



PHOTO: EMMA LYONS

THE LATEST: Various fashion shows throughout the day were a favourite with the crowd.



KAPA HAKA TIME: Two youngsters from Te Kupenga Kohanga Reo in action. PHOTO: SUENJE PAASCH-COLBERG



DESIRE TO WIN: South Auckland hip hop group DZIAH went to Los Angeles in August for the world hip hop championships and came eighth. PHOTO: SARAH KACI

A proud 'whanau affair'

Powhiri, hip hop performance, kapa haka and kai - KIRSTY CHARLES mingled with the crowd at the AUT Maori Expo last week and experienced a day of mainly contemporary Maori culture.

The 10th Maori Expo may have been about educational opportunities, but it had the rarified air of a rock concert. Around 50,000 people, ranging from giggling school girls to more serious educators, packed into the Aotea Centre to experience the vibrant mix of learning, debate, music and fresh food.

The official Sam powhiri that started the day welcomed important guests, including mayor Dick Hubbard, Maori Party co-leader Pita Sharples and Labour MP John Tamihere, and performers, to

a day that honoured tikanga and te reo Maori. The expo featured Maori sports, media and political personalities, exploring issues and celebrating Maori achievement. AUT's Maori liaison officer and organiser Kitea Tipuna says the expo was different from previous years because more AUT staff were involved and the entertainment was more contemporary. "We've usually gone for half and half contemporary and traditional. This year was really contemporary and it seems to have worked really well. We were catering to a youth audience but having aspects of traditional culture met the needs of more of our traditional whanau," he says.

Media co-ordinator and organiser Veeshayne Armstrong says Maori were given a chance to get together and feel proud of their culture. "It's valuable on many different levels. We get to see our Maori leaders and hear first hand what they have to say and it's an opportunity to celebrate being Maori and being part of Aotearoa," she says. Shona Marupo brought her four-year-old daughter Carla along to see her nephew, Korza, perform. She says it was great to see so many

Maori hanging out. "It's really cool when they do things. It's huge — it's a family affair." By lunchtime, a crowd had packed the auditorium to hear Waikato band Katchafire. The group's lead singer Logan Bell says it was an important day for his people and he was impressed at the talent among the young performers at the expo. "We play all around the country to adults and young people don't get to see us much. We hope to inspire them to do well at what they're good at." AUT student Jasmine Bedggood was pleased that such a diverse crowd and so many rangatahi were finding out about educational options. "It's important because people need to know what's out there, otherwise you don't set your sights very high," she says.

Ropata Hirewini, who cooked mussels in the kai stalls and "fed a lot of the whanau", said there was a lack of Maori gatherings that focused on inspiring youth. "There's not enough of us that come together at one time and it's been really great to have the kids around. Cultural background also brings the greatest day today because of what we believe in — that we're all part of Maori history."

IMPORTANT DAY: Waikato band Katchafire hopes to inspire young people to use their talents.



