

TOMMY CASTRO AND THE PAINKILLERS

The Devil You Know

Alligator Records
January 21, 2014

"Phenomenal and funky...soulful vocals and inspired blues-rock guitar." - The Washington Post

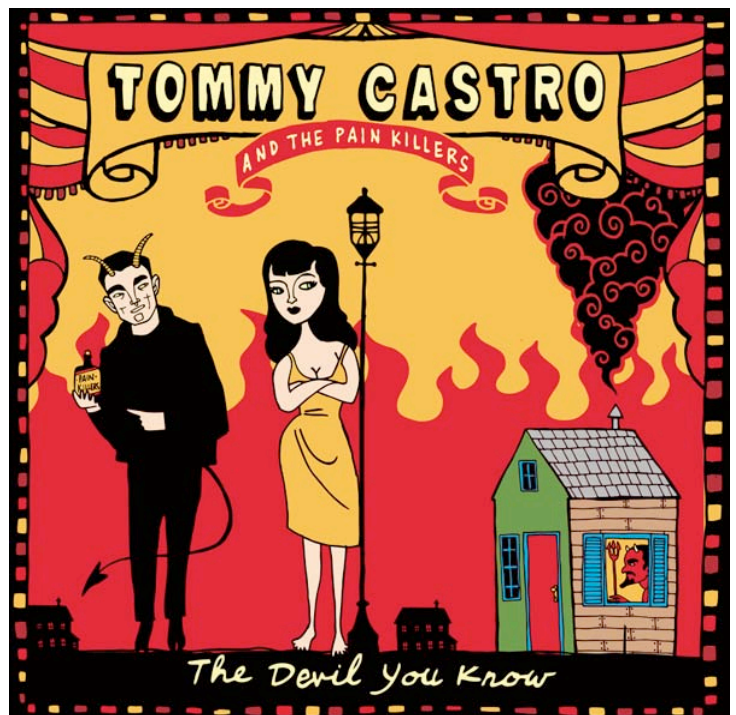
"Tommy Castro and The Painkillers are a crackling, stripped-down band with plenty of grit and a rocking soul." - Jambands.com

"I'm always moving forward, going outside of my wheelhouse, listening to new music and incorporating new ideas," says award-winning guitarist / vocalist / songwriter Tommy Castro. "The contemporary blues scene is full of fresh, new sounds. It's an exciting time." Castro is famed for his signature brand of tough, rocking rhythm and blues, thrilling fans around the world with his incendiary live performances. With his turbo-charged new Alligator Records album, *THE DEVIL YOU KNOW*, Castro strips his music down to its raw essence as he rockets into the next phase of his storied career.

THE DEVIL YOU KNOW, recorded in the Bay Area with his fiery new band The Painkillers, and produced by Castro and Bonnie Hayes, is a contemporary blues tour-de-force. The album is an untamed, high-energy set of 13 songs, including nine written or co-written by Castro. "For the new album I challenged myself to add different sounds and new rhythms to my style while remaining true to my roots. I wrote using ideas for songs and ideas for sounds together in a way I'd never done before," explains Castro, "using drum rhythms to drive the lyrics." The tracks – melodic and biting, energetic and fun – are brought to life with sonic authority by bassist Randy McDonald (from the original Tommy Castro Band), original Painkillers drummer Byron Cage and keyboardist James Pace.

In addition, many of Castro's friends and admirers, including Alligator label-mates Marcia Ball and The Holmes Brothers, add their talents to the proceedings. Other guests include guitarists Joe Bonamassa and Mark Karan, guitarist/vocalist Tab Benoit, vocalists Samantha Fish and Tasha Taylor, and harmonica player Magic Dick. Each song comes loaded with emotional depth and muscular hooks courtesy of Castro's soulful singing, insightful lyrics, and dynamic, potent guitar playing. With *THE DEVIL YOU KNOW*, Castro -- The Painkillers blazing behind him -- unleashes an instant classic. According to *Blurt*, "Castro is one of the greatest blues guitarists, songwriters and entertainers in the world today."

