

Transcript for **Boy bands**

**Presenter:** The internet is full of articles about what makes a good boy band. But many bands appear and disappear without a trace. Alana, it can't be as easy as following a formula, can it?

**Alana:** No, I don't think so. The traditional formula is that you have four or five good-looking young guys with some musical ability and the ability to dance – the choreographed dancing was very important to boy bands in the past. They tended to wear the same, or very similar, clothes when they performed, so you had to decide on a 'look' for the group. The most important element, however, was said to be that the band members had different and very distinct personalities.

**Presenter:** Right, the cute one, the rebel, the joker, the shy one, mysterious one ...

**Alana:** Yeah, although sometimes they all just seem to like the cute one! The idea is that different boys appeal to different girls, so you can have a bigger fan base. There's someone in the band for everyone.

**Presenter:** So, do you think this all still holds true? Or have things changed in the 21st century?

**Alana:** Yeah, I guess things have changed for several reasons – partly just because we needed a change, but mainly because of changes in the media and with new technology. Take One Direction ...

**Presenter:** Ah, I've been counting the seconds before you mentioned One Direction!

**Alana:** Well, we have to talk about them because they're the biggest thing at the moment, although who knows how long they will last.

**Presenter:** Oh, ages and ages ...

**Alana:** We'll see. Anyway, One Direction, as you know, came to fame through the X Factor, a reality show, and that was a great way to start. You had loads of people watching them every week and wanting them to win. They felt as if they had a personal stake in their story as they voted for them every week.

**Presenter:** What age group does One Direction appeal to exactly?

**Alana:** That's another clever thing. They seem very unthreatening, so they appeal to very young girls, they are cute so teenage girls really like them, but they also have a laddish, slightly naughty side to appeal to the mums! The teenage girls and the mums are the ones who will spend money. The lyrics to the songs are calculated to appeal to girls who feel a bit insecure about themselves, like most teenage girls. "You don't know you're beautiful, that's what makes you beautiful", that kind of thing. Lots of girls want to feel wanted, but not scared, and that's traditionally what boy bands do. They present this image of a clean-cut, reliable boyfriend. Actually, One Direction's clothes also help here: chinos and clean casual shirts and canvas shoes. You'll have noticed that they don't wear the same clothes. Their stylists have been instructed to keep them looking individual, but despite that they all have this attractive but unthreatening look. No tattoos, or piercings, or black leather, or make-up or anything.

**Presenter:** You make them seem very cold and calculating. Remember that they've been nominated for loads of music awards and they've won dozens, so they're regarded as serious musicians.

**Alana:** OK, if you don't want to believe they're calculating you can blame their management. They're nice boys who are fantastic musicians.

**Presenter:** They are! And they keep proving their critics wrong. A lot of people said they wouldn't make the leap from the UK to the US market, but they did very quickly.

**Alana:** Yes, and that's all down to their clever use of social media, or rather their management's clever use of social media. One Direction are all over Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Tumblr. That's how they made it in the States so quickly. In the past it was a lot more difficult and took a lot longer. Bands had to try and get air-time on local radio stations and that was really hard. But they've by-passed all that. Social media has become the new radio, as their manager said.

**Presenter:** Their first record, Up All Night, went to number one in the US, didn't it?

**Alana:** Sure did! They achieved a world record as the first British band in history to reach number one in America with a debut album. It sold 176,000 copies in the US in a single week.

**Presenter:** Amazing. And the boys are all rich from the merchandising too.

**Alana:** Yes, well, the boys and their management company. There are One Direction phones, toys and games. Dolls, even. I think that's another 21st-century thing – companies are cashing in on success in all possible ways as quickly as possible.

**Presenter:** May they all enjoy it while it lasts.