

Their mutual affection for classic honky-tonk country and soul brought Dave Gonzales and Chris Gaffney together as the Hacienda Brothers.

'After playing high paced for so many years, it's nice to slow down and let the subtleties come out,' Dave Gonzales says.

As the leader of the San Diego-based Paladins, Gonzales has played revved-up, stripped-down rockabilly since the early 1980s. Fellow Californian Chris Gaffney spent those same years playing country and roots rock -- albeit, not as hurriedly -- on his own or with Dave Alvin. In 2003, the two decided to relocate to Tucson, Ariz., and form the Hacienda Brothers, whose self-titled first album was recently released on Koch Records. From the opening track, 'She's Gone,' the influence of the Bakersfield sound that characterized Buck Owens' greatest hits is obvious, including a lightly strummed acoustic guitar, and an ethereal pedal steel guitar backing Gaffney's rich baritone vocal.

'There's a little West Coast,' Gonzales agrees, talking by phone from Florida, 'a little Nashville, a little Muscle Shoals, a little Memphis, mixed together with the Southwestern feeling we get from being down in Tucson a lot.'

That honky-tonk sound played a role in bringing Gonzales and Gaffney together, but not as big a role as Jeb Schoonover. Schoonover is now the duo's manager, but he started as a friend and disc jockey in Tucson who invited each of them separately, when their respective bands passed through town, to appear on his radio show and spin some records. They both chose honky-tonk classics by Owens and Merle Haggard among others, and when the Paladins recorded a few country songs on an album, he encouraged Gonzales to write more.

Gonzales didn't think he could get the Paladins to do more country, and he definitely didn't see them indulging his desire for pedal steel or slow songs. Schoonover encouraged him to get in touch with Gaffney, at the same time telling Gaffney about Gonzales. The story isn't art, and the process wasn't instant -- it took almost 10 years of near misses and weekends of singing and writing together here and there -- but eventually the two got together.

The Hacienda Brothers gives Gaffney a chance to sing country and soul -- something he only gets to do occasionally touring with Dave Alvin -- while it gives Gonzales a break for carrying the load.

'In my other band for the last 20 years, I did all the singing and all the writing,' he says. 'I was really glad to step back and be the second singer or sing harmony parts or just play guitar parts.'

One of the first songs they wrote, Gonzales says, was a waltz, 'I'm So Proud.' 'I had never written a waltz before,' he says. When the band was looking for a producer, they sent 'I'm So Proud' and three other songs. The songs impressed Dan Penn, writer of such hits as the Box Tops' 'Cry Like a Baby,' Aretha's 'Do Right Woman, Do Right Man' and James Carr's 'Dark End of the Street,' so much so that he said, 'I got a brand new Lincoln Continental and I feel like taking me a drive,' Gonzales recalls. He drove to Tucson from Nashville with his wife, mother-in-law and his dog and hung out for two weeks in the fall of 2003. He was also so impressed with Gaffney's soulful voice that he wrote a song, 'The Years That Got Away,' for him to sing.

Gonzales recalls Penn being laidback, but not afraid to tell the musicians what he wanted. When they were cutting 'Saguaro,' a spaghetti western-like instrumental, he stopped the proceedings. 'He walked into the studio and walked right up to me, as close as you absolutely can possibly get, and looked at me dead in the eyes and said, 'Dave, I'm really looking for loneliness,'" Gonzales says.

That phrase not only motivated Gonzales' performance, but it gave him the title for a song he and Penn collaborated on. The morning after the 'Saguaro' recording, the two got up early and drove to a lookout on a mountain outside town to talk about everything under the sun. At some point, Gonzales says, 'we stopped throwing rocks and we went back to the truck, picked up the Spanish guitar I brought, and he started strumming it, gazing out over the horizon.'

The two handed the guitar back and forth and wrote it on the spot. When they got back to the studio, the group recorded the song that afternoon. 'By the time dinnertime rolled around, we were listening to it. That's pretty happening.'

Talking about the experience of making the record, Gonzales is obviously pleased. Besides the excitement of working with someone of Penn's legendary stature, it was clearly gratifying to work with him to put out an album that successfully merges classic country and soul. "He's an old-school cat, and that's how Gaff and I are," Gonzales says.

THE TENNESSEAN | by Nicole Keiper, May 21, 2005

Country Soul

Oh, Brothers! Band's got soul!

Helmed by bandleaders/songwriters Chris Gaffney and Dave Gonzalez, the Hacienda Brothers make that time-tested kind of country-soul stuff that, too often, ain't made like it used to be.

Gaffney's resume includes leading a rootsy combo called The Cold Hard Facts, while Gonzalez played guitar and sang in rockabilly-blues act The Paladins. The two make use of their honed stylistic strengths on The Brothers' self-titled debut, released earlier this year on Koch Nashville. It's a straight-forward mix of old-fashioned twang and throaty wails, crafted with steady, practiced hands.

The disc's soul side was augmented by producer Dan Penn, a Southern soul vet who's worked with Aretha Franklin and Solomon Burke.

All the RAGE (Nashville) | by Heather Johnson, May 19-26, 2005

Roots and rockabilly fans from here to Hamburg are probably pinching themselves upon discovering the Hacienda Brothers, a raucous new combo composed of The Paladins' guitarist/singer-songwriter Dave Gonzalez and Cold Hard Facts frontman/Dave Alvin sideman Chris Gaffney. Sound too good to be true?

It's not. In fact, it's probably better than you can imagine. Because when these two talents came together a few years ago, it created a steamroller effect, fueled by a feisty combination of traditional country and Sam & Dave-style R&B that producer/songwriting great Dan Penn calls "Western soul." "We can play a rock joint, but if someone wants us to play a dancehall in Texas, we can do that too," Gonzalez tells *All the Rage*.

They hit Nashville with their equally exceptional bandmates to give us a dose of their self-titled Koch debut. Splash some cold water on your face and find out why Joe Ely call Hacienda Brothers "perfect."

Dig that western soul from the Hacienda Brothers

The Hacienda Brothers are doing Waylon and Willie proud. The southwestern vintage country duo of Chris Gaffney and Dave Gonzalez work hard to carry the torch of their heroes, while infusing the outlaw sound with a rootsy twist of soul and delta blues with some gritty surf rock licks.

The pair recently released a self-titled debut on Koch Records Nashville, and while the sound may be a new refreshing dip into music's past (they've coined it "western soul"), the story of the eventual union between these two honky tonk stalwarts goes back a long way.

The two met back in the eighties in Los Angeles at the famous now-defunct club The Palomino, whose stage was graced by the likes of Bob Dylan, John Fogerty, Jerry Lee Lewis and Merle Haggard. Gaffney was playing in his slot as one of David Alvin's Guilty Men and, at the time, Gonzales was the primary singer, songwriter and guitar wiz for the Paladins.

"In the southwestern scene, there are a number of bands that always seem to be running into each other at the same clubs and festivals," says Gonzales in an early-morning interview from road stop in Tampa. "That's how it went for Chris and I. We met and instantly became friends."

After many years of bumping into each other and talking about collaborations, the two friends eventually set up shop in Tucson.

"We'd meet up and hang out, just drive around in my old Desoto and listen to old records or go down to Mexico and strum guitars. We wrote some songs right out of the chute and found out that we had a lot of inspiration together."

This desert-dweller bonding yielded a cache of new songs. Still the two friends couldn't decide whether to separately return to comfortable former gigs or make a go of this new project. Any waning inhibition was eased by producer Dan Penn, who the Haciendas tapped to produce the debut.

Penn currently resides as a revered Nashville mainstay, but he earned his reputation in the advent of rock 'n' roll, writing songs for Otis Redding and Aretha Franklin and shaping groundbreaking records at the historic Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals, Ala.

"He always told me there was room for me in Nashville, but I had too much going on, so I left it as 'maybe someday,'" Gonzales says of Penn. "He's one of my heroes and I really look up to him as a songwriter and a producer. He couldn't have been a more perfect person to pick as our producer. It was a long shot, because we were on the West coast and he was back East, but I knew if Dan heard Chris sing he would dig it."

