



Studio album by [Gil Scott-Heron](#) & [Brian Jackson](#)

Released	May 1974 (see release history)
Recorded	September 4–5, October 15, 1973 D&B Sound (Silver Spring, Maryland)
Genre	Soul , jazz-funk , fusion , jazz
Length	44:27
Label	Strata-East SES-19742
Producer	Gil Scott-Heron, Brian Jackson

WINTER IN AMERICA

(Liner notes by Gil Scott-Heron & Brian Jackson)

{The purpose of providing these liner notes is to encourage you to support the musicians }

At the end of 360 degrees, Winter is a metaphor: a term not only used to describe the season of ice, but the period of our lives through which we are travelling. In our hearts we feel that spring is just around the corner: a spring of brotherhood and united spirits among people of color. Everyone is moving, searching. There is a restlessness within our souls that keeps us questioning, discovering and struggling against a system that will not allow us space and time for fresh expression. Western iceman have attempted to distort time. Extra months on the calendar and daylight saved what was Eastern Standard. We approach winter the most depressing period in the history of this industrial empire, with threats of oil shortages and energy crises. But we, as Black people, have been a source of endless energy, endless beauty and endless determination. I have many things to tell you about tomorrow's love and light.

We will see you in the spring.

Gil

In the interest of national security, please help us carry out our constitutional duty to overthrow the king.

Liner notes by Gil Scott-Heron, 1/98

Several things stand out.

First, the artwork on the cover was done by a brother named Eugene Coles. He was a friend of Brian and myself from Morgan State University. The original name of the project was Supernatural Corner because we left Baltimore and moved into what appeared to be a haunted house on the corner of 13th Street, #1 Logan Circle in D.C.

The title was changed as were some of the tunes. One of the songs that was removed was "Supernatural Corner." We found that you had to see the house to relate to the song. The title became Winter In America but we had commissioned Eugene Coles to do an album cover called Supernatural Corner. So when he turned it in we paid him and put it on the front of Winter In America.

The collage on the inside [you'll have to own the LP/CD to appreciate this collage*] could have been on the front. It was done by Mrs. Peggy Harris who knew it was going to be called Winter. Her problem was that there was no title song. I told her that "Winter in America" was a phrase that fit the album and the times we were living. She didn't care. Every time we saw her she said the same thing: "There just ought to be a song called 'Winter in America'." Even after the album was out and we were working on another one she said the same thing: "There ought to be..."

She was right. As the title of an album that most people just called "The Bottle Album" the phrase was lost. So I wrote the song "Winter in America" that shows up on an album called The First Minute Of A New Day. Some folks believed we did that on purpose. Nope. Mrs. Peggy Harris made us do it. (She later did a painting for me of Ed Myers, a 105-year-old brother in Florida being held for murder. His nickname was "Possum Slim". That song was done on It's Your World.)

Brian and I all of the playing and singing alone. I think it was Brute who suggested that we go to D&B Sound in Silver Springs, Maryland. It was small, but it had a comfortable feeling and it had Jose Williams as the engineer. The main room was so small that when Brian and I did tunes together, one of us had to go out in the hallway where the water cooler was located. I did vocals for "Bobby Smith" and "A Very Precious Time" from there and Brian played flute on "The Bottle" and "Your Daddy Loves You" right next to that cooler.

The other people who appear on the album showed up on the last day. Bob Adams (drums) and Danny Bowens (bass) came from Lincoln University to add their part to "Peace Go With You", "Rivers Of My Fathers", "Back Home", and "The Bottle."

They added one more thing. Bob was disappointed that the poem I had been doing as an opening monologue in concerts, "The H20Gate (Watergate) Blues", was not on the album. I told him I left it off because nobody outside of Washington seemed to know what the hell I was talking about. He was reply was (more or less) that even if people didn't understand the politics it's still funny as hell.

So we sat up to do one take, a "live ad-lib" to a blues backing. My description of the colors, the 3,000 shades, etc., was off the top of my head and the poem was done with a few index cards with notes to be sure I got the references straight without stumbling. (I still stumbled anyway.) After we got through it we listened to it play back with an open studio mike and became the audience. (There are some great comments in the back, particularly during the intro.)

The poem worked well. It felt like what the album had been missing. Not just the political aspect, but as Bob has said, for the laughs. The Watergate incident itself was not funny and neither were its broader implications, but as a release, a relief of tension in Winter In America it provided a perfect landing.

Please enjoy – Gil

It's not true that I invented selective amnesia, but it is true I owe as many "thank yous" as the US government owes Iraq. Fortunately now that I have this label and this space to write I can get down to some serious "thanks" to people who have helped me along my way.

Well, maybe what I will do is limit the thanks I initiate to the project at hand. This album Winter In America should start with a serious thank you to Mrs. Peggy Harris who contributed the collage. I have already thanked her for that, but not for continuing to urge me to write a song called "Winter In America" until I did.

This album originally had no title tune. Winter was a metaphor, what I called the overall atmosphere of the album. But Mrs. Harris insisted that there should be a song. She "heard" it. She was right. We presented the original studio version on the first Arista LP *The First Minute Of A New Day*, but this is a great version "live" the way I like music. The players are the original Amnesia Express performing in Black Wax with Kenny Sheffield on trumpet and Vernon James on flute.

On the other material Glenn Turner, Robert Gordon and my old friend Larry McDonald are the players.

-gil

The Nature of Retribution

Look at trees.
They don't bother nobody.
Let folks burn 'em, cut 'em.
Paint 'em and use 'em
But they don't bother nobody...
That is, till money...
But like, whose fault is that?

B. Jackson

* comments from Malcolm - web site admin