

## new releases

pieces, some with vocals and overdubbed harmonica, associated with Cow Cow Davenport, Leroy Carr, Little Brother Montgomery, Big Maceo, Pinetop Smith and Jimmy Yancey, plus four original songs in the tradition. The other was recorded during a January 2011 gig at the Poor House Bistro in San Jose, California, in the company of Bishop bandmates Bobby Cochran on drums and a couple lead vocals, guitarist Bob Welsh, upright bassist Ruth Davies and trombonist Ed Earley, along with guests Nancy Wright on tenor saxophonist and guitarist Takezo Takeda. Bishop himself sits in on guitar on four of the 14 tracks, one—Fats Domino's *Don't Lie to Me* (actually a variation on Tampa Red's *Don't You Lie to Me*, also known as *I Get Evil*)—featuring his distinctively craggy voice.

Willis' rhythmically riveting, two-handed piano prowess on the solo disc is quite striking, particularly on such highly syncopated numbers as Davenport's *Cow Cow Blues* and Montgomery's *Vicksburg Blues*. The original *Turtle Dove Bounce* features wonderfully intricate interplay between piano and harmonica. Willis' vocals are rather soulful and are marked by distinctively breathy tones and a pronounced vibrato at the end of many end-of-phrase sustains.

The band set is far more stylistically diverse, ranging from such blues tunes as *C.C. Rider*, *River's Invitation*, Louis Jordan's *Let the Good Times Roll* and Little Walter's *Last Night*, the New Orleans classics *Tipitina* and *Hey Pocky A-Way*, the country standard *Release Me* and a rather vocally overwrought rockabilly rendition of *Mystery Train*. Willis affords plenty of instrumental solo space to Wright, Earley, Welsh and, of course, his own piano, but in the end, Bishop steals the show with his one vocal and his commanding guitar work, of which his slide solo on *Last Night* is especially bone-chilling.

—Lee Hildebrand

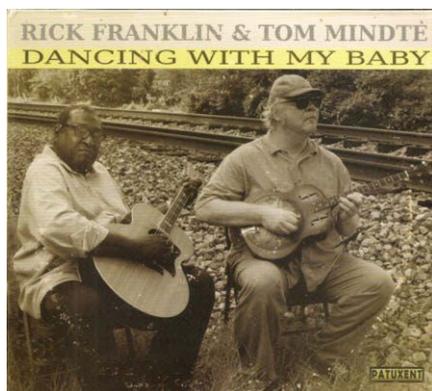
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## RICK FRANKLIN & TOM MINDTE

### *Dancing with My Baby*

Patuxent - CD 246

Two Washington, D.C., acoustic players, each excellent instrumentalists, join as a duo to combine their respective string traditions—one from the African American Piedmont blues scene in Archie Edwards' famous D.C. barbershop, the other from the thriving



Appalachian regional bluegrass realm. Blues guitarist, songster and storyteller Rick Franklin is a mainstay of the Maryland/Virginia/D.C. area acoustic blues scene, a folk roots musician deserving of greater attention, much like the entire acoustic blues scene of the region. Mandolinist and music historian Tom Mindte is well known for his recording and production studio that specializes in roots music, Patuxent Music, which is where this CD was recorded.

The result is a gentle album, almost languid, with a lazy-day, back porch-picking feeling, neither deep blues nor bluegrass, but rather a lighthearted roots music drawing on diverse traditions. In many ways, this blending of styles is in itself a tradition in the tri-state region. While there may have been societal racial segregation, the east coast folk and roots heritage is rich with an amalgam of both black and white music, and the musicians have always interchanged, shared and drawn from each other's musical heritage. White players like Doc Boggs, Roscoe Holcomb and Doc Watson were well versed and influenced by the blues players and songsters like Papa Charlie Jackson; and, the black blues players from the Piedmont liberally drew from the popular white country players like Jimmie Rodgers. "Backstage integration," a form of cultural cross-pollination, helped form American roots music, and the resulting melting pot helped define east coast folk music to this day.

So, it's natural for this type of music to transcend strict delineation. As Franklin & Mindte sat down for this session, they were not trying to be one thing or the other, but what came out was typical American string music. Yet, each musician's heritage comes through. Any good bluegrass string player can play some blues, and any good blues players can dig into the country realm, but Mindte's style, even when playing blues progressions, is definitely bluegrass, and Franklin