

POLYNESIAN FESTIVAL 1981



HENARE EVERITT

Irirangi Tiakiawa (above), speaking for Te Arawa, in action before one of the protest banners. Below is Bernadette Papesch-Huata, of Te Whare Wananga o Waikato. She won the award for the best woman leader. A spirited performance from Mawai Hakona (right).



TAINUI STEPHENS



CLIFF WHITING

With insufficient finance, wet weather and the alternative attraction of a US country singer performing along the road at Western Springs, it was perhaps a wonder that this year's New Zealand Polynesian Festival got off the ground at all.

But it did, and the grandstand at Auckland's Avondale Racecourse was packed for a weekend as thousands came to see and hear the performances.

The Festival began on 6 February — Waitangi Day. The date was chosen not for its political significance but because it offered a clear three-day weekend.

But immediately after the welcomes and replies came a deputation from the Waitangi Action Committee, who had been granted permission to present their take to the crowds. Afterwards banners were removed and the protesters mingled amicably with the crowds — in sharp contrast to the trouble occurring further north that day.

There was little talk of politics after that (apart from Saturday evening, when Arai te Uru shocked, puzzled, delighted or annoyed spectators with their Waitangi sketch) and soon the Festival was in full swing.

On these pages we show some of the sights from the Festival weekend — a weekend of colour, spectacle, music and hard work with the very best from New Zealand's Polynesian cultural groups.