

# RADIO TUNES INTO KIDS

And the younger set is turning its dials to WNYE & the 'Summer City Song Fest' that's going into year-round programming

By PAUL SCHULTZ

Where else could you hear a song about "warm fuzzles"? On "Summer City Song Fest," Wednesdays on WNYE (91.5-FM) from 3-3:45 p.m., children's performers