

Texas Voice Sounds California

By ROBB BAKER

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"MONTEREY PCP," the documentary made at the very successful rock music festival held in Monterey, Calif., during the summer of 1967, has an early segment showing Cass Elliott of the Mamas and the Papas singing for all she is worth. At the time of the festival (which preceded her departure from the top quartet), there was no one in the entire business who was bigger than Mama Cass — in terms of commercial success or sheer poundage.

Cass shows up a little later in the film, too, but this time she's in the crowd, watching, instead of on stage. She stares transfixed as an unknown girl singer belts out what is probably the most powerful vocal rendition ever cap-

tured on film. With the last wail still reverberating through the sound system, the camera cuts to Cass. There can be no mistake that what she is mouthing is a long, low "Wow!"

Janis Joplin is far from unknown today, almost two years later, but there's still not much improvement that anyone could make on that supreme compliment from the then-reigning queen of female vocalists. The long segment, with Janis doing the "Big Mama" Willie Mae Thornton tune, "Ball and Chain," generally draws a burst of applause from moviegoers.

MONTEREY was the turning point in Janis' career. Just a year before, she had started singing with Big Brother and the Holding Co., a

San Francisco rock group playing in Chet Helm's Avalon ballroom. Both Helms and Travis Rivers (then manager of Big Brother, now manager of another group called Mother Earth) knew Janis from her home state, Texas, where she grew up in an oldest-daughter-of-a-fairly-well-to-do-family, town-beatnik, college-classcutler syndrome, making the rounds singing blues and folk, drinking and living a lot. A typo in the New York Times once described her as a "25-year-old rynamo from Port Arthur, Texas" and that somehow sums her up pretty well.

Like Mama Cass and Nina Simone, Janis is not exactly what a girl-watcher would term pretty. But, as with them, her very homeliness has won her hosts of admirers who see beyond surface beauty. (It would be fascinating to read a survey on the psychological impact that Cass' popularity has had on self-acceptance among chubby girls, letting them dress and act and walk down the street the way they feel and are instead of trying to look like Vogue and-or being frustrated by the fact that they can't.)

Janis is of medium height, with long brown hair, eyes that squint nicely in a smile, and a bit of a pug nose. She dresses in clinging outfits, shiny or beaded, which may be either dresses from the '20s or pantsuits from the '60s. She adds lots of baubles and bangles — rings and necklaces in particular.

Her feet are small, and she comes on stage with baby steps. The moment the music begins, the feet are never still. And the rhythms that start there soon spread through the entire body.

BODY AND voice combine to make Janis a dynamic stage performer without equal on the scene, certainly at least among white performers today. What she communicates is rooted in the blues tradition of such singers as Billie Holiday and Bessie Smith, but to call it imitation — or say that she's not able to feel the same emotions as the old-time blues bellers — is to show scant comprehension of the kind of person Janis really is.

Yet there seems almost a trend among a certain segment of music industry people toward a closed mind on the Joplin mystique. Its power bothers some people, who perhaps need some easy way to dismiss it. As easy as anything is to see her as a copier.

Talking to Janis can expel that notion rather rapidly. She's the kind of person who, at the Aragon in Chicago a year ago last spring, looked around a dressing room full of dull "hip" chatter and said, "You wanna go somewhere and talk about music?"

You do go somewhere, and she offers you some of her Southern Comfort. (Somehow through the whole San Francisco scene, Janis remained hung up on drink instead of drugs, you see. She still likes her booze in large, sweet doses, sometimes substituting benedictine and brandy for Southern Comfort.) And you talk. About her early memories of listening to Lead-belly and Odetta. About the days just after college, roaming, in Texas, New York, San Francisco. About the bad time that scared her, sending her back home to try one more time to do the school teacher bit her parents always wanted. About returning, to music.

About what it all means: "When you walk on stage and the music starts behind you, there's this feeling. You're full of it. And the people out there are pulsing with it, too. And you can tell whether they're with you or not. It's just like when you're balling with someone; you can always tell."

"There was a reporter once from Glamour magazine and she asked me, get this, how it felt to be a star. I told her I wasn't a star. I was a singer. When I'm up there, it's the greatest communication ever."

A YEAR PASSES, and Janis comes back to Chicago, famous now. But it's still the same Janis. "Give me your phone number and I'll call you tomorrow morning. We can all go for breakfast — somewhere where we can have a drink."

Over six vodka - and - orange - juices, she still talks about how it feels up there on stage: "Like San Francisco. They really love us there, you know. I never loved anybody that good — I've never been inspired to. But I hope somebody loves me that good some day. You look out at the audience, and it sure looks like they're having a good time. I'd like to love somebody that much."

About television: "TV men don't give a damn about you. It's hard to do TV. You have to think in terms of your outside. It's another



JANIS JOPLIN
... concert break-up

idiom, and I'm not into that yet. You have to LOOK LIKE you're groovin' instead of really doing it."

When the talk turns to Rolling Stone Magazine, which recently attacked both Janis and her new group, she has that not-so-tough-after-all little girl look that she sometimes gets on stage between songs: "That hurt me. It hurt me a lot. It was cruel. They should try to help people in the business, not castrate them."

