



# Jesse Winchester's Studio

 Life is good for us lucky musicians who live and work in the ambit of the studio's famous Reality Barrier. Here our biggest worry is playing B when we want C - even when you're completely sober it's not easy - they're right next to each other, for gosh sakes. Sheltered from unpleasantness, dining every day on Marvel's delicious Cajun/Szechuan cuisine, and engaged in the pleasant work of adding to the world's musical treasures, we are understandably loath to leave our little paradise. But from time to time we pack up our Gibsons and Fenders and Ludwigs and venture out into the rude clamor of the marketplace, tired of playing for lifeless machines and jaded engineers, eager to set toes tapping, soothe savage breasts, and make a little money. We go on the road.

 Too often offended by the brusque manners and arbitrary scrutiny of today's airport security officers, we prefer to travel by car when possible. Something about floating down the highway in an air-conditioned Cadillac, with a powerful sound system and seats like Barcaloungers, strikes a chord deep in the musician's soul. We may arrive hours, even days later than the air travellers, but we arrive happy, the proud guardians of a tradition of vanity and self-indulgence which reaches back to the first troubadour who perfumed his hair and pulled on a pair of tights and those shoes with the curly toes.

 When we arrive in that night's lucky town, we go immediately to our hotel. Here again, the watchword is luxury; milled French soap, a complimentary bathrobe, late-night room-service, a huge TV with a zillion channels - we *need* these things if we're going to play with the divine fire and compassion for suffering humanity that our audiences have come to expect. The hotel staff greet us with gratifying servility, and after signing in, we separate, some heading to the pool, others to their room with an uplifting book or to change their guitar strings, some to shop or stroll in town, still

others to the bar. Each musician has a method, a private ritual for finding the inner well-spring of his spirit, so that later in the evening, his reservoir full, he can turn the hose of beauty and truth on his listeners, and water their thirsty souls.



Next, in the late afternoon, physically and spiritually refreshed, we meet in the lobby and leave for the venue to do our sound check. This is a chore that no one really enjoys, so we concentrate and work quickly, playing one up-tempo number and one ballad while working with the technicians to adjust the sound and lights. We talk gels and decibels. We set the stage for magic.



Then we retire to the dressing room, where the worm of fear begins to gnaw at the musician's heart. Now there's nothing to do but wait and worry about playing B instead of C in front of a crowd of people - critical listeners who've paid good money to sit with their arms folded and heads cocked, expecting divine fire and compassion for suffering humanity, demanding to hear C, prepared to boo B. The stage has been set for magic, and magic had better show up. Some of us pick at the deli platter, but those of us who sing have learned to avoid the *crudités* and onion dip before a performance - we permit ourselves only bottled water and perhaps a strawberry or two. We take no chances - the night several years ago when we ate *chilis relleños* before a concert is still fresh in our memory.



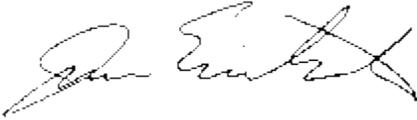
Finally the moment arrives - the stage manager knocks at the door - "Let's do it, gentlemen." We gather our instruments and follow him to the wings, wait while the announcer introduces us, and walk out into the lights and applause. We count off the first song, and without a thought, without a plan, our fingers begin to find C and never B. We bathe in a warm pool of gels and decibels and love. Weak and comical as we are, the perfection of God's plan is apparent in every note, every breath, every gesture. The boundaries between us dissolve, and we glory in being weak and comical. Musicians and listeners, together we are Joshuas, tearing down walls and stopping the sun. Angels and demons declare a truce and study war no more. And when the last note rings and fades to silence, we don't know whether to laugh or to cry. We've gotten away with it again.



Afterwards, backstage, we put away our instruments and allow our egos a little run without the leash. Of course, there's always someone who will remind you that you did in fact, at one point, play a B instead of a C. I ignore

him. Back at the hotel there's a Bogart movie on TV and all-night room service. I'm happy.

Thanks for the visit,



 **PS:** There are now two illegal CDs of my music being sold publicly, blatantly. I'm like you, dear reader - always looking for the best in people, slow to believe the worst - but the crooks who do this threaten to impede my spiritual progress. They undermine my childlike, trusting nature. One CD is titled "Defying Gravity", peddled by a company called AIM. They add to the insult by misspelling my name on the cover. The other CD, released just recently on the Acrobat label, is titled "Live" (not to be confused with "Live from Mountain Stage" on the Blue Plate label, which is legitimate and, of course, sublime). Both CDs are of very poor quality, so you'll be missing nothing if you refuse to reward thievery by buying them. I told the people selling these things - Amazon, Barnes and Noble and others - that I'm disappointed in them, that they're hastening the end of civilization, opening the gates to the Visigoths, but they were "like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear." Perhaps one day AIM and Acrobat and Amazon, and others who would steal from a childlike, trusting songwriter, will see the mills of the gods in action - how they "grind slow, but they grind exceeding small." Something to look forward to. *JW*

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