

COROMIND



Issue 42

THE TAVERN, THE YARNS, THE MADNESS

How the Coromandel Helped
Shape Cult Kiwi Film *The Tavern*

A QUIET REVOLUTION IN YOUR BANK ACCOUNT

What Happens When
Banks Lose Control?

Ancient Stories, Modern Sounds

The Coromandel Soundscape
of Purple Pilgrims

A HAMMER & A CAMERA

The Art of Peter Felix Muller

On Air



Watch & Listen

funny old times

It's a funny old time to be an adult in Aotearoa. So much so that I wonder how our mokos will recall things when we're gone.

That in itself will depend on how long our planet sustains them ... how well we look after her, making up for the ongoing, catastrophic environmental erosion of the industrial and info-tech eras. Eras we inherited or informed.

How well we get along with one another is an interesting accompaniment to the rhythm this chronology lays down. I hope our offspring hear more harmony than discord. What historical dances will the cultural and political dissonance of the current age contribute to the soundtrack our progeny research tomorrow?

If they come across archived Coromind magazines, we'll appear the better for it. Definitely. They'll encounter nanny and koro's inspirational Corominded mates, who Corocrafted, Corocritiqued, Coroinnovated and Corolived. Coromindedness might read as a watershed that contributed to the survival of the species, avoiding the zombie-apocalypse timeline before it even happened. 'Sarah Conner ... Come with me if you want to live.'

If our 'progress' as a country was assessed against some Scandinavian-sourced criteria, I suspect we'd receive a report worth hiding

under the mattress, away from the prying eyes of our descendants. Perhaps, in some near or distant future, they'll be so addicted, 'deviced', medicated, self-involved or surviving-in-the-moment they won't care.

Or ... maybe not.

I'd like to imagine them inheriting a world built on the legacy of Corocreators who nurtured our environment, who Kauri 2000*-ed, Driving Creek*-ed, Wharekura-o-Manaia*-ed, Predator Free*-ed, Hauraki-Kōwhai-Rau*-ed, Habitat Restor*-ed, Mata-o-Kaiwaka*-ed, Pottery Watch*-ed and Toitū-Te Tiriti*-ed ... who said 'no' to the destructive types of exploitative farming, fishing and mining we detest. Who said 'yes' to the eco-sustainable business models we adore. People who researched widely and shared that learning some Māori words at age five wasn't going to hamper a child's acquisition of English. Pai kare*!

I'd like to end with a Homeric or Rāwheoro* reference. But a kid in the future might not understand it.

It's a funny old time. He tamariki, he tāonga*.

(If you care to / need to, Google the asterisks!)

Words by
Brandon Amoamo



TE TOI O MATARIKI

A Celebration of Matariki through Art and Community

July 10 Matariki Public Holiday, Kūaotunu

6am

Hautapu ceremony community celebration at dawn

- Gather at 5:45am for 6am start on Kūaotunu Reserve (opp. Luke's Kitchen)
- To finish when the sun has risen (7.29am sunrise)

9am

9am Exhibition opening at Kūaotunu Hall, all welcome

- Nine local artists have created artwork around each of the Matariki stars
- Art show running through the weekend, July 10 to 12

10am

10am – 4pm Wānanga running in the garden of the hall. Demonstrations of harakeke, uku (clay), kōrero around kaitiakitanga (full programme TBC, more to come)

6pm

6pm (time TBC) Bonfire Kūaotunu boat ramp. All welcome, BYO guitar and marshmallows.

Put in your Diary!

When: Matariki weekend July 10–12

What: An opportunity for the community to come together to celebrate the Māori new year

Where: Kūaotunu Reserve, Kūaotunu Hall and surrounds (weather dependent)

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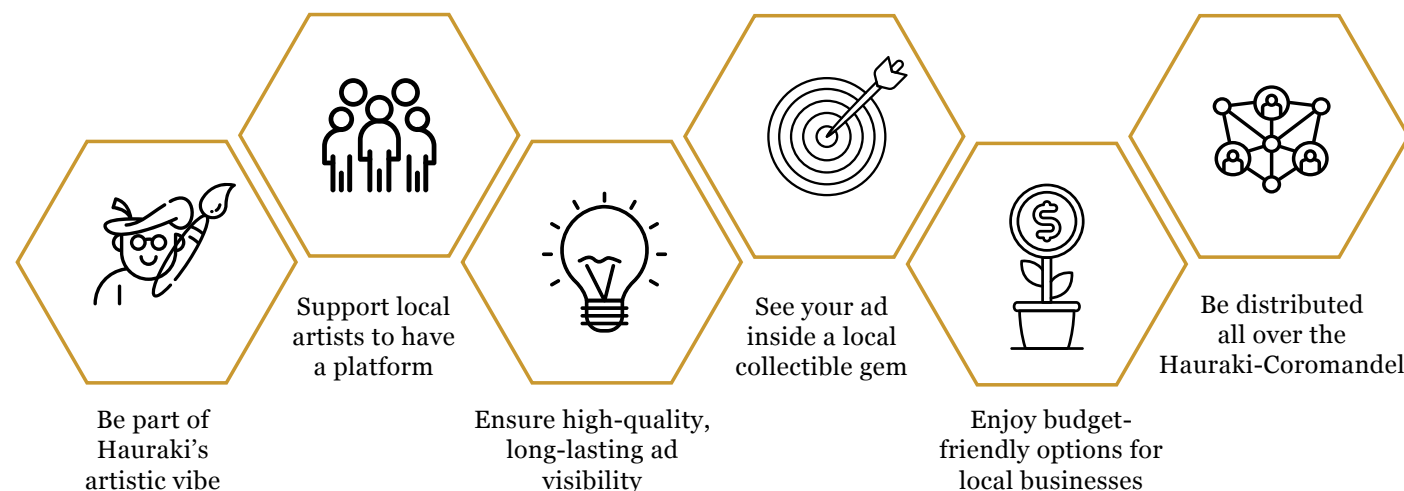
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Tanya Finlayson

Turning Patience Into Art



Tairua artist Tanya Finlayson loves doing things that take a long time! She loves the challenge. And the intricate art that she creates does demand patience, commitment and a lot of time. It also requires talent.

