



Perhaps it's just a reflection of the state of the local music scene or maybe, as Malcolm McLaren claims, it's the way things are going, but cassette tapes seem to be playing an increasingly significant part in this country's music.

Or, more correctly, what might be called the "alternative" side to that music. The side that record companies don't spend thousands of dollars on, the side that most of the media steers clear of, the side that doesn't pay. In the last 18 months the number of cassette-only record releases has swelled remarkably.

Whether they come from established labels or individuals, cassettes are providing a real alternative.

Early into the act was Auckland's Ocean Records, who market with confidence recordings of Alpha 2, Fusion and Holzelmuzik. The music might not appeal to Joe Public, or even to readers of this magazine but that's the whole idea.

To break even on a 7" record, about 300 copies must be sold.

The minimum pressing run is 100 but that'll lose money at regular prices. With little effort cassette copies can be run off at home for only the cost of the tape. If you want it done more quickly most recording studios will sell you dubs of your original at a per unit price. Of course then you run into things like sales tax.

To make cassette releases even easier, Aucklander Paul Luker has begun a cassette-only label called Industrial Tapes. Industrial is envisaged as a collective, with those using it sharing costs like advertising.

Luker plans to schedule releases regularly and will be producing a newspaper to keep everyone up to date on what is coming out.

"Presentation of cassettes is important. There should be contact beyond just a cover. I'm keen to include small books with releases, like we've done with *Uptown Friday* (a live tape including *Kiwi Animal* and the *Heptocrats*)." He hopes to reach new, younger audiences and will be trying to get the newsletter into schools.

"People are still trying to cater to the same audience as they have for years and that's wrong. There are a lot of younger potential

listeners who aren't touched."

Luker is keen to hear from artists around the country who have something to offer. If he feels it's good, he'll release it. But he doesn't want to encroach on the territory of those, like Flying Nun, who put out records. His setup will be an extra, not a competitor.

"When I say good, I have to realise someone's going to like it. It has to have reasonable recording quality but the most important thing is integrity."

Luker also has a two-track recorder with which he can record for the label. The first two releases are *Uptown Friday* and *This is Heaven*, a tape he recorded himself. Upcoming are releases by the Normal Ambition and Flak and a tape called *Milk Moon*.

Another project soon to come to fruition is Commotion Music, run by Mike Nelson and Kelly Rogers (of the Miltown Stowaways). They have a 4-track Portastudio and will be recording bands, poets and anyone else with a noise to make either live or at their Fort St base and releasing them on cassette. They'll be underway in early January with a compilation tape.

Soul stalwart Rick Bryant will soon have a service offering tapes of local bands, both those with which he has been associated (Neighbours, Jive Bombers, Rough Justice, to name a few) and others. Bryant's service will offer the option of sending in your own high-quality tape to be recorded on.

Another beauty of cassettes is that you can even do your original recording on them. Steve Roach's intricate *Gorgonzola* was put together on two cassette recorders and dubbed off at home. The expertise with which Roach has approached recording doesn't come easy, but even Above Ground's *Gone Awoa*, named after the portable machine used to record it, is one of the finest tapes to be released this year.

And cassettes are generally better value too. The South Island's seminal TV Eye Records (spawned in Timaru, but since spread) has been releasing C90 tapes packed full of music by groups like the Picnic Boys and Say Yes to Apes for a couple of

years for about \$6. Twice the music at half the price.

Of course it doesn't stop at NZ music. Christchurch's Alternative Entertainment Bureau will soon be releasing the debut album by Los Angeles punk band Millions of Dead Cops on tape at a bargain basement price of \$5. Negotiations for rights to the UK's Crass Records 90-plus bands continue. And the New York label Reachout International Records (ROIR) is quite exceptional, a source of rare gems from across the music spectrum.

Other good sources of local tapes include New Plymouth's Ima Hitt, which distributes its own releases and others. Last Laugh Studios in Auckland has to its credit releases by Peking Man, the Schmeel Brothers and Fetus Productions' fine *Self Manipulation*.

Flying Nun released the Clean's inimitable swansong, *Oddities* and more tapes are possible in future. Unsung Records has Avant Garage's *Garage Music*, which is quite different from the ensemble's vinyl album.

