

sporadically, *Fastway*, and provides these aging mobs with some wicked ear candy on the raging blues rockers *Heavy Load* and *Walking Too Slow*.

The remainder of the 12-song disc is a collection of expertly delivered, energetic and sometimes even rollicking, piano/guitar blues, filled with Clarke's idiosyncratic, highly personal lyrical themes.

Make My Day is Clarke's inaugural solo blues record and it will surely be the hope of most of those who hear it that it's just a first peek into this guitarist's deep and unique ability to present the musical form with insight, spirit, taste and variety.

—Steve Sharp

GREG IZOR & THE BOX KICKERS

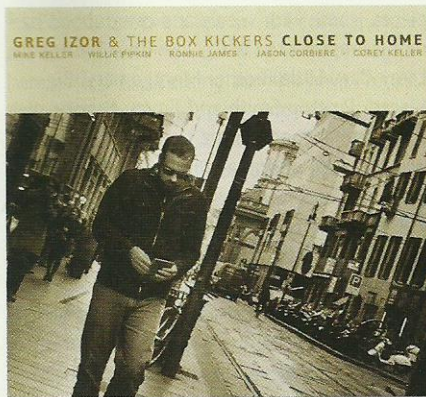
Close to Home

Tangle Eye - 1021

Austin-based singer and harmonica player Greg Izor kicks off the opening track of his second full-length album with an air of power and authority. "Get my money / I know you heard what I said," he warns. "I don't want you comin' around here / Until you've got all my bread." Izor penned all 12 tracks on *Close to Home*, and this one, appropriately titled *Get My Money*, features a scorching first position harp solo with one of the fiercest blow bend runs in recent memory.

Izor, a native of Vermont who was one of the featured artists in *LB's* special harmonica issue last year, is a legitimate powerhouse and a throwback to the heyday of players such as Little Walter, Rice Miller and Big Walter Horton. Never anachronistic or derivative, however, Izor combines a deep respect for tradition with the same ability to innovate that defines the work of some of today's best contemporary harmonica players (think Mark Hummel, Kim Wilson or Annie Raines).

When he's not on the road touring in Europe or handling vocal and harp duties for Anson Funderburgh and The Rockets, Izor can be found playing several nights a week in the Austin area, his home base after relocating there from New Orleans in 2006. One of the benefits of recording *Close to Home* in Austin was that it gave Izor the opportunity to work with an outstanding ensemble of musicians, most of whom are also based in the Texas capital: The Fabulous Thunderbirds guitarist Mike Keller and his brother, Corey Keller, on drums; bassist



Ronnie James, who also did a stint with the T-Birds and has recorded with too many artists to mention; guitarist Willie Pipkin, a rising name in the Austin blues scene who is perhaps best known for his work with the Little Elmore Reed Blues Band and Jason Corbiere, former drummer with Roomful of Blues.

This tight-knit group showcases their skills on a varied set list that includes the Sonny Boy Williamson-flavored *Hooper Street*, the molasses-thick funk of *Can't Get Right* and three beautiful chromatic harmonica numbers, *The Rub* and *Close to Home* (both slow blues) and the unique instrumental *Three Eyed Tiger*, which layers Mediterranean themes over a bouncing, ska-inflected rhythm.

Stripped of everything save the bare essentials—sparse guitar and amplified harp fills with a very restrained rhythm section—*Broadway Joe*, more than anything else on this fine album, demonstrates the depth of Izor's talent. This airy blues drops the pace down to the slowest of crawls as Izor spins a tale of a close friend who was gunned down at a neighborhood dive bar. Fans of straightforward, unadulterated, harmonica-based blues will love this one.

—Roger Gatchet

S.E. WILLIS

Turtle Dove Bounce/Live At The Poor House

Mr. Suchensuch - MS 14007

Veteran San Francisco/Oakland Bay Area pianist and singer S.E. Willis, now in his 15th year as a member of Elvin Bishop's band, showcases two sides of his considerable talents on this double-disc, fifth CD. One consists of solo performances of mostly classic blues, barrelhouse and boogie-woogie piano