



Brother Johnny Liner Notes
February 2022

Hello all,

I don't make that many albums these days. They all mean a lot to me, but this one is particularly personal, and very special. So, before I even get started, I feel compelled to explain my feelings, and clarify my motives and intentions here.

As most of you may know, my brother, Johnny, passed away in July of 2014. Johnny was touring Europe and had just played the Cahors Blues Festival in France, which was destined to become his last show. He had traveled to Switzerland where his next show was scheduled, the one he would never play. He would pass away in his sleep there at the hotel in Zurich before he ever got the chance.

Let me first say that although Johnny may have departed this physical plane, his spirit, his music, and his presence will live on in my heart, always. Johnny was a true bluesman. He played the music and lived the life. He came in and went out the same way - true to the blues, and I love him for that.

Now after his passing, many people immediately started trying to convince me to do a Johnny Winter tribute album. Somehow, this just didn't feel right to me. It seemed like exploitation, using Johnny's name and memory for other purposes, as a promotional tool just to sell records - not something I wanted to see happen, or was willing to be a part of. I thought someone was bound to do it, but it wasn't going to be me.

Now, as time has passed, I have started to reconsider. This didn't happen all at once. The first real change occurred on stage. Just two weeks after his anticipated return, we were scheduled to start a tour called the Rock 'n' Blues Fest. We were both playing with our respective bands, and there would have been jamming together at the end.

I was devastated, and had expected the tour to be canceled, but the promoters wanted it to go on as planned with me and my band as the headliners. The first night, after playing "Frankenstein" to honor Johnny's memory, I closed the show with "Johnny B. Goode", "Rock and Roll, Hoochie Koo", and "Jumpin' Jack Flash", dedicating the end of the set to Johnny.

I had expected the tour to be very emotional, perhaps sad, and possibly difficult, but playing those songs turned out to be a great source of strength and comfort to me. Everyone on the tour was so kind and supportive getting up to jam, and it became a kind of tradition. There was such an overwhelming outpouring of love and respect for Johnny, I began to realize it was not just businesspeople sensing an opportunity here; it was Johnny's true, loyal, and devoted fans who wanted to see this happen as well.

The world seemed to be crying out for this, so maybe it was time to surrender to the natural flow of the universe and just let it happen. I started to question my own motives



asking myself, why Didn't I want to do it? I realized a part of me deep down in my heart Did want to make this album. It was just the circumstances that never seemed quite right.

I talked it over with my wife, Monique. I trust her intuition more than my own judgment or analytical thinking, and we always make these kinds of decisions together. She was all for it and said, "I think you have to make this album, both for Johnny, for yourself, and for the world. You owe that acknowledgment to your older brother. If it weren't for him, you wouldn't be where you are today. There's no need to worry about it. If it's meant to happen, it will. Just let it be"

Here's what finally decided the whole thing. A friend and fellow musician I had just met said, "Wow! A Johnny Winter tribute album, what a Great idea. You've Got to do it! I know this guy you just have to talk to. His name is Bruce Quarto. He was originally in computer software, sold his company planning to retire, then became interested in music and film production, and now has formed his own record label. So, he's got all this interesting and valuable business experience, but doesn't think or operate at all like the typical businessman.

He loves music, science, and the arts, and he has this unique personal vision of doing things he believes in to revitalize the industry, help authentic musicians, and make a real difference. Believe me! I know Bruce, and he will Love this idea. What's more, when he believes in something, he goes all out. He will do this the Right Way, and for the Right Reasons. Let me at least run this by him, and then you guys can talk." I said, "sure, that can't hurt. Besides, he sounds like an interesting guy, whether or not we decide to do this. If he's interested, ask if he minds your giving me his number, and feel free to give him mine."

Talking to Bruce was the real turning point. He's such a character, full of boundless enthusiasm. To him, anything is possible. You can't help but Love an attitude like that. The conversation got deep, and we talked for hours. Here's the general gist of what he had to say.

"I was the guy sprawled out on the floor in the bean bag chair: amazed by the album covers, immersed in the liner notes, swept away by the music." Of course, I knew exactly what he was talking about because I was that guy too. We all were once, unless you were just too young to have experienced it. And if you were, then how about some music that would take you there?

He went on, "I listened to Johnny's music, I cranked up your "Frankenstein", I blasted "Free Ride" in the car. There was so much great music in that era; it was magic! And there's a whole world out there who might remember, or may have forgotten, or maybe never even heard it before. They deserve to. Let's bring it back!"



I'm up for that! - I said. It sounds great (in theory), but can we really do it. I guess we'll never really know, until we try. So, let's just say (for the sake of argument) that we're doing this. Let's talk about the album, itself. Here's the first question that comes to mind.

In some ways, I think I know Johnny better than anyone else on the planet. As kids, we were inseparable, much closer than average brothers. Not only did we learn to play music together, but because we were both albino, we shared a unique personal perspective on life different than anyone else's. Here's the point. To the general public, and even among his biggest fans, there is a common perception of Johnny that is quite different from my own. In other words, the image that Johnny chose to project to the world, is not the Johnny I knew.

