

Sweet and slow or reeling rock

Winchester's a musical 'Godsend'

By DAVID FREESTON

has been a Montreal resident for about seven or eight years now, and isn't likely to move elsewhere in the near future. Nevertheless, you'd do well to catch him as soon as possible. Chances are that your nervous system would profit from the kind of reflective peace that Jesse's sets can induce. He sings of things that he

knows, but his songs are always something more than thinly-veiled autobiography. He can be intimate without being embarrassingly personal, sentimental without being mawkish, tough without being cruel. An authentic voice is a rare thing, but one that incorporates artistry is rarer still.

At a time when art is often equated with clumsy candor, Winchester is a Godsend.

His songs are evocations of rustic life, simpler times, pristine values and, occasionally, wry self-deprecation. At the same time they are such models of economy and structure that what would normally pass for simple, homely wisdom is elevated to powerful and direct metaphor.

He's a nice antidote to the horrendous self-indulgences of, say, a Joni Mitchell.

His show last night was, fittingly, low keyed. Accompanying himself on acoustic guitar, Jesse played in an understated fashion that suited an easy-going, well-modulated vocal style. There was little stage patter, no interminable tuning of the guitar, or any of the other boring diversions that one normally associates with folkies.

He did a well-paced set that ranged from the humorous Snow and the gentle parody of Love Hurts, to the chiding Twigs and Seeds and the classically-beautiful Yankee Lady.

Jesse even included a tribute to hero-influences Hank Snow and Lefty Friz-

zel, as well as Merle Hag-

gard with I Can't Be Myself When I'm With You.

Winchester's songs have been taken up by everyone

from Joan Baez and Matthews to the hard-group Babe Ruth, but my money he remains own best interpreter.

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