PHOTO: MEGAN MURPHY

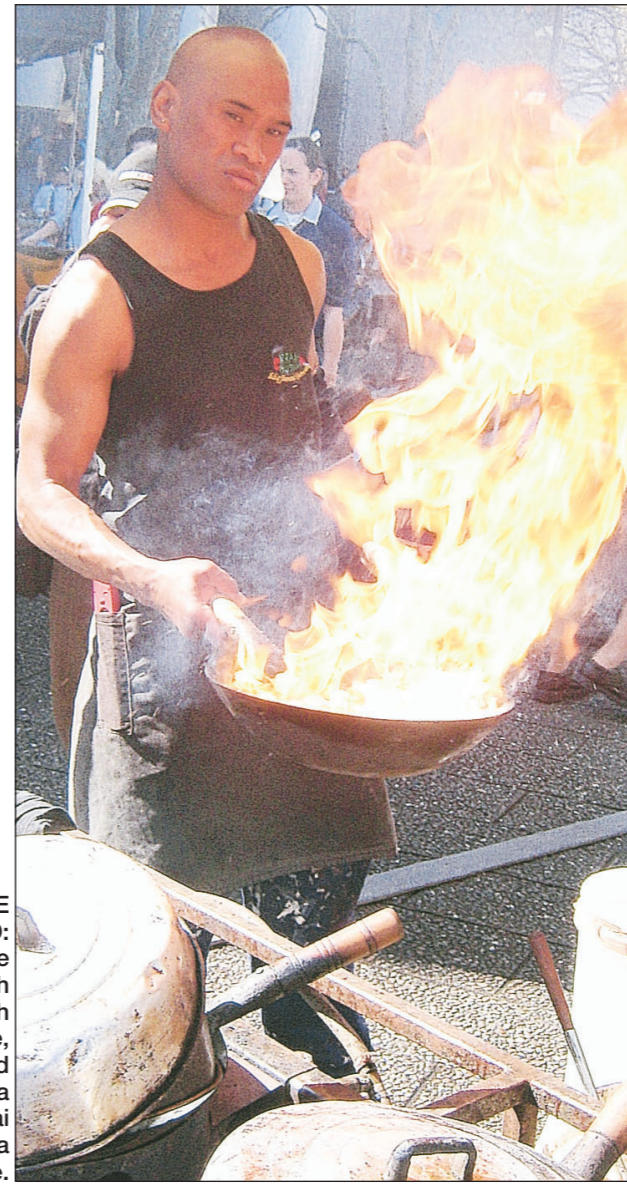


PHOTO: SUENJE PAASCH-COLBERG

FEEDING THE CROWD: Attracted by the smell of fresh mussels with chilli sauce, people queued up at Ropata Hirewini's kai stall on Aotea Square.

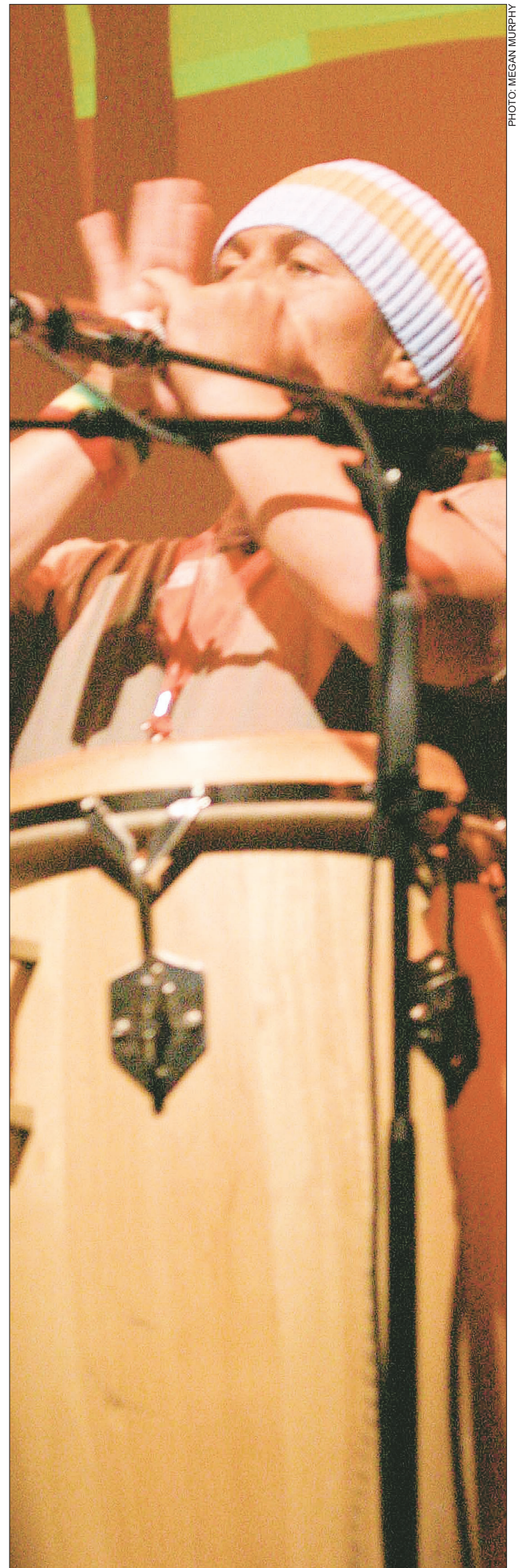


PHOTO: MEGAN MURPHY

REGGAE BEATS: Katchafire's Leon Davey demonstrates his musical gifts.