

Johnny Winter

Live Through The '70s

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With his flowing white locks and easy smile, the Johnny Winter that scorched the earth in the 1970s with his searing guitar solos and stunned crowds with his keen mastery of the blues looks much different than the frail, tattooed survivor of addiction he is today.

Still a captivating live performer who stalks the fret like a panther on the prowl, just as he did way back when, Winter was in his prime when all of the archival footage on "Live Through The '70s" was made. And while the film quality isn't always pristine — a little of the footage, grainy and somewhat dark, is showing its age — this clutch of mostly professionally shot concert and TV video is a marvel simply because this material, sprinkled with interesting interviews, actually exists and was in good enough shape to make it onto DVD.

Visual evidence of Winter's nimble fretwork abounds. From catching the blues fat that seems to drip and sizzle in the skillet of a slowly cooked "Be Careful Of The Fool" — part of a trio (including "Frankenstein" and "Drop The Bomb") of songs performed for Danish TV at a smokey Gladsaxe Teen Club in Denmark in 1970 with a band that included his brother Edgar on saxophone, keyboards and drums — to the frenetic, full-tilt boogie of "Johnny B. Goode," "Talk To Your Daughter" and "Tell The Truth" played with reckless abandon at London's Royal Albert Hall that same year, "Live Through The '70s" dazzles. Even the choppy ugliness of the Royal Albert Hall footage seems oddly appropriate, actually enhancing the show's raw energy, also palpable in the blistering 1973 Don Kirshner's Rock Concert highlights "Rock and Roll Hootchie Koo" and "Stone Country." Consider this essential viewing.

— Peter Lindblad