



PHOTO GIL HANLY

Toi Te Kupu, Toi Te Mana, Toi Te Whenua

The Patea Maori Club: a Story About Survival by Chris Bourke

It's another Saturday night at the Papatoetoe Inn. On the tiny stage is Dalvanus, up from Hawera on the bus for two nights with the resident band. The bar is comfortably full, and the musicians seem very casual, though there's some snappy playing going on beneath Dalvanus's delicate and heartfelt renditions of soul favourites. It's an easy atmosphere, the crowd singing along and dancing cheek to cheek, and after finishing his short set, Dalvanus remains to mingle. Strangers and old friends chat with equal ease

Auckland is still asleep when the bus pulls out at 8am the next day. But ensconced in the back seat, Dalvanus is alive with ideas and anecdotes. The up and ups of the past three years could scarcely have been imagined, but there are plenty more dreams where they came from to come

true yet.

One doesn't have to look too far to see the impact that's been achieved. In Hamilton kids are twirling pois in the bus depot, in Te Kuiti a mother brings forward her children who want to shake Dalvanus's hand; on the bus wide-eyed 10-year-olds ask for autographs.

about a recent TV appearance or news of acquaintances from other parts of the country. At the same time though, Dalvanus is planning ahead. He's supposed to be in Wellington on Monday to work on a soundtrack. But just before he went on he heard an aunt has died back in Patea, and he must return for the tangi, which will last until Tuesday. So if we're to talk about the Patea Maori Club, their new album, their town, and Dalvanus's philosophies, plans and dreams, *Rip It Up* must come too.

"The whole thing is the language," he begins. "To reach a young audience with the Maori language, without compromising the language. Through that, the kids gain self-esteem and the Maori language and culture survives. That's the whole point of the experience." The story begins in

Tokomaru Bay on the East Coast, when Dalvanus, flushed with the success of his production of Prince Tui Teka's 'E Ipo', went to meet Ngoi Pewhairangi, an elderly woman greatly respected for her songwriting and efforts to keep the language alive. Do you write any songs, she asked Dalvanus. Only in

English, he had to reply, I don't speak Maori properly. "How can we get the Maori language heard and accepted by the younger generation?" she said.

The answer was through music. "Let me be your voice — you can be the tune," said Pewhairangi. Dalvanus extended his two-hour visit, and within three weeks the pair had written 18 songs. Among them was a contemporary poi dance, with lyrics in Maori, but aimed at the mass market.

"'Poi E' was not a fluke — it was all planned," says Dalvanus. "There were a lot of issues we wanted to highlight in the Maori's place in the New Zealand social structure. Many people had been looking for reasons and answers, but they'd never thought of using the kid's leisure to put across their message." The songs having been written, they were now given a top-class production by Dalvanus with musicians ("who shared the same vision") such as Stuart Pearce, Gordon Joll and Alistair Riddell. "I wanted to get rid of every reason radio had for not playing the records."

Enter the South Taranaki Cultural Group, a traditional singing group from Dalvanus's hometown of Patea, a small community suffering from the closure of the local freezing works. They became the Patea Maori Club (after the then-popular Culture Club and Tom Tom Club) ... "I wanted to use the song to uplift the community." Unable to get any grants or funding — reserved to projects of a more traditional nature — Dalvanus went to local businesses; 27 of them donated \$100 each, and 'Poi E' was under way.

But for the record to come out, it had to have

someone to put it out. No record label, including the independents, was interested. "I had a No 1 hit with 'E Ipo', a No 3 with 'Maoris on 45' — I thought I had credibility," says Dalvanus. "They all said no. I was so upset and uptight. One company said, throw in a couple of Pakeha verses like 'E Ipo'. But I didn't want to compromise the Maori language. Ngoi said, start your own company, but I had doubts.

"I envisaged a Maori Motown, with a roster of acts starting with the Tama Band, Taste of Bounty, and the Patea Maori Club. The name of the label had to have a young image. I chose Maui, after the character in the legends — a hero to all Polynesian races. I wanted our kids to have a mega Maori hero."

Getting the video made was another problem. Money from a fund for "Maori interest" programmes was denied 'Poi E' because, says Dalvanus, it wasn't sung in English. But money was provided for videos for the Tama Band and Taste of Bounty ... so Dalvanus talked a videomaker into making three videos for the price of two. "I had the last laugh," he says with a grin. But getting it aired was yet another obstacle. There seemed to be no slot willing to show it until Derek Fox placed the video on *Te Karere*. It was then used as a filler, sales began to pick up for the slowly moving record, it was placed on *Ready to Roll*, and then things snowballed ... and the criticisms began.

Ngoi had been reluctant about the mix of traditional and contemporary cultures, but gave Dalvanus artistic control. "Oh well," she said, "if that's the way you're

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



IT'S POURING IN SUNNY JAMAICA

From the sun-drenched canefields of Jamaica comes Captain Morgan Dark Rum. Matured slowly in oak casks, it has a taste that is smooth, full-bodied and enjoyed around the world. Always ask for Captain Morgan.



Jamaica's finest dark rum

From Seagram. The World's Best.