



Johnny Winter - Live Through the '80s

MVD Visual DVD

BluesWax Rating: 7

Winter's Slide into Summer

This DVD represents Johnny Winter's energetic 1980's era, when the then gunslinger still had commanding energy. All performances are of Johnny in a trio format with various drummers, and New York's Jon Paris is the bassist throughout. Live Through The '80s features eighteen performances at venues of various sizes. Four songs are from Toronto, Canada, in 1983, while ten segments are from 1984 in Denmark, the Capitol Theater in New Jersey, and Nashua, New Hampshire. There are also a couple of Alligator MTV-styled videos. The later 1980 s are covered from Sweden in '87 and Italy in '88. Also included is a Winter interview and a few quick comments.

Winter is razor sharp on the emotional ballad "Stranger" and on Bobby Womack's "It's All Over Now," both culled from the Toronto performances in 1983. Covers of "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and "Johnny B. Goode," recorded in Denmark in front of one-hundred thousand fans, are eye catching but not as explosive as Winter's renditions from Johnny Winter And, the live disc on Columbia recorded more than a decade prior. A shirtless Johnny slides his brains out on Dylan's "Highway 61 Revisited." Poor video but excellent audio from the The Casbah in Nashua, New Hampshire, from 1984 includes an odd addition of "Please Come Home for Christmas."

Winter comments in 1984 that he wants to make more commercial albums because straight blues doesn't receive enough airplay. Contrarily, in 1987 he states that blues music is like a good friend and that good blues music makes him and many people feel happy. The Alligator records promos are also a welcome addition, especially the lip-synched "Don't Take Advantage of Me." It is during the second Alligator segment that Winter speaks about the Dick Shurman/Bruce Iglauer-produced Guitar Slinger being his favorite album and goes on to say that he thinks it will be his favorite for many years to come.

In summary, this video demonstrates the raw power Johnny Winter once possessed. For me I still prefer his earlier work with Rick Derringer and company and with brother Edgar (check out the DVD Johnny Winter Live Through the '70s for additional evidence). All of these live performances are within the confines of guitar, bass, and drums, but I prefer more color and dynamics in music. That said, this documentary is well done, the audio is pretty good, and (for the most part) the video is of decent quality. So if you dig the '80s era of Johnny Winter, this DVD should work well for you.

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