

REVIEWS

MICKI FREE

*American Horse*

[Native Music Rocks/Mighty Loud]

Past stints have found guitarist Micki Free tearing it up with such diverse entities as ZZ Top, Shalamar, Janet Jackson and punk icon Wendy O. Williams. Nevertheless, Free's own efforts leave no doubt as to his direction. He carries the frenzied, heavy-handed blues that initially inspired him into hard rock realms previously trod by Jimi Hendrix, Cream and Robin Trower. His visceral take on a generous sampling of Hendrix tunes—“Hey Baby/New Rising Sun,” an extended “Voodoo Chile (Slight Return)” and a powerful “Voodoo Chile Blues”—provide obvious reference points for a blistering style that gives *American Horse* its power. Elsewhere, the riveting “New York, New York” and emotive “Heather’s Arms” showcase his melodic prowess. For all the passion Free and his trio (including veteran players Cindy Blackman on drums and David Santos on bass) exude, it’s two versions of “Wounded Knee,” an homage to his Native American heritage, that most convincingly asserts his blend of brilliance and abandon. —LZ

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