



Jack Dalton picks up the guitar in his Farmington Hills office. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

He runs after that elusive hit

By LETHA D. WILLIAMS

Wearing jeans and a red plaid shirt, he cradles his guitar and writes another song.

Singer-songwriter Jack Dalton is one of the Midwest's leading composers of radio and TV commercial music. But that doesn't satisfy his creativity.

At 35, Dalton remains dedicated to an effort that began 19 years ago — writing the elusive hit song.

In 1970, Dalton and producer Jeff Parsons founded "The Road Company, Inc.," a commercial production agency, then in Southfield. Last year they moved the agency to Farmington Hills. Dalton established his professional reputation through successful local contracts with Hudsons, Phillip's Shoes and the Detroit Red Wing Organization. Nationally, he is known for his Hires Root Beer and "Me And My Arrow" productions.

But Dalton wants to write hit songs and he says it requires more than musical talent. Like winning the Lottery, it takes luck and persistence.

For 10 years the lean, curly haired musician pursued luck between Detroit and Los Angeles. Committed now to his partnership in "The Road Company," he remains in the Detroit area, writing, recording and waiting.

WITH SIX brothers and sisters, Dalton grew up entertaining.

His sister, MaryAnn, was a club director in the U.S. Army. She played USO shows and later married comedian Tim Conway.

Dalton's other sister, Peggy, and a brother, Tommy, lead more private lives, but play musical instruments. His brother, Jerry, is a Canadian songwriter.

Dalton left his Dearborn home in 1960 with his remaining two brothers, Danny and Wally. Touring the West Coast, the trio called themselves "The Dalton Boys" like the old West outlaws.

"We had a lot of talent," Dalton said. "We could have been as successful as the Kingston Trio."

"The Dalton Boys" were inspired and encouraged in their talents. But the young trio wanted to record.

California club dates and guest spots on ABC Hootenanny shows kept them working. However, the recording contract eluded them.

"We were getting up there as far as where we should be in the placement of our careers," Dalton said. "We couldn't have gone too much further except selling records. That was what we weren't doing."

DISCOURAGED, Dalton teamed up with writer-musician Gary Montgom-

ery. They returned to Detroit in 1969 and auditioned for Motown. To their amazement, they were signed as individual artists and writers and became the only two white performers on the label.

But Motown was storming the world with black singers like Diana Ross and Stevie Wonder.

"They were not about to take the promotional money from Diana Ross and put it toward us," Dalton said.

His only Motown release, "I've Been Cheated," was aired hourly on CKLW before Ross' "I Hear A Symphony." Dalton's song was hit-bound. "It just never made it," he said.

After a frustrating year at Motown, Dalton and Montgomery returned to Los Angeles and signed briefly with Whitewell Records. Later, they secured a contract with Robbins Publishing House as writers and singers.

Calling themselves "The Colours," they wrote and recorded their first album. Robbins sold it to Dot Records but, according to Dalton, promotion failed when internal dissent raked the two companies.

"The Colours'" second album was equally doomed.

"In those days the marketing men didn't want to see a second album by a

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