



Shalin Graves (left) and Sacha Young started Coup de Main for their friends



PHOTOGRAPH BY ALASTAIR GUTHRIE

EMERGING TALENT

SURPRISE ATTACK

A *coup de main* is defined as a swift attack reliant on speed and surprise to accomplish its objectives in a single blow. It's also an apt title for an online magazine that in just 18 months, through "crazy word of mouth", boasts 22,000 unique visitors a month.

Coup de Main was started by then-students Shalin Graves, Sacha Young and Vicki Lin purely for their friends, but thanks to Young's accountant father, the girls had the foresight to register as a business at an early stage. "We were like, smile and nod, 'Yes, Dad,'" says Young. "We did it anyway. I think it probably put us in a different mindset from then on, that if we worked really hard and put all that we had into it we could potentially make a living out of it."

Spanning fashion, music, photography, film and everything pop-culture related, *Coup de Main* is sprinkled with things to 'heart', celebrity looks to emulate, guest blogs and whimsical photo shoots with visiting bands.

At just 20 and 21, Graves and Young (Lin moved to Taiwan this year but still contributes) write for a readership they consider friends and about things that

genuinely interest them—unapologetically so.

"We are what we are," says Graves. "The good thing about our readers is that they do understand that we'll cover, like, the Jonas Brothers, then we'll cover some hardcore band that we know our readers are interested in. They know we have the full spectrum and we'll try and cater."

Pegged by publicists as trendsetters and predictors ("It's so weird when they

wish I could do what you've done." Well, why don't you? You know, start a blog, go take some photos with your friends. Why wish when you can do?"

And the *Coup de Main* girls are definitely doing. They are redesigning the magazine to incorporate advertising space, which they hadn't considered originally, and have plans to expand a global audience that already includes readers from as far afield as the US and Bolivia.

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call us that!"), the girls have opinions on everything from jeggings (definitely out) to the newish Polaroid 300 cameras (definitely in) and Janine Foster, a musician they manage on the side ("Tiny, but when she sings it's huge").

Graves also shares her opinion on would-be entrepreneurs. "People are like, 'Oh we're so jealous, I

When I mention that 22,000 visitors a month puts them in the company of some pretty respectable Kiwi magazine circulation numbers, they're unaffected.

"That's cool to know," says Graves pragmatically, "but we're always striving to get to the next ten thousand. We'll never be satisfied. More is more."

—*Lynda Brendish*