



MATT OWENS

Location: Auckland

"Just a dude on a journey"

In a previous life, Matt Owens worked in an Ad agency and had a stint as a banjo player in the original lineup of the folk group Albi and the Wolves.

Matt is now an author, graphic artist, Greenstone carver, volunteer firefighter, and an unexpected social media star after he wrote and published a Whitcoull's Top 50 children's book, *The Story of Swoop*.

The beautifully-illustrated book struck a chord with both children, and their parents alike, before becoming a staple in the classroom and an instant young reader favourite.

Matt's real-life experience of caring for an injured baby Magpie after finding the chick abandoned at the roadside and nursing it back to health was the genesis of *The Story of Swoop*. The bird's rejuvenation, coupled with an unlikely relationship between 'Swoop' and his cat, Mowgli, shaped the narrative, while his grounding in creativity fueled the page-turner.

Matt has said his goal for the book was to inspire children to be kind to animals, and that writing the story and caring for the Magpie was cathartic, coming at a time when his father was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

Matt's engaging personality and the empathy he showed for a vulnerable newborn endeared him to a global audience online after he chronicled the adventure via the Instagram handle @swoopandmowgli - which now boasts nearly 125,000 subscribers.

The trio propelled to viral stardom with 50 Million cross-platform views, including 43,000 TikTok followers that earned Matt the nickname "New Zealand's Dr Doolittle". His uplifting videos also glimpse into the other side of his life as a family man and tell the story of his unwavering commitment to the Fire and Emergency squad of the small community of Awhitu.



The videos' viral success worked hand-in-glove with the promotion of the book. Appearances via traditional media outlets increased Matt's profile exponentially, featuring on primetime magazine-style shows like Seven Sharp, Breakfast TV, web content like Ladbible and the Daily Mail, and the front cover of New Zealand institution; The Woman's Weekly. He also regularly visits schools and reads his book to kids.

Matt's success with his first book has inspired him to continue writing for children. His plan involves integrating his musical background into new books complete with song components.

He aims to build even further on his significant social and literary outreach and has recently adopted a new baby magpie named Zoe, who is now starring online.

SKILLS

Instruments

Guitar, Guitar » Bass, Guitar » Bass, Guitar » Bass, Guitar »
Intermediate

