



ROCK ISN'T DEAD: IT'S JUST A KID AGAIN.

HzS  d

“Fighting to Stay Free”

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#194...July

And now, ladies and gentlemen...

...at the place I'm currently getting physical therapy, I overheard a conversation between another therapist and the parent of an eight-year old being treated for a football injury, who happened to be wearing an AC/DC shirt similar to the one shown above. The gist of that conversation was that acts like AC/DC, Bon Jovi and Bruce Springsteen have become family rites of passage, from listening on car trips to rocking out at live shows.

It wasn't the first time I've seen or heard this. The more I observe, the clearer it is that for millions of kids of the current generation of parents, anthem rock is now the next step up from nursery rhymes and *Sesame Street*. Put another way: "I've Been

Working on the Railroad” has been replaced by “Crazy Train” (although I’m not certain there was ever a kids song expressing the same feelings as Twisted Sister’s “We’re Not Gonna Take It”).

On the surface, the idea of mostly 80s metal as kids fare seems odd. After all, wasn’t it our parents who hated that music and did whatever they could to keep it out of the house? Most of us remember the PMRC and Tipper Gore (that’s right, Al’s wife) trying to squash hard rock like a bug in that era, instead giving it the publicity it relished. But when you think about it, every generation of parents is simply sharing the music they loved with their kids (I reached back for 1950s-60s hits such as “Doo Wah Diddy Diddy” and “Splish Splash” for mine), and now that music has an edge. I’m old enough to recall being spoon-fed classical music: today the three Bs are no longer Bach, Beethoven and Brahms but Bon Jovi, Bruce and Bon (or Brian, depending on which AC/DC era you favor).



Metal mania starts early.

The rock act that discovered and tapped this market early on was, of course, the machos of marketing and merchandising, **KISS** (see, I can’t even reference them without using the logo). Even though much of their material isn’t suitable for kids, that didn’t stop them from promoting themselves as a ‘cradle-to-grave’ (literally, if you’ve seen the “KISS coffin”) obsession. As evidenced by the t-shirt wearing tyke up top, it’s worked. When all’s said and done, everything about the band is summed up in one generation-spanning anthem the chorus of which has become such a mantra that I don’t even have to tell you what it is.

It’s hard to confirm, but it’s likely that other bands with just as wide a reach followed the KISS model. After all, all you need is one anthem. With **Back in Black**, AC/DC’s got two, including the title track (while I may not think the under-12 market is ready for American thighs, the parents of America beg to differ). Ozzy’s got one, Bon Jovi’s got at least one (have Tommy and Gina replaced Dick and

Jane?). Springsteen's songs, while often casting doubt on the American dream, seem to make great kid material nonetheless: if you can sing "Born in the U.S.A.," you're in.

What does radio have to do with the kid-ification of rock? Just about everything. If the classic rock format is your thing – which it has been for millions of double-income parents with young children – then you've noticed its 'creamy center' move from the Beatles and Stones in its earliest years (the mid-to-late 1980s) to AC/DC, Ozzy, Def Leppard, Guns N' Roses and other harder acts of the 1980s. It's the natural evolution every format goes through based on the changing tastes of its target audience, which explains how adult contemporary has gone from Tony Bennett to, ironically, Lady Gaga.

In rock's case, though, it's not just radio but the lack thereof. As rock and the rock band as we know it have gradually diminished from contemporary radio, selling the 'classics' to their kids is about all older adults can do to hold on to this music (short of leaving terrestrial radio for other choices, such as Sirius XM and Pandora). In fact, it's been so long since rock and not R&B was the cornerstone of contemporary music that the traditional rock band has become cliché, the mark of which has always been the greater use of the cliché genre in commercials, movies and TV. We've certainly seen that a lot lately, from the Chevy Colorado commercial using "Back in Black" to "We're Not Gonna Take It" in the Extended Stay America spot. And that's just the beginning.

For many of us who have been around awhile, it's interesting seeing once-edgy music become "safe" for everyone. So if you're thinking rap and alternative classics will never be the stuff of minivans...think again.

MEANWHILE, BACK ON THE RADIO: *That Thing with Rich Appel* is counting down the Top 100 Summer Hits of the 60s and 70s all summer long, courtesy of Dann Isbell and Bill Carroll, authors of the books ***Ranking the 60s*** and ***Ranking the 70s***. They compiled this survey based on the charts used in these books, and along with ***That Thing***, we're giving away a book a week from now until Labor Day weekend.

If you'd like to win one of these books, here's what you do:

- 1 – Send your full name and mail address to ThatThing1@verizon.net
- 2 – Listen to ***That Thing*** either Sundays at 6pm Eastern on Rewound Radio or Saturdays at 7pm on WOLDradio.com.
- 3 – Each week, we'll draw a winner. If you hear your name, either post in ***That Thing's*** Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ThatThingRichAppel>) or email to tell us you heard your name.

And that's just one way to win; we'll mention others on air. Join us online, and now more than ever...

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Rich Appel is a talented and experienced writer about the radio and music industries. He's written Hz So Good since 1996, and written for Billboard since 2011. His services are available for your publication or website. Contact Rich at richappel@verizon.net.