

NESIAN STYLES (RE)PRESENT R'N' B:
THE APPROPRIATION, TRANSFORMATION AND REALIZATION
OF CONTEMPORARY R'N'B WITH HIP HOP
BY URBAN PASIFIKA GROUPS IN AOTEAROA

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ABSTRACT

This paper will first give a brief cultural context of hip hop and its meanings in Aotearoa. The relationship and nature of hip hop and r'n'b at its point of origin (in America) is explored showing how the two pop genres are intimately related historically and musically, in Aotearoa and in the United States. From the Pacific community and media, a contemporary [Poly] 'Nesian Style' is evolving which utilises this creative and cultural combination. Many of the key Aotearoa 'Nesian' styles and artists are introduced, citing their songs, musical influences, and Pacific themes. This outline of artists supports the notion of r'n'b as contemporary local cultural expression and, alongside hip hop, as a 'Nesian Style'. Academic theory around the politicisation and deviance of African American music forms is explored, suggesting that r'n'b can be as political and meaningful, and as radical, as hip hop, both representing notions of black history, black community, and black stories. A final discussion presents the syncretic features of love songs, religion and dance which also drive these musical alignments. Interviews with local artists confirm these synchronies and support the concept that, as in the United States, r'n'b carries significations of history, race and community which are behind its and hip hop's appropriation in Aotearoa.

INTRODUCTION

Nesian style is here
Ladies beware
Now tell me if you are down
All the sounds get down

Polynesians all around
 Now this is how we move your crowd

(Nesian Mystik, 'Nesian Style', 2002)

The indigenous Māori and the Pacific immigrant communities in New Zealand/Aotearoa have been major pop music proponents and have utilised and adapted various pop styles over the years, often using them to combat histories of colonisation and oppression (Zemke-White 2001). They create new 'versions' of these American based pop musics, ones which celebrate and illustrate new identities, often integrating elements of their traditional musics. Aotearoa hip hop has been a site for much academic attention, and it offers up substantial theoretical exploration into areas of culture, identity, politics and Māori history (Zemke-White 2000; Henderson 1999; Mitchell 1996). However, this paper looks at a broader musical and sub cultural context for rap music in Aotearoa, expanding the category of 'Pasifika' proponents of hip hop to include the sister genre of r'n'b, soul and gospel and combinations thereof. Contemporary r'n'b while commercially popular in Aotearoa is often neglected for academic attention, most likely because of its 'mainstream' and commercial character as well as its textual and thematic light-heartedness. While hip hop is often used for political and oppositional purposes (Potter 1995; Rose 1994; Dyson 1993), contemporary r'n'b (a less confrontational and more 'pop' musical form), can also express narratives, alignments, and ethnic pride (Neal 2003), highlighting musical possibilities beyond overt textual communications. The 'Nesian' phenomenon of local hip hop and r'n'b combinations sees young Pacific artists in Aotearoa blending American hip hop and r'n'b influences and inspirations to express their current and past lifestyles and struggles. A 'Nesian Style' is constructed, negotiated and defined by the community, and these young artists commit to and select particular musical strands, specifically mostly hip hop and r'n'b, but with abundant Pacific referents and stories.

Many terms have been used to explain, locate and describe the global flows and localised appropriations of popular musics, such as: syncretic (Nettl 1985) which refers to the blending of two disparate but musically aligned (in some aspects) forms; micromusics (Slobin 1993), a process which sees distinct but flexible sub-cultures and scenes emerging (a foil to homogenisation worries); transculturation, a multi-directional, continuous, rootless, and interactive process between cultural systems (Wallis and Malm 1984); hybridization, an equal blending of two forms, producing a distinct but obviously combined form (Mitchell 1993); or recycling, taking cultural and/or musical elements, and using them in new and often decontextualised ways (Kaepler 2003). I

will add yet another possibility to this body of theory: to 'represent'. Represent can mean to symbolise, to stand for, and to present something again, either in an intact or transformed manner. Represent also has a hip hop vernacular usage, meaning to put forth positive images, examples and ideas for one's people or community. Young Pacific and Māori artists in Aotearoa take their preferred pop music styles, hip hop and r'n'b, and present them back into popular culture, as songs, albums and units for sales, with their own cultural and personal alterations. It will be shown that this 're-presentation' is thematically and musically grounded in unique Pacific and Māori experiences and histories. To explain what they do, these 'Nesian' artists often call upon the hip hop trope of 'representing' for their people, speaking for them, about them and empowering them. For instance, Auckland based Nesian Mystik (2002) open their *Polysaturated* album ('saturated' with 'Polynesian-ness') with a mission statement (from a voice 'on high') which asks them to 'represent':

Go forth into the world and lift up the people, not just your own people, but your friends, your peers, and your community. Basically, anyone who feels your Nesian styles mate.

...And so they stopped talking about it, and just did it. There was five of them from the far flung corners of the mighty South Pacific. From Samoa, from the Kingdom of Tonga, from the Cook Islands, to Aotearoa. They joined forces, and took, as their chosen weapon, their voices, their musical instruments, their mics, and their intelligence. (Nesian Mystik 2002 'Introduction')

HIP HOP CONTEXT

Hip hop in Aotearoa has shown itself to be a very powerful force culturally, socially and economically. There is a thriving hip hop culture embracing all the core elements (turntablism, MC-ing, b-boying and graffiti art) and, over the last decades, local rap acts have had periods of commercial success in the sales charts. Rappers like Scribe, Mareko, King Kapisi, Dei Hamo and Savage have proved to radio and the media their strength and mana as a locally produced musical form, able to compete economically against an American product. Since the first Aotearoa rap single by Māori act, Upper Hutt Posse, 'E Tu' in 1988, rap in Aotearoa has often exploited one of hip hop's greatest strengths: its potential to be an 'audible sounding space of opposition' (Baker 1993: 296) and an 'enabling source of black juvenile and communal solidarity' (Dyson 1993: 15). Māori rap artists like Te Kupu, Iwi, and Dam Native have used hip hop to explore their culture, identities and colonial past (Zemke-White 2000).

Pacific artists like Che Fu, King Kapisi and DawnRaid Entertainment crews often express concerns about relevant local issues such as poverty, genetic engineering, colonisation, religion and immigration (Zemke-White 2001). However, alongside this creative and cultural development, was the naissance of an Aotearoa Pasifika r'n'b, mirroring the association and expansion of the two genre in their point of origin, the United States.

