



Jesse Winchester was my friend.

I last saw him in November and was happy to see his warm, friendly smile (the kind that would melt the Berlin Wall). But my heart was inexplicably heavy as we parted company. And now it's time to express my deep sadness for his family. He dearly loved his wife Cindy, his family and children. He had life in perspective.

His quiet, genteel demeanor, coupled with the write and sometimes silly flashes of humor in his songs, masked the inner steadfast political activist. He got a kick out of reminding folks that he started as a drummer.

As a singer-songwriter/recording artist/and performer, Jesse was the quintessence of style. He was my Bob Dylan. He lived at the heart of the human condition and will rank as highly as a writer as Frank Zappa does as a composer.

In 1977, I left college to follow Jesse Winchester on his historic *First U.S. Tour* as he played music from his first few albums on Bearsville Records to packed houses across the country. There wasn't a music critic of consequence who wasn't on hand and eager to salute him. I most vividly recall his full-band shows at New York's legendary *Bottom Line* and *The Bijou Café* in Philadelphia (captured as a live radio show and available on disc).

Jesse's catalog is an unparalleled and timeless patchwork quilt of finely crafted songs that will endure as the benchmark not only for this generation of songwriters but all those that follow.

He lived the 'showman's life' as a performer. Waltzing through the clubs, cafes, listening rooms, theaters and festivals throughout North America—a quiet, gentle giant of music. He was doggedly determined to make his songs count. So he often took years to complete projects to his own exacting standards. Revered by such artists as Dylan, James Taylor, Jackson Browne, Bonnie Raitt, Emmylou Harris, Jimmy Buffett and Elvis Costello, Jesse remained humble and quietly content with his place in music. He had nothing to prove, and he loved and respected his peers and his loyal cadre of fans and admirers.

I don't have the words to end this, so I'll just quote the master:

*Just out in the harbor
All the ships asleep
Maybe one cold watchman*

Walks a lonely beat

*Way out on the water
A ship is under sail
Leaving wavy starlight
And a dreamer in her trail*

*I wave bye bye
I pray God speed
I wish lovely weather
More luck than you need*

*You'll only sail in circles
So there's no need to cry
No, I'll see you again one day*

*And then I waved bye bye
Bye bye Jesse.*

Jim Della Croce

Former manager, publicist and producer of the retrospective Jesse Winchester concert taped in Woodstock, NY.