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Winchester Has High Finance in His Sights

By DUNCAN STRAUSS

The acclaimed but low-profile singer-songwriter Jesse Winchester plans to release his first album in a decade this spring.

Addressing the long gap between records during a recent interview, he said, "Well, I suppose if I'd really wanted to, I could have forced the issue, and gone out and done something about it. But I just was kind of disgusted with the whole procedure. In the recording business, the fun lasts for about three days and then the tedium sets in. I just couldn't put myself through that."

What prompted Winchester--who plays McCabe's tonight--to put himself through it now?

"I make records for money," he replied, speaking by phone from San Francisco. "I've lost all my high ideals, as far as the record business goes. . . . Every time I put a record out, I hope it's going to make me rich beyond my wildest dreams."

So is this a refreshingly candid chap whose artistic vision is blurred by the dollar signs in his eyes? Not exactly. In fact, he won't be out to promote the new album ("Humor Me") in his current shows.

"Oh, no--I wouldn't do that to people," the Louisiana-born musician said with a slight drawl.

It's not that Winchester will be avoiding "Humor Me" songs in the shows. But he makes a distinction between playing the new tunes and introducing them as music from a forthcoming album.

"It always puts me off to hear somebody advertise themselves," said Winchester, 43. "That's kind of sleazy to my mind. I just *can't*."

Fair enough. But after the long dry spell, wouldn't Jesse Winchester fans appreciate knowing there's a new album on the way?

"Yeah, I know what you mean. And if I really had the feeling I was doing somebody a public service, I *would* do that," he said, laughing.

If he's reluctant to plug his new work, he's less than indifferent about promoting his old LPs, which were recently reissued by Rhino Records.

"Yeah, I guess they're re-releasing some of my stuff," he said. "I heard it was the first two albums. But as you can probably tell, I don't really know. I just don't know."

Well, for the record, Rhino did put out the first two albums ("Jesse Winchester" and "Third Down, 110 to Go") and will follow up with a compilation package next fall.

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