Penn heard a four-track demo and immediately dubbed the "western soul" moniker, also eagerly accepting the invitation to produce the duo. With some songs in the bank and Penn at the helm, the Hacienda Brothers recorded the debut that hit record stores in February.

Exhibiting the Hacienda intention, the record is a diverse musical stew that jumps from dance-friendly Tex-Mex instrumentals ("Railed") to old school horn-driven soul ("Looking for Loneliness") to introspective desert ballads ("She's Gone"). Some songs are, of course, written with the pretense: what would Willie do?

Gonzales himself admits, "I'll listen to a Willie Nelson record and attempt to write a song that I could actually pitch to him."

But this is a look at the Nelson style of old, and the band's unabashed approach at wearing influence on its sleeve never seems too copycat, especially when the geographic dimensions are blended ("Saguaro").

It's all amounted to the band being a new Americana force, recently making waves at South by Southwest, and a solidified group that is hitting the road hard and committed to two more records on its new label. The group recently finished a three-week stint in Europe and is now a coast-to-coast run through the United States, stopping at the Town Pump Tavern in Black Mountain tonight.

"Now we can finally say the Hacienda Brothers are more than just a side project, and Chris and I are really focused on it. We pretty much say we stepped in it. It's on our shoe now, so we gotta go for it."

THE TAMPA TRIBUNE | by Curtis Ross, May 13, 2005

Hacienda Brothers at Home with Classic Country

Chris Gaffney and Dave Gonzalez called on an architect of Southern soul to construct their debut CD as country duo The Hacienda Brothers.

Dan Penn, who wrote or co-wrote such great tunes as “At the Dark End of the Street,” “I’m Your Puppet” and “Cry Like a Baby,” was behind the boards for this year’s eponymous disc featuring Gaffney, of Cold Hard Truth and Dave Alvin & the Guilty Men, and Gonzalez, of The Paladins.

“To have Chris sing and Dan produce,” Gonzalez writes in an e-mail, “to work with them, write with them...[is] a dream come true.”

Gonzalez first met Penn at a music festival in Holland, where they bonded as much over their shared love of classic cars as they did over music.

Gonzalez says he’d kept in touch with Penn, even visiting him in Nashville, Tenn. But the guitarist had to be coaxed into asking Penn to check out the music he was making with Gaffney.

“Originally I wasn’t sure I should” contact Penn, Gonzalez writes, “but then I just knew he’d like the songs and especially dig Gaff’s soulful voice.”

The result is “The Hacienda Brothers,” a hard-country record with a big dose of Southern soul – two styles that go together like fried catfish and sweet tea.

Gonzalez even got to write with Penn, resulting in “Lookin’ for Loneliness.” Other highlights include the Willie Nelson-inspired “Seven Little Numbers,” the epic instrumental “Saguaro” and a fine version of Mel Tillis’ “Mental Revenge.”

Gaffney’s commanding vocals take center stage, with Gonzalez’s excellent guitar lending fine support.

But like contacting Penn, it took some prodding to get the Hacienda duo together.

Gaffney and Gonzalez were friends and fellow musicians in the West Coast roots-music scene, Gonzalez writes.

A mutual friend, concert promoter Jeb Schoonover, sensed chemistry and urged the two to get together.

“I always wanted to, but the ultra-slammed schedule of The Paladins always had kept me from doing a lot of things – everything,” Gonzalez writes.

Gonzalez finally made the time to write with Gaffney, and he’s glad he did.

“I was very limited in the [Paladins] trio,” Gonzalez writes, “and...there was so much more I wanted to do in a songwriting and arranging. I needed a real good singer, a real good bigger band a real...record producer.”

“There is nothing more important than a real experienced producer,” Gonzalez writes. “It is completely awesome that we were lucky enough to get Mr. Dan Penn.”

SHERMAN OAKS SUN | by Bill Bently, May 6-20, 2005

Hacienda Brothers (Koch). A 99-cent CD tip: if you ever come across the album Chris Gaffney & the Cold Hard Facts on Rom Records, grab it quick. It's an undiscovered gem from the 1980s of hard scapple California country as performed by a singer-songwriter who really didn't give a damn about playing the game, and features a couple of songs so good it's crazy George Jones never got around to cutting them (though Freddy Fender wisely did one on the Texas Tornado's last album). Gaffney has thrown in with Paladins front man Dave Gonzalez in the Hacienda Brothers, and it's the musical equivalent of William Holden and Ernest Borgnine in "The Wild Bunch" movie masterpiece: a pair of renegades who live by their own code and can't believe the way things they cherish are now circling the drain. The Haciendas are ably aided in their quest by producer Dan Penn, the Memphis musical legend who has worked with everyone from The Box Tops to Aretha Franklin, and the band's dead-on sound is perfect backing for the two singer's subtle swagger. With originals that stand tall next to songs by Dallas Frazier, Mel Tillis, Fred Neil and Penn, this album is one that the movie's bad boys Strother Martin, L.Q. Jones and Warren Oates would have surely had in heavy rotation on their trailer 8-tracks. As Oates' character said, "I've got poetry in me." So do these soul brothers.

THE JAPAN TIMES | by Phillip Brasor, April 24, 2005

Vocalist Chris Gaffney, who has been kicking around the Southwest country-western scene for 25 years, and Dave Gonzalez, guitarist for the rockabilly-blues band The Paladins, call the music they make as the Tucson-based Hacienda Brothers "western soul." Gaffney's baritone teeters somewhere between the countrypolitan silk of Ray Price and the whisky-soaked drawl of Waylon Jennings, while Gonzalez favors a guitar style that references Buddy Guy and Steve Cropper as much as it does Buck Owens.

Their debut probably would have been mostly a mix-or-match affair if the great Memphis songwriter Dan Penn hadn't lent his services as producer, Penn, who's written for Aretha Franklin and Otis Redding, understands how every species of pop music is basically rhythm and blues, even the kind of honk-tonk heartbreaker that Gaffney loves. Together they turn the plaintive ballad "No Time to Waste" into the type of three-minute opera that The Righteous Brothers used to deliver, but without all the extraneous noise that Phil Spector mistook for music. Penn and the Haciendas make do with spare arrangements – guitar, pedal steel, rhythm section, accordion – and let the soul seep out of the performance and the lyrics.

Western Soul

Everyone's hot and bothered about the Hacienda Brothers

And so it was in Chris Gaffney's twilight years that the world finally lay at his feet, a black '99 Cadillac DeVille in his driveway as the emblem of his accomplishments, while critics, fans and fellow musicians sang the hosannas of his newish band, the Hacienda Brothers. (Joe Ely calls the band "perfect.") Where once Gaffney rarely left the county and gigged so little he had to work day jobs scraping mannequins off boat hulls or somesuch, now he's living on the road, touring from Hialeah to Helsinki, fronting the most buzzed-about roots band of the new millennium.

How does he like it?

"I *really* wish I was younger. I can still be 10 times the tiger when I'm onstage, but getting out of the van is a little more difficult than it used to be," the 55-year-old Costa Mesan related over the phone from Tucson, Arizona, where the Brothers, just returned from Austin's South by Southwest, were finishing their second album.

Gaffney's chief *hermano de hacienda* is Paladins guitarist Dave Gonzalez. The two first met at a 1980s Palomino gig, then played together at a friend's birthday party two years ago, and it went from there, with steel guitarist Dave Berzansky, bassist Hank Maninger and drummer Dave Daniel now in the fold.

The group's self-titled debut album (on Koch Records) is a wondrous lot of gristle and twang, an amalgam of country and R&B music that producer Dan Penn has dubbed "western soul." That's *legendary* producer Dan Penn, by the way, responsible for writing and/or recording some of the most soulful music ever (Aretha's "Do Right Woman, Do Right Man," *everybody's* "Dark End of the Street," et al.), who says it was Gaffney's voice that attracted him to the project.

