



## Kid Trends – Spring 2004

### Music

#### Producer Come Performer

The first truly great hip-hop album of a nascent 2004 has dropped. **Kanye West's** *The College Dropout* will be one of those records that comfortably straddles the line between critical and commercial success in much the same way releases from Ludacris, Outkast and Blackalicious have in the past. The College Dropout is a coming out party for one of the top producers working today. Having already created hits for Alicia Keys, Jay-Z and Talib Kweli, Kanye West looks set to have a couple of his own.

#### Rock's Great Hope

The 80s art-rock vibe that was kicked into high gear with The Strokes and has continued with the success of the likes of Interpol, Hot Hot Heat and The Yeah Yeah Yeahs is showing few signs of waning with new releases from Scotland's **Franz Ferdinand** and New York City's **The Walkmen**. Franz Ferdinand have released their self-titled debut to critical acclaim. Critics are loving the angular guitar rush and cool yet danceable vibe of the record. The Walkmen meanwhile are riding the latent success of their earlier single "We've Been Had" after the track was effectively used in a Volkswagen commercial. So, the expectations were high for the bands second LP. Fortunately they didn't disappoint with *Bows + Arrows*. The album comes off like a chugging post-punk version of early U2 and Wire combined. Longtime fans of the band will be satisfied with the dreamy noise and urgency of the latest release while, hopefully, new fans will discover one of rock's great hopes for the future.

#### P. Diddy Going Electric?

Looks like P. Diddy is taking a drastic new direction on his upcoming album. Due for release later this year, we can apparently expect an **electro-fueled dance-rap** album featuring some of the biggest names in independent electronic music; including Felix Da Housecat, Les Rythmes Digitales, Timo Maas, DJ Hell and Zoot Woman. Felix says that while most of the album will be frantic and upbeat, there will also be some more emotive down tempo numbers.

**This just in:** As soon as Gwyneth Paltrow has her baby she will be heading to the recording studio to record a hip-hop track with her husband, Chris Martin of the band Cold Play. The track is going to be a rap and mega producer, Timbaland is set to lay it down. This should happen in about six months...we'll keep you posted.

### Movies

#### What's That Smell?

If you've noticed any strange odors at the multiplex lately it's not that they've changed the simulated butter topping...it's teen spirit. Every studio is jumping on the "Duff" bandwagon by trying to launch their own multi-media female teenage stars.

The original tween juggernaut that is **the Olsen Twins** is moving into teen territory with their first full-length theatrical feature since *It Takes Two*. *New York Minute* will feature the dynamic duo in what is expected to be their first PG outing.

Freaky Friday's **Lindsay Lohan** has a trio of movies on the horizon. *Mean Girls*, *Dramarama*, and *Gossip Girl* are all slated to come out over the next two years. She's also lending her vocal contributions to the recently released CD for *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen*.

Everyone's guilty pleasure of a Cosby kid, **Raven-Symone** (aka poor man's Rudy), not only has a hit sitcom in *That's So Raven* and several CD's already on the shelf, but she's also being groomed by Disney to become their next Hilary Duff. *All-American Girl* is going to be her feature debut and since contributing to the soundtracks of *The Haunted Mansion* and *The Lion King 1 ½*, another CD is inevitable.

### Disney...Down & Dirty

With the breakdown of negotiations between Disney and Pixar, both studios are green lighting their own 3-D animated fare set to come out after their last two joint ventures, **The Incredibles** and **Cars**, are released. Disney has all but dropped its 2-D animation division to concentrate full time on this new animation format. Their first fully in house produced project will be **Chicken Little**. Pixar on the other hand continues developing strong stories and artistic concepts on the heels of the best-animated feature Oscar win for **Finding Nemo**. **Ratatouille**, a tale of a rat living in a restaurant, is the rumored first project for Pixar sans Disney.

### Barbie's Got A Brand New Bag

We're big into Barbie movies around here so it's with great pleasure that we announce the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> Barbie DVD release **The Princess and the Pauper** – expect Mattel to expand into the music sector in the future since this movie contains original songs that were commissioned especially for it. We're sure Barbie will be releasing a CD shortly after her 4<sup>th</sup> DVD – that Barbie certainly is talented!