HIP HOP AND R'N' B

She said she want some Marvin Gaye, some Luther Vandross
 A little Anita will definitely set this party off right
 She said she want some Ready For The World, some New Edition
 Some Minnie Riperton will definitely set this party off right

(Kanye West, featuring Jaime Fox and Twista, 'Slow Jamz', 2004)

Hip hop, despite being its own distinctive culture, embracing art, music, dance and other specific forms (Dimitriadis 1996), is closely linked musically and culturally in the United States to another urban African American music: r'n'b, featuring collaborating artists, songs, albums, and audiences. The genres appear together on radio stations and in magazines (for instance dedicated rap magazines like *Vibe* and *Source* also feature r'n'b artists). Interacting but independent, these two African American pop music genre, exemplify two aspects of contemporary masculinity: the style, sophistication and romance of the r'n'b singer, as foil to the danger, brutality and rebellion of the rapper.

The original use of the term 'Rhythm and Blues', was to describe the blues based African American genre in the 1950's which was the foundation of rock and roll. Maintaining itself as a 'black' popular style, the genre through the following decades was re-infused with gospel, absorbed doo wop, morphed into soul (when gospel took firm hold), given pop sensibilities by Motown, and expanded rhythmically and textually by funk and disco in the 1970's. Genre definitions and constructions are always fluid (Frith 1996) but 'r'n'b' is currently used both by fans and the music industry to mean today's African American pop music, typified by artists such as Beyonce and Usher. It has its own category in the Grammys, the Billboard charts and most other American awards shows (for example the American music awards calls it 'Soul/Rhythm and Blues'). Close collaborations between United States hip hop artists with their r'n'b counterparts, often sees rappers featuring on the bridge of an r'n'b hit, or r'n'b hooks as the choruses of rap tunes. For instance rapper Tupac was closely connected with singers K-Ci & JoJo, and singer Nate Dogg has had hits

with rappers Warren G and Snoop Doggy Dogg. Called 'Hip Hop divas,' Mary J. Blige and Erykah Badu are essentially singers but have featured rappers such as Method Man, Busta Rhymes, and Common on their hit songs. Sultry singer R Kelly has done projects with rapper Jay Z.

NESIAN STYLE

This musical interaction is echoed in Aotearoa, as many r'n'b groups are linked with rap groups. For instance highly successful r'n'b duo Adeaze are on hip hop label DawnRaid, and rapper King Kapisi appears on Jamoa Jam's first album. Samoan rapper Dei Hamo works closely with Chong Nee, a producer and performer of r'n'b (Aaria and a.k.a. Brown). Some American artists such as Lauryn Hill link the genre by performing both arts (rapping and singing) equally proficiently. This is matched in Aotearoa with Che Fu, who both sings and raps. Aotearoa group Nesian Mystik has members that rap and members that sing r'n'b, so their chart topping music reflects both influences equally. D1 Entertainment's compilation album and record label feature a combination of rappers (E-man, Immigrantz) and soulful r'n'b acts (Peta, Rosita and Vai), peppered with Polynesian referents and imagery. Others such as Jamoa Jam and Pacific Soul use hip hop and r'n'b influences in their mostly Pacific language songs.

It has been shown that many young Pacific and Māori people in Aotearoa have heartily embraced hip hop culture in all its social, cultural and musical characteristics (Zemke-White 2004). Rap artists like Tha Feelstyle (2004) are able to mix their indigenous sounds and referents in a contemporary sound which also confronts contemporary issues. Tha Feelstyle raps mostly in Samoan, and features both Samoan and Wellington imagery in his videos and CD cover and he raps about growing up away from his homeland, in Aotearoa.

However, the localised manifestations of hip hop are also matched by a love for and expression of r'n'b styles. Alicia Keys, Erykah Badu, Destiny's Child, Ashanti, Aaliyah, Brandy, Michael Jackson and Stevie Wonder, have arguably generated as much meaning and emulation for young Pacific people as Dr. Dre, KRS-One, 2Pac or Chuck D. For every young Māori or Pacific youth writing raps in their bedroom, there is an r'n'b fan practising the vocal acrobatics of Mariah Carey or R Kelly. This is evidenced in the sales charts, where American and local r'n'b vie equally with pop, rock and hip hop. Pacific young people auditioning for both the Australian and New Zealand Idol shows highlighted an overwhelming partiality for r'n'b, soul and gospel singing styles and covers. The winner of New Zealand's first Idol competition in 2004, Ben Lummis, was

a 24 year old Tongan and Māori Christian, who sings in r'n'b style.¹ Many of the other finalists who were of Pacific descent (eight out of the final ten) also performed in a distinctly r'n'b influenced style.

In Aotearoa, hip hop and r'n'b are now linked overwhelmingly on radio and television. This both reflects and influences the development of a perceptible 'Nesian Style'. Youth targeted and Māori funded Mai FM (www.maifm.co.nz), plays the 'best of today's hip hop and r'n'b' and Pacific centred Niu FM (www.niufm.com) features primarily US hip hop and r'n'b alongside Pacific pop. A new Auckland radio station (2004) 'Flava 96.1' calls itself: 'Auckland's new home of hip hop and r'n'b' (www.flava.co.nz). While it plays primarily mainstream American hip hop and r'n'b, it does support Aotearoa hip hop and r'n'b, and interestingly, maintains a Pacific cultural connection, for instance it is one of the sponsors of the Kia Orana Cook Islands Music Festival September 24–6 2004 (<http://pacificmango.co.nz/>).

Youth programmes on Māori television (opened in 2004) also focus on both hip hop and r'n'b (www.Maoritelevision.com) including Tuhono (which is hip hop based but includes r'n'b), Coast (more pop oriented, featuring a range of Māori and Pacific artists and constantly linking the terms 'hip hop' and 'r'n'b'), and L.I.P.S. ('Locking into Pacific Sounds', heavily featuring both musics).

The line-up of acts on the contemporary stage at the annual Pasifika festival is also a testament to this growing phenomenon. Raps acts such as Scribe, Al-pharisk, Savage, Nesian Mystik and Dei Hamo, play alongside r'n'b artists like Kat Theo, Ardijah, Sara Jane and Adeaze (2004–5). The Nesian sound has been evolving at this festival over the years, especially on the contemporary stage. The festival purports to:

Develop, promote and celebrate the diversity and unity that is Pasifika.
(<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/whatson/events/pasifika/default.asp>
2005)

Having these young acts is a signal from the Pacific community that they have embraced the new arts that young people are embracing, and these arts sit alongside the more traditional dances and acts on other stages. In 2005, the Pasifika festival opened with the first Pacific Music awards which gave awards to Pacific pop artists.² This was once again the community celebrating and coalescing a Nesian style that embraces hip hop and r'n'b influenced pop sounds, a sound laced with Pacific languages, referents, and signification, or as I would argue, Pacific 'representation'.

