

Metallica Man Rocks with Kids

Former Bassist Plays Children's Songs

For the last five years Little Kids Rock, a program that brings music into inner-city schools, has put out an album of songs written by children. This year, tracks like "Little Dinosaur," "First Grade Funk," "Yoda," and "I'm a Cowgirl," will get the professional treatment beginning with a recording session tomorrow at the famed Plant recording studio in Sausalito, California. Former Metallica bassist Jason Newsted and Doobie Brothers guitarist/vocalist Tom Johnston are among the musicians who will record songs written by grade-school tunesmiths.

"It has been proven that children who create relationships with musical instruments do better in school and in life," says Newsted, a veteran of recording sessions at the Plant both with Metallica and his current band Voivod. "In times like these, when the arts are being forced out of our schools, encouraging self-confidence in kids through music -- or in any way we can -- is absolutely essential."

The program is the vision of a former first-grade teacher named Dave Wish, who began giving free guitar lessons after school to a group of twenty kids at a Redwood City, California, elementary school. A grant from Carlos Santana's Milagro Foundation allowed the program to grow and in the seven years since Wish started, Little Kids Rock has expanded to working with 2,000 kids at sites in New York, New Jersey and Tennessee, as well as California. The organization's honorary board of directors now includes Santana, Paul Simon, Bonnie Raitt and B.B. King.



Jason Newsted

"I believe music puts people in touch with their creative sides, and creativity is like oxygen to children," says Wish. "Once they learn to get in touch with their creative side it transfers to other aspects of their lives, it improves their mathematical abilities and their overall academic functioning. "The quality of the output the students are laying out there -- kids who can still count their age on two hands -- is

pretty intense," Wish continues. "This breaks away from the traditional model of teaching jazz and classical to kids. This teaches them to write the kind of music they listen to. There's songs that sound like the Stones, Shaggy and Destiny's Child."

The similarity of the recent *School of Rock* film and the actual Little Kids Rock is striking, a coincidence that has proved beneficial. "It's been fantastic," says Wish. "People are excited and amazed when they find there's an

organization actually doing that for kids across the country, for free."

A future recording session for the Little Kids Rock album is planned at Manhattan Center Studios in New York, with former Del Fuegos frontman Dan Zanes, guitarist Jim Campilongo and Billy Joel drummer Liberty Devitto.

Samples of the kids' work are available at the organization's Web site, littlekidsrock.org.

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