

I, for one, was very happy when good old rock 'n' rolling Jesse Winchester appeared.

STRONG

His set started strong, with a series of his own good, good songs: the current hit Isn't That So, the philosophical Do It, the significant I Like Roosevelt. And it continued with more of the same.

But 'round about Midnight Bus, it began to occur to me that with all of Jesse's back-up (albeit only bass and drums) something of the subtlety and gracefulness of his voice was being lost.

It is not that either accompanist is lacking in talent — far from it. The problem lay chiefly in the circumstances. Jesse has been doing a lot of singing in bars lately (his sets at the Rainbow are first class entertainment), and some of his softness must necessarily have given way to the need to play over a noisy crowd. But last night, it seemed there should have been some allowance for playing in the very different circumstances of a hall like Place des Arts.

You Can't Stand Up Alone, the unaccompanied number with which Jesse closed the evening, emphasized this. Jesse's voice is just too fine to be buried under too much back-up.

That said, it must also be said that Winchester is still a wonderful performer to hear. Numbers like L'Air de la Louisiane, Yankee Lady, Grown-ups get to make the rules, we have all the fun (whatever the title is) are great music.