NESIAN HIP HOP AND R'N'B ARTISTS

Pacific peoples in their home islands and in Aotearoa diaspora communities, through the mass media, were aware of soul music and the other African American music traditions, as well as the political and cultural movements they connected with, in the decades they emerged. Various pop music forms and predilections (like reggae, love songs and string bands) emerged in the Pacific community (both in Aotearoa and back in the islands). However, in the last ten years, with some early efforts in the 1980's, a Pasifika soul with its hip hop counterpart, or Nesian Styles, began to ripen. From hip hop groups, to specifically labelled r'n'b groups, to Pacific language 'Island Styles' music, the following overview highlights and explores key Pacific Aotearoa artists and groups who perform r'n'b, or a combination of hip hop and r'n'b: proponents of a 'Nesian Style'. This brief outline documents and memorialises the defining musicians and groups.

The acknowledged forerunner of this 'Nesian' style is funk band Ardijah (from the 1980s). Auckland based Ardijah consisted of husband and wife team Ryan and Betty Ann Monga. They were a covers band and released some singles, doing lots of touring and supporting in the 90s. They remain a positive inspiration to many current r'n'b and hip hop acts and are often cited as important influences by Pasifika artists. On their website, Ryan cites their Pacific roots, urban location and American influences all as the seeds of their style:

Ryan Monga grew up in the deep south of Auckland (Otago) New Zealand, with a melting pot of Pacific peoples, and was exposed to a rich blend of both traditional Cook Island/Tahitian music and the sounds of international funk bands.

(<http://www.ardijah.com/history.html> 2005)

Betty-Anne's musical influences consists of Jazz/Blues singers Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald and Australia's Renee Geyer (www.ardijah.com 2005). Ardijah released their first album in 1988, *Take A Chance*, and it was in the Top Twenty on the local sales charts for four months. Three singles from the album went to the Top Ten. They call their sound 'Poly-Fonk R&B', and they have continued to record, their 1998 album *Love So Right* was in the New Zealand Top Twenty chart for seventeen weeks. A 2004 album *Journey (Aere'anga)* adds some hip hop touches (turntables) but keeps their funk sound, laced with Polynesian sonic referents like the ukulele, and Pacific stories in the lyrics. A sales site (www.amplifier.co.nz) sells their album with the phrase:

Their sound is timeless, unique and mature – a ‘sweet’ blend of funk, soul, hip hop and rap combined with their own distinct take on Polynesian groove rhythms – the Poly Fonk sound. (http://www.amplifier.co.nz/nzmusic/13568/Journey_Aereanga.html 2005)

The funk/hip hop connection was highlighted in 2002 when hip hop group Ill Semantics gave ‘props’ (proper respect) to Ardijah, featuring one of Ardijah’s songs on a refrain. Betty Ann even appeared on the video for the song, ‘Watching You’, helping to not only bring Ardijah to a younger hip hop audience, but also to signify the importance of Ardijah’s contribution to Nesian styles (hip hop and r’n’b) in Aotearoa.

Nesian styles are also forged by specifically created record labels who promote Pacific artists and combine hip hop and r’n’b. On South Auckland hip hop label DawnRaid³ are gospel r’n’b group Adeaze who sit comfortably alongside the more gangster rap styles of label mates Mareko, Savage and Alphrisk. First appearing on DawnRaid compilation album *Southside Story* (1999b) surrounded by rap acts, Adeaze was in the top ten for over 10 weeks in 2003–4 with their r’n’b ballad ‘A life with you’, followed by two other top ten singles in 2004. New Zealand born Samoan brothers Naina and Vi’i Tupai’i perfectly emulate American soul and r’n’b, but add a Pacific flavour. For example pictures from their childhood in Samoan traditional clothing (for performing, and going to White Sunday) feature on the CD cover, and in their interviews they always emphasise family and spirituality (Samoan values). Two of the songs on their debut album *Always & for Real* (2004) have lyrics in the Samoan language (‘E Paia’ and ‘The Lord is my Light’). Their commercial success indicates a broad audience appeal for well executed Pasifika r’n’b with local flavour and sincerity.

D1 entertainment’s album *D’Luscious* (Various 2004a) is a compilation featuring various acts from the independent record company, and primarily features r’n’b and hip hop (with one rock song for diversity). Rap acts E-man and Immigrantz fit naturally alongside r’n’b divas Peta, Rosita and Vai. The album, despite its American emulations, still exudes Pacific referents, the first single ‘Koko Luv’ celebrates the sexiness of Pacific people.⁴ The video features a backyard Pacific family party and plenty of Pacific clothing and imagery. A second r’n’b/pop single ‘Like Woah’ features Peta’s (Alopeta Bass) husky blues voice and rap refrains from the Immigrantz crew.

One of the biggest producers of Pacific and Māori r’n’b is the recently late Phil Fuemana (of Niuean and Māori descent) (<http://www.giftedandMaori>).

com/phill.html 2005) who claimed that his record company Urban Pacifika Records was: 'fusing Maori and Polynesian artists with hip hop and RnB and pop stylings' (www.urbanpacifika.com originally on <http://members.tripod.com/~Phylpcyde/index-3.html> 1999). Urban Pacifika's first compilation album in 2000 featured rappers Lost Tribe and Dei Hamo, alongside r'n'b acts like Moizna and a.k.a. Brown. Samoan r'n'b duo a.k.a. Brown is John Chongnee (who is also a producer for rap acts Mareko, Ill Semantics and Deceptikonz) and Sam Feo II (from one of the earliest rap groups in the late 1980's Semi MCs). A.k.a. Brown have been the opening act for international artists such as Usher (r'n'b) and Snoop Doggy Dogg (rap). Their debut single 'Something I Need' was released in 1998, and went to number five in the charts.

Fuemana has links with both the Pacific and Māori communities and later turned to developing mostly young Māori pop r'n'b and hip hop acts under the umbrella title 'Gifted and Maori' which is defined on their website as being 'a special showcase of New Zealand's Hottest new Maori Hip Hop and RnB artists' (<http://www.giftedandMaori.com/projects.html> 2004). Their first compilation (Various 2003a) featured '21 trks [*sic*] of the hottest new Maori Hip Hop/ RnB artists, a mixture of English and Te Reo Maori trks [*sic*]'. The compilation features groups such as Koha Kii ('Aotearoa's 1st all guy Te Reo Māori RnB crew, with young gun whip appeal and bangin beats'), Aaria (who won numerous local awards for their bilingual single 'Kei a wai ra te kupu'), wvvlc (whose style is defined as 'hip hop, RnB & Reggae all blended with Te Reo Maori'), Chapter and Li'l Tyrone. A second compilation was released in 2004, as well as *Wahine Volume One* (2003c), billed as:

the 1st ever all female Te Reo Maori album featuring new and upcoming female artist. The styles range from RnB, Soul, Blues, 2Step and more and features female artists from all over NZ (<http://www.giftedandMaori.com/projects.html> 2005)

These artists emulate the pop layer of r'n'b, replicating musically the United States contemporary r'n'b so successful in the local charts, yet using it to signify as Māori, and at the same time representing as contemporary, global, and sexy.

