

Letters

Mountain's Rocky Relations

Re: Wacko Willy — another dysfunctional Jackson?

I have been involved as publicist/A&R over the past four years for the *Mountain Rock* festivals. It has been brought to my attention, an article printed in the September issue of *RipItUp*. The article is situated in a relatively dominant area of the magazine, on page five, with the headline *Mountain Rock Owes Bands*. The article contains Willie Jackson's comments concerning the organisers' ability to hold this event, with the added threat he will wind the company up, and that we, the organisers, are all a pack of liars.

The organisers are well used to the distorted statements magazines such as yours sometimes write, but because of the great support we get from festival participants, they continue on. This time, however, I will not stand back and allow the promotion for next year's event to be trodden on. I find Mr Jackson's comments seriously offensive, and am also deeply concerned you should print an article of this sort without firstly contacting the director of MRP Limited, Ryan Smock. In fact, I am so angry you should print this rubbish that I have sent the offensive article to the company lawyers for their reference.

Mr Cammick, when did you decide to turn this paper into a tabloid magazine, and what makes you think this sort of (to be absolutely straight forward) absolute bullshit can serve any purpose? Not only is this article full of bloody lies and distorted truths that do not concern anybody except the bands and Mountain Rock, it also indicates that, if I am to continue to send press releases to you, there are some serious issues that need to be ascertained.

Supergroove were contracted to perform at *Mountain Rock IV* through their so-called manager, Stuart Broughton. A deal was struck by Paul Campbell (director, at the time, of Mountain Rock Productions Limited.). Supergroove were to be paid \$5,000. Directly after Supergroove's performance, Stuart Broughton insisted the fee was \$8,500, not including the merchandise. The Supergroove performance fee for *Mountain Rock IV* has, since January, been in dispute.

It should also be realised that at *Mountain Rock III*, the organisers put Supergroove on the Main Stage to perform in front of 30,000 people. This is back when the band was hardly heard of. Indeed, I feel the organisers contributed in a relatively small way to the success the group have achieved. The album *Traction* rose to platinum, and featured in the inside album cover is a picture of Supergroove performing at *Mountain Rock*. Supergroove have never credited Mountain Rock for the photo. The organisers have never asked for any compensation for this, and probably never will.

Hello Sailor declined to mention the "substantial amount". However, I feel if you start the 'dirty laundry' attack then, by all means, let it be finished. The performance fee was \$10,000 plus GST. Hello Sailor have performed at the *Rock* for the past two years. In fact, for your interest, they reformed for *Mountain Rock III*, and have always been looked after with accommodation, domestic airfares, et cetera. They were included in the press launch in Wellington last year, and were paid a respectable fee to perform. It is agreed the amount owed for the *Mountain Rock* festival performance is owed, however, this is between Hello Sailor and the organisers. It does not concern you, or anyone else, and especially Willie Jackson.

Moana and the Moahunters are owed \$4,500 for

their performance last year. It might also be noted that last year the *Mountain Rock* organisers spent approximately \$15,000 of their own money for Moana and the Moahunters, and other acts such as the Nixons, Jungle Tongue and Shadowplay, to be represented at the *Pop Komm* festival in Germany. *Mountain Rock* organisers are of the understanding that Moana and the Moahunters were well received and negotiations were made for a record deal. Looking through the files from last year, I do not see even a word of thanks from Mr Jackson; but then, from recent experience, this is not unusual in the New Zealand music business industry.

During the promotion of *Mountain Rock III*, an article was printed in *The Truth* with Willie Jackson boldly stating the *Mountain Rock* festival organisers were racist, that they had not hired enough Polynesian acts, and he threatened to stop the iwi broadcasting the festival. His allegations were totally untrue and, because not a lot was thought of his pathetic attempt at putting the festival down, all people insulted by his remarks (including the Maori wardens working for the show) carried on through, and the show proceeded with all of the iwi stations broadcasting. We are not people to carry grudges for too long, hence the *Pop Komm* trip, et cetera. Aside from all of this, Moana and the Moahunters are indeed an act to be respected. It is regretted that they are owed money.

