

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## A Radio Station With a Very Small Demographic



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JERSEY CITY

**T**HEIR voices could be coming from a basement rec room, where Twister is on the floor, the Jiffy Pop is hot, and Mom and Dad are out of the house. But even if Hova and Belinda, D.J.'s of the "Greasy Kid Stuff" radio show on WFMU-FM, sound as if they are the older siblings who let the little guys come to their party, they are, in fact, broadcasting from Studio A at the station's headquarters, a historic building here.

Market research? Who needs it. Focus groups? You've got to be kidding. These D.J.'s play what they like, as long as it does not contain anything untoward for their target audience of 6 to 11 year olds.

This, after all, is iconoclastic free-form radio, which means that Hova and Belinda might play Ella Fitzgerald's "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," Devo's "Go, Monkey, Go!," Shonen Knife's punk or "Happy Noodle vs. Sad Noodle," by Logan Whitehurst and the Junior Science Club — all during the same show on Saturday mornings from 10 to noon. They call "Greasy Kid Stuff" "hi-fi for small fry," and they like to say, "We do the work so parents don't have to."

On air Hova and Belinda may sound like hip teenagers, but they are husband and wife, Hovakim Najarian, 40, and Belinda Miller, 38, and they have been up to their musical mischief since 1995. Now they have a new compatriot, their 7-month-old daughter, Georgia, known on air as D.J. Waah Waah, who was born at 10:20 a.m. on a Saturday while two substitute D.J.'s were putting "Greasy Kid Stuff" on the air.

"We called up the show from the delivery room to say she was born," Ms. Miller said. As congratulations, one of the D.J.'s, Cosmic Cowboy, played "Mama, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys."

Mr. Najarian and Ms. Miller, who live in West Orange, troll thrift stores and garage sales for vintage records, and have amassed about 3,000 albums, plus CD's and 45's, for their show. They also draw from WFMU's vast library, scrutinizing adult CD's for that one song with kid appeal. The show can be heard in New Jersey and New York City on 91.1 FM or 90.1 FM, and online at [www.wfmufm.com](http://www.wfmufm.com).

You might hear "Ants in My Pants" by the Phantom Surfers or Fred Lane's demented "French Toast Man," about a man who explodes from eating too much, or songs about magic eight balls, lonely robots and school buses. But you will not hear Raffi or Barney or any saccharine songs by men in rainbow suspenders, as Mr. Najarian described the



Photographs by Dith Pran/The New York Times

archetypal children's performers. When they offer music intended for children, it is likely to be old-fashioned songs played with an ironic wink or given a twist, like Elvis Presley's version of "Old MacDonald."

Listeners tuning in late do not always realize they are hearing a children's show, Mr. Najarian said. "I love that," he said. "We don't really make a distinction between music for kids and music in general."

Georgia has brought fresh meaning to the term rock 'n' roll. At a recent visit to the studio, she turned fussy during the show so her father rocked her in the crook of one arm while typing song titles into a computer with his other hand.

Meanwhile, Ms. Miller put records on turntables or dropped CD's into players while bopping to the music, but easily switched duties to breast feeding. About halfway through, she put on "Life Without the Cow" (3 minutes, 30 seconds) while hunting for a baby biscuit.

Georgia was introduced to listeners in October with a set of themed songs including Barry Louis Polisar's "Don't Wake the Baby (Or the Baby Will Get You)," "The Milk Song" by the Cowsills, "Mamma!" by They Might Be Giants and the Ivor Cutler Trio's "A Suck of My Thumb."

Ms. Miller's and Mr. Najarian's main experience with children before starting the show was working for two years as au pairs. They have no formal training in radio, mu-

sic or childhood education, and their work on the show is volunteer. For a day job, Mr. Najarian does administrative office work for a division of The New York Times Company; Ms. Miller does similar work for a small information-technology company in Maplewood.

Confidential Recordings has released two CD compilations of favorites on the show; for the first one the D.J.'s earned \$28.

Unlike television, which has entire cable networks devoted to young audiences, radio has not really discovered children. Radio Disney, a 24-hour station heard in the area on WQEW-AM (1560), plays predictable pop fare. The ambitious "New York Kids" on the WNYC public radio station went off the air in 2001, and the award-winning "Kids Corner," out of WXPN-FM in Philadelphia, reaches only parts of New Jersey. And so "Greasy Kid Stuff" stands out.

"It's great and so needed in the stratified world of kids' radio," said P. J. Swift, a founder of the Children's Music Web, a non-profit resource on children's music, and the former producer of "Pickleberry Pie," a nationally syndicated children's show on Sirius Satellite Radio, a subscription service. "Either you get the bellybutton-baring divas on Disney or you get serious folk music by earnest and humorless 'right thinkers' on public radio. There's little that celebrates irreverence and fun."

Belinda Miller and Hovakim Najarian and their daughter, Georgia, or D.J. Waah Waah, during a broadcast of "Greasy Kid Stuff," a children's radio show on WFMU-FM. D.J. Waah Waah was born on a Saturday morning seven months ago while two substitute D.J.'s were putting the show on the air.

At WFMU, Ken Freedman, the station manager, said "Greasy Kid Stuff" was one of his most popular shows. It gets frequent calls and e-mail messages from listeners making dedications and requests and sending out birthday wishes, Ms. Miller said. One caller just said, "I'm eating Cheerios!"

"The sugarclothed stuff is supposed to be good for kids," Ms. Miller said. "Our whole point is it doesn't have to be good for them. We want it to be fun."