

It's as difficult for some songwriters to talk about their songs as it is for a plant to discuss horticulture. Not so with Charlie McGettigan, lead singer and guitarist with 'Jargon'. For a start, Charlie has a lot of his own songs to talk about — five hundred, in fact. Then there's the widely different styles of his songs — traditional, ragtime, bluegrass, rock, bossa-nova, etc. 'Jargon's' first single, released last January, reflects this variation in style. The A side of the single was 'Bailieborough and Me' — a gentle ballad, while the B side was the up-tempo blue-grass number 'Farnon City Stomp', written by the group's mandolin/guitarist Brendan Emmett, about his native Ballyfarnon.

There are a number of reasons why Charlie writes in different styles. Firstly, he easily becomes bored with the same type of music. Secondly, he wants to tap a wider market when sending demonstration tapes of his songs to singers who might record his songs. Maura O'Connell of 'Maggie' and 'Irish Molly' fame, and 'The Dublin City Ramblers' have recorded two of his songs, and Ralph McTell will record one next year.

Meanwhile his own recording career has not stopped with 'Bailieborough and Me' — a record which kept 'Jargon' in The Irish Top 30 for three weeks and sold 2,500 copies. They have recorded 'Man on the Stage Alone' for an R.T.E. album called 'Sounds Promising'. In the summer, their latest single, 'The Singer' received extensive air-plays, although it didn't make the Top 30. There have been numerous T.V. appearances — B.B.C. T.V.'s 'As I Roved Out', and R.T.E.'s 'Late, Late Show', 'S.B.B.', 'The Music Show', 'Anything Goes' and soon 'Festival Folk'.

The recordings and T.V. appearances have been interspersed through a tough schedule of performances in halls, clubs and folk festivals throughout Ireland, playing to audiences of 2,000 in places like Letterkenny and Belfast. It all sounds exciting and glamorous but the reality falls rather short of the image.

There is what Charlie calls the drudgery of recording a song. Both of their singles took fourteen hours each to record. And before the recording studio there can be the

Drumshanbo Songwriter and Musician

Charlie McGettigan —
'Jargon'

'machine-like' process of song-writing. He is not the kind of writer who gets an inspired thought at five in the morning or while out planting spuds in the back garden. "I rarely have any pre-conceived idea about what I am going to write. I trick around with the melody first and the melody will conjure up a title. A lot of the time, all I need is a title, and the rest of the song can come in ten minutes. I find that the lyrics are the most difficult aspect of song-writing. As for the melody of the song — different types of songs have different formulas, different structures. For example, if I decide to write a ragtime song, I know that the song will have a basic structure of two verses, a chorus, a middle eight, an instrumental passage and a finish.

Charlie does not think that his songs are very personal. "They are my own viewpoints and impressions about things which people can identify with". Life is the rag merchant from which he chooses and pieces together his creations. Marcel Marceau, Packie Duignan, Jeannie Cribbs have all been subjects of his songs, as have such abstract topics as love and unemployment, and rather less abstract topics like after-hours in pubs. He is very particular about using his own impressions, and not



somebody else's. If the song has its source in the past, he will invent from memory. "I will not research a song, as it will only ruin by initial impressions".

His musical output and performances have not all been channelled through 'Jargon'. He has written a musical score for a T.V. programme yet to be televised, and last Summer he represented Ireland at The Knokke Song Festival in Belgium.

He looks, towards the future for what the present denies. "Hopefully, eventually, people will be able to say that that is a Charlie McGettigan song, even though it may not have been like the one before, but there will be some thread running through it that identifies it as my song. Hopefully, too, I will be able to make a decent living from writing and performing music."

One thing that the present cannot deny is that 'Jargon' present the highest standard of musicianship and entertainment, and that they appeal to every age group. It's a deserved success from Drumshanbo man, Charlie McGettigan, a founder member of the group which will celebrate its tenth anniversary in 1984.