

# Los Angeles Times CALENDAR weekend

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WITH THE KIDS

## Link to creativity

'Playdate,' an Internet show, exercises imaginations.

By Brenda Rees  
Special to The Times

MOVE over, Saturday morning cartoons. There's a new screen in town that's kid-friendly without the monotonous glare and stare.

Airing at 8 a.m. Saturdays on the Engage Internet Radio, "Playdate" is a wacky children's show that encourages kids to color, sketch and write poetry and stories while their imaginations are being tickled from computer speakers. It's been broadcasting since January as part of the 1 1/2 -year-old Evolving Artist Media Network.

Inspired by Monty Python and Pee-wee Herman, "Playdate's" creator Alan Bernhoft says the show is meant to keep kids creatively occupied through art, dancing and surreal sketches with off-the-wall characters.

"I want this to be like an old-time radio show where [listeners] have to make up what things look like as events happen," the Glendale resident says. "It's all about make-believe."

Indeed, at the top of every show, Bernhoft encourages kids to find paper, crayons and pencils, and then, he cranks up an original song such as "Sunshine Girl" or "The Guy Ahead of You."

"How does this song make you feel? What can you imagine about this place?" he asks. "Where does this song take you?"

"Playdate," whose viewers number in the hundreds but are growing each week, was the first program for kids on the Evolving Artists network, which reaches about 100,000 households a week, director of operations Craig Frand says.

"['Playdate'] has a very loyal audience that's growing," says Frand, whose operation programs a wide variety of fare, including jazz, talk shows and hip-hop.

As for Bernhoft's songs, the Beatle-esque quality is immediately apparent. A big fan since he was a kid, Bernhoft regularly plays John Lennon in various Beatles tribute bands, including Paperback Writer and Number Nine. "There is something so positive about Beatles songs," Bernhoft says. "They are mostly about love and are never mean-spirited. It's just good stuff."

After the music ends, kids are encouraged to send in their finished masterpieces — they might receive a CD of "Playdate" music if their artwork gets posted on the website.

"I love seeing what the kids come up with when they're listening to music," says Bernhoft, who adds that he's received artwork from mostly children in the U.S. but is starting to see submissions from overseas, especially England.

Interspersed between the art and dance/exercise segments are skits in which Bernhoft provides voices for such loony personas as the perpetually confused Commander MacTavish, English correspondent Bainbridge Mathers and Stu Macadamia, the stentorian news announcer.

As the show grows, Bernhoft sees more involvement from kids; maybe they'll read stories on the air, do comedy bits or sing along.

"My 8-year-old daughter is my toughest critic," he concedes. "If I made her laugh, then I know I did a good job."

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*Much programming for kids revolves around music, such as Kidz World ([www.kidzworld.com](http://www.kidzworld.com)), Loopy Moose*

([loopymooseradio.com](http://loopymooseradio.com)), *Hip Young Parent* ([www.hipyoungparent.com](http://www.hipyoungparent.com)) or *Radio Disney* ([radio.disney.go.com](http://radio.disney.go.com)). Some that offer more:

**"Crazy Dave's Kid Show"**

([www.crazydaveradio.com](http://www.crazydaveradio.com)), 8:30 to 10 a.m. Saturdays. Crazy Dave and Goofy Gil interview kids via the phone, perform sketch comedy and provide musical interludes.

**"Playdate"** radio show, 8 to 9 a.m. Saturdays. <http://www.evolvingartist.com> or <http://www.alanbernhoft.com> .

**"Kid's Corner"** ([www.kidscorner.org](http://www.kidscorner.org)), 4 to 5 p.m.

Sundays through Thursdays. The call-in show hosted by Kathy O'Connell features daily themes.

**"Kid's Time"** ([www.freewebs.com/kidstimeradio](http://www.freewebs.com/kidstimeradio)), 6 to 7 a.m. Saturdays, from Ontario, Canada, and featuring music, stories and talk.

**"Family Groove"** ([www.kfai.org/programs/famgrv.htm](http://www.kfai.org/programs/famgrv.htm)), posted on Sundays, is a weekly music-oriented program.

**"Classics for Kids"** ([www.classicsforkids.com](http://www.classicsforkids.com)) offers, in addition to music, information, facts, quizzes and stories about composers and compositions.