On the CD and at their early shows, the band certainly sounded *earnest*, with every six-string-bass riff and pedal-steel slurp saying, "Hey, we really mean it." The album may be the best thing to happen to country music in years, but it's a bittersweet triumph for those of us who are longtime fans of Gaffney's hometown band, the Cold Hard Facts. As brooding as Fred Neil's "I've Got a Secret" sounds on the album, when the Cold Hard Facts did it, the wheels left the ground, and they flew the song, as lonesome and beautiful as a Piper Cub in the night sky.

No one knows when they'll play together again, much less even talk on the phone, but Gaffney insists, "I could never lay the Cold Hard Facts to rest. I love them far too much for that." (Paladins fans should also take heart that Gonzalez considers that band to be merely on hiatus as well.)

It's another kind of cold hard fact that, at this point in Gaffney's career, his band simply couldn't afford to hit the road with him. Instead, he's been touring twice as hard, both with the Hacienda Brothers and as a member of Dave Alvin's Guilty Men.

The new album, due in the fall, is composed entirely of covers of the band's favorite songs, including numbers by Conway Twitty, Charlie Rich and two Penn-penned tunes, "Cry Like a Baby" and "It Tears Me Up." Even Gaffney's wife, Julie, who is not easily impressed by her husband, says his singing on it gives her goose bumps.

The current album has some inspired covers as well (check the 1963-sounding version of Dallas Frazier's "She's Gone"); a song Penn wrote for Gaffney, "The Years That Got Away"; and some strong originals from Gonzalez, Gaffney and band mates.

Gonzalez has mentioned in interviews that, while musically akin, he and Gaffney are otherwise as different as night and day. We asked Gaffney to elaborate.

"Let's start at the top: when I'm done playing, I'm *done playing*," he says. "I don't hang around and talk about gear. I completely put it to rest. What I jones for is a nice fight on TV, while Dave sleeps with his guitar.

"And Dave is nuts about jalopies. I don't give a fuck for cars, aside from if they start and stop. I do like my '99 sedan DeVille, though. I'm looking forward to being home long enough to drive it."

PRIME TIME | by Tom Wilk, April, 2005

With The Hacienda Brothers, Dave Gonzalez and Chris Gaffney pull off a musical merger that incorporates their love of early soul music, roots rock and classic country. Dan Penn, producer of the album, has dubbed their sound "Western Soul" and it's an apt description. Gaffney's emotionally direct vocal style recalls Percy Sledge and Arthur Alexander on the mournful "She's Gone" that includes a hint of Roy Orbison at the end. Gaffney makes "Walkin' On My Dreams," a Gonzalez original, into a bluesy meditation about an ill-fated love. Penn wrote "The Years That Got Away" especially for Gaffney, who turns the lament for lost time and opportunities into the album's centerpiece.

Gonzalez, lead guitarist for the Paladins, brightens the proceedings with a sprightly vocal on "Leavin' on My Mind." The band switches gears by showing off its instrumental side on "Railed," which recalls guitarist Duane Eddy's hits of the early 1960s, and the atmospheric "Saguaro" that would work effectively as a movie soundtrack instrumental.

HYBRID MUSIC | by Embo Blake, March, 2005

Real country music... not the type that the hit-makers in Nashville have been churning out for the past twenty years... But the kind that **Johnny Cash** was making for over five decades and **Merle Haggard** continues to create, God bless him. I feel very refreshed listening to the **Hacienda Brothers**. This self-titled record from the honky-tonk duo is full of songs of heartbreak and loss, twanging guitars, and even the odd baritone solo here and there. Rich vocals, deep and resonant, are to be found on each song, whether it's **Chris Gaffney** or **Dave Gonzalez** handling the lead vocal chores. Their voices ring of days gone by and their songs are brilliantly well written, both honky tonk tunes and reflective balladry. This record is, quite frankly, everything that is right about real country music that illuminates everything wrong with the current pop-country mainstream. I think that if **Chet Atkins** had known what he was creating, he would have thought twice before introducing the world to countrypolitan... but I digress.

"She's Gone" begins the album in steel guitar soaked fashion and an excellent guitar solo, lamenting the departure of love. Just like real country music should be. "Mental Revenge" begins the twang on the album and is produced to sound like it has come directly off of an LP from the late 60's. Just like real country music should be. "Leavin' On My Mind" takes my ear to the glory days of early **Johnny Paycheck** when **Lloyd Green** was playing his unique brand of pedal steel. These licks are brilliantly executed and nail the sound that steel is supposed to have. Just like real country music should be. "South Of Lonesome" has that brilliant quirky twanging guitar that reminds me of the righteous era of early **George Jones** and also the same sort of excellent songwriting that came from that same period. Just like real country music should be. "Railed" is full of guitars that are reminiscent of the **Ventures**, underscored by that same awesome pedal steel and solid rhythm section found on other songs. Just like real country music should be. The lonesome train feel of "No Time To Waste" is very reminiscent of Johnny Cash's salad days. Just like real country music should be.

So, if you are like me and have a special place in your heart for the country music of the 60's - the golden era of Nashville - then this album simply must be heard. Go find yourself a copy immediately. Now I've just got to formulate a plan to have the Hacienda Brothers tour with **Dale Watson** and **The Domino Kings** and play clubs with excellent dance floors for kickin' up the heels of boots. But not shiny boots - the real working cowboy's dirty scuffy boots.

Hacienda Brothers explores soul of the west

When the topic of American roots music is discussed, classic soul is rarely given proper credit as an essential element of our nation's cultural fabric. This didn't dissuade Dave Gonzalez of The Paladins and Chris Gaffney of Dave Alvin's Guilty Men from joining forces to explore the links between country and soul under the moniker of The Hacienda Brothers.

The band's self-titled debut dropped in February on the Koch Nashville label. "When I was a kid, I remember learning to play guitar to Otis Redding and Sam and Dave records," Gonzalez, 42, recalls during a phone interview from his California office. "My dad had country records, and I'd play guitar to those, too. I discovered that the scales of the songs were the same, but country was just twangier."

For his part, Gaffney, 55, is no stranger to the marriage of soul and country. On his 1995 album "Losers Paradise," he and Lucinda Williams recorded a duet of "Cowboys to Girls," a 1968 R&B hit originally recorded by The Intruders.

The Hacienda Brothers album has been a topic of discussion and a labor of love for Gonzalez and Gaffney for many years. "This is exactly the album I wanted to make because I love Western music, and I love R&B," Gaffney says via telephone.

The pair met in the early 1980s when playing at a famous Southern California honky-tonk, The Palomino. Gonzalez was fronting his long time rockabilly blues trio, The Paladins, and Gaffney was playing accordion behind Dave Alvin. The two immediately became friends as a result of their love for roots music and shared Latin American heritage.

Gaffney went on to play accordion on The Paladins' number "Rain Rain" as well supporting emerging artists produced by Gonzalez.

But it took the intervention of mutual friend and former Tucson country radio D.J. Jeb Schoonover to bring about the formation of the Hacienda Brothers. "He was really the instigator," Gonzalez explains. "Finally, after a couple years of Jeb's persistence, we agreed to write a couple songs together in Tucson."

After four songs recorded as a demo, the pair knew they were onto something special. They realized that in order to record an album blending country and soul, they would have to put together a dream team.

The first step was finding the perfect producer, and the number one draft pick was Dan Penn, a man whose songwriting and production defined the Muscle Shoals sound.

Penn has written hits for everyone from Ronnie Milsap to Aretha Franklin. His famous songs include "The Letter" by The Box Tops, as well as soul mainstays "Dark End of the Street" and "Do-Right Woman, Do-Right Man." If the Hacienda Brothers were seeking a producer with instant credibility in the worlds of country and soul, Penn was the man for the job.

