

# For Winchester, country-music roots run deep

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**S**inger and songwriter Jesse Winchester says that, these days, mainstream country and western music is his main source of inspiration for ballads and love songs.

"It's the roots music of the white race," he said.

Winchester thinks that the appeal of country music is something that is just "built into us."

"It's something that we just like to hear," he said. "Two violins in close harmony together, or two voices, or that wailing sort of sound that we seem to like so much. I don't know what it is, but I believe it's very deep inside us."

Winchester will bring his blend of country, folk, rhythm and blues and gospel music to Beverly's in Townsend, Mass.

"I always play solo," Winchester said. "When I write and in the studio I also play piano and keyboards, but on the stage it's just me and the guitar."

Winchester says he writes some upbeat songs but prefers to sing ballads and love songs.

"My personal favorites seem to be romantic songs," he said.

Winchester thinks the themes of his music combined with the flavor of the country style have a universal appeal and speak to common experiences.

"I wouldn't do it if I didn't think everybody felt the same way," he said. "That's kind of the whole idea - you're speaking for everybody. Otherwise it would be embarrassing if I thought I was the only one who cried or whatever."

The Memphis, Tenn., native, who now lives

in Montreal, credits God for his talents, minimizing his own role in the success he has had.

"Sometimes it feels as if talent is pursuing you," he laughed.

Winchester allows that talent to direct his songwriting. In describing the writing process, he said, "There doesn't seem to be any kind of pattern to it. I wish there were. Generally, I just show up every day, and if the muse doesn't show up too, well, it's not my fault."

But once the muse has done its job of providing inspiration, Winchester's skills as a writer take over.

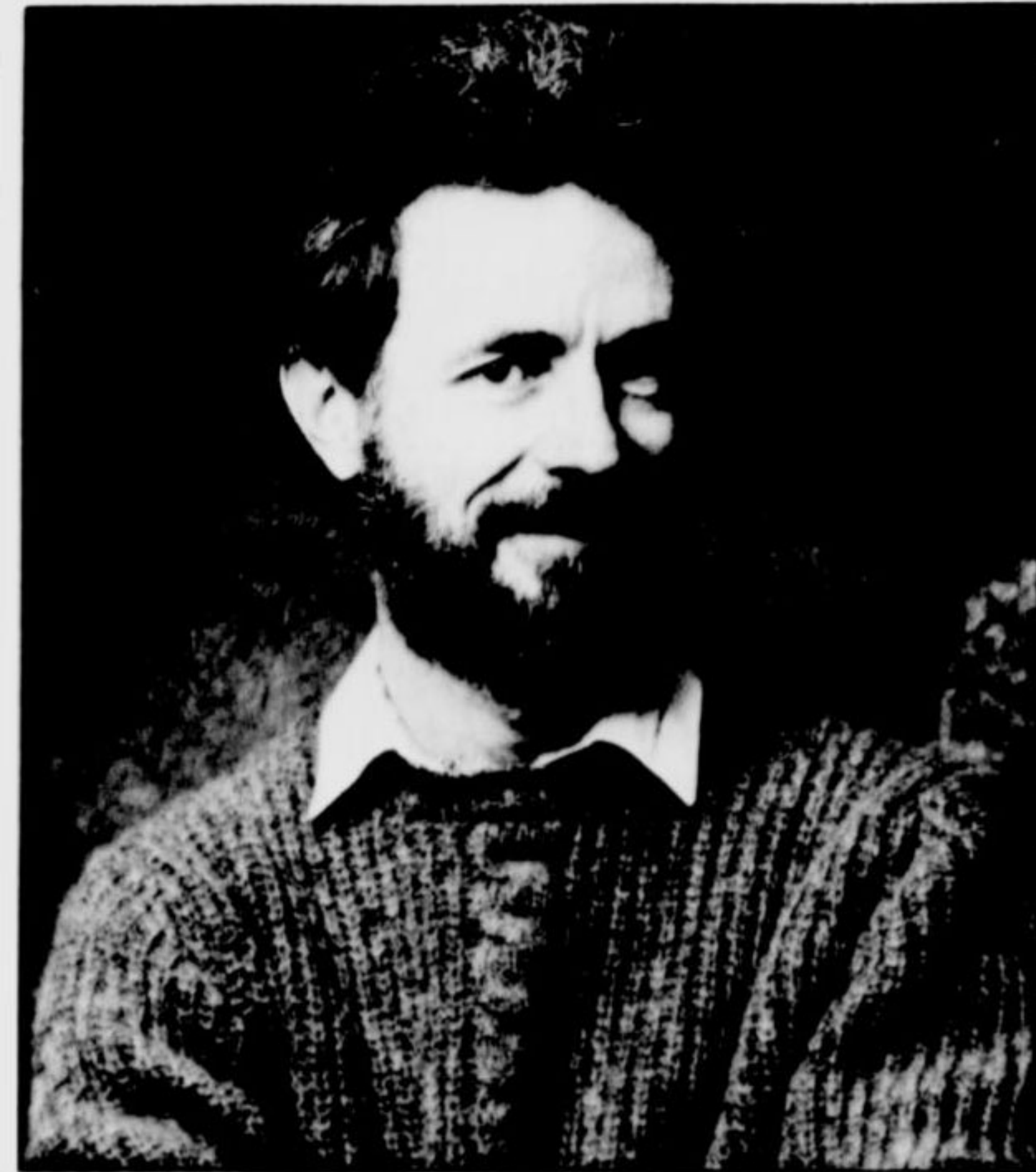
"When you work on a song, after you've had the initial inspiration, the sort of hacking-it-out phase where you have to find a rhyme for orange or something, that's more like a craft," he said. "It's kind of like doing crossword puzzles - making words fit together and scan properly so that each verse fits the melody the same way."

Winchester apparently knows his craft well and has his share of inspiration. He recently released his eighth album, "Humor Me" (Sugar Hill Records), and a new one is already in the works.

Winchester's two performances at Beverly's are among several scheduled for New England. He regularly tours various parts of the United States.

"There seem to be country-music fans everywhere you go," he said. "Country music is never going to be anything like rock 'n' roll teen-age music in terms of size of audience. But they are very enthusiastic and loyal fans above all, and they're everywhere."

Jesse Winchester will perform Wednesday and Thursday at Beverly's in Townsend, Mass. Tickets are \$12; for more information call (508) 597-8762.



Jesse Winchester