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## Are They Not Kids? Yes, They Are — And They're Giving Devo A Disney Makeover

**Devo 2.0, made up of tweens ages 10-13, have recorded band's songs for Disney Sound label.**

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Think of 13-year-old Nicole Stoehr as the anti-J.D. Fortune. While the new INXS singer grew up idolizing the Aussie band he now fronts, Nicole had never even heard of Devo when the pioneering new-wave act tapped her to front its new, kid-safe incarnation, Devo 2.0.

"My mom and dad said they were listening to Devo when they were in high school and college, and my mom said she had this eight-track player thing and it had a bunch of Devo songs on it," said Nicole, who beat out 1,000 other hopefuls to front the all-tween version of the group, whose self-titled debut will be released on the new Disney Sound label on March 14. "My dad said that in college he went to one of their concerts and they were all on treadmills while they sang 'Whip It' and it was the coolest thing ever."

Since she won the gig last year, Nicole has been briefed on the history of Devo-lution by the original members of the band and has recorded the album of 10 kid-friendly Devo covers. The LP also includes two new songs, "Cyclops" and "The Winner." The "showbiz veteran" — she's been taking voice lessons since she was 4, has appeared in stage productions of "Aladdin" and "Beauty and the Beast" and was previously part of a group called Kidstarz — is, like, psyched.

"At first they wanted all boys like the original band," said Stoehr, who goes to performing-arts school. "A bunch of people I know auditioned and I was, like, really bummed I didn't get an audition. Then they wanted a girl for keyboards, and they ended up picking me for lead singer because they liked my spunk and attitude."

But how did the band that used dada-pop songs satirizing corporate culture to theorize that humans were devolving instead of evolving end up under the Mickey Mouse banner? Simple: The folks at Disney asked, and Devo said, "Sure, why not?"

Band co-founder Mark Mothersbaugh said the idea of reincarnating the band with fresh-faced kids (guitarist Nathan, drummer Kane, keyboardist Jackie and bassist Michael are all ages 10-

13) actually fits perfectly with the original theory of the group, which formed at Ohio's Kent State University in 1972.

"Back in the mid-'70s, when we were trying to figure out what Devo was, we thought of the actual five members of the group more as a concept than as performing artists, and we imagined sending out bands to perform Devo songs so we wouldn't have to tour," said new dad Mothersbaugh, 55. "It would be like the Blue Man Group is now, with four troops out there at a time playing our songs."

That never happened, but luckily for the real Devo, their friends at Disney found a group of kids who can actually play, "probably better than us at this point," Mothersbaugh joked. Once they were chosen, Devo sat them down and asked them some simple fill-in-the-blank questions to make sure they were right for the "part," such as, "Are we not men? We are ..." If they answered "Devo," Mothersbaugh said, it was a "point in their favor."

The idea of picking pixies to take your place might seem odd, but it's not like the members of the band haven't dipped their toes in the kiddie pool before. Mothersbaugh has scored such popular shows as "Clifford the Big Red Dog," "The Powerpuff Girls" and "Rugrats," and he pointed to the nursery rhyme-like cadences of songs like "Whip It" ("Step on a crack, break your momma's back") and "Peek-a-Boo" as proof that Devo's music has always been kids' stuff.

Realizing the old recordings were not up to modern standards, the band re-recorded the instrumental tracks for the album to brighten up the arrangements and changed "Girl U Want" to "Boy U Want" to accommodate Nicole. And while some of the lyrics have been tweaked to strip the overt innuendo, for fans of the original band, the sight of perky, blond-haired Nicole bopping around in animated videos for "Uncontrollable Urge" and "Jerkin' Back and Forth" might be even stranger than the deadpan, arty clips Devo filmed more than 20 years ago.

The project has drawn mixed responses from hard-core Devolutionists, some of whom have complained in blogs that the band — which three years ago drew groans for licensing the use of "Whip It" for a Swiffer commercial with the tagline "Swift it good!" — has crossed the line this time. They've wondered whether it's another case of stealth subversion or just a cheesy move to get in bed with the Mouse House. Surely there must be some kind of hidden messages in the songs or some esoteric idea behind the project, right?

Not really, no.

"As times change, people's perceptions change, too," Mothersbaugh said. "I think everyone liked the twist of doing something to update the band. Now the people who are running Disney are the people who grew up on Devo. Back in my 20s that wasn't something I would have imagined."

Plans are in the works for Devo 2.0 to do a limited U.S. tour. Disney Sound has already tapped the next band to get the 2.0 treatment: The Go-Gos will be re-created as the Po-Gos.

— Gil Kaufman