Fortunately, Gonzalez and Penn were acquaintances since meeting at a European music festival several years before. They both shared a common passion for music and a love of American hot-rods.

When the time was right, Gonzalez lured Penn to the Hacienda Brothers project by leveraging their mutual love of restoring classic cars.

"As it turned out, the motor in my DeSoto blew up, and I had to replace it," Gonzalez recalls. "I ended up writing Dan a note telling him I scored a killer motor from the Desoto club, and by the way, here's my new demo."

Two or three days later, Gonzalez heard back from Penn who immediately wanted to be part of the project. Rather than recording the album at Penn's Nashville studios, he felt strongly that the band could maintain the southwestern flavor of the demo if the recording took place in Tucson.

Working with Penn opened many creative doors for the Hacienda Brothers. Between recording sessions, Gonzalez and Penn took every opportunity to retreat into the mountains to talk about nature, cars and the mysteries of the desert. "We were looking out over these big lonesome vistas at all the cactus," Gonzalez remembers. "We started strumming the guitars together, and that's how we wrote 'Looking for Loneliness.'"

Along with "Looking for Loneliness," the album features a handful of originals mixed with some obscure, but compelling, covers. Gonzalez did the lion's share of the original songwriting for the record, and most of the songs feature Gaffney's unique and soulful voice.

After having been a lead singer with The Paladins for 23 years, was it difficult for Gonzalez to turn the microphone over to Gaffney for most of this joint venture?

"Absolutely not," Gonzalez maintains. "Chris' voice is the best instrument we have in our band. I sing a

little bit, but I write a lot. I always wanted to expand the boundaries of my music by adding another singer, a piano part and a horn section. The Hacienda Brothers allows for that."

Another element of the band's studio all-star team arrived when Penn's long-time friend Wayne Jackson of the Memphis Horns agreed to take part in the project by adding trumpets to two tracks. His signature sound provided a Mariachi vibe to the striking instrumental "Saguaro," a number Gaffney describes as "an epic Western song."

Many of the original numbers penned for the Hacienda Brothers debut were written using a "What if..." approach.

On "Railed," for example, Gonzalez explains, "Chris and I were playing a lot in a beer joint called the Doll Hut in Southern California, and we used to jam on this song. It came from idea I had - What if Freddie King went to Bakersfield? That was my whole concept of the tune - it's kinda like a Freddie King tune with a Bakersfield country twist."

The track "Leavin' On My Mind" came into existence as a result of Gonzalez and Gaffney's mutual admiration for Waylon Jennings. "I had always dreamed of backing up Waylon," Gonzalez says. "I pretended that I was writing a song for Waylon with the intention of pitching it to him in Nashville."

Willie Nelson's stylistic fingerprints appear on "Walkin' on My Dreams." Gonzalez says, "I wrote that song as if I was going to pitch it to Willie as a b-side."

Nelson's songwriting style also served to unlock the door for Gaffney to write "Seven Little Numbers."

As Gonzalez explains, "For about a year, Gaff kept telling me he had an idea for a song called 'Don't Make That Call,' and the idea wouldn't get out of his head. I asked him what Willie Nelson would do with the theme. I suggested that Willie would write a song about the matchbook that the numbers were written on, and the next day, he had the first verse written. By the end of the day, he had it all arranged and completed."

A live mainstay of Gaffney's old band, The Cold Hard Facts, titled "Turn To Grey" also appears on the Hacienda Brothers debut. "It's a great country rock song with interesting words," Gonzalez says. "I heard a live version of The Cold Hard Facts playing it, and we talked Gaffney into letting us redo it for the record. My dad said it's his favorite song on the record." Penn also contributed background vocals to the track.

The covers chosen for the album also come from a variety of sources.

For example, Melba Montgomery's "He's Gone" was rearranged with a sex change and became "She's Gone." Montgomery's brother, Carl, happened to write "Six Days on the Road," a live staple of the Hacienda Brothers and, for that matter, every country bar band in America. Rather than re-record the classic, Gonzalez and Gaffney chose to cover a more obscure Carl Montgomery number, "South of Lonesome."

"We had to have a truck driving song on there," Gaffney says.

The track "Mental Revenge" was written by Mel Tillis, but made famous by Waylon Jennings. "When we made our first demo, we needed an electric guitar, rocked-up tune, so when we sent it out, it wouldn't be all slow songs," Gonzalez says. "I think it really showcases the grit of Chris' singing."

From a creative point of view, Gonzalez is noticeably rejuvenated in a manner that only a side project or new venture can do. "I've got suitcases full of songs on tape and in my head. Being in a trio for 23 years can be limiting. It became very stifling to my creativity," he explains.

Gonzalez continues, "If there was any song idea that I thought might be good - a hook line or guitar lick - I didn't shun it off. I chased it because there are no boundaries in the Hacienda Brothers. That's what's so awesome about this project."

All indications are that Gaffney will continue as Dave Alvin's main sidekick while still pursuing the vision of the Hacienda Brothers.

But the future of The Paladins is more of a question mark. The band's eighth record came out in 2003 with a time-consuming tour that exceeded 200 shows in one year's time.

"I've been trying for many years to get The Paladins expand the boundaries," Gonzalez confides. "Now, they're way on the back burner. After a while, it's just hard to be a trio. When I was writing with Chris, this huge weight was lifted off my shoulders. I finally told the guys that I was going to be busy with the Hacienda Brothers, so we've wound things down quite a bit."

"I'll still play a few festivals later in the year with The Paladins," he adds.

For its part, Koch Nashville is bullish on the band. The label has reportedly asked the Hacienda Brothers to generate three albums over the next two years. And with Gonzalez' prolific songwriting abilities, it shouldn't be much of a problem.

Gaffney claims amazement at the inexhaustible nature of Gonzalez' songwriting gifts. "You've got to

understand that Dave sleeps with his guitar, and he's writing all the time," Gaffney says.

Another refreshing part of the project is the lack of expectations Gaffney and Gonzalez are met with when playing shows under the new moniker. A national tour for the Hacienda Brothers is set to launch in March including a high-profile stop at Austin's South-by-Southwest music festival, historically a proving ground for young musical acts. And despite the duo's 50-plus combined years in the music industry, the Hacienda Brothers project has served to make the two veterans feel like rookies once again. Gonzalez explains, "We're just a brand new band, you know?"

SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE | by Buddy Blue, March 25, 2005

Hacienda Brothers, "Hacienda Brothers" (Koch): Take a group featuring criminally neglected country singer-songwriter Chris Gaffney and Paladins guitar monster Dave Gonzalez, then toss them into the studio with super-soul songwriter-producer Dan Penn at the helm (he's written "Do Right Man," "I'm Your Puppet," "Dark End of the Street" and "The Letter," to name a few), and you naturally assume momentous music will result, but the Bros. debut CD actually exceeds even the loftiest expectations.

Wisely, Gaff assumes center-stage with his best-ever-recorded vocal performances; an expansive, vibrato-rich, wounded baritone that can take your heart and crush it under the mud-caked heel of his cowboy boot. Gonzo's guitar playing – heretofore a hot flash of blues lightning with a Ph.D. from the Stevie Ray Vaughan Academy – is surprisingly, tastefully, subdued in service of the songs, but his twanging baritone ax-work is a revelation, like an Ennio Morricone soundtrack played under a desert moon while chugging mescal.

The wealth of original songs by Gaff, Gonz and Penn, alone or as a team, are uniformly gorgeous and moving (as are the harmony vocals), presented nicely with well-chosen covers (Fred Neil, Mel Tillis, etc).

Although there are R&B and Tex-Mex influences afoot, this is very much a trad country album, and if a better one comes along this year, I'll eat my durn Stetson.

Hacienda Brothers find national voice

Classic country and early soul aren't styles of music that are generally thought of at the same time. But exploring the combination of the Nashville and Memphis sounds from years ago brought together Dave Gonzalez and Chris Gaffney and created the Hacienda Brothers.