EARTHY SHE is, as well as frank, intelligent, a little temperamental and sensitive. And funny: "A scandal magazine once conned its way into an interview with me. I talked to them and everything, and the best they could do was headlined 'She Admits She Gets Drunk Before Going on Stage.' Honest!"

But most of all, she's all Janis. She loves music the way she loves life and fun and Southern Comfort. And naturally it shows in the way she sings.

Even Jerry Wexler, vice president of Atlantic Records (which has made a fortune on black music under his guidance; and producer of Aretha Franklin, said: "I don't really believe her. When a person truly sings the blues, there's no strain, no trying to make it sound right. I can always hear Janis straining. I don't know. There are people who think she's almost an unwitting parodist."

"But I'd give anything to produce her," he added after a short pause. "Anything."

Winter Just Keeps On Playing Back Home

By AL RUDIS

Chicago Sun-Times

ONCE UPON a time in Texas, there was a guitar player named Johnny Winter. He was not very good-looking. He was an albino with pink eyes and shocking white hair. He was also cross-eyed.

But Johnny didn't let that bother him. He liked to play the blues and he was good at it. He was up in Chicago playing with Mike Bloomfield before Mike became a superstar. He played with B. B. King before B. B. was known outside the black club circuit.

However, Johnny never went anywhere. He just stayed in Texas and played the blues.

MEANWHILE, other people were leaving Texas and going to San Francisco—Janis Joplin, Big Brother and the Holding Company, the Sir Douglas Quintet, the Steve Miller Band. They all became famous, but not Johnny.

One day, Rolling Stone, a magazine about rock and pop music, decided to do an article on all the wonderful San Francisco people who had come from Texas and what they were like and where they came from and why they left.

Quite a few of these Texas people remembered Johnny Winter and said to Rolling Stone something like: "If you think we're good, you should see Johnny Winter. He's better than almost everybody and he's still kicking around Texas going nowhere."

SOME PEOPLE read the article about Texas and took notice of Johnny Winter's name. They include a prince named Steve Paul, who owns a nightclub in New York and kings Elektra, RCA, Columbia and Atlantic, who are record companies.

Steve Paul flew down to Texas and found Johnny Winter and flew him to New York, where he played before the kings. Then Steve Paul told the kings that Johnny Winter was available.

At \$500,000, RCA dropped out of the bidding. But the final offer of Columbia was around \$600,000. And so evidently Johnny Winter is going to live happy ever after.

END OF THE fairy tale. But real life is a little differ-

ent. First, along came Imperial Records, which didn't bid anything but went down to Texas and found a record Johnny had cut for a little company called Sonobeat.

Imperial bought the whole company and released "The Progressive Blues Experiment" almost at the same time Columbia released its "Johnny Winter."

Remember king Atlantic which lost out in the bidding? Well, it went down to Texas, too, and found a man who had some tapes of Johnny Winter that had been made a long time ago and never been put on a record. The man also had some kind of contract with Johnny. Atlantic bought both and it now claims to have the only legal contract.

That's the story of Johnny Winter up to now. It naturally raises this question: What kind of music does he play, anyway?

THE ANSWER is black — jet black. In Nashville, while

he was recording the Columbia album, they referred to it as pick-eyed soul. Call it cross-eyed soul, too, if you like, but it's nothing exotic.

In Johnny Winter, we have a master musical technician and gruff-voiced vocalist who can really wail the blues; his appearance may be bizarre, but his genius is basic.

The chief difference between "Johnny Winter" (Columbia) and "The Progressive Blues Experiment" (Imperial) is evolution. The Imperial is an earlier record, and Johnny's improved since then.

He's kept the same backup men, Tommy Shannon on bass and John Turner on drums. The Columbia does feature some guests on a few of the cuts, but essentially, it has the same good country blues, recorded much better of course. Despite the tremendous money and publicity that have been swirling around him, Winter has remained true to himself artistically, which is sort of a happy ending.

HEALTH TIPS

Curve Balls Can Be Injurious to Players

By DR. GEORGE WILLEFORD
AP Newsfeatures

DEAR DR. WILLEFORD: Our high school baseball coach won't let us younger pitchers throw curve balls. He says throwing curve balls would ruin our arms. His older players may throw curve balls all they want. How come?

LEE

DEAR LEE: Your coach is trying to save you from pain and possible permanent damage.

When you throw a baseball forcefully you start with your arm bent and end up with the arm straight. When you curve a ball you rotate your forearm at the same time. This combination of movements, together with the great forces (muscular and centrifugal) involved, can damage ligaments in a still growing arm and such damage may be permanent. Better mind your coach; he

knows what he's talking about. Hold your curve balls for a year or two.

DEAR DR. WILLEFORD: I had mumps on one side of the face a year ago. Now the new mumps vaccine is out and my mother says one can have mumps twice if the attack involved only one side. She wants me to take the vaccine shot. Do I have to?

CHARLES

DEAR CHARLES: Mumps nearly always results in permanent immunity, and whether it involves one side or both makes no difference. In very few people the immunity is weak and they can get a second attack. This is so rare that I'd vote against the shot now, provided you are certain it was the mumps you had.

(You can write to Dr. Willeford at GO Magazine, The Corpus Christi Caller-Times, 820 N. Lower Broadway.)