

Guitar Red

Guitar Red *Lightnin' in a Bottle* (Backspace ***1/2

Nick Cristiano, Philadelphia Enquirer, November

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Street musicians have to project a dynamic presence to get and keep an audience. The 44-year-old Guitar Red (Billy Christian Walls), who busks in Decatur, Ga., is a pro at it, and, performing solo except for one number, he captures all that energy on tape on the aptly titled *Lightnin' in a Bottle*.

The singer-guitarist has substance abuse, homelessness and jail time on his resume, which gives him ample fodder to sing the blues. Without denying hard-luck reality, however, he conveys an infectious exuberance for life. Laments such as "I Ain't Got Nobody But Myself" and "Chain Gang Blues" are outnumbered by brisk, hard-strumming workouts such as "Lips Poked Out" and the humorous "Three-Legged Dog Blues," or the sweet declaration of faith "I Believe." A great find.