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Boom in Children's Music a Coup for Labels

By DAVID BAUDER, AP Entertainment Writer

The new mantra of the music industry? Don't trust anyone over 16!

Kids are a potent new army of music fans, a trend that became obvious a few weeks ago when the top three discs on the Billboard album chart were likely bought with allowance money . . .

This week Disney releases an intriguing disc, "Devo 2.0," updating the rock band's music with younger players. If it works, it could offer a roadmap for older musicians looking to revive careers.

The new face of Devo is a perky blonde named Nicole Stoehr, along with four other teenagers culled from Disney's casting department. They sing versions of songs they may have noticed in their parents' record collections.

Considering Devo's penchant for robotic, simple melodies, they translate well to the young voices and were easy for the cast to master. The music on the disc was performed by the old Devo members, but leader Mark Mothersbaugh said the kids have already learned to play the instruments themselves and are going on a concert tour.

Mothersbaugh, 55, has forged a lucrative second career as a composer for film and television soundtracks, with a long-term relationship with Disney.

Even back in the early 1970s when Devo was formed, band members envisioned it as an act that could exist without its original members — sort of like how the Blue Man Group has different touring companies, he said. It never worked out that way, but when Disney asked him if he was interested in another kids' project, Devo came to mind.

"Devo is kind of a good choice because our music was never about sex," Mothersbaugh said. "It was never about drugs, it was never about guns or pimps or whores or cops. It wasn't about committing suicide. Our music, if you distill it down, was pro-information. If we were anti anything, it was stupidity."

They new band sings "Whip It," "Beautiful World" and "Boy U Want," the latter rewritten from "Girl U Want" to accommodate Stoehr. She looks kind of rakish on the cover wearing one of those red plastic hats that made the old Devo look dorky . . .

Mothersbaugh still does work for adults — like the music on the HBO series "Big Love" — but has found a comfortable home in the children's market.

"I think kids are receptive to ideas — much more than grown-ups are," he said.