

Monday Night, February 5, 1968

By Mark Allen

As most Johannesburg folk lovers and singers know, the Troubadour is not usually open on Monday nights, but Monday, February 5, was an exception with a difference.

That evening opened with a long blues session by Mike Dickman and Viv Horwitz, and they were really playing as they had never done before. With good cause, too, because the guest of honour, one of the only people for whom the Troubadour would open on its day of rest, was none other than Doc Watson, that great among greats of American folk singers and guitar pickers.

After Mike and Viv came down, Leon Rabinowitz went up on stage and welcomed Doc and his son Merle to the Troubadour and South Africa, and at the same time bade farewell to Mike, who leaves for foggy London town this month.

Leon led the singing of "A Lesson too Late for the Learning," which he dedicated to Mike.

Dave Marks followed Leon onto the stage, and sang two of his own compositions. He started with "Shiny Shiny Fairy Gold," a song about diamond digging, and was about to go off when everyone started yelling for more, and when Doc asked him to sing another, he could hardly refuse, and he sang "Master Jack."

Doc then went up, and, using Mike's guitar, played "The Devil and the Farmer's Wife," followed that with an arrangement of "Geordie," the likes of which have never been heard in this country before, and then played "Tickling the Strings," a frighteningly fast instrumental. Doc said that the arrangement of the tune to be heard on the "Doc Watson and Son" re-

ording was not supposed to appear on the disc at all, as it was not a

full version of the tune, and he had only been "foolin' around!" Well, if I could fool around like that, I would be very happy.

The great man ended his session with his favourite blues, called "Deep River Blues."

The Troubadour has never rang with applause the way it did when Doc finished each number, and when he finished his all too short session, the applause and the shouts of more nearly brought the roof down.

Doc and Merle were passing through on their way to do a concert tour of Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland, and the privileged few who heard him on that memorable evening will always remember him with deep affection.



Doc Watson

Photo: Mark Allen