

Blues ace to play The Belfry

Tommy Castro & The Painkillers, touring in support of their latest Alligator Records release, “Killin’ It Live,” will perform at The Belfry in Sisters on Thursday, February 27. Castro, along with his band, The Painkillers — bassist Randy McDonald, keyboardist Michael Emerson and drummer Bowen Brown — plays music that is guaranteed to fill the floor and raise the roof.

With seemingly telepathic musicianship, The Painkillers bring an unmatched passion to Castro’s blue-eyed California soul and hard-rocking, good-time songs. Killin’ It Live is a nonstop, spirited mix of blues, rock and soul, with rollicking, hypnotic grooves fueled by Castro’s fervent vocals and the band’s muscular musicianship.

Tommy Castro & The Painkillers recently received two Blues Music Award nominations for Blues Rock Album Of The Year and Blues Rock Artist Of The Year. The 41st Annual Blues Music Awards will be presented by the Blues Foundation in Memphis on

May 7.

With the group firing on all cylinders, Castro knew the time was right to answer his fans’ demands for a live album. Killin’ It Live captures the band at the peak of their creative and improvisational powers, and features one unforgettable, unpredictable performance after another.

“This is the best band we’ve ever had,” says Castro. “We really got something going on beyond just being good musicians. Every song we play live now has that right feel—all the dynamics. It allows us to jam out more on stage. Killin’ It Live is what you hear when you see us live.”

Featuring songs from throughout Castro’s career, Killin’ It Live was produced by Castro and engineer/songwriter Ron Alan Cohen and recorded at venues in Texas, New York, Michigan and California during 2018. The album includes eight Castro originals spanning his entire career and two Castro-ized covers, each showing a slightly different side

of his multifaceted musical personality.

Born in San Jose, California in 1955, Tommy Castro first picked up a guitar at age 10. He fell under the spell of Eric Clapton, Elvin Bishop, Taj Mahal, Mike Bloomfield and other blues-rockers. Almost every major rock and soul act, from Ike and Tina Turner to Janis Joplin to Elvin Bishop to Taj Mahal, toured through the area, and Castro was at every show. He saw John Lee Hooker, Albert King and Buddy Guy and Junior Wells at the same local blues bar, JJ’s, where he often jammed, dreaming of one day busting out. Mixing the blues-rock he loved and the soul music he heard blasting out from his Mexican friends’ lowriders, Tommy started to create his own personal sound and style. He honed his guitar skills and intense vocals, learning how to capture an audience as he performed in San Jose’s highly competitive bar scene.

As his reputation spread, Tommy played in a variety of Bay Area blues and soul



PHOTO BY JAYSON CARPENTER

Tommy Castro is returning to rock The Belfry on February 27.

bands, soon making a name for himself as a hotter-than-hot live artist bursting at the seams with talent. He joined Warner Brothers’ artists The Dynatoners in the late 1980s, gigging all over the country. After forming the first Tommy Castro Band in 1991, 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. He signed with Alligator Records in 2009, releasing “Hard Believer” to massive acclaim.

Castro formed the first incarnation of The Painkillers in 2012 and released “The

Devil You Know.” By 2014 (with Brown and Emerson taking over drums and keys respectively) they had become a lean, mean four-piece lineup. The current band released “Method To My Madness” in 2015 and “Stompin’ Ground” in 2017, with critics shouting praise and admirers cheering the group’s every move.

Blues Revue said simply, “Tommy Castro can do no wrong.”

The Belfry is located at 302 E. Main Ave. Showtime is 7 p.m. Tickets are \$20 advance/\$25 day of show. Visit www.belfryevents.com.

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