A further fruition of a 'Nesian Style' was cemented in 2003 by the New Zealand Industry Commission who put out a compilation CD called 'Pacific Niu Sila' (Various 2003b) to promote and support Pacific artists.⁵ Released only to radio and industry, the CD claims to present 'radio-friendly tracks from Pacific artists', intended to gain more radio play for Pacific hip hop and r'n'b artists. It

also reiterates the Pacific embracing of both hip hop and r'n'b for contemporary expression. Featured on the CD are Fou Nature (pop/r'n'b), Ardijah, and Lole (gospel/pop/soul), as well as hip hop acts such as Nesian Mystik, Che Fu and the Fotsouljahs. R'n'b act Cydel, are David Letoa, Saipele Nili, and Alan Togi, were 'bred & brought up in the 'Promiseland' called 'OTARA' (from www.nzmusic.com/artist.cfm?i=561 2004). Together since 1994, they claim to have 'created their own original style of music which they call 'Pac' Blues' (Pacific Blues)'. The Niu Sila compilation both reiterates and reproduces the notion of a 'Nesian' style which features primarily hip hop and r'n'b as Pacific expression.

Another Pacific musical expression which utilises both hip hop and r'n'b is music from Pacific artists in Pacific languages which is often more rooted in Pacific rather than urban or commercial locations such as the community, Pacific performance venues, or Pacific radio. For instance, there is a huge body of Cook Islands pop music (www.oysterentertainment.com), most of which is pop based but layered with ukulele. Some of it has reggae or Latin feels, but one act, the 'Kabin Bread Boys' describe themselves as 'hot':

They bring to the world a new style of Cook Island music with an r'n'b, hip-hop feel blended with the sound of fast and funky ukuleles and heavy fat bass lines. They stand tall with pride for their Cook Island culture and will strive to keep it alive. (http://www.oysterentertainment.com/entertainers/index.php?ent_id=140&show=pr_ofile&genre_id=1&place_id=9&page=3 2005).

So, they are blending these American musics with their own more localised pop sounds and insist that it is a means for expressing their culture and locations.

New Zealand based Samoans have had great success in generating a Samoan language pop music which is heavily influenced by hip hop beats, r'n'b vocals and production and soul/gospel vocals. This style also makes more direct reference to the parents of contemporary r'n'b: soul, Motown and doo wop. The leading group of this type was Jamoa Jam. Their first album *Samoana Soul* (2000) established Jamoa Jam's innovative style of soul and gospel inspired harmonies and vocal acrobatics, danceable funk beats and a passionate Samoan affirmation. A four part vocal men's group, they hearken to the earlier black groups of the sixties (Coasters, Temptations), as well as contemporary r'n'b (Boys II Men, Blackstreet). They took some well known Samoan songs and mixed them with modern beats and soul/doo wop vocals.

Jamoa Jam's second album *The Future* (2000), featured more updated Samoan hits (for instance a Punialava'a cover, 'Ai E Te Le'i Tu'ua'), some originals (such as 'Tell Me') and some r'n'b covers (Stevie Wonder's 'Love's in Need'). Their latest album *Tama Mai Le Pasifika* (2001) also relies on the funky r'n'b influences and includes Tahitian songs (to capture the profitable Tahitian markets for Pasifika pop), more redoing of 1970's Samoan pop hits (like Punialava'a's 'Fa'amavaega' and Five Stars' 'Agi Maia'), and some gospel spirituals ('Lord's Prayer').

Original Jamoa Jam member Lapi Mariner has gone on to a solo career. Lapi is an embodiment of the Pacific soul/gospel sound, with a voice reminiscent of Barry White or Luther Vandross. The music in his solo album *Just Me* (2003) varies from religious to Samoan standards. Mariner uses r'n'b nuances to deliver his cultural, emotional and personal messages. (Track 2 is written by his uncle, and track six is an r'n'b style love song with lyrics from Lapi's pastor's Tongan wife). Lapi has made many appearances on television and at sporting events, and sings the theme song for the Warriors Rugby League team.

Female Pacific r'n'b group Pacific Soul were created and produced by Jamoa Jam's producer Sam Tuuga. As much as they owe to the vocal harmonies and ukulele driven beats of Jamoa Jam, they also echo r'n'b sounds of American girl groups like En Vogue and Destiny's Child. Aiming for a Pacific market they record mostly Samoan and religious songs but are now finding a wider audience on Niu FM and other Pacific radio. Their capable singing with vocal acrobatics shows a strong influence of American divas like Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey. Formed in 2001 these four Pacific women released the single 'Alright' in 2001 and an album in 2002. Original member Sara Jane has released her own solo album *Bounz to it* (2004). The album features prayers, love songs, and Samoan language songs all in an r'n'b /pop style. However, Auva'a's first single 'Bounz to it' features the hip hop elements rapping, break-dancing (on the video) and scratching.⁶

Pacific Soul and Sara Jane's exquisite voices and styles reflect a key r'n'b feature: the r'n'b diva. R'n'b pop divas such as Anita Baker, Beyonce, Brandy, Aaliyah, Alicia Keys, Angie Stone and Ashanti, are paralleled in Pasifika pop styles, with divas such as Sara Jane, Teremoana Rapley, Lole, Lavina, Marina, Ladi6, Annie Crummer, and others who present Pacific identities, personae and themes in an r'n'b, and sometimes hip hop, influenced music package. Echoing Erykah Badu, Aretha Franklin, Lauryn Hill, Mariah Carey, and others, these Pacific women have found they have equal vocal dexterity, style and skills to their American counterparts. R'n'b has been more open to female artists, in con-

trast to hip hop, which, like rock (Whitley 1998) and punk (Leblanc 1999), has remained a primarily male-dominated phenomenon, especially in releases and charts. This is perhaps another reason for r'n'b's popularity among young Pacific musicians, as it has more scope for women artists, and still works well alongside hip hop.

To conclude this inventory, the group who coined the phrase 'Nesian Styles' is Auckland based Nesian Mystik. Their r'n'b hip hop combination style has propelled them to commercial success. They had four successful singles and their debut album *Polysaturated* went to triple-platinum status (45,000 copies sold). Their single 'For the People' recently won the 2003 APRA Silver Scroll award for song writing because, according to APRA head Mike Chunn, 'Nesian Mystik epitomise the way New Zealand music is fusing elements from its various genres' (cited in *New Zealand Herald* 2003).⁷

The album title and cover imagery of *Polysaturated* establish Nesian Mystik's connection to and promotion of their Pacific roots. Their songs make reference to not only their ethnicity, but their urban Pacific locations and lifestyles, with thematic aspects of family, unity, pride, religion and respect. The CD liner notes feature imagery of their 'Pacific-ness' including referents to their specific Pacific ethnicities (i.e. Māori, Tongan, Samoan and Cook Island ancestry) and the CD cover features a close up of a pair of knees and hands, covered in Samoan *tatau* (tattoo) and *lava lava* (colourful cloth wrap), playing a cabin bread tin (instrument frequently used in the Pacific as a drum, especially in Tonga).

