own divers to go down and search for it, but they could never find it. He was obsessed by it; just like Wall Street and Washington are obsessed with greed and money and power.

"They're after those maritime rights off the coast of Gaza. They're after the oil and gas reserves underneath the water that Palestine owns and that they have licensed to British companies now. The film's a metaphor for all of this. It's nothing profound. It's the same prosaic story over and over again, told over the generations. We think we're civilised today but we have not progressed beyond the era of Genghis Khan. There's no real advance. Do you think we have progressed one iota since the golden age of drama and philosophy and literature in ancient Greece? We have technology, we have new ways of printing and transmitting our thoughts through telecommunications and electronics, but we haven't advanced as human beings, or in civilisation, and all our political structures have failed us.

"This is not a cynical view. It's an objective view and I'm not an objective person really, but even I can see that. This is what our film has to deal with, because art represents something that has to be true and exists in everyday life. Even the muses, even mythology is all reflected from the human condition and human experience. It's of the imagination yet it has to have the truth of everyday life or no one is really interested in it. People think mythology doesn't really exist, that it's only a story, but it's the truth. It's based on truth lived out over the generations. Myth is more real. Myth is the reality, the inner reality.

"The story itself is not particularly profound. The poetic gradient comes with the parallel to Urania, but the story itself is like the phantom of Fantômas. Why did the silent movie cinema series of Louis Feuillard capture the imaginations of surrealist poets, painters and artists? These were simple stories of a master thief, a mastermind, a genius. His story was not that of an intellectual, like Pizarro who wrote profusely about phantoms or Louis Aragon the poet, yet they were fascinated by this cinematic character. It's my theory that he presaged the criminal masterminds that came later, like Adolf Hitler. Fritz Lang presaged a criminal mastermind in his *Dr Mabuse* series of films before anyone knew the name of Hitler. The surrealists understood something was coming.

"In America we had the equivalent which came much later, because America's a little behind. We had the George Bushes, that whole dynasty, these monstrosities of nature, these criminal masterminds who built up a reich called the HIGs - Hoodlums In Government. Now we have Barack Obama, the president that we most believed in, who was going to redeem the United States. We all voted for him, we all believed in him but then he became a black anathema, more hideous than the Bushes. I don't see how he and Michelle can sleep at night with the drone warfare, with the women and children being destroyed in the Middle East by the American military industrial complexes. This, in a sense, is part of *Urania Descending* because we have a simple intrigue predicated on those very things that are the objects of lust and greed and power from the Third Reich to the present regimes in Great Britain and the United States, with all the lust for power and money built on the industrial Moloch that rules these people's minds and governments.

"My film is an expressionist film; that which comes from the interior, like voodoo music. If you listen to the music of voodoo the lyrics are silly, they don't mean anything, but it's a way to get to the dark waters of the unconscious. That's what my film is about. It brings something out. You leave it with a little residual feeling inside. The story is diverting, but it's the images, it's the shrieks, it's the ecstasies, the little moments, the little epiphanies that are important. I want to entertain people a little bit but there's an undercurrent and that's what matters. That's what means something, whether people realise it or not. It's not profound, it's an undercurrent. That's the music of the Panther Burns too; it's an undercurrent."

The physical process of gathering materials and getting the film developed to modern standards became a saga in itself. It's shot in black and white because, Falco says, "Pure cinema can't be colour, it has to be black and white." He bought some old motion-picture film "at a good price" from a laboratory in Prague, who also ended up processing the film after he befriended them. When the film was finished, the next step was to get a digital transfer so it could be released. After the Austrian Film Commission rejected the movie and refused to pay for the transfer, Falco went to the Upper Austrian Film Commission in Linz. Happily, "they gave us the money to make the transfer. I didn't go to a lab. I bought the equipment in Germany and had it shipped to Vienna and made the transfer with my own hands with a special projector and special software and equipment.

