

BAD HAIR DAY

If you haven't heard the song "Bad Hair Day" this year, then you might be living under a rock! Here is the story behind the song from Nelson-based teacher and composer John Phillips whose song "Bad Hair Day" has had 2.4 million posts and the combined views on these is now at 1.1Billion on Tik Tok.

I guess it would be fair to say I am a bit of an 'ANNOYING DAD' sort of character when carrying out my crossing duty on busy Salisbury Rd outside the school where I teach in Richmond, Nelson. One of the local Colleges is situated on the other side of the road and I have always made it my mission in the mornings to shock them with a chirpy comment or joke ... hoping for a two-syllable greeting in return but also content with a grunt! That is until a song I wrote 20 plus years ago "Bad Hair Day" went viral on Tik Tok. Once the connection was made my 'street cred' skyrocketed... 'You actually wrote Bad Hair Day... sick!' 'You da man!' From that point on, life with the lollipop changed forever - so many hi fives and congrats from the very same staunch teenagers that struggled to crack even a smile. It's been hard to keep my mind on the traffic and delivering people safely across the road.

My work colleagues call me 'Johnny Tok Star'...weird.

To be honest I'm still trying to get my head around how this all happened - I'm certainly uncomfortable with the attention and way out of my depth when it comes to social media at this level but one of the most humbling realisations to come out of this whole experience has been just how impactful our role as a teacher is - and I mean seriously impactful.

If you are like me, you just get on with your job - you don't stop and consider exactly how many students you have taught over the years - you try and have fun with each new group that dances in and out your music room door - you hype them up - you send them back to class... sorry for that (Not!). I have learnt firsthand, through this experience, how/that we must never forget that each group that rocks up and sits down expectantly in front of us is comprised of **individuals** - each one goes home at night and talks about 'stuff' - hopefully some of the good stuff was about attending music class. Maybe they don't talk about it maybe they don't need to... it's just something from the way you have treated them that has made them feel special and they tuck that away, forever. I have been reminded over the last few weeks of so many fun times involving 'Bad Hair Day' - hard to believe how it has lasted so long.

The Bad Hair Day story started over 20 years ago. But as I look back on 34 years of teaching, I can't help but think I can trace back this little success to some key formative moments in my own teacher training and professional development that unlocked a talent for song writing.

Wellington Teachers' College was 'the bomb'. To be fair - if the surf was up at Lyall Bay or there was cricket on at the Basin Reserve we called in sick, but when actually in attendance we had a blast. We sang in choirs (for fun!) - we danced creatively like no one was watching, we wrote songs with Laughton Patrick, we talked about arty farty stuff, we learnt to play guitar and ukulele and we practiced all these things together out in schools. We focused on developing skills that proved to be invaluable when we became real teachers and left us feeling confident teaching the Arts in the classroom, setting up a fun daily schedule.

No YouTube to rely on back then! How thankful I was in those early teaching years that I could pull out the guitar and calm the farm with a song! I can't help but feel that this style of collegial learning, laughing at ourselves as we trained to be teachers, was critical. We were all in it together - those of us that had a few more skills on the guitar taught others. We made resources that I still use today.

In every job since my first at St Patrick's School in Kilbirnie I was always the one in charge of finding assembly songs. Never an easy task. Will the kids like it? Nice tune but what about the lyrics? I can only find stuff about love and heartbreak. Assembly is tomorrow and I've got nothing! Then along came *Kiwi Kidsongs*! How I looked forward to that delivery every year. I have no doubt schools around the motu breathed a collective sigh of relief as they ripped open the packaging to see what musical treasures awaited on those... tapes. Singing sorted for the year!

For me *Kiwi Kidsongs* was a true turning point in my writing career. What if I wrote a song that got onto a *Kiwi Kidsongs* album?!

At Springlands School in Blenheim where I worked for 14 years, we had a school-wide focus on values, and I started listening more closely while on duty to what was going on - everything suddenly became a potential song! Respect for property... boring! That was until one of the mums fell into the huge "**Lost Property Box**" we had by the staffroom... brilliant. Song #1 sorted. The next song came to me while I was watching my son play soccer and seeing the behaviour of some of the parents on the sideline....not flash! Song #2 sorted: "**My Dad Loves His Rugby**". And so it went on: "**Ma Te Mahi Ka Ora**", "**The Wobbly Tooth**", "**Marble Mania**", "**Butterfly**", "**The Red Dot Special**". Each song with a different values focus.

Despite having no studio experience, I recorded the whole album at home on an 8 track VS-880 Roland digital recorder - in an old, converted woodshed. The egg cartons on the walls were for visual effect rather than acoustic. I had to wait until the neighbors stopped arguing and the dog stopped barking to get a clean take. It certainly taught me to rely on my musical

ear and to hone my playing skills. I was a finalist in the Tui NZ music awards in 2001 - (not many entrants that year).

