

## FAME Review: Johnny Winter - Live at Rockpalast (CD)

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## Live at Rockpalast

[Johnny Winter](#)

[MVD Audio](#) - MVD5185A (CD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange  
by **Mark S. Tucker**  
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Since I covered this gig in its DVD format ([here](#)), I'm here going to take the opportunity to ponder why Johnny Winter seems to have been neglected by time and scribes, as the man certainly hasn't come in for the accolades and sales figures so richly deserved by such a devotion to his art and the blues. The key, however, may well lie in what MVD, the issuing label, describes as his perennial approach: "straight up blues...lean and mean". Such a domain is not always to the market's tastes, the popular mind being a fickle beast and too oft informed by a surfeit of tinsel and glitter having nothing to do with true aesthetics, authenticity, or integrity. Nowhere is this more glaringly proven than in the analogue case of brother Edgar's raging success with the now anthemic *Frankenstein*, a cut having nothing to do with the gent's love of rhythm and blues, soul, and the sort of bayou sound so well shown in the still underrated White Trash ensemble. More, *Free Ride*, another big hit off the same LP (*They Only Come Out at Night*), was not Edgar's at all but entirely the child of pop schlockmeister Dan Hartman. Must be grating, to earn supper and sleep by lowering oneself to such levels, hm, Edgar?

No insult is intended, the music world is tough, but Johnny himself was rarely able to do that transformation shuffle very well. When he tried, he cranked out some great rock and roll, the Johnny Winter And materials standing as testimony, but let's face it: all of that was heavily blues-based rock, as John never could, and never wanted to, get away from his marriage to the sound he so loves. **Rockpalast** documents him determining, after an extended bout of side-tripping, to get right back to basics with a ferocity that is precisely lean and quintessentially mean, as MVD aptly cites, the kind of spirit that Rory Gallagher demonstrated so cyclonically when he swung full tilt at Montreux and elsewhere. Every cut here is a tornado of biting chops from a trio sweating its brains out, the albino fretbender 385% into it, determined to make converts of the entire German audience, if not the whole European continent. This, I have no doubt, is what prompted the long-delayed release of the gig, making sure the event was not lost to time.

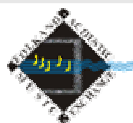
Ironically enough, Johnny catches one of Gallagher's favorites, *Messin' with the Kid*, and turns it into a fireball, the crowd going crazy in appreciative response. In fact, one easily discerns that the listeners were as much anticipating Winter's reclamation of his birthright as the guitar-slinger himself. It's impossible to be disappointed in a Winter gig in any event, so one could say it hardly mattered, yet it does: there was that firm decision to not mess around any longer and deal the full deck naked, unadorned, and glorious back out into the world. Thus, the CD, though truncated from the DVD, albeit still 54 slammin' minutes of full throttle relentlessness, is killer car-play material, windows open as you cruise the summer's end, stereo blasting, the sun going down, and youth seemingly perpetual...and if not, then, dammit!, we'll force a last gasp out of fading years with a shout, a swagger, a hoot, and then a holler with the die-hard bluesman from Texas.

### Track List:

- Hideaway (Freddie King)
- Messin' with the Kid (Mel London)
- Walking by Myself (Rogers / Horton)
- Divin' Duck (Sleepy John Estes)
- I'm Ready (Waters / Dixon)
- Rockabilly Boogie (Burnette / Mortimer / Hawkins)
- Jumpin' Jack Flash (Jagger / Richards)

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