

"No one would ever dream of having a reggae poi. I'm the kind of person what likes to do something different: To reach our younger people we have to do what they are listening to."

He believes "Ati Konei Ra" will sell well. "It's going to be a hit, it will be a hit. We have been doing it on stage for six months and it's well received."

He and Barletta also intend recording an album, which will be "a surrealistic look at contemporary Maori life".

"The whole object is to do songs that have been part of our mode of living. We're not going to compromise."

Through the pair have been in show business together for almost 11 years, they are not well known in Aotearoa. They have worked mostly in Australia or Asia.

They are best known for their appearances on the local rock 'n' roll show "Rock Around the Clock". But he and Barletta produced the Prince Tui Teka smash single "E Ipo", which featured such diverse musicians as the Wille Dayson Blues Band, Stuart Pearce (Hammond Gamble Band) and Walter Biance (Hattie and the Hot Shots, DD Smash).

They also produced the last Tui Teka album but fell out with the record company.

"A lot of Maori musicians were involved on the condition that they were to be credited on an inner sleeve. We also had a mihi to our dead. I said to them: 'Don't forget the inner sleeve and don't forget to acknowledge all those Maori musicians.'"

The album came out without the inner sleeve so Dalvanious threatened legal action and some records were released with the sleeve.

"As far as I'm concerned a lot of the public were ripped off. The musicians were ripped off and we were ripped off because people thought it was our idea to drop the sleeve."

As well as upsetting the establishment, Dalvanious has upset some Maori radicals with his song "Warrior — Headhunter Song".

"It's not a gang song — it's about how the Maoris came to New Zealand and ate all the Morioris."

"It says to our Maori people: 'Don't go blaming the system, the pakeha. We ripped off the land just like the pakeha.'"

And while he believes in Maoritanga, he also believes in pakehatanga — "There is a merger, we can live side-by-side."

Early on in his career he let Maori music take second place to the international — but mainly American — black music: The Drifters, The Temptations, and the soul singers that followed on from R and B. Even now one of the features of his show is the Temptations song "Standin on Shaky Ground".

He introduces the song saying: "It



will put more spunk in your funk; more pride in your stride; more strut in your butt. This is a song that's got problems. It's for all the people here that are on the PEP; all the people here that are unemployed. Most of all it's for the workers.

"It's a song about unemployment. About people not being able to pay their bills because they haven't got any money."

He and Barletta are at their best with rock 'n' roll and soul. After singing "Ati Konei Ra" at the Castlecliff they burst back into R and B with "The Great Pretender" by the Platters, "Save The Last Dance For Me" by the Drifters, and then the Shirrels classic "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow".

Earlier he had invited people up to dance and they came. As they swayed and the band swung and Dalvanious shook he started talking....

"I can see a lot of beautiful people here tonight. Are you all beautiful people?" he asked, and the crowd roared its reply.

"I can see a lot of solo mothers here tonight," he said and a cheer went up. "I can see a lot of solo fathers here."

"You can always tell a solo mother. She's always dancing with another woman. You can always tell a solo father. He's always dancing with some other man's woman."

"I can see a lot of people here looking for a bit on the side. They're sitting down there looking real cool. I can see a lot of cool looking people down there."

"You know, you can take the hand of a stranger and say to him or her: 'Let's boogie'. And you can go back to his or her apartment and boogie all night. That's cool. That's OK, if that's what you're looking for. But can you honestly

say that's true love?"

"In the morning you can wake up and say to him or her: 'Hey baby, last night, didn't we get it together?'"

"But is that true love? People, I'll tell you what true love is. It's when you wake up beside your baby and you say to him or her, you say...."

And then they hit it. Dalvanious and Barletta together. Sad and lonesome and full of emotion they sang: "Will you still love me tomorrow."

At the Castlecliff they were like gods. But Tu Tangata saw them again at the Empire Hotel in Masterton during the week of the Golden Shears. The audience was small and unresponsive and while the pair worked hard the show never got going.

"We worked our guts out," Dalvanious said after the show, "But it was boring."

They were able to stick with it because they're pros. They have worked with such people as the Pointer Sisters, Isaac Hayes, Dionne Warwick, Osibisa and the Tina Turner Revue.

As the Fascinations, they are the first New Zealand group to perform at the Sydney Opera house, where they played with Petula Clark. A week later they were invited back.

In 1978 they won the award for the best Australian soul composition with "Checkmate on Love".

In Asia they had a number one record and were a leading act.

After the professionalism of Australia and the money of Asia, returning to the pub circuit in New Zealand has been difficult.

"We have to try and reach a cross-section of people. A lot of old people want to hear the ballads. Then we have to up the pace and do something fast and funky. Do we cut that for the few people that don't like it?"

"The fast songs get people dancing and sweating — and drinking, which helps the bar. That's the whole ethic of it."

"In Australia people go to a place because they want to see a group. Here it's different. On TV in Australia the songs are live. Here there's a lot of miming."

"It's hard because a lot of people don't know us or they have seen us on TV and they think we're a rock 'n' roll group. It freaks out the purists."

But despite the difficulties, Dalvanious and Barletta have been on the road since November and have managed to support themselves and their four-piece backing band. And they have been doing it without a regular spot in one of the pubs and clubs in Auckland and Wellington. One of their most successful shows was in Ruatoria.

They intend to stay on the road (mainly the back-roads) till May when they return to Australia for several months.

Peter Croucher