

Winter Weaves Spell at Fillmore

NEW YORK—In the best test yet of rock's Pavlovian powers, Johnny Winter, the hottest rock property since Dylan, played a willing audience into complete submission when he unleashed his mind-monopolizing blues show at Fillmore East on Nov. 14. Chicago, Columbia's fine rock-jazz ensemble, and A&M's Blodwyn Pig rounded out another potent Fillmore bill.

A shocking apparition in platinum hair, Winter toed, feinted and fussed around the stage, rasping and combing the guitar strings through his fingers in great greedy grabs and runs. Woven into the thumping electric fabric of his guitar blues was his singing, more of a sound than a voice, suggesting the lyric via a garbled, primitive complaint from his gut. But when Winter plays, he takes over, becomes the guitar and his voice becomes part of the magnificent whole. His guitar playing beautifies everything

he does, so his singing, delivered flawlessly between the lightning licks, is perfect by nature of its individuality. And when he puts it all together and steals across the stage like a phantom dragging his Texas blues behind him—Johnny Winter is incredibly real and compelling. Of all the reactions to the shock of Winter, lethargy is not among them and very few people can be seen howling and writhing. Most people just sit in quiet communion and stare at the white-haired magician who steals their thoughts with his music.

Joining Winter, and the group, was his brother Edgar, a future star for Epic Records. Muscular and military, Edgar stiff-armed the electric piano, alto sax and drums, working them at a runaway speed apparently common to both boys. Edgar rigidly enforced his blues under pressure rather than letting go with the feeling, though beneath his presentation lies clear

talent. On "Tobacco Road" his voice was over-rich with affectations, though, once again, by overwhelming his material he often struck nerves of raw emotion. Thanks to Edgar, bassist Tommy Shannon and Uncle John Turner on drums—the electrification of Winter's hard-rural blues is a milestone equivalent to the invention of folk-rock. And Winter himself is so magnificent that stripped of amplification, volume, rock's adrenalized pace and even today's new super audiences, Winter would still be rock's answer to art and talent. Even in a closet. Any questions?

Blodwyn Pig, a raunchy rock quartet built around ex-Jethro Tull guitarist Mick Abrahams and tenor sax Jack Lancaster, is the best English import since, well, Jethro Tull. The group plays well-developed rock-jazz themes complex enough to hold up under listening, though their music is better for just stomping. They play a lot of music—rock, jazz, rock 'n' roll and a dash of blues—and the concentration from their obvious labors of love generate energy in the form of intensity. The big beat of Ron Berg on drums is further invitation to kick out the jams, kinks and cobwebs, while Abrahams' downshifting from the careening "Cats Squirrel" to the dreamy, delicate "Dear John" showed Abrahams to be a gunner with a gentle streak. Lancaster's screaming sax, often wailed among a mouthful of other horns, raised the pitch of the group's swinging cabaret-style rock with frantic, brassy raves. Blodwyn Pig (Blood-Win-Pig) is wild, intelligent and musical, especially in their rock 'n' roll encore, "Slow Down." "It's Only Love" and "The Modern Alchemist," their best numbers, are featured on their A&M album, "Ahead Rings Out."

Sandwiched in between Blodwyn Pig and Winter was a listless Chicago, the top rock-jazz combo. Starved for new material, Chicago merely played back their best-selling Columbia album with little enthusiasm. Complex yet seamless, the seven-man ensemble withered within the confines of their rigid arrangements which are planned rather than improvisational. Strict obedience to the record, a chore even for the group, dimmed the polish of their act, proving how boring planned perfection can be without changing the plan occasionally, or at least coloring it with new inspiration. The group, led by Robert Lamm on the keyboard and lead vocals and Terry Kath on guitar and vocals, plus their fine brass section, played their popular "Beginnings," "Question 67 and 68," "Listen" and "He's a Man," the Spencer Davis Group classic. Chicago will rebound with new material. They are too good to lay low. ED OCHS

Sandpipers Come in Soft And Clear at Rainbow Grill

NEW YORK—Though rainbows have given way to air pollution, and clear days and seeing forever are only Broadway optimism, romantics can still enjoy the Rainbow Grill and a clear night with the Sandpipers vocal trio, who presented their soft pop harmonies Nov. 17. Supported by a combo and

lone femme soprano, the trio offered more of the clear, precision arrangements that marked their "Guantanamara" gem a few years ago.