One of the "buzz bands" at last year's South by Southwest Music Conference in Austin, Texas, the Hacienda Brothers have already taken Lincoln by storm, becoming one of the most popular acts at the Zoo Bar in just a few months.

"Both of us are big fans of soul music and real honky-tonk country," Gonzalez said of himself and Gaffney. "We tried to write songs in that vein. After all, Chris is a natural soul singer that sounds like Waylon. We're the odd couple individually. We have lots of differences. But musically, we're really, really close."

The closeness can be heard on "Hacienda Brothers," the duo's just-released Koch Records debut, and in the riveting live performances that have packed the Zoo Bar on all the band's previous Lincoln appearances.

Their local popularity is evidenced by the fact that the Haciendas are booked for a four-night stand at the Zoo starting with Wednesday's early 6 to 9 p.m. show and running through next weekend.

"I've never done that many nights anywhere before," said Gonzalez, a frequent Zoo visitor as leader of the bluesy rockabilly trio The Paladins. "We love the Zoo so much. There's not too many other places in the world we'd like to play more than one night, let alone four. But the Zoo is such a great place. It's one of the best clubs in the country. That place is like home."

Teaming up with Gaffney had been in Gonzalez's mind for years as he contemplated putting together a band to play old-school honky-tonk. Gaffney has put out solo records and has appeared in Lincoln playing accordion with Dave Alvin and the Guilty Men.

"I've been a fan of his for a long time, really, truly," Gonzalez said. "I met him back in '89 at the famous Palomino Club in north Hollywood. Every time, I've been at (his manager's) house, we'd talk about doing a project like this, and Gaff's name came up."

In 2002, Gaffney and Gonzalez finally got together, playing at a friend's birthday party, and they decided to give working together a try. But it was far from a full-time mission.

"It started out as a little side project," Gonzalez said in a telephone interview from his California home. "We did it when both of us had enough time to get together and drive to Tucson. After some time, we made a little demo, sent it out and then were able to pick our own producer to make the record. We couldn't believe it. Our dream came true."

That producer was Dan Penn, a soul music legend who wrote songs recorded by the likes of Otis Redding and Aretha Franklin and worked at the famous Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals, Ala., and American Studios in Memphis.

"He guided us right where we wanted to go," Gonzalez said. "He's the real deal."

"Hacienda Brothers" sounds like a country record with some shimmering Southwestern guitar tossed in for good measure. But there are plenty of touches that let the music live up to the title given it by Penn — "Western Soul."

The punchy horns on "Looking for Lonesome" are the most obvious soul sounds on the disc. But take out the pedal steel and "Seven Little Numbers" is as much soul ballad as it is country weeper. That soulful sense pervades the recording, giving the Haciendas' brand of country a far different shading than that of

most of today's honky tonk revivalists.

Much of the credit for that goes to Gaffney, who learned to sing backing '50s/'60s country stars Webb Pierce, Hank Snow and Ferlin Huskey, then honed his soulful style fronting his own band, the Cold Hard Facts, for 25 years.

Even though he wrote or co-wrote half of the 14 tunes on "Hacienda Brothers," Gonzalez, who sings in The Paladins, was more than happy to step away from the microphone in the Hacienda Brothers.

"Just because I write it doesn't mean I want to recite it," he said. "I'd just as soon hear a Hacienda Brothers song done with intense vocals and whatever else will take it where it's supposed to go. He's a full-on soul singer. I can't do that."

Turning the vocal duties over to Gaffney also allows Gonzalez to concentrate on his guitar playing. After decades on the circuit with The Paladins, it would appear that Gonzalez could easily slide over to playing country songs. But those tunes aren't as simple as they sound.

"It's very, very difficult," he said. "As far as I'm concerned, the most difficult music I've played is country music and soul music."

Country and soul a la the Haciendas share another element, something Gaffney calls 'no cheese' — a straight-up approach that requires the same passion and commitment that the legends who created the genres in the '40s through the '60s brought to the music.

"You can't fake it," Gonzalez said. "You've got to definitely believe every word you sing and every note you play. It's a control thing. You've got to stay on it. You've got to be very convicted and very convincing."

That's particularly true in live performances.

"Chris and I worked real hard to find the exact right guys for the band," Gonzalez said. "On stage, all of us are there to back up Chris. When you have a band like this and a singer like Chris, you can really get some magic."

The Hacienda Brothers will be heading back to Austin for another SxSW appearance after their Lincoln shows and an Omaha gig. Then they'll be playing the legendary Gruene Hall, a honky-tonk outside New Braunfels, Texas, that's hosted a who's who of country over the years.

Gaffney, Gonzalez and company should feel just as much at home there as they do at the Zoo.

Hacienda Brothers are feeling right at home in the Old Pueblo

Over the years, Tucson has spawned and nurtured a vibrant music scene. Now it has become the surrogate home for a nationally touring band.

The Hacienda Brothers have toured the country with their blend of classic country honkytonk and 1960s soul, and though the band isn't based in Tucson, its management is here, it recorded its debut album here and one of the frontmen - guitarist Dave Gonzalez - is planning to move here.

"We just love it out here in Tucson," Gonzalez said in a phone interview during a visit to Tucson. "The feeling of the Hacienda sound is a full-on Tucson, Southwestern honky-tonk sound with Southwestern soul."

The two Hacienda Brothers frontmen are both longtime professional musicians in their own right. Acoustic guitar and accordion player Chris Gaffney has fronted his own band, the Cold Hard Facts, for the past 25 years and tours as one of Dave Alvin's Guilty Men. Gonzalez is a producer and the primary singer and songwriter for the rockabilly trio the Paladins.

For more than a decade, local music veteran Jeb Schoonover of Honky-Tonk Hacienda had been encouraging the two musicians to join forces to create a blend of roots, blues, country and soul with a Southwestern tang. It took until 2003 for both busy SoCal musicians to get serious about it because they were both touring extensively and doing well with their other projects, Gonzalez said.

"It's hard to jump off the wagon when it's rolling pretty good," he said.

It was his love of classic country that finally drove him to give the Hacienda Brothers an honest shot. Now the band has become his priority.

"I was always trying to get the Paladins to do more country stuff," Gonzalez said. "I get tired of being in a trio and being limited musically and creatively. With the Hacienda Brothers instrumentation, which is a five piece with steel guitar, it's like a whole new world and a weight is lifted off my shoulders. Now I can write and I can work with these guys and there's no limitation. It's just pure music. We can do a full-on soul tune, we can write a country tune, we can do whatever we want and we can pull it off."

The band toured nationally last year without having an album, but that's changed this week with the release of the band's eponymous debut album, produced by legendary producer and songwriter Dan Penn.

Penn labeled the music "Western soul," and indeed the album reflects Tucson in many ways, from the soulful song "Looking for Loneliness," which Gonzalez and Penn wrote out in the desert, to "Saguaro," an instrumental tribute to the band's second home.

You can get a chance to pick up the new album and hear the Hacienda Brothers live Wednesday before they set out for a tour that will take them through Missouri, Nebraska, Texas and California. This is the beginning of a new chapter for the band, which has a deal with Koch Records for three albums over the next two years.

"It's just a dream come true," Gonzalez said, "because this sound and this concept has been in all of our hearts for so long."

Musical Saltillo Tile

TAKE ONE OF THE MOST road-tested rock-a-bluesy guitarist in the game, the Paladins' Dave Gonzalez, and add country/conjunto/Cajun soul man Chris Gaffney, and you've got the makings of something special. Add David "D.B." Berzansky's pedal steell, bassist Hank Maninger, and drummer Dale Daniel to the mix, and things really start to gel. Bring in Memphis songwriting legend Dan Penn to produce, and it'd be hard *not* to come away with a great CD.

Gonzalez and Gaffney cooked up the idea for the Brothers in Tucson, Arizona, which is appropriate, because, while I've never really thought of a "Tucson sound," this is like the musical equivalent of saltillo tile, feeling the heat coming up through your shoes, and having a plate of sun-dried carne secca at El Charro.

