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BUSINESS BASICS GIVE MUSOS A HEADSTART

It can be heartbreaking to see a talented musician stacking shelves in a warehouse. But it's a scenario all too familiar to MAINZ director and former Hello Sailor guitarist Harry Lyon.

"People in the arts typically struggle to turn their creative talents into a viable living and tend to end up at the bottom of the income pile," he says.

But this is something MAINZ (The Music and Audio Institute of New Zealand) hopes to turnaround through its Diploma in Creative Enterprise, a year-long programme designed to equip people in the creative industries with "a business toolkit".

"When our music and audio graduates ring me for advice, it's never about writing songs or technical details, it's always to do with the music business," Lyon says.

The MAINZ Diploma is designed to help students establish their career by developing skills and knowledge that will assist them in identifying, researching and marketing their products and services.

"Quite often students have only a very vague idea of what they want to achieve, so the first part of the course is heavily involved in goal setting."

While MAINZ has traditionally focussed on music and audio, the Diploma in Creative Enterprise is open to people from all creative fields. "We're teaching business skills that can be applied to any discipline and we'd love to have film makers, photographers, writers, sculptors and fashion designers in there with the musicians; that would be great!"

The Diploma runs like a "mini MBA", explains Lyon, who talks passionately about the programme's 'blended delivery' method. "We use a variety of ways to communicate with the students", including Moodle - an on-line education platform, which allows tutors to post resources and conduct classes as forums. This blended delivery method makes the programme suitable to anyone wanting flexibility to study when they want, where they want. "The idea is that people can fit classes around their business or career."

Students meet once a month for three-day workshops on campus and have internal and external mentors to guide them with their business idea.

As well as these hand-picked mentors, students work closely with MAINZ staff involved with the other programmes on campus such as Audio Engineering, Contemporary Music, Live Sound, and Event Management to enhance their own professional skills. They also have the option of purchasing their own laptop computer to take advantage of the wireless network that operates on campus and use it to build a portfolio of valuable resources to take with them when they graduate.

Lyon describes Programme Coordinator, John Quigley, as “the perfect person to be guiding the programme. He has the practical industry experience plus an MBA and teaching qualification to provide an academic backdrop to his teaching”

Originally with the former New Zealand bands the Bongos and Big Sideways, John won the New Zealand Music Award for best song and new group in 1987. These days he continues his passion for performing and composing with his group, the Nairobi Trio, of which he is a founding member.

Lyon is enthusiastic about the Diploma in Creative Enterprise, and the difference it will make to students’ futures. “There was nothing like this when I was younger, absolutely nothing. I think it’s symptomatic of the creative industries being taken more seriously.”

“There is a growing acceptance that arts has a place in the economy and quite vigorous academic programme around this, such as how a vibrant arts scene in a city can attract talented people from other sectors,” says Lyon, who completed his Masters dissertation on career development in the music industry.

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For more information please contact:

Harry Lyon DD: 0-9-308 7512
Director Mobile: 027-497 0355
MAINZ Email: harryl@tpp.ac.nz
www.mainz.ac.nz

About MAINZ

MAINZ is a division of Tai Poutini Polytechnic, attracting approximately 300 students per year to its music and audio programmes. As well as the Diploma in Creative Enterprise, MAINZ offers programmes in Audio Engineering, Contemporary Music Performance, Live Sound and Event Production, Music Event Management and new for 2010; DJ and Electronic Music Production.

The school also delivers short courses in song writing, Logic, DJ'ing and Pro Tools, the industry standard audio software used in the majority of recording and post-production facilities internationally. MAINZ prides itself on being New Zealand's first Digidesign Certified Training Locations to deliver the internationally recognised Pro Tools qualifications.

MAINZ has two campuses - one in Auckland City, the other located in Christchurch. Their programmes are supported by Industry and approved by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.