

Rhythm and riffs right on

One Mt Roskill school is making a big noise in music circles. John Thornton listens in

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD Andy Tigili'ima smiles bashfully as I ask how he thought of his band's name, Octamystik. It is as if nothing would yield him greater hurt than providing the answer.

"It's kind of like a hip-hop name," he discloses reluctantly. "Mystik means minus one and Octa means eight. We have got seven members."

He has no need to be so bashful. The band, with six other Year Nine students from Wesley Intermediate, beat all contenders to claim first place in the Intermediate Battle of the Bands Originals section.

The feat is all the more remarkable as most of the band had not played an instrument until they were taught music at the school.

"I just started playing last year," says guitarist Matthew Esekia. "I knew nothing [about playing the guitar] before I came here" shortly before letting rip with the riff from *Sweet Child o' Mine* note-for-note.

A critical component of the band's success has been music teacher Natalie Hughes, whose offer of free lessons in ukulele, guitar and keyboard allows students of all backgrounds a chance to express themselves musically.

"I have got the opportunity to teach the whole school, from Year Seven through the ukulele, keyboard and guitar class," she says.

"So, by that time, you get a pretty good idea of who to choose [for the band] — just in terms of



Octamystik won the Intermediate Battle of the Bands Originals section — a reward for their diligence and enthusiasm

GARRY BRANDON

who's got good rhythm, who's got a good ear and to focus on those students."

Evidently, Natalie's genuine warmth and

music knowledge has paid off. Two of her students scored best individual instrumentalist awards in the competition.

Octamystik's drummer, Andy, 12, won best drummer in Auckland for a second year in a row. Bassist Alex Terry, 13, won best bass player.

His teacher describes Alex as "a natural talent". He was offered a scholarship at Rock Camp worth \$700, but may miss the chance because of a family trip to Australia.

"We are all upset he might not get it," says Natalie. "It would have been such a great opportunity."

Despite their tender ages, the band composed the winning entry, *Move On*, for Battle of the Bands from idea to performance in less than a week.

"We had the music for the song done a week before," says Natalie.

"But we didn't put any lyrics to it until, like, 24 hours beforehand. We didn't even have a song title until the previous night."

For the award the band receives \$800 in MusicWorks vouchers and \$350 cash for Wesley Intermediate.

The band also has an opportunity to make a

music video, offered by web-based video pioneers Jaijaz. Plans are already cooking on how the school will spend the money. "There's been talk of setting up a recording studio," says school principal Nigel David.

"There's a great spot for it in the rehearsal room, which is already soundproofed."

Indeed, there is a great spot, not only for a recording studio, but also for musical teaching in general.

"The rehearsal room already has guitars of all shapes and sizes on every available wall space and about two dozen keyboards."

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SCHOOL OF ROCK

Awards were high and plenty for Octamystik at the Intermediate Battle of the Bands:

First place in Originals section
Second place in Covers section
Best Bass Player — Alex Terry
Best Drummer — Andy Tangili'ima
Top Manager — Natalie Hughes

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