

TOP STORY

EDITOR'S PICK

40 years later, The Paladins will return to KXCI House Rockin' Review

This is where rockabilly blues band made its Tucson debut

Cathalena E. Burch

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Dave Gonzalez can hardly believe 40 years have passed since his Southern California rockabilly band played its first KXCI show in Tucson.

On Friday, Aug. 7, **The Paladins** return for an unofficial 40th anniversary of that concert when they headline the 13th annual KXCI House Rockin' Blues Review at **El Casino Ballroom**. Tucson saxophonist and Arizona Blues Hall of Famer Alex Flores will join them.

It will be the band's first concert of 2026 and one of only a small handful they have on the books until year's end.

"The last time we played was November of last year, a car show up in North Texas," Gonzalez said during a phone call late last month. "We've just been playing very, very few shows."

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That's by design, he said. With the cost of touring and the fact that he and bandmates Thomas Yearsley and Brian Fahey don't live in the same city, touring is less and less attractive.



The SoCal rockabilly band The Paladins first played El Casino Ballroom in 1986. Founding member Dave Gonzalez, who has called Tucson home, was part of the Tucson-born Hacienda Brothers.

Brad Elligood

“This year, I didn't try to solicit any shows,” he said.

That wasn't the case back in the early 1980s when Gonzalez and Yearsley formed the band in San Diego. They lived on the road, playing their infectious blend of rock, R&B and classic country up and down the West Coast and as far away as Texas, earning them the tagline of California's hardest-working band.

The Paladins appeared on the 1983 Rhino Records album “The Best of L.A. Rockabilly,” which opened the door to the band making its Tucson debut after KXCI blues DJs Jeb Schoonover and Dave “Kidd Squidd” Squires “flipped out and became big fans,” Gonzalez recalled.

“It was through KXCI that we got to Tucson,” he said. “We got an invitation to play El Casino and that was our first show there. “

In the years since, The Paladins have played a number of shows here, the last of which was in 2018.

When the pandemic struck two years later, the band was forced to sit on the sidelines. The more time they were off the road, the more comfortable Gonzalez became with being off the road.

“I need to stay home, and I'm tired of going anywhere, and I don't want to go anywhere anymore,” he remembers telling himself as the months turned into nearly two years. “It was my way of saying, ‘Hey, look, you know what? After 35 years, I can I take a year off.’ And I've just slowly been kind of playing a little bit here and there since then. I I don't want to go full time with it anymore.”

His last Tucson show was a gig at Club Congress last October with Texas indie rocker Alejandro Escovedo that included Mike Hebert and the Kings of Pleasure featuring Alex Flores.



The Paladins (Dave Gonzalez, left, and Thomas Yearsley) played their first KXCI show at El Casino Ballroom in 1986. It was part of the community radio station's House Rockin' Blues concert series.

Courtesy of Jeb Schoonover

Although it's been a minute since they performed together, Gonzalez guessed it would be "like getting back on the bicycle" once the guys are on the El Casino Ballroom stage.

"It's like a time warp. As soon as we start playing, you don't even know what year it is anymore," he said. "I go back in time. Just as soon as I hear the drum beat and Tom starts ripping on that bass, I just grab ahold of it and I just want to go full speed and and tear into it."

If you go

What: 13th annual KXCI House Rockin' Blues Review

Starring: The Paladins with special guest Alex Flores and Tucson's own The Xcelerators featuring Ken Saydak

When: 7:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 7; doors open at 6:30

Where: Historic El Casino Ballroom, 437 E. 26th St.

Tickets: \$25 for KXCI members, \$30 general admission in advance through **kxci.org**; \$35 at the door

Details: **kxci.org/house-rockin-concert**

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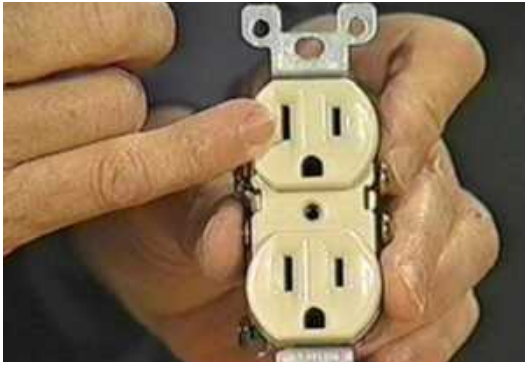
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