

# BRANDWEEK

## The Biz: Show Clicks With Hip Parents And (Oh, Yeah) Their Kids

May 19, 2008- Is it a happy accident or a well-oiled marketing plan that makes a TV show catch on with groups far beyond its target demo? It's often a bit of both, as was the case with Yo Gabba Gabba.

The live-action Nick Jr. property has gotten a boost from stealth online campaigns, MP3s and publicity-generating guest stars. Since launching last fall it has become the No. 1 program among kids 2-5 in its time period, per Nielsen Media Research. It was named one of the best new kids' shows in '07 by Time magazine. And after snagging its first Emmy nomination against well-established competition, the program has snagged some 25 million video streams on the Nick Jr. broadband service.

But it's far from a toddler-only zone. Specifically, hipsters and indie music fans really dig it, and teen-agers latched onto it, posting YouTube videos of their renditions of the show's songs like There's a Party in My Tummy. E! network's pop culture roundup The Soup has highlighted Yo Gabba guest appearances from unlikely stars like Elijah Wood and its awkwardly-dancing primary-colored costumed characters (four "monsters" and a robot).

Creators of the show, two L.A.-based musicians, said the goal was to produce an age-appropriate program they could watch with their young kids. They weren't shy, though, about seeding it with the alternative music community ahead of its TV debut. They also released a couple early episodes and MP3s online to draw out the potential adult fans.

"We felt like we'd get the cool parents, but we really had no idea that anyone else would be interested," said Scott Schultz, co-creator. "We didn't set out to create a Wonder Showzen," which looks like a PBS kids' show but is aimed squarely at adults.

This isn't the first kid property to attract an adult following. Aside from Looney Tunes and comic-based animation that go back decades, there are more recent entries like Nickelodeon's SpongeBob SquarePants.

Like Teletubbies before it, Yo Gabba has been designed for the youngest viewers with sketches on sharing, exercising, making friends and similar lessons. Unlike Teletubbies, which initially recoiled from the club kids who embraced it, Yo Gabba has actively sought out teens and adults, and not just the alterna-dads.

The first Yo Gabba licensed merchandise to launch was collectible figures from Kidrobot, \$150 hoodies and \$30 T-shirts in adult sizes that sold at specialty stores and through the Web.

"We realized quickly that there was significant demand," said Michael Polis, CMO of Wildbrain, which produces and licenses the show with Schultz and his partner Christian Jacobs through their Magic Store banner. "A lot of the product has sold out."

A few weeks ago, product went into mall retailer Hot Topic, where the young and ironic shop. It's not until fall that true kid merchandise hits the mass, with toys from Spin Master leading a program that will fan out over books, DVDs, CDs, puzzles, electronics, sleepwear and other swag. It will coincide with the show's second season.

Upcoming on Yo Gabba will be more of what has drawn in both adults and kids so far. Ongoing segments with rapper Biz Markie called "Biz's Beat of the Day" and Devo founder Mark Mothersbaugh ("Mark's Magic Pictures") will sit next to a mix of pop, electronic, new wave, British invasion, hip-hop and other current music.

Bands like I'm From Barcelona will appear in season two, following a path already trod by The Shins, Tahiti 80, Mya, Supernova, the Aggrolites and the Aquabats (of which co-creator Jacobs is a member).

