

Johnny Winter

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This is AMERICA

Johnny Winter stops 'em in the street

IT WAS a swell idea Johnny Winter had, the kind that restores faith to the true believers: just tour out to San Francisco in his new mobile home and play unannounced sets at The Orphanage and The Keystone Berkeley, snug venues by any standards.

The Beaumont Ace was here a few months back for a packed-house concert at Winterland, reeling and charging the stage in lacy-white leather as part of his 'I've been burnt out but I made it through alive,' comeback tour.

It was one of those overstated displays that bring on 'Judy Garland at Carnegie Hall' vibes; some obligatory show-biz.

These latest sets were to be another item altogether. Having paid his dues on the cavernous hall circuit, Johnny wanted to return to play with some local friends at clubs that would just accommodate Winterland's backstage crowd.

Winter got in touch with Peter Kaukonen (brother to Jorma) and lead guitarist with the

Adam Block
SAN FRANCISCO

now-defunct *Black Kangaroo*, to play bass, and brought Richard Hughes, from the last J. Winter disc — "Still Alive And Well," — with him to drum.

They dubbed the group Albino Kangaroo and agreed to forego publicity for the gigs. Both club owners apparently had other ideas, and after word got out, and the Keystone's owner bumped up his price Winter was quite angry.

"I told the owner, 'you've ripped us off and the people who paid to see us, and I don't like you but we'll play anyway.'"

Johnny explained: "I came to San Francisco because there are a lot of small clubs around that we could play in, but so far people have just taken advantage of us: See, people come in and have to pay 4.00 dollars and then they think its me that's makin' them pay it, and I don't want that.

"I wanted it so the band didn't have to be great. Clubs can be a lot of fun because I can get better communication with the audience and people pay less.

"At concerts and rock-n-roll shows people don't come for

the music. I've tried it both ways — playing well, and jumpin' around, and people always seem to like me best when I'm jumpin' around.

"That's why I wanted to play some clubs — I didn't want to have to jump around."

The Orphanage show was mighty fine, though. Despite the late publicity, the club was just comfortably filled when The Group appeared at a late 11.30 p.m., Winter looking faintly comic in an all black suit and circus-barker top hat, his platinum sheaf of hair running off his shoulders, sporting a wispy moustache and beard.

Kaukonen's solid bass, and Hughe's clean percussion soon had Winter loosening into the soaring fluid riffs which brought him from backwoods Texan obscurity to international pop star status in the flash of a six-figure contract.

As the group played, passers-by stopped in the street and a crowd gathered outside the window, surprised in an auidial double-take by that speed and grace, issued from such unexpected quarters.

Without any wall of amplifiers, it was just Johnny Winter doing what he knows best.

The group played a solid hour-and-a-half, moving through "Jumpin Jack Flash", "Dust My Broom", and

It was a fine set, nothing you'd want to bootleg for the ultimate archives, but with most flash concerts the irritating drag they are, it was a real treat to catch a talent like Winter in such comfortable surroundings, and, in the face of inconsiderate club-owners, I'd like to thank the old boy for the chance.