BOOKS

Fantasy tale with Maori twist

THE LOST TOHUNGA
David Hair
HarperCollins
$24.99

DAVID Hair's brave new young adult fantasy series which started with *The Bone Tiki* continues with *The Lost Tohunga*.

This series takes legendary Maori figures, such as the great tohunga Ngatoro-i-Rangi, and plenty of mythology, both European and Maori, and mixes them all together in Hair's fictional ghost world of Aotearoa.

It is this world that young Matiu Douglas, the son of a criminal lawyer from Napier, finds himself slipping into to do battle with various tohunga makutu and spirit creatures.

Matiu is an adept, someone who can manipulate the spirit world known as Aotearoa.

In this third novel, Matiu and his friends become caught up in the power struggle that was created when he killed the master tohunga, Puarata, in *The Bone Tiki*.

Puarata had many followers and enemies who are eager to take hold of the secret place he stored his power, which he called Te Iho.

Each of Hair's novels is set in a different part of New Zealand and centres around a different Maori legend.

This novel is set in Rotorua and Taupo and features the love story of Hinemoa and Tutanekai.

Matiu meets and becomes involved with a beautiful young gang moll by the name of Hine who turns out to be an avatar, a legendary spirit reborn into the body of an ordinary mortal.

When Puarata's former servant, Parukau, kidnaps Hine, Mat's attempts to save her make him a main player in the battle to find Te Iho.

Being the third book in the series, this story starts off slowly as there are a lot of characters to catch up on. But once the action begins it is stimulating stuff.

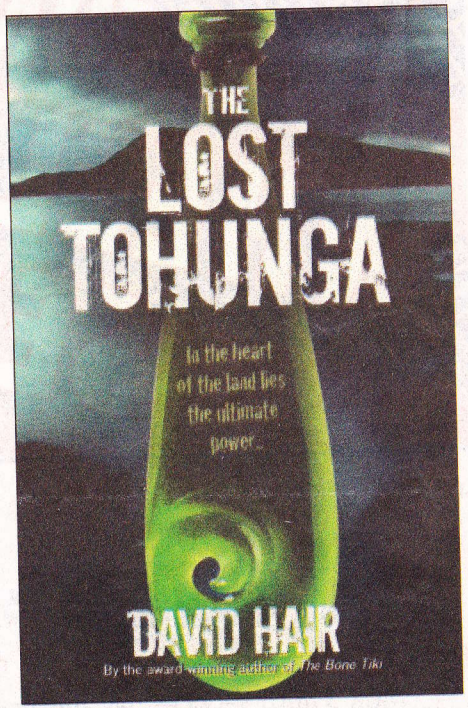
There is a lot of fight scenes, something Hair obviously has an affinity for as he writes these scenes very well.

Also, as Mat travels frequently from the modern world to the parallel world of Aotearoa this novel remains well grounded in modern culture depite the fantasy aspect.

Previous novels in this series have dealt with real world issues that modern children often have to deal with such as marriage break-ups and gang culture.

This story touches on such issues as domestic violence, rape and incest which could be fairly upsetting for some youngsters.

But the big theme of this story is second chances and both the good guys and the bad guys have a lot of childhood issues they need to overcome to move on happily with their lives.



These adventure stories are a welcome addition to New Zealand's short list of young adult authors who write stories that are interesting for both boys and girls.