

JOHNNY 'GUITAR' WATSON: IN CONCERT (INAKUSTIK/MUSIC VIDEO DISTRIBUTORS)

I'll get this off my chest right away; I've always had zero tolerance for those anal-retentives who continuously bitch about **Johnny 'Guitar' Watson** 'deserting' Blues for Funk. It's totally ludicrous but unfortunately typical for some of the Blues Nazis who like to assign fixed 'roles' for artists and I remember hearing "Ain't That A Bitch" for the first time and thinking "Man, this is so cool..." and I wasn't even a Funk fan at the time. If there is an artist who stayed at-the-creative-top-of-his-game (for decades) it's Johnny 'Guitar' Watson, a man who defined scorching Texas Blues guitar in the 1950s, became a Soulman in the 1960s and King of Funk in the 1970s/80s. A genius recluse who, like most of the Music Industry Icons of his day, got seduced by the lure of cocaine (and all that came with it...) Watson disappeared from the radar for several years and was making a comeback when he dropped dead onstage in Japan in 1996 his latest CD was nominated for many major Awards. **Frank Zappa** (among many) loved Johnny and Watson's death was a major loss for not just Black music but Music in general.

When I heard this DVD was available I was ecstatic and now, seeing it I'm happy to say it's Johnny 'Guitar' at his very finest, funkiest, funniest and coolest recorded July 2, 1990, in front of a live audience at "Ohne Filter" TV-studio, Baden-Baden, Germany and Watson had his hand-picked 8-piece band (plus nephew/rapper X-calibre) cooking.

Opening with a song that we now see as a Nostradamus-like prediction 'of-things-to-come', "Strike On Computers", Watson had already seen his lyrics come true as he leads the audience into the chorus of "We need some strikes on computers before there's no jobs to find..." pacing the stage, microphone in hand, dressed to the '9's'. The audience is obviously in Heaven as it's non-stop Electrifyin'. "Superman Lover" is pushed to the max by a highly animated/energetic band featuring an extraordinary young female drummer and young bassist who is obviously having a Ball! Johnny picks up his guitar and hops down into the audience and proves he is the Nastiest Mutha in Texas/West Coast Blues AND Funk as he goes down on his knees guitar-humpin' much to the delight of the 2 German 'fraus' standing next to him. As Johnny picks effortlessly with his thumb the meanest solo you'll ever hear, we get close-ups on his 'Secret' technique (bare thumb picking). The slinky Blues of "I Want To Ta Ta You Baby" is guaranteed to advance your love life as effectively as any **Barry White/Al Green** tune and Johnny picks more stone cold Blues guitar. Nice audience sing-along rapport with lots of

laughs. “Nothing Left To Be Desired” is a celebration of Love song and one reflects on the fact that while Johnny Watson may have been rejected by his 1950s/60s White audience he had become a Mega-Icon to Black audiences from 1974 onwards with Huge Hits which leads us into the Funk Anthem “Ain’t That A Bitch” a tune that will NEVER lose any bite. Johnny and the alto sax man get into a duel before Johnny gets on his knees to serenade the young ladies at the stage lip and-pull-and-bend strings like no other guitarist, showing us all kinds of tricks from his endless arsenal. (My only lament so far is that the band is anonymous...). It just gets better though, as he dives into “A Real Mother For Ya” (he and **Albert Collin**’s both shared the strap-on-one-shoulder approach) the biggest social commentary of the 1980s. The trademark “Mutha...” solo is delivered in full Johnny Watson fire and fury as the band lays down a groove that’s so fat you could walk on it! (Who is this female drummer?) See if you can stay in your chair for this one. Encore time sees Johnny Guitar REALLY Nasty with the heaviest Blues to ever come out of California; “Three Hours Past Midnight” (Frank Zappa’s favorite guitar solo) by Watson, by the 10-minute mark, was soaked-in-sweat, and even watching the DVD is a gruelling pace for the massive energy expenditure that you’ll find yourself getting caught up in. After this ‘sweat marathon’ we get the ultimate masterpiece, “Gangster of Love”, his signature song for 30 years. What a tune. The finest ode to Machismo ever written...

What a show! Thank God it was captured on film and made available to his fans (finally!). I have to warn you this DVD will sap your energy... Wait! Oh My Goodness! They’re back on stage for another encore! They’re doing “A Real Mother...” again! I can’t stand it... I’ve got to dance! Mesi where are you? Get back here! 6 Bottles for a fitting, fantastic, Funky farewell to one of the Greatest Men of Black Music. I’d love to see this DVD become mandatory viewing for every Hip-Hop/Rap fan under-the-age-of-thirty. It’d mess ‘em up real good. Ooh my soul! Buy it while you can!

...A. Grigg