



## In the groove

"Mystery Girl" in "(All I Can Do Is) Dream You" and "In the Real World," both of which come off with a vapourously touching quality that makes them that much more unforgettable.

"You Got It," on the other hand, is a straightforward declaration of affection that is one of the strongest cuts on the album. "She's a Mystery to Me" is another lyrical highlight, as are "California Blue" and "The Only One," which illuminates as complex a series of emotions as anything on the album.

It would be easy to go overboard in praising "Mystery Girl" simply because of the tragic circumstances surrounding it. But it is no mere re-introduction of an old-timer to a new generation of listeners. It is a genuinely affecting piece of work that is the result of musical virtuosity and painstaking practicality.

## Welcome back, Winchester

Jesse Winchester is another gifted purveyor of incisive lyricism whose career has been on the back burner for a while.

Winchester, a native Southerner who fled to Canada to avoid the draft

during the Vietnam War, returned to the United States after President Carter granted amnesty. He was welcomed back enthusiastically and toured both the United States and Canada to considerable acclaim.

Then it all started to dwindle away. In the past few years, he has performed without a band and often to depressingly thin audiences. Whenever he was noticed, he was usually identified with a certain amount of condescension as a member of the folk enclave or (equally damning) as a singer-songwriter.

In any event, he has bounced back ferociously with "Humour Me" (Sugar Hill SH-1023), an album that veers from introspective minimalism to irresistible rock 'n' roll as effortlessly as Winchester reels off his insistently thoughtful verses.

"Humour Me" is filled with great songs, such as "They Just Can't Help Themselves," "Let's Make a Baby King," "I Don't Think You Love Me Anymore," "Willow" and "I Want to Mean Something to You."

Winchester has always had a knack for understatement and that is certainly the case with the numbers on this album.

He also is a master of the kind of multigenre rainbow of Southern styles that distinguishes the rock turned out by, say, Little Feat. There are love ballads, doo-wop rockers and light-country hell-raisers on "Humour Me."

There is nothing flip about any of it, though. Winchester is a superb craftsman (many of his earlier songs such as "Yankee Lady" and "Brand New Tennessee Waltz" are bona fide classics) and that shows in everything he does.

It is great to have him back and it is about time, too.