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- MONTREAL GAZETTE

Winchester wins over home town with fresh approach to favorites

By ROBERT WINTERS
of The Gazette

REVIEW

Jesse Winchester at Pollack Hall last night.

The whistling and howling crowd seemed a bit out of place in the quietly restrained atmosphere of Pollack Hall. But Jesse Winchester had managed to turn what could have been a routine radio-recording session into a magical evening.

Although some of the whistlers and howlers seemed distinctly middle-aged, the crowd energy that Montreal resident Winchester conjured up during last night's show seemed to please the lanky Louisiana-born guitar-picker.

The performance by Winchester, arguably one of his generation's top singer-songwriters, was sponsored by CBC Radio's *Saturday Spotlight* program and was a benefit for the

Sun Youth Food Bank. It was recorded and will be broadcast on CBM 940 this Saturday at 5:08 p.m.

Although his songs include deeply personal images of growing up in the U.S. South, playing baseball in the sun and watching his mother cooking, Winchester has called Montreal home since 1967 when he came here to escape the draft.

"It's always a little harder to play for your friends, they're always a little harder to fool than strangers," he confided after receiving an enthusiastic standing ovation at the end of the first of two shows.

"It's like playing for your mom,

she knows you're not that deep!" he added with a laugh.

Winchester presented a varied set that included funky, open-rhythm blues, folk ballads and several of his major hits such as *Brand New Tennessee Waltz* and *Yankee Lady*.

He worked hard to make these classics sound fresh and meaningful to those who had heard them countless times before, sometimes by switching the rhythm, sometimes by singing softly and even by changing several notes.

Winchester added some unusual touches to his music yesterday evening, such as the frequent use of his voice to produce a bottleneck-guitar sound, sliding it up and down a range of notes that included a clear falsetto. His guitar-playing was agile, precise, controlled and well-muscled when he needed it.

FROM SEPTEMBER 8 TO 14