Here's what I mean. There are certain songs everybody associates with Johnny, "Rock and Roll, Hoochie Koo" being the most obvious example. Johnny stopped playing that song in his set years ago, which was perhaps perplexing and maybe disappointing to some of his fans. I happen to know why, but that's another story and not the point here. The question is, should it be on the album? I say yes, absolutely. But here's the real, more important, and bigger question. Should this album simply be a tribute to the great legacy Johnny left the world, or rather a more personal tribute from me to my brother based on my own particular preferences, and what I think he would have wanted. The answer, I think, is a balance of both.

Bruce seemed to ponder this a while. "I think that has to be Your decision. You should follow your heart. I will do everything I can to make this project the best it can be. We will spare no expense, try to attract all the absolute best people, and really do it right. I promise it will be first class all the way.

I may have opinions from time to time, and will certainly express them, but ultimately the creative decisions should be yours. I want to make this a success, but I'm not doing it for the money. In fact, I intend to donate a good part of my share to a charity set up to help disadvantaged musicians. I'm doing it because the world needs to hear this music."

When I heard this, I knew Bruce was the right person. I had been concerned about keeping our motives and intentions pure, out of love and respect for my brother, and I could see that Bruce felt the same way.

Now before I start talking about all the great artists on this record, and who played what and where, there is one musician in particular that I especially want to thank. That is our dear friend and most amazing drummer, Gregg Bissonette. Gregg and I played together in three of Ringo's All Starr Bands, got to know each other, just hang and have a good time. He has the best time, coolest groove, super technique, and greatest versatility of anyone I know.



We started out the album with just piano and drums, and the killer tracks he laid down became the foundation, soul, and heartbeat of the album. Thank you, Gregg! You came in just in time to save the day. You put so much heart and energy into every song. Your playing was an inspiration throughout the whole album, and I'll never forget what you did.

The other person I most of all want to thank is Ross Hogarth. Ross and I met and worked together for the first time on My album "Rebel Road" in 2008. After that, I decided I never wanted to work with any other engineer or mixer than Ross. He loves Johnny's music as much as I do and is as familiar with it too. There was simply no other person I would have considered doing this album with.

Ross, Monique and I thank you from both our hearts for all the hard work, the love and care, the thought and imagination, the artistic musical creativity, and all the great artists you helped bring into the project. It simply would not be the album is, without you.

Now the rhythm section being the fundamental groove underlying everything, I want to thank the two great bass players who helped build it from the bottom up. Both, incidentally, were recommended by Ross, and both great calls.

Bob Glaub is a bass man extraordinaire who has played with all the greats such as Journey, Steve Miller Band, John Fogerty, Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan, and too many others to name. Bob is a very musical player with such a natural feel. Very human, yet rock solid. Thanks, Bob, for gracing our album with your great talent and experience.

Sean Hurley is probably best known for playing with John Mayer (both studio and live), but he's recorded with Gwen Stefani, Lukas Graham, Alanis Morissette, Jason Marx, Lady A, Robin Thicke, and many others. Sean plays pop, rock, blues, Motown, McCartney melodic, anything you want, and plays the hell out of all of them. He also brought something very special to the table for this album that I absolutely Love. On piano, I play a lot of bass lines with my left hand (sometimes too much). When Ross sent the ruffs of piano and drums for Sean to study and learn, he picked up on all my favorite bass lines and had the taste and sensitivity to know when and where to play them—and when to leave them alone and play something else. Sean, thank you so much for getting that far into the detail of my playing. I love it when you cop those lines. Your time, feel, and delivery are impeccable. Man, you groove!

Now, as for the music—here are the songs (although not written by Johnny) that all his fans know, love, and would expect to hear, and that I think absolutely have to be on the album.

Rock and Roll Hoochie Koo
Still Alive and Well
Johnny B. Goode



Jumpin' Jack Flash
Highway 61 Revisited

"Hoochie Koo" and "Alive and Well" are practically no brainers, both having been written by Rick Derringer especially for Johnny with the new group "Johnny Winter And" specifically in mind.

I wanted to do a uniquely different version of "Hoochie Koo". I heard it with a wild, crazy, kind of Hendrixy guitar solo. The first person who immediately came to mind was my good friend Steve Lukather.

Steve is (of course) one of the original members of "Toto" one of my favorite bands. We toured Japan and Europe together some time ago (referring to it as "The Odd Couple Tour") playing some of the Jazz festivals where we got a chance to stretch out and really have fun. Steve has a bizarre sometimes perverse sense of humor (which we all love) but is really all heart. He played the perfect slightly twisted, somewhat demented, Luke-style solo. Thanks Steve, exactly the kind of insanity I was looking for.

Also, I had some signature Hendrix style rhythm parts in mind. For this Ross suggested Tim Pierce, another great call. Many thanks, Tim! You were able to translate exactly what I was hearing in my head into physical reality—feel, tone, and everything. Great Vibe, Tim. You're a total pro, and it was a real pleasure working with you.

For "Alive And Well" I wanted a real blues guy. The first person I thought of was Kenny Wayne Shepherd. We knew each other slightly, having played some multi act blues festivals together, but never in the same band. I called him up and he was super nice, and ready to rock! I sent him three songs, and he picked "Alive And Well" just as I had hoped.

When the session rolled around and Kenny Wayne walked in, we started talking as he was setting up, just getting to know each other. I found out he was from Louisiana (my old stomping ground) which I hadn't known. I smiled to myself and thought, no wonder I like his playing so much. I'm from Texas, where the liquor laws are 21 as opposed to 18 in Louisiana just across the border. So, the Bible Belt is a couple of notches looser over there—really great, warm-hearted, fun-loving people. We started talking about all these old clubs we both had played, without ever having known it.

