

Winter Evokes Warmth

By J. GREG ROBERTSON

Winter is still with us, thank heavens. Johnny Winter, that is.

Far down the comeback trail after a bout with drugs several years ago, the dynamic blues and rock star had 'em shouting for more Friday night at the Springfield Civic Center.

Review: ROCK

As perhaps the best blues electric guitar picker (Eric Clapton is an only occasional rival), Winter instills a fair amount of blues funk into his rock playing.

"Rock & Roll People," Winter's loud opening tribute to the young audience, obviously got him off on the right foot.

During his performance, the albino Texan brought out a cross-section of rock and roll hits: Larry Williams' "Boney Maronie," a long version of Bob Dylan's "Highway 61," Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode," and a wild encore rendition of the Rolling Stones' "Jumpin' Jack Flash." Winter has re-read hits out of all of them.

But perhaps the most rewarding selection of the evening was a long, nearly-slow straight blues. Hunched forward with his fingers twitching lightly over the frets, he ground out a long instrumental solo and then added his deep, earthy vocal before his three able sidemen joined in for the finish. (Just wishful thinking, I know, but it sure would be nice to hear Johnny Winter devote a night to the blues in a small club setting.)

Successfully setting the tone for the event, a Cornucopia-WHCN production, was blues harmonica player James Cotton and his four-man band