Like Penn, who composed such classics as "Dark End of the Street," "Do Right Man," "Cry Like a Baby" and "I'm Your Puppet," Gaffney's singing is unaffected and soulful – as comfortable singing R&B as honky-tonk. Instead of shouldering the entire solo load in a trio format, as he's done for 20-some years (and still does) with the Paladins, Gonzalez happily supplies a multitude of parts and textures, from Danelectro baritone to steel-string to Tele to Epiphone gut-string, playing more sparsely, as befits the scenery.

In addition to off-the beaten path finds like Fred Neil's "I've Got a Secret" and Dallas Frazier's "She's Gone," the group has a knack for writing originals that recall country-when-country-was-great icons like Doug Sahm, Waylon Jennings, and George Jones, without sounding imitative.

Penn wrote "The Years that Got Away" specifically for Gaffney, who handles most of the lead vocals. Gonzalez sings lead on the two-step "Leavin' on My Mind," with Gaffney breaking out his accordion and Berzansky adding tasteful steel. "Looking for Loneliness," the most soul-tinged number of the set, is a Gonzalez-Penn collaboration, and singer/guitarist Teddy Morgan co-wrote "I'm So Proud" and co-produced Mel Tillis' "Mental Revenge" with the group.

Dave's two instrumentals add just the right flavor to complete the feast. The guitarist/composer calls "Railed" "Freddie King goes to Bakersfield" – with a baritone – and the desolate "Saguaro," with Berzansky's distant steel whines and Wayne Jackson adding mariachi trumpets, is the perfect closer.

Western Soul

The Hacienda Brothers return to the honky tonk

Hey, guess what? The Hacienda Brothers are coming to town.

In the context of a music feature, this is a notable-enough event in itself, but what I meant was that the Hacienda Brothers are opting to base themselves in Tucson.

This is an infrequently taken path. Established musical outfits tend to say, "Perhaps we should go to where the action is," and light out for Nashville skylines like Troy Olsen, or the, er, lakes of Los Angeles like Linda Ronstadt. But almost never do you hear of a group volitionally relocating to Southern Arizona. (With the notable exception of your cousin's metal band that moved here because Benson proved too stifling.)

Chalk it up to the charms of Sonora. "I have a real love affair going with the Southwest, especially Tucson," relates Hacienda Brother/motorhead/Telecaster master Dave Gonzalez. "In the early '80s, I first started touring (with the Paladins), and Jeb (Schoonover, promoter/band manager/former owner of the Rialto Theatre/player of tennis with Jim Rosborough) was one of the first cats to bring me to town ... we became instant friends," says Gonzalez. "One morning, he interviewed me on his radio show (the late *Country Crossroads* on KXCI), and he was surprised I was into country so much."

It was on rockabilly and blues that Gonzalez cut his teeth; his rootsy three-piece, the Paladins, have put out records on Alligator and Warner Brothers. But the Paladins, who were never all that interested in indulging Gonzalez' love of country, are currently on hiatus so Gonzalez can focus on the Hacienda Brothers. "It was just a long time comin' where I needed to go do my own record, and then I started workin' with Chris (Gaffney, Hacienda Brothers vocalist). So I kinda put (the Paladins) on hold," Gonzalez explains.

It should be noted that Gaffney has a couple of other high-profile gigs as well, as one of Dave Alvin's Guilty Men and as the leader of the SoCal roots band the Cold Hard Facts. But neither precludes him from taking up the Hacienda Brothers mantle.

All of this would be somewhat less exciting if the Hacienda's self-titled debut had not been produced by a veritable living legend. "Dan Penn's been a hero of mine for years and years," says Gonzalez. Penn, whose *curriculum vitae* as a producer and songwriter (along with writing partner Spooner Oldham) reads like a who's-who of country and soul legends, had been friends with Gonzalez ever since they shared a stage in Europe in 1997. But Gonzalez was loath to bother him with a request to produce the Hacienda Brothers debut. Chicken, even. After all, Penn is the guy who wrote "I'm Your Puppet" and "Do Right Woman," ferfucksake--the creator of the Muscle Shoals sound. Finally, Gonzalez was persuaded to reach out at the urging of Schoonover.

"I didn't expect to hear back from (Penn) that quick, if at all, and I was very nervous about the whole thing, and within about three days, I heard from him. And he said 'Call me immediately!' And when I talked to him, he said, 'Man, Dave, I'm just knocked out by that demo you sent me. Matter of fact, it don't sound like a demo to me, and you don't really need a producer, but if you want one, I'm in.'"

The rest is kismet. Penn broke with his own rule of insisting that musicians come to him in Nashville, because he was so impressed with the Hacienda's demo and with Gaffney's voice that he wanted to be a part of it. He arrived in Tucson having written "The Years That Got Away" for Gaffney; while here, he and Gonzalez had a little "desert session" of writing that resulted in "Looking for Loneliness" on the debut. In a relatively brief time, Penn, Gonzalez and Gaffney formed a mutual admiration society that has only grown in intensity since the recording.

And now Gonzalez and Gaffney's experiment will get a full airing. Koch Nashville released the self-titled *Hacienda Brothers* debut on Tuesday. And Gonzalez has, for the first time, put out a record that features his first love--country; or, as Penn dubbed the Brothers' sound, "Western Soul." Gonzalez can now laugh about the battles he fought over country earlier in his career.

"I remember years ago arguing with Alligator Records, and I remember telling Warner Brothers when we were on 4AD that I wanted to do a country record. I told 'em that in the mid '90s. And they said, 'You want to do WHAT?' And I said I want to do a record that sounds like a '60s Willie Nelson record, and they said 'Are you crazy?' And I said, 'NO! "Crazy" is like one of my favorite songs in the whole world, that's what I'm talking about!'"

HACIENDA BROTHERS: *Points for Pennmanship*

Chris Gaffney is recording his fifth or maybe sixth perfect vocal take of the Dan Penn/Spooner Oldham classic, "It Tears Me Up". Rasping, gorgeous and heartbreakingly soulful, it's still not what he's after. It's past 10 p.m. on the tenth and last day of this Tucson recording session for a future Hacienda Brothers release, currently envisioned as a tribute to Penn. Gaffney re-records the phrase he wants, and nails it. Penn produced the Hacienda brother's self-titled debut, released February 22 on Koch Records. The experience of working with him is still rich in Gaffney's mind.

"Dan Penn is the most beautiful human being you'll ever want to meet," he says. "He's been around a lot of great singers and he's a great singer himself. It's not intimidating, but I know his history, so you've gotta be on your P's and Q's. What did I learn? How to make things right and not give up on something. If it could've had a better vocal, he encouraged that out of me, as he did with everybody who played an instrument."

The admiration is mutual. Asked how he came to work with the fledgling Haciendas, fronted by longtime Dave Alvin sideman Gaffney and the Paladins' Dave Gonzalez, Penn says, "Chris Gaffney's voice, number one. But also, just the whole playing and the style they were getting. It didn't sound like Nashville or L.A., it sounded like Tucson.

"I heard something I'd never heard quite exactly the same, and I just wanted to be a part of it. I love Dave's singing, too, and the guitar playing. I love where they're coming from, where they want to go." Even the learning went both ways. "I've never been the biggest country fan," Penn admits, "although I've heard stuff I like. But a lot of it I never did really care for." Then, with substantial understatement, the co-author of "Dark End of the Street" and such R&B hits as "I'm Your Puppet" says, "I was mostly a rhythm & blues person, you know."

So the cross-country trek to his first Tucson recording session was a musical awakening of sorts for him, too. "They love old country and soul music, so I walked in and they were playing a lot of really old country, Johnny Paycheck and stuff, and I enjoyed what that was."

The result is as hard to imagine as it is fine to hear. There's a new Dan Penn tune, a Mel Tillis cover, and a Penn co-write with Gonzalez, who otherwise likes to imagine he's writing songs for Waylon Jennings. Instrumentation involves exquisitely tasteful pedal steel, a little accordion, and the ghost of Duane Eddy in some guitar parts.

