

right to be politically aware and motivated in order to push Maori take forward."

Ngahiwi believes Maori and Pakeha people who may be shocked by what they see as separatist songs should be aware that there is no turning back for Maori people. "The days of Howard Morrison joke songs like 'Mori the Hori' when Maori people shied away from identifying as Maori are gone."

"One of the criticisms that some Pakeha people have leveled at Maori people and Maori musicians in particular is saying, 'There they go again, copying the Blacks from overseas!'"

He says when Pakeha people copy the 'new wave' style or 'funk' or something like that, it seems perfectly alright because it's their own thing. But it's not, cause they're a Pacific people, where they live is part of the Pacific and the influences are different.

Ngahiwi explains the Maori identification with reggae, funk and soul, as a positive replacement for a negative Maori image. "Our Maori youth see the videos and hear the music and go for the spark and pride that's evident in being Black.

He's not favour of Maori youth living out a surrogate Black identity but would prefer to build up a Maori identity.

"Aotearoa use reggae and soul styles of music to get this message across." Ngahiwi sees it as transitional music that doesn't further alienate Maori

youth by preaching from a great height, as he says many Maori leaders do.

"Our first album had one very traditional song, 'Tihei Mauriora', that spoke of Rangi and Papa. Our next album had three in similar vein, I would say the elements of tuturu Maori are slowly being put in there and people may not even notice them until they find Aotearoa in two years time has a completely different sound, one very much based on traditional structures."

He says Aotearoa aim to turn the overseas reggae sound until it stands firmly on Maori ground.

With two singles and two albums released and album release in England timed for July or August, the band have moved fast. They've won a cultural fellowship exchange on a Commonwealth Youth Project Award with travel to Canada as the sweetener.

As well, Black American woman, Makeda Dread of Prophet World Beat is interested in the band gaining airplay through a 100,000 watts F.M. station in San Diego. As Ngahiwi says, those are plenty of watts to get Aotearoa's message heard on.

From what started as a band with five bi-lingual highly motivated Maori people, Aotearoa are by Ngahiwi's own words, now a band with varying degrees of cultural awareness. But you get the impression that Ngahiwi is learning to loosen up and let the message do the work.



Ngahiwi Apanui

