



JESSE WINCHESTER

A TOUCH ON THE RAINY SIDE



It was unusual for Jesse Winchester to follow one album so closely with another, but 1977's *Nothing But A Breeze* was followed by *A Touch On The Rainy Side* a year later. With the U.S. market now open for touring, perhaps Jesse was trying to strike while the iron was hot. Then again, perhaps not. "That doesn't sound like me," he says. "I'll wait 'til it cools off." Much of the momentum was governed by Albert Grossman, owner of Bearsville Records, and Grossman possibly thought that Jesse, still living in Canada, needed another record to build on the momentum of the pardon, the tour, and the chart success of "Nothing But A Breeze."

Grossman also had the very '70s notion that spending more money made for a better record, so he elected to cut Jesse in Nashville with all the trimmings. He placed him with producer Norbert Putnam, a bass player who had worked on Dylan's early Nashville sessions and had later co-founded Area Code 615. James Stroud, currently the hottest producer in Nashville, was the assistant engineer. *A Touch On The Rainy Side* wasn't a Nashville sounding record; it was Nashville trying to out-coast the coast. It was a big budget album, though. A cast of thirty-plus was credited on the back. It was too big for Jesse. "They kept saying to me, and I guess it's a catchphrase in Nashville, 'Don't worry, Jesse, we're going to get this right if it takes every dime you've got.' If it had been up to me, and if I had been a stronger personality I would have insisted that there be no producer, or at most a sympathetic, musically minded engineer. I just always felt so intimidated by Albert. He was paying the bills."

The album opened with two remarkable songs. "A Touch On The Rainy Side" was a moving piece of confessionalism that sounds for all the world as if one has walked in on an intensely private moment. Jesse often laid his soul bare, but here it's naked. He doesn't hide behind fictionalization; he mentions his wife Leslie by name:

"And just because you are the sunshine,
Please don't run and hide
Just because I am a touch on the rainy side."

Then, on the mordantly dry "A Showman's Life," we get the clearest sense yet of the reservations Jesse continued to harbour about the fabulous business of music:

"A showman's life is a smoky bar,
The fevered chase of a tiny star,
It's a hotel room and a lonely wife,
From what I've seen of a showman's life."

The song confirmed that Jesse could no more stomach the starmaking machinery and the old industry schmooze than he ever could. "It's the big raspberry seed in the molar of the musician's life. Or it was to this musician," he said recently.

The choice of "Candida," the first Tony Orlando and Dawn hit from 1970, might still raise some eyebrows, but Jesse was always an unabashed admirer of a well-crafted pop song, and, think what you might of Tony Orlando, "Candida" was a consummate pop song. If, as a song, it boiled down to nothing, it was meant to.

The album closed out with "I'm Looking For A Miracle," another of Jesse's little tussles with religion, this one set to the feel of a black church shout. The line Jesse draws between Thomas, the doubting apostle, and himself should not come as a great surprise to anyone who had heard him ponder the same themes out loud on earlier albums. This was, after all, the man who had once written a doo wop song called "Jesus Was A Teenager Too."

There were no hits drawn from *A Touch On The Rainy Side*; it was perhaps a little too much on the rainy side for its day. 1978 was, after all, the beginning of the disco era. The dark, unsmiling, almost unsettling, basement photo on the front gave a very clear indication of what was inside. Three years would pass before we had another Jesse Winchester record.

– COLIN ESCOTT, Toronto, July 1994

1. A Touch On The Rainy Side
2. A Showman's Life
3. Sassy
4. Candida (Tony Wine, Irwin Levine)Big Apple Music Co.
BMI a Division of 40 West Music Corp.
5. High Ball
6. Little Glass of Wine
7. Holly
8. Wintery Feeling
9. Just Now It Feels So Right
10. I'm Looking For A Miracle

All selections written by Jesse Winchester except where indicated.

All selections published by Fourth Floor Music, Inc. and Hot Kitchen Music - ASCAP.

Art work: Patrick Molloy
Art Direction: Arnie Naiditch
Photography: Norman Seeff
Re-issue Producer: Holger Petersen
Re-issue design: Rob Storeshaw

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MUSICIANS

Keyboards: David Briggs, Shane Keister, Jesse Winchester
Guitars: Steve Gibson, Bobby Thompson, John Goin
Bass: Jack Williams
Drums: Larrie Londin, Kenny Buttrey
Percussion: Farrell Morris
Congas: Jamie Nichol
Soprano & Tenor Sax: Roger Williams
Tenor & Baritone Sax: Dennis Solee
Trumpet: Lloyd Barry
Trombone: Terry Williams
Strings: The Shelly Kurland Strings
Background Voices: Edward Fusty, Calvin Fusty, Borchard Teel, Sheri Kramer, Liza Silver, Diane Tidwell
Chorus: Peter Byrd, Vertelle Cameron, Joy Cannon, Janet Harley, Cynthia Johnson, Jerome McLeudon, Carole Strong, Sherman Tribble, Legoria Vernon, Kevin Williams

PRODUCED BY NORBERT PUTNAM

Engineered by Marty Lewis
Assistant Engineers: Jimmy Stroud & Kenny Kopp
Strings arranged by: David Briggs, Shane Keister, Jack Williams
Horns arranged by Sanchez Harley
Recorded At Quadrafonic Studios, Nashville

Special thanks to my manager, Arnie Naiditch, who makes the trains run on time. "High Ball" is dedicated to the world's greatest navigator and sound man, Joe "The Moose" Ciccoline. Also thanks to Bill "The Professor" Jacobson for Leslie