Mr Cammick, I would like to know if there is any other money outstanding in the New Zealand music industry, can it be established then that the company that ran the previous *Mountain Rock* event is the only company to ever owe money in New Zealand music history? I ask you this because I realise you have a fairly wide knowledge of this industry. I know there have been instances recently where a few so-called big time promoters involved in several events in New Zealand owe large amounts of money, maybe even more than Mountain Rock Promotions. Yes, we hear things also, and I am beginning to wonder why *RipItUp* don't publish defamatory articles concerning these people. But, of course, that wouldn't take too much time to figure out, would it?

For years and years companies have fallen, been wound up, stomped on, chewed and then spat out. If a picture theatre goes down and another starts up, do the people still go to see the movie of their choice? I would like to confirm once and for all to you, Mr Cammick, that 97 percent of the people that were involved in the festival, including all bands but three, were paid in full.

Personally, I am saddened by Mr Jackson's attempt to weaken us. I would just like to close this letter by informing you that obviously you do not take much notice of the articles written in your magazine, otherwise you would have been aware that in the previous issue of *RipItUp* (August), it was stated that due to a substantial theft currently being investigated by the police, Mountain Rock Productions Limited, is being wound up by a major creditor, Showtravel. The information concerning this is confidential. Mr Cammick, we were ripped off. Do you think we were lying? We would also like justice to be forthcoming.

Let it be known now that next year's event will be bigger and better than you could ever imagine. It is not run by liars or country bumpkins from Woodville, and if it takes a challenge such as this, then so be it! Mr Willie Jackson and the so-called big boys of Auckland can all take a flying leap. Your support is not required.

Michele Cole, Publicity Officer, Mountain Rock Promotions Limited.

Editor replies: It would have been unprofessional for our magazine to stay silent when we knew local groups had not been paid for their Mountain Rock 95 appearances.

Moana & the Moahunters manager Willie Jackson replies: Just which member of my family is Ms Cole describing as dysfunctional? My Uncles Moana and Syd Jackson, my mother June? Or perhaps my wife Moana, possibly our five year old, who knows? Perhaps as the publicity officer for a major local event,

Ms Cole should drop the hysterics, stick to the facts, and deal to whoever was responsible for lying to me and my band.

Fact one: (and not disputed by Cole) We are still owed a performance fee from Mountain Rock 95.

Fact two: (not acknowledged by Cole, which leads us to assume she is either ignorant or a liar herself) We were informed on three specific occasions by reps of the festival that 'the cheque is in the mail'.

Fact three: At no time at all did anyone bother to tell us why the cheque never reached us. We read about the theft in *RipItUp*. (Kia ora to you lot at the paper!) Now, as I have said before, we are not unreasonable people — we were well treated at the Festival, had a good time. If anyone respected us enough to explain what was going on, we could have reached some understanding. But hey, all we got was the run-around! All we are doing is warning other acts money is owed from the previous Mountain Rock, while they are gearing up for a new festival. Now, whatever those bands choose to do with that information, if anything, is up to them.

Cole's defensiveness regarding our prior challenge of racism indicates that she still just doesn't get it. Half a dozen Maori in bands such as Straitjacket Fits and the Exponents, the Maori wardens and two Maori bands, Mana and Southside (out of well over 50 in the line-up), does not mean Maori music was represented at a concert which was promoted as a showcase for New Zealand music, past and present. Once again, Cole exposes her ignorance, because over half the iwi stations pulled the plug on the broadcast for this very same reason. The natives aren't so easily pacified, Ms Cole — it's just that some of us are noisier than the rest!

Whether our stance had anything to do with it or not, who knows? The point is, this year's concert was radically different in terms of its diversity of musical style and culture. That's why we agreed to participate. We weren't paid, but it's the principle more than anything else why we don't display the kind of misplaced loyalty to the festival Ms Cole infers we should, by letting everyone else know.

So, all you musos, bands, mega rock stars out there: if you've been ripped off, dealt to, or conned by shonky promoters, dodgy venue operators and shady operators, don't keep it to yourself! Spread the word cuzzies!

Solidarity.

Stuart Broughton, Chronic Productions Limited, replies: Re: Michelle Cole's letter and the 'rock event of the 90s'

The paragraph directly concerning me contains the type of outrageous dribble I've come to expect from MRP.