One example is the beautiful book she has created which is packed with delicate sketches of flowers. The inspiration for this time-consuming work was a book she read – *The Lost Flowers of Alice Hart*, by Holly Ringland.

Tanya is dyslexic, so reading is not easy, but this book inspired her. "It's about a girl who sees the secret language of flowers. I loved that idea and started researching the traditional aspects linked to certain blooms. I ended up learning a whole new skill," she says as she relaxes on her sofa, surrounded by plants, vibrant art and her cute little Yorkshire Terrier, Echo. That book led to Tanya's floral sketches and words, put together in a lovely work of art. The pages are water paper and she made the cover using American deer leather (which her mum had given her to make a pair of moccasins!).

So far her book features about 60 flowers, one for each of the pages. They include Buttercups. "Buttercups bring joy and I recall that as a child we would put one under a playmate's chin and declare "You like butter!" Freesias

are linked to innocence, lasting friendship and trust. I loved the saying that a friend is someone who overlooks your broken fence and admires your garden. Then there is Helenium, named after Helen of Troy and the legend that when she was abducted one of her tears fell and grew as this flower.

"We used to call Pansies 'happy faces' and I remember someone I loved who had a garden bursting with happy pansies. I have found learning about these flowers is like music – it can take you back to another time in your memory."

Tanya has always loved arts, crafts and sewing. After leaving school, she did a three-year Diploma in Fashion and Textiles and wanted to do fashion illustration. But as far as a job, it was not the right time. "I did the single mum thing and eventually worked as an artist with galleries and exhibitions." When her son Darrien was eight she moved to Tairua and then set up a sewing business in a bedroom. "Tairua identities Brian Cullen and Rob French taught me a lot about industrial machines, making boat covers and so on, and my business grew."

Meanwhile she continued with her art.

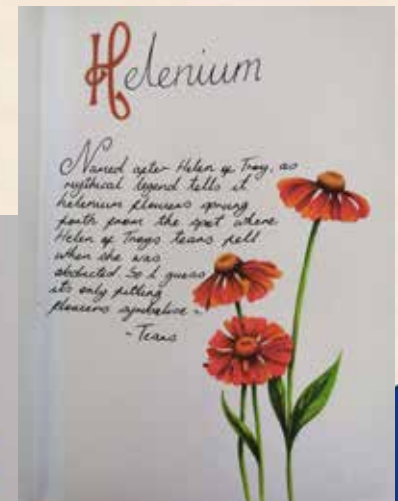
Tanya has an eclectic range of art, including lovely sketches of birds and animals. She loves the simplicity of working in black and white and this is effective in her works Knight Templar and Guitar Player. Curious about how to sketch droplets of water, she worked on a moving sketch of a young soldier.

Tanya enjoys being part of Tairua Art Group and her work was in their recent exhibition. She says the group has diverse talents and is very supportive. "There's so many interesting and talented people here and around the Coromandel."

She is not shy of doing renovations, having worked on two camper vans while in Tairua. She recently bought a house in Tairua and looks forward to the new challenge of creating a home of her own.

You can contact Lisa at:
tairuasewingservice@gmail.com

Words by
Pamela Ferla



Check out more
of Tanya's Work *Scan Here*



Or visit: www.coromind.nz/artist-tanya-finlayson



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THE TAVERN, THE YARNS, THE MADNESS

How the Coromandel Helped Shape Cult Kiwi Film *The Tavern*

For writer, producer and actor Matt Hicks, *The Tavern* (2025) may be a Cambridge-made film, but the soul of the story was shaped just as much by the Coromandel.

This unruly Kiwi comedy follows five small-town battlers racing against time to save their beloved rundown tavern from a slick Ponsonby property developer with sinister plans for the site. It's low-budget, proudly independent, R16, and has been described as what might happen if *Flight of the Conchords* had a bastard child with South Park and raised it in the Waikato.

The film features Josh McKenzie (*La Brea*, *The Hunting Party*), veteran actor Mick Innes (the voice of the iconic Hammer Hardware ads), NZ Idol Ben Lummis and a cast packed with talent from Cambridge, Te Aroha and the wider Waikato, along with cameos from former All Black Zac Guildford and a colourful mix of personalities from rugby, racing and beyond.

But for Hicks (aka DJ Honest Matt aka DJ SkrillHicks), the real inspiration behind *The Tavern* came from more than a decade spent DJing in the Coromandel.

Hicks has rung in the New Year many times at Waihi Beach Hotel and, more recently, Whitianga Hotel, while also becoming a familiar face at Smoky Pallet Freehouse, Junction in Thames, Beach Hop, and Dance Farm at Joe's Farm over the last 10 to 15 years. Those years immersed in the region's pubs, festivals and unforgettable local personalities left a lasting mark. The smoky back bars, the rough-around-the-edges regulars, the larger-than-life yarns – all of it became part of the DNA of *The Tavern*.

The idea for the film may have started in Cambridge, with early scenes written while Hicks was living in London, but the story truly found its voice during a week in Whangamata. With the internet switched off and no distractions, the bones of the story came together – and with them, the unmistakable influence of the Coromandel.

That influence even appears on screen. One of the film's characters, Keitz, wears a Thames Valley Swamp Foxes jersey throughout the movie – a tribute to the region and to the unforgettable Meads Cup victory celebrations Hicks was lucky enough to DJ.

The Coromandel also played a huge role in helping *The Tavern* find its audience. The Left Bank Theatre in Thames, with the support of David Mulholland, hosted three sold-out screenings, The Theatre Waihi led by Hollie Weir, had the quickest sell-out the film has ever seen, while Anne-Maree and Matt McDougall at Mercury Twin Cinemas in Whitianga championed the film with multiple successful sessions, including collaborations with the Mercury Bay Marlins and the CoroCine Film Festival.

That kind of grassroots backing helped turn *The Tavern* into one of last year's surprise underground hits. The film went on to screen in 40 cinemas nationwide, selling out sessions around the country and outperforming many films made with far larger budgets. In true Tavern fashion, the team even brewed its own signature beer – Piss – a cheeky, irreverent nod to the humour and rebellious spirit that gave the film its cult appeal.

