

Spotlight on the Showbands



Introduction

Showbands were the most popular form of musical entertainment within the Isle of Ireland in an era that lasted from the 1950s until the 1970s.

What was unique about the Showbands?

Well, the clue is in the name. Show - Band!

They put on a show, were colourful and exciting on stage.

Before the showband era mini orchestras, dressed in tuxedos would have provided music for dances. Those musicians would have played sitting down, behind music stands.



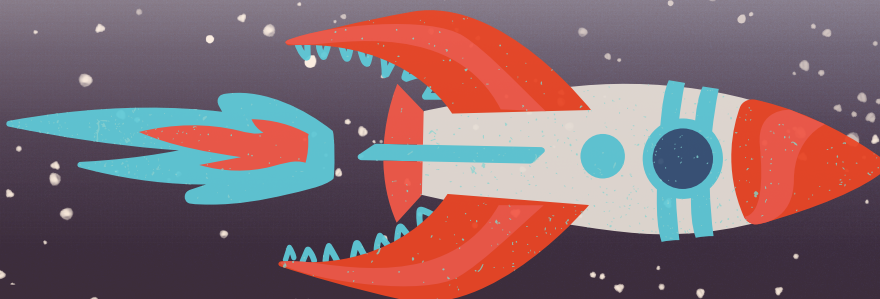
The showbands musicians changed that. They stood up and moved on the stage.

Omagh has a special place in the history of the Showbands, because many musicians and singers from here performed in the top bands of that era

The 1950s to the 1970s was a time of great change. Young people had money to spend on records, movies and dances. Soon every home would have a television set and transistor radios were everywhere, blasting out pop songs.



The Beatles were revolutionising pop music, rockets were heading to the moon and Omagh's heroes were the Showbands



Did you know . . . ?

- That there were more than 700 Showbands in Ireland at one time?
- Some were playing up to 5 nights a week and, in some cases, to crowds of 1,500.
- That it cost about 40 pence to go to a dance in Omagh in 1966.
- Tom Jones sang in Omagh.



SHOWBAND SEARCH

N D A R E C O R D P L A Y E R
A V O L S Y G T U O I O A R S
C M S R O E N E C C E O L M R
U A T U O S I N S S T Y R D N
O O R E R P V D E I S A S A L
V P A C A R I E C D L I I N L
A A H O K M J R A A G U N D A
D N C O C C U C Y G Y B G M H
O T U N U S S O D Q Q U L Y R
O O S E B A R P O L Y I E M U
P M S J T S T A L R H G A M O
S I R Y I G L R E I O Q L H B
P M N O A R U D M P L O E D A
N E M R E T T A L P S A D C L
O S H M P L T D R U M Q U I N

PLATTERMEN

BUCKAROOS

MELODY ACES

JIVING

LABOUR HALL

PANTOMINES

DISCO

OMAGH

DRUMQUIN

RECORD PLAYER

SINGLE

CHARTS

Introducing the Showbands

Learning Objectives:

By the end of Section 1 pupils will develop an understanding of:

- Their local musical heritage.
- The personal history of older members of their family.
- The development and importance of the media.

The average Showband usually consisted of a lead singer, a rhythm section of lead guitar, bass guitar and drums. A brass section of saxophone, trumpet and trombone. Many Showbands had up to seven members.

Each Showband had to have a 'look' or image. After all, they had to **stand out**.

Most Showbands played 'covers'. This meant they sang the latest pop hits, sounding as close to the originals as possible.

Showbands played pop, country, rock and roll, ceili, folk, jazz and waltz music.



"My name is **Tom Sweeney**, singer, song writer and entertainer. The Showbands started in the late 1950's. First of all you must remember, back in those days there was no television and very little radio. The only places young people could meet were the dancehalls. Every parish in Ireland had a dancehall and they would be packed maybe on a Friday and Saturday night. It was a social necessity. There was nowhere else to go."



Definition of a Dancehall:

Public establishment that charges an admission price to see a band and you could dance the night away.

