

# Students finetune mobile music sounds

MP3, iPod, 3G, photo and video messaging – it's all high-tech stuff and it's what our young people are into.

So when Far North Lion Foundation Young Enterprise Scheme – YES – firm MCNA unveiled its solution to amplifying music played from cellphones, there were plenty of sceptics about, especially because Apple, Sony and Panasonic had already invested millions on amplification solutions for audio devices.

The original idea for MCNA's audio enhancement device, marketed under the brand name, The Sube, came from the firm's 16-year-old managing director Ashe Cooper.

Using a surprisingly "old-tech" approach, their device is made from acrylic plastic, moulded into a small rectangular vessel. When a cellphone playing music is placed inside it, sound is bounced off the vessel's walls at a higher frequency which, according to MCNA, amplifies volume by as much as 11 percent, depending on the type of phone used.

Ashe says the idea for The Sube came to him while watching classmates on the school bus having a competition to see whose mobile phone could produce the loudest music.

He noticed they were cupping their hands around the phones to try to amplify the sound and thought, in true



**Young entrepreneurs:** Directors of the Young Enterprise Scheme firm MCNA are, from left: Nerissa Kapa, Ashe Cooper and Michael Hiko-Nodder. Absent Misty-Blue Ngere.

entrepreneurial style, there must be a better way.

Ashe, his fellow MCNA directors Michael Hiko-Nodder, Nerissa Kapa and Misty-Blue Ngere and Bay of Islands College students then set about developing the idea to bring to market.

And just in case you think this simple but effective idea could be easily copied, The Sube is already the subject of a patent application.

The MCNA team say they are quickly learning about the different qualities it takes to run a success-

ful business and how much effort and commitment is needed.

They've also been surprised by how much of a challenge working with friends can be when, from time to time, not all team members see eye-to-eye on matters.

The YES Programme is part of the Education for Enterprise Programme – E4E – and is sponsored in Northland by Far North electricity generation and lines network company Top Energy.

Under the year-long, business-learning programme,

year 11 to 13 students form firms, become directors and follow business plans they write to develop products and services which they market and sell.

Students are supported by teachers and a regional co-ordinator, who arranges directors' seminars, trade fairs, oral and end-of-year presentations and teacher and mentor training.

Top Energy chief executive Russell Shaw says his firm sees the Young Enterprise Scheme as a powerful, hands-on learning experience for Northland's young people.

"The programme teaches them about the business world and helps them develop enterprising minds," says Mr Shaw.

"It also gives them insights into the dynamics of how people have to find ways to work together to achieve their business goals."

Top Energy's sponsorship of the scheme fits well with other educational programmes the firm sponsors in the Far North, including WaterSafe which teaches primary school children water survival skills, he says.

The firm's Far North Science and Technology Fair is an effective, hands-on way to promote science and technology to secondary school students, while helping them to develop investigative and problem-solving life-skills, he says.