

A modest man and his music

DAVE MARKS, the quietly-spoken songwriter who made his name with "Master Jack" and feels bad about it, has taken over from Brian Finch at the Palm Beach Hotel's Totum.

You couldn't meet anyone more unassuming than Dave — "I don't really feel like a folk singer, I just dig music" — who was there when it was all happening at Woodstock and is now president of the South African Folk Music Association.

In search of an interview soon after he arrived, I knocked on his door and was politely asked to "come in but ignore the mess" — a difficult request.

Sound equipment was everywhere. Hi-fi speakers, a portable two-track studio recorder, clothes, a 16 channel mixer, guitar, records and mountains of spools of tape surrounded Dave who was in the centre of it all, eating!

"Oh," he said, "you're from the 'Mercury.' I bet you'll say I'm the folk singer who made 'Master Jack' and made it.

"I've read all that before so please think of a new angle . . . and you don't

to the spallish first-night audience.

The guitar refused to stay in tune and he apologised shyly. "Does it sound OK? Too much bass on the guitar?" The sound became clearer.

"More volume for my voice? No, I like it like this!"

More songs: Bob Dylan, Tom Rush, a cowboy song, his own compositions.

After an hour he took a break.

"You know I haven't done this kind of all-night gig since I left here two years ago.

"I don't really feel like a folksinger, I just dig music, like to record people, organise, write songs and sing them at home for a week or two and forget them gain.

"Writing songs is like conversing with a friend when it's not absolutely necessary

By Eric Dorr



'Writing songs is like conversing with a friend'

really have to take photos, do you?"

He put a Joni Mitchell LP on the turntable and suggested: "Why don't you write about the South African Folk Music Association? We held a couple of free concerts in Johannesburg recently and collected more than R1 100 for charity.

"A live LP has been made of 20 artists and groups who performed called 'Free Peoples Concert Album' and I'll be selling the records at cost price as soon as the covers arrive.

"If I can find help a concert could be arranged here in Durban."

And then, suddenly, "What is the time? Well, I've got to go and play now."

Quietly but firmly, just as he speaks, Dave went on to the stage and began to play

to be right.

"You project your feelings or your point of view on any given subject and know you'll be understood as you want to be.

"But play the same song in public and you stand a good chance of being misunderstood and then rejected or acclaimed for reasons that have absolutely no connection with the initial sentiment, aim or purpose of the song.

"Let's say you write a song which happens to have commercial appeal. You play it in public for a while, until your feelings change and you want to forget it.

"Two years later somebody records it and it becomes a hit, while you, the writer, have long outgrown it and can't identify with it any longer.

"Of course you appreciate the publicity and the financial benefits because you do need the bread but don't forget that you are being rewarded for something that is spiritually not yours any longer.

"Fair enough for commercial writers who compose for money only, but devastating for someone who explores, searches and consequently

changes continuously.

"This is one of the reasons why I don't look for full-time folk entertainment jobs.

"I do enjoy playing in public, I can already feel that I'll dig the next two months at Totum, but I'll also be happy to get back home to Johannesburg.

"I've built a little studio at my house with some friends and we are going to make

demoes and maybe cut some discs as soon as the mixing console is ready.

"Anybody will be welcome to arrange and produce their own material in a relaxed atmosphere.

And then it was back to work again. Another Bob Zimmerman composition.

"Romona come closer, shut softly your watery eyes . . ."

FROM ST. MATTHEW TO CHARLEMAGNE:

Music and lyrics
by Stephen Schwartz

By Michael Bandler

ANOTHER George Gershwin? Another Leonard Bernstein? It's still too early to be certain, but as of now, Stephen Schwartz seems to be on the right track.

To date, the 23-year-old composer and lyricist has produced:

- The words and music to "Godspell," a rock musical adaptation of the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

- Most of the English lyrics to "Mass," the Bernstein composition with a Latin-English text that had its world premiere at the opening of the John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. last year.

The young artist writes with an eye to the world as it is today. In his view, though, there is a difference between realism — the treatment of a subject — and reality, or the subject itself.

That's why he can say that he has no interest in realism: "Musicals, by their nature, are not realistic. Sooner or later, in the middle of the story, someone is going to sing, and everyday life just isn't like that."