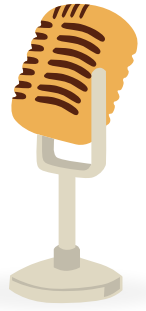
DESIGN YOUR SHOWBAND

Activity: Design your own Showband, illustrate this, including the number of members and instruments you would have in your band.



Memory Lane

What are your parents, grandparents or guardians memories of the Showband's



1 What was your favourite Showband?

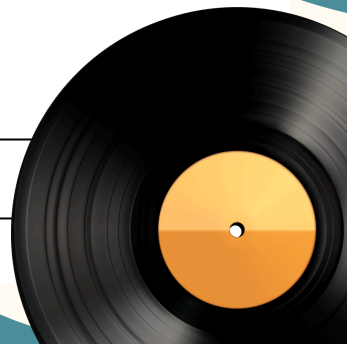
2 Who was your favourite singer?

3 What was your favourite song?

4 How did you hear about the Showband's?

5 How much did it cost to attend a Showband event?

6 How did you get to a Showband event?





7 What did you wear?

8 What time did the event usually start/finish at?


9 Did you go on your own, or within a group?

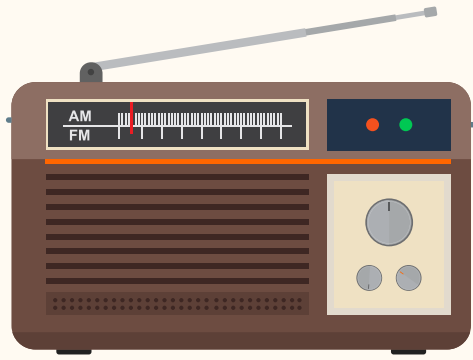
10 What kind of music did they play, can you describe it?

11 Would you have danced to the Showbands, what sort of dance would this have been?

12 Do you have any photographs of showbands, can you describe what's happening in the photo?

13 Would you have got an autograph from one of the bands? Who would this have been?





The Importance of the Radio

Between the 1950s and 1960s the Showbands were becoming increasingly popular. A lot of homes around the North and South of Ireland still had limited or maybe no access to television. However, most people had access to a radio or something known as a wireless. Each family would listen to radio/wireless programmes each evening, it was how people kept up to date and listened to the latest music. This included listening to the latest Showband songs.

You could see what radio shows were going to be played by purchasing the local paper, it would have a television and radio schedule printed in it each day.

Section PROGRAMME FOR THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 1968.