Penn's longtime collaborator Spooner Oldham plays keys, Jim Lauderdale and Bekka Bramlett sing some backing vocals, and Wayne Jackson of the Memphis Horns adds trumpet, including a soul-mariachi turn. Gaffney's voice and phrasing find the common ground between Wynn Stewart and Lloyd Price. The final result retains the vibe where many of the tunes were first recorded. Penn has dubbed it "western soul."

Perhaps fittingly, it was more or less conceived in the back of a hot rod. Dave Gonzalez had met Penn at a festival in the Netherlands in 1999, and the pair found common ground in their love of old cars. The two kept in touch about jalopies, carburetors and the like; eventually, Tucson promoter Jeb Schoonover persuaded Gonzalez to send Penn the Hacienda brothers' demo. "He's always instigating something cool to happen," Gonzalez says of Schoonover, a longtime friend to the two Hacienda bandmates. Both Gaffney and Gonzalez spent their growing-up years in Tucson. They met Schoonover through their respective work with Dave Alvin and the Paladins. It was Schoonover who encouraged Gonzalez and Gaffney to work together.

"I write a lot of songs besides the type I play in the Paladins," Gonzalez says. "I write soul tunes, country songs, love songs and ballads, and other stuff that I can't do in a guitar-based, heavy-duty, rockabilly blues trio. Working with Chris, my boundaries of melody and chord structure and song content – there are no boundaries, none at all."

The pair also collaborated on songwriting. "We're good for each other. Like Felix and Oscar," Gonzalez quips.

Gonzalez is as painstaking as Gaffney in pursuit of the perfect take. "I'm a record collector, a record fanatic, and I'm a sound fanatic," he says. "To have an opportunity to work with [people] who all fell the same way as I do about old records, traditional-sounding records, I love it."

"I try to do that – convey that old-school message – but make it so people walking down the street can go, 'I like that little melody, that kind of reminds me of...'" western soul?

USA TODAY | LIFE | by Brian Mansfield, February 22, 2005

Listen Up (Album Review): Hacienda Brothers (★★★) The Haciendas – California country singer Chris Gaffney and Dave Gonzalez of the roots-rock Paladins – locate the shared border of old-school country and R&B. Songwriting great Dan Penn (*Do Right Woman, I'm Your Puppet*) produces the album, adding touches of trucker twang and Memphis horns. The Haciendas bolster their originals with covers of Mel Tillis and Dallas Frazier, and Gaffney's haunting rendition of Fred Neil's *I've Got a Secret* walks the dark end of the street indeed.

CHICAGO READER | CRITIC'S CHOICE | by Bob Mehr, October 29, 2004

HACIENDA BROTHERS SoCal roots-scene stalwarts Chris Gaffney (leader of the Cold Hard Facts, member of Dave Alvin's Guilty Men) and Dave Gonzalez (front man and guitarist for rockabilly-blues trio the Paladins) first teamed up to play a friend's birthday party in late 2002. They soon began writing together and gigging as the Hacienda Brothers, exploring their shared passion for 60s country and soul. A demo grabbed the attention of Memphis songwriting legend Dan Penn--author of "Cry Like a Baby," "Dark End of the Street," and countless other classics--and he wound up penning a pair of songs for and producing the Haciendas' self-titled debut, due from Koch Nashville in February. The group calls its style "western soul," but the LP comes off like a hard-core country record duded up with irresistible Stax grooves and gorgeous Morricone flourishes. Gaffney began his career singing behind honky-tonk immortals like Webb Pierce and Hank Snow; here he justifies his rep as one of roots rock's most gifted vocalists, making like a modern-day Mr. Heartache on the Johnny Paycheck-styled opener "She's Gone," swaggering through the big-rig chestnut "South of Lonesome," and damn near bringing tears to your eyes on the Ray Price homage "Seven Little Numbers." Meanwhile Gonzalez nearly steals the show with his fiery Telecaster work and train-whistle harmonies. It's pretty early to be making predictions, but right now I'd say *Hacienda Brothers* has the inside track for best country album of '05. The Riptones open. 🍷➡️ 10 PM, FitzGerald's

Musician going to do country thing at Tom's

Dave Gonzalez will be wearing his country hat when he returns to Tom's Garage Thursday night. The frontman for The Paladins, the rockabilly/blues trio that played Tom's in April, is appearing with his other band, the **Hacienda Brothers**, which also features Chris Gaffney, the accordion-playing member of Dave Alvin's The Guilty Men.

"This is a lot different from The Paladins," Gonzalez said. "This is something I've wanted to do for a long time. We did have a few country tunes on our records, but I've written a lot of things that don't necessarily fit with the other band. I was always trying to work more country into the other band but was not able to pull it off."

Gonzalez finally realized he needed to branch off with a different-sounding band.

"As soon as I found these guys, my songwriting just completely opened up because I no longer have any limitations," he said.

Gonzalez said he and Gaffney have known each other since the 1980s.

"I've been a big fan of his," he said. "He's a great songwriter and a tremendous singer. I was always kind of afraid, even with my solo stuff, of being able to pull off vocally things I write. When I finally hooked up with Chris Gaffney, there was no problem any more. We think a lot alike when we write.

"I don't mind stepping back, singing a little harmony, singing a few tunes here and there."

Steel player David Berzansky, bass player Hank Gallup and drummer Dale Daniel round out the **Hacienda Brothers**.

"We've been together more than a year," Gonzalez said. "Last October we just said, this is it. We've got the A-team."

The band put together a five-song demo for its appearance at the 2004 South by Southwest appearance, the annual spring gathering around music and film in Austin, Texas.

"That got a real good response," Gonzalez said. "They picked one of those songs for the South by Southwest Web site."

A full-length record was to follow, but it took longer than anyone anticipated.

"It's kind of like the band that cried wolf," Gonzalez said. "We tell everybody we have this record coming out and it never comes out. But it's done now. We have a release date of late January. A goal of ours is to have it out on the street and some ink on it before South by Southwest rolls around (in late March)."

They signed soul songwriter/producer Dan Penn, who wrote and produced songs for the Box Tops ("The Letter," "Cry Like A Baby") and wrote a number of soul classics such as "Do Right Woman" (for Aretha Franklin), "Dark End of the Street" and "I'm Your Puppet."

Penn, based in Nashville, said the band could come to Nashville to record the album but said he preferred to come to them in Tucson, Ariz.

"He told us, 'You guys got something going on that I want to be a part of,'" Gonzalez said. "He described our sound as 'Western soul.' We said, 'Thanks, bro. We didn't know what to call it.'"

Gonzalez said everyone was relieved Penn wanted to record in Tucson.

"Gaff is from Tucson and my dad's from there, so I spent a lot of time in Tucson as a kid," he said. "We played all our first gigs there and we were totally inspired by being there."

Gonzalez said the place definitely influenced the music.

"Our whole trip is the southwestern thing," he said. "Every time we wanted to work on the record, we have to drive back out there, through the desert, chill out there a few days and focus."

THE READER | by B.J. Huchtemann October 14-20, 2004

Simmering Southwestern Soul

The Paladins' Dave Gonzalez and Southern California singer-songwriter Chris Gaffney share a love of country, blues and soul music. The two have joined forces in a new project called the Hacienda Brothers, playing music that's been described as "honky-tonk soul."

Local roots fans need no introduction to Dave Gonzalez. His rockabilly band the Paladins is a standing-room-only favorite in the metro. On the haciendabrothers.com website, Gonzalez wrote, "For years I've been writing 'country' and 'soul' songs that don't always 'fit' into the Paladins plan that easily. ...All this stuff I could never (or hardly) do with 'the Pals,' works great for 'the Bros.'"

