

NON-STOP FOLK MUSIC AND GAY CHIT-CHAT AT "DEVIL'S FUNNYBONE"

LOCAL ARTISTS: *Devil's Funnybone, Johannesburg.*

○ BEYING a whim to see what was happening on the local folksinging scene, I dropped in one cold evening at what used to be known as "The Troubadour" and is now called "The Devil's Funnybone."

I had intended to stay for maybe half an hour, but I remained for nearly three hours for relaxed listening.

A free-and-easy, amiable form of non-stop entertainment is offered, and the singers who paraded their undoubted talents were a mellifluous mite of music — one Mel Green otherwise known to the cognoscenti by the Dickensian sounding Little Mel — the rugged and original Clem Tholis, and a group of husky young men who call themselves "The College Set."

Songs range from familiar and well-aired standards, old jazz songs, genuine folk ballads from all over the world, to original numbers that tell of modern conditions, laugh at contemporary mores and moan about unrequited love.

There is plenty of cheery chit-chat between artists and audience, with cosy customers calling out for songs they want to hear and some pretty broad and sometimes bawdy humour thrown about.

Charmer

There is no shyness about joining in vocally or providing rhythmic hand-clapping as a background to the vocalising, and sometimes salty remarks from the table-sitters bring some swift and saucy ad libs.

Little Mel has charm and a

formidable repertoire that embraces talking blues, songs in Hebrew, the stirring "Universal Soldier," sad "Early Morning Rain" and practically anything the vociferous audience called for.

Perhaps he harps too bitterly on his records which have not yet been released — but this young charmer has a big potential and a style of singing that is easy to listen to.

The lusty lads who call themselves "The College Set" show great promise of being more of a variety act than a bunch of folk-singers. They go for mild ribaldry with Formby oldies, the Chicken Song and "Did You Ever See Such A Strange Thing Before?" But I preferred their indigenous African songs.

They have a considerable amount of brass and brash attack and their electric guitars and banjo sometimes shake the walls.

Clem Tholis has a smooth approach, but some rough stories that might earn him a fine in Rhodesia.

He has composed many of his offerings, and I liked "Kumoni" and his song about a city that could well be Johannesburg.

I understand that the singers are changed practically every week, and I must call at the Devil's Funnybone again to hear more of our local talent.