

Vermont native Greg Izor counts among his influences the Harmonicats and Borrah Minevitch & the Harmonica Rascals as much as Little Walter and James Cotton. He is a true fan of the harmonica, and his melodic range, rich tone, and sense of stylistic curiosity on the instrument make him one of the most exciting rising names in the blues harmonica world. After several years of hustling as a journeyman musician in New Orleans where he developed a close friendship under the tutelage of blues veteran Johnny Sansone, in 2006 Izor relocated to Austin, Texas, where he also works as a high school teacher when he's not on stage. Izor has quickly established himself as one of the top harmonica players in the Southwest, teaming up with respected players such as Mike Keller and Johnny Moeller (both now with the Fabulous Thunderbirds), as well as Willie Pipkin and the late Nick Curran.

In 2010 Anson Funderburgh tapped Izor to front the Rockets when they go out on tour, a position he has maintained ever since, and Mark Hummel added him to the bill for his Blues Harmonica Blowout showcase when it made a rare appearance at Antone's in Austin in 2012 (a flight delay prevented him from appearing, however). He has released two excellent albums under his own name, ***I Was Wrong*** (2010) and ***Close to Home*** (2013), both available at [www.gregizor.com](http://www.gregizor.com). Izor spends his summers touring throughout Europe, and he currently holds a weekly residency at Evangeline Café, a funky Cajun joint in South Austin.

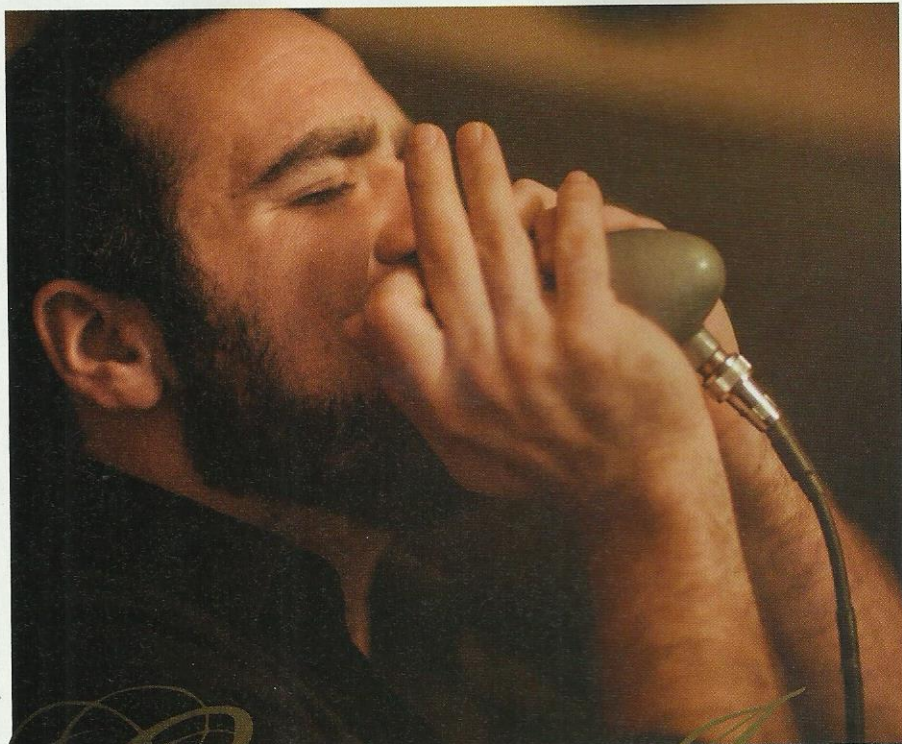


"I grew up in Vermont, and I started playing trumpet when I was eight. Later on I started playing guitar and harmonica together, like folk music. That's how I started playing harmonica. I just like the way the instrument sounds. I had a band director when I was a kid, and he taught me that if you liked this music and this is what you want to play, then you need to dig deeper than what you know.

"So I was able to broaden my horizons from Vermont, which was hard to do. I started in with Big Walter and Sonny Boy and Little Walter, and then George Smith. And then from there got to Kim [Wilson], Rod [Piazza], and [Rick] Estrin.

"And about that time I had to figure out where to go to college because I got kicked out of college in Vermont and decided I could either go to California and try and run up on those guys out there, or I could go to New Orleans where [Johnny] Sansone was and look him up. And so I went to New Orleans, and man I had a great time. It's still home.

"Sansone had a gig at Tip's [Tipitina's] downtown, and I watched his first set. And



# Greg Izor

## Nothing Feels Better Than Playing

by Roger Gatchet

he went on a break, and when he came back I was standing right there. I said, 'Hey Mr. Sansone. My name's Greg, and I moved to New Orleans to learn from you.' I followed him and went to all his gigs.

"And then I started booking my own gigs here and there. Johnny would have me sit in with him at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, and that was always a huge thrill for me.

"I hear a lot of guys say, 'Well, the blues is all about this,' or 'the blues is all about that.' Or 'that's the blues,' or 'it's blues time,' or whatever. But for me, blues is just something I really love, and it causes me to have a certain feeling, and that's a way that I'm grateful to be able to express myself.

"When you're playing music there's a

certain type of music that has this feeling, and I know I do and I know a lot of the guys that I play with do, too. It's like a can't-be-satisfied thing, where you're always reaching for something that's just out of grasp. And nothing feels better than playing, and nothing feels better than playing when you feel like you've played as good as you possibly could. But there's always this thing out there that you don't necessarily know what it is that you're reaching for, that kind of fuels you to keep doing different things, or trying to play different things and learning new things. Because there's always this thing, even if you don't know what it sounds like, that you're reaching for. And all the guys I've played with have that thing. I like that. I'm glad I feel that way. And I hope that I always feel that way."