

Tommy Castro & The Painkillers



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"With a sterling reputation, guitarist and vocalist Tommy Castro is one of the foremost practitioners of electric blues. Searing delivery...rousing and teeming with emotion. [He is] a sheer, soaring tour-de-force." – Living Blues

"Castro plays gritty, string-bending blues like a runaway train....a glorious blend that rocks the soul and lifts the spirits." – No Depression

"Soaring vocals and swirling leads...showcasing Castro's testifying, confessional vocals [and] resonant emotional power as a singer." – AllMusic

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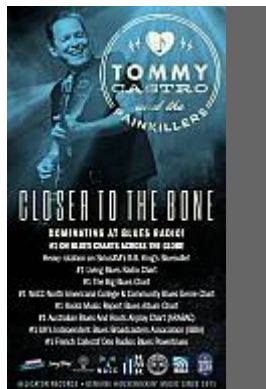
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FULL INFO

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Multiple award-winning, California-based blues and rock sensation Tommy Castro is the guitar slinging, soul-singing leader of the telepathically tight and wildly raucous Tommy Castro & The Painkillers. He's released 17 previous albums over the course of his four-decade career. Each release features its own individual sound and style, ranging from horn-fueled R&B to piping hot blues and soul to fiery, stripped-down rock 'n' roll. With his new album, *Closer To The Bone*, Castro has returned to his roots, delivering what he calls "a real blues record, the way they would have made them back in the day." *Closer To The Bone* is the most unvarnished, straight-ahead blues release of Castro's career, one that bristles with every ounce of his dynamic energy and raw emotion.

On *Closer To The Bone* (Castro's 8th Alligator release), Castro and his Painkillers—bassist Randy McDonald, keyboardist Mike Emerson and drummer Bowen Brown—mix new Castro originals (*Ain't Worth The Heartache*, *Can't Catch A Break*, *Crazy Woman Blues*) with songs originally performed by many of Castro's friends and heroes. Artists and their songs include Johnny Nitro (*One More Night*, on which Castro plays his treasured 1966 black Fender Stratocaster, a guitar once owned by Nitro himself), Magic Slim (*Hole In The Wall*), Ron Thompson (*Freight Train*), Mike Duke (*Keep Your Dog Inside*) and Chris Cain (*Woke Up And Smelled The Coffee*). Castro additionally chose obscure songs by Wynonie Harris (*Bloodshot Eyes*), Eddie Taylor (*Stroll Out West*), Jimmy Nolen (*The Way You Do*) and Johnny "Guitar" Watson (*She Moves Me*). According to Castro, "These are not the obvious artists people generally cover, and that was most definitely on purpose."

Closer To The Bone was produced by master guitarist and studio wizard Christoffer "Kid" Andersen (producer of over 100 albums), at his now-famous Greaseland Studio in San Jose, California. *Closer To The Bone* finds Castro at the top of his game, bringing his seemingly limitless energy and boundless talent to the studio. Guests on the album include labelmates Andersen, Rick Estrin, Chris Cain and Billy Branch, along with saxophone player/vocalist Deanna Bogart, keyboard wizard Jim Pugh and, on three songs, the voices of The Sons Of The Soul Revivers.

Born in San Jose, California in 1955, Tommy Castro first picked up a guitar at age 10. He fell under the spell of six-string stars like Elvin Bishop, Taj Mahal and Mike Bloomfield. Almost every major rock and soul act, from Ike and Tina Turner to Janis Joplin to Tower Of Power, toured through the area, and Castro was at every show. He saw John Lee Hooker, Albert King, and Buddy Guy and Junior Wells at a local club, JJ's Blues Bar. Castro often jammed at JJ's, dreaming of busting out and making a name for himself. He created his own personal sound and style by mixing the blues, R&B and funk music he loved into his own, instantly recognizable brand of uplifting, soul-healing music.

As his reputation spread, Tommy played in several Bay Area bands, quickly making a name for himself as a hotter-than-hot live artist bursting at the seams with talent. In 1985, he became lead singer and guitarist for the regionally popular blues band NiteCry before joined popular Warner Brothers' artists The Dynatones, gigging all over the country. He formed the first Tommy Castro Band in 1992 and has not stopped touring since. In 1995, soon after releasing their first album on Blind Pig Records, The Tommy Castro Band were selected as the house band for three seasons on NBC Television's *Comedy Showcase* (airing right after *Saturday Night Live*). The show brought Tommy in front of millions of viewers every week and cemented his reputation as a not-to-be-missed live performer.

After a series of successful releases on the Blind Pig, Telarc and 33rd Street labels, Tommy Castro joined Alligator Records in 2009. His label debut, *Hard Believer*, launched to massive popular and critical acclaim. 2011 saw the release of the raucous *Tommy Castro Presents The Legendary Rhythm & Blues Revue—Live!*. In 2014, Castro & The

Painkillers released *The Devil You Know*, followed by *Method To My Madness* in 2015, *Stompin' Ground* in 2017, and the irresistible *Killin' It—Live* in 2019. With 2021's *A Bluesman Came To Town*, Castro told the story of a young musician's journey through the blues world. *AllMusic* said the album was "a towering achievement."

Castro received his fourth prestigious and coveted Blues Music Award for B.B. King Entertainer Of The Year in 2023. He's taken home a total of 10 Blues Music Awards and is among the genre's most decorated artists. Castro's relentless road-dog approach—gig after gig, 150 nights a year—continues to earn him loyal, lifelong fans everywhere he plays. *The Washington Post* says Castro is "phenomenal and funky" with "soulful vocals and inspired blues guitar." Famed guitarist Joe Bonamassa says, "Tommy has always been top of the heap among blues guitar players. He always puts on a great show."

Tommy Castro & The Painkillers' deceptively simple approach on *Closer To The Bone* delivers one thrilling performance after another. Says Castro, "Here, I'm not the contemporary guy, not the rock guy, not the soul guy. This is the deeper blues side of me. I know, with these songs, I am at my most authentic."