

The Woodstock legacy lingers on

NIGHT BEAT
Reporter



Dave Marks

THE recent 20th anniversary of the Woodstock Festival brought memories flooding back to songwriter and recording personality Dave Marks, who usually doesn't talk about the past.

Dave, who still remains South Africa's most famous songwriter with such international hits as *Master Jack*, *Mr Nico* and *Mountains of Men*, was one of the few South Africans who took part in the massive celebration of music in 1969.

"I don't usually talk about it, I'm not into nostalgia, I'm a futurist," he told NIGHT BEAT.

But he's relented, briefly, because he believes that the effects of Woodstock are still being felt today. And one of them is the new link between his sound, recording and music publishing company Third Ear Music and the major South African record company, Tusk Music.

Tusk has invested in Third Ear Music and the result will be a major recording facility in Durban providing a boost for local musicians and Natal music in particular. It will include a massive 24-track recorder — the same one used by Toni Childs when she recorded her best-selling album in Swaziland last year.

The journey from Woodstock to the present has culminated in the new recording centre, now being established in Morningside. Dave, who worked at Woodstock as part of the team that handled the music festival's sound system says that where he is today is a direct result of his involvement in Woodstock.

He would never have been involved in the recording and sound business had it not been for his job as a student sound engineer with the American company that provided the sound system for Woodstock and many other major music events in the United States. During that time he worked with a number of music superstars including John Lennon, Eric Clapton, Jim Morrison and The Doors, Joan Baez, and Jose Feliciano.

On his return to South Africa in 1970, Dave brought the Woodstock sound system with him on the understanding that he wouldn't have to pay for it until it paid for itself.

In those days, he recalls, the only music events which drew crowds in sufficient numbers to warrant the Woodstock system were black music festivals in the townships.

It was also about that time Dave decided to stage the Free People's Concerts — the first was held in Durban in 1971 — not so much as an heroic defiance of apartheid, but more out of necessity. Bands got to know of the sophisticated sound system and began booking Dave Marks' Third Ear Music.

The company expanded into recording various artists as well. Many musicians who are well-known today made their early recordings with Dave, including Johnny Clegg and Spho Mchunu, Malombo, David Kramer and Roger Lucey.

Dave's constant commitment to local music and musicians led to the Tusk involvement today.

"With Tusk, we'll be able to give Natal its own stamp, just as in America where music is regionalised into the West Coast, East Coast and Nashville sounds. Now musicians will be able to record their music in their own environment, rather than having to travel to Johannesburg," he says.