

## Things to Do



### Merry melodies

Stuff little stockings with cool kid CDs.

By Jay Rutenberg  
Nov 25–Dec 30, 2008

While the rest of the music industry shriveled, 2008 proved to be another boom year for the children's genre. Among our favorites were albums by kid rocker staples (Dan Zanes, Laurie Berkner), moonlighting pop stars (They Might Be Giants) and purists (Ralph's World). But wait! Year's end brings three more CDs—care of Moldy Peach Kimya Dawson, spirited Nickelodeon show Yo Gabba Gabba! and 1950s folkie Tom Glazer—all of which fit conveniently in December wrapping paper.

### ***Alphabutt***

**Kimya Dawson and Friends (K)**

Best known for her contributions to the Juno soundtrack, the preternaturally gifted Dawson writes what amount to children's songs for adults. On *Alphabutt*, the new mother's first proper kids' release, she removes grown-ups from the equation, assembling a scrappy group of tots to join her on 15 short, silly songs. Dawson grew up in a Westchester home that doubled as a day-care center, and she relates to little ones with an easy straightforwardness. While tunes like "Pee-Pee in the Potty" and "Wiggle My Tooth" are less complex than the tales she usually spins, Dawson continues to achieve an emotional truth that eludes most songwriters—even when she's singing about farts.

### ***Yo Gabba Gabba!***

**Various artists (Nickelodeon)**

Since it premiered last year, the manic Nick Jr. variety show *Yo Gabba Gabba!* has welcomed an impressive array of musical guests, including the Shins, Cornelius and the always great Biz Markie, who performs the show's recurring "Biz's Beat of the Day" segment. This compilation culls some of the program's hits, including songs by the Roots ("Lovely, Love My Family"), Red House Painter Mark Kozelek ("Bedtime Lullaby") and the consummately goofy *Yo Gabba Gabba!* house band ("Party in My Tummy"). One word of warning: Those listeners weary of all things chirpy and colorful are advised to stay away. Far away.

### ***Tom Glazer Sings Honk-Hiss-Tweet-GGGGGGG and Other Favorites***

**Tom Glazer (Smithsonian Folkways)**

There's no reason why young listeners whose ears have been molded by Nickelodeon and Disney would fail to appreciate the folk songs that their grandparents giggled to as tykes. This trove of 24 tunes, recorded in the '50s, '60s and '70s as Tom Glazer performed before live audiences, serves as a fine starting point. The late singer learned guitar from Alan Lomax, played for Eleanor Roosevelt at the White House and heard his songs covered by Bob Dylan. But it was as a children's singer that he flourished, most notably with his summer-camp standby "On Top of Spaghetti." On this recording, the hit has Glazer's young audience eagerly singing along; no doubt, his tale of a rolling meatball will captivate modern audiences, too.