

QUOTAS OR NO? MUSIC VOX POPS

By this time next year it's very likely radio stations here will be forced to play a set percentage of New Zealand music. The desirability of compulsory minimum local content quotas is now under review by the Royal Commission on Broadcasting and its report is due by mid-1986. The Minister of Broadcasting says if quotas get the nod he'll get the necessary regulations drawn up immediately.

The issue of local music on radio is a complex and controversial one. Commercial radio says it can't make a distinction between local and international music because it simply plays what people want to hear on the basis of what's currently selling. In turn, parts of the music industry accuse radio of dictating what appears on the charts by exposing only a narrow range of songs in the

first place. It's a chicken-and-egg type of argument that could go on for ever and still never increase the range of music available on the radio. Realising that, people who have a vested interest in getting more New Zealand music exposed have opted for a more direct approach and the quotas argument has gained momentum.

In the last few years broadcasters here have voluntarily tried to make sure 10 per cent of their programmes were locally sourced. Today most admit they'd be lucky to manage five per cent, although all claim to play more than anyone else. If quotas are established it's likely they'll start at 12-and-a-half per cent, which is slightly more than one song an hour on average. That may not sound like much, but a lot of expectations ride on that guaranteed slice of airtime. The local industry only has to look to Australia, where quotas were first slapped on 12 years ago, to convince itself a similar move here would pay off.

The oft-quoted Australian exam-

ple is worth studying. In the first year (1973-74) when the quota was 10 per cent, the average result from all stations was more than 15 per cent. Today, with the quota at 20 per cent, most stations programme up to 30 per cent as a matter of course. Australian radio wants to play Australian music irrespective of whether it has to.

Quotas appeared in Australia just as the country was embarking on a period of intense patriotism. Happily the recording industry had also come of age and inroads were being made in overseas markets, particularly America. Radio claims these two factors, together with the strong live band scene, were behind more Australian music getting on the airwaves and that quotas were merely incidental. In New Zealand also, unless there's a corresponding public awareness, a commitment to develop recording techniques and some sort of overseas success, quotas alone are unlikely to achieve much.

This is not to let New Zealand ra-

dio off the hook. Its pitiful record on local music is plain for all to hear. It is surely not the fault of the New Zealand musician that radio has become such a pointless exercise but music has become a major casualty. If radio cannot recognise the vital role it has to play in the promotion of New Zealand music and our culture in general then it should be dragged, kicking and screaming if necessary, to its senses. The imposition of quotas will be a terrible shock to its system but will show radio can no longer be a law unto itself.

One last point. You can't legislate for quality. Ultimately music must stand or fall on its own merit and that's how it should be judged. Making any type of music a special case purely because of who made it can be seen to run counter to artistic integrity. Quotas are a crude device and wide open to abuse. There is no simple answer to getting more New Zealand music on the radio and quotas remain a very simplistic approach. In the coming months, as

the argument continues and the stock of goodwill on both sides dwindles further, it's to be hoped more realistic ways of strengthening our music industry are also considered.

Mark Everton

Brendan Smythe
QEL Arts Council

Quotas is the most crucial issue that we're fighting in relation to New Zealand music. Our contention is that New Zealand radio should sound New Zealand. Within the broadcasting legislation radio stations have an obligation to maintain and develop a New Zealand identity in programming but they're not doing it properly. Ideally quotas wouldn't be necessary but experience suggests they are the only strategy we can use to achieve the objective.



Jordan Luck
Dance Exponents

Quotas will be great if they help get the boring stuff off the radio. They'll be healthy for anything that's happening and could mean our music will be heard by a lot of people for the first time. New Zealanders are quite diverse in their musical tastes but radio doesn't reflect that. Also New Zealand music is quite distinctive, quite radical really, in an industry sense worldwide. That sort of music is not so instantly appealing or acceptable so maybe it has to be made a special case to give it a better chance of success.

Glynn Tucker Jnr

Managing director, Mandrill Studios, Reaction Records

Quotas are a great move in the right direction, 10 years too late, but very welcome. They will encourage all record companies to make more New Zealand records and also to spend more time polishing up the quality. This is happening now, but with the extra confidence of knowing you've got a good chance of airplay, things will get even better.



Trevor Reekie

Pagan Records, Car Crash Set

From a musician's point of view it'll be far more interesting to hear our songs on the radio for a change. Making records is fine but it's very disappointing to see them go down the tube because radio doesn't find them instantly programmable.

From the independent record label's point of view quotas are a positive step if only because they'll put all radio stations on the same footing when it comes to local music. Quotas won't force radio to play anything it doesn't want to but it will have to play a set percentage and it all adds up.

Ray Columbus

Long-time quotas campaigner

I do believe there's enough music here to sustain a quota system. Quotas will be good for pop, rock and country music but especially for MOR, easy listening and classical music which doesn't have a market here because nobody plays it.

Quotas will stimulate an industry that hasn't really flourished since the late 1960s when private radio arrived and the ratings battle started with the so-called public broadcasters. But let's be genuine and congenial about this, it doesn't have to be open warfare. Radio says quotas will create an artificial situation, but surely it's artificial at the moment with tight playlists spinning around the same imported tracks. Let's just get on with it and get it right.



Keith Williams
Programme Director, Triple M 89FM

Quotas will have no effect whatsoever on what they're supposed to do. There's no indication they've helped anyone in the Australian or Canadian industries. In my two and a half years at Triple M in Sydney we played an average 27 per cent Australian content without even trying. We just supplied what an audience demanded and it's the same here.

