

## Guitar Red

Homeless Blues from 'Guitar Red'

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[http://airbornecombatengineer.typepad.com/in\\_decaturn/2008/08/homeless-blues.html](http://airbornecombatengineer.typepad.com/in_decaturn/2008/08/homeless-blues.html)



On July 29, Decatur, Georgia based blues guitarist and singer Guitar Red fulfilled an unexpected lifelong dream with the release of his debut album that truly lives up to its moniker **Lightnin' In A Bottle**. As the first release by recently launched Atlanta indie label **Backspace Records** [see write up in [Market Watch](#)], the day could have easily called for a dual celebration. But there was no formal fanfare, no scheduled record release party at a big club, no streamers and balloons or packaged performance with a backing band. Instead, the 44 year-old street musician—real name, **Billy Christian Walls**—spent the day doing what he always does around the square of Decatur, strumming his guitar and singing songs of women, drinking and hard times in the raw, unvarnished tradition of real blues. Not those slick modern pop-rock blues of Robert Cray, Eric Clapton, Taj Mahal and B.B. King—no offense meant to those legends at all. But those raw, Robert Johnson blues that can only come from knowing hunger, poverty, heartache, loss, drug and alcohol addiction, not to mention homelessness. Guitar Red is the real deal, a "busker" [someone who performs for money] who spends most mornings on E. Court Square, sometimes in front of the Brick Store Pub, whose management is kind to him, where he frequently plays for hours. On a good day, he goes to sleep with a pocketful of tips. But not every day is a good day. No matter. For Red, it's all about authenticity, staying true to who he is. [AntiMusic](#) Since this blogger wears lots of GT shirts, he greets me with, "Hey Georgia Tech!" But, I've yet to get him to learn to play and sing the Ramblin' Wreck fight song. It's great to see him get his own album and some press. This could never happen when this blogger was a kid.

*He's the epitome of a non-aggressive panhandler. He's always smiling and joking and enjoying life (which is more than this blogger can say for some who are far more fortunate and/or driven toward success). You're not likely to see him looking as concerned as he does in the cover image of his album. If you walk by, throw a quarter or or two, or even a buck if you can spare it, in his guitar case. But don't give him too much, or he'll buy a house and blow his homeless image.*