## FASHION

### Vixen: out. Decorum: in.

Britney vs. Hilary – we may all be breathing a sigh of relief this year as trends gear less towards "sexy" and more towards "sweetheart". Spring is all about looking pretty and polished with lady-like looks that can still ooze attitude without looking cheap (even Paris Hilton has tossed aside the micro mini for a lovely white pantsuit). This isn't to say that the ultra mini skirt is on its way out, but at least teens are more likely to pair it with the popular layered look, i.e. tanks, cardigans or polo-style shirts. This preppy, layered look is also popular with boys.

Finally, it seems tweens are realizing that "less" isn't necessarily more! Even short summer dresses will be worn over a favorite pair of faded jeans. And scarves are likely to make it past the winter season as the perfect accessory for those sassy graphic tees that are still a staple. The vintage craze is partly to thank for this as well as the latest batch of tween

influencers such as Avril Lavigne and Hilary Duff - even Christina Aguilera, the queen of trash, looked rather respectable whilst performing at this year's Grammy Awards.

In-your-face sexuality is out – the antics of Janet & Justin at the Super Bowl and Miss Hilton starring in her own sex tape – helped seal the nail in that coffin. Kids are always ready for a change so we expect tweens to embrace this trend towards the prim and proper. In the March issue of Teen Vogue (our style bible) the editor sums it up perfectly: “Are you sick of watching nearly naked girls grinding next to fully dressed guys on MTV, or movie stars dressed as if they moonlight as strippers?” “Clearly it's time for a cover-up.”

### Other Trends

- Personalized clothes/jewellery and accessories are still cool, but there's another individualistic trend coming up that's sure to take over – 'tis the season of the **jean jewel** ([www.jeanjewels.com](http://www.jeanjewels.com)) -- which is similar to a charm bracelet but worn hanging off your belt loop -- pretty much every young celebrity has given this accessory their stamp of approval (Ashton, Hilary, Paris, et al).
- Low-slung jeans and belly-baring tops are out with full skirts, higher jeans and sweater sets taking their place.
- Capris are still a spring mainstay; look for jeans to be worn cropped no matter what the style or cut.
- Tie dye is making a comeback. Hand-dipped skirts and dresses and spiral patterned tees are being sold for those who just aren't cut out for DIY.

### So last year...

- Matching track/velour suits (note: don't worry, it's still cool to wear these pieces as long as they're worn separately, i.e. Jacket with jeans/skirts, or pants with a tank/tee).
- Platform sneaks/shoes/sandals --- instead you'll see kitten heel flip flops, sandals with grommets, t-straps, ankle straps, flat Indian inspired sandals, Converse. Boots (and not just Uggs, i.e. riding boots, rubber rain boots, etc) will be worn with skirts and over fitted jeans.

## Video Games

### Introducing Sitekick

Virtual pets and reward systems have been all the rage for some time now. Most of the major online kids' sites, including cartoonnetwork.com and neopets.com, have some kind of collecting/trading/building hook to keep their click-happy netizens coming back on a daily basis. On March 1st, YTV.com launched its own take on the online loyalty system, and the reception from its YAP! Member community has re-affirmed the potential and inherent *coolness* of this type of system.

YTV's Sitekick is a little yellow ball-shaped robot that website members receive for free in a big virtual crate stuffed with packing peanuts. After cracking open the package with a crowbar, the user's robot springs to life and zips off to live in its home on the site, a place called “the Dock”. Players can search YTV.com for Chips - colourful little spheres that program the Sitekick to do different things. Some Chips might mix n' match to dress

up the Sitekick, some may transform the Sitekick into a vehicle or a mini-game, and some may even provide special access to a super-secret section of the site!

The hiding/seeking, collecting/trading elements of Sitekick elevate it from a simple virtual pet to an engrossing, online, and - best of all - FREE experience for YTV.com members. And while the Sitekick itself doesn't have legs, the concept sure does - in the first three days of its launch, membership sign-ups were up 100%, and 10 000 individual trades took place! By developing the Sitekick program, YTV.com provides for its members a great reason to visit the site every day. With new Chips being released all the time, no serious Sitekick owner would miss their chance at collecting a rare Chip that only appears for one day!