After years of playing guitar-driven blues and R&B, backed by a tight horn section, Castro introduced The Painkillers live in 2012, creating a lean, mean four-piece lineup, with the drum chair currently held by David Tucker. Fueled by Tommy's voice and guitar plus bass, drums and keyboards, the band released the 45rpm single *Greedy / That's All I Got* later that year (both songs are included as bonus tracks on the new CD). *Greedy* quickly



became one of Castro's most-requested songs. An attention-grabbing video for *Greedy* has already received over 150,000 views on YouTube. *The Chicago Sun-Times* calls his music "fiery and soul-drenched."

Castro views the harder-edged sound of The Painkillers as a natural extension of the music he's been making since he was a teenager. "The Painkillers really get me back to my roots. It feels to me a lot more like it did when I first started playing with my friends as a kid. Bands were always just three or four guys playing for the fun of it," Castro recalls. Now, Tommy Castro And The Painkillers are pushing the music to another level.

Tommy Castro And The Painkillers are anxious to bring *THE DEVIL YOU KNOW* to life on stage night after night, personally connecting with their fans all over the world. "A lot of folks are having hard times these days," Castro says, "and they need something to lift them up and make them smile. Our music kills the pain." With *THE DEVIL YOU KNOW*, Castro, along with The Painkillers, will unquestionably be easing pain, lifting spirits and filling dance floors the same way he's been doing for decades – only now he's packing a far more feral punch.

BIOGRAPHY

Born in San Jose, California in 1955, Tommy Castro first picked up a guitar at age 10. He came under the spell of Eric Clapton, Elvin Bishop, Mike Bloomfield and other blues rock players early on. As he got older, Castro moved forward by investigating the past, falling in love with the blues guitar work of Muddy Waters, B.B. King, Freddie King, Buddy Guy, Elmore James and singers like Ray Charles, Wilson Pickett and James Brown. By his late 20s he was playing in a variety of San Francisco-area blues and soul bands.

Castro joined Warner Brothers artists The Dynatones in the late 1980s. The much-loved band had a huge fan base and toured the U.S. constantly. He honed his chops with the group on the road

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for two years, performing live all across the country and sharing stages with major artists like Carla Thomas and Albert King. He formed The Tommy Castro Band in 1991 and won the Bay Area Music Award for Best Club Band in both 1993 and 1994. With his local fan base quickly expanding, he released his debut album in 1996 on Blind Pig. He began touring nationally, picking up new fans everywhere he went. The album won the 1997 Bay Area Music Award for Outstanding Blues Album, and Castro also took the award for Outstanding Blues Musician that same year.

In the mid-1990s The Tommy Castro Band served as the house band for three seasons on NBC Television's *Comedy Showcase* (airing right after *Saturday Night Live*), bringing him in front of millions of viewers every week. During the 1990s and into the 2000s, Castro released a series of critically acclaimed CDs for Blind Pig, Telarc and 33rd Street Records as well as one on his own Heart And Soul label and began years of year-round, relentless touring, continuing to this day. In 2001 and 2002 the legendary B.B. King asked Castro to open his summer concert tours. Castro received an open invitation to join the King Of The Blues on stage for the nightly finale.

Castro's 2009 Alligator debut, *HARD BELIEVER*, was anchored by his inspired vocal delivery, masterful horn arrangements and expert guitar work. On the strength of the album and subsequent touring, Castro won four 2010 Blues Music Awards including, for the second time in his career, the coveted B.B. King Entertainer Of The Year Award (the very highest award a blues performer can receive). His song *Hard Believer* (co-written with Bonnie Hayes, who co-produced *THE DEVIL YOU KNOW*), took first place in the blues category of The 2012 International Songwriting Competition.

In 2011, Castro released *TOMMY CASTRO PRESENTS THE LEGENDARY RHYTHM & BLUES REVUE--LIVE!* on Alligator. The album is a fiery collection of the highest highlights from a series of live performances anchored by Castro and an all-star collection of nationally recognized blues musicians. In addition to Castro's stellar fretwork and blue-eyed soul vocals, the album features Alligator Records label mates Joe Louis Walker, Rick Estrin, Janiva Magness and the late Michael "Iron Man" Burks, along with Debbie Davies, Theodis Ealey, Sista Monica and Trampled Under Foot.

