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## CULTURE

An outsider spirit typifies New Zealand, which results in a cultural scene packed with ideas, attitude and insight.

### THE OVERVIEW

A vital mix

New Zealand's cultural heritage is as rich and varied as that of any country in the world. The range of different influences is immense – from Maori, who arrived on these islands around 800 years ago, through the European customs and traditions that white settlers brought with them to more recent arrivals from India and China – and has turned the largest metropolises into multicultural melting pots. But a country's cultural life never stands still or stays fixated on the past and New Zealand's thriving world of culture, media and film is no different.



#### 1 MUSIC Flying Nun Auckland

"The strategy is to make sure as much music is travelling from New Zealand to the rest of the world as there is from the world coming here," says Ben Howe. He's the general manager at Flying Nun Records, an indie record label that since 1981 has championed some of the country's best-known small bands. [flyingnun.co.nz](http://flyingnun.co.nz); [archhill.co.nz](http://archhill.co.nz)



#### 2 RADIO 95bFM Auckland

Started as a pirate radio station broadcast from a boat in 1969, 95bFM – now in a rent-free space on the University of Auckland campus – is the city's 24-hour, trial-by-fire school for aspiring broadcasters. Over the years, 95bFM has kept its devil-may-care swagger and lured young listeners with its irreverent news, interviews and homegrown alternative music selection. [95bfm.co.nz](http://95bfm.co.nz)

#### TUNED IN

New Zealand bands account for more than half of 95bFM's music playlist and the station's programmes are broadcast from a studio with an open-door policy.



#### 3 ART Brick Bay Sculpture Park Warkworth

Richard and Christine Didsbury came up with the idea of the Brick Bay Sculpture Park while they were at the Cass Sculpture Foundation in Sussex, England. "It was this classic English landscape and there was this sense of discovery," says Richard. "There was nothing like it in New Zealand at the time. And the landscape here [about a 50-minute drive from Auckland in rural Northland] is perfect."

Visitors walk for about an hour round the 10-hectare site and will see around 40 sculptures on the way. "It is a joy to us to sell the artists' works and support them in the process," says Christine. [brickbaysculpture.co.nz](http://brickbaysculpture.co.nz)



#### 4 MUSIC Conch Records Auckland

Conch Records is on Auckland's achingly cool Ponsonby Road. Pick up a few vinyls and then head to the back of the shop, which opens onto a sunny courtyard. Food and drinks are served here from 08.00 till the late evening and the menu features dishes influenced by the flavours of South America. [conch.co.nz](http://conch.co.nz)



#### 5 BOOKS Freerange Press Christchurch

When the 2011 earthquake hit Christchurch, Barnaby Bennett, an architecture graduate student, was living in Melbourne. He decided to move back to the city that generations of his family called home, where he now runs Freerange Press. As New Zealand's only co-operative publishing company it produces a journal, books and online articles that focus on Christchurch. [projectfreerange.com](http://projectfreerange.com)



## THE SHOW GOES ON

The O Theatre on Auckland's Queen Street opened its doors in 2011 after a 15-year battle to build a replacement for the city's Watershed Theatre that closed in 1996. The new building was designed by Cheshire Architects.



### CREATIVE CAREER

From 14 March to 21 June 2015, the gallery will showcase a retrospective of celebrated Auckland artist Billy Apple, whose career spans more than 50 years.

## 6 ART Auckland Art Gallery Auckland

The Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki underwent an enormous rebuilding, expansion and rebranding project that came to fruition in 2011. It saw the building – beautifully situated within Auckland's central Albert Park – win the World Building of the Year award at the 2013 World Architecture Festival in Singapore.

"There is a seamless relationship between the building and the natural world through the visual presence of the magnificent trees in Albert Park," says Rhana Devenport (pictured), the gallery's director. [aucklandartgallery.com](http://aucklandartgallery.com)



## Q & A

Taika Waititi  
Film-maker

**Taika Waititi is one of New Zealand's foremost film-makers and known for his inimitable comic style. He has been nominated for an Oscar and his most recent feature 'What we do in the Shadows' (co-directed with fellow Kiwi comedian Jemaine Clement) is about vampires living in Wellington.**

*Has competing with commercial films been a challenge?*

I don't think we're even in the same race. We're at the same sports day maybe but I'm in the long jump and they're in the 100 metres. My stuff is going to have – and I hate the word – an independent rather than a big studio style.

*Tell us about 'What we do in the Shadows'.*

People love it because it is obviously made first and foremost for New Zealanders – all the references and the fact that they live in Miramar, which is like a really boring suburb by the airport. The classic Kiwi film is dark and depressing – we're like Iceland in that way. But people nowadays want escapism and I totally get that. That's what we were trying to do with the vampire thing.

*How healthy is the New Zealand film industry?*

I'm hoping it'll get better. I've started this thing with a couple of friends of mine called Piki Films, which is a script workshop for Maori and Pacific island writers. *Piki* means "to spring forth" in Maori.



## 7 ART Johnson Witehira Wellington

Johnson Witehira (pictured) is an artist and designer of mixed Maori and New Zealand European descent, whose stated goal is to bring Maori visual culture back into the lives of its originators. "When I was growing up, I was really into computer games and comics, as well as painting," says Witehira, "but one thing that bothered me when I was older was that there was no Maori presence in these things."



Witehira has always insisted that Maori art and design should be out in the public sphere rather than confined to museums and galleries. "There is such a rich Maori visual culture and this is completely missing from the urban landscape," he says. "It is important to be there in the public space. It brings the culture to people's attention, into their lives."

A great example of this philosophy at work came in 2012 when his designs were exhibited on 34 screens in Times Square – the first-ever

synchronised display of digital content there.

Witehira is working on various projects, including a series of murals in public spaces across Wellington (pictured), designing a set of Maori typefaces and experimenting with the idea of what Maori wallpaper might look like. The last project is arguably the most typical of his style. As he explains, "I don't want to put Maori art on a wall: I want to make the wall Maori." [madebyjohnson.co.nz](http://madebyjohnson.co.nz)