

**Auckland Acoustics Benefit
Acoustic Confusion, Kathryn
Tait, Chris and Lynne
Thompson, Wayne Gillespie,
Siren, Nick Smith, Mahina
Tocker**
Freeman's Bay Community
Centre

'Auckland Acoustics' is being held to raise funds for an album of the same name, which will feature the acts present tonight. Judging by the packed hall their efforts should be well rewarded.

First up is Acoustic Confusion, three men and one woman playing folksy 70s-ish music. They're back from a break of some months with new songs, blending strong voices and harmonies with a haunting mouth organ and guitars. The overall effect is professional and popular, but a bit dated for my liking.

All acts are restricted to five songs each, so as to be out of the hall by 10.30pm. Kathryn Tait is next with guitar and mouth organ, which she plays simultaneously, assisted by a quiet bongo player. She has a tawny, direct style and a knack of making people laugh. Her lyrics are the most audible of the evening — and, for me, the best. 'Wounded By the World' sends shivers down me, the songs feel true musically and socially. She goes off to a mountain of applause. Can this quality be maintained?

Chris Thompson is a 'veteran of folk music' and is now back in NZ working as a duo with his wife Lynne. They're accomplished musicians, but I get annoyed by the lyrics, cowboy songs seem irrelevant to a NZ audience, especially after the depth of Kathryn Tait's songs. Their best song is an instrumental, the two guitars dancing together and finally merging. Wayne Gillespie has just

returned from Australia and tonight is accompanied by a bass player and, in later songs, by Acoustic Confusion. His voice is deep and expressive, I enjoy the 'Broken Marriages and ... Skodas' songs which he performs alone except for occasional sparse bass support in the chorus. It's spine-tingly sad.

Siren are the first band to excite me. Three hard-hitting, dynamic women singing gutsy blues. They mix haunting harmonies with powerful solos, singing Bob Dylan songs along with their own. They clown their way through the set, the audience hanging on every acid word and outrageous action, but their music is serious. Seriously beautiful, political and strong. I don't want them to leave.

Nick Smith and his band are young and inexperienced in comparison with their co-performers. They made their debut at the Globe two months ago and are the only band not to have an album out. The MC asks us to be open-minded — their music is different to what we've been hearing. They look more suited to the Windsor and I wonder what they're doing here — until they begin. Nick's voice bursts forth from him like a lion from a cage. It's raw, angry and beautiful. The emotion is right from his heart, agonised gut-wrenching howls and growls. I'm so absorbed by him that I find the rest of the band distracting; he doesn't really need them, as he proves with the song he sings himself. It's slightly like John Cale — almost as good. His last song is so powerful there are people who can't handle it — its chorus of fucks no doubt contributing to the apparent discomfort around me. Nick Smith is too good to miss.

Mahina Tocker winds up the evening on guitar/vocals, singing short, bluesy woman-orientated

songs. She sings 10 or so songs, joined by Siren for the later ones. Very professional (trained?) voice, sounding somewhat like Joni Mitchell.

The quality of the evening never wavers. Hopefully the ensuing LP will spread the news that Auckland contains some extremely talented and exciting acoustic musicians.
L.A. Steele

Easy listening 'Acoustics'

'Auckland Acoustics' is a pleasant, 'easy' listening record featuring some of the best local acoustic musicians around today.

The well produced album consists of songs that are mostly folk orientated, but a couple provide a healthy breeze with more 'Rock' tint.

Highlights on the album are 'Papa Will Survive' by Mahina which reminds one of Joni Mitchell at times, 'She Should Have Been A Lady' by Chris and Lynne Thompson and Wayne Gillespie's two songs 'While The Cat's Away' and 'Invercargill'.

Wayne Gillespie is a musician who knows what good folk music should sound like and he combines this with a sad but witty text.

'Acoustic Confusion,' slowly becoming one of the best folk bands around town, contributes two songs to this record of which 'Takeaway Newspapers' shows why the band deserves this reputation.

The record had its beginnings at the Globe's Acoustic Music night and it's good to see these local bands can put an album together that not only looks good but sounds good too.

It proves the local acoustic music scene is very much alive and capable of producing some professional sounding material.

Rene de Groot

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Auckland Acoustics* (Groovy)

Non-electric music seems to be undergoing the sort of Auckland renaissance that blues did three or four years back. Not only that, a lot of it is making its way to semi-posterity on record.

And hot on the heels of local releases by acts like Wayne Gillespie and Acoustic Confusion comes this 13-track compilation featuring those two plus other unamplified types.

And a rich and enjoyable cross-section of songs, voices and styles it is too, from near-traditional folksiness to Gillespie's lovely, jazzy *While the Cat's Away*, Nick Smith's eerie *Wasted Days* and Siren's Dylan and Patti Smith covers.

Other artists include Chris and Lynne Thompson, Kathryn Tait and two tracks from the prodigiously-talented Mahina Tocker.

★★★