

Winchester stays, amnesty's no worry

By **BILL MANN**
for The Gazette

Jesse Winchester, draft exile, says amnesty hasn't really been on his mind lately. Gerry Ford or no.

"Even if they declared it, I don't have any plans to go back," said the bearded singer in the dimly-lit Nelson Hotel this week.

So Montreal seems not to be in danger of losing one of its more unique and important talents.

Jesse will be at the Nelson by himself all through this weekend — he hasn't had a band for a half year or so now, and the Tennessee native says that's fine by him.

One thing Jesse DOES have is a new album out this month (on Bearsville Records) called Learn to Love It. And it is a record that is being heard: in trade publication *Billboard* this week, Jesse's record is listed in the top five most-played new albums on U.S. FM stations.

The album, like Jesse's show, if even, is also mellow. If world-weary, it is also good-natured. There are even gospel songs on the album — it starts off with a song called Wake Me that features a gospel chorus behind Jesse.

One can also not deny also



JESSE WINCHESTER
... welcome aboard

that Winchester is among the more listenable singer-songwriters around, and even if his lyrics tend to be slightly depressing, they are refreshingly sincere and do not seem to be contrived.

The most up-tempo cut on the album is a non-Winchester-written song, *Third-Rate Romance*, a wry, offhand look at the boy-girl-motel syndrome, and, once again, Winchester doesn't seem to get excited or overly worried about anything; he moves at his own leisure. Perhaps that is why this city has been such a good home for him, in that it will approximate the pace of life in his native South.

I asked Winchester why he mentions, "All the way down..." about life on his LP liner notes, and his reaction bordered on the morbid: "We're all gonna die, you know." But, a minute later, while commenting on his young son and soon-to-arrive child, Winchester becomes equally life-affirmative and says, "You don't know what love is until you've had a kid. And, let's face it, we're getting on in life, and, why not?"

Unique guy, this Winchester. Great set of pipes, too. Glad he's staying.

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