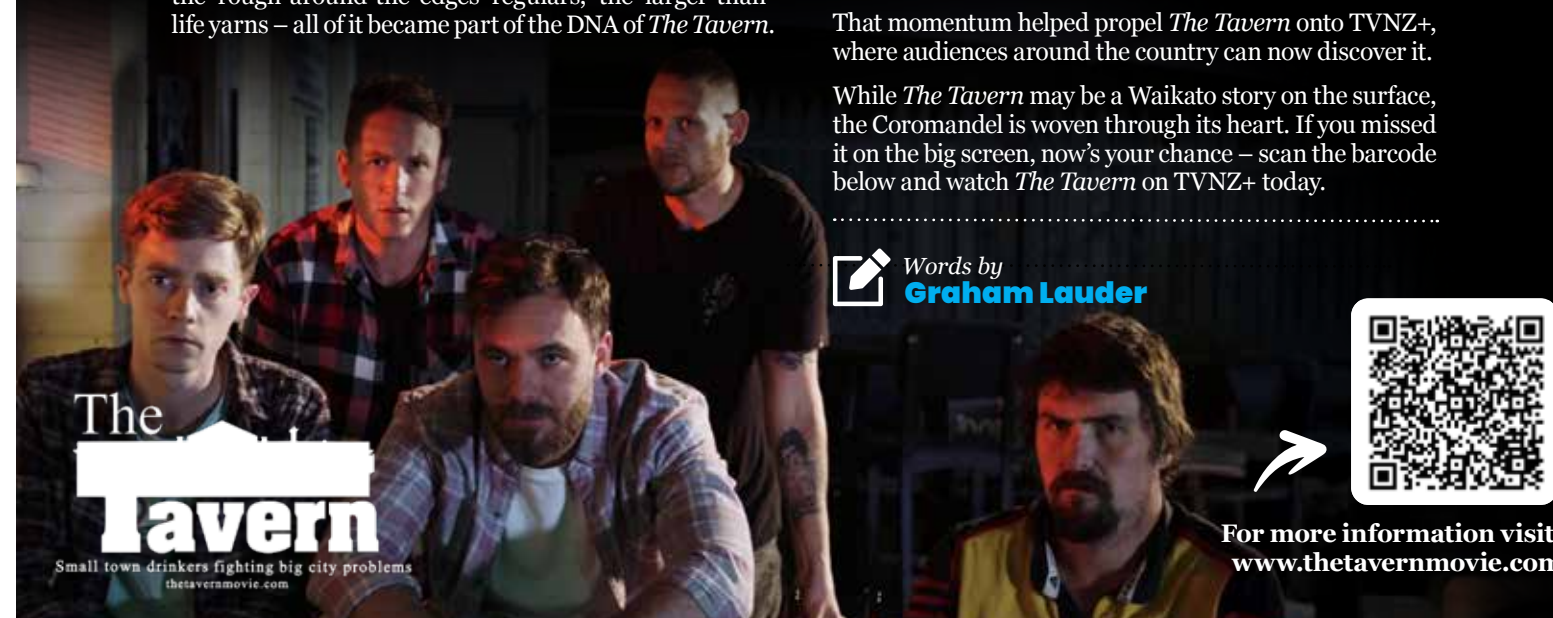
That momentum helped propel *The Tavern* onto TVNZ+, where audiences around the country can now discover it.

While *The Tavern* may be a Waikato story on the surface, the Coromandel is woven through its heart. If you missed it on the big screen, now's your chance – scan the barcode below and watch *The Tavern* on TVNZ+ today.

Words by
Graham Lauder



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A QUIET REVOLUTION IN YOUR BANK ACCOUNT

What Happens When Banks Lose Control?

For most of us, banking has worked the same way our whole lives. You sign up with one of the big four, your money lives in their walled garden, and if you want to pay someone, you do it on their terms, using their app, their card network, and their fees. Switching banks is a hassle. Letting a budgeting app see your balance means handing over your password and hoping for the best.

That is starting to change. Quietly, and without much fanfare, New Zealand is rolling out something called open banking, and by the end of 2026 it will reshape how money moves in this country.

The idea is simple. Your bank account information, and the ability to make payments from it, belong to you, not to your bank. Open banking forces the banks to provide the same kind of secure connection, letting you grant other apps and services controlled access to your account. You choose what they see, for how long, and you can switch off access at any time.

This is not happening because the banks woke up feeling generous. It is happening because the Commerce Commission spent two years studying retail banking and concluded what most New Zealanders already suspected: the market is not competitive enough, and consumers are paying for it. The government has legislated, and the four major banks have committed to common standards through the industry body Payments NZ. Kiwibank is expected to come online in June, completing the set. Australia, the UK, and the EU have already walked this road, and the benefits there have been measurable: new lenders, cheaper payments, better tools for managing money, more people switching providers. It is not a revolution that arrives with fanfare. It arrives as a series of small choices that, taken together, start to feel different.

So, what changes for you?

First, paying for things gets cheaper and faster. When you pay a small business by card today, that business loses roughly 1.5 to 2 percent of the transaction to fees, and the money takes a day or two to settle. An open banking payment goes straight from your account to theirs in seconds, for a fraction of the cost. That saving flows back to local businesses ... and over time, into the prices you pay.

Second, switching banks stops being painful. Right now, moving to a different bank means re-routing direct debits, re-entering payees, and untangling years of automatic payments. With open banking, that information can move with you in minutes.

Third, the tools you use to manage money get better. Budgeting apps, accounting software, lenders, and investment platforms can plug into your accounts with your permission and give you a real picture of your finances, without you typing in numbers or sharing passwords. The KiwiSaver provider that shows you an honest view of your retirement. The lender who approves a mortgage in a day because they can verify income directly. The local cafe owner who balances a week of sales over a flat white.

Fourth, your data stays yours. You decide exactly what to share, for how long, and you can see it all in one place. Pull the plug whenever you want.

You might wonder whether any of this is safe. The honest answer is that the new connections are more secure than what most of us do today. Sharing your bank password with a budgeting app, handing a card to a waiter, typing a stranger's bank account number from a handwritten sign at the market: these are everyday practices that should make us nervous and somehow do not. Open banking replaces them with tamper-proof permissions you authorise inside your real bank app, the same way you confirm any payment. Nothing happens you do not see, and nothing happens you cannot undo.