The song was done in nothing flat. Kenny Wayne played that same old swampy, sleazy, slinky blues I'd grown up hearing all my life. It was very down-home, just Great! When it was finished, Kenny said, "is that it? Just that solo and the few fills? Have you got anything else?" Kenny Wayne did play on one more song, but that's another story. To be continued. Great job, Kenny Wayne, you killed it!



I should mention here that before Kenny Wayne even came in, we had blazing rhythm guitar on already (which is why Kenny had so little to do). This was done by the incomparable Phil X (another friend of Ross's). Phil has played with Bon Jovi the last ten years or so. He officially replaced Richie Sambora in 2016. Need I say more? He also did background vocals along with me on this one. Phil, you're one wild and crazy guy, and a maniac on the guitar. It was crazy fun getting you on this album. Thanks a million.

The formation of the group "Johnny Winter And" signaled a change in Johnny's direction from straight blues to more high energy Rock 'n' Roll, which won him a whole new and much wider audience. It also included songs like "Jumpin' Jack Flash", "Highway 61", and "Johnny B. Goode".

Johnny was a Huge "Stones" fan, so "Jumpin' Jack Flash" was a natural. His rendition was much more energetic, and power driven than the original Stones version. To me, that song really exemplifies what "Johnny Winter And" was all about live. I also played it with the great Leon Russell, another reason it will always have a special place in my heart. And Phil X (Bon Jovi) really put it over the top with his wild, spontaneous, totally-out-there guitar solos. Phil, I also love that magical little mandolin like (Mandoguitar) part Ross had you put on the choruses. Man, You Rock!

Next, a big shout out and many thanks to our friend, the wonderful Waddy Wachtel! I particularly wanted that sleazy Stones style rhythm guitar on this one. I'd seen Waddy with Stevie Nicks, but I knew he played with Keith Richards in his band the "X-Pensive Winos". That made him the perfect candidate. Waddy, thanks for doing your Bad-Boy thing. You gave it just that low-down dirty deal vibe I was looking for. You really kicked it good!

Finally, there was just one last thing left to go on, the timbales. There was a little timbale solo I was going to play myself, but I was reluctant to come in to the studio with COVID still raging. Ross also thought it could use percussion, tambourine, shakers, etc. We both agreed Kenny Aronoff would be absolutely the best guy to do it. Kenny could do it from home, so we didn't have to set up a session. He is a great drummer who plays everything, and his time is dead-on-rock-solid. Great job, Kenny! Love the timbale solo, and all the percs. Our eternal thanks.

Johnny also loved Bob Dylan. He was fascinated with his lyrics, the persona, and the whole Dylan mystique. "Highway 61" was the perfect vehicle for Johnny's unique style of slide guitar.



I've always thought of 61 as one of Johnny's signature slide songs. And by the time Kenny came in to play, it was the only other song left that was not already promised to someone else. Kenny asked if there was any guitar on it yet. I told him no—it was just piano, bass, and drums. Kenny Wayne smiled. "Great, let's hear it!"

After I explained about the slide thing he said, "I play slide alright, but it's not really my thing. But I'm hearing something completely different. Why don't we run it down a couple of times, and I'll just play what I play? If you like it, you got it. If not, we'll figure out something else.

As soon as the song started to play, I couldn't believe my ears! I hadn't really thought regular guitar would work, I was so used to hearing Johnny's old style, slippery, slide with all the sustain and shaky vibrato. Kenny hit it with a lowdown chunky style rhythm that really made it drive, with Rockin' fills in all the right places.

I had thought a combination of two guitars (one regular and one slide) might have worked well together, contrasting styles with different sounds to give it some variety. But what Kenny was laying down was so cool it made me think, this sounds Great just the way it is. So that's the way we left it for quite some time.

Months later I had asked Michael McDonald to do a vocal (another story we'll get around to). Michael was working on some "Doobie Brothers" material with John McFee at his studio, so it made perfect sense for Ross to do it there. After the vocal was done Ross and I were talking and he said, "you know, John plays great slide. Maybe we could get him to do 61."

For some reason I had always thought of John as an excellent guitar player, but not particularly a slide guy. Then Ross reminded me of all the great slide on the early Doobies albums and I thought ... Wow, that would be fantastic!

As it turned out, not only was John willing to do it, he was actually excited and really wanted to do it. He listened not just to the original studio recording, but a bunch of live versions as well. Johnny had a way of playing things a lot differently live than in the studio. I was so happy and flattered that he cared enough to take the time to dig into it and get the whole picture. John, my heartfelt gratitude! It just wouldn't be the real Johnny thing without your cool Rockin' slide.

But there was one last thing it just had to have. I Love that kooky whistle on the original Dylan version. It has such a happy party kind of sound. I asked Ross if he knew what it was, and he said he would research it and let me know. A couple of weeks later he presented me with a small box saying, "here's something you can have some fun with". The label on the box said Acme Siren (made in England). I opened it up, took a deep breath, gave it a good blast, and slapped Ross on the back. It was exactly the same sound.