"The image is distressed. It looks like it's been around for 80 years, but I didn't plan that, it's just the way it worked out. I couldn't clean the film the whole time. I had to put my hands on it, so it got dirty but, like my band the Panther Burns, we play dirty music sometimes. The film image quality may not be the cleanest but the imagery of the muse Urania redeems it."

Falco's long-running love of tango is also strongly evident in the movie, after being part of his live show for years and also evident on the latest compilation. He first became exposed to tango music and dancing on his first tours with Panther Burns in Europe, and started dancing himself in the 90s. In 2000 he spent four months studying tango in Buenos Aires.

"It was a very fertile time," he says now. "I danced every day; as soon as I got off the plane I was dancing. I saw a lot of music and a lot of musicians. I began to discover the thematic and melodic parallels between Argentine tango and blues and early jazz in New Orleans. I'm especially talking about the thematic parallels in the blues - unrequited love, betrayal, brother against brother. Tango, however, is a music of the port of Buenos Aires. Just like the port of New Orleans, where black people were brought to work on plantations in Mississippi and Louisiana, they were brought to Buenos Aires to work in Argentina.

"American hot jazz and blues in New Orleans is a product of African culture brought into America, the same as it was to Buenos Aires. In New Orleans it was black and white musicians picking up the instruments of European music, including the guitar, the tuba, the contrabass and flute. In Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas, black music was drums and guitars, once in a while a flute. It was mainly jigs and blues."

Dancing the tango in 2014 provides a link with the hellfire rockabilly of Falco's very first album, *Beyond The Magnolia Curtain*, recorded as The Unapproachable Panther Burns in Memphis in 1979 and released on Rough Trade (after an initial album recorded at Sam Phillips' Sun Studios had been rejected). At this point, Alex Chilton was still in the band, which started as an 'art damage' project, handling drums as well as guitar. But the album's most unusual and often overlooked

element was the presence on four tracks of the Tate County Fife and Drum Corps, featuring the late blues pioneer and future She-Wolf Jessie Mae Hemphill on marching snare.

"This was before she called herself the She-Wolf," recalls Falco. "They recorded on four tracks. No American band has ever done that. It never happened before and it hasn't happened since. It was totally outside. It was polyrhythmic, with three drummers marching around the studio. The engineer went completely crazy trying to get it on tape. He was in a state of shock for the whole session. We had to take that studio over.

"That's what distinguished that record. A lot of people like *Magnolia Curtain*, but they like it for all the wrong reasons. They say it was so loose and so sloppy, that was because we had two guitar players playing drums - Alex Chilton and Jim Duckworth - and the marching band on four tracks."

The movie also features another of Tav's old Memphis muckers, the great Charlie Feathers, whose 'Jungle Fever' appears (and is also covered on the new Panther Burns album). Mention of Feathers prompts another discourse from Tav on the roots of rock & roll. "Charlie said that the music he plays is a synthesis between the cotton-patch blues that he grew up with outside of Memphis and mountain music; the European tradition of hillbilly music in the Tennessee hills which Sam Phillips eventually recorded. They later called it rock & roll and rockabilly, but they had no name for it when they first recorded it. They didn't have the name rock & roll when Elvis recorded it. They took all those records around the gospel stations because there were no rock & roll stations in the south.

"That's one end of how that music's manifestation in the port city of New Orleans parallels thematically and sometimes melodically with the port music of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. [Pioneering Uruguayan tango orchestra leader] Francisco Canaro went to Paris in the 1920s with hot jazz and brought a trumpet and drum set into tango. Before that there was just samba-type drums. In 'St Louis Blues' by WC Handy, there are two verses that are written into the sheet music as 'tango'.

