



TAINUI STEPHENS

If indeed there is to be another Festival. While those attending and participating were clearly in support, the event created few ripples anywhere else and seems to have been regarded — by much of the media and many potential advertisers and sponsors anyway — as little more than a bunch of Maoris doing their thing. Between all the jokes and cajoling with the crowd, Kingi Ihaka struck a note of urgent seriousness on the subject of funding. The Festival is a monster undertaking which deserves to be taken more seriously by New Zealand in general, and which deserves to be funded more enthusiastically by the government in particular — a point which the Minister of Maori Affairs, the Hon. Ben Couch, was invited to go home and think about.

Another dilemma which faces the Festival is just how "Polynesian" it

really is. Despite its title, it is less a Polynesian festival than an exclusively New Zealand Maori competition. The participation of groups representing other island cultures such as Tonga (below), Samoa (above) or the Cook Islands (right) seems more like a breather from the serious business of assessing the whakaekē, chorale, waiata-a-ringa, poi, haka, "traditional item" and whakawatea.

While these groups clearly possess the same determination, skill, grace and exuberance in performance, it is equally clear that they cannot be judged according to the same criteria which dictate the Maori performances.

For all that, the island performances were received rapturously. Perhaps many Maori spectators had never had the opportunity to watch Island dance forms before; perhaps they were caught up in



the exciting rhythms, brilliant colours and costumes; perhaps they were frankly relieved to watch something outside the Maori context for a change: whatever the reason, it is to be hoped that if the Polynesian Festival is to live up to its name then in future a format will be devised to allow other Polynesian cultures fuller participation.



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