

Johnny Winter - Johnny Winter (1969)

Written by bluesever

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1. I'm Yours And I'm Hers 4:27 2. Be Careful With A Fool 5:15 3. Dallas 2:45 4. Mean Mistreater 3:53 5. Leland Mississippi Blues 3:19 6. Good Morning Little School Girl 2:45 7. When You Got A Good Friend 3:30 8. I'll Drown In My Tears 4:44 9. Back Door Friend 2:57
Johnny Winter - lead guitar, slide guitar, harp, vocals Tommy Shannon - bass "Uncle" John Turner - drums + Willie Dixon - acoustic bass (4) Walter "Shakey" Horton - harp (4) Edgar Winter - alto saxophone (6), piano (8) Stephen Ralph Sefcik - alto saxophone (8) A. Wynn Butler - tenor saxophone (6, 8) Norman Ray - baritone saxophone (8) Karl Garin - trumpet (6, 8) Carrie Hossell, Elsie Senter, Peggy Bowers - backing vocals (8)

Winter's debut album for Columbia was also arguably his bluesiest and best. Straight out of Texas with a hot trio, Winter made blues-rock music for the angels, tearing up a cheap Fender guitar with total abandon on tracks like "I'm Yours and I'm Hers," "Leland Mississippi Blues," and perhaps the slow blues moment to die for on this set, B.B. King's "Be Careful with a Fool." Winter's playing and vocals have yet to become mannered or clichéd on this session, and if you've ever wondered what the fuss is all about, here's the best place to check out his true legacy. ---Cub Koda, allmusic.com

How impressive was Johnny Winter just before he cut this album, his Columbia debut? Columbia's then-president, Clive Davis, shelled out a then-record.... bonus to sign the gangling albino with the slick fingers and the hotrod blues. Small wonder Imperial Records couldn't wait to get the set Winter and his then-rhythm section (future Double Trouble bassist Tommy Shannon and drummer Uncle John Turner) had just finished laying down, the remarkable "Progressive Blues Experiment," out onto the racks at about the same time.

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Winter opened up the industry's eyes in the first place when friend and fan Mike Bloomfield urged him onstage at the Fillmore East during a SuperSession show with Al Kooper; Winter played for about fifteen minutes and flattened the place cold. His Columbia debut gives you ample enough reason why, but it was way far more than just the randiest bloozeguitar jerkoff of the year - this guy was going deeper than the average string strangler.

He doesn't even have a guitar in his hands, for example, when he delivers a very soulful cover of Ray Charles's "I'll Drown In My Own Tears," and he's one Texan who had the Chicago blues esthetic down cold, the evidence here being "Mean Mistreater," which features two titans of the Chicago style, bassist Willie Dixon and harmonica virtuoso (when he kept himself straight, anyway) Big Walter Horton. And when he switches to acoustic resonator guitar for his own "Dallas," a skippy-whippy piece which pays a debt to Texas legend Blind Lemon Jefferson, Winter's just as much in his element as when he's rat-racing the electric fretboard. Likewise with his cover of Robert Johnson's "When You Got A Good Friend," his guitar playing simpler but deeper, and his vocal at once reverent and soulful.

Yet when he does rat-race it, he's not just spraying fast and loose with no direction home. Those arpeggiated runs and machine-gun licks are so tightly controlled some accused Winter of scripting himself only too cleverly by half. Not so, though you might well understand why a lot of people didn't quite know what hit them when hearing "I'm Yours and I'm Hers" and "Be Careful With A Fool," the former his own composition, the latter a once-obscured B.B. King number. Winter was no Johnny-come-lately, and not just because he'd slogged the Southwest blues bars for almost half his young life to this point, either. He proved it on his next Columbia issue, in spades... ---BluesDuke, amazon.com

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