"All I'm saying is there are overlaps. Maybe this is part of the reason why I was attracted to tango. Having grown up in the American south and spent 17 years in Memphis, somehow I was totally fascinated with this music of Argentina called tango and the dramatic sensual gradients in the dance,

which is so expressive of a defined relationship; a sophisticated relationship between a man and a woman. That does not exist in popular dance in the US, but in Buenos Aires and Argentina it became a way of life and a way of expression. It was a ritual of courtship as blues dances were in America, but it took on a more profound meaning. Also the fact there were so many European immigrants in Buenos Aires. Like New Orleans and New York, it became a melting pot of European and black culture.

"The dance itself became very elaborated and defined. Every movement in the dance became a gesture of an aspect of a relationship. Each movement and figure in tango had a name. It's identified. The corte, quebrada, gancho, boleó... those steps and figures are studied and cultivated. Dancers spend their whole lives dancing, like a musician learning scales, to keep learning and practising those movements. That's the basis of the dance.

"It's also an improvisational dance. What Gina and I did at the London premiere of *Urania Descending* were improvised dances based on a vocabulary of figures, just like Lester Young might have a vocabulary of jazz riffs to play on tenor saxophone. He didn't play the same way every time. It was a vocabulary that he played according to his mood that day. You can do a choreography but that's a stage show. What we did was an improvisation from our vocabulary. We did a beginning and an end, but everything that came in the middle was drawn from a vocabulary.

"The dancing in the film figured in the characters. It's like Josef Von Sternberg in *The Devil Is A Woman* with Marlene Dietrich [1935]. He brought Dietrich to America and made six films with her. When she sang songs in his films it wasn't a Broadway production number; the songs came out of her character in the film. The dancing in *Urania Descending* comes out of the characters who are portrayed in the story in this film. I didn't set out to make a movie about tango, I set out to make a film about this Nazi plunder that was shot down in the lake and the characters involved in it. These characters happen to be involved in the demimonde of Vienna and they dance the tango. Tango goes way back to the 1920s in Vienna and these people in the film were all exposed to tango. I like the way a dance from one culture is danced in another culture. It takes on a more interesting aspect."

The film ends with Diego desperately trying to find Gina Lee in the waters of the lake before a large question mark flashes on the screen. After this cliffhanger, surely there has to be a second part?

"I've already been thinking about that: part two of a trilogy. I already have ideas about how we're going to pick up the story. It's going to be more elaborate, not so much the simple folk poem part one is but more complex, more convoluted with many more reversals, but dealing with the same characters, like the concierge in the hotel. There are many unanswered questions that will be addressed in part two."

Urania Descending has its Vienna premiere on December 10 at Metro Kino. Tav Falco's Wild & Exotic World of Musical Obscurities is released on Stag-O-Lee Records

TAV FALCO

Like many of the musicians, scholars, carnies and flaneurs that inspired him, Tav Falco is a Southern provocateur grifting his audience with the ol' song and dance act before shuffling out the back door with a wink and a nod. His historico-musico revue, The Unapproachable Panther Burns, originated in 1979 at the nadir of Memphis' postmodern, post-Beale, post-Sun, post-Stax era, when the Mississippi River town had seemingly disappeared from the cultural map and shriveled into an obsolescent landmark. Only groups like the Dixie Flyers, Mud Boy and the Neutrons, Big Star and Panther Burns were intent to keep the fires burning with or without commercial success, and their contribution to experimental pop music, dirty rock 'n roll and the blues revival have been incalculable.

Falco spent his formative years in the country near Whelen Springs, Arkansas, before landing in Memphis in the late 1960s. Co-founding with decadent poet Randall Lyon, the art action group TeleVista in which he worked alongside renowned photographer William Eggleston, Falco spent the next decade filming and photographing the city's legendary cadre of country blues and rockabilly musicians, artists, and politicians, expanding his lens to the outer realms of the Mississippi hill country and the Delta. In his travels he documented Sam Phillips, R.L. Burnside, Phineas Newborn, Jr., James Carr, Cordell Jackson and Jessie Mae Hemphill to name but a few. Throughout his career in photography, video, film and music, Falco has merged the grainy portraiture of a gonzo documentarian with the spellbinding mythos of a backwoods raconteur. None is more illustrative of this *raison d'etre* than the band he founded with fellow musician and Memphian enfant terrible Alex Chilton – The Unapproachable Panther Burns. A reference to an ol' Mississippi tall tale, Panther Burn was a large 19th century plantation outside of Greenville where legend had it a cunning panther stalked and terrorized the local population until it was corralled into a cane break and set aflame. According to witnesses, the screams coming from the panther were an unholy amalgam of animal lust and divine transubstantiation, which continue to curse the plantation.