In our next issue, we look at how one Coromandel-grown venture, Shop Local, is using open banking to put more of every dollar back into the pockets of the people who actually run our towns. Cafes and tradies, growers and artisans, the corner store and the lawnmower repair shop: small operators whose cut on each sale gets quietly eroded by card fees they never asked for, and who stand to benefit first as the way money moves changes beneath them.

 Words by **David Crompton**

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MILLY MOON AND THE SPACES BETWEEN SERIES



Walking Songs ^{Part 1}

*A show carried across
mountains and motorways*

We're expected in Pōneke (Wellington) by 9 pm. Chilli and I always enjoy driving down the motu (island). She's perched, attentive, blanket arranged to perfection, on the passenger bench, hours before I'm finished packing the car. My favourite travel companion to date. Our trusty Nissan Serena is carefully stacked like Tetris (thanks Dad for that obsessive skill), with PA, stands and instruments, merch, props and personals. At this point, it's been a year since the wild experiment manifested, of writing, producing and touring a solo show and I still reel in gratitude for the recognition and connection I experienced.

What I'd needed in my arts practice was permission to be real. I'd wanted desperately to break from playing a character to fit, and finding my voice walking on trail gave me exactly the connection and inspiration I was seeking. So, I wrote story and song to my footfall, of nature and loss and grief and love, of universal experiences, shaped by my personal journey. I called it Walking Songs.

Of my debut NZ Fringe performance, sold out at the Garage Project's Wild Workshop, a young reviewer suggested that as a hiker himself, he knew how my story should be told and while it might be nice for me in catharsis, was it necessary to share this performance with others? Ahh, the necessity of the artist.

A stranger stopped me on Cuba Street to tell me how my story of prayer "cracked her open", shaking hands gripping the air in front of her chest. A beautiful trans woman attended multiple performances, replying to my story of naming as a resonation of her own claiming. A woman in stride down the slope of Buachaille Etive Mòr, 100 miles from Edinburgh, stopped me, English broken, tears flowing, to tell me "Thank you for a beautiful moment in the pain".

I realised quickly just how necessary sharing this story was. So I sank my bones into it, I made broth and nourished anyone who needed to see their reflection in song. Interactions like these drove momentum towards this afternoon's departure.

Every spare minute for the past six months has been a flurry of revisions and edits, songs written and recorded, a zine made, itinerary planned and harmony rehearsed. I've pitched and booked venues, designed artworks and created marketing campaigns. I'm not terribly inspired by the administration of making art for life, but if I balance it with enough play, I can force fun into Instagram posts and press releases.

Chilli and I arrive around 10 pm. Re-rehearsal is a full day of blocking, timing and scrutinising, finding comedic beat, texture and key. We rehearse each song with reverence. My sister Lucy-Belle is reluctant at first, though I know the deep soulful bond of her voice and there is a reason I've asked her to sing with me.

Lucy-Belle and my dear friend Chloe were a part of the production from its inception. Chloe's flute and their true voices in harmony enriched the piece they both poured generous time and love into. To produce a show and tour internationally is a humbling and a sobering experience. Without my incredible community support at home and abroad, I would have completely fallen apart. For this tour, therefore, Lucy will also play stage manager and is on tour with me the whole way.

We work through the story, placing the intention and ensuring connection to each stanza, allowing a final reshaping and resettling until we have the rhythm of the piece in us.

We begin in Pōneke/Wellington the following night. Let the tour begin!

Walking Songs full NZ performance can be purchased (\$15)
via Patreon: www.patreon.com/c/MillyMoon

Words by
Milly Moon



Bloody Gravity!

The Day the Mountain Bit Back

Three years ago, I was skiing with family. The snow was very firm, and all the non-groomed parts of the mountain were closed due to icy conditions. We were skiing an expert run with a drop of about 150 vertical metres that looked very steep when you were standing at the top.

Finn was fairly new to skiing but he is always keen and spells confidence with a capital C. An aerial view of skiing looks like a never-ending S. You complete one turn and immediately turn back the other way.

Well, at the top of this run on the second turn instead of turning down into the next S curve Finn continued around with the first curve, making a U. He quietly came to a stop facing back up the hill. Time stood still for a moment.

Time may have stood still but gravity kept going. I don't think people really understand gravity. If they did, then they wouldn't blame themselves for trips and stumbles. Gravity is like a large dog that is always pulling on the leash and doesn't listen. But we have got so used to it that we forget the dog is there.

Well, that big dog kept pulling Finn down the hill but this time backwards. He picked up speed and couldn't turn, one ski flew off, gravity then pulled him over onto the snow, and he lost his other ski and his poles. Now gravity really got going and he accelerated down the hill. There is no stopping on a steep slope, and very soon he was sliding out of control, past other skiers.

At the bottom of the run, there was a vehicle track cut across the slope with a 1m bank of snow on the uphill

side; after sliding down 200m, Finn shot off the top of the bank and landed 2m out from the side of the track and continued to slide across the track and over the edge onto the next section of slope below and he picked up speed again. There was another vehicle track below this slope and this time when he went over the bank, he landed in the middle of the track with a thump but had lost his momentum.

Usually, the more experienced skiers stay at the back to help pick up the pieces of abandoned equipment, so I had seen the whole thing from the top. Finn is very robust and plays as a front row forward in rugby. He normally bounces back up after a ski accident. This time he stayed down, it must have hurt. After a minute, he slowly got to his feet. I was so relieved.

Gravity got my brother that day, as well. He had a similar fall on that same slope but didn't travel down as far as the access tracks. They closed the run an hour later. We all carried on skiing on other runs, some of us more bruised than others.

The point of my story is for the next time you bump a nice glass of wine, or a cup of tea and gravity pulls it down and spills it on the expensive carpet; don't say "I'm sorry", just grit your teeth and think, "That bloody gravity!"

