



(South Texas)

JOHNNY WINTER
"Live Through The 70's" DVD
MVD Visual (2008)

This DVD is undeniable evidence that in a world of great guitarists, **Johnny Winter** in his prime, was a true colossus on the six-string.

Following the success of his "**Live Bootleg**" CD series, Winter's fans have been eagerly anticipating the release of some of the fabled early European & US TV performances. Not one to disappoint, Johnny ventured deep into the archives to produce "**Live Through The 70's**", an extraordinary collection of clips showing the soul man in his fiery formative years from 1970-74, and 1979.

It kicks off with an appearance on Danish TV's **Gladsaxe Teen Club** from 1970, that brings the original Winter band of drummer **Uncle John Turner**, bassist **Tommy Shannon**, and as guest on keys & sax, brother **Edgar Winter**, into your living room with vivid color & sound quality. If one has any questions about the essentialness of this disc, they're answered as soon as the band explodes into their powerful early version of Edgar's "Frankenstein". This pre-synthesiser nugget is driven by Johnny's guitar and that signature Uncle John backbeat. And though I'm not usually much on drum solos, to see Turner work his kit here, is a primal & rhythmic thing of beauty. Not withstanding a rather spiritless audience, the quartet packs plenty of raw blues punch into "Be Careful With A Fool" & "Drop The Bomb".

Also from 1970, are three songs from London's **Royal Albert Hall**. Here we see the start of Johnny's progression into the rock & roll realm. His version of **Chuck Berry's** 1955 classic "Johnny B. Goode" will always rank right up there with the original, as Winter's scorching guitar puts his take head & shoulders above all the rest.

The smokin' "Mean Town Blues" on Germany's famed **Beat Club** round out the 1970 performances.

"Rock & Roll Hoochie Koo" and "Stone County" from a 1973 Waterbury, CT show recorded for **Don Kirshner's Rock Concert** have Johnny performing at his arena-filling, rock-star apex. With his long white beard, and decked out in silver stack-heeled boots & black leather top hat, Johnny is like a wizard, gliding around the stage, mixing up a white-hot musical potion, and holding the audience under his spell.

The All-Star performance of **Muddy Waters'** "Walk In The Park" from 1974's Chicago Blues Summit on **Soundstage** brings together Johnny, **Junior Wells**, **Dr. John**, **Michael Bloomfield**, and the mighty Band of Gypsies' drummer **Buddy Miles**, for what can only be described as a "blues jam for the ages".

For the 1974 German **Musikladen's** "Boney Maroney", Winter added a second guitar player, giving him a chance to stretch out even more with his lead work. The camera edits here are pretty dynamic for the time, with lots of quick cuts and interplay. Sort of similar to the classic Beat Club look, but without the "green screen" effects. It fits the energy of the tune very well.

To wrap up the collection, we see Johnny come full-circle back to the blues, with three songs on the German **Rockpalast** program. Outside of the drummer being perched behind an enormous, transparent orange drum kit that would be more appropriate for Led Zeppelin than a three-piece blues act from Texas, this is a marvelous performance in many ways. Bassist **Jon Paris** takes on harp duties as well, and handles the task to a tee. The trio takes the audience on a southern road trip with **Jimmy Rogers'** "Walking By Myself", and the 1957 **Dale Hawkins/James Burton** hit, "Suzie Q". It's Winter's soul-deep treatment of Delta blues pioneer, **Willie Brown's** "Mississippi Blues", that best showcase Johnny's passion for the genre.

Interspersed throughout the segments are interview clips from Detroit's **Tubeworks** in 1970, which were filmed in the early morning hours following the **Ann Arbor Blues Festival**. The clips are very off-the-cuff, and cover the ground between the current state of rock & roll music, to Johnny's desire to levitate. Johnny even offers up an impromptu take of **Big Bill Broonzy's** "Key To The Highway", as he teaches bassist **Randy Jo Hobbs** the tune. More evidence of JW's pure passion for the blues.

"Live Through The 70's" is an indispensable document of the rise & rule of one of the greats, and should be an integral part of any blues, roots, and Texas music fan's library.

--Review by Jerry Clayworth