TELEVISION	THURSDAY	RADIO
<p>7.55 AN ROAGHT 8.0 NATIONAL SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS In the final of the 100m and 200m events, the Irish team will be competing against the United States and the Soviet Union. Coverage of the 400m and 800m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>8.30 THE TIME TUNNEL Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 8.30pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>8.50 THE NEWS Weather Forecast.</p> <p>9.15 PRECIOUS POP AND BILLYBLYND BEANS A musical variety concert with the participation of the BBC. The show will feature the best of Irish music and will be broadcast on the radio.</p> <p>9.30 THE NEWS Weather Forecast.</p> <p>9.45 NEWS SPECIAL Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 9.45pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>10.15 SPORTS FINAL Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 10.15pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>10.30 STORM CONCERT Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 10.30pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>10.45 NEWS Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 10.45pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>11.00 LATE NEWS Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 11.00pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>11.15 OUTLOOK Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 11.15pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>11.30 THE NEWS Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 11.30pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p>	<p>7.55 WEATHER FORECAST 8.0 THE NEWS 8.10 "IT SAYS IN THE PAPERS" With Sam Hain.</p> <p>8.15 CONVENTION SPECIAL Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 8.15pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>8.30 THE NEWS Weather Forecast.</p> <p>8.45 FIRST NATIONAL BUILDING SOCIETY Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 8.45pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>9.0 THE NEWS Weather Forecast.</p> <p>9.15 MORNING MELODY Presented by Des O'Hara.</p> <p>10.0 NEWS HEADLINES From the Irish Times.</p> <p>10.4 BOODA NA MBIAI News from the Irish Times.</p> <p>11.0 NEWS HEADLINES From the Irish Times.</p> <p>11.1 MID-MORNING Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 11.1am. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>11.15 IT'S COUNTRY STYLE Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 11.15am. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>11.45 BARBARA'S BARBITER Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 11.45am. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>12.0 THE ANGELS Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 12.0pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>12.1 NEWS HEADLINES From the Irish Times.</p> <p>12.2 MUSIC AT MIDWAY Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 12.2pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>12.30 NEWS HEADLINES From the Irish Times.</p> <p>1.0 THE NEWS Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 1.0pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>1.15 NEWS Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 1.15pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>2.0 JACOBS Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 2.0pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>2.15 NEWS HEADLINES From the Irish Times.</p> <p>3.0 NEWS HEADLINES From the Irish Times.</p> <p>5.1 CEOL BURGE Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 5.1pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>5.15 WORD AND NOTE Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 5.15pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>5.30 WILLIAM Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 5.30pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>5.55 WEATHER FORECAST 6.0 THE ANGELS 6.1 AN ROAGHT Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 6.1pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>6.30 ANNOUNCEMENTS Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 6.30pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>6.35 NEWS THE DOCTOR Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 6.35pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>6.50 THE NEWS Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 6.50pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>6.45 BACK TO SCHOOL Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 6.45pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>7.15 REQUESTS Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 7.15pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>7.30 FOOTSTEPS Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 7.30pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>8.0 THE NEWS Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 8.0pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>8.1 THINGS ARE SWIRLING Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 8.1pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>8.15 THE BOWLAND CONCERT Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 8.15pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>8.30 NEWS HEADLINES From the Irish Times.</p> <p>8.45 SOCIAL WEA AN AN SEANSEAL Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 8.45pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>9.0 THE NEWS Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 9.0pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>9.1 MY GREEN THE MAGEICIAN'S ASSISTANT Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 9.1pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>9.45 SOCIAL WEA AN AN SEANSEAL Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 9.45pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>10.0 NEWS HEADLINES From the Irish Times.</p> <p>10.15 THE NEWS Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 10.15pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>10.30 HERRYBRAVE, THE LEGENDARY COURTYER Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 10.30pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>10.45 RECITAL Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 10.45pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p> <p>11.0 NEWS HEADLINES From the Irish Times.</p> <p>11.30 NEWS SUMMARY Coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games, starting at 11.30pm. Coverage of the 100m and 200m events will follow. Commentator: John O'Connell. (See Page 11)</p>	

When you look at the programme above, what do you think is different about today's radio?

Did you notice some of the radio programmes are 15 minutes long? What do you think of this?

Television and Radio Schedule from August 1968

Tom Sweeney speaking:



"When I was nine or ten years old my brother and I would often be guest artists in the Royal Arms. The band would play for two hours, then there would be a break and the guest artist would perform for half an hour or so.

I was so young when I came home from school, my Mother would put me to bed and I'd get up again around 9'o clock that night to go to the Royal Arms to perform."



Tom Sweeney

How did the Showbands evolve?

Learning Objectives:

By the end of Section 2 pupils will develop an understanding of:

- The history of their local place.
- The evolution of pop music in the Showband era.
- The importance of the visual image.

One of the best, and most popular, Showbands were **The Plattermen**. The band was formed by a group of school friends in Omagh in the late 1950s and they called themselves 'The Platters'.

They changed their name a few years later to 'The Plattermen'.



The Platters (Later the Plattermen) in the Star Ballroom, Omagh in 1958
For a period of about 2 years the band played there on alternate Thursdays (8pm - midnight) and Saturdays (8pm - 11:45pm)
L-R: Aiden O'Neill, Vocals/ Double Bass; Ray Moore, Trumpet; Jackie Adams, Drums; Pat Chesters, Tenor Sax; Leo Doran, Alto Sax; Brendan O'Donnell, Piano/ Accordeon/ Manager; Artie McGlynn, Guitar.

The band members changed over the years. They made records and with their lead singer, Brian Coll, became really successful in the dancehall circuit, particularly in Cork and Dublin.

By the late 1960s Brian Coll had left The Plattermen to form his own country band, **The Buckaroo's**. The Plattermen then changed their music style and image to become a rock band which attracted a different audience.