Former choir boys who still key their vocals to pure Gregorian harmonies and inspirational readings, the Sandpipers add the artificial echo of amplifiers to revitalize the Beatles' "MacArthur Park." Their knack for purifying lyrics, whether in Italian, French or Spanish, reclaimed gentle pop tunes like Donovan's "Jennifer Juniper" as well as the classics from "West Side Story," which benefited from a medley timed and delivered with seamless precision, continuity and conviction. They also relit the Doors' "Light My Fire," taming it to the warm flicker of a candle.

Eight-year veterans who have held their ground in the middle of the road by nature of their smooth, rhythmic hymns, the Sandpipers bring to the classy Rainbow Grill youth with the usual youthful clichés distilled out. The result is a fountain of youth as strained and purified as spring water, but cool and refreshing going down. The group records for A&M Records. ED OCHS

Nice in Mixed Bag at Ungano's

NEW YORK—The mixed media style of the Nice (Immediate) drew favorable reaction from the audience at Ungano's on Nov. 16 when they made their first New York U.S. tour. A previous concert, headlined by Sam and Dave, had been postponed.

The organ dominated trio seemed to be moving more and more into the classical music-rock area, mixing up Bach's "Brandenburg Concerto" with Bob Dylan's "Country Pie" and using Tchaikovsky's "Pathe-tique" as a crowd pleaser.

Not that the group are overly serious in their general approach—they still recognize the fact that they are a beat group. At present the classical programming is an adjunct, a non-gimmicky addition that doesn't dominate. IAN DOVE



AL BENNETT, left, Liberty/UA president, maps out new release projects with Liberty's recently acquired singer Henry Shed.

Kaye Sees Resurgence Big Band Business

NEW YORK — "People are coming back to the dance floor." That's the opinion of band-leader Sammy Kaye who has observed a resurgence of dance interest during the past year that bodes well for a comeback of the big band business.

Kaye said that interest in dancing hit a low during the early part of the 1960's but started to perk up around 1967 and began growing at fast clip this past year. He cited his recent (Nov. 14) one-night stand at Penn-Harris Hotel, Harrisburg, Pa., as an example of the big draw a dance band can have. Kaye drew a capacity crowd to the Penn-Harris after only a few

small ads were placed heralding his engagement.

At other dates, Kaye has noticed, too, that people are filling the rooms for an evening of dancing. "It's a trend," he said, "that could mean that young musicians will again seriously consider careers as band-leaders."

On the recording end, Kaye is currently on the market with the Decca album, "The Thirties Are Here to Stay." He goes into the Decca studios again Dec. 2 and 4 to record a new album that will be pegged on the contemporary sound.

On his dance days, Kaye said, the repertoire range runs to 75 percent standard material to 25 percent contemporary

Bibb Takes Maisonette Crowd On Trip Down Memory Lane

NEW YORK—Leon Bibb's opening at the Maisonette Room of the St. Regis Hotel Nov. 13 was like a quiet stroll down memory lane. Like a parent, or a lover, Bibb took his near-capacity audience by an invisible hand and gently, like children, carried their minds back to the pre-war era of prohibition and early blues, swing and speakeasies, early jazz and the Al Capone boys.

The audience loved it! It was, to them, unique, gimmicky and professionally packaged. Even the younger set, unfamiliar with tunes like Louis Jordan's old standard, "Susan," "Because I

Love Her," from "Follow the Boys," and Billie Holiday's, "God Bless The Child" found that they could relate to the swinging, easy, euphoria-producing music.

Bibb, an RCA Records artist, is no newcomer to the world of entertainment. It was, therefore, easy for him to avoid the pitfalls that so often beset the over-eager and over ambitious newcomer to the field. Instead of taking chances, he stayed with the tunes he knew best, presenting them with the quiet confidence of the professional. RADCLIFFE JOE

Paramount's Amber Gris Sparks at Electric Circus

NEW YORK — Amber Gris, a new nine-man band, had an encouraging opening set at the Electric Circus on Nov. 18. The unit, which is signed to Paramount Records, is together and has a steady danceable beat.

"Walkin' on the Water" was the strong opener. Here, even harmonic changes were well handled. Jerry Maeven was in good voice on vocal. "Too Hard to Handle" was a good blues rock number. "Chocolate Pudding," "Forget It," and "Home Groan" were among the other good rockers.

Amber Gris showed a solid brass section in trumpeters Harry May and Charlie Camerleri, and trombonists Louie Kahn and Glen Miller. Billy Shay impressed on guitar, while Larry Harlow was in top form on piano and organ. The importance of the group's beat gave drummer Gil Fields and bass guitarist Jerry Weiss heavy assignments along with Harlow and all came through excellently. It looks like Paramount really has something in this unit as soon as the company decides which label to put them on. FRED KIRBY

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