### Gimmie Some Skins

Let's face it, video game consoles are ugly. They lack personality. Cool factor and a variety of color options have played a significant role in the success of the Gameboy Advance SP and the Macintosh. Following this trend, a couple of third party companies have taken this idea one step further. Enter the **console skin**. Skins are basically removable decals that allow you to give your console the extreme makeover it so desperately needs. Skin designs include simple colour changes or character designs from your favourite new game! The possibilities are endless and console developers should take note. What would more badass than an Xbox2/PS3/Gamecube2 sporting a pimped out ninja logo? That's right - NOTHING! Look for skins online until stores smarten up and start stocking them on their shelves.

### Video Games & Fitness?

Who would have thought the two could go hand-in-hand? Apparently Sony; as exemplified by the release of **Gamebike**, a new accessory for the Playstation console. The device allows riders to control games with a bicycle mounted on an indoor trainer. The speed and direction of the race car, motorcycle, boat, etc. is controlled by the player on the bike. No more blaming video games for obesity thanks to this little contraption.

## Books

### Did you know?

- Celebrate the *Seuss Centennial* – this month marks the 100th anniversary of Theodore Giesel's birth -- a figure better known to millions of readers as Dr. Seuss.
- Rumour has it that Britney Spears is looking to write an autobiography. In potentially related news, Justin Timberlake is still auctioning off the rights to his 'tell all' book. Remember when biographies were written by people AFTER they'd lived a long, eventful life? Seems like now by the age of 25, celebrities feel they have tonnes to look back on.

### Book to Big Screen

We've mentioned previously how **Judy Blume** books are having a resurgence in popularity, so it's not a huge shock to hear that some of her titles will be made into movies (the first one scheduled for development is *Deenie*). The thing we love about Judy Blume is that the themes of her stories are still relevant today - i.e. divorce, dealing with adolescence, being overweight, bullying, etc. If these movies can be done right (as

opposed to cheesy Hollywood teen flicks), we think they'll be loved not only by kids but also by adults.

## Toys

### Your Favourite Shows – Played out

There's never been a better way to express love for your favourite show than owning the toys. Two cartoons that are super hot right now have just released their action figures.

**Knights of the Zodiac** and **Teen Titans** figures and accessories from Bandai are modeled after their hit shows on YTV. Teen Titans also addresses the huge mini market needs with the five-inch figures, each featuring a different sound or unique action feature.

And word on the street is that Inu-Yasha, one of the hottest anime series with kids right now, also has plans for action figures. While a launch date hasn't been announced, expect these toys to fly off the shelves once they hit the market.

### Mega Mini Dolls

One area that was super strong in 2003 was the mini doll category. Retro-inspired dolls such as Strawberry Shortcake and My Little Pony were reintroduced after a 20 year hiatus and they are proving to be equally popular with the little girls of today (and their mothers). Polly Pocket and Lil' Bratz will also continue to be mainstays with any little girl that hasn't quite discovered fashion dolls such as Barbie and My Scene or the bigger, edgier Bratz for that matter. Bandi is also planning to steal some shelf space with the release of T\*Neez sometime this year.

### Toys and TV – kids two favourite things!

In the 80s there were a few toys that could interact with your television, but they sucked. It seems that toy manufacturers want to take another kick at the can in an attempt to compete with the flourishing video & computer game market with a few offerings that were seen at the Toy Fair.

Barbie: when you play with the aforementioned The Princess and the Pauper DVD a line of corresponding dolls come to life. Barbie dolls Princess Anneliese and Erika will sing songs to you in harmony along with the soundtrack. They also have a stuffed cat, Serafina that sings and makes cat-like motions along with the movie.

Batman: A new animated series slated to hit the American airwaves this fall is called *The Batman* and it will transmit an invisible data stream into a subsequent line of toys. When these toys are in front of the TV screen optical sensors inside them will pick up the signals and special capabilities (like sounds, lights and motion) will be "unlocked." The Batmobile will be able to rev its engine along with the cartoon - as well as engine graphics, diagnostics, storyline background from the show and more will be activated...okay, this sounds much cooler than Captain Power from the 80s.

Wheel of Fortune: Users have a handheld wireless device that allows them to compete with the contestants on the actual show. Unfortunately the only bonus to beating the contestant is the signal your TV sends to the device with some "bonus" games. Show me the money!

