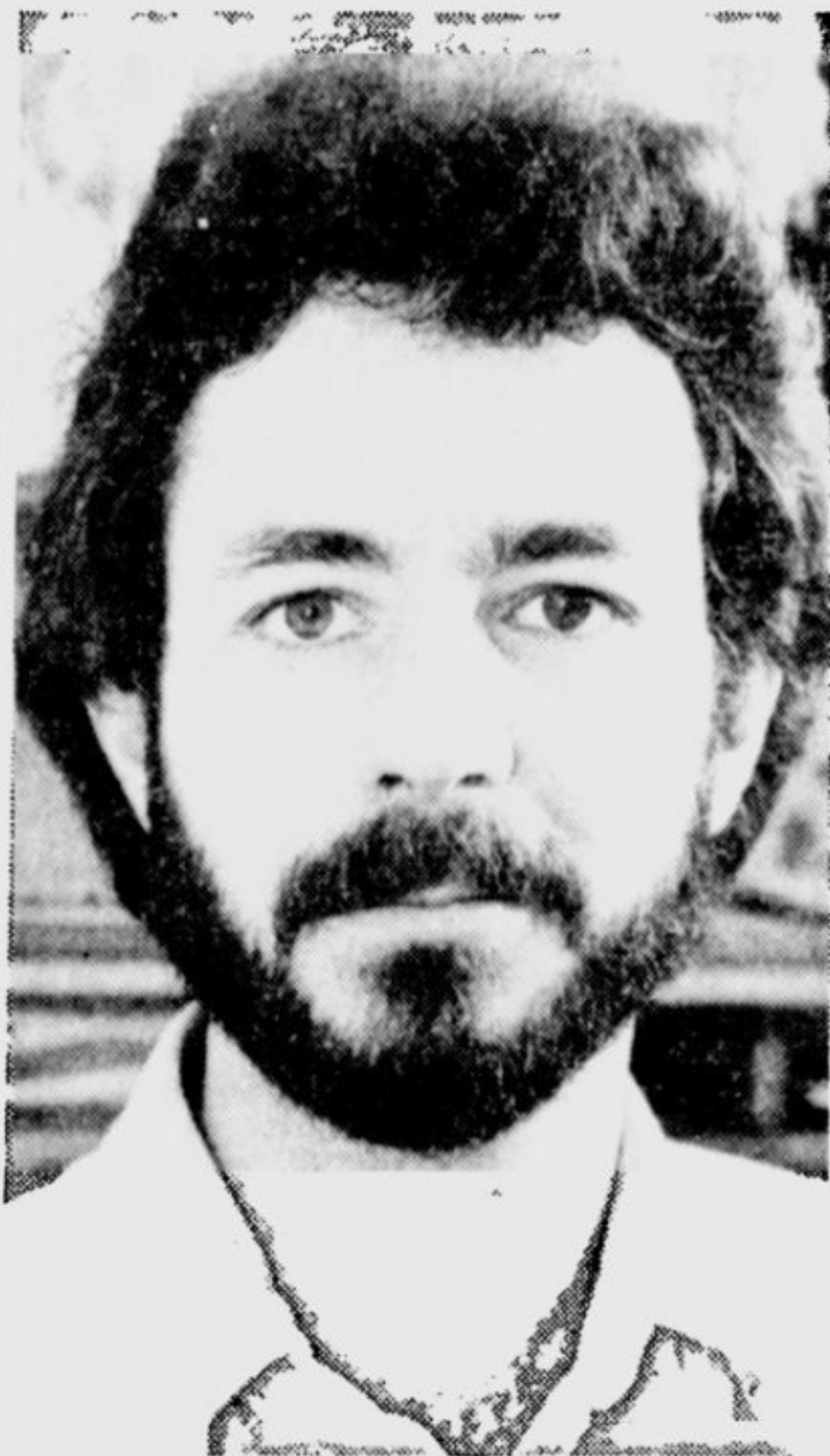


# Winchester: A reluctant hero returns



Jesse Winchester: New plans

The tenth winter for Montreal's own southern gentleman, Jesse Winchester, has begun on a promising note.

After years of erratic performances in small clubs, the singer-songwriter is making a concentrated effort to get an "act" together — with the help of a new band comprised of top sessionmen who've backed numerous local recording stars and vedettes.

The shy, wiry Louisiana-born Winchester has come a long way, in his own reticent manner, since arriving in this northern metropolis in 1966, on the run from the draft system, with nothing but a guitar and a few songs like Yankee Lady and Brand New Tennessee Waltz.

Today, having garnered an international reputation as one of the best songwriters (attested by the growing list of "covers" of his songs), he is in the midst of recording his fourth album.

Although he no longer trembles and clutches at his guitar, as he did in performance during these early times when he was "treadin' water," Jesse is still nervous, something that probably accounts for the distinctive taut edge to his songs. But gone is the anguished plucking of his nylon-string guitar: Jesse has decided to put a little juice into his music.

The new band may well spur Winchester to do some international touring, a task he's never leapt at. As yet, he hasn't felt like returning to the U.S., mainly because he feels his new home here is more in line with his quiet spirit. But he has been considering concert possibilities overseas — beginning last September with a three-week tour in, of all places, Australia.

## Grits teeth

"I have a small cult-type following there, enough that I could fill small concert halls. But most of the journalists had never heard of me and the promoters had set up a constant series of interviews, at least two a day and sometimes four. I was constantly having to explain to people who I was, and I can't stand that — I mean, I'm still trying to figure it out myself."

Winchester still grits his teeth through interviews. He tries to be as considered and informative as he can, with that slow southern elocution of his, but he is not

## Rock & Pop

by Juan Rodriguez



big on public opinion-making. However, he is enthused about working on the new album:

"This one's a little more 'produced' than the others. I'm using the skills I had accumulated during my musical education, such as it is, I had learned how to arrange and score parts for different instruments but when I started playing rock 'n' roll and country music and so forth I kinda let that end of things slide. For this album I sorta got back into it and it's really fun, even though it's a very painstaking process for me because I hadn't done it so long. It takes me forever to arrange just one song but it's such a pleasure to do it and see it work, fit together like a puzzle. It's opened up a whole new area for me."

So has the new band, consisting of bassist Marty Harris, drummer Chris Castle and guitarist Bob Cohen. These musicians have worked with the likes of Diane Dufresne, Aut'Chose, Tony Roman, Michel Pagliaro, Randy Bishop, Anne Anderson and other stars of the local scene.

With them, Winchester seems more eager to take up his position in the scheme of things. He is currently in the middle of a two week run at the Edgewater Hotel, then he moves over to the Hotel Nelson's Evechê club starting Dec. 16, followed by appearances in the new year at Valentin's and the Cinema Outremont.

Jesse is still a reluctant hero — he seems much more willing to indulge his catholic conservative tastes, such as reading Churchill's History of the English Speaking Peoples — but fans have been waiting a long time for him to put his music on the road.

His current studio and band settings auger well for that to happen.