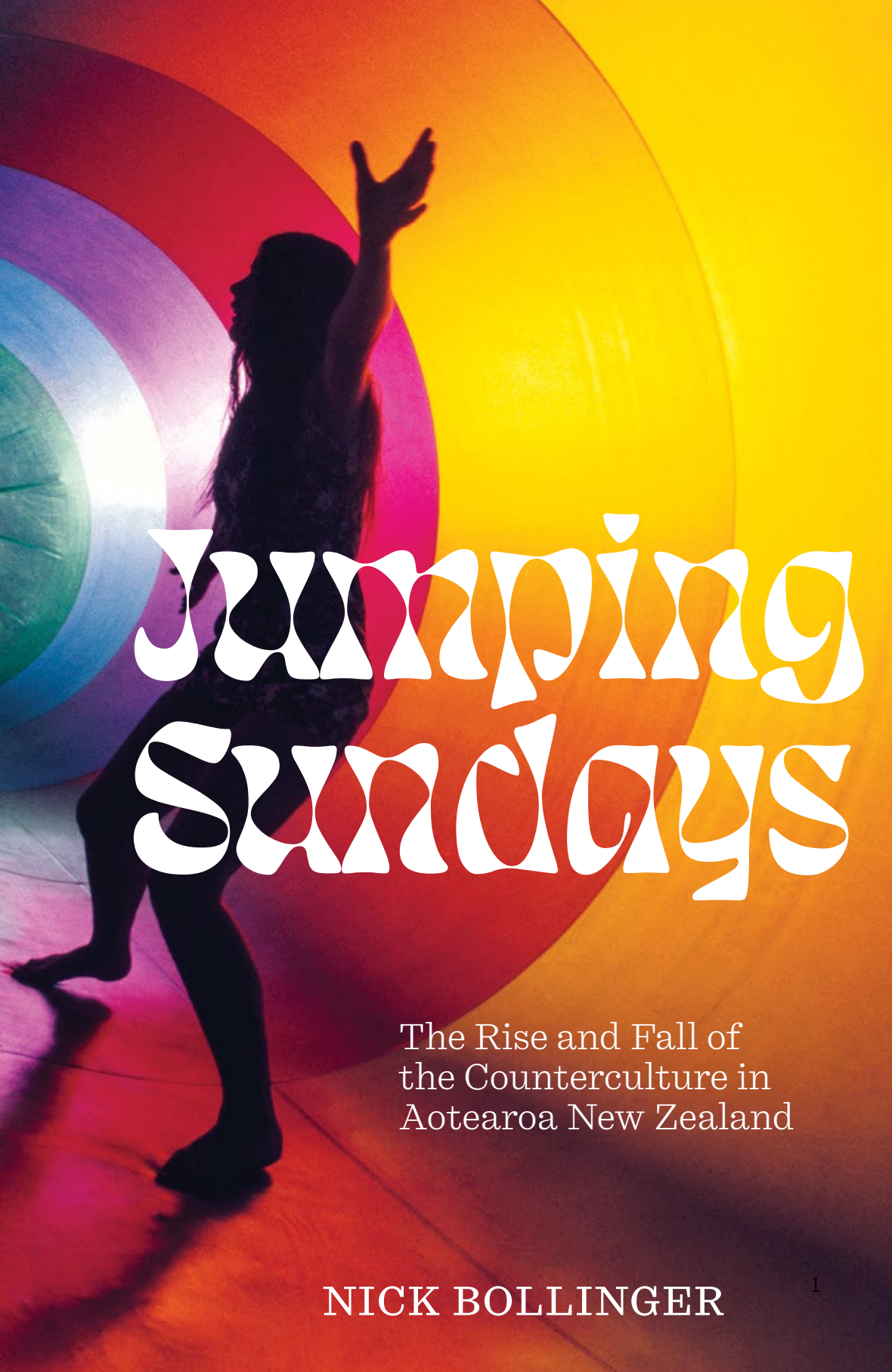
Jumping Sundays
The Rise and Fall of the Counterculture in Aotearoa New Zealand
NICK BOLLINGER

Jumping Sundays

The Rise and Fall of
the Counterculture in
Aotearoa New Zealand

‘A compelling and important history of the counterculture in Aotearoa New Zealand. Meticulously researched and full of vivid details and memorable photographs, this book is an immensely readable and absorbing account of an important era in our recent history.’

