

Agility Marks Blues By Johnny Winter At Forest Hills Fete

By MIKE JAHN

Johnny Winter, the Texas blues guitarist and vocalist, seems to be singing with ever larger gulps of blues.

When he first played here last December he was impressive for his agility in presenting both country and urban blues styles with force. But at that time he had just arrived from playing in and around Texas and seemed somewhat awed by the increased attention he was receiving.

Appearing Saturday at the Forest Hills Music Festival, Mr. Winter showed the same agility, but far more power and confidence than previously. Most important, he showed much interest in playing blues-oriented, old-style rock.

One of his songs, "Black Cat Bone," is an original. This song lies on the thin border where country blues meets the early rock of guitarists like Chuck Berry. It combines the crisp feel of bottleneck guitar-playing with the heavy hand of early rock.

He played this song Saturday, and closed with a Chuck Berry song, "Johnny B. Goode." He uses his raspy voice and aggressive playing well on material of this sort, which is directly derived from standard blues.

Through this growing interest in songs like Mr. Berry's, and the increased confidence and force given him by seven months of popularity, Mr. Winter's playing has improved greatly. The hard blues and old rock style has become very popular this year, and Mr. Winter's experiments in it were his best moments.

Mr. Winter was backed by John Tarner, drums, and Tommy Shannon, bass.

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