

# Kindergarten rock

Southeast Portland is the new home base for

New Jersey's cult radio show for kids and their parents, "Greasy Kid Stuff"



Hosts Hova Najarian and Belinda Miller regularly troll garage sales and thrift stores for music for their radio show. If they play music specifically intended for kids, it tends to be stuff that has a sense of retro cool.



Belinda Miller offers the mike to daughter Georgia, aka DJ Waah Waah, during a recent taping of "Greasy Kid Stuff."

Photos by BENJAMIN BRINK  
THE OREGONIAN

**A**mong discerning rock 'n' roll parents — parents who would much rather raise their offspring on ska, punk or quirky retro-pop than the Wiggles or Raffi — the names Belinda Miller and Hova Najarian enjoy a certain cult status. On a recent Saturday morning, Belinda and Hova, as they are known to their loyal listeners, were holed up in their Southeast Portland home, fueling up on coffee and Voodoo Doughnuts and shuffling through stacks of CDs and LPs in preparation for their two-hour radio show, "Greasy Kid Stuff."

Rather than play music specifically written for children, Belinda and Hova have turned

By INARA VERZEMNIEKS ♦ THE OREGONIAN

"Greasy Kid Stuff" into a national phenomenon by playing grown-up music they think kids would like instead.

What that means for those who happen to tune in to the show, which is broadcast Saturday mornings by WFMU, a free-form, independent radio station in the New Jersey-New York

area (and which also is streamed live over the Internet to everyone else), is an eclectic sonic stew that has at times encompassed Lou Reed, Blue Oyster Cult, Yo La Tengo, the Moldy Peaches, L.L. Cool J and Mel Tormé — all selected with little ears in mind. (No swearing.

Please see "KID STUFF," Page D2

"We wanted to do this service for the parents of America," to give them something "they can share with their kids."

BELINDA MILLER, "GREASY KID STUFF" CO-HOST

## 'Kid Stuff': DJ Waah Waah also gets some time on the air

Continued from Page D1

Nothing too titillating. Sufficiently sweet and silly.)

"We just felt like so much of the stuff that was being offered to kids was really bad," Hova says. Condescending. Anesthetizing.

As Belinda puts it, "We wanted to do this service for the parents of America," to give them something "they can share with their kids," a fairly radical notion at a time when "we seem to be niche marketing everything," keeping kids' and parents' music separate, creating an atmosphere of "us against them."

"I like to think that's where we're stepping in," she says.

### Hawthorne HQ

The current headquarters of Greasy Kid Stuff is a rambling gray

house just off Hawthorne Boulevard, where Belinda and Hova and their 2-year-old daughter Georgia, also known as DJ Waah Waah, moved nine months ago from New York so that they could be closer to Belinda's family.

The couple, who have been married for 15 years, broadcast out of a studio on the home's second floor. There, shelves of CDs and several boxes of LPs line the walls, painted portraits of the Modern Lovers and Elvis provide the decoration, and a red 1950s dining table holds equipment, including an official-looking box that allows them to hook up remotely with WFMU back in New Jersey via the telephone line. A framed copy of a New York Times article about Greasy Kid Stuff hangs over the turntables.

On this particular morning, Hova, who is 42, and Belinda, 39, were returning to the air after a two-week vacation and were to be joined by a good friend from WFMU named Amanda Barrett (known on the air as Miss Amanda) who had come to visit — as soon as Barrett emerged from the shower downstairs. In the next room, DJ Waah Waah slept.



BENJAMIN BRINK/THE OREGONIAN

Hova Najarian does his thing for the early morning airing of "Greasy Kid Stuff."

As Belinda made a few last-minute checks to ensure the hook-up to New Jersey was working, headphones around her neck, Hova checked the computer in the next room for listener requests.

"We have a request for the Black Lodge Singers' 'Flintstones Pow-Wow Song,'" he called out.

"OK," said Belinda, as she organized a stack of CDs she had piled on the dinette.

By 7 a.m., they were ready to start. Belinda, dressed in a black WFMU T-shirt, eased the arm of the turntable onto an LP, and the sound of the Village Stompers, a Dixieland band from the 1960s,

**"We just felt like so much of the stuff that was being offered to kids was really bad."**

### HOVA NAJARIAN

filled the room. She and Hova had recently picked up "a whole pile of old records" at a garage sale and were excited to air some of their best finds on the show that day.

After playing a few more songs, including "Nasty Dan," by Johnny Cash, Belinda and Hova finally

came on the air, in their signature fashion. "Hey there, Hova!" cried Belinda. "Hey there, Belinda!" cried Hova. Then they let listeners know that Greasy Kid Stuff had recently celebrated its 10th birthday.