Etch-a-Sketch: This popular toy has come a long way. The electronic version uses the TV as its sketching tool. The system is sold with a control device that hooks up to your TV and allows kids to create their own original artwork, sound effects and maze games.

- Another thing toy companies are doing to try to compete with video games is creating **plug-and-play games** that you just plug into your TV – no need for a fancy expensive console. Jakks Pacific is one such company that has recently come out with a SpongeBob SquarePants TV Game that contains five unique games in a single joystick (that even looks the SpongeBob). All that's required are batteries and a TV set.

### Digital Pets

This month marks the introduction of **Aquapets**, an interactive water pet with life-like movements that respond to your actions. The current ones are cute; with names like Kiko and Puku, but the one we're really pumped about is the SpongeBob SquarePants version which will launch as soon as the movie is released.

Since Aqua Pets are slated to do as well in Canada as they do in Japan, Bandai thought they'd re-release the fad that started the interactive pet trend in 1997 – the **Tamagotchi!** This time around, the virtual pets will be able to communicate, play and even reproduce with one another via infrared technology on each unit.

So if you haven't gotten over the guilt of letting your little Tamagotchi die five years ago, you soon will be able to redeem yourself and prove that you are capable of taking care of a digital pet after all.

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## Television

### Hong Kong Ricky Martin

It's amazing; a man-child, who looks more like an extra from *Revenge of the Nerds* than an idol, walks in front of Simon, Paula and Randy, performs possibly the world's worst rendition of "She Bangs" and becomes an overnight phenomenon.

Once the audition was over American Idol viewers instantly wanted to know more about the ambitious little engineering student who busted some, now famous, Ed Grimley-esque dance moves and "sang" his heart out.

It must have been his obvious proclamation of having "no professional training" that endeared him into the hearts of millions. William Hung radiates a pure and innocent charm that most aren't used to seeing on television – after he was sent packing he stated that it was okay and stressed the importance of always striving to achieve one's best. It was then that he became the biggest thing since the dancing baby of 1998.

William Hung wanted to become a pop idol; not for the chicks, the fame, or the money, but to "meet friends and touch people's hearts" and apparently it's all happening for him. He now has an official website with over 7 million hits a week, hundreds of fan sites, a record deal, proposals from girls, T shirts and SNL recently based a skit on him.

The best thing that American Idol has done for pop culture is prove that you don't need to be gorgeous, or have any talent to be a star. What America seems to be looking for is an innocent, bright-eyed genuine guy with a good attitude who's not afraid of making a total fool of himself in front of millions.

For the few people who have yet to witness it, tune in to Jay Leno on April 8<sup>th</sup> to see for yourself – it's the wackiest thing since Clay Aiken became a sex symbol.

### What Does the Future Hold?

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Well it's looking like Cartoon Network wants a piece of the gender neutral pie that Nickelodeon has. Currently CN is a major destination for boys 6-11 but doesn't fare as well with girls of the same age (they flock to Nick). It's an audience they want to shore up in order to increase ratings. Plus, girls 6-11 have a major spending power in the advertising market. We predict that there will be a lot more shows coming down the pipe that resonate well with both boys and girls a la The Fairly OddParents and SpongeBob.

### Move Over Tinky Winky

The new preschool show, Boohbah, is hoping to get young kids active and moving. Created by the same people behind Teletubbies, this show stars five coloured blob-type creatures interacting in a trippy environment. While this show is targeted at those under five, we're thinking that older kids (e.g. Candy ravers) will be drawn to this show due to its combined innocence and wackiness - the same way that Teletubbies and Blues Clues became popular. We also think Boohbahs will have a following with the college crowd as something trippy to watch when you're late night partying!

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**YTV DECODER** (every issue we give you the skinny on some kid vernacular)

**Tight:** Often used to describe someone who is stylish, cool and has everything together: "*she looks tight*" or "*that ride (car) is tight*"

Can also be used to describe cheapness: "*Come on mom, don't be tight, it's only \$300.*"

As well as close relationships: "*Britney and I are tight.*"

**DISCLAIMER:** The trends that the YTV Trend Huntaz comment on come from the buzz on the street, the mall, the Internet, and numerous publications. YTV does not guarantee that all of the above information will come to fruition, but you can pretty much believe us as we are obsessed with this stuff.