Now there's a story behind every song on this album, but this next one is really special. As just little kids growing up in Beaumont, Texas—Johnny and I started early. We went on radio doing something called "The Uncle Willie Show". I remember it from when I was around six years old, but my mother assured me the first time we did it I was only four. Then we graduated to TV on "The Don Mahoney Show" Don was a sort of singing cowboy like Roy Rogers or Gene Autry.

But the big break came with this local talent contest that was the biggest thing in the area. It was called "The Johnny Melody Contest", and first prize was the chance to make your own record. I guess I was 11 or 12, and Johnny about 14 or 15. We had our very first band called "Johnny and the Jammers". The best song we knew was "Johnny B. Goode". So, we entered, we went on, we played it, we won, and went on to make our first record (a song Johnny wrote called "School Day Blues"— and as they say, the rest is history.

So, if it hadn't been for that song, Who Knows? To this day, when I think of Rock 'n' Roll, I think of Chuck Berry and "Johnny B. Goode". It's not only Johnny's story, it's every kid's story who ever picked up a guitar, coming from humble beginnings with the idea of making it big someday. So of course, it has to be on this album.

I had this dream of singing the song with my friend the great Joe Walsh. Joe and I go way back to the 70s playing shows together when he was in the "James Gang". We also crossed paths accidentally recording different projects with other people at a studio called the Caribou Ranch up in Colorado. I remember many a night our shooting pool 'til late in the early hours of the morning, just hanging out having fun.

Joe was up for it, so we went to his place and recorded at his home studio. I got him to sing the second verse and do the harmonies on the "Go Johnny Go" choruses, and just like that, my dream came true. Thank you, Joe, for taking time from your busy schedule with the Eagles and your radio show to do this special duet. It reminded me of when Johnny and I used to sing it together, and felt just like old times.

Joe is one of the Real Rockers, but he picked a different song to play guitar on. More on that later, but there is some Rockin' guitar work by a fellow Texan named David Grissom (suggested by Ross Hogarth, our engineer, mixer, and producer). It fits perfectly with the Rock-house Boogie style piano I had put on it earlier. What I Love is that you can hear both Chuck Berry and Johnny Winter in the way he played it. Thanks, David. You really got it Rockin', Big Time Johnny Texas Style!

Now let's talk about Johnny's writing. Once again, being his younger brother and looking up to him as my all-time musical hero, it's hard for me to be objective. Nevertheless, I consider Johnny a great writer. Here's the thing. Most of Johnny's earlier songs (particularly the ones on his first few albums) were straight blues, and therefore not



likely to become hits. Traditional delta blues songs like, "Dallas". Then there were songs a little more progressive and uniquely Johnny's own style, like "Mean Town Blues", "I'm Yours and I'm Hers", and "Leland Mississippi Blues".

These are all great songs and real Johnny Winter, but there are so many to choose from, I didn't really know--at that point--exactly which ones would actually end up on the album. However, there were several songs that I was definitely positive about.

One is a ballad called "Stranger" that I absolutely love, partly because it is so uncharacteristic of Johnny's style and image. It is on the soft side, very melodic, and sensitive, displaying a vulnerability Johnny does not often reveal. This is the one Joe Walsh really wanted to play guitar on, rather than "Johnny B. Goode". And when you hear it, you'll see why. It's classic Joe, all heart and really emotional. Thank you, Joe, for your Rockin' vocal on "Johnny B. Goode" and your great guitar vision on "Stranger". Having you be a part of this means more than I can say. And hey, let's go shoot some pool sometime.

The vocal on this one is sung by one of my absolute favorite singers on the planet. This was my wife Monique's suggestion; I'm talking about the incomparable Michael McDonald. Our friendship goes back to the early 80s when Michael (much to my surprise) invited me to play in his first solo band after the Doobies, and also on his debut solo album "If That's What It Takes". We also did a Japanese tour with that band. It was a three-act show—Michael McDonald, Joe Walsh, and Boz Scaggs. What a lineup! This was one of the most exciting, and inspiring periods of my life, and one I'll never forget. Now I have the joy and feeling of things having come full circle, with our both having played or sung on each other's albums. Michael's vocal is pure magic, hauntingly beautiful, intimately personal, and so real as only his voice can make it. Michael, thank you, Thank You, THANK YOU! You're not only a Doobie brother, but a Blues brother, and a Soul brother.

But wait, that's not all. As a very special guest on the drums, we have The Greatest! (Who else, of course, it's Sir Ringo Starr)! I met Ringo back in 2006 and had the great honor of playing in his All Starr band for the first time that year. I was invited again in 2008, 2010, and 2011. It was literally the thrill of a lifetime being on stage with the incredible Ringo Starr and so many other great musicians in his All Starr Band.

I Love Ringo! Who doesn't? Both as a musician, and as a human being. You can go anywhere in the world, mention the name Ringo, and you're sure to get a smile. Along with his great music, his advocacy and outreach to bring Peace and Love into our hearts is truly a gift to the world. As a matter of fact, In the heart of Beverly Hills there is a Peace and Love Sculpture of Ring's hand giving the peace sign. It stands in Beverly Gardens Park just opposite City Hall as a reminder of Peace and Love.