Words by
Steven Knowles



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A HAMMER & A CAMERA

The Art of Peter Felix Muller



When you talk to Peter Felix Muller, you get the sense that he's never been in a rush. That's not to say he hasn't achieved a lot – he's done plenty. But his approach to art, whether it's behind a camera or at the jeweller's bench, has always been more about flow than force.

Peter's artistic journey started early. "Silversmithing came about from a teenage interest and admiration of Jens Hansen's work in Nelson," he says. As a teenager, he stumbled into a workshop after bumping into his former art teacher, Ray Mitchell. That brief encounter was enough to spark something. Soon after, a summer course with Hansen and Gavin Hitchings deepened his connection to the craft. "Jens was a good teacher, and I enjoyed his robust style, use of a good hammer and Flat Bastard file," Peter says.

But it was photography that took the lead early on. He studied at Wellington Polytechnic Design School and ended up spending decades immersed in the photographic world – running labs, working briefly for Kodak, and eventually co-owning New Zealand's largest commercial photo lab. "We introduced digital imaging in 1993 with Photoshop version 2," he adds casually, like someone mentioning they were at the birth of the internet. His work evolved into supporting major exhibitions, including at Te Papa and the Waitangi Museum.

A Sculptor at Heart

Despite the decades in photography, the pull of metal never left. In 2022 – after a 47-year break – Peter returned to silversmithing. He's not easing in gently, either.

"My interest has changed to using New Zealand stone, pounamu, etc., in a more rustic, sculptural, Kiwi-inspired form," he explains. "I'm a ring maker. I like rings."

His pieces, especially the rings, feel like they've been unearthed from the land itself – bold, solid, and full of texture. "I want to show these stones in a different light," he says. That often means skipping sketchbooks and jumping straight into three-dimensional problem-solving. "An idea comes to me over a few days or weeks until I imagine it clearly – and then transpose it in metal."

There's a beautiful synergy between his jewellery and photography. "Both are influenced by shape, texture and shadow," he says. The fingerprints of the Bauhaus movement, Germanic precision, and Scandinavian minimalism are all over his work. That makes sense – Peter's roots are Swiss with a touch of Danish, and he's never strayed far from those influences.

From West Coast Rivers to Whitianga Sands

Though Peter now lives in Whitianga, he says it's still too soon to claim the Coromandel has made its mark on his style. "I've now lived here four years, but I think my recent work is reflecting a childhood regularly visiting the South Island West Coast," he says. "Walking beaches and rivers with my family looking for greenstone or panning for gold – that's where the seeds were planted."

That said, he acknowledges the Coromandel will leave its imprint in time. How could it not?

The Power of Collaborating

Peter shares a studio and life with fellow artist Peter Augustin, and their creative dialogue is ongoing. "Peter's idea was the Elementa 5 exhibitions," he says, referring to the collaborative shows hosted at Driving Creek (2024)



and at Whitianga Arts Centre (2025). "They've been excellent exhibitions – great quality, teamwork, and support for each other's art form."

Peter has always been surrounded by art and artists. His maternal grandfather, a Swiss painter and porcelain designer, was part of a long line of creatives. "As a family, we mixed with artists, attended exhibitions and concerts. It just felt normal."

Highlights and Hurdles

Peter doesn't sugarcoat the challenges. Starting over after nearly five decades away from silversmithing has required patience – and YouTube tutorials. "My challenge has been to re-learn and expand my skills," he says. "Luckily I've got a practical mechanical ability, so these processes translate to bending metal."

Despite the learning curve, the achievements keep stacking up. He has sold pieces through local connections and was recently named a finalist in the Small Sculpture Awards 2025 for his 'corrugated wave' two-finger ring. "I look forward to my future work being more art-sculpture linked rather than mainstream," he says.

As for photography, Peter's abstract work has been recognised internationally and locally – his images have been finalists in prestigious awards from Japan to New Zealand. But it's clear that jewellery is where his hands are happiest at the moment.

Advice from the Workshop

For anyone dabbling in multiple art forms – or just figuring out where to start – Peter's advice is grounded and generous: "Immerse yourself in art. Visit exhibitions, talk to and become friends with artists. Ask questions." He also champions the unfashionable, but reliable – books. "Books hold secrets to your end result."

Social media is helpful, sure. But nothing replaces doing the work, making mistakes, and learning from every piece. "I'm learning with every project," he says. "It takes time."

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Instagram: [@peterfelix_art](https://www.instagram.com/peterfelix_art)

Words by
Leonardo Magri



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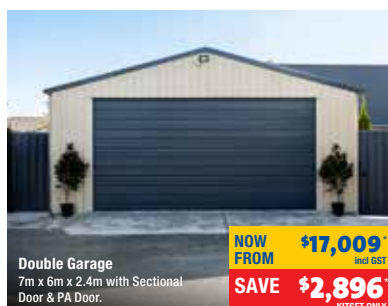
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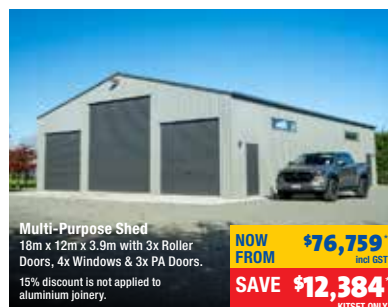
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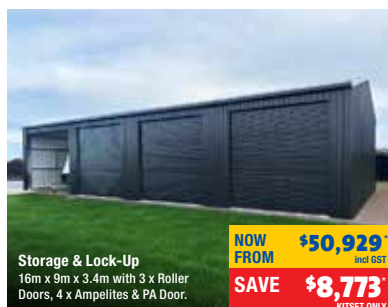
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I am falling into you

My Elephant Island
Between us God is coming with every atom of his
I have not yet learned how to embed myself
in her Fireflies cypridina
Give my boat
Give them to the full moon
The next day I can no longer find them
I am falling into you
You Fireflies Tie a sailor's knot in my soul
I have turned pale
Even my eyes are as white as the sun
I am the biggest cloud
The cloud like a sea lion
I drink all the moonlight and your blue
An Elephant Island is gone
You tie a sailor's knot in my soul
The busy present I fall into you
The undressed gods drink with the horses of memories

God loves me
Give me fireflies
Glowing seawater
The sound of the boat's motor
The only night

God loves me
I get all the holiness

by Yaning Ma Foreman

Riven with tears

Ancient, that land
riven with tears, steeped in blood, shrouded in grief.
Layers of recriminations ...
sediment of hatred
underpinning reprehensible acts of revenge.