On the other hand, he stresses, he is determined to deal with the world as he sees it in his subject matter and in what his leading characters think and say.

make-up and costume recreate the story of Christ's last days, prancing, singing and miming across the stage and through the audience.

Mr. Schwartz has said that "Godspell" is "really about what happens between the kids and the audience. It's nothing without an audience. It's an extension of games, exhilarating and fun. If it's not that, you lose it all."

"Pippin" is about a young man who embraces with all his heart many different life styles in order to find fulfillment. Mr. Schwartz adds: "But the only difference between Pippin and any other young man is that his father



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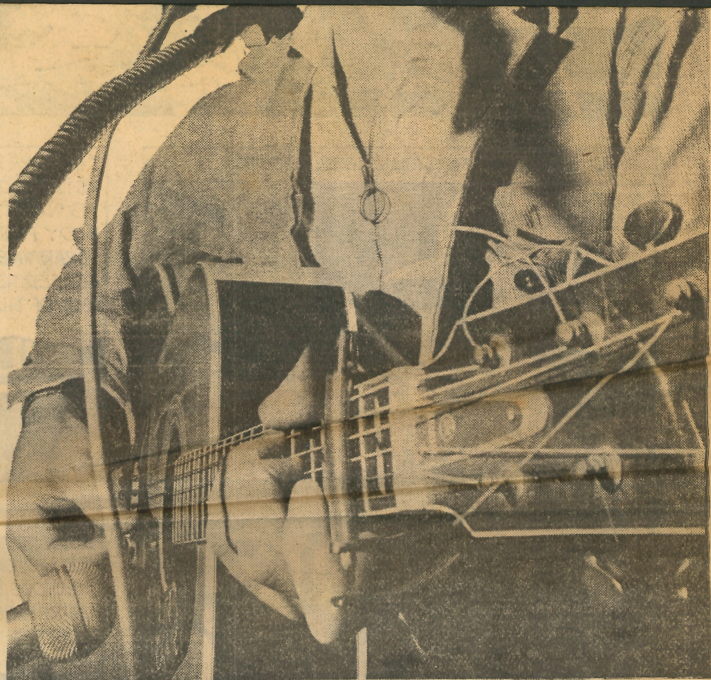
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STEPHEN SCHWARTZ, the 23-year-old composer-lyricist of "Godspell," and collaborator with Leonard Bernstein on the lyrics of "Mass," is currently completing work on his newest musical, "Pippin," the saga of Charlemagne's son.

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● The words and music to "Pippin," a musical about the son of Charlemagne, a period piece that is slated for production later this year.

Has success gone to Mr. Schwartz's head? Not a bit. In an interview, he admitted: "I never expected to have accomplished what I have by this point."

Furthermore, he is happy to be doing what he wants to do and hopes that "I won't fall into the syndrome of writing and composing because I have to."

The young artist writes with an eye to the world as it is today. In his view, though, there is a difference between realism — the treatment of a subject — and reality, or the subject itself.

That's why he can say that he has no interest in realism: "Musicals, by their nature, are not realistic. Sooner or later, in the middle of the story, someone is going to sing, and everyday life just isn't like that."

On the other hand, he stresses, he is determined to deal with the world as he sees it in his subject matter and in what his leading characters think and sing.

"Godspell" surprised everyone, tiptoeing as it did on to the scene via a relatively unpublicised off-Broadway opening early in 1971. The text was written by John-Michael Tebelak, an acquaintance of the composer in college. The musical is aimed at "encouraging people to live together and enjoy each other in today's society," Mr. Schwartz says.

In the musical, 10 young men and women in clown

make-up and costume recreate the story of Christ's last days, prancing, singing and miming across the stage and through the audience.

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"Pippin" is about a young man who embraces with all his heart many different life styles in order to find fulfillment. Mr. Schwarz adds: "But the only difference between Pippin and any other young man is that his father is Charlemagne, the first Christian emperor of the West."

Although he was happy to have been selected by Mr. Bernstein to contribute lyrics to "Mass," Mr. Schwartz is happiest when composing.

"I find lyrics very difficult to produce, but I do them because I find I've managed to say something closer to what I'm thinking than what any collaborator might turn up."