THE PAINKILLERS ARE:

RANDY McDONALD

Randy McDonald was born in Harrisburg, PA in 1959 and grew up in San Diego. He learned bass at an early age, becoming a first call, in-demand musician by his late teens. McDonald's influences range from straight-ahead jazz to hard rock, blues, and soul music. When he joined The Dynatoners in 1983 -- the nationally touring, six-piece blue-eyed soul band -- it was a perfect fit. During his tenure with the group, McDonald befriended Dynatoners guitarist Tommy Castro. Not long after leaving the band in 1991, McDonald got a call from Castro, who was putting together the first incarnation of The Tommy Castro Band. McDonald appears on seven Castro albums and has toured the world with Tommy, helping the band to become one of the most celebrated groups



Photo by Steve Sherman

performing anywhere. McDonald left the group in 2007 before returning to join The Painkillers in 2012. "Randy has been with me from the beginning as a major contributor to the music we were playing," recalls Castro. "Randy was a big part of the Tommy Castro sound. It's great to have him back."

JAMES PACE

James Pace was born in Roanoke, VA in 1978. He began playing piano by ear at age three. A proficient pianist, he fell in love with the Hammond B3 organ at age 22, touring with the jam band Rebus before playing with Blind Pig recording artist Harper. In 2008, Pace joined blues guitarist Ana Popovic's band, and spent three years performing with her around the world. He has played on over 30 albums and has shared stages with blues legends including B.B. King, Buddy Guy, Robert Cray, Los Lobos, and Janiva Magness. Pace is thrilled to be playing with Tommy. "I am blessed to play the music I love with incredible friends," he says, "for the greatest fans on earth."

DAVID TUCKER

David Tucker was born in Syracuse, NY in 1964. He started drumming at age 14, falling in love with blues and funk music at an early age. Since moving to Santa Cruz, CA, Tucker toured and/or recorded with Maria Muldaur, Sista Monica, James Armstrong and John "Broadway" Tucker. Castro is happy to have Tucker in the band. "David's a great fit for The Painkillers. He plays with a natural sound." Tucker couldn't agree more. "Tommy's the man," he said. "I am thrilled to be in the band. I love killing the pain."

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"Tommy Castro & The Painkillers are a crackling, stripped down band [with] plenty of grit... Castro is...a top notch musician, but what sets him apart from the pack is the ability to lift any number of styles from his kit bag and let fly."
- Jambands.com (April 2012)

"Tommy Castro has the voice and the sound to touch everybody's heart."
- Carlos Santana

Collaborations with **B.B. King** - 80+ dates, **John Hiatt**, **John Lee Hooker**, **Buddy Guy**, **Dr. John**, **Elvin Bishop**, **Carlos Santana**, **Los Lobos**, **Delbert McClinton** and many more

"**Tommy Castro Day**" declared October 14 2006 by **San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom**, in recognition of his musical achievements and his support of various community projects

HIGHLIGHTS

2012 BLUES MUSIC AWARD NOMINEE

★ B.B. King Entertainer of the Year, Band of the Year

★ Contemporary Blues Male Artist of the Year

★ Contemporary Blues Album of the Year for *Tommy Castro*

Presents The Legendary Rhythm & Blues Revue - Live!

2012 INTERNATIONAL SONGWRITING COMPETITION WINNER

Blues Category award for "Hard Believer" - title song to his acclaimed album

Featured on the 2012 BMA nominated DVD, *All Jams on Deck*.

