

PHOTO BY ANGELA JONASSON

He doesn't do adverts back home in Britain. It brings too much baggage with it. Here, it doesn't seem to matter. He doesn't know why. It seemed like a good idea: Rarotonga, Singapore on the way back, it's like a paid holiday. It's a shitty summer in Britain.

He's been doing films lately. One of them, *Solarwarriors*, is on at the cinema up the road, the only place in the world, it seems. It's certainly never surfaced in Britain. It's what you might call a failure. So that's probably that. He's done some films that have never appeared. Marlon Brando probably has too.

He hasn't done standup comedy for a couple of years. It's hard work, making strangers laugh. Trying to push it as far as possible, and not make it cosy. A JB Priestley play would be easier. Nobody's gonna heckle you, everyone's gonna be sober, nobody's gonna be offended and walk out. It's not gonna be full of punks and skinheads. All his live concerts were like that. Also it's limited artistically: there's only so far you can go when you've gotta get a laugh every 30 seconds. If you don't, you're not being a comic.

Sayle or Return

Even a cup of strong espresso can't turn Alexei Sayle into an anarchic comedian this morning. Tanned from two weeks holiday in Rarotonga, he seems bored. He sits Buddha-like in shapeless T-shirt and trousers, his face blank as the Regent's decor.

Maybe it's the interview conveyor belt. Maybe he's thinking of the impending film shoot, with its 120 setups. What's he in Auckland for? An advert. What's he advertising? Oh, we'll find out in the spring.

Films are what he's most interested in now: acting and writing. *Didn't You Kill My Brother?* opens in Britain soon. But films don't take up that much time — writing does. For *Time Out*, the *Sunday Mirror*.

He likes doing what's not expected of him, to make the most stupid career moves he can. That makes it more interesting, you get a good progression: a wild anarchic comedian who gets successful,

does some charity concerts for Princess Diana, plays polo with Billy Connolly, dies of a drug overdose... That's the sort of career plan he's been trying to avoid. All he's managed to do is die of a drugs overdose.

The humour of his early work was that of his Liverpool friends, really. Did he fit in? Yeah. No, perhaps not. His parents were both in the Communist Party and all that, blah blah. They felt slightly supercilious to the rest of the

neighbourhood, working class, comfortable, he more or less fitted in. No deep trauma.

Over the years his standup work and writing have become more political. His films, underneath, in a diffuse sense, deep down, look at how things could be different economically in Britain. No, he's not a supporter of the Labour Party. If he'd wanted a bald Harold Wilson, yes, he'd have voted for Neil Kinnock. Thatcher makes Kinnock look like a radical because she's so right-wing.

At least she forces people to make choices: she's an evil woman. In a general sense, being a left-winger is an articulation of what is decent about people, while being right-wing is an expression of all that's evil in people: racism and greed and so on. Nevertheless having Thatcher in power makes the country a vital kind of place, which may sound stupid, because a lot of people are suffering terribly. But those people would have still suffered under Kinnock.

Ambitions? What now, after TV, films, records and two novels? Well, he doesn't know. He'd like a motorbike. To learn karate. A fitted kitchen. Naah, he'd like to retire — he'd always said he would when he was 35. He's 35 now, so maybe at 36.

But no. He'd like to make some films like Woody Allen, one a year, write it, make it, do nothing else. And for them to be hailed as the most significant films of the 80s and 90s. Yeah, he'd like to be Orson Welles, with the big hat, the beard.

Orson Welles, the film genius who died plugging Xerox machines. But Alexei won't do TV ads, in Britain anyway. They imply a degree of endorsement.

Some photos? Certainly. Like a surge of ECG, his blank face lights up with the flashbulb. *Flash: mad look.* Blank mask. *Flash: mad look.* Blank mask.

Chris Bourke

Campus Compilation (Continued)

Following the success of the *Weird Culture, Weird Custom* compilation last year, the student radio stations plan another album of the 12 local artists: and they're looking for tapes now.

"The format and selection of the album will differ slightly from last year's," says Radio Active's Jacquie Riddell for the Association of Student Broadcasters. "Instead of each station selecting two tracks for inclusion, we are inviting anyone from anywhere in the country to send a demo tape to us, and the content of the album will be selected by a group of three people."

The artists chosen to appear on the album will be recorded in one of the student radio production studios free of charge. The only requirement is that the artists from outside the university cities pay for their travelling expenses.

The National Student Radio organisers are looking for a wide variety of musical styles for the album, which will be released through Pagan Records. The album release is planned to coincide with Orientation '88.

Any artists interested, send a demo tape, plus details, by October 1st to: National Student Radio Compilation Album, PO Box 9468, Wellington.

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and no one will use him. Maoridom has its own performance values — you have to be able to perform. There's a tradition of oratory, waiata and so on, but we're talking about actors, and actors have to work. You can't be an actor for one week a year. You need the regular opportunity to work and develop your communication skills on the film set."

Ngati, like Barclay's earlier documentaries, is very much a political film. Although he feels that films tend to follow political movements and crystallise what is already understood and accepted, the issues brought up in Tama Poata's script are still relevant today.

