

U.S. INTEREST IN AFRICAN SONGS —AND SINGERS

DEREK HANNAN — the man who helped to put stars such as Jody Wayne and the Four Jacks and a Jill on the map — is back in town after spending seven months overseas. When I went to see him this week at the offices of the record company for which he is a producer, he was full of enthusiasm and new ideas.

"South African stars can make it in America. If only they had original material," said Derek, who spent most of his trip in the States.

Record people were "mildly interested" in records of Jody, Nick Taylor and several other South Africans. "These artistes are certainly no worse than the average American ones."

But what the Americans wanted was new material, not re-hashes of their own music. That's why they were particularly interested in the African songs on LPs of the Four Jacks and a Jill (top of the pops at the moment, and "gold disc" winners — with "Timothy").

So Derek is now thinking in terms of a whole album of African songs with this group, for possible export.

He said: "Once one South African breaks the ice overseas — with a record made in South Africa — people there will sit up and take notice of our other stars. This is what the Seekers did for Australia."

Big prospects

Among the many artistes Derek met in his travels were Dana Valery and Barry Mitchell (although Barry is British, he is well known in pop circles on the Rand because he lived here for several years). Dana had left "Wait a Minim" and was doing well in cabaret. She was also making records. Derek shared a flat with Barry in Hollywood and he thinks that Barry has big prospects if he can get a work permit.

"He's had lots of showbusiness offers, but at the moment he's selling electrical equipment — in the hope that he can get a permit that way."

POP: FOLK: JAZZ

Harry Suskin



DEREK HANNAN—full of new ideas.

The Americans still remember the thousands of dollars which left the country for Britain during the Beatles era, and they are not keen on allowing British entertainers to work there now, according to Derek.

Israeli tops

While in the States he saw a four-hour television show on Africa. Forty-five minutes was given to South Africa — and what should be used as background music but Des Lindberg singing David Mark's "Mountains of Men."

Both these folk entertainers are in Johannesburg's folk festival at the moment.

"There was a lot of comment on the number," said Derek.

"I'm sure an American singer is going to do it."

In New York Derek met Ron Ehiran, the Israeli folk singer, who is due back in South Africa next week. "Fresh from the Middle East War, Ron really made his name. He topped the bill on television and was interviewed by just about everybody."

Did Derek pick up any tips? "Dozens," he said. He is back to recording South African stars, so listen closely to his future records — they're bound to carry an extra stamp of professionalism.

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A BRITISH record company has big hopes for Emil Dean's "Ave Maria." The South African singer's first disc in Britain, it was issued this week. Emil told me in London a few weeks ago that he recorded the number with the original words a few months back, and the result was so powerful that it was decided to have English lyrics written.

This Emil did himself and with the backing, which he describes as "fantastic," the record could just make the hit parade. It could mean overnight stardom for him.

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JUST back from a trip to Britain and the Continent is Johannesburg singer Jack Cross. And Jack has a pocketful of adventures to tell about.

"I was singing on a Paris street corner when I was nearly picked up by the police. Evidently street singing was forbidden in that part of the city, and only an explanation by a French woman who was listening to me prevented a probable night in jail."

Another time he was playing and singing in a flat in Israel. Later, he found an anonymous note pinned on the door. "I thought it was from the neighbour downstairs complaining about the noise, but it read: 'I listen to your singing avidly. It is people like you who keep the world happy.'"

And at the end of the note was added a request for a certain song.