This profile of 'Nesian' artists and CDs acknowledges r'n'b alongside hip hop as an important musical phenomenon among young Pacific and Māori artists in Aotearoa, examples of a nascent 'Nesian Style'. While hip hop has its own flourishing local New Zealand sub-culture and a plethora of successful artists, its companion r'n'b must also be acknowledged. This paper has only been able to mention a sample of the artists participating in this phenomenon, and other r'n'b acts deserving of mention and further exploration are D2S, Ladi6, Moizna, Ma-V-Elle, Fou Nature, Kulcha, Purest Form, Max Stowers, Terakey, and Che Fu.

The developing 'Nesian Style' indicates not only an aesthetic and historical choice, but there are historical, racial and political components to the musics as well, which arguably figure into their adoption in Aotearoa. Artist D Kamali states:

I guess we can relate to black music as Pacific Islanders because we face similar struggles and realities concerning our culture, spirituality and nationality. (pers. comm. 2005)

Despite r'n'b's more pop-like elements, scholars assert that hip hop and r'n'b can be equally powerful sites for negotiating radical identities.

USA HIP HOP AND R'N' B

American academics have explored the nature and power of black musics, looking at hip hop, but also r'n'b's potential for race politics and solidarity (Neal 2003). Its grounding in black history may explain the choice of r'n'b alongside hip hop despite its often overt sexuality and trivial and materialistic themes. This section shows how hip hop, r'n'b, and all African American musics have elements of political opposition, empowerment, and tell the stories of the African American people.

While post-modernism may have deconstructed categories of race and gender, politically, these categories still exist in subordination. Cultural critics assert that there is a difference of ideology, experience, status and culture between blacks and whites in America (West 1993; hooks 1992). Both a hierarchy and the notion of difference are maintained by a dominant 'white' class through the media and economic policies (Lemelle 1995). By being a 'black' music, presented by and for an alternative community to the mainstream dominant white hegemony, rap and any music which signifies as black such as r'n'b is therefore inherently deviant, challenging both the white value system and the maintenance of that system of inequality.⁸

R'n'b is perhaps textually too apolitical and industrially too 'mainstream' to incite the fear and racism that rap has, however, contemporary r'n'b is heavily rooted in African American traditions of gospel, funk, soul and original Rhythm and Blues, making it as musically challenging and as much a celebration of African American culture as hip hop. Rap music is considered deviant for its race politics, ghetto themes and criminality, but r'n'b's resistance and marginalisation is often overlooked because of its material and sexual themes, and its connection to a more commercial industrial process (often producer rather than performer driven). The objections and dismissal of this music because of its highly sexualised images and content echoes the perceived sexual deviance and marginalisation of the blues (Oliver 1995). It also can be argued that rap music too has always matched its own politics and rebelliousness with equal amounts of materialism and sexism, making it sometimes no less

superficial than r'n'b. Recent popular commercial rap styles from the American South (artists like Chingy and Lil John) centre on sexual, partying and materialistic themes.⁹

Rose (1994) argues for the political power and resonance of any style which signifies as 'black' (despite textual themes) because of musical deconstructions (of Western musical hegemony), links with African culture or history, and offerings of an alternative pop culture hegemony. Rose (1994) insists that rap is musically deviant because it defies western musical logics of melody, harmony and composition. Rap's reliance on the beat and bass, and its disruption through sampling and scratching techniques can often locate an ethnocentric bias on the part of its detractors (Considine 1991). Contemporary r'n'b too often defies rock aesthetics of authorship and authenticity. Like pop, r'n'b is most often highly produced and few artists write their own songs, subjecting it to criticisms of being light hearted, superficial, and 'manufactured'. This shows ignorance of r'n'b's roots in jazz, soul and blues, and its signification for the black community. Ironically r'n'b is firmly grounded in the same musics as rock is based upon. Rock often prides itself on being politically oppositional and 'alternative', as a foil to pop, operating outside of (or creatively despite) the restrictions of capitalism (Jones and Featherly 2002; Weinstein 1999). However, as rock has always been intimately tied with the market, sales and capitalism, rock's opposition is often more an affectation or stance rather than economic reality (Grossberg 1999). Another justification for rock's supremacy over r'n'b, rap and other African American forms, is the latter's connection with sex and the body (McClary and Walser 1994), as opposed to the mind. McClary and Walser (1994) argue that African American musics are no less intricate and no less intellectually mediated than classical or rock musics. I suggest that Aotearoa artists are aware of this and see through the mass mediation and commercialism to find racial and historical alliances:

Yes these genres may be more market-driven, 'cheesey' and homogenised now, but there is an aesthetic, assurance, sexual-confidence and attitude that only R'n'B and hip hop can provide. It's a sense that Pacific and Maori identity, urban especially, is in context.... we can belong alongside other brown and black artistry. (CocoSolid, pers. com. 2005)

The use of, and homage paid to, African traditional styles and African American musics in rap (Baker 1993; Dyson 1993; Rose 1994) and r'n'b positions them as part of a larger cultural history of African-American genre used for opposition and identity, particularly on a 'racial' level (such as blues, jazz and

soul). Berry (1994) asserts that, from spirituals to rap, black music style is a communicative process interwoven deep within the black American experience. Spirituals were used as a code for slave escapes, news and reassurance; blues represented loss of faith in the black community; avant-garde jazz was a musical/cultural/political protest to mainstream styles and scales; Soul Music represented heightened black consciousness, unity and pride; and rap reflects the distinct experience of today's urban black culture. The Blues genre was even called 'race music' until 1949 which, as a term, indicated that the artist was black yet also served to keep the music isolated from the mainstream (Garofalo 1995). So while r'n'b may not often explore black history or themes, it nevertheless reflects historical black experiences. This is cited as part of the appeal of 'black' music to Pacific and Māori New Zealanders:

I think it relates to the environment people are in, islanders are mi-grates trying to relate; there is a history of brown/Maori vs white/pakeha, so music or rhythm being a medium of effective communication is the connection, to express our stories and journeys be told. (BBoy Raw Styles, pers. com. 2005)

Brackett (1995) argues that there can be a distinctive African-American music that does not have to rely on an essentialised or romanticised view of 'blackness' or 'African American-ness'. He claims that such a 'discursive formation' of 'blackness' is not static; it is consistent in some respects but undergoing modification in others. Pop musics (especially r'n'b and hip hop) are most likely an integral part of that 'discursive formation' expressing and modifying notions of what blackness is or can be. Rose (1994) argues that rap no matter the content, always has a politically resistive role, because of the web of institutional politics to which rappers are subjected. Resistance is exercised through signs, language and institutions and the struggle over public space. This also applies to r'n'b which is subject to the same racist systems and structures (Neal 1997).

