

JOHNNY WINTER

Live From Japan

(MVD VISUAL) www.johnnywinter.com



Recorded last year at the Zepp Tokyo Music Hall, this set captures the then-sixty-seven-year-old blues-rock legend's first-ever visit to Japan. The rock credentials of a support band that includes guitarist Paul Nelson, bassist Scott Spray and drummer/vocalist Vito Liuzzi ensure that both tempo and volume are maintained at impressive levels throughout the incendiary ninety-minute performance.

From a cinematic standpoint, *Live From Japan* is well produced and edited, with high image quality and decent audio, although the sound mix is questionable at times, with Nelson's guitar often distorted at the expense of Winter's lead.

Johnny Winter remains such an icon that it feels disrespectful to criticise his performance, but sadly the years and rock lifestyle have not been kind to Winter who appears considerably frailer than his age would suggest. Seated throughout this set, it is evident that his guitar skills, although still better than many artists, are no longer those featured on his collaborations with Muddy Waters, while his vocals, always an acquired taste, are now also significantly weaker.

The set combines old favourites such as 'Sugar Coated Love', 'Good Morning Little School Girl' and 'Johnnie B Goode' with tributes to Ray Charles's 'Blackjack', the Stones' 'Gimme Shelter' and for an encore, Dylan's 'Highway 61 Revisited'. This is all good, raucous, enjoyable blues-rock from an artist whose best days of energy-sapping power blues and breathtaking guitar licks may be behind him, but who can still get a reserved Japanese crowd on its feet.

Winter is a bluesman at heart, as shown on his best Alligator-era recordings and, as a fan of that period, I only wish he were still performing with blues session men capable of re-creating that mojo.

Morgan Hogarth