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Lorde tops US Billboard charts

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TOP OF THE POPS: Singer-songwriter Lorde

It's been billed as the biggest moment in Kiwi music in 25 years. **Michelle Duff** reports on Lorde's ascension to pop music's throne with her No 1 hit Royals.

America's holy grail of music now belongs to Lorde, and the Auckland dad who first picked her talent can happily say: "I told you so."

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Royals pushed past Miley Cyrus' *Wrecking Ball* and Katy Perry's *Roar* to take out the top spot, earning the 16-year-old a place in music history.

Auckland producer Joel Little, who collaborated with Lorde on *The Love Club* EP and her new album *Pure Heroine*, was equally excited.

"This is that ultimate dream you never expect to happen in real life."

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It has been a meteoric rise to the top for Lorde, who was signed to Universal Music after performing at a talent contest at Belmont Intermediate, on the North Shore, in 2009.

At the time, Ella was singing with her buddy, now Five Mile Town guitarist Louis McDonald. Louis' father Ian McDonald knew Ella was something special, so sent a recording of their performance to Universal.

Yesterday, Mr McDonald joked: "I suppose my epithet is 'I told you so'. It's funny, all those years ago when I first heard her sing I just knew she was different from everyone else ... you just knew there was this sort of latent talent forming there.

"She has a great personality, a lovely character, a brilliant voice, and is a really, really clever girl, so I'm not surprised. But I am surprised she's done what she's done so quickly, I think everyone is. It's absolutely brilliant."

Mr McDonald said Louis and Ella played several gigs around Devonport and her vocal tone and ability to remember melody and lyrics even at age 12 were astounding.

NZ On Air music manager Brendan Smythe said reaching No 1 in the Billboard top 100 was a "monumental achievement," unlike any he had seen.

"It is so wonderful. I've been around for 25 years in this business, and this is probably the biggest moment in New Zealand music in those 25 years. The No 1 on Billboard is kind of like the holy grail of music, and now it's Lorde's grail.

"A New Zealand artist achieving the holy grail in America ... it's something we've all dreamed of, worked for, wanted, and it's such an extraordinary achievement."

Could only be positive for other Kiwi musicians, he said.

"If you're an American talent scout, you would be looking at Kimbra's success, at Lorde's success, and you'd have to be saying, 'What's going on, what's in the water down there?' and you'd be taking a closer look."

But the simple fact was that the song *Royals* was fantastic.

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"This 16-year-old's first album is so smart that it begins with the line 'Don't you think that it's boring how people talk?' and ends with the statement, 'Let them talk.' *Pure Heroine* is honest and addictive. Welcome to the age of Lorde." - *Billboard*

"It just so happens that *Pure Heroine*, as its title cheekily implies, is wall-to-wall pop pleasure and very possibly the best album of the year." - *Grantland*

"Yelich-O'Connor is, first and foremost, an astute songwriter, a keen observer of desolation and relationships." - *Boston Globe*

BREAKING NEW GROUND

Lorde joins an exclusive club of New Zealand artists breaking into the American market.

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Kiwi artist Kimbra was a guest vocalist on Australian musician Gotye's hit Somebody That I Used To Know, which topped the Hot 100 last year.

Comedy duo Flight of the Conchords' album peaked at No 3 in the Billboard albums chart in 2008, while Crowded House's single, Don't Dream It's Over, made it to No 2 in the single charts in 1987.

OMC's song How Bizarre made No 1 on the Mainstream Top 40 chart in 1997, but did not make the Hot 100.

Royals took the crown with top "Airplay Gainer honours" for the first time, and had a 22 per cent lift in radio audience to 128 million.

It also topped the digital song chart, with 294,000 downloads, and was streamed 6.1 million times. In the hot rock songs chart, it stayed on top for a fifth week.

Lorde currently has three songs on New Zealand's top 20 singles chart: Team, Royals, and Tennis Court.



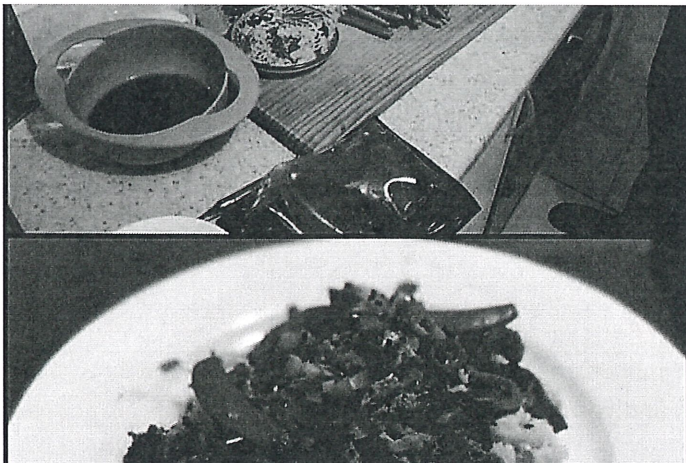
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