Alongside connections to history, deviance and identity, r'n'b is also tied to notions of 'community'. George (1988) says that while r'n'b is colour blind, it is also a powerful symbol for a black community forged by common political, economic, and geographic conditions. Neal (1997:119) explores the specific vocal intonations of soul music (now found in much r'n'b) finding them to be 'the creolization of various discourses and energies to create a mode of expression that is uniquely African (pretext), uniquely American (context), and capable of liberatory (subtext) interpretations'. Neal posits that these music styles resonate with a foundational nostalgia: they represent 'African American efforts to re-build community by, ironically embracing communal models

from previous eras of black communal stability' (Neal 1997: 133). So, perhaps outside the African American community, r'n'b music with its soul roots and vocal virtuosity, not only signifies as 'black' but can express notions of community and solidarity for other marginalised peoples.

There is an awareness among Aotearoa artists with whom I have spoken, of the historical, 'racial' alliance and community components of r'n'b and hip hop:

'Black Music' has always impacted on Pacific and Maori communities here. Soul, rock'n'roll, disco, funk, all of these things stylistically influenced and attracted our parents. I think this natural affinity with a brown face has been passed down, coupled with the fact that these scenes and musicians give us confidence – an edge – over our non-Pacific counterparts. (CocoSolid, pers. com. 2005)

While rap may have more overt political themes, discussion and references, both genre are intrinsically tied to African American experience and community. These powerful signifiers also mean the music can be used as an interactive platform to express distinctive stories and identities:

We [*Pacific peoples*] feel we resemble them [*African Americans*] physically and socially (with parallels of oppression and colonisation). Pasifika communities want to represent these movements on the other side of the planet, and being the brown minority who else better? (CocoSolid, pers. com. 2005)

The hip hop/soul combination music presented by young urban Pasifikans in Aotearoa 'represents' or projects a 'style of self onto the world' (Dyson 1993: 15 on American hip hop). This 'self' locates their global and indigenous influences and associations, and offers a continued effort to describe modern circumstances using chosen globalised pop styles combined with traditional Pacific elements and connections. Artists interviewed cite the use of the music to 'represent' back to the world at large:

Black music gives us the opportunity and a formulae to take our messages and beliefs to the rest of our people world-wide as well as educating the western world about our existence and reality here in the Pacific. (D Kamali, pers. com. 2005)

Also taking on board a Black experience BUT also aware of my own PASIFIKAN dimensions and its impact on that. Thus it was not just

one way traffic rather I am contributing to a dialogue that has a two way flow. That's why Pasifikan Hip Hop for me is positive and what makes our brand of Hip Hop and r'n'b unique to this part of the globe... Being empowered to represent. We are also attempting to free the music industry from its corruption of a people movement and corporate savagery. (RevMC, pers. com. 2005)

This artistic and cultural appropriation expresses an underlying racial politics. At the same time it shows a proactive creative reaction to American styles, forging a local hip hop/r'n'b product which is equally reliant on Pacific music and song, current social locations, and diasporic histories. I suggest three aesthetic synchronies which also draw Pacific and Māori artists to r'n'b: love songs, rhythm and spirituality.

SYNCHRETISM

Hip hop has obvious lifestyle relevances for young people in Aotearoa with its exploration of the urban ghetto, race politics and community empowerment. The lifestyles, histories, concerns and class locations of African Americans may in some ways parallel the positions of young Pacific people, and while this may explain some grounds for hip hop's appeal, such political concerns are not usually expressed overtly in the themes of r'n'b, which textually is mostly about parties, romance, sex and money. This exploration has shown that r'n'b offers a particular style and virtuosity that Pacific artists have shown a penchant for, but three further synchronies are suggested: religion, dance and love:

I think just the soulful feel of the music, I find it relaxing. Because it's performed by black Americans I find I can relate to the singing styles and the lyrics, a lot of it you can relate to, because of the love (Naomi Fuamatu, pers. com. 2005)

The Gospel implications are strong spiritually and theologically... Pasifikans probably relate to it because of its historical Gospel influence hence this 'feel' for the music which then transcended to genres of romance and telling it like it is. R'n'b is about an experience but even more importantly it's an emotion being released and realised. (RevMC, pers. com. 2005)

The gospel aspect of r'n'b is significant to Pacific young people because of its religious associations. R'n'b is linked to gospel with its roots in soul music

(which sprang directly from gospel) and gospel maintains a link with contemporary r'n'b through specific artists who cross over between audiences and genres (such as Whitney Houston and Jill Scott) and linked singing styles. The church is an important element of Pacific culture and offers a cohesive facet of modern immigrant communities (Anae 2001; Taule'ale'ausamai 2001). The possibility that one's favourite musics or artists also use their talents at times to praise God could be one synchrony between the cultures. Pasifika artists like Sara Jane, Lapi, Adeaze and Ben Lummis feature Christian material as part of their repertoire and personae and feature gospel musical influences.

There is also a strong dance element in Pacific culture (Moyle 1991) and while rap music can be sometimes too centred on the text and word, r'n'b is often focussed on the dance and the body, perhaps another reason for its appeal for young Pasifikans:

Because we [*Pacific peoples*] like the groove of the music. (Saia Tuitahi, pers. com. 2005)

I think it's the rhythm, the rhythm, the easy rhythm. You know, the slow jams. (Sefa Enari, pers. com. 2005)

Dance is an integral element of African American musics (Breckenridge 2000) and enhances wider corporeal communicative components like groove and bass line. Party and dance related songs like 'It's On' (Nesian Mystik) and Marina's 'Samoan Beat' are a key feature of the local genre.

Another characteristic feature of the r'n'b genre is its love songs or 'slow jams':

The heartbreak stories or stories of a first love is always a theme which alot of island songs are based on which Pasifika people can relate to. (Saia Tuitahi, pers. com. 2005)

R'n'b has really good songs; the words are usually about love, or torn love. I think r'n'b is a black thing, so there's that association with coloured artists, that sort of association with where they are coming from. And the way they describe their lyrics their partners and terrible break ups. (Sefa Enari, pers. com. 2005)

The complex ballads of Stevie Wonder, the romance of Luther Vandross, and the earthy sexuality of Marvin Gaye and D'Angelo, are a predictable attraction

for Pacific people who already showed a predilection for love songs in earlier generations with the sweet ‘island’ love songs of Bill Sevesi and Bill Wolfgramme in the forties and fifties, as well as even earlier Hawaiian standards (Zemke-White 2002). Ben Lummis, Ardijah, and Adeaze for instance, fully exploit these romantic themes of r’n’b .