I would love to have more Kiwi music on the radio but in general I think New Zealanders aren't as patriotic about local music as they should be. One danger with quotas is that they'll cause other music to miss out, music that at the moment the audience tell us it wants to hear. Quotas also over-inflate the value of someone's work and that doesn't do them any good or us. It doesn't encourage people to put out a quality product.

Anyway, it's the live scene that makes music sell, you go and see a hot band and the next day go out and buy its record. That's how Australia. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

John MacCready

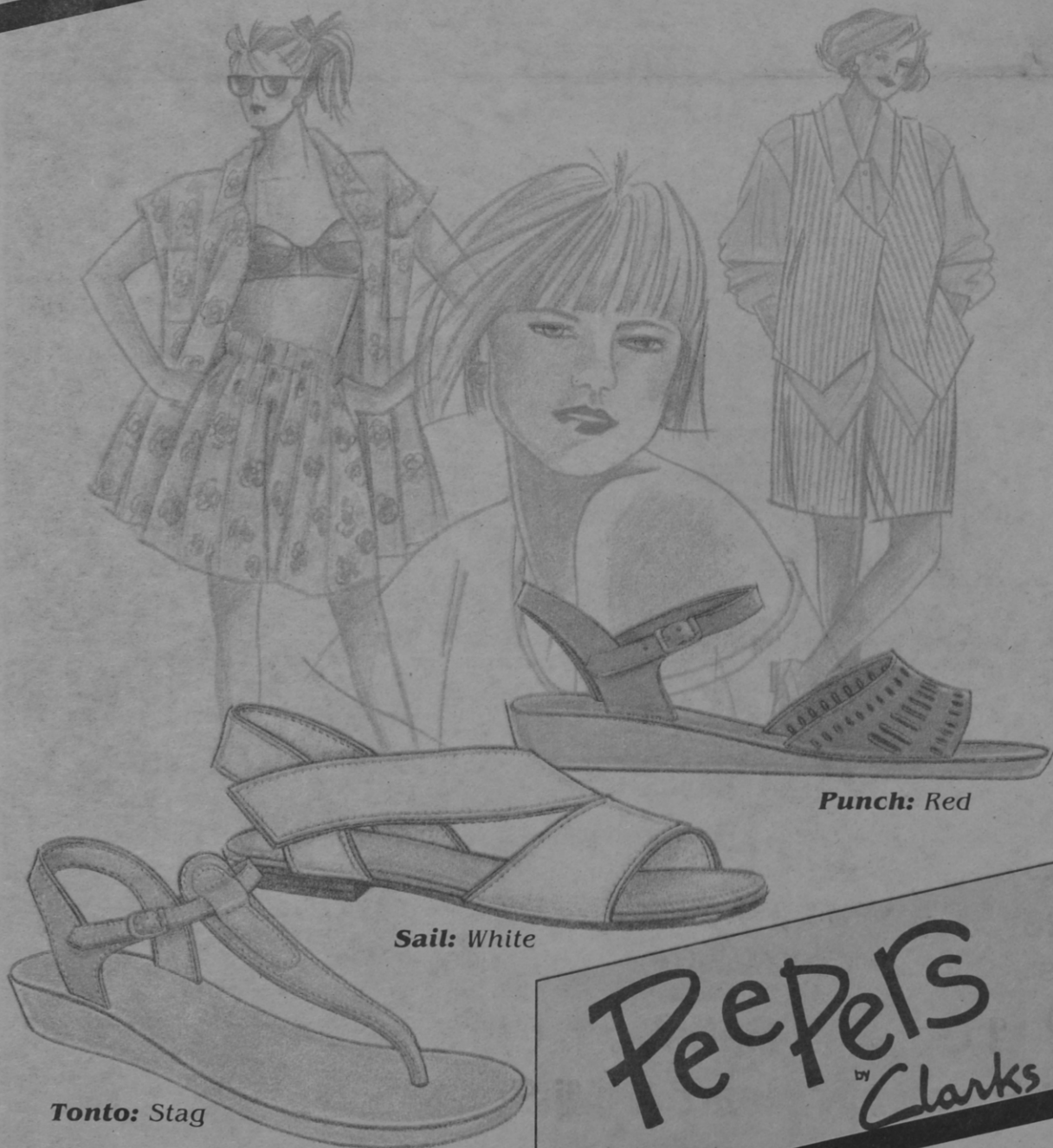
Managing director, Radio Hauraki

It's hard to take a simple black or white stand on this issue but speaking on behalf of private radio I can say we don't want quotas. We view them as a form of censorship which will deprive our programmers of freedom of choice. It's a difficult enough job now with intense competition in the marketplace to determine what sort of music you should play to gain the market share you want and quotas will further hamper that ability.

Instead of quotas I would recommend the setting up of a committee taking members from radio stations, multi-national record compa-

Take a Peep at the Summer of 86

The casual look this summer is bare and body-conscious... boxer-shorts and T-shirts... bare waists and halter-tops. And is that the mini-skirt back again? Yes, indeed. And to complement your summer style — Peepers by Clarks. The total look for the Summer of 86.



Punch: Red

Sail: White

Tonto: Stag

Peepers
by **Clarks**

Made in N.Z.

7393 USP