Playing in the Memphis cotton lofts - wood-lined structures Falco likened to a guitar sounding box - Panther Burns developed their own tone science and gut-bucket approach to musical forms. The unbridled Panther Burns shows, which often featured guests like Charlie Feathers and Jim Dickinson, became monumental, renegade events. Ever-committed to preserving indigenous music and furthering new and daring expression, in 1985 Falco and the Panther Burns founded Counter Fest, an annual festival showcasing the best and the worst of the Memphis arts underground. The band quickly became a favorite in New York City, as well, where No Wave was emerging at the time. Rough Trade Records enthused over the band and released Panther Burns' debut album *Behind The Magnolia Curtain* in 1981.

After twelve LP and EP releases and countless globetrotting tours, Falco expatriated to Europe, where he found his most embracing audiences along the Seine and Danube rivers. The lure of the Mississippi was not far from his mind when he finally chose the river towns of Paris and Vienna as outposts of mother Memphis. The dramatic flair of his music has always colluded with cinema, and Falco was destined to step foot in its dream-factory. In addition to his own expressionist-inspired films "Shadetree Mechanic" (1986),

“Memphis Beat” (1989), “Born Too Late” (1993), “Masque of Hotel Orient” (with Kenneth Anger, 1996). Falco appeared in the unredeemed Jerry Lee Lewis biopic *Great Balls Of Fire* (1989) and portrayed the leader of a motorcycle gang in the award-winning rock’n’roll road movie *Highway 61* (1993), riding his own vintage Norton motorbike. Among numerous other movies, he appeared in *By the Ways*, a documentary film about color photographer William Eggleston, and enjoyed a retrospective of his own short films in April 2006, at the Cinémathèque Française. In 2014 Lamplighter Films/Frenzi Films co-released first feature film directorial effort of Falco entitled, *Urania Descending*, which has premiered in London, Vienna, Paris, and USA.

Falco’s interest in Latin sounds has evolved into an ardor for Argentine tango. Becoming a tango dancer himself, Falco is regularly gliding in baroque ballrooms of Vienna’s many palaces and in the milongas of Paris and Buenos Aires. The profound influence of tango is evident in Falco’s albums, as woven through songs of unrequited love, betrayal, and lost causes. As *The New York Times* has declared of unorthodox preservationist Falco, “(He is) a singer, guitarist and researcher of musical arcane who hasn’t let his increasingly technical expertise and idiomatic mastery compromise the clarity of his vision.”

Falco continues to perform with Panther Burns, appearing at events like the It Came From Memphis series at The Barbican Centre in London in 2005. Appearances include 2006’s ArthurNIGHTS Festival at the historic Palace Theatre in Los Angeles, 2007’s command performance at Fondation Cartier in Paris, 2008’s headlining at the Strade Blu Festival in Tredozio, Italy, 2009’s Alternatilla Festival in Mallorca, Spain, the Barreiro Rocks Festival in Lisbon 2010, a London showcase at the 100 CLUB in 2011, the and multimedia event at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art and Music in New Orleans in 2012, along with the Byron Bay International Blues Festival in Australia in 2013. In 2015 Falco was invited to appear at Silencio - the private club of David Lynch in Paris.