CONCLUSION

The linked appropriation of hip hop and r’n’b signals aesthetic, historical, and social affinities between Pacific people, and the originators of the musics they love. This empathy and attraction has in turn generated a local product that creatively expresses the cultural, political and social locations in which Pacific and Māori young people find themselves. ‘Nesian’ or ‘Pasifika’ hip hop/r’n’b despite outward musical similarities to its American counterpart, is actually a unique localised cultural product that reflects local themes and identities. The Pacific Music Awards in 2005, the Pasifika Festival, and musics presented on Mai Time, Māori television, Niu FM, and in *2 b Spacific* magazine, foster and reflect this Nesian style. The style re-packages (re-presents) the American sounds, and is then used to actually speak for, empower, and ‘represent’ urban Pacific and Māori peoples. While some may read this phenomenon as Americanisation and merely mass mediated global pop hegemony, I argue that the identities, lyrics, and musics of these artists denote rather a diffusion, a re-presentation, which maintains its roots as ‘representing’. Just like African American artists communicate and signify distinct values and communities through sometimes outwardly commercialised and seemingly apolitical music forms, Pacific artists are using the genre of hip hop and r’n’b for their inherent core aspect of speaking for and telling stores of a marginalised people:

But I think it is the whole element of expressing one’s roots in a European society also which attracts not only Islanders but people in socio economic hardship to this type of music. I believe we just have ties to this rhythm and blues sound because history states this is we/our people have travelled from Africa the root and heart of the rhythm. (BBoy Raw Styles, pers. com. 2005)

[*On rhythm and blue’s appeal to Pacific people*] There’s that whole movement, the whole civil rights movement, that just went every where. So that’s the whole idea of this freedom to express. You can sing songs about being a black man who has lost his black lady. Or black ladies will sing songs about violent things about being abused,

and I think Polynesians can relate to that. And a lot of songs touch on oppression. (Sefa Enari, pers. com. 2005)

Nesian hip hop/r'n'b music supports other studies which indicate that popular music styles can resonate across cultures and develop localised versions (such as Guibalt 1997; Regev 1997). Like rock and reggae, particular American styles are often embraced by particular audiences and proponents. Hip hop and r'n'b's appropriation in Aotearoa is also part of a wider trend of Polynesian appropriation of a range of pop forms and styles. For instance Reggae is also treasured by Pacific and Māori people, for both listening and performing (for instance bands Katchafire, Aotearoa, Rania & Ruia, and Unity Pacific); this is paralleled in Hawaii (Weintraub 1998) and other parts of the Pacific (Solomons, Vanuatu).

The choice of r'n'b by young Pacific artists arguably then signifies a complex musical and aesthetic preference which also relies on historical, racial and social resemblances. Hip hop and r'n'b in Aotearoa are now both firmly implanted as local forms. 'Nesian' hip hop and r'n'b artists are combining these American forms with Pacific songs, instruments, languages and identities shaping their own unique genre and sub-culture which reflects contemporary locations and associations. They are re-presenting these African American forms to the world, and in a Nesian style which 'represents' for their own people, locations and lifestyles.

There exists no force
That could ever hold us back
Armed with intention
Unified expression
Together we're stepping forward

(Nesian Mystik, 'Unity', 2002).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I especially need to thank all the friends and artists who gave interviews, and all the artists and students who send me music and include me in their creative projects. Your inspirational art not only deserves the financial and media attention it is getting, but it also warrants this critical academic exploration, and this is just the start.

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DISCOGRAPHY (NEW ZEALAND)

Adeaze 2004 *Always & for Real* DawnRaid

Annie Crummer 1992 *Language* Warner Music NZ

Annie Crummer 1996 *Seventh Wave* Warner Music NZ

Ardijah 1987 *Take a Chance* WEA

Ardijah 1998 *Love so Right* Warner Music NZ

Ardijah 1999 *Time* Warner Music NZ

Ardijah 2004 *Journey* Polyfonk

Ben Lummis 2004 *One Road* BMG

Che Fu 1998 *2b S.Pacific* BMG

Che Fu 2001 *Navigator* Sony
D2S 2002 *Ride with me* (single) Player Park
Dam Native 1997 *Kaupapa Driven Rhymes Uplifted* Tangata Records
Deceptikonz 2002 *Elimination* Dawn Raid
Dei Hamo 2004 *We gon' ride* [single] Hiruys
DJ Sirvere 2001 *Major Favours 1* Universal NZ
DJ Sirvere 2002 *Major Flavours 2* Universal NZ
DLT 1997 *The True School* BMG
Dubious Brothers 2002 *Trade Secrets* Shock NZ
Fast Crew 2004 *Set The Record Straight* Akrite
Feelstyle 2004 *Break it to Pieces* Can't Stop
Footsouljahs 2002 *Stylez Deliveriez Flowz* 2Much Records
Fou Nature 2001 *Love come down* (single) Pagan
Ill Semantics 2002 *Theory of Meaning* DawnRaid
Jamoā Jam 2000a *Samoana Soul* Pacific Dream Records
Jamoā Jam 2000b *The Future* Pacific Dream Records
Jamoā Jam 2001 *Tama Mai Le Pasifika* Pacific Dream Records
King Kapisi 2000 *Savage Thoughts* Festival Mushroom
King Kapisi 2003 *2nd Round Testament* Festival Mushroom
Lapi Mariner 2003 *Just Me* (Artist)
Lole 2000 *Samoana* Sista Records
Mareko 2003 *White Sunday* DawnRaid
Marina *Marina the album* Pacific Dream Records (year unstated)
Misfits of Science 2004 *Fools Love* [single] BMG
Moizna 1997 *Just another Day* (single) UPR
Nesian Mystik 2002 *Polysaturated* Bounce Records
Pacific Soul 2002 *Pacific Soul* Pacific Dream Records
P-Money 2002 *Big Things* Dirty/Kog
Sara-Jane Auvaa 2004 *Sara Jane* (Artist)
Savage 2005 *Swing* [single] DawnRaid
Scribe 2003 *The Crusader* Dirty

Te Kupu 2000 *Ko Te Matakahi Kupu* Kia Kaha Productions
Upper Hutt Posse 1995 *Movement in Demand* Tangata Records
Various 1999a *Pioneers of a Pacifican Frontier* BMG/UPR
Various 1999b *Southside Story* Dawn Raid Entertainment
Various 2001 *Southside Story 2: International* Dawn Raid Entertainment
Various 2002 *Loop 003* Loop
Various 2003 *Gifted and Maori Vol 1* Gifted and Maori
Various 2003b *Pacific Niu Sila* (promotional) NZMIC
Various 2003c *Wahine Vol 1* Gifted and Maori
Various 2004a *D'Luscious* DI Entertainment
Various 2004b *Gifted and Maori Vol 2* Gifted and Maori
wvVLC 2003 *Waitahanui* Gifted and Maori