Another Love connection—Ringo's wife, Barbara's sister (Marjorie) is Married to Joe. That makes them brothers in law, and obviously very close. Monique and I, knowing this, and our all being friends—we thought it would be especially cool to have them both on the same track together. So, I asked Ringo and he said yes, I'll do it for you. I felt so honored. He did it in his home studio (where he has all his drums set up) and we want to thank Bruce Sugar here for his engineering, overseeing the session, and making it happen. It was another full circle, since I have played on several of Ringo's albums. Thank you, Ringo. You are The Greatest! Peace and Love.

We also want to thank Tim Pierce for his beautiful acoustic guitars doing the rhythm. Yeah, Tim! I Love that lush wall you created.

The final touch was light percussion—once again done by the rhythm-master, our friend Kenny Aronoff. Thanks again, Kenny. It's especially cool to have you on this one, in the midst of such amazing company.

So, Michael McDonald, Joe Walsh, and Ringo Starr. What an interesting, diverse, and unique combination. And if you think it looks good on paper, just wait 'til you hear it.

Another one of my Johnny favorites is a more contemporary rock song called "Guess I'll Go Away". He wrote this around the time of his first rehab, as the title would suggest. It is based on a killer riff, with much more modern structural development. Lyrically and emotionally, it expresses a lot of dark, defiance - but tinged with a certain note of acceptance. There are even hints of an introspective withdrawal, but with a grim determination to get through it all and come back even stronger, which he did. The song mainly comes down to sex, drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll, as it often does with Johnny's writing. He really puts it right out there, without holding anything back. And fueled with that energy, IT ROCKS!

This one has a really energetic, uniquely cool vocal with lots of personality sung by Taylor Hawkins (of the Foo Fighters). Taylor is a friend of Ross's (who suggested him to do this vocal). I Love the Foo Fighters! They're one of the few remaining true rock bands still out there. This song being a real rocker, Taylor was the perfect fit.

We met for the first time at Infinitespin (the studio where we recorded most of the guest artists). He was so cool, with such a great enthusiastic vibe, not wanting anything but the fun of getting out there and doing it. Thanks for rockin' out with us, Taylor! It was so amazing hearing you burn that one down.

All the Killer Guitar is by My Man, Doug Rappoport (the guitarist in my own band). Doug has been with us well over 15 years now (the longest of anyone ever) and has developed into a really phenomenal player, as you will hear. Thanks Doug, you really smoked it! You surpassed all my expectations, and I'm so proud to have you in the



band. I think this is the heaviest, most modern rock song on the whole album. So, for all you hard rockers out there, this one's for you.

Now we come to my favorite Johnny shuffle. Johnny has always really Loved shuffles. They're one of his things, and he's done many versions of the great ones over the years. But there's one original which he wrote himself that's always stood out in my mind as the absolute best. It's kind of a power shuffle with a great groove called "Self-Destructive Blues". The words are very clever, humorous, and speak for themselves. It's classic Johnny Winter for sure. Some of the things I've picked are somewhat obscure and not necessarily his best-known songs, but they're the ones that really mean something to me. When you hear the album, I think you'll see what I mean.

This was Joe Bonamassa's absolute first pick, and it's truly amazing how many times this kind of thing has happened. We were on the phone discussing potential song possibilities, and the second I mentioned "Self-Destructive Blues" Joe said, "stop right there. You're really gonna do Self Destructive? That's the first Johnny song I ever learned and played with my band. That is THE song I want to do.

Joe showed up with a Firebird guitar and a Fender Bassman amp (just like Johnny used to use) and just killed it. He not only knew lots of Johnny's licks, he had actually tapped into the essence of his style, adding original creative variations of his own. I mean it was astounding. Only Johnny could have written "Self-Destructive Blues" and only Joe Bonamassa could have played it the way he did. Thank you, Joe, for bringing that song to life in Johnny's unique style. You really captured the high energy flow of the way he played his solos. So cool, I could close my eyes and think it was him. Truly Amazing.

Now when I think about Johnny, his authenticity as a blues man (reflected in his early writing), and particularly his style of slide guitar—if there's one song that best epitomizes and brings all those elements together to represent the many aspects of who Johnny was in the early days, that song would have to be "Mean Town Blues". Every time I hear it, I think, now that's Real Johnny Winter. It just captures the essence of everything he was.

To me, all this made it one of the most important tracks on the album, and probably the most difficult to replicate the original feel on. Although my intention was Never to make a Johnny sound alike or copy album, I wanted this one song to be as authentic as possible.

I wanted only guitar, bass, and drums, exactly like Johnny's original blues trio. But I couldn't think of anyone out there who naturally played slide anything like the way Johnny did. Then I thought—Joe Bonamassa did such a great job with Johnny's regular guitar style, I wonder if he could do the same thing with the slide? So, I called Joe



saying I didn't know where else to turn, and that he was our last and best hope. Joe said it would be a real challenge, but one he was up for. Don't worry; I've got you covered. I think he viewed it as an adventure that would add a new dimension to his playing.

We scheduled the recording for a few weeks later to give Joe a chance to study. When the session rolled around, he said he was ready, and man, was he! As soon as he started playing, I knew we were home free. Joe rose to the challenge and beyond. I swear I've never heard anyone (other than myself) able to get inside Johnny's playing the way Joe does. He nailed it—dead center Johnny Winter! When I put on our version, it takes me back to the first time I heard Johnny play it. I get that same old feeling, and I hope you all will too. Joe, I don't have the words to thank you. What you brought to this album goes beyond words. When I listen to the songs you did, it's as though I can hear and feel Johnny's spirit and presence in the music. Call it mystical, magical, some kind of bizarre channeling, or just great heart and soul musicianship. Whatever it is, you got it—and I thank you for giving to the world on this album.