Bombs and rockets no solution ...
failed strategies only fail again
over and over
in paroxysms of terror.

But what of the children?
Who will step back from ultimatums ...
open their hearts to concession?

Her blood, his blood – death
makes no distinction.
Children lie broken in the rubble
and families mourn
as a blood-red sun rises yet again
over deadly futile devastation.

by Helen Oliver

Published in Mingled Voices 9,
International Proverse Poetry Prize Anthology 2024



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Ancient & Stories, Modern Sounds

The Coromandel Soundscape of Purple Pilgrims

Clementine and Valentine Nixon, aka Purple Pilgrims, are sisters who make music together. At times playful, ethereal or hauntingly enigmatic, their ever-evolving sound is hard to categorise but certainly falls into the alternative realm.

Music is in their blood. Not only are they sisters, but Clementine and Valentine come from a long line of Scottish folk musicians. Naturally, music was always around growing up.

“Our grandparents were always singing,” says Valentine. “Our grandfather taught Clementine the notes on the piano, and our grandmother would sing with us. Our mum would sing with us. Scottish folk ballads were what I started with. That had a real impact because essentially it’s storytelling, and it’s quite ancient, so I think falling into these stories from another time was really transformative.”

“Our ancestors were Scottish travellers, so their culture is very much rooted in the old ballads and handing down their oral history for centuries,” adds Clementine. “They used to play to the kings and courts and all that kind of stuff!”

A shared love of stories and mythology has been with them from an early age and heavily influences their lyrics.

“As kids, we would interact with the place we were in by learning about its history and mythology,” says Valentine. “I think it’s just a fascinating way to write. It’s rich with metaphor and symbolism and all of those things that are fun to play with in writing.”

Originally from Christchurch, the sisters moved to the Coromandel Peninsula in 2016 after living in Hong Kong.

“We were struck by how beautiful the whole area is, and how much space there is,” says Clementine. “It seemed like a perfect place to come and make music away from the world in this incredible environment.”

“I think being out of the hustle and bustle has a big impact on how we make art, and it definitely comes out in the sound as well,” adds Valentine. “Being outside of the city and being so surrounded by nature has definitely seeped into the music in ways that we didn’t plan, and it’s influenced us – the change of lifestyle and being connected to nature and having a river in the garden.”

They view the isolation as conducive to their creative process.

“It means that we’re able to work on our music at our own pace and on our own terms,” says Valentine. “If you wanna make music that’s truly your own, it’s important to at times block out the world, especially during the writing process at the sort of embryonic stage of making music. You don’t want to be influenced by too many outside sounds, other musicians or scenes. All that kind of stuff can be a distraction from making something that’s truly authentic.”

The Coromandel influence can be heard on Purple Pilgrims’ 2016 debut album, *Eternal Delight*, which was self-produced at home. While heavily influenced by the experimental noise scene the sisters were exposed to in Christchurch, the natural world is a definite presence on the album.

“There’s more naturalistic tones and textures, and there’s even some cicadas in there,” says Clementine. “They were really loud that summer when we were recording, but we ended up working with them instead of against them!”

“We’d been touring a lot and had written a lot of the songs,” Valentine adds. “Then we moved here and started recording straight away, so we were very enamoured by the beauty of the environment. I think that influence came through the most strongly in that album.”

They followed up *Eternal Delight* with *Perfumed Earth* in 2019. While their vocals were largely buried under layers of noise in the former, they are more clearly heard on *Perfumed Earth*.

2023 marked the beginning of a new stage in the sisters’ artistic evolution with the release of their more conventional third album, *The Coin That Broke The Fountain Floor*. In a break from their usual DIY production, the album was produced by Randall Dunn, who has worked with such luminaries as Bob Dylan, David Bowie and Björk. It was recorded at Circular Ruin Studios in New York. When it came time to release, the sisters decided a name change was in order. They released the album as Clementine Valentine.

“It was the experience of collaboration and because Purple Pilgrims was exclusively self-produced and quite DIY,” Valentine explains this name change. “When we did this bigger production with a group of collaborators, it felt like it was its own world and its own entity, so we decided that it needed a different name. That’s not to say we won’t go back to Purple Pilgrims in the future.”

The sisters have toured extensively around the world, both as headliners and opening for alternative heavyweights such as Weyes Blood. They remember a show in Aberdeen, the hometown of their folk musician great-grandfather Davey Stewart, as a career highlight.

“We played at a venue that our great-grandfather had played at,” Clementine remembers. “The support ended up playing some covers of his music, and they actually remember him, because he used to busk on the streets of Aberdeen. They had this whole surprise waiting for us, and they said: ‘You have to go and watch the support act, because they’ve got something special.’ That was an incredible experience, because we weren’t expecting it.”



Words by
Nur Peach



PROUD TO BE LOCAL

Liam Ryan

The Narcs formed in Christchurch, but you weren't part of the line-up until the Auckland days. Did you know them back in Canterbury?

No. I was doing a lot of session work in Auckland at the start of the 80s – Rodger Fox, Suzanne Prentice, country shows, all sorts of stuff. I'd heard about The Narcs' legendary gigs at the Hillsborough in Christchurch but didn't meet them until they played in Devonport where I was living between tours. They were a three piece at the time. So, adding keyboards was a big change. They took the name The Narcs because they were originally a covers band that did a lot of Police songs.

Was there a particular moment when you thought, "Woah, I'm a rock star!"

Maybe when we were featured in the *Woman's Weekly*! Opening for Queen, opening for Elton John, touring with Midnight Oil. To be honest, I was more interested in being a great musician.

The Narcs disbanded in 1990. What have you been doing since then?

I was getting into teaching when we broke up. I got a couple of degrees and a master's. Eventually I ended up managing Performing Arts at ARA in Christchurch – overseeing 30 staff and 300 students across two music degree courses. That took up a lot of my time – and got me away from performing. After the earthquakes, I wanted to get back to playing – so we moved back up north.