I submitted "My Dad Loves His Rugby" to *Kiwi Kidsongs* and it was accepted! I was stoked. That began a wonderful few years working with the amazing Janice Marriot and her team from Universal Children's Audio. Other songs I personally had published on various *Kiwi Kidsongs* albums were "Ma Te Mahi Ka Ora", "The Wobbly Tooth" and of course, "Bad Hair Day", written in 2004.

School photos are always hilarious to look back on and we have all had moments I am sure where we have thought: "what was my mother thinking letting me out in public like that"? My son, who is now also a music teacher, had the frizziest mop of hair when he was younger - looked like dacrone when he got up in the mornings.... like he'd been 'fighting with his pillow all night'..... and there it was. Quick song to write too as they sometimes are.

Bad Hair Day was first published in 2004 on my own album of original music for children and then later on *Kiwi Kidsongs 14*. I had to do a little convincing at the time to keep the original feel to the song on this recording but in the end, I think all involved in the project would agree it has stood the test of time and still has that sassy upbeat feel that suits the subject matter. The amazing vocals by child singing sensation Theo Va'a really gave the track some added punch.

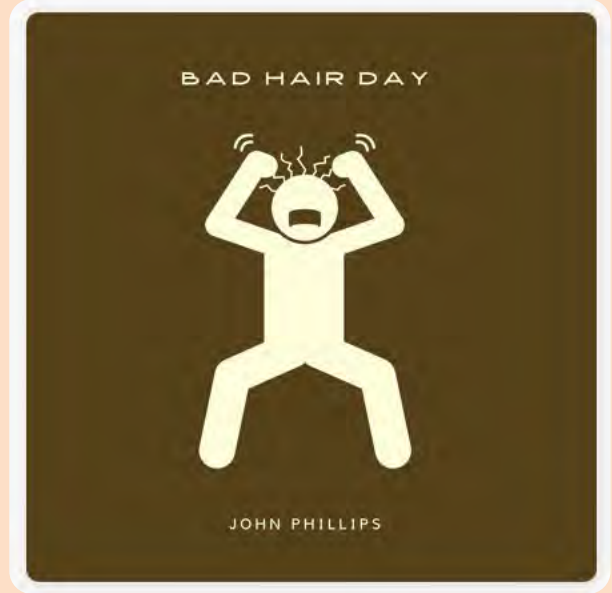
DOWNLOAD HERE



Kiwi Kidsongs

Kiwi Kidsongs has in recent years been made available online in the form of lyric videos on Vimeo. This updating of the resource was made with the financial help from the Networks of Expertise and the project was driven by passionate classroom and specialist music teacher Tim Carson. While teaching at the same school here in Nelson, Tim Carson and I had many conversations while teaching at the same school here in Nelson about the urgent need for a focus to be put back into developing the skills of classroom teachers to be able to confidently teach performing arts within their own classroom programmes.

- The need for more government funded music resources in today's teaching environment is critical - good wholesome relevant songs that are professionally produced - pitched at the primary school yr 4-8 age bracket.



- More teachers playing instruments live while leading classroom singing!
- More quality professional development where teachers can build confidence to teach music, dance and drama.

I for one am a teacher who is looking back on their career and feeling eternally grateful for the input given at teacher training level which allowed me to identify my passion and pursue it with confidence. I would never have written 'Bad Hair Day' had I not been given the opportunity or a reason to give writing a go.

Writing songs for children is every bit as enjoyable and fulfilling as writing for radio. It's challenging and the audience is brutally honest. Sometimes you get it right and there is nothing more fulfilling than hearing hundreds of students singing your song back at you - lost in the moment.

BIO: John Phillips

Albums

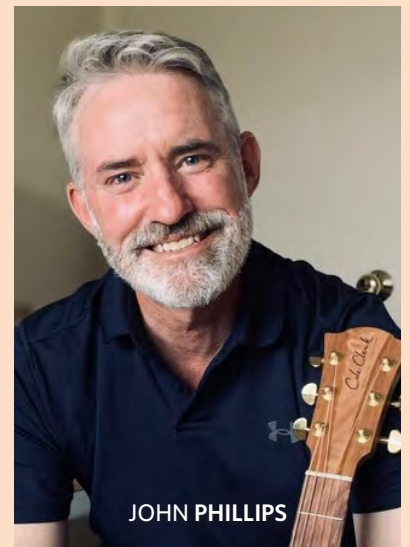
The Lost Property Box
Bad Hair Day
Express Yourself

Music For Liturgy

God's Love
At Your Feet

John Phillips Profile

SPOTIFY



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