



# THAT MARKS MAN..

BY MARGARET BARKET



David Marks, 24-year-old composer of the top hit, "Master Jack", with a recording of one of his songs.

"It's a strange, strange world . . .", but stranger still is young David Marks, the composer of "Master Jack" and several other top hits. Typically South African—handsome, healthy, and red-blooded—David looks more like a Springbok footballer than the very talented song-writer he is. He was born in Cape Town 24 years ago, and led a normal, rough-and-tumble schoolboy life until he began working underground in the St. Helena mines in Welkom. Two years later, at the age of 21 he saw Des Lindberg singing, and was so inspired that he learned to play the guitar. He spent the long hours underground writing songs, and in two-and-a-half years had written no less than 40 numbers. His first composition to hit the charts was "Mountains of Men", a stirring contem-

porary folk song dedicated to the men who risk their lives mining deep underground. This song was recorded seven times by five different people, and is now the theme tune of an American television programme.

The adventurous and colourful atmosphere of the mines is infused into many of David's most popular songs. "Shiny, Shiny Fairy Gold", recorded by Nick Taylor, is another of his successes. David says that he was inspired to write this song by an old prospector he once knew.

Then came "Master Jack". Hearing the words, one is immediately filled with curiosity about the mysterious Master Jack. Who was he, and what does the song mean? It helps a little to know that a "Jack" in mining lingo means a cowboy, or, in plain language, someone who thinks he knows everything. "The song is about somebody rather unpleasant I once met down in the mines", explains David. Bet most of us could think of somebody like this to write a song about, but unfortunately it takes talent!

Certainly, David had no idea what an impact this song with its strange words and catchy tune would make. It was immediately snapped up and recorded by South Africa's top group, Four Jacks and a Jill, and in no time, "Master Jack" had hit the No. 1 spot on the South African hit parade. Then came the great news that it was to be released in America, followed by worldwide release. This will be a first for any South African group or composer.

More success for "Master Jack" came along in the form of Trini Lopez, who became so enthusiastic about the song that he immediately recorded it during his recent short stay in Johannesburg.

The composer is curiously reluctant to talk about himself. "Don't write about me", he said modestly. "Say something about Four Jacks and a Jill. They are really making the grade, with three records on the hit parade at the same time". The only thing we learned from David was his admiration for Bob Dylan. "I pray to him every night", he said, tongue in cheek. David is a pretty good folk singer and guitarist in his own write (excuse the pun). He has been fairly successful in Johannesburg folk venues and coffee bars, and is an amusing entertainer. He was last seen heading for Durban and the "Talk of the Town", where he will be featured in cabaret and we wish him every success.