

High-Volume Rock

By Johnny Winter,

Now in a Top Hat

Johnny Winter, making his annual New York pilgrimage at the Felt Forum on Tuesday, seemed changed only in appearance. Gone were the flowing caftans; now a top hat, somewhat battered, is the only sartorially bizarre effect. Remaining is the same screechy attack on the blues-rock form that has characterized the Texas musician since he burst charismatically on the music scene in 1968.

He has survived (and Mr. Winter over the years had many problems) more or less intact, perhaps leaning toward rock a little harder, laying back on the basic blues. But there was too much familiarity in his performance—the drive is the same, only the tempo changes. It just falls short of slickness.

Mr. Winter also believes that his sound volume can clear a sinus just as surely as it can clog the Forum's aisles. His is an unruly, movable audience, doomed to boogie. It is an interesting effect when, for instance, his quartet lumbers into the rock oldie "Bonie Moronie" with enough bass vibrations to make the producers of "Earthquake" envious, and the audience stomps happily around.

Supporting was James Cotton's Blues Band. He is a minor but genuine figure in the Chicago electric blues scene, and the exposure he gets with Mr. Winter is very worthwhile.

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