4 BLUES MUSIC AWARD WINS FOR 2010!

★ Band of the Year

★ B.B. King Entertainer of the Year

★ Contemporary Blues Male Artist of the Year

★ Contemporary Blues Album of the Year - *Hard Believer*

HARD BELIEVER

#1 Peak on ROOTS MUSIC CHART

#1 Best Blues Album of 2009 - Living Blues Awards Readers' Poll

#1 Blues Album of 2009 - France's GUITARIST MAGAZINE

MOJO MAGAZINE - #3 Blues Album of 2009

BILLBOARD BLUES CHART - Top 15 for over 16 months

2010 Named Best Blues Band at BLUES BLAST MUSIC AWARDS

2010 MAPLE BLUES AWARD NOMINEE for B.B. King International Artist Of The Year

2008 BLUES MUSIC AWARD WINNER

★ B.B. King Entertainer of the Year

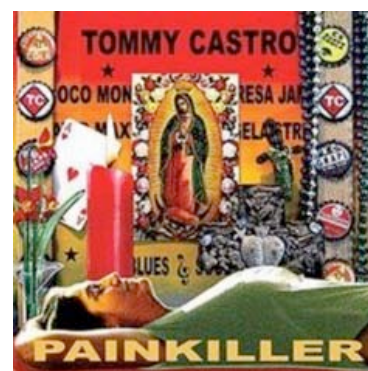
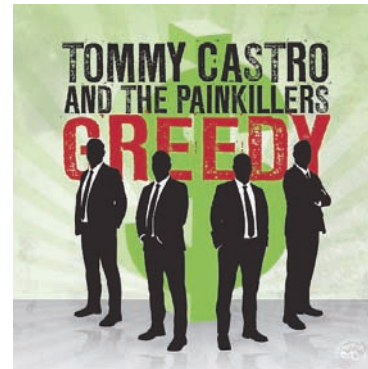
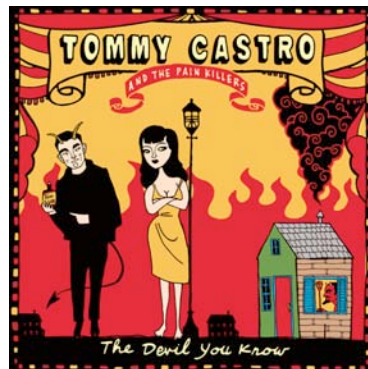
★ Contemporary Album of the Year for *Painkiller*

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DISCOGRAPHY

The Devil You Know (2014)
 Greedy (7" Vinyl / Digital Download) (2012)
 Tommy Castro Presents
 The Legendary Rhythm & Blues Revue Live! (2011)
 Hard Believer (2009)
 Command Performance
 The Legendary Rhythm & Blues Revue (2008)
 Painkiller (2007)
 Soul Shaker (2005)
 Triple Trouble (2003)
 Gratitude (2003)
 Guilty of Love (2001)
 The Essential Tommy Castro (2001)
 Live at The Fillmore (2000)
 Right as Rain (1999)
 Can't Keep A Good Man Down (1997)
 Exception to the Rule (1996)
 No Foolin' (1993)



PRESS

"Everyone is at the top of their game with an electricity and vein-popping excitement that can only be generated when musicians feed off each other live. Castro in particular seems to relish his master of ceremonies role...and displays his sometimes underappreciated guitar skills...The disc moves from one highlight to the next with the primary detriment being that it's not a double CD...Perhaps volume two is in order."

- Review of Tommy Castro Presents The Legendary Rhythm & Blues Revue Live!, AllMusic.com

"Castro has made about a dozen albums over 14 years, and unless I've missed one, Hard Believer is his best yet...he sings and plays a set of savvy songs with great concentration and little flamboyance. The sort of record that gives blues-rock a good name."

- Mojo

"Timely, topical blues for the 21st century."

- Blurt

"Here's a blues musician who clearly knows his strengths...A soul vocalist who occasionally brings to mind Delbert McClinton, Castro wouldn't have any trouble fronting a top-notch band without ever playing a note, yet his guitar work and songwriting are equally impressive."

- The Washington Post

"It's obvious with Hard Believer that Castro is upping the ante. In the R&B world of 2009, he has to be considered one of the top contenders for the crown."

- Vintage Guitar

"A gifted lead guitarist firmly in touch with his lyrical voice, Castro writes an alluring blend of straight ahead blues and Memphis-style soul. While he has his own definable sound, Castro calls to mind great blues-rock players such as Billy Gibbons of Z.Z.Top, Stevie Ray Vaughan and even Duane Allman."

- Blues Revue

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