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Country Music Duo Gets Praise

NEW YORK (UPI) —Linda Ronstadt and Jesse Winchester are the latest arrivals on the country music scene and should be invited to stay there for a long time.

Country singers need to know how to mix humor and what may seem to be tragedy and Linda is well qualified.

In the album "Silk Purse" (Capitol ST-497), Linda takes a bold step at the beginning in singing "Love is a Kick Blues," which requires tricky vocal maneuverings. While Linda doesn't match the perfection of Hank Williams, the composer, or Charlie Pride, considered by many to be the best new country singer, she turns in an acceptable performance.

Linda is a true artist because she is able to radiate or project her personality in all of her songs, especially "Are My Thoughts With You" and "Life Is Like a Mountain Railway."

Winchester makes a fine impression with an album bearing his name as the title (Ampex A-3004). He has something of a nasal twang that at one time could be regarded as the greatest asset of a country singer.

He opens with "Pay Day" and "Blues" and begins building up with "The Brand New Tennessee Waltz." All the songs, with the exception of one, are compositions of Jesse Winchester.

Jesse performs with a good group and doubles up on guitar and piano. Some of the piano passages, either by Winchester or Ken Pearson, are elegant.

The current popularity of soul music is the legacy of such uninhibited singers as Huddie (Leadbelly) Ledbetter, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Bill Broonzy and others who were able to communicate their misery over faithless women and bad luck, among other misfortunes. Most of these soul singers have been dead for many years yet their influence lingers.

Still among the living is Fred McDowell, who may remind students of Negro soul music of Leadbelly.

In "Mississippi Fred McDowell in London" (Sire SES 97018), he pours out his heart on various subjects. The recording includes such titles as "I Wish I Was in Heaven Sitting Down," "I Don't Need No Heater," "Some Sweet Day" and "My Babe."