

Johnny Winter - The Progressive Blues Experiment (1968/2005)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Rollin' And Tumblin'* 2 *Tribute To Muddy* 3 *I Got Love If You Want It* 4 *Bad Luck And Trouble* 5 *Help Me* 6 *Mean Town Blues* 7 *Broke Down Engine* 8 *Black Cat Bone* 9 *It's My Own Fault* 10 *Forty-Four* Johnny Winter - guitars (acoustic, electric and slide), harmonica, mandolin, vocals Tommy Shannon - bass guitar Uncle John Turner - drums, percussion

Although his early Columbia albums brought him worldwide stardom, it was this modest little album (first released on Imperial before the Columbia sides) that first brought Johnny Winter to the attention of guitarheads in America. It's also Winter at the beginning of a long career, playing the blues as if his life depends on it, without applying a glimmer of rock commercialism. The standard classic repertoire here includes "Rollin' and Tumblin'," "I Got Love if You Want It," "Forty-Four," "It's My Own Fault," and "Help Me," with Winter mixing it up with his original Texas trio of Red Turner on drums and Tommy Shannon (later of Stevie Ray Vaughan's *Double Trouble*) on bass. A true classic, this is one dirty, dangerous, and visionary album. The set was issued in a sonically screaming 24-bit remastered edition on CD by Capitol in 2005. It contains no bonus tracks, but it leaves the original crummy CD issue in the dust. ---Thom Jurek, AllMusic Review

This album was a demo at one time, like any other album. However, there was a distinct difference with this particular recording in comparison to your every day studio demo. Unbelievably, this Johnny Winter classic blues-rock recording was sitting around collecting dust while Winter had already established himself as a star. It saw the light of day after the fact, but now, and rightfully so, Capitol Records has remastered and re-released this pearl.

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It was titled Progressive Blues Experiment for a reason, remember now, this was 1969, a pivotal year for rock music in general. The sound Winter created was his own, after many years of endless study of all the old blues players and making his fingers bleed he came up with what is now know as the Texas Blues sound. Songs that were normally only fit for the old black blues players that had completed their rites of passage, found a home with Johnny's guitar and vocal treatments. He does not waste any time giving a nod to his influences, as the second track is his "Tribute to Muddy." The all-time classic "Black Cat Bone" is one of the very best versions I have ever heard. He does it with all the heart and soul one person could possibly muster.

What makes this album such a gem is that the sound is so clean, well, so is Winter's guitar playing. He sounded like a man in his element, right on the cusp of taking the world by storm, which in fact he was. This certainly was not the turning point in Winter's career, it was just the beginning. This album would be a very special initiation to a sound that would become a unique blues-rock stamp that most anyone would find difficult to duplicate.

All 10 tracks are strong and feature the Winter style in good light. This was a glimpse of what was to come. This album sounds like the building blocks of Second Winter, which also received the remaster treatment this year, and it sounds incredible. The new Legacy edition features the entire album and some live tracks with the band at their peak, so pick that one up too. This is killer white boy blues beyond compare. It is all Johnny, plain and simple, so do not miss it. If you already have it, get it again, you will not believe how good it sounds now. --- Morrice Blackwell, jazzreview.com

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