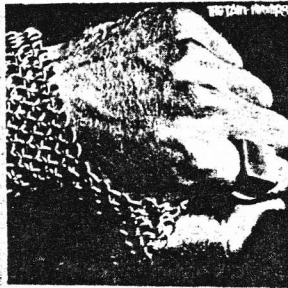


Sounds 2. 2. 74



**JOHNNY WINTER:
"SAINTS & SINNERS"**

(CBS) Import

JOHNNY WINTER has just finished the final mixes of his new album and this white label copy arrived from the States hot off the presses this week. It's Johnny's second "comeback" album and as such he has had full opportunity to take his time and show that he really is still alive and well, since the last album was something of a misnomer, fairly disappointing from beginning to end. "Saints & Sinners" marks a reunion of musicians since Rick Derringer produced it, brother Edgar organises some lovely horn work and plays keyboards, Bobby Caldwell plays drums on a few cuts, Jon Smith and Dan Hartman

also sit in alongside John's permanent sidemen Randy Jo Hobbs on bass and Richard Hughes on drums. The message is plain from the opening cut when Winter and Co. fairly tear into Richard Supa's "Stone County" and never let up. And in a sense that's the main criticism of this album and marks the tendency of Derringer to over-embellish in the studios. The whole album is too uptight and too upfront, as though Winter and Derringer between them are trying to contrive the excitement rather than let it flow naturally. Winter's guitar sits well into the overall ensemble but rarely gets the chance to break out with that strident grace for which he is known. As for the tracks, the promised David Bowie song hasn't materialised but once again Johnny pays tribute to the Rolling Stones on "Stray Cat Blues" and Allen Toussaint with "Blinded By Love" where he is happy to let his guitar rest behind Derringer's. These are the two outstanding cuts and completely overshadow the older classics like Chuck Berry's "Thirty Days", Larry Williams' "Boney Maroney" and the Lieber-Stoller composition "Riot In Cell Block No. 9" which has just about been done to death. Johnny Winter still has a lot of playing in him, that much is for sure — but right now he needs Edgar or Rick or Steve Paul to point him in the direction in which he can work easily without trying to prove himself all over again. — J.G.