There are others. If you are playing music and believe in what you are doing, cassettes provide a real opportunity. The recording can be done at home on cassette recorders (use top quality tape) or on two or four-track cassette or reel-to-reel machines. If you want good quality sound you can venture out into a small studio.

If you live in a reasonable sized city or town it's relatively easy. If not, people like Industrial might be able to help you. A few shops may take the final product but your best hope is probably mail order. Put a small ad in *RiU* but that's not enough. Send us (and others who might be interested, like student radio) review copies, make up posters, pester friends - get out there and sell.

You might try asking an established label to distribute your tape (but don't get bitter and twisted if they don't want to). If you have doubts about anything, try writing to the people already doing it. Chances are they'll help you (it might be polite to buy something of theirs too). Russell Brown

Listed below are as many of the releases available as I could track down. There are undoubtedly others.

Industrial Tapes
PO Box 8809, Auckland.
Paul Luker *This Is Heaven* \$5
Uptown Friday \$7
The Normal Ambition, Watch It There \$5
(Coming up, Flak, Milk Moon, Silent Decree. SAE for newsletter.)

Onset-Offset
PO Box 2764, Christchurch.
Solid Krypton Hits Vol 1 \$8.50
Solid Krypton Hits Vol 2 \$8.50
Bottletops EP \$5.50

Last Laugh
PO Box 6884, Auckland.
Schmeel Brothers *Yabba Yabba* \$6
Fetus Productions *Self Manipulation* \$6
Peking Man Animal Instincts \$6

TV Eye
506 Queens Drive, Invercargill.
Legacy of Ears Beetroot in Orbit \$6
Various Artists *Weirdcats* \$6
Legacy of Ears/Hyphen Smythe The Hamburg \$6
Picnic Boys Music for Bathrooms \$6
Picnic Boys Crumbs It's A Pterodactyl \$6
Picnic Boys Here Comes the Jungle \$6

Prototype Productions
PO Box 2190, Christchurch.
Above Ground *Gone Awoa* \$6

House of Squirm
PO Box 47-295, Auckland.
Steve Roach *Gorgonzola* \$6
Squirm Squirm Songs \$5

Flying Nun
PO Box 3000, Christchurch.
The Clean Oddities \$6

Reachout International Records
611 Broadway, Suite 214, New York City, NY 10012.
Too many to list, write for a catalogue (enclosing an International Reply Coupon would be a good idea).

Fail Safe
PO Box 3003, Christchurch.
Desperate Measures/Unauthorised *Wasted Again* \$6.50

Alternative Entertainment Bureau
PO Box 13-407, Christchurch.
Millions of Dead Cops LP \$5 (out soon).

Ima Hitt
PO Box 407, New Plymouth.
Various Palmerston Nth bands *Music to do the Dishes To* \$5
Ralph Bennett *Daze in the Country/Nites on the Town* \$7.50
Fishschool *Present-Pastimes* \$8
Mice in the Radiogram \$4.80
Penknife Glides *Live Drums* \$7.50 (Others also.)

Ocean Records
PO Box 876, Auckland.
The Wings, Seven Songs \$5
9 Hastings Street, Christchurch.

Goblins EP \$6
Geoff Harding, c/- Ian McGowan, RD4 Springton, Canterbury.

Unsung Records
PO Box 47-293, Auckland.
Miltown Stowaways *Live in Dunedin* \$6.50
Avant Garage *Garage to Gallery* \$8.50
Ivan Zagni and Peter Scholes *4 Minute Exposure* \$8.50
Ivan Zagni *London 79* \$8.50

Indies Mail Order
PO Box 37-371, Auckland.
Silent Decree In Loving Memory \$5.50
(Plus Last Laugh, Industrial and Unsung catalogues.)

Commotion Music
PO Box 37-710, Auckland.
(First release a compilation in Jan. Write or watch for details.)

Rick Bryant
PO Box 68-594, Auckland.
(Starting soon, watch or write for details.)

Axemen Equinox \$6 (Others available, plus T-Shirts).
17 Robert Drive, Christchurch.

If your tape(s) has been missed, write to us and we'll run an additional listing next month.

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\$7.00 IT/2 UPTOWN FRIDAY Cassette L.P.
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