

and bone up on HERBS for the contemporary music experience that points to life after ANZUS.

Herbs P.S.

Just recieved the studio album that Herbs took their new material from. It's called Long Ago.

Not only have Herbs improved enormously as a live act, they've also come to grips with the studio sound.

Long Ago stands up well as a complete album. Even so I have my favourites, 'Tahu's Song,' co-written by Emory Tahu and Dilworth Karaka and

the two ballads, 'On My Mind' and 'In The Ghetto'.

While Herbs are mostly known for their reggae tunes, both ballads surprised me, in that the mellow feelings well suited Herbs. Keyboard player, Tama Lundon has a lovely feel for the slower song and a different sounding voice from the others in the band.

As for the album lyrics 'Jah Reggae' — "cause if you broadcast hate I say... you'll never be a dread that way," through 'Repatriation' — "a stranger among strangers.. where is the sense of history," to 'Long Ago' — "realise the downfall of that time has made you wise, long ago was so long ago."

The picture painted is bleak, from the title song's plea to build on the past but live for today. From the 'Lonely Faces' who, "call for help it's just too late... sounds of laughter lost forever,".

To the single from the album, 'Nuclear Waste' — "it's coming down on you, you better watch out now." A strong song with a great hook-line, let's hope it pulls in those politicians and people who wholeheartedly sanction nuclear power at any cost.

However it's Tahu's Song that sums up this bittersweet shot of love from Herbs, "a'int it sad we don't pull together, a'int it sad we don't trust one another." PW

Professor Titonui Series

A genius ahead of his time

This latest in Professor Titonui's enthralling and thought-provoking series, "The Maori Impact on World History", tells of a man who actually had no impact on the history of the world whatsoever. But he might have. And even if he didn't, this was not his fault. Besides, this is a story of such prescience, brilliance and motivation that it deserves to be told nevertheless.

The recent discovery of a battered and mussel-encrusted radio, dredged up by a trawler in the Bay of Plenty, lends weight to a theory I have held for some time — that in the seventeenth century a Maori on White Island invented the transistor radio.

The theory has met with scepticism in certain quarters, and unfortunately I have never been able to reveal my sources for the story. My informants are descendants of the inventor, and they are too embarrassed by the whole business to say much about it outside the immediate family. But it seems to me that they should be proud of their tupuna, a man of great vision and genius who managed in a few short weeks of inspired and dedicated toil to beat the scientists of Europe by almost two hundred years.

This is what happened.

One morning the inventor (whose real name I will not disclose: those familiar with certain whakapapa might work out who he was) called together the people of his kainga. So far he had been a fairly remarkable man, but today with a strange gleam in his eye he told them of a dream he had had. In it, he had fashioned a curious waka huia with knobs on. By manipulating the knobs he had been able to produce weird and thrilling noises. The people laughed and called him porangi (and for the sake of identification so shall we).

Porangi became tired of their taunts. The dream haunted him, and he withdrew himself to Whakaari to work it

out. Inspired by the dream, he attempted to make the box in real life. He devised ways of making things so far no one had even thought about.

When all was ready he paddled back to the mainland and sent word to all of the Bay of Plenty tribes to come and hear his wondrous new invention: the first transistor radio in Polynesia, or anywhere else for that matter.

The great day came. Several hundred people turned up, some from curiosity and others to laugh, but they came anyway. With a trembling hand Porangi placed his waka huia on the marae and switched a knob. Nothing happened. He twiddled further knobs. One or two lights may have come on, and there may have been a bit of crackling and whistling — the family tradition doesn't say.

With some anxiety Porangi turned to the assembly and said, "There appears to be a slight technical hitch. Doubtless this will soon be cleared up, but meanwhile I will sing for you."

His audience was less than impressed. The people threw his radio into the sea and then killed Porangi for wasting their time. After that they all went home and forgot about it — apart from Porangi's relations.

The story could be dismissed but for the discovery of the radio by the trawler. It is so badly corroded and knocked about that it is impossible to prove that it is modern. I think we may safely conclude in the face of such persuasive evidence that this is indeed the first transistor radio in the world, invented by the luckless Porangi.

Luckless he may have been, but he was a genius nevertheless. Despite the damage done to it, this prehistoric ghetto-blaster is perfect in every detail, incorporating technology which the greatest minds of Europe, America and Japan have only recently discovered. It is accurately designed and constructed to pick up any radio station in New Zea-

land.

And there lies the tragedy of Porangi's invention, for which he lost his life. Three centuries ago there were no radio stations in Aotearoa. Porangi's radio would have picked up a broadcast, but there were no broadcasts to be picked up. The man was literally ahead of his time.

He could clearly see into the future. One wonders what he listened to in his dream: the 2ZM cash call? Haare Williams or Henare Te Ua? "Ghostbusters"? The news in Tokelauan? "My Music", with Denis Norden and Frank Muir? We will never know.

More startling than the radio itself was the technology behind it. Porangi must have single-handedly invented or discovered plastic, ways to process metals, electricity, dry batteries, the principle of radio waves, loudspeakers, knobs, dials, even the handle to carry it by. Unfortunately no evidence of his workshop exists. As if in sympathy, Whakaari erupted the day after his death, obliterating everything. Perhaps some day an intrepid archaeologist will excavate the island, but so far my appeals to the archaeology departments of our universities have fallen on deaf ears.

Just think of how Porangi's discovery could have changed history. Instead of relying on flutes, Hinemoa and Tutanekai could have communicated by CB radio. The great hui at Waitangi in February 1840 need not have happened — Hobson could have chaired a phone-in programme on the National Programme. The slaughter of the musket wars could have been avoided if the phone directories said then as they do today: "When disaster strikes, turn on your radio for advice and information."

Next issue: How Tin Pan Alley ripped off fledgling Maori music industry