Based in Nashville, Tenn., songwriter Dan Penn was wowed enough by the Hacienda Brothers to collaborate with them on new tunes to complete their debut album. The Brothers hope to release the disc by the end of this year. Penn is known for classics like "Do Right Woman, Do Right Man," "Dark End of the Street" and "I'm Your Puppet."

The new Penn compositions mix with others originals and well-chosen covers to create a ripping live show. Hearing Chris Gaffney launch into Fred Neil's great 1960s ballad "I've Got a Secret" will stop you in your tracks: Gaffney's deep, rich voice provides just the right confessional tone for the poetic lyrics. Gaffney is best-known locally for his work as one of Dave Alvin's sidemen (accordion and acoustic guitar), but in Southern California, Gaffney is legendary for his own songwriting and band the Cold Hard Facts. Last year, he was named the No. 2 artist in the OC Weekly's "129 Greatest OC Bands Ever!"

The musical framework of the Hacienda Brothers' music may not be blues, but it is pure blues at its honky-tonk heart. They were a favorite of 2004 South by Southwest-goers.

The band's southwestern soul will simmer for three big nights at Lincoln's Zoo Bar. Catch them there Thursday through Saturday, Oct. 21 to 23. On Sunday, Oct. 24, the band gigs at Omaha's Crescent Moon for another Sunday Roadhouse presentation. The Moon show starts at 5p.m. and advance tickets are available while they last. Their Omaha show sold out in March.

Hacienda Heights

Pining for the music of Chris Gaffney? Costa Mesa's eminent elfin entertainer has taken his latest side-project on the road in search of fame, fortune, shots of free tequila and vermin-free sleeping quarters. The Hacienda Brothers—fronted by Gaff and the Paladins' Dave Gonzales, with bassist Hank Gallup, drummer Dale Daniels and steel guitarist David Berzansky in tow—have been touring the Southwest these past several weeks and apparently made quite a splash at the recent South By Southwest fete with their crazed country/soul hybrid thang. According to Austin-music-scene big shot Steve Dean, "They tore it up. Everybody was talking about their set, and they created a huge buzz down here." The Bros. already have a record in the can, produced in Nashville by veteran soul-music mensch Dan Penn—former partner with Chips Moman at legendary hit factory American Studios and composer of such R&B/pop classics as Aretha Franklin's "Do Right Woman, Do Right Man," the Box Tops' "The Letter" and "Cry Like a Baby," and James & Bobby Purify's "I'm Your Puppet." They're shopping the project to various labels and hoping for a release by year's end. "Dan was great to work with, and he wrote a tune for the album, too," said an obviously stoked Gonzo. "Man, wait'll you hear this thing; you're gonna love it. We've been getting a great response wherever we play. I mean, Gaff just sitting and playing acoustic guitar should sell out anywhere, but I just can't wait till you hear this band." Asked for comment of his own, Gaff replied, "I love you, *maaaan*." No, really! The Hacienda Bros. return to SoCal in time to sneak in a Doll Hut show on April 18, between Paladins performances for Gonzo and Cold Hard Facts/Dave Alvin & the Guilty Men gigs for the Gaff.

Honky-Tonk Soul

Local music fans have an exceptional opportunity to check out Southern California's Hacienda Brothers. The quintet is one of the buzz bands among roots-rock shows headed to South by Southwest in Austin next week. Lucky for us the Hacienda Brothers are coming to Lincoln and Omaha en route to Austin, with four nights at the Zoo Bar and an early Sunday show at Omaha's Crescent Moon Ale House.

The leaders of the Hacienda Brothers are Dave Gonzalez and Chris Gaffney. Gonzalez is familiar to Paladins fans as the Pals' vocalist and blistering lead guitarist. Dave has a variety of musical interests outside the old-school rockabilly that has formed the backbone of the Paladins sound. "I write a lot of songs that the Paladins can't do as a trio," Gonzalez told a Tucson, Ariz., paper in December. Those mid-tempo country songs find a home with the Hacienda Brothers.

Chris Gaffney is a veteran of the southwestern music scene who sometimes works as a sideman for Dave Alvin. Gaffney is also acclaimed for his solo singer-songwriter work. He was named number two among California's OC Weekly's 2003 list of "the 129 Greatest OC Bands Ever." "Gaffney's skewed songs of love and loss are as good as country gets," said the Weekly. The write-up noted that Gaffney's long-time band, the Cold Hard Facts, can "floor you in a set, bursting with passion, slashing musical interplay. Gaffney's life-besotted vocals and all the other grand stuff that doesn't translate to paper ... this is the band by which all others must be judged and found wanting."

Mix Gaffney and Gonzalez and you get an incendiary musical pairing that the two call the Hacienda Brothers. With Gonzalez on guitar and Gaffney on accordion and acoustic guitar, the duo are backed by a pedal steel guitar, bass and drums ensemble.

Hear for yourself when the Hacienda Brothers take up residence at Lincoln's Zoo Bar starting on Wednesday, March 10 at 9:30 p.m. Chubby Carrier is the early show at 6 p.m. The Hacienda lovefest continues on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, March 11, 12 and 13.

Sunday afternoon the Hacienda Brothers high-tail it to Omaha's Crescent Moon Ale House, 3578 Farnam St. Opening the show at 5 p.m. will be the bluegrass-country of Austin's Weary Boys. This band was a huge hit at the Moon last fall. The Hacienda Brothers are scheduled for 6 p.m. Advance tickets for the March 14 show are recommended and available at the Moon.

Roots music leads guitarist to form groups

Guitarist Dave Gonzalez is knee-deep in roots music.

When he's not playing rockabilly rhythms with his longtime trio, the Paladins, his time is spent honky-tonkin' with his alter-ensemble, the Hacienda Brothers.

Both groups will be performing at the Rialto's New Year's Eve celebration on Wednesday night.

"I never wanted to listen to anything too modern," said Gonzalez. "I feel fortunate enough that I've never had to play Top 40."

That's the way it's been since high school for Gonzalez, 42, who recalls being turned on to all sorts of roots musicians, like bluesman Muddy Waters and country legend Johnny Cash, as a teen.

"When we were kids, Johnny Cash was huge," said Gonzalez. "Everyone listened to the 'Ring of Fire' and 'I Walk the Line.' Those are some of the greatest songs ever."

This roots-music attraction eventually led to the creation of the Paladins in the late 1970s.

"We just hit it off musically and never looked back," Gonzalez said.

The San Diego-based Paladins have performed in venues from Belgium to Australia, playing with the likes of Los Lobos and the Nighthawks. The trio has leaned toward country, blues and a bit of jazz over the years, but has never strayed too far from the rockabilly sound for which the band has earned a reputation.

"The sound of the Paladins boils down to the Sun Records, Memphis sound," said Gonzalez. "Memphis is where the blues, country and soul all came together. That's how rockabilly was born."

Expect to hear cuts from the new Paladins' album, "El Matador," at the New Year's celebration.

Gonzalez pointed out that the album includes a variety of musical elements found in the seven previous Paladins albums, including the presence of several instrumentals.

"Our albums all fit together in a big puzzle," he said. "The new Paladins record has a little bit of every one of them."

When he's feeling a little more country, Gonzalez turns to his other group, the Hacienda Brothers, as a way to express himself beyond the realm of upbeat rockabilly music.

"We play more mid-tempo stuff with the Hacienda Brothers," he said. "I write a lot of songs that the Paladins can't do as a trio."

With a style dubbed "honky-tonk soul," the five-member group has developed a surprise following through their performances with the Paladins, according to Gonzalez.

"People come to the shows and hear the Hacienda Brothers and say, 'Wow! We didn't even know we liked country music,'" he said.

Having played the Rialto many times with both the Paladins and the Hacienda Brothers, including one of its first New Year's Eve concerts, Gonzalez noted that the atmosphere of a New Year's Eve party brings a certain energy to the event.

"It's an exciting night, and you only get one a year," said Gonzalez. "You gotta whoop it up, and everyone realizes it. You try extra hard to make it a special night."