

## Wineries beckon NZ music heavyweights

By Chris Ormond of NZPAWellington, Dec 20 NZPA - Tim Finn, Dave Dobbyn and Bic Runga will get a chance to "fall in love with their country all over again" when they embark on a national winery tour in February. All three can pull a crowd on the strength of their own music, but, as they learned 10 years ago, that can compound when they join forces. The trio sold out halls and theatres from Whangarei to Invercargill in 2000 when they played 26 shows on the trot, and are well aware of how New Zealanders are likely to respond to a similar format being applied to winery settings throughout the country. When approached for the 2000 tour, Dobbyn said the response from the musicians was immediately positive and things fell into place in terms of scheduling. "And the same thing has happened with this one..." He says the idea of playing with Finn and Runga again during the height of summer was an attractive proposition which was difficult to say no to. It will be a sizeable production with a 70-strong team supporting the trio, who will be backed on stage with drums, bass, two keyboards, guitars and plenty of vocal input. "We're putting in as much work as we can to make it sound right. We've got a good bunch of songs to deal with, and as it turns out, the set we did 10 years ago, a lot of those songs will remain," Dobbyn says. Those songs will be a mixture of each other's most well-known hits, some of which will be pared back to harmonies and acoustic guitars and others which will involve the entire musical artillery. Such gigs are family-oriented and all three admit tour spirit is always high when the spotlight is shared. "You've got all generations and all ages and that is definitely a plus. The audiences walk away blown away by the spectacle of it all -- and so do we," Dobbyn says. "I won't be able to take the smile off my face -- it's the perfect environment really." Finn says he couldn't believe how popular the first tour was, and to what extent the three musicians playing together appeared to have struck a chord with the communities they visited. "It was an amazing tour, one of those ones where you can't quite imagine how it sold so quickly." Even with decades of experience playing to such crowds, he says the nerves still come to the surface in the final minutes before taking the stage. "There's no doubt about that... on your own it's pretty full-on, and that never changes as you get older." But he agrees any weight on his shoulders is significantly lessened when playing with other singer-songwriters. "And at the end of the first song you feel the waves coming back at you and (nerves) are gone." Dobbyn says his own pre-gig routine involves wandering around drinking water with his emotional state drifting somewhere between excitement and fear. "But being on that stage and getting that first one-two-three-four, bang, it's gone. It goes straight out into the audience." At 23, Runga was a spring chicken during the first tour. Dobbyn says he and Finn must have seemed like the "two slightly scary uncles". "But then she realised that we were just two crazy cranks doing the same as her." He says there was no spoiled brat behaviour and if there were any frustrations created by spending weeks on the road together, it certainly didn't show. When the tour came to an end the feeling was one of elation rather than fatigue and the need for some time out.

"At the end of the tour, when you used to be spent and bothered, we were kind of inspired to record things, which is ultimately what you are aiming for... to kind of ride that wave." Finn agrees collaborative touring to the extent of the upcoming string of shows is refreshing and enjoyable. "You fall in love with your country all over again." The trio all have musical commitments outside the winery tour and face a busy time getting ready for it. They say learning each other's music is one of the biggest challenges presented by collaborative tours, and as well as having creative input in terms of the stage show, that will be the main focus of the preparation between now and February.\* For pics contact Jane Torrance: jane@jtlpr.co.nz 021 393157, 09 3576688 Tour schedule: Feb 5 & 6, Ascension Wine Estate, Matakana; Feb 7, Tutukaka Marina Reserve, Tutukaka; Feb 10 & 11, Neudorf Vineyards, Upper Moutere; Feb 12, Villa Maria Estate, Blenheim; Feb 13, The Mudhouse Winery & Café, Waipara; Feb 15, Millbrook Resort, Arrowtown; Feb 18, Brunton Road, Gisborne; Feb 19, Black Barn Vineyards, Havelock North; Feb 20, Alana Estate, Martinborough; Feb 21, Sacred Hill, Rifleman's Vineyard, Napier; Feb 24, Sentry Hill Estate, New Plymouth; Feb 26, Arena Manawatu Lawns, Palmerston North; Feb 27, Unison Amphitheatre, Taupo; Feb 28, Wharepai Domain, Tauranga; March 5, Mystery Creek, Hamilton; March 6, Villa Maria Estate, Auckland. NZPA WGT co mgr gt20/12/09 14-02NZ