DISCOGRAPHY (USA)

2Pac 1996 *All Eyez On Me* Death Row Records
2Pac 1997 *R U Still Down? (Remember Me)* Jive records
2Pac 1998 *Greatest Hits* Amaru/Interscope Records
2Pac 1998 *Me Against The World* Amaru/Jive
Aaliyah 2001 *One in a Million* Virgin
After 7 1997 *The Very Best of After 7* Virgin
Alicia Keys 2001 *Songs in A minor* J-records
Angie Stone 2004 *Stone Love* J-records
Anita Baker 1986 *Rapture* Elektra
Aretha Franklin 2001 *Aretha's Best* Rhino
Ashanti 2003 *Chapter II* Def Jam
Beyonce 2003 *Dangerously in Love* Sony
Blackstreet 1994 *Blackstreet* Interscope
Brandy 2002 *Full Moon* Atlantic
Brian McKnight 2002 *From There to Here: 1989–2002* Universal
Chingy 2003 *Jackpot* Capitol
Chuck D 1996 *Autobiography of Mistachuck* Polygram

- D'Angelo 1995 *Brown Sugar* Capitol
Destiny's Child 2001 *Survivor* Sony
Dr. Dre 1992 *The Chronic* Interscope Records
En vogue 1992 *Funky Divas* Atlantic
Erykah Badu 1997 *Baduism* Universal
James Brown 1991 *James Brown 20 All Time Greatest Hits* Polygram
Jill Scott 2000 *Who Is Jill Scott?: Words and Sounds, Vol. 1* Sony
Jodeci 1991 *Forever my Lady* MCA
Kanye West 2004 *College Dropout* Roc-A-Fella
K-Ci and JoJo 1997 *Love Always* MCA
KRS-One 1993 *Return of the Boom Bap* Jive
Lauryn Hill 1998 *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* Ruffhouse Records
Lil John and the Eastside Boys 2001 *Put yo hood up* Tvt
Luther Vandross 1999 *Greatest Hits* Sony
Macy Gray 2001 *The Id* Sony
Mariah Carey 1990 *Mariah Carey* Sony
Marvin Gaye 2003 *What's going On [Remastered]* Universal
Mary J. Blige 1992 *What's the 411* MCA
Mary J. Blige *No More Drama* 2002 MCA
Michael Jackson 2001 *Off the Wall [special edition]* Sony
Nate Dogg 2001 *Music & Me* Elektra/Asylum
Prince 1981 *Controversy* Warner Brothers
Prince 1986 *Purple Rain* Warner Brothers
R Kelly 2003 *Chocolate Factory* Jive
R Kelly and Jay Z 2002 *The Best of Both Worlds* Universal
Snoop Doggy Dogg 1993 *Doggystyle* Death Row Records
Snoop Doggy Dogg 1996 *Tha Doggfather* Death Row Records / Interscope Records
Stevie Wonder 2000 *Original Musiquarium I* Polygram
Stevie Wonder 2000 *Songs in the Key of Life* Universal
TLC 1994 *Crazysexycool* La Face

Toni Braxton 1993 *Toni Braxton* La Face

Usher 2004 *Confessions* La Face

Warren G 1994 *Regulate... G Funk Era* Def Jam

RELEVANT SITES

www.Maorimusic.com

www.maifm.co.nz

www.nzmusic.org.nz/pag.cfm?i=1231 (Niu FM)

www.niufm.com

www.flava.co.nz

www.Maoritelevision.com

www.urbanpacifika.com

www.giftedandMaori.com

www.ardijah.com

www.dawnraid.co.nz

www.allmusic.com

www.urbanpacifika.com

www.oysterentertainment.com

www.sarajane.co.nz

www.nesian.com

www.hiphopnz.com

www.nzmusic.com

www.amplifier.co.nz

NOTES:

- 1 I would argue that it was no coincidence that in the weeks leading up to Lummis' New Zealand Idol win, that Usher had been number one. Ben looks very similar to Usher and emulates his singing style, so seeing a local version was most likely instrumental in Ben's taking the title.
- 2 In 2005 the winners were: Best Pacific female artist- Sara-Jane Auva'a (soul r'n'b); Best Pacific group- Adeaze (gospel r'n'b); Best Pacific hip-hop artist- Tha

Feelstyle; Best Pacific male artist- Tha Feelstyle (rap); Best Pacific music album- Ardijah ('Poly Fonk', or funk); Best Pacific song- Kas Futialo & Ian Seumanu for 'Su'amalie/Ain't Mad At You' (rap).

- 3 DawnRaid is named for the period in the 1970's when Pacific Island homes were raided by the police, looking for 'overstayers' or those who had come to work in the factories, but whose visas had run out. This is a very painful time in New Zealand immigrant history, and like other American rap record labels (Death Row for instance) utilises a negative facet of their community location as a point of unity, activism and empowerment.
- 4 'Koko' can mean cocoa referring positively to brown skin, or coconuts, once a derogatory term for Pacific immigrants, but now sometimes turned around and used as a term of communal pride (particularly among Pacific rappers).
- 5 The words Niu Sila allude to both a Pacific accented pronunciation of New Zealand, and the meaning of the word niu in many Polynesian languages: the young coconut, one of the foundations of Pacific economy and lifestyle.
- 6 'Scratching' is what a hip hop DJ does by pulling vinyl records back and forth, making a scratching sound. It is a key audible hip hop signifier.
- 7 Nesian Mystik are the third hip-hop artists to win a Silver Scroll, after King Kapisi and Che-Fu (the latter uses a reggae based hip hop/ r'n'b style combination).
- 8 However, Guevara (1997) warns against seeing hip hop culture as only African American derived, she argues for the acknowledgement of its Latino roots, and Cross (1993) cites Caribbean (the first break DJ Kool Herc) and European (Kraftwerk on Afrika Baamabata) influences in the earliest manifestations of the culture.
- 9 A cluster of New Zealand pop rap has emerged garnering number one hits locally. However artists like Fast Crew ('I got'), Dei Hamo ('We gon' ride'), Misfits of Science ('Fools Love') and Savage ('Swing') arguably manage to both emulate and at the same time parody American pop rap styles.

See Ya caught up in the material
Fancy this, fancy that
Ain't nothin' fancy bout ya rap
Ya weak, cheap creeps ain't nothin' unique

I got mad styles, knock peeps off their feet
Ain't makin' this fo' radio
Yet they wanna play it tho....
All ya money hungry grubbin' hustlin'
Wannbe champagne bubblin'
Honey covered crews
Smotherin' the true sound
Who frontin' in the sound booth
All ya underground cats
Goal driven but ya livin' only fo' the mad cash by cuttin'
Spittin' on tracks with no rhythm

(Misfits of Science, 2004. 'Fools Love')