"The Coast was absolutely devastated in the mid-50s by a more or less deliberate resettlement policy (although some people might interpret that differently). The result is that there are more *Ngati* Porou living in Sydney or Auckland than in their spiritual homeland. I think that about 180 men are now out of work with the corporatisation of the forestry industry, and the same thing is happening with the fishery and forestry works. These are issues that

Tama has very much to heart."

Fight

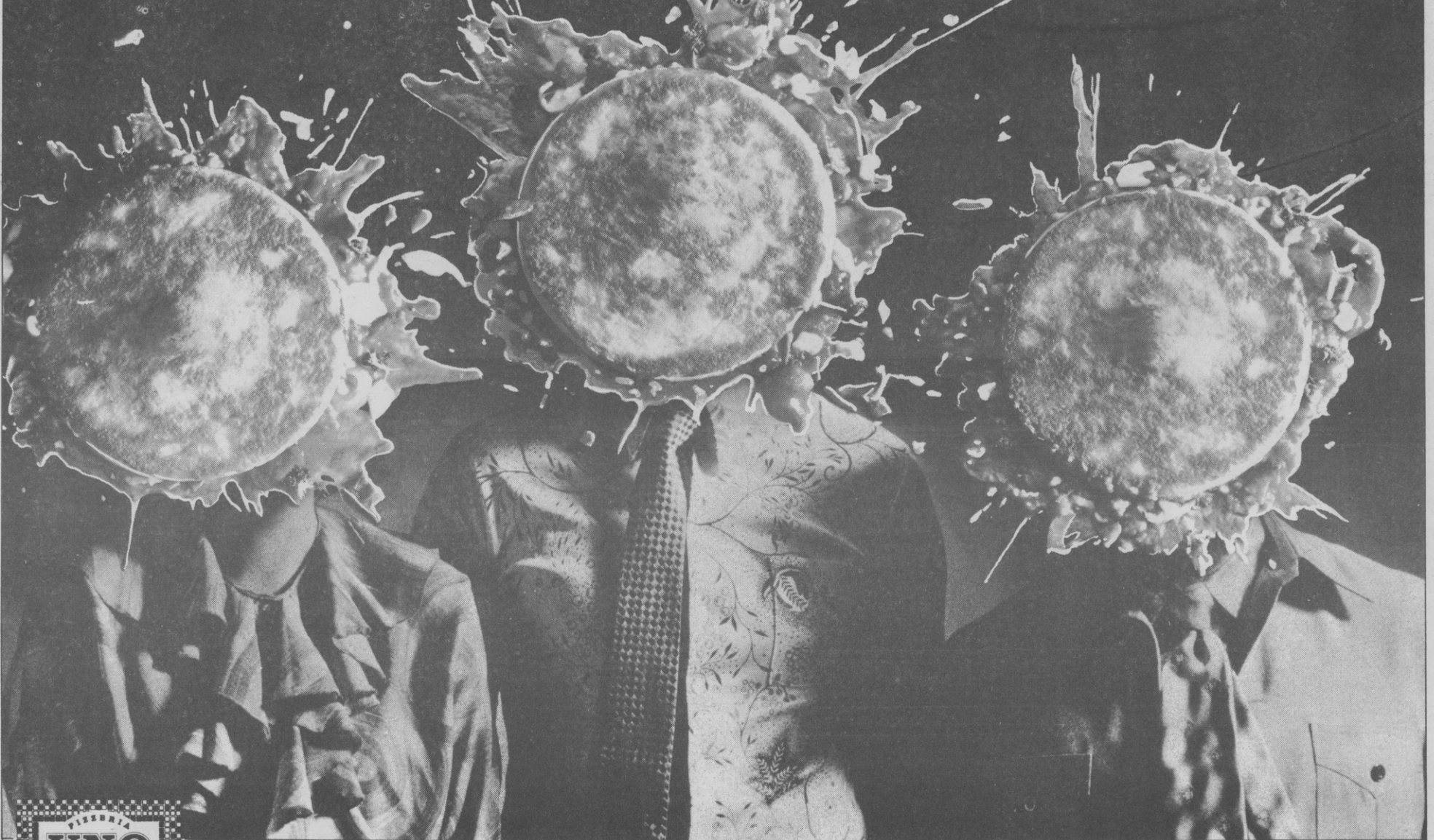
When he was filming the *Tangata Whenua* series in 1974, Barry Barclay had a "tremendous fight" with television to interview in Maori. He won that battle, and the finished documentary has English subtitles. Things have improved in the meantime.

"I've just done this film in the Urewera for television, and ironically, it's the first major film to be made in Tuhoe since I shot some of *Tangata Whenua* there in the 70s. This time I made demands. I wanted a six week pre-production period, I wanted to go and talk to the old people on the marae, I wanted archival dimension. I also wanted every trained Maori I could have on the crew, together with four trainees. Every film tries to advance the cause a wee bit."

Ngati is an emotional experience. It's difficult not to draw parallels with the return of Te Maori — Te Hokinga Mai. With the simple insistence of a Bresson, Barclay has come up with a vision that speaks from the heart of this country.

William Dart

Too dull for Pizzeria Uno.



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