Recorded in Rome, the new studio album, COMMAND PERFORMANCE, was released in March 2015 by UK label TSB Records. The lineup includes guitarist Mario Monterosso, keyboardist Francesco D’Agnolo, Drummer, Riccardo Colasante, bassist Giuseppe Sangirardi. Falco’s exceptional voice, described by one journalist, as sounding like Marlene Dietrich under torture, evokes the phenomenal fires of the Panther Burns. This new album is a real statement of intent from a man and his band who hit new peaks of performance - showcasing not only stunningly varied selections of the obscure and the well known from the blues palette, but an amazingly broad selection of new original material as well.

A new FRENZI re-Issue series of the Panther Burns catalog is now underway with LTM records in the UK in 2015 beginning with the introductory release, *HIP FLASK*.

Equal parts primal, early rock’n’roll, deviant hill country blues & avant-garde art - TAV FALCO’s PANTHER BURNS are ramshackle, raw, unholy & utterly amazing. Panther Burns is not just Music... it is a state of mind. Tav Falco is one of the truly original and romantic forces in American music - the voice that America lost and found. He is tender and virile, flamboyant, witty and dangerous. Falco brings daggers back to the stage. HE is the one who always holds out a hand to the enemy.

Tav Falco Filmography

Great Balls of Fire 1989 USA, dir. Jim McBride with Winona Ryder
"Memphis Beat" 1990 music clip, dir. Robt. Gordon
The Big Post Office Robbery 1992 Hungary, dir. Sandor Soth
"Born Too Late" 1993 music clip, dir. Rainer Kirberg
Highway 61 1993 Canada, dir. Bruce MacDonald, with Don McKeller & Jello Biafra
"Love's Last Warning" 1996 music clip, dir. Rainer Kirberg
Downtown 81 2001 USA, dir. Edo Bertoglio with Jean Michel Basquiat
Wayne County Rambling 2002 USA, dir. Dan Rose, with Iggy Pop
Le Rouge du Couchant 2003 France, dir. Edgardo Cozarinsky w/Marisa Paredes & Féodor Atkine
By The Ways 2007 France, dir. Cédric Laty with William Eggleston
Urania Descending 2014 Austria, dir. Tav Falco with Via Kali, Peter Reisetger, & Gustavo Falco

Discography

(with band Panther Burns)

Behind the Magnolia Curtain 1981 (Rough Trade/Frenzi)
Blow Your Top 1983 (Animal/Rough Trade/Frenzi)
NOW! 1984 (Au GoGo/Frenzi)
Sugar Ditch Revisited 1985 (New Rose/Frenzi)
Swamp Surfing in Memphis 1986 (Au GoGo/Frenzi)
Shake Rag 1986 (New Rose/Frenzi)
The World We Knew 1987 (New Rose/Frenzi)
Red Devil 1988 (New Rose/Frenzi)
Midnight in Memphis 1989 (New Rose/Frenzi)
Return of the Blue Panther 1990 (New Rose/Frenzi)
Life Sentence in the Cat House 1992 (New Rose/Frenzi)
Highway 61 1993 soundtrack comp. (Intrepid)
Deep in the Shadows 1994 (Marilyn/Frenzi)
Shadow Dancer 1995 (Upstart-Rounder/ Inter- cord/EMI/Frenzi)
Best Of 1996 (New Rose/Frenzi)
Disappearing Angels 1997 (Sympathy/Frenzi)
Panther Phobia 2000 (In The Red/Frenzi)
Conjurations: Séance for Deranged Lovers 2011 (Stag-O-Lee/Frenzi)
Lore & Testament of the Panther Burns, Vol. I 2011 (Stag-O-Lee/Frenzi)
Lore & Testament of the Panther Burns, Vol. II 2012 (Stag-O-Lee/Frenzi)
Live in London @ 100 Club 2012 (Stag-O-Lee/Frenzi)
Tav Falco's Wild & Exotic World of Musical Obscurities 2014 (Stag-O-Lee)
Command Performance 2015 (TSB Records)
A Tav Falco Christmas 2017 (ORG Music)