

Self-destruct

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Johnny Winter freezes Slade at Gardens

By JOE MATYAS
of The Free Press

The rumblings in the corridors of London Gardens Monday night after the English group, Slade, self-destructed before more than 4,000 fans on the first-half of a double bill concert centred mainly on the group's volume.

Even by rock standards the band was excessive, so powerful that a record company promotion man was overheard to say between gulps of a soft drink: "Maaaaan, that group's toooo loud."

When he uttered the statement, the aforementioned PR type was standing in the corridor while the band was still on, protecting his sensitive eardrums with the thick concrete block walls between him and the arena echo chamber.

Loudness aside, Slade proved themselves to be an inept simplistic group bordering on musical idiocy. This is probably a minority report, but it is not without its supporters.

Slade seems to do well with singles in Europe, but why is a mystery. Noddy Holder's piercing lead vocals resemble primordial screaming more than rock anguishing and the band's wobbly chord smashing and pots and pans rhythms strip the feeling from rock 'n' roll rendering it muscleless. (I've never heard anybody mishandle a song as badly as they did on Feel So Fine).

Johnny Winter and his group, the headline act that everybody came to see, was immensely superior. Winter is a master blues and rock guitarist who throws in all kinds of improvisation as he plays and it all seems to fit, with the proper emphasis wherever it should be put.

Winter is definitely the star in the four-man group consisting of two drummers and a bass player besides the albino ace himself. Oh yes, there was a chick in hot pants galloping about the stage doing some minor percussion work and receiving a few suggestive thrusts now and again from the neck of Johnny's guitar but she didn't mean much to the group except as a sex object.

But her visuals weren't necessary. Johnny Winter is about as physically striking a rock performer as can be found, a long shaft of white willow with a flowing white mane, bedecked in jet black costumes and pink silk scarf. There is only one man in rock who can match him for effect and that's his brother Edgar, but when it comes to music, Johnny's got him beat.

Edgar is an equally fine musician, of course, but he seems to lack direction, play-

ing progressive rock backed up by straightforward rock 'n' roll musicians. No such schizophrenia affects Johnny. He plays two things at different times, Rock 'n' roll and blues rock and he plays both exceptionally well with a personal style of thumb-picking (unusual for a rock guitarist). The rest of his band are merely sidemen, but competent ones at that.

As usual the acoustics at the Gardens got in the way of the rock, imploding on the sound before new things happened.

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