Another uniquely Johnny song as he began to develop his own personal writing style is "I'm Yours And I'm Hers". This was based on traditional but original blues riffs, as were most of the songs Johnny was writing at the time. But this one was a little more advanced and progressive. It had Johnny's regular guitar on the left, and his slide on the right; like two Johnnys in the same band. We have the great Billy Gibbons (of ZZ Top, and of course from Texas) singing and ripping the first guitar solo, and Derek Trucks (who played with the Allman Brothers before forming the Tedeschi Trucks Band) following up with the screaming slide.

Billy is such a character and was so much fun to work with. We reminisced and talked endlessly about the old clubs and bands we remembered from our younger days. We had played shows together, but never really gotten a chance to sit down and talk. I was amazed how much we had in common. He loved and really cared about doing this for Johnny, and it shows. Billy, only you could have done that guitar and vocal the way you did. Thanks for doing that real Texas Thing we all grew up with. Johnny and I Love it!

I didn't get a chance to meet Derek (due to the COVID quarantine), but I want to thank him here. Derek—your fiery, sizzling slide really puts it over the top. Johnny used to talk about you (and Warren Haynes) and had a special feeling and respect for you both. I know he is as thrilled as I am to have you on this track with Billy. Great chemistry and fantastic playing! It gives the song that edge it needed. Our love and thanks. As Johnny would say, it's Down and Dirty.



Another aspect of Johnny's style was his R&B playing. For me the best example of this is a song written by Percy Mayfield called "Memory Pain". I've always been crazy about R&B, and when I first heard him play this one, it just flipped me out.

I was reading the list to Warren Haynes (who also played with the Allmans the same time as Derek) and when I got to "Memory Pain" he just lit up and said, "that's it! That's the one I want to do." And man, did he ever. He walked up to the mic, plugged in his guitar, and proceeded to sing and play the whole song down from start to finish all at the same time. No working on the guitar separately, and then going out to overdub the vocal. He just did the song for real, exactly the way Johnny used to do it. The honesty and greatness of that really blew me away.

Thank you, Warren! What a real, sincere, and magical performance you gave. That's the way to play the blues!

Looking over the entire album, I think the most emotional song for me was "Drown In My Own Tears". Johnny did it on "First Winter" which was the first album we ever played on together, and I always felt like he did that song especially for me. He said, "just write out the horn parts and play the piano. No guitar, just the way Ray did it."

Johnny knew how much I Loved Ray Charles, and I think if it hadn't been for me, he probably never would have done that song. I think he wanted to give me the chance to do my kind of thing, in the style he knew I loved.

I feel like redoing this song on the tribute album gave me the chance to sing it back to Johnny the same way he sang it to me all those years ago when he was young and so alive. Doing that vocal was so emotional. It felt like I was not only singing it for Johnny, but for my Mom and Dad, my grand and great grandparents, all my friends and band members who have passed on—everyone who has gone and won't be coming back, at least in this lifetime.

I choked up in many places but was finally able to get through it three times. Then Ross and I picked the lines that seemed the least shaky, and that became the vocal. When we did Ray Charles songs in our early bands, Johnny always sang Ray's parts, and I would sing all the Raelettes high parts. It was so personal it just didn't feel right having anyone else's voices on it, so I put the Edgarettes on the end.

For the horns I called up Doc Kupka, who got some of the guys from "Tower Of Power". With Covid and the quarantine going on, we had to send it around person to person, but I think we came through with a real, live, authentic sounding horn section. Great job, guys! Especially Doc for putting it all together, my deepest thanks.



One other blues song that has always been special to me is “Stormy Monday Blues”. Although it’s a T-Bone Walker song, next to Ray Charles, Bobby “Blue” Bland was probably my favorite—and his was the version we always did.

Johnny usually sang all night long, but occasionally he’d want a break and say, “hey Edgar, sing a song.” Most of the time it would be “Stormy Monday”. I wasn’t much interested in singing back then. But that one just felt good. I liked the progression, and it was really easy to change up and play around with. It just sort of became my song. So, whenever I think of Johnny and singing a song, of course it’s gonna be “Stormy Monday”. And I say, why quit now? And my heartfelt thanks to Robben Ford for adding his special genius touch on guitar.

Robben is one of the few guys I know who can really play both blues and jazz. And I mean Really Play them with absolute artistry and authenticity. My piano arrangement had a kind of jazzy vibe I knew would be just perfect for Robben—and Man, it is. Thank You, Robben. You’re one Cool Cat. I dig you The Most!

As we were nearing the end of song selection, Ross said out of the blue, “you know, we really ought to do something by Muddy. I couldn’t believe I hadn’t thought of this. Johnny literally Loved and Idolized Muddy Waters. I think for Johnny, the high point of his career was getting to record with Muddy. The killer track on the album “Hard Again” was “Manish Boy” but there is nothing that could ever live up to that version.