The Plattermen were one of the first Showbands to have their own specially designed transport, complete with aeroplane seats and their name painted on the side of the bus.



The Evolution of Showband Style



1950s
(to early 1960s)

- formal black suit and tie -

1960s

- emergence of less formal attire, but still keeping that dress look -



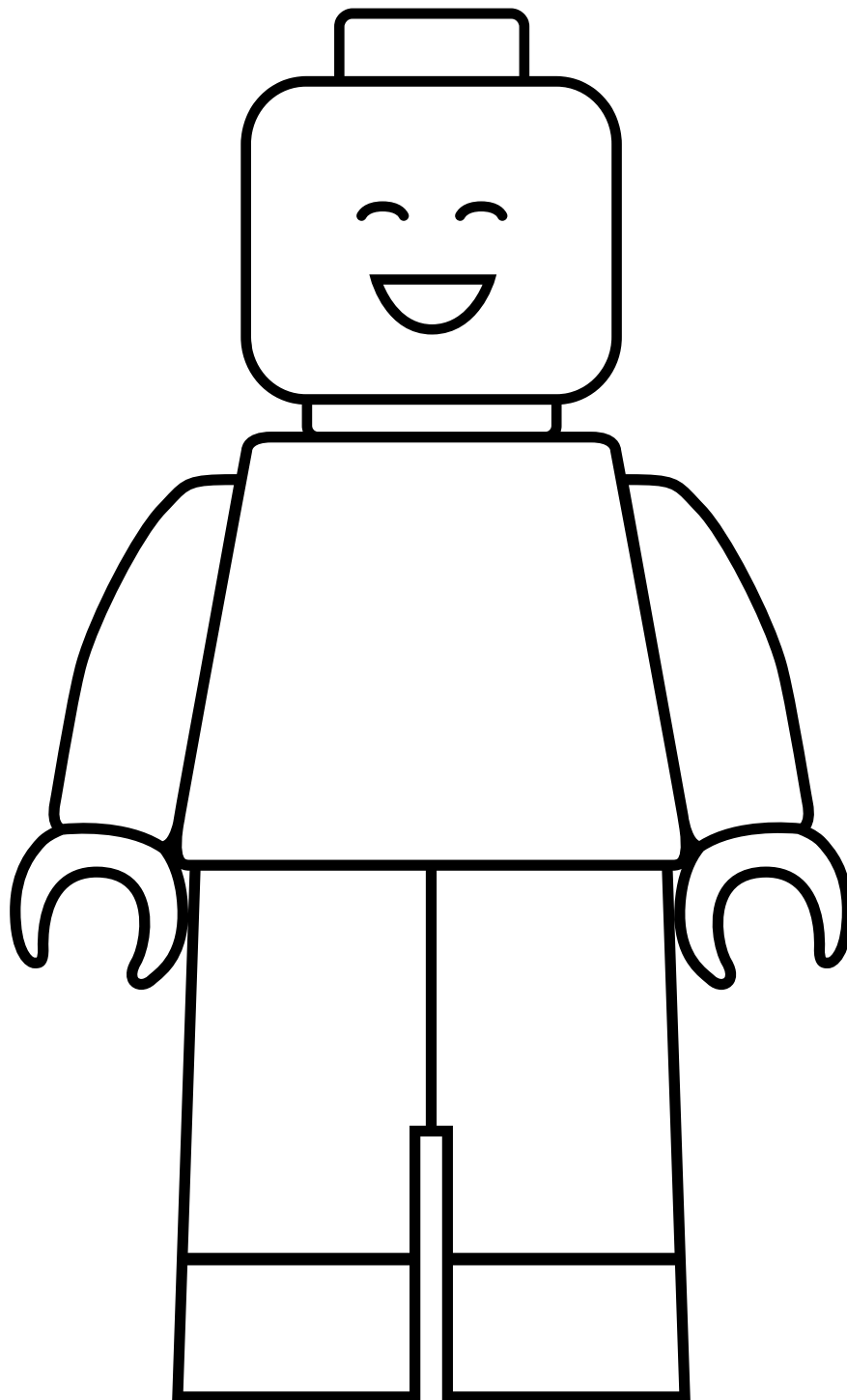
1970s

A more creative
colourful wardrobe.
- Disco influences -



LEGO SHOWBAND

Get creative & design a Showband Lego Character!



