

Music Awards Finalists	
Single	Strawpeople, 'Love Explodes'. Straitjacket Fits, 'Cat Inna Can'. Headless Chickens, 'Juice'/'Choppers'.
Album	Strawpeople, <i>World Service</i> . Straitjacket Fits, <i>Blow</i> . Headless Chickens, <i>Body Blow</i> .
Top Male Vocalist	Shayne Carter, Straitjacket Fits. John Toogood, Shihad. Chris Matthews, Headless Chickens.
Top Female Vocalist	Shona Laing Fiona MacDonald, Headless Chickens Annie Crummer
Top Group	Strawpeople Straitjacket Fits Headless Chickens
Country	The Warratahs, <i>Big Sky</i> . Patsy Riggir, <i>My Little Corner of the World</i> . Al Hunter, <i>The Singer</i> .
Most Promising Male Vocalist	Michael Gregg & Brendon Gregg, Holy Toledos Matty J, Matty J & the Soul Syndicate Jason Ioasa, Grace
Most Promising Female Vocalist	Rima Te Wiata Jan Preston Emma Paki
Most Promising Group	Urban Disturbance The Holy Toledos 3Ds <i>Second Child</i> Grace
Top International Performer	Straitjacket Fits Headless Chickens Crowded House
Video	'The Beautiful Things' Front Lawn <i>Produced/Directed by Fane Flaws</i> . 'System Virtue' Emma Paki <i>Produced by Matt Noonan/Directed by Josh Frizzell</i> . 'Mr Moon' Headless Chickens <i>Produced/Directed by Johnny Ogilvie</i> .
Producer	Stuart Pearce, <i>Pacifico</i> Kantuta. Strawpeople, <i>Worldservice</i> . Jaz Coleman, <i>Churn</i> Shihad.
Engineer	Malcolm Welsford, 'You Gotta Know ' Supergroove Graeme Myrhe, <i>Travellin' On</i> Midge Marsden Malcolm Welsford, <i>Churn</i> Shihad.
Jazz	Nairobi Trio <i>Through the Clouds</i> . Freebass <i>Raw</i> . Bluespeak <i>Late Last Night</i> .
Classical	Tamas Vesmas <i>Eastern European Piano Music</i> . NZ Symphony Orchestra <i>The Three Symphonies / Douglas Lilburn</i> . Dame Malvina Major <i>Casta Diva</i> .
Maori	Moana and the Moahunters <i>Tahi</i> . Gifted and Brown 'So Much Soul'. Emma Paki 'System Virtue'.
Polynesian	Pasifik MX <i>Manuiri</i> . Mana <i>Mana</i> . Andre Tapena <i>It's Raro</i> .
Folk	Steve McDonald <i>Sons of Somerled</i> . Beverley Young <i>It's Then I Wish</i> . Adam Bell <i>Summerland</i> .
Gospel	Woodford House Chapel Choir, <i>Celebration</i> Stephen Bell-Booth, <i>Undivided</i> . Monica O'Hagan, <i>His Love</i> . Andrew & Saskia Smith, <i>The Gemcutter</i> .
Cover Design	Johnny Pain & Jonathan King. <i>Drinking with Judas</i> , Hallelujah Picassos. Brett Graham, <i>Te Rangatahi</i> Various. Chris Knox, <i>Duck Shaped Pain</i> and 'Gum'.
Songwriter	Stephen Bell-Booth 'Undivided'. Greg Johnson 'Winter Song'. Emma Paki 'System Virtue'.

Ball of

Confusion

The Music Awards NZ

Call it a slowly rolling stone gathering moss or call it a summer of discontent, the fact remains — the 30th Annual New Zealand Music Awards is not the harmonious celebration of ‘artistic and technical achievement in the recording industry’ the organisers would have you believe.

This article was originally planned as a short commentary on the glaring omissions and surprising admissions among this year’s finalists. Several phone calls later and a snowball effect had begun. Further grievances were aired until it was clear many influential people involved in the music industry were not at all happy.

The most common complaint was the inclusion of six judges (from a total of 14) from the very record companies whose artists were competing for awards. Many felt being expected to take it on faith that judging would be totally unbiased was unreasonable, and that a wholly independent panel would be considerably more appropriate.

Lisa Van Der Aarde, long-time host of 95bFM’s New Zealand Music Show has been a member of the judging panel for the past three years.

“The second year that I was involved [1993] there were no record company people present and that was far more suitable. The record companies are responsible for nominating their artists so it’s not appropriate for their representatives to be involved in the final decision making. I really believe the record buying public should be the judges, that would be fair and also a true reflection of the most popular NZ bands.”