Why Waihi?

We liked the idea of the mountains wrapped around us and being close to the sea. When we were moving north, we looked for a place that had that kind of feel.

What do you love most about the area?

I really dig the Hauraki landscape, the mountains, the sea, the skies, the rivers. That's a big draw for me. I feel very connected to the whenua (land) here. I find it very inspiring creatively and also good for my well-being. We've found a really nice community of people around the area.

You're doing a lot with local musicians and songwriters. Tell me about Air Sculptures.

I established Air Sculptures based around the idea of songwriting as a daily personal practice – of actually taking pen to paper and writing songs. Over the last two years, I've been working with 30 or 40 songwriters who really encourage each other to write. We've created a group environment where people can workshop their songs, critique each other's songs and perform on each other's songs.

What would be your advice to a young keyboardist wanting to make it in the music industry?

I think every musician should try and get at least a basic understanding of the piano keyboard. Apart from the variety of keyboards it allows you to play – piano, synthesisers, etc. – keyboards are the pathway into music programming, DJ work and working with music software like Logic and Protools. And play every day – regardless of what instrument you play. Music is a loyal, life-long friend.

This is an edited version of a really good chat Rob Holding had with Liam Ryan. To read or listen to the full interview, visit: coromind.nz/proud-to-be-local-liam-ryan



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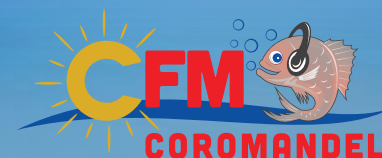
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Goat Control

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Walk through a healthy Coromandel forest and you'll notice the understorey – young seedlings emerging, ferns unfurling, and shrubs filling the understorey that feeds and shelters wildlife.

"That understorey is where the next generation of the ngahere (forest) begins," says Steve Bolton, Programme Lead Peninsular Ungulate Management, Whitianga District.

"When that layer is sparse, it's a sign the forest is under pressure."

"One of the key drivers of the pressure on the understorey can be wild goats," Steve says.

"Goats browse the foliage of most trees and plants and can rapidly strip vegetation within their reach, eating seedlings, saplings and leaf litter-fall from the forest floor. Over time, this damages the forest understorey and slows or stops regeneration.

"Goats often take favoured species first – such as broadleaf/pāpāuma and māhoe – before moving on to less desirable plants. That removes vital food and shelter for native animals," Steve adds. "That's why DOC runs an ongoing goat control programme across the Coromandel Peninsula – to control goats and protect our forest."

A key focus is the Papakai Ecological Area, with forests ranging from lowland podocarp to sub-alpine communities, including kauri, tawa and northern rātā, with the rugged peaks of Papakai and Maumaupaki rising steeply to 822 metres. The Manaia Kauri Sanctuary sits at the northern end of this landscape, adding to the significance of protecting the wider forest ecosystem. Papakai is home to Coromandel brown kiwi and Archey's frog, kākā, long-tailed bat, and special forest plants, including king fern, and Dactylanthus (pua o te reinga).

Control of goats is through various methods, according to Steve.

"Ground control is undertaken by skilled hunters working with trained bailing or indicating dogs to locate goats in dense bush," Steve explains. "Dogs are fitted with GPS collars, and both hunters and dogs must meet certification standards.

"Aerial control is used as the next step after ground control, particularly in steep, inaccessible terrain where hunters can't safely operate on foot. Tools such as thermal detection and 'Judas goats' (collared goats used to locate others) can improve effectiveness, including Judas goats with GPS or radio telemetry collars, with strict requirements for positive identification before animals are controlled.

"The scale of work, and progress, is significant. In Papakai, 2,380 goats were removed between 2022 and June 2025, with a further 570 removed so far in the 2025-26 period. At Papa Aroha, control resumed in 2025 and has removed 109 goats to date. Across Northern Coromandel, Papakai and the Southern Forest, animals controlled as of June 2025 totalled 3,185."

Goat control requires ongoing effort and follow-up.

"Goats were eradicated north of the Colville-Waikawau Bay Road in 2005/06, but a small population thought to be gone around Three Stone Bay was rediscovered in late 2023 – a reminder that follow-up and repeat visits are essential," Steve says. "Sustained control protects the gains we make."



Photos

Judas Goat Papakai – Shaun Neustroski
 David Paine thermal camera specialist and pilot Dan Mulligan – DOC
 Hunting dog Pippi with a large Billy goat – Shaun Neustroski
 Aerial hunting goats – DOC

The Joy of Joining a Writers' Group

A Dialogue and a Descriptive Mishap

I joined the *Mercury Bay Writers* when it was formed back in March. We meet once a month and are given a topic and/or genre to write a 500-word piece about. Our first assignment was to create 'a dialogue' and the second was to write 'A descriptive mishap'. I would like to share my attempts with you, so here they are.



1) The sad demise of Sam and Buddy

There was nobody at home to interview for Steven's homework project, so I decided to interview two strawberries that I had just picked. I had read that plants can communicate with one another, so I wondered if they could with humans. I asked one of them, "Hey mate, how's it going?" No reply. I said to the other, "Nice sunny day to be a strawberry." Nothing. "Oh well," I thought. "I'll just have to imagine a dialogue between my two red, rosy friends, whom I named Sam and Buddy, and who were lying in a bowl on the kitchen bench. Here's how it went.

"Hey Sam, howya doin'?"

"Hiya Buddy, to tell the truth, I'm feeling a bit disconnected after we all got picked yesterday. I was really enjoying it there in the garden, growing away in the summer sun with all the family. How are you finding our new home?"

"Actually mate, I was happy to be picked. It was getting so hot there under mother plant's leaves that I was starting to go a bit soft and mushy and those disgusting, slimy slug things were beginning to gnaw away at me making these horrible holes in my otherwise beautiful body. Thank gardengod I'm away from them."

"I was freezing last night in that big box over there that they put us in. Weren't you, B?"

"Not really, as I said I was just glad to get out of the heat. Better for my complexion. By the way, do you know what happened to Sally and Brian and the others? They were just lying there with us in that cold dark box when suddenly we were flooded with some kind of weird light. It wasn't sunlight, and a huge thing, like the one that picked us, came in and whisked them off somewhere and then suddenly it was dark again."