The Demise of the Showbands

Learning Objectives:

By the end of Section 3 Pupils will develop an understanding of:

- Aspects of the past.
- Musical and social changes.

The Showband era began to fade out in the 1970s.

This was due to many reasons including:

- Music tastes were changing.
- Some performers grew tired of the constant travelling.
- Many of the big dancehalls were basic and people wanted more comfort.
- Owners of hotels and pubs began to have two piece and small bands playing
- The disco was born!



Most Showbands played 'covers'. This meant they sang the latest pop hits, sounding as close to the originals as possible.

Showbands played pop, country, rock and roll, ceili, folk, jazz and waltz music.



Memory Lane



What are your parents, grandparents or guardians memories of the Showband's

1 When did you stop going to the Showbands?

2 Do you remember the venues closing down?

3 Do you remember discos starting?

4 Can you name any of the dance halls and remember where they were?





Music Then & Now

Learning Objectives:

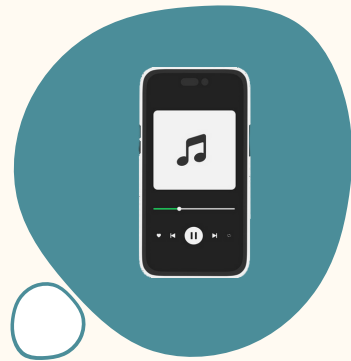
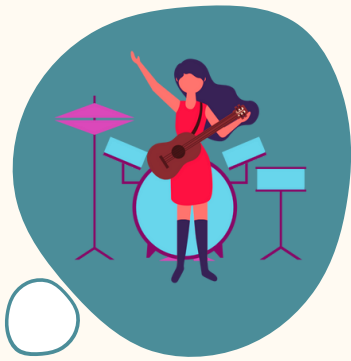
By the end of Section 4 pupils will develop an understanding of:

- Observations between the present and the past in their own lives, and the lives of family members.
- The evolution of the ways people accessed and listened to music.
- The changes that have taken place in the recording industry.

 The evolution of how people listened to music - from live music to digital downloads 

Activity: Put the different ways to listen to music in chronological order

Definition of a Chronological: the order in which things happened



Answers:

1. Live Music 2. Music on Vinyl 3. Tape Recorder 4. Music Centre 5. Walkman 6. CD Player 7. MP3 Player 8. Digital Downloads 9. Smartphone

DESIGN YOUR OWN SHOWBAND RECORD

Activity: Create your very own showband record like the one shown!

Give it a record name, colour it in and make it so that the design can be easily cut out.





Reflection Time



Tell us more about you!

1 Do you listen to music?

2 Who do you listen to?

3 Why do you listen to that type of music?

4 How do you listen to it?

5 Would you like to be a musician?

6 How do think you could make a career in music?



WRITE YOUR OWN SHOWBAND SONG

Tips for writing your own Showband Song:

- Keep it simple
- Use rhyme
- Have a chorus
- Can you dance to it?



DID YOU KNOW?

One of the most successful songwriters of the 20th century was born in Omagh.

Jimmy Kennedy was born in 1902 and his best known songs include The Teddy Bears Picnic, Red Sails in the Sunset and the Hokey Cokey. His songs were recorded by two of the 20th Century's greatest singers, Bing Crosby and Elvis Presley.





Fact File: Showbands

Did you know at one time there were over 700 showbands on the Isle of Ireland?

Did you know that a Showband dance could last from 9pm until 2am? Can you imagine some of today's bands playing for 5 hours!!

You could see what radio shows were going to be played by purchasing the local paper, it would have a television and radio schedule printed in it each day.

Did you know bands had to travel to Belfast, Dublin and London to record?

Why do you think this was?

Did you know that there were very few female singers in Showbands?

Why do you think this was?

