

Pakeha images our kids were relating to and replace them with Maori images.”

Prime speaks specifically of heroes and the importance they have to our younger generation. Urban figures and city style are equally prominent.

“Raukura” reflects this — a young Maori boy caught between a Pakeha world he can’t handle and a Maori world he doesn’t understand.

“It’s a message album — mana Maori, mana motuhake. Turn your head to taha Maori.” He insists its not purely a Dalvanius album.

I WENT INTO THE CITY FOR
SECURITY,
THE PAKEHA MAN SAYS YOU GOT
SCHOOL C,
I SAID NO NO AIN’T HAD MUCH
EDUCATION,
FAR TOO BUSY DOING TIME AND
PROBATION.
MY PAPA TOLD ME ABOUT
MAORI TANGA,
I SEE NO SENSE IN WHO AND
WHAT WE ARE.

(From “Down at the Pa.”)

“Anyway the hero dies, he succumbs to the pakeha lifestyle.”

The music, and the slightly hallucinogenic cover design by South Island artist Hohepa Wylie, leans heavily towards the abstract. “The purists aren’t going to like it again.”

It features domesticated moa and flying people, both referred to in waiata moteatea of Te Ati Awa and nga Rauru. When the hero of Raukura dopes himself to escape the Pakeha world, this is what he dreams of.

The album is a culmination of three years hard work — “it’s been a labour of love, a labour of frustration, anger and anguish.”

These words suggest the last year alone has been a period of self-analysis.

With the loss of a great friend in Ngoi Pewhairangi and also Taranaki elder Ruka Broughton, Prime faced personal setbacks.

“When Ngoi died I was left with the problem of trying to write songs without her. Her influence on me was great.”

Prime talks of the prolific Maori songwriter with sincere reverence, realising the impact she has had in shaping his career, and the many others she came in contact with.

“I was not the only one fortunate enough to work with Ngoi but you knew she had this intense relationship with everybody.”

Half way through the latest album Ngoi Pewhairangi died. “I had to have a reappraisal of the project at that stage.

“When she passed away I just couldn’t

go back to the studio. I had to will myself to work with other people to see if I could write again.”

He said he has forced himself away from the initial grief though he often finds himself dreaming about her.

The couple’s last effort ‘Te Kohanga Reo Rap’ was a strange little rap song which still remains vivid in Prime’s mind. “Plus there are a number of her lyrics which I haven’t worked on yet.”

Prime talks of a perfect formula Ngoi Pewhairangi would come up with time and time again. Her absence left him with an artistic challenge he had not bargained on, yet he felt himself slowly responding.

He reacted by taking on a number of projects, two of which have been arranged, produced and are now out for release.

Tu Tangata readers already have seen the anti-alcohol and drug campaign “Kua Makona” of which Prime was able to put his musical talents to good use. And the warding off of a contemporary social evil in the Maori community is something he appears well suited for.

The campaign also gave Prime the opportunity to work with Auckland singer-lawyer Moana Maniapoto-Jackson.

Then there was the soundtrack to “Ngati”, which although not finding release in New Zealand yet has already won international acclaim.

Both the music score and movie have made New Zealand feature film history by putting themselves up for major

awards at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival and making the top seven of ‘Critics Choice.’

Prime worked on a relatively short budget (\$13,000) and produced and arranged the soundtrack.

The movie was shot on location at Tokomaru and Waipiro Bay and tells the story of an Australian’s visit to an East Coast rural town during the 1940’s. The score features two original traditional waiata, made into modern arrangements by Prime.

One of the soundtrack’s singles “Haeremai” was released earlier this year and enabled Prime to fulfill a promise he made with Ngoi Pewhairangi. Prime chose her niece Kara Pewhairangi to perform the song.

both “Kua Makona” and “Ngati” were a welcome departure for Prime, helping him secure a spot near the top of the country’s music talent.

“I really wanted to do something outside the Patea Maori Club. I didn’t like the idea of being known just for my work with the club.” Prime still cites the group as a major part of his life and although he has taken a rather large step away from it in the past year he still feels a strong obligation towards it.

The Patea Maori Club, as the general record-buying public know it, came into existence during the small South Taranaki town’s greatest disaster.

Prime says with little guilt and a dash of irony, the Patea Freezing Works closure was the start of good times.

It was during the town’s depression that his days spent in Sydney came to focus on the club. The Patea Maori Club soon began to fill a large gap in the New Zealand music industry.

The potential of the group was quickly realised by all of the country’s media and a ready-made stage was laid out. Its music sauntered slowly up the charts before it made a deafening approach to the top.

Success was their’s, but as Prime suggests, success did not come in the form it was promised.

“Economically it was doomed to failure. We are really only a media success.

“I guess a lot of people think we’d be making a fortune, but we’re not. There are probably 20 groups around who sing better than us and it’s really difficult to sell Maori to Maori people.”

Prime soon learnt the club’s chances of true financial fame were limited. This realisation was one he didn’t like.

“The sad thing that this whole business has taught me is I know I’m better paid when I sing in English — I’m paid



Kara Pewhairangi