"I must've been asleep. I didn't hear them go. I'm glad we eventually got out of there though. It just didn't feel natural being cooped up in the cold and dark like that. At least here we can see the sunlight. Hey Buddy, what do you think happens to us after we're picked? Do we just lie here until we go soft and slushy?"

"Gardengod knows. But I can say that just after we got put on this bench, I heard a strange noise, and I thought I saw Sally going round and round in a weird-looking round box thing. She didn't look overly happy. Then she disappeared and all I saw was red watery stuff spinning and spinning."

"Really? Uh, hey Buddy, what's happening? We're going somewhere. Ouch, something just pulled out my hair."

"Woah, mine's gone too. Sam, what's that strange noise? And why are we going around and around? I hope.....aaaaagh!"

2) Writer's block

'Descriptive mishap'. That's the topic that Lynnette gave us for our next writing assignment. "Can't be that hard," I thought, so I went home and sat down at my computer to start writing. That flat blank screen stared back at me as if to say, "C'mon man. Show us what you've got." "Nothing, must be just writer's block. All writers get that," I pleaded. The taunting screen maintained its insipid pale colour with no hint of encouragement. "Help me describe something for god's sake. It's no big deal, just a few adjectives and a lot of imagination." "The quick brown fox jumped ..." At least you can picture the fox and the lazy dog. I know, I'll try to picture a mishap and then describe it, but hang on, how can I do that if my mishap is writer's block and I am in the middle of it? I can't visualise something that I am a part of. It's impossible to visualise nothing. No adjectives like quick or brown to play with. No colours to fall back on. You can't have red or green nothingness because then it would be something. No actions like jump or fall or dance, because again there would be something to describe like, "She danced around the room like a softly flowing stream, her chiffon dress brushing lightly against her partner." Oh, to have something solid to describe.

More staring at the screen. I become distracted by the soft sound of the ex-cyclone rain patting the deck and the odd final gusts of wind heralding the demise of the much-anticipated storm with its predicted destructive outcome. Ocean bound seagulls squark as they leave the comparative safety of the sodden fields behind our house on their way to forage for tasty titbits on the debris-laden beach. But hang on. These are mere distractions of the mind trying to drag me away from the real task I have of describing this mishap of writer's block. The mind often does that, takes us off on some random memory or intrusive thought, inducing longing or anger or some other equally distracting emotion. How to concentrate to enable myself to describe this feeling of nothingness.

Still nothing. You know, I'm beginning to think that writers' block may be just nature's way of telling us to slow down and just be with our lack of thought or inspiration, to simply indulge in mind quietness with no yearning desire to do or achieve anything else but emptiness. If this is so, then I am sorry I won't be able to complete my homework assignment. Sorry Lynnette. I will let you know when I come up with something to describe.

Words by
Ross Liggins

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STILL HOOKING CROWDS AFTER TWO DECADES

Whitianga Oceans Festival: Where Coast Meats Country!

It's been over 20 years since Whitianga started a local festival in celebration of the local seafood and coastal culture – and with the 21st event taking place on the Whitianga marina waterfront on 19 September, it's time to reflect on why it's still one of New Zealand's most loved regional food and lifestyle events.

Just ask two people who've been there since its inception and are still keeping the vibe alive – Linda and Darrell Bird. Linda started on the committee, while Darrell was a stallholder when it was called the Scallop Festival. Two decades later, Linda is the Oceans Festival committee chair (and a highly regarded local real estate agent), while Darrell's a committee member (and runs the very successful Dive Zone business, which he founded around the time the festival first began).

"Over the past two decades, the festival has become more than just a day of entertainment – it's a reflection of the Coromandel community itself, bringing together locals, visitors, chefs, artists, families and seafood lovers in a uniquely Kiwi celebration of the ocean," says Linda.

It's now evolved into a broader offering, with coast, meats and country. In 2021, it rebranded and moved away from scallops, recognising the state of the fishery and the need to help with the pressure to push for an MPI closure on Coromandel scallops.

Seafood dishes remain on offer – harvested in a local, sustainable way – from local line-caught snapper to mussels and oysters from Coromandel farms, alongside kina sourced from local divers. The festival's ethos around the environment saw it acknowledged for Best Sustainability Initiative at the 2024 New Zealand Event Awards.

In 2026, there'll be a wider offering of foods to reflect the country and western vibe – bbq meats, smoky ribs, alongside local produce and vegetarian options – a dish for everyone.

But what continues to be at the heart of the festival's success is its strong community focus. Local volunteers, schools, charities, performers, hospitality businesses and seafood suppliers have all played a role in shaping the festival's identity over the years.

What started as a modest community gathering has steadily evolved into a nationally recognised event, attracting thousands of attendees from across NZ and overseas.

"The thing I've always loved is the variety of people attending," says Linda. "You'll see families, young people, retirees, visitors from all over the country and locals who've been coming since the beginning. Everyone mixes together with lots of laughs. I was thrilled to meet one group who came from Tasmania, who loved the festival so much, they created their own event based on ours."

The costumes and colourful personalities are also a much-loved tradition.

"There are amazing costumes. People get into the spirit of it. You see sea-inspired costumes, pirate hats, and groups who plan meticulously in advance to dress up together – with best-dressed prizes up for grabs."

"And the behavior's incredibly positive and respectful – we've got a great relationship with the police and Council, who've supported the event all along."

Across its 20+-year history, the festival has navigated significant challenges. Economic downturns, changing tourism patterns and the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic all impacted attendance, planning and operations at various times. Severe weather events and rising event delivery costs also create pressures faced by many regional festivals.

Despite these challenges, the resilience of the Whitianga community and the loyalty of festival goers has helped this event to thrive. Its ability to evolve while staying true to its original values has become one of the key reasons for its longevity.

Today, the Whitianga Oceans Festival remains not only a celebration of great food, music and coastal culture, it's a celebration of community spirit, sustainability and regional pride. For many attendees it's become a highlight on the New Zealand events calendar. Make it your tradition and come along Saturday, 19 September 2026.

 Words by
Laurina White
Oceans Festival Event Coordinator



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