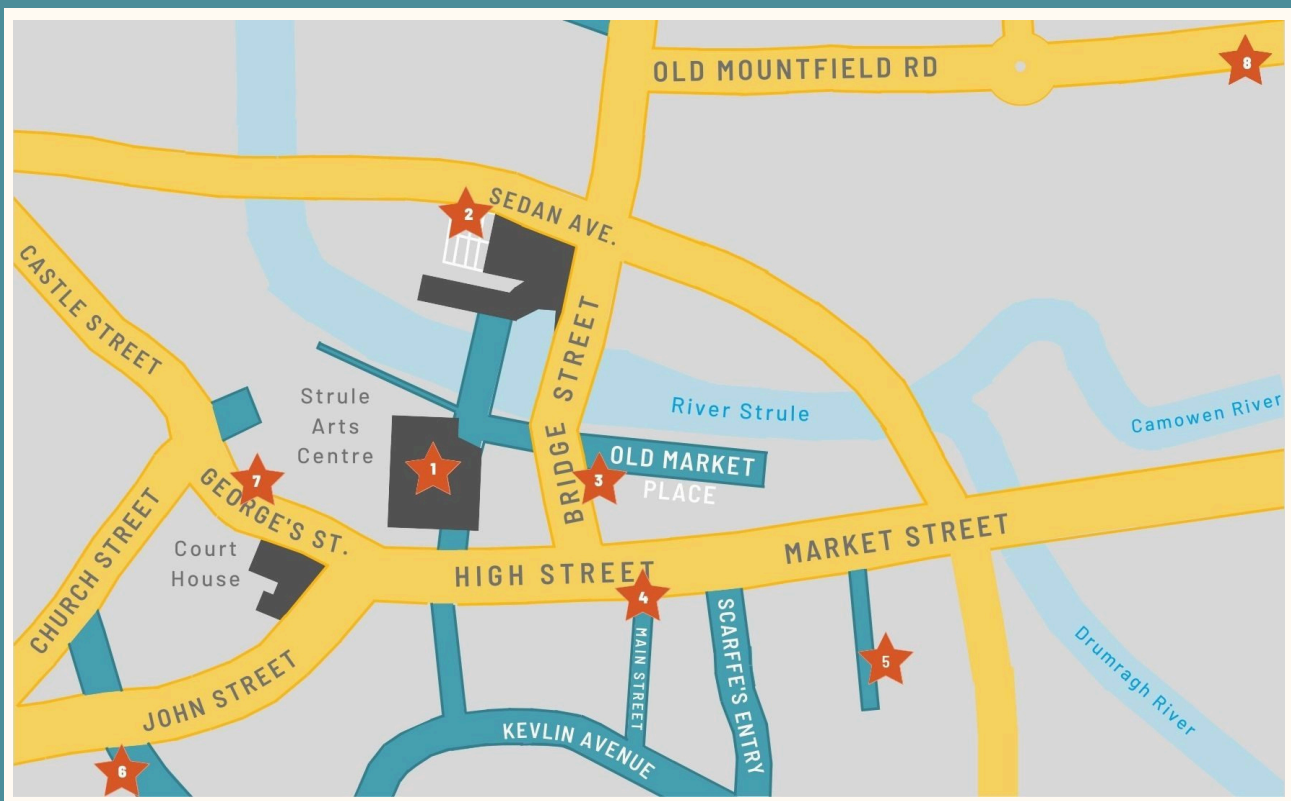


Omagh

HERITAGE MUSIC TRAIL

If you want to learn more about the Showbands, there is a walking trail which captures many of the key sites around Omagh town. If you are unable to visit this, you can access the trail virtually, via the link below:

<https://struleartscentre.co.uk/your-visit/omagh-heritage-music-trail/>



The walking trail sites include:

- Exhibition & Old Town Hall – Strule Arts Centre
- The Star Ballroom Site- Sedan Avenue
- McSorley’s Records – Bridge Street
- Royal Arms Hotel Site- Main Street
- Boneyard Records – Market Street Arcade
- Old Labour Hall Site – Kevlin Road
- Irish National Foresters – George’s Street
- Knock Na Moe Hotel Site – Old Mountfield Rd



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