The price suggested by Chronic Productions Limited to MRP, way back in April 94, for Supergroove to perform at Mountain Rock 95 was indeed \$5,000. This price was a ballpark figure given to MRP nearly a year before the event. This was neither confirmation of their performance of their fee. When we approached [MRP] in October 94 (certainly not after the event, as stated by Michelle), I indicated the initial estimate was no longer applicable. This was for many obvious reasons. We had released a triple platinum, Number 1 album, Number 1 single, and partaken in an extensive, sell out tour of New Zealand. The initial quote of \$5,000 was not even going to cover the daily cost of the band being on the road. While the logistical cost of a Number 1 touring act may seem quite extravagant to the lay person, after four years of touring Supergroove, believe me, these costs are very real.

Add to this the fact bands of lesser profiles were being offered double this amount, and we were already achieving a performance gross six times this amount — naturally I was not going to sign any contract unless the fee was reviewed.

Daniel Keighley (also manager of The Muttonbirds... hope they got paid okay, Dan!) was involved in negotiating the Mountain Rock booking for Supergroove as well as the other high profile acts.

Unfortunately Daniel took my prerogative to renegotiate the fee as a personal affront. He made it clear to me, in no uncertain terms, that any professional relationship between us had now been 'tarnished'.

Daniel signed the revised contract a couple of months prior to the event, with the price being \$9,000 (inclusive). The band performed the show and left the country soon after for a two month tour of Australia. It was in that time that Mountain Rock bounced the cheque. The cheque was made out for \$9000. How can Mountain Rock possibly say there is a dispute over the amount?

No one from Mountain Rock ever rang to inform us there was a problem with the cheque. When efforts were made by myself to get to the bottom of it, I was told all sorts of different stories: simple bank account problems, re-payment promises, Serious Fraud investigations et cetera. Daniel Keighley now had nothing whatsoever to do with it, and was sorry to hear of our misfortune. The Mountain Rock phone lines were cut off. Plenty of buck passing, but no actual cheque.

Adding insult to injury was the matter of the merchandising. I sent shirts to Mountain Rock's sole exclusive merchandising agent for the concert. Plenty of shirts were sold. The remaining shirts were sent back with a letter stating the amount of shirts sold, the commission that had been taken, and that the cheque, for over \$1,500, was enclosed. There was no cheque. After making enquiries to the agent, I discovered that it was not just a simple mistake of omitting the cheque. The money was now tied up with the Mountain Rock money. The shirt money off our backs?

With regard to Michelle's statement about Mountain Rock 94 — 'The organisers put Supergroove on the main stage to perform in front of 30,000 people... back when the band was hardly heard of... the organisers contributed in a relatively small way to the success that the group have achieved' — I have this to say to Michelle: Firstly, the band played to about 2,000 half awake punters who had managed to make it to the show by lunchtime. Maybe you got them confused with your mates the Desert Road Band, who got the top slot. Secondly, Supergroove was already a household name and one of New Zealand's top acts by that time of mid-January 94.

The situation to date has not been resolved. Chronic Productions Limited has recently been sent its first correspondence ever regarding the money owing to Supergroove. The correspondence is dated August 11, 1995, seven months after the fact. All information regarding the debt is wrong, just like Michelle's letter. It also includes a grovelling scheme to get Supergroove to play Mountain Rock 96.

At this point in time I am extremely angry with Mountain Rock and all the various people associated with its management. It will be a rather cold day in hell when I ever book or advise a band to play Mountain Rock again.

In all my years of dealing with music management, I have never come across such a scandalous affair. Mountain Rock should be ashamed of themselves for their disgusting lack of professional standards and basic civil behaviour.

I have a few helpful suggestions for Mountain Rock 'Promotions' Limited. (For readers' interest, it used to be called 'Productions', but that has been wound up, and it is now called 'Promotions'... Clever eh!) Firstly, always tell the truth, it's easier to remember. Secondly, try not to believe your own hype. It's very dangerous, especially when that hype says shit like 'rock event of the 90s'. Thirdly, if you don't like the dung, get out of the paddock. Fourthly, MRP, why don't you pay Supergroove the money you owe them?

As for Michelle, why don't you sit back, put on your latest Midnight Oil album and relax. You guys probably paid for their record anyway.

[Abridged by the editor.]

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