



'Yo Gabba Gabba!' is monstrous fun for kids, adults

By Bill Keveney
October 20, 2008

Eclectic rock, pop and hip-hop have found an unlikely hot spot: a daytime kids' show.

Appearances by such performers as The Roots, the Ting Tings and Jimmy Eat World have helped *Yo Gabba Gabba!* (Nickelodeon, weekdays 11:30 a.m.) attract not only the Nick Jr. preschool block's 2- to 5-year-olds but also their parents, teens and young adults without children.

Christian Jacobs, 36, and Scott Schultz, 37, out-front and behind-the-scenes participants in rock band The Aquabats, noticed how their children enjoyed a wide range of music and decided to make a show that would appeal to them.

"Our kids were responding to a lot of dance music and hip-hop and beats," Jacobs says. "We built a world around dancing and music."

The self-described "pop culture nerds" found inspiration in shows from their youth — from *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company* to *Pee-wee's Playhouse* and the Sid and Marty Krofft puppet shows — to create a colorful world in which DJ Lance Rock (Lance Robertson) brings to life four monsters and a robot (Muno, Foofa, Brobee, Toodee and Plex) with the magic words Yo Gabba Gabba!, the creators' own nonsensical phrase. (They are happy that it also pays homage to The Ramones' chant, "Gabba Gabba Hey," itself a tribute to Tod

Browning's 1932 film *Freaks*.)

This week's shows feature musical guests I'm From Barcelona, Money Mark and Datarock, along with actors Amy Sedaris and *30 Rock*'s Jack McBrayer. Jack Black will appear later this season. Each show has a simple theme (today: differences, Wednesday: robot, Thursday: teeth, Friday: weather) with related, repetitive songs with simple beats, written by Jacobs, Schultz and friends. Some are written with specific bands in mind.



Gabba is a children's show, but it has "a cool factor" because of participating artists, Nickelodeon animation president Brown Johnson says. Viewers "respond to the happy sounds, from 1- and 2-year-olds to my daughter," a 22-year-old DJ who sometimes plays the songs at her gigs.

The second-season series trails Nick Jr. hits *Dora the Explorer*

and *Go, Diego, Go!* in viewers (though drawing more than 1.3 million for new episodes), but Johnson says it can take a year or more before a show really takes off. A feature film is in the works, says Charles Rivkin of *Gabba* producer Wildbrain.

Popular musicians, some of them parents, are eager to appear on the show; Jacobs and Schultz have sought out their favorites. First-year guests Mya, The Shins, Sean Kingston, Elijah Wood and Hector Jimenez can be seen on the new DVD, *Yo Gabba Gabba! The Dancey Dance Bunch*. A song album also is available.

Regular features include Mark's Magic Pictures with Mark Mothersbaugh of Devo fame and beat-boxing instruction by Biz Markie.

Mothersbaugh, who has scored such kids shows as *Pee-wee's Playhouse* and *Rugrats*, says *Gabba* has a defining sensibility that could make it this generation's *Playhouse*. Besides that, it gives his daughters, ages 4 and 7, a sense of what he does, an impetus for numerous performers. "All of a sudden it resonates with them: 'You are doing something I can relate to.' That makes it more valuable to me."

Schultz sees another reason for the broad appeal: "There's an element of wanting to be fancy-free and not too serious, and to be a kid again."