### Free-form radio

When Belinda and Hova started DJ'ing "Greasy Kid Stuff" in 1995, they had no children themselves. They had worked as au pairs for a couple of years, but that was about the extent of their experience with kids. "I had no experience with kids at all," Hova says.

But both he and Belinda were passionate about music — Hova

### Greasy Kid Stuff

**What:** A kids radio show broadcast by Portland residents Belinda Miller and Hova Najarian, over WFMU, a New Jersey-New York-area free-form radio station

**When:** 7 to 9 a.m. Saturdays

**How to listen:** Live Internet streams at [www.wfmua.org](http://www.wfmua.org)

**Listen to past shows and check out playlists:** [www.wfmua.org/gks](http://www.wfmua.org/gks)

**Also on CD:** "Greasy Kid Stuff, Songs From Inside the Radio," and "Greasy Kid Stuff 2, More Songs From Inside the Radio."

had always had a huge record collection, and they had both been volunteering at WFMU for a few years. And they had seen how positively their young charges had reacted when they happened to play some of the more kid-friendly selections from Hova's collection. "He was the one with the really good taste," says Belinda, "and I had the kid-filter."

When WFMU asked if they would like to DJ their own show, doing something for kids just made sense, Hova says. There was nothing like that on the station, and "it was around the time a lot of the folks raised on punk rock were starting to have kids, too," Hova says.

Since then, "Greasy Kid Stuff's" influence has spread far beyond the New York area via the Internet, becoming an underground hit among parents looking for alternative kids' music. It also has spawned two CDs of collected music from the show.

**September 9, 10, 11**  
**Hillsboro Airport**

**FRIDAY NIGHT:**  
Country Star **JOSH GRACIN** in concert  
Spectacular Night Show & Fireworks  
(No Thunderbirds Friday Night)

**SATURDAY & SUNDAY:**  
**USAF Thunderbirds!**  
and many, many more incredible acts

Featuring the  
**USAF Thunderbirds!**

**Air Show**

[www.oregonairshow.com](http://www.oregonairshow.com)  
503-629-0706

Belinda likes to say that "Greasy Kid Stuff" is a land of its own," and if so, quirky lo-fi cult figure Jonathan Richmond is clearly its patron saint. Songs about peanut butter sandwiches and earthworms are popular here. And if kids music is played at all, it tends to be vintage cool or it is actually made by kids themselves, such as the surreal punk rock stylings of Eyeball Skeleton or the songs of the Kids of Whidney High, a group of special education students from Los Angeles.

### Back to work

During the Saturday taping, just as Man or Astro-man? was finishing up "Cattle Drive," DJ Waah Waah began to wail from her bedroom. As Belinda cued up the next song, Hova went to fetch her. She entered the studio in his arms, blinking, sucking on a pacifier and wearing a pink T-shirt that said "I ♥ Mekons," celebrating the famous British punk band.

"Uppy mommy," she murmured.

"Just a second, Georgia" said Belinda, as she cued up the next CD.

"Who is this?" called Hova, who had run to the other room where the computer was, to try and update the playlist.

"It's the Aquabats' 'The Ballad of Mr. Bonkers,'" Belinda said. "It's a whole rock opera!"

Georgia, now seated on a chair stacked with records, rocked back and forth to the beat.

Often, Belinda and Hova let Georgia speak into the microphone, and include her in their on-air conversations. It's an interesting touch, allowing listeners this glimpse into their family, and at times, as you watch Belinda let Georgia punch the button for a segue, or as Belinda sings along to the Blue Oyster Cult while changing a diaper, it feels less like you are listening to a radio show and more like you are simply eavesdropping on two hip, indie parents as they let their kid rifle through their record collection.

"Little Bunny Foo-Foo," by the Moldy Peaches elicited a particularly positive response from Georgia, who was munching on a doughnut.

"You're partial to the punk rock, aren't you?" said Belinda, as Georgia enthusiastically waved her doughnut to the lyrics.

After a few more minutes, though, Georgia started to get a little restless and tried to climb the record collection. There was still a good chunk of show left, and like any parent stuck in the middle of something that had to be done right now, Belinda searched for a distraction.

"We can turn on the TV and you can watch Pee-wee Herman," she tried.

Then she and Hova laughed, realizing how that sounded. "This is not the kind of parenting we normally condone," Belinda apologized.

"TV, doughnuts and punk rock..." Miss Amanda said.

"Oh no," said Belinda, as she readied the next song. "We condone the punk rock."

Inara Verzemnieks: 503-221-8201;  
inara@news.oregonian.com