



Live from Japan

Johnny Winter

MVD Visual - MVD5421D (DVD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**

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There's a story here that needs to be told before I can begin my critique. Paul Nelson, the gent on the cover of *Live from Japan* who bears a striking facial resemblance to a young version of James Osterberg (Iggy Pop), may well be the reason venerable dirty-white-blues god Johnny Winter is still with us. Johnny was in the middle of a double whammy (prescription drugs and alcohol) when it turned triple in the form of manager Teddy Slatius, whose actions in regard of Winter were—er, shall we say? —**highly** questionable as his own drug problems drove him in and out of rehab, making a very bad rep and a buncha business screw jobs for Winter as he and his and manager both slipped down the ladder.

Along came Nelson, student of a killer teacher trio (Steve Vai, Steve Khan, and Mike Stern - YOW!!) and a guy with heart and integrity. He saw what was what, took matters in hand, and accepted a rhythm guitarist slot while cleaning house and taking over management of the platinum-haired stringsmeister, turning Johnny around and thus blessing the rest of us with ever more of Winter's dynamic music and stalwart presence in the blues world. *Live from Japan* shows the old jaguar still on the mend, looking worn but indestructible, sitting for the performance rather than in his erstwhile leonine stance at the microphone, but still able to peel off the riffs like the icon he deservedly is. More, the Japanese audience, in a land that has ever housed major connoisseurs of American culture, are enthusiastic as hell, eating every minute up with fork and spoon.

As the concert proceeds and that well steeped blues blood of his stirs, Winter gets more animated, his own music infecting him as much as the audience. More than a few memories of the old Johnny Winter And band come flooding back, the new backing ensemble providing a solid baseline for the flashes. By the time he lights into *Got my Mojo Working*, everything's up to speed and kinetic, even with the august gent still seated. Johnny becomes what he is: a blues king holding court and showering blessings on the people. From there, you're buckled in for the ride. Every head in the hall is bopping along with the rhythm, hands waving and clapping, fingers snapping as Winter's lead guitar work sings like a chorus of rough angels descending from the clouds to dance in the streets.

He catches on fire during the middle eight of *Johnny B. Goode* and even the slow numbers sear every loving ear, each note heartfelt, fired from a laser. Providentially, MVD, which issued this gem, also released an old 1979 Rockpalast comeback show not long ago ([here](#)), one of several such phoenix trips for the guy, and, take my word for it, you need to see 'em both. It's hard to believe that anyone can still crank out top-notch material after all he's been through for...half...a...damn...century! Yet here Johnny is, captured only last year, defying all the odds. Oh, and did I tell that he'd never played Japan before in his life, that this was the one thing he had left to do? S'true, and he sold out a very large hall (Zepp Tokyo Music Hall) in the world's largest city...for three nights. Man o man!

Track List:

- Intro
- Hideway
- Sugar Coated Love
- She Like To Boogie Real Low
- Good Morning Little School Girl
- Got My Mojo Workin'
- Johnny B. Goode
- Blackjack
- All Tore Down
- Lone Wolf
- Don't Take Advantage Of Me
- Bony Marony
- It's All Over Now
- Dust My Broom
- Highway 61 Rvisited

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