BMG Records had several artists nominated this year including the hugely popular Auckland band Supergroove. Dave Jordan of BMG was a member of the 1994 judging panel but completed his voting by correspondence, he was unable to attend the final meeting having being struck by a car two days before.

“It appears to me that it has been too strong on personal opinion judging. If that’s the situation it may be an idea to take it away from the industry and have ‘Mr Joe Public’ judging the Awards, and maybe we will get a more unbiased result. Then you would just be putting the product in front of them, saying listen to this and give us an opinion.”

Russell Brown, editor of *Planet* magazine and judging for the second year in a row, also had reservations.

“I was reasonably pleasantly surprised that most record company people appeared impartial, although

some were definitely more impartial than others. Putting the judging in the hands of the public would give you an entirely different sort of awards and it would create a lot of logistical problems, but it seems like a good idea to include one or two ‘Public Choice’ awards.”

In reply to these criticisms Terence O’Neill Joyce, president of the Recording Industry Association of New Zealand (RIANZ), the organisation that governs the awards, refuted claims that record company involvement could lead to biased results.

“We have representatives from radio, television, and the media not only the record companies. It has always been a policy to have record company involvement in the awards as it does provide a balance within the industry.”

That doesn’t address the fact there are some very blatant omissions from the list of finalists in the 1994 Awards. Recordings submitted to RIANZ for appraisal are judged under three main criterias (although more emphasis may be placed on a criteria depending on the category involved):

- (a) The commercial appeal of the release.
- (b) Artistic merit.
- (c) The potential international appeal of the recording artist.

Points out of 40 are awarded for the first category and 30 each for the remaining two. The Recording Industry’s terms of reference for the award categories describes the prime consideration for judging within the Best Single and Best Album categories as being based on ‘commercial success, ie; public acceptance.’ RIANZ request in writing that record companies provide chart returns and audited sales figures as proof of their artist’s commercial viability. Meaning, a band or artist that had experienced considerable chart success would hold more than a slight advantage over their peers. Therefore one of the most obvious omissions this year must be Supergroove who were nominated by their record company for two categories, one being Single of the Year. ‘You Gotta Know’ was released in June of 1993, has been certified ‘Gold’ (5000 copies sold), spent over eight weeks in the Top 20 (four of those weeks in the Top 5) and peaked at number 4 in the charts. A feat that doesn’t even come close to being matched by the eventual three finalists. With such a clearly defined criteria Supergroove are obviously top qualifiers and when Jordan speaks of his frustration you just know it isn’t a case of sour grapes.

“It makes you wonder what the criteria for the

Awards is. Sure there is going to be a certain amount of personal taste from judges but it has also got to cover chart statistics and the success stories of the year. We had in Supergroove one of the most successful groups of the year, both of their singles went gold for us. Based on that sort of success you would think they would finish up as finalists at least for Single of the Year. The main feeling from us is one of disappointment.”

So if chart success is acceptable to RIANZ as a measure of public approval, and the most important consideration for the Top Single Award is commercial success, why has such a popular record been ignored by the judges?

Lisa Van Der Aarde: “It’s very hard to understand why, they should have been among the finalists. Perhaps none of the judging panel like Supergroove.”

That final sentence reinforces Jordan’s claims that personal preference played too big a part in the judge’s decision that resulted in the elimination of Supergroove. When the judging criteria has been made so crystal clear, and a band so obviously fits the bill, that makes the current situation unacceptable.

There was also talk in the industry that representatives from BMG Records would not attend the Awards ceremony, so great was their dissatisfaction with the judging procedure.

Jordan: “. . . No there will not be a boycott from BMG. All the staff here are given the opportunity to attend the Awards. We usually buy ‘x’ amount of tickets but what we have done this year is given the staff the option of whether they want to attend or not, and that’s at all levels from management right through. That’s the situation.”

Among the contractual obligations an artist must comply with in order to be eligible for consideration in the Awards is a condition of entry that states the following: ‘Recordings must have been first released in NZ between 1st January and 31 December 1993.’ The last eleven words are displayed in bold type and are underlined. This clause would appear to eliminate one finalist in a very high profile category.

Body Blow by the Headless Chickens was originally released in 1991 and won the Best Album Award at the 1992 ceremony. Subsequently remixed and with several tracks added (primarily for the Australian market), it was re-released in 1993 and has once again been included in the Best Album category.

Headless Chickens manager and bassist Grant Fell: “It’s nice to have the recognition but being a finalist



Supergroove: Two Gold singles and not a NZ Music Awards Finalist