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New York radio DJ RAFE GOMEZ is responsible for picking up Kiwi bands Twinset, one million dollars and P-Bass Expressway for airplay on his U.S. syndicated jazz mix show The Groove Boutique. JET talked to Rafe about discovering NZ music from an international perspective.

How did you discover NZ music?

I first became intrigued by the NZ vibe when I was watching the movie *Once Were Warriors*. There's a scene where the abusive Maori dad is in a bar and he starts singing with the jukebox. His voice was amazing! So rich, heartfelt, and soulful - he could've been one of The Temptations. It was so unexpected yet so powerful. That's when I became fascinated by the notion of NZ soul. When I got on the air with *The Groove Boutique*, I was searching for a release by a particular band - I don't remember which one - and I came across the excellent NZ music site smokecds.com, which is where I discovered the "NZ Sound".

What is your favourite NZ band?

For soulful song craft, I'd have to say one million dollars. For cool jazzy vibes, Twinset. For get-up-and-party funk jams, P-Bass Expressway!

How is it different from what's in the States?

There's something going on down there, maybe it's in the water or perhaps the lambchops, that contributes to a unique sound which is unlike anything going on here. It's very soulful, very authentic, and very - I guess the word I'm looking for is enthusiastic! When I'm digging NZ bands, I'm really feeling the joy that the musicians are putting out there when they're in the studio, and it's an ingenuous, hopeful vibe that's extremely infectious.

What has the response been like?

Interestingly, I received an e-mail from the manager of one million dollars, who said that all of a sudden, he's been getting requests from U.S. importers for the band's album. Given that I'm the only radio DJ in the entire US of A who's spinning the band's tracks, he attributes the surge of interest solely to the airplay that I've been giving the band on my nationally syndicated jazz mix show, The Groove Boutique.

What's your assessment of the music industry in the US?

It's in flux, what with corporate consolidations and the prosecution of music thieves - I mean downloaders... It's a horrible time to be an artist hoping to be signed to a major, but I would think that it's a good time to be a self-contained artistic/business unit - specifically, artists who produce their own albums on their own labels, build their own web sites, do their own publicity, book their own shows, and sell their own merchandise. If their sound is solid and their expectations are realistic, they could manage a decent living.

How can NZ music push itself further over there?

By consistently presenting the world with well-written, well-produced material by talented artists - and seeking out guys like me who'll give it mega spins and support it one hundred per cent.

Ever been to NZ?

No, but I'd love to get down there. It's a gorgeous country with fascinating culture. Hopefully soon, when an NZ radio station or network syndicates The Groove Boutique, I can swing through on a combo holiday-publicity tour! I'm buying most of what I'm playing, but if any labels think they might have a jazzy-funky or funky-jazzy joint that's right for me, they should check out the playlists for the show, which are on my site www.thegrooveboutique.com/playlists.php. If upon perusing my vibe they realize that their releases are consistent with it, they should hit me with their genius, bay-bee!