

**Kid Rock: Pop acts make records for small-fry music lovers.**

By Thor Christensen

Once upon a time, if you asked singer Dan Zanes what he thought of kids' music, he'd have looked at you as if you were speaking Swahili.

"I'd have said 'Kids? I think I know that word, but remind me again ... What are they?'" he says, laughing.

As leader of the hard-partying, roots-rock band the Del Fuegos, Mr. Zanes spent much of the '80s sleeping in vans and playing a succession of dank, smoky nightclubs. Today, he makes a living singing "Polly Wolly Doodle" to bright-eyed audiences whose beverage of choice is milk or apple juice - not Jack Daniels.

They're also hitting a time-honored trail traveled by the likes of Pete Seeger, Taj Mahal, Linda Ronstadt and Ladysmith Black Mambazo - who've all recorded children's records. For Mr. Zanes, however, the album that inspired him to give up rock 'n' roll was Not for Kids Only, Jerry Garcia and David Grisman's 1993 CD of old folk tunes.

"For me, it was a vision of what a children's record could be," says Mr. Zanes, who found the disc while searching for music to play to his daughter, who's now 6. "It showed me it doesn't have to be all songs about brushing your teeth. It could be the kind of record I'd listen to if my daughter was around or not."

"It's easy to see why kids' music has such a bad rap when you go into the big chain stores, because it's 90 percent music from TV and Disney movies that's made in the big studios with the big sound and the big marketing push," Mr. Zanes said. "I wanted to make music that sounds like everyday life, like a family band playing on a front porch."

He recently released his debut kid's album, Rocket Ship Beach, a collection he describes as "hopped-up folk music." The disc, which includes cameos from Sheryl Crow and Suzanne Vega, came out on Mr. Zanes' own children's music label, Festival Five Records.

While he confesses some of his rocker buddies have expressed "bewilderment when they hear I'm doing this," the singer says the think there's a radical edge to us that we hope won't be diminished by this."

Yet Mr. Zanes says one of the best perks of playing for tots is throwing off the burden of being edgy and hip.

"[In the Del Fuegos], I used to come up with all these phony lines

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