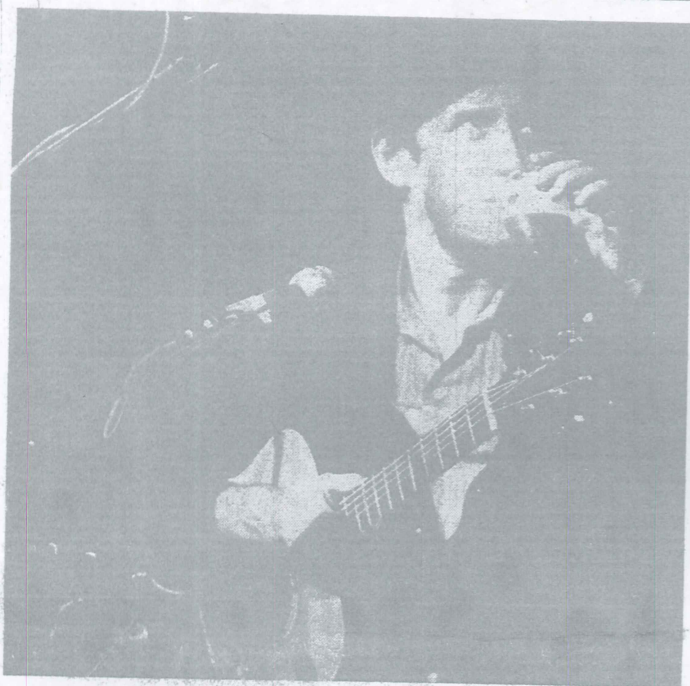




Phil Ochs, the visiting American "protest singer," takes a swig of beer between songs at his first Johannesburg performance at a Rosebank hotel last night.



The singer resumes his show. Members of the audience and critics called his performance "embarrassing." Pictures by Frank Black.

'Yeah, man, I was pretty crazy'

Staff reporter Hugh Leggatt AMERICAN folk protest singer Phil Ochs, who drank his way through his first Johannesburg performance at a Rosebank hotel last night, admitted today "Yeah, I was pretty crazy last night."

During his 40-minute show he swigged a glass of beer between numbers, knocking it over once but having it soon refilled, slid off his stool, slurred his words and fell off the stage in the wings.

The audience was described as "embarrassed" and today critics panned Ochs as having

a voice "totally lacking in control."

The singer said today: "Getting all that beer down was not a normal part of my act. Tonight I'll be much more pulled together."

He explained that he had "problems." "I've been in a dilemma for days as I can't decide whether to stay in South Africa or go back to America."

"I've got trouble with my voice. In Dar es Salaam three guys jumped me and strangled me as they robbed me. My

voice is not right yet. I'm seeing a doctor."

"Down in the Cape I was enjoying the fabulous wines and coming up here on the plane yesterday I had a few drinks and just went on when I got here. I hoped it would help my voice."

Ochs said he felt remorse this morning and wanted to apologise to anybody who was upset by his behaviour.

"But I did get through my singing," he added.

And as far as could be judged nobody walked out.

(See Page 23)

Pipe-smoking

RAEFORD DANIEL

HE has written some memorable songs — "There But for Fortune", "Changes", "Crucifixion", "Pleasures of the harbour", "No one's buying Flowers from the Flower Lady", to name but a few.

His name ranks with that of Bob Dylan, Tom Paxton, and Pete Seeger as one of the leading lights of American folk

revival.

But Phil Ochs is a quiet, modest fellow, who will talk shyly about himself if pressed, but is far more likely to stare abstractedly into space, puffing away at his pipe or humming softly to himself.

And the chances are that the tune he hums will not be one of his own. I responded delightedly to his current preoccupation — Dylan's "Lay down your

Phil Ochs disappoints

PHIL OCHS — Blue Fox.

I HAD hoped to be able to hail the occasion as the most momentous in the history of folk music in this country. I was sadly disappointed. Phil Ochs, celebrated American composer and folksinger, took the stage at the Blue Fox last night apologising that he was appearing with half a voice. The other half, he jocularly informed us, at Dar es Salaam.

Now no one was prepared to quibble about that, but the performance he gave was evident less of diminished vocal powers than of a voice totally lacking in control.

He slurred his way through what might have been an arresting musical adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Bells", made heavy weather of a Josef Hellstrom ballad of social protest and fared little better even with some choice examples of his own work, the lyrical "Changes", the haunting "Pleasures of the Harbour", inspired by John Ford's film of Eugene O'Neill's "The Long Voyage Home", and, perhaps his best-known work, "There but for Fortune" which, coupled in

medley with some Johnny Cash songs, he dedicated to the prisoners on Robben Island.

Ochs is one of the more articulate of the new-age poets whose observations on the social scene are acute and pertinent.

He is also a superb musician and his melodies have an unearthly beauty. But the impact of all this last night was painfully blunted.

I am more than ready to accept a casual approach as being relevant to the folk scene and would be the first to reject a slick, cabaret presentation as being ill suited to the genre. But not even the greatest of performers should be allowed to get away with what smacks of contempt for the audience.

I trust subsequent performances will see some improvement. In the meantime the evening is saved from total disaster by the unruly, somewhat self-indulgent but strongly individual talent of Colin Shamley and a beautiful showcase of finely placed blues and poignant melodies of incredible loveliness from Edie Neaderlander.

RAEFORD DANIEL

Fumble, mumble, stumble

THE CONCERT: Phil Ochs (Blue Fox Restaurant, Rosebank). THE SUPPORTING ARTISTS: Colin Shamley and Edie Neaderlander. THE PROMOTER: Rocky Rabin.

Phil Ochs, a once shining light on the American folk protest scene, was reduced to a mere flicker last night in a performance that rates as possibly the most embarrassing I've had the misfortune of reviewing.

Ochs, almost a shell of his former eloquent self, fumbled, mumbled and stumbled his way through a selection of numbers — some his own and others borrowed — enveloped in a cloud of supreme inertia.

I won't indulge in criticism over particular numbers, and am prepared to dismiss the 40-minute set as a huge disappointment.

Two local artists, Edie Neaderlander, who grows more mature and penetrating with each concert, and Colin Shamley, generating his usual strange, almost hostile, vibrations, made up for it.

Edie's work is imbued with delicate beauty and her own composition, "Write Me A Letter," should be recorded, with orchestral embellishment, so that a wider public can appreciate this gentle, moving number.

Shamley's set was a madly individualistic string of old and new numbers, all expertly performed. — PETER FELDMAN.

Final protest?

PHIL OCHS, 35, who wrote and sang songs against the Vietnam war, popular on many American university campuses, committed suicide on Friday. 7/1/76

Ochs was reported to have hanged himself at the New York home of his sister after being "very depressed," friends said. — Sapa-AP.