

# Winchester celebrates Door's good old days

By JOHN GRIFFIN  
Gazette Pop Music Critic

Though he called himself a "poor friend" of the place, Jesse Winchester proved otherwise Saturday as he headlined a night of music at the McGill University Ballroom to celebrate the 16th anniversary of the Yellow Door Coffee House.

In a rare local appearance, Winchester, his acoustic guitar and sweet tenor voice coaxed some 300 people out of their homes and into tidy rows of church basement chairs for a spellbinding set of country-soul, gospel, ascerbic social comment and songs that reached back to his humble beginnings in the Door some 16 years ago.

Indeed, this was an evening in which the old days, be they good, bad or indifferent, were dragged out of mothballs, propped up, dusted off and instilled with a surprising number of those signs deemed vital for life.

Winchester made the run from deepest, darkest Montreal West, singers Karen Young, Linda Morrison and friends teamed up for a rambling, appealing performance, Celtic group Brahan Seer ably filled in after a last-minute cancellation by The White River Bluegrass Band, and folk singer Penny Lang reduced some members of the audience to tears with the emotional power of the set that opened this benefit concert.

It was an evening to reinforce the theory that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Though popular tastes have turned away from the naive, somewhat sanctimonious air that marked the Yellow Door in the 1960s, an astonishing number of old folkies and hippies slipped out of their '80s mindset Saturday and through the time warp to support this Montreal institution in its hour of need.



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