I decided on “Got My Mojo Working”. It’s practically Muddy’s anthem and definitely his best-known song. So, this one is not only a tribute to Johnny and Muddy, but to the Chicago blues as well. I was talking to Bruce Quarto about this one day, and he came up with a Great suggestion for the guest artist, Bobby Rush! If you aren’t familiar with Bobby, check him out. He’s originally from Louisiana (my second home growing up) and moved to Chicago back in “53”. There he became part of that amazing Chicago blues scene along with such greats as Muddy Waters, Little Walter, Howlin’ Wolf, Jimmy Reed, Etta James, Buddy Guy, and all the rest.

He is a Great singer / harp player, and in his 80s still going Strong. He has many blues music awards, and in 2017 won his first Grammy for his album “Porcupine Meat”. I’ll never forget when we first met in the studio; there was an instant connection! We talked about Louisiana, Texas, and Chicago (the way they used to be). But mostly we talked about Johnny and the blues. He had all these great Johnny stories from different shows they’d played together on the road. I hadn’t even known they knew each other and were real friends. It was such a warm feeling, like family.

We got the old Bullet Mic and amp set up for the harp. And when Ross hit record, I couldn’t believe it. I mean (in his 80s) this guy sang and played the hell out of “Mojo”. I tell you; Bobby Rush is the Real Deal. He did it two or three times (just for safety’s sake), but once was enough. Bobby, you blew me away! What a great vibe. Thanks, Big



Time! Old Town Chicago style. I know Johnny would Love this track, thinking of Muddy and Bobby, the blues, and all the good times they had. Also, big thanks to Michael McDonald and John McFee for doing the party vocal answers on the Mojo choruses. You guys got the Mojo Workin'!

One more thing. I don't think this album would be complete without at least one, heartfelt, personal tribute--from me to my brother--in the form of a song. So, I wrote this about something I know Johnny felt deep in his heart at one time, though it may have changed in later years. It's a thing I have to explain in order for you to understand it.

When we were kids, we both loved music, but Johnny had this drive and determination. He had The Dream, that burning ambition. He wanted to be a Star!

I loved music in and of itself, just for the beauty of harmony, melody, and rhythm. It was a deeply personal and private world for me, but Johnny wanted to be famous.

He watched "Bandstand" and read all the magazines. He was Johnny "Cool Daddy" Winter, with the guitar, the pompadour, the shades, and the girls. I was the quiet kid who played all the instruments.

Now here's the odd thing, the irony of it all. Johnny worked relentlessly--all his life--to attain this goal. And when he finally achieved it, the success, the money, the fame and fortune, the adoring fans, the recognition so hard won, the dream come true, everything he had ever wanted in life - He Hated It!

He used to say - I never thought it would be like this. I feel so alone and cut off, from everybody and everything. I don't know who I can trust, or even talk to. Certainly not the businesspeople, who are supposed to be on my side; they're just trying to sell me and whatever I've got. They don't know who I am, or what I've been through. To them, it might as well be dog food.

And the people, the fans, the girls - they Sure don't know who I am. They've got some kind of crazy, fantasy idea of a superstar all made up in their heads. None of it's real. Nothing is real! Anymore.

So, he hated it—but he Loved it too. Be careful what you wish for, the paradox of life. It was quite a shock, at first. Johnny became very disillusioned and went through an extremely difficult period. But as time went on and the years rolled by, I think he eventually came to accept and even appreciate all he had gone through and accomplished in life. He said he was happy and satisfied near the end, and I'd like to believe it's true. In a way, we went through this together, and though I tried to write this as I think Johnny would have written it, from his point of view, it comes from both our hearts. The idea of being a star yet feeling all alone must have jelled subliminally in my



subconscious to give me the perfect title, “Lone Star Blues”. When it came to me, I thought—and we’re from Texas to boot. Now you can’t beat that!

When it came to a special guest artist for this one, there was one and only one person I wanted to do it, and that is Keb’ Mo’. I didn’t know him at all, but Ross did the TajMo album that won the Grammy. So, he knew and worked closely with both Taj and Kevin. I asked Ross to ask him, and Ross set up a get acquainted phone call. I explained all about why I was doing the album, how much it meant to me, and about the specific song and the idea behind it. He was very nice, straight from the heart, and real. He seemed open to the possibility and said he would like to hear the song.

All we had to send was a simulated slide guitar I played on keyboard in a typical Johnny style, a vocal, and drums. In this case, less was more. What we were hoping was for Kevin to make it into a Keb’ Mo’ song, and that’s exactly what happened.

I was totally over the moon when he agreed to do it. He broke the whole thing down and started over from scratch, putting all the instruments on himself—all the guitars, bass, and some great vocal lines.

Keb’ Mo’ is a real blues man who feels it heart and soul. He has his own unique style that is absolutely perfect for this song.

I had done a typical Johnny kind of vocal (very intense and gravelly), but everybody thought it was just too much and over the top. After hearing the lines that Keb’ Mo’ sang I got it. His voice was so cool and laid back, every time he sang a line the song just seemed to come to life. My lines sounded edgy, stressed, and almost angry. So, I redid my entire vocal in a more natural storytelling style. I sent it to Ross, who sent it on to Keb’ Mo’. What he said, I took as a real compliment. “Does Edgar like Mose Allison? It kind of sounds a little like Mose.” Keb’ Mo’ had a completely different feel and approach that absolutely transformed the song. Kevin, thank you from my heart. I Love you for being Keb’ Mo’ and doing what you did.

