

The New Kids are growing up

Entertainment

Now that the New Kids On The Block have cornered the teenybopper market, they may aim at the old folk - senior high school students.

The Boston-area pop music group has sparked more shrieks from the soprano set than any group since the Beatles. The quintet has captured the adulation of not only early teens, but of pre-teen girls.



Bob Spence
Entertainment
Thornton News Service

Their recent Canadian concert tour has left thousands of young girls with strained vocal cords. Even 12-and-13-year-olds can only scream for so long.

The New Kids, with their elaborate choreography, sugar-dripping lyrics and wholesome image, are a carefully packaged event. Each of the quintet - the average age is 19 - is already a millionaire. Their breakthrough second album, *Hangin' Tough*, has passed the 16-million sales mark.

Maurice Starr is the man behind the Kids. Seven years ago he formed the New Edition, five black performers whose hits included *Candy Girl*.

He began auditions in 1984 for a new group - a group that became *New Kids On The Block*.

"Given the demographics of the country and the history of the music business, I figured that five

white kids could be very big," he told *The New Times*. "If New Edition was as big as they were, I could imagine what would happen if white kids were doing the same thing."

HEARTSTRINGS

Joe McIntyre, 17, Jordan Knight, 18, Jon Knight, 21, Danny Wood, 19, and Donnie Wahlberg, 20, singing the songs Starr writes, are now plucking at the heartstrings of millions of young girls.

Some of them, very young indeed. Among the privileged few with special backstage passes (contest winners or daughters of people who knew someone who knew someone) at the recent New Kids concert in Hamilton was an eight-year-old.

A few minutes before the concert began, the young girl was crying, covering her ears to reduce the impact of 18,000 children screaming for their heroes. When the young child and others with the special passes got to meet two of the New Kids, though, the tears were replaced by an ear-to-ear smile. When Jordan Knight picked her up and hugged her, she became so excited she could only emit a steady ohhhhhh...

The average age of the fans at this particular concert was about 13.

That average may climb. Step By Step, the New Kids' third album - tentatively scheduled for May release - is more "mature," says Rob Mitchell, Canadian publicity manager for CBS Records, the New Kids' label.

"I haven't heard the album yet," Mitchell said in an interview, "but the word we have gotten is that it is more of a stretch... more ballads... more mature."

The New Kids have written some

of the songs. "It's a sign of their evolution," said Mitchell.

A one-hour New Kids On The Block special, *Hangin' Tough Live In Concert*, makes its Canadian premiere on the Family Channel April 6.

It was taped during the group's 1989 world tour.

Alex Trebek may have reached the elusive twin goals many people strive for - fame and fortune - but the articulate TV personality is not adverse to manual labor.

Trebek, who grew up in Sudbury, has become a household name because of the large audiences *Jeopardy* has been attracting. He has been the host of the game show

since 1984. It is the second most successful syndicated show in North America, behind *Wheel of Fortune*.

And, his annual salary is reportedly more than \$1 million. So, what did groom-to-be Trebek

do when he wanted the closets and bathrooms in his Hollywood Hills home expanded before his marriage to a Los Angeles commercial real estate agent? He got down on his hands and knees and did the work himself.

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