

Edgar Winter on 'Dying To Live

Written by Westside ID236

Thursday, 21 October 2004 20:12 -

Britney Spears' face will mummify into a Keith Richards-like state before classic rock radio stations play Edgar Winter's "Dying To Live."

But the song, which Winter wrote as an anti-war piece after he performed at Woodstock, found a home last year -- with the hip-hop nation.

When bad-boy rapper Eminem was recruited to work on the soundtrack for slain rap star Tupac Shakur 's documentary film "Tupac Resurrection," he dusted off "Dying To Live," a ballad that Winter describes as resembling "classical chamber music with a blues vocal."

Eminem sampled the song, then wedded it to raps about gang-banging and survival on the streets by Tupac and the late Notorious B.I.G. The result, "Runnin" (Dying To Live)," went to No. 5 on Billboard's Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Singles Sales chart, while the soundtrack album was No. 1 for eight consecutive weeks.

"I was surprised, especially considering the nature and the style of the original song," Winter says by phone from his Beverly Hills home, as he relaxes before his Biketoberfest concert Sunday at Daytona International Speedway.

"Dying To Live" meant a great deal to me when I wrote it after Woodstock in '69," the 57-year-old rocker says, his twang-dusted voice revealing his Beaumont, Texas, roots. "I thought of it as an anti-war song. It's a very personal statement about survival.

"I never would have thought of it in terms of the street or gang violence, but it was the perfect message to take those two existing raps by Tupac and Biggie, who are no longer living, and thematically connect them. It was brilliant on Eminem's part to see the humanity in that song and transform it in a way I never would have imagined."

Winter isn't miffed that, so far as classic rock radio is concerned, he's only crafted two worthy songs, both hits in 1973: "Frankenstein," that monstrous instrumental, and "Free Ride." Those two works account for the bulk of Winter's radio airplay and numerous movie soundtrack appearances (including "Wayne's World 2," "Air America" and a dozen other flicks).

And "Free Ride" accounts for his popularity at biker festivals and his stint with a tour sponsored by Easyriders magazine two years ago. "We've done a lot of shows and tours with Steppenwolf," Winter says. "Born To Be Wild" is one of the biker anthems and "Free Ride" runs a very close second."

Edgar Winter on 'Dying To Live

Written by Westside ID236

Thursday, 21 October 2004 20:12 -

But the keyboardist, sax player and vocalist has tallied 20 albums during his career, as well as numerous collaborative projects with his brother, guitarist Johnny Winter, guitarist and sometime bandmate Rick Derringer and others.

"That's just the nature of classic rock," Winter says of that radio format's limited play list. Besides, he notes, he's had a number of songs -- "Keep Playin" that Rock and Roll," "We All Had a Real Good Time" and others -- covered often by other artists.

But he is puzzled that "a lot of the classic rock guys seem to resent doing their old hits. With "Frankenstein" particularly -- I love playing that song every bit as much as I did when it was new. The reason is that it's an ever-evolving song. It was about 20 minutes when I recorded it, then it was edited down to four or five on the album.

"Just about every tour, I write a new section. It's like jazz -- it's only about 5 percent that remains the same, the rest is improvisation."

Last year, Winter released a CD and DVD titled "Live at the Galaxy," which includes the songs "Keep Playin" that Rock and Roll," "Turn on Your Love Light," "Tobacco Road," "Texas" and, of course, "Free Ride" and "Frankenstein."

He's staying busy with new recording projects. Another DVD, of a live concert with guitarist Alvin Lee at London's Royal Albert Hall, is due soon. And he's in the middle of his "Winter Blues" CD trilogy -- "Jazzin" the Blues" is now available and he's about to begin work on the third installment, "Rockin" the Blues."

And he continues to hit the road.

"I'm rockin'!" Winter says playfully, with the giddiness of those arch classic-rock fans Beavis and Butt-head. "I love playing live. It's something I don't ever intend to give up. No thoughts of going into retirement. I'll be like the old blues guys -- I'm going to be playing until the end."

[Source](#)