Sue Kedgley

‘Jumping Sundays is a fluent, vivid, coherent and succinct account of a period of turmoil during which major changes took place in New Zealand society, and of the ways we understood what that society was, what it had been, and what it could yet become.’

Martin Edmond

‘An absorbing and serious account that is also terrific fun. Deft interviews and personal letters provide rollicking recollections together with many amazing new photographs and images. Bollinger puts a personal and personable stamp on this critical decade with words, sights and sounds that surprise and delight.’

Bronwyn Labrum

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P. 4–5: Albert Park, 1969. **Max Oettli photograph, Alexander Turnbull Library, PAColl-1386-1**

In memory
of
Arthur Baysting

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Albert Park, Auckland, 1969. **Geoff Studd photograph, private collection**

PROLOGUE

On a Sunday afternoon in the spring of 1969, thousands of people defied Auckland city bylaws and came to party in Albert Park. A rock band played on the rotunda. Some people held hands, some danced alone, some sat under trees with guitars, flutes and bongos and made music of their own. They wore kaftans, ponchos and leather-fringed jerkins, floppy hats, headbands, beads and flowers. Poetry and political diatribes were delivered from a podium, improvised from an upturned tea chest. There were bikies, balloons, bubbles, sack races and a lolly scramble, lots of dogs and a pet possum. Someone brought a canoe and paddled it around the fountain, until it capsized. As the afternoon wore on there were joss sticks, skyrockets and what some will have recognised as the musky smell of marijuana.

It wasn't the first gathering of this kind in New Zealand, but it was, up to this point, easily the biggest. Here, on a seemingly vast scale, people who had been variously labelled as hippies, freaks, weirdies, radicals and dropouts were able to see and celebrate with a great many others who looked and acted a lot like they did. For those watching from the sidelines or looking at newspaper photos in the days that followed, the effect was quite the opposite. The revellers were a strange group whose lives, looks, beliefs and aspirations were evidently not only very different from their own but also a challenge to post-war New Zealand's social norms.[1]

Jumping Sundays, as the weekly Albert Park gatherings became known, had their origins in another park, another Sunday. Just a few blocks away, on the upper slopes of Queen Street, Myers Park was the only public place in Auckland where it was legally permitted to lecture or preach, play musical instruments, dance, or assemble to partake in any of the above. In the late sixties much of the activity in Myers Park had centred on the war in Vietnam. Protesters waved placards. Speakers decried New Zealand's involvement in the war and its powerful American allies. One group staged a hunger strike in support of an imprisoned protester, and stayed in the park for several days. But while opposition to the war was earnest, a distinguishing feature of this new kind of protest was the idea that such causes could, and should, be fought in a spirit of mischief and fun. Along with politics there would be songs, dancing, poetry and theatre. For some of the participants, most of whom were in their teens and early twenties, the politics were almost immaterial. Underlying it all was the idea that the world was on the brink of a momentous change, and this was a way to be part of it.

The Myers Park gatherings had been gaining force through the year. At first just a handful, then hundreds came, and soon the crowd had outgrown the venue. The players and dancers felt constrained by the park's steep narrow slopes. And there was the principle of free speech. Shouldn't you be able to speak your mind whenever and wherever you liked? The limits on gatherings were draconian and had to be challenged. So one Sunday, with little planning and no advance publicity, a group of several hundred left Myers Park and set off down the middle of Queen Street. The musicians carried their instruments, which included an iron-framed upright piano. The small number of police on duty in the city that day were taken by surprise. Assuming the marchers were headed for the United States Consulate in Customs Street, the site of several previous demonstrations, they hastily arranged a cordon at the bottom of Queen Street, but the marchers never reached it. Instead they made a right turn up Vulcan Lane in the direction of the much larger Albert Park, just across from the University of Auckland campus. A taxi driver, picking up the police on his CB radio, heard an agitated official exclaim, 'But sergeant, three hundred people can't just disappear!'

Albert Park was liberated.

Albert Park, Auckland, 1969. Geoff Studd photographs, private collection