

Student 5: Low Achieved

NZQA Intended for teacher use only

'Play It Strange' grasped me as an important competition for youth in New Zealand; therefore an interesting topic for me to research further. I personally feel as though Mike Chunn has put immense amounts of effort into New Zealand youth and highlighting the importance of creating music from a young age. As a music student myself, I have learned how important it is to engage in contemporary music in class. Therefore, exploring Play It Strange in depth will develop my own knowledge of the importance of song writing among young New Zealanders as well as the significance Play It Strange has had on NZ music as well as international music. I will be exploring the history of the competition, further developed competitions, future dreams for Play It Strange, past winners of the competition, as well as the overall question of my research: ***How significant has the establishment of Play It Strange been on the growth and development of New Zealand music and beyond?***

### **History of Play It Strange**

The Play It Strange Trust was established in 2003 for the purpose of encouraging NZ youth to develop interested and skills in song-writing and musical performance. The opportunity arose when Bill Moran (an economist) presented a funding source to founder Mike Chunn for a charitable trust that ran music programmes in schools. It was an opportunity to access the important music departments in schools without having to develop the programme with the Ministry of Education. Play It Strange was developed through this idea as Mike Chunn believed that "the music curriculum is only half way there – song is not in the curriculum. Teachers' process is not about going through education – it's all about crotchets and quavers.' Mike established Play It Strange to have a world where music curriculum was expanded, and contemporary minded music teacher are coming through the system rather than having students being forced to create the contemporary world themselves.

The trustees of Play It Strange encourage and facilitate young people to make, and experiment in, music that reflects NZ's unique characteristics, thereby encouraging creativity and innovation in NZ music and enabling young people to make a positive contribution to society through music. Chunn wanted to 'have a world where the music curriculum is expanded and contemporary minded music teachers come through the system; rather than having being forced to create that contemporary world themselves'.

### **Band of Strangers**

Band of Strangers is an event where secondary school students in Years 11, 12 and 13 have the opportunity to get up on stage and play in a band with established and iconic NZ musicians. Play It Strange Trust organiser, Mike Chunn, saw this concept as "a great way to put the spotlight on emerging, top music talent in Auckland schools".

### **Future Dreams for Play It Strange**

Chunn's intention from the start was to change the mind-set of his generation; as he is still trying to discover "why parents don't go to some departments and say 'where is the rock and roll at this school'". His goal is to expand the attitude of people who don't understand or don't want to understand the importance of creativity through song. **Chunn believes that school is where everything should be happening – "between 13 and 18 your imagination should be**

accepted, as it flourishes in the writing and performing of original songs". Another essential aspect of the development of Play It Strange is the fact that all schools are participating in creative song writing and performance; and encouraged by their music teachers and school.

"There are schools where high-Western (music) is all that the teacher knows. Their open-mindedness doesn't exist." Chunn would love Play It Strange to have an impact on NZ society; for people to think that Play It Strange needs to be a competition running annually because of the importance song has in society.

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### **How significant has the establishment of Play It Strange been on the growth and development of New Zealand and beyond?**

Through my research, I have discovered the immense importance Play It Strange has, particularly on New Zealand youth. The success of competition finalists, including Kimbra and Annah Mac has been immensely positive on the individual artists. However their success from such young ages has come from the contest instead of the development of their talents through music in high school. The music curriculum in secondary schools is beginning to develop with the new age. However, an immense setback is the fact that the work "song" is not in the curriculum. With the present music course, song writing is allowed to be completely ignored within non-contemporary departments. It is Mike Chunn's dream to develop song into the music curriculum to build the creativity of high school students. "Everything about the music curriculum is fine, it is just half-way there".

Mike Chunn believes the opportunities for the future of New Zealand song-writers is endless. NZ music is constantly making a mark on the international market: with the development of artists such as Kimbra in Australia and America.

Although NZ music is still partially driven by American and English Top-40 songs, local music has become immensely popular nationally and internationally. Today, artists can be heard because people want to hear them; there are also more delivery systems of music and a much larger musical online presence. Play It Strange has been immensely significant in developing more youthful and confident songwriters and performers. Chunn displays more availability in terms of song-writing as Play It Strange offers entrants the opportunity to enter their songs for NCEA composition Achievement Standards.

I personally believe that Play It Strange has had an immensely positive impact on New Zealand music in particular. I feel that by being creative through expression of music undeniably benefits individuals from a young age and is greatly important; Play It Strange offers this as a competition.

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Mike Chunn has created an innovative and significant competition for high school students to express themselves through song. New Zealand music has grown into a much more creative music nation; Play It Strange has helped develop this as artists are flourishing from a much younger age. The significance of the competition from its establishment in 2003 has already had a positive impact on New Zealand youth and the national music industry as a whole.