Finally, after having made all these decisions about the song selection, but before we started recording, I decided to write this one last song. I had the stunning realization that nowhere on the whole album was there anything expressing my own personal feelings.

Everything in depth about Johnny (which is the point) but not a single Edgar song anywhere. I knew that making this album was going to be an intensely emotional experience that would put me through a lot of changes. And after thinking about it, I felt absolutely compelled to put these feelings into a song. The idea that just flashed into my mind was “End Of The Line”.

Sometimes I don’t know where songs come from, or why I write them. They just come. This song was like that. As I started to write, I began to realize the line I was thinking about was the Winter family line. Johnny and I were the last surviving members of the



Winter family. Neither of us having had children, when Johnny passed on, that made me the last Winter—the end of the line.

Although this might seem sad, I don't actually happen to think of death as the end. As I said earlier, although Johnny may have departed this physical plane, his spirit, his music, and his presence will live on in my heart, always. And the same will be true for me when my time comes, and for all of us in our turn. So, the last verse says:

Songs may end or just fade away
But the music never dies
Stars may shine and burn in the night
Here on Earth, we hear their cries

But I'm standing
I'm still standing
After all this time
Through the hopes and fears
All the joy and tears
Now It still appears
I'm standing at the end
of the line

It's deeper than that, but you get the idea. I could have written this as a blues song, but I wanted to make it entirely different from anything else on the album—like “Dying To Live” on the “White Trash” album, or “Frankenstein” on “They Only Come Out At Night”. So, I decided to write it in a semi classical form. I hope all you blues lovers out there will forgive me this one transgression. But it's a more abstract, poetic idea, and seems to lend itself more to that style. Believe it or not, Johnny always used to encourage me to do more jazz and classical, so in a way, this is for him too.

And hey, it is an Edgar Winter album as well. As most of you may know, I've always loved jazz and classical as well as blues, rock, and country too. I thought this should definitely have strings, and discussing it with Ross, he suggested David Campbell to do the string arrangement. Monique and I happened to have known David and his wife since the 80s before we moved from New York to California. David is a world class composer and arranger with over 450 gold and platinum records to his credit, and many film scores as well.

I have always had at least one ballad on every album I've ever made. Either a love song to my wife Monique, or something of a deeply personal nature. I have a deep Love, affinity, and connection with ballads. They are usually my favorite songs simply because they are the most honest, revealing, personal, and true. And that's how I feel about “End Of The Line”.



It was at this point (thinking the album was completely done) that Ross and I realized we had overlooked something else, a big something else. We had discussed this early on but set it aside and then forgot about it.

One of Johnny's greatest styles that he loved the most was the old-time, country, acoustic Delta Blues. People like Robert Johnson, Lightnin' Hopkins, John Lee Hooker, Taj Mahal, Son House, Elmore James, etc. He always had at least one song on every album with just an acoustic guitar or two and a vocal. I used to think of them as back porch blues. But the thing was, we didn't have one.

Ross had played a few of the first tracks we finished for a good friend of his, Doyle Bramhall II. Doyle is best known for his work with Eric Clapton (being the second guitar player in his regular band), Roger Waters, Sheryl Crow, Tedeschi Trucks Band and many others. His comment was that it definitely needed some bluesy acoustic guitar in the mix.

So, I asked Ross to ask Doyle if he would do an old-style Johnny acoustic track for the record. Long story short, Doyle said yes! We gave him several ideas from Johnny's various albums. The one he picked was "When You Got a good Friend" by the great Robert Johnson. Ross and I both loved that choice. So, Ross and Doyle did the whole thing in one day long session.

Doyle put on three guitars—a regular six string acoustic, a National resonator, a National slide, and such a cool vocal. What a great vibe. There are so few people around today who can play authentic Delta Blues. Sadly, the slide guitar (in particular) is a dying art. Doyle done did the Delta deal. Thank you, Doyle, for takin' it back down home to Texas. I know Johnny would Love it, and I sure do. What a way to finish. True to the Blues!

This album has been years in the making, and I've given it my all. For that matter, it feels like I've been writing this for years. I had no idea it was going to be so long. This is more like a novella than liner notes, but I wanted to tell at least part of the story.

I want to thank everybody for everything: Johnny—my brother in musical inspiration; my wife Monique for her Love, encouragement, and support (without which I never would have done this); Ross Hogarth who put his whole heart and soul into it and worked as hard as I have myself (Ross, I simply couldn't have done it without you); Bruce Quarto for his Love of the blues, of Johnny's music, his faith in me as an artist, and his patience and understanding in how long it's taken; Dave Hart for his belief in my talent, not only in management—but in friendship, and taking care of business, every day.

And my deepest and most profound thanks to all the great, fantastic, amazing artists for their incredible heartfelt performances. You touched our hearts on behalf of Johnny and the Winter family.



It's time to say goodbye for now, so here's the last thing I want to say. When I was very young, I can still remember thinking ... no matter how much time goes by, how old I get, what happens in my life, or how far I end up from home - there is one person in this world I know will always understand what I've been through, how I feel. And that person is my brother, Johnny.

It's sad to say, but we drifted farther apart than I ever could have imagined back in those early days. So much has happened to both of us since then, but one thing will always remain the same ... that bond, of brotherhood, of family, of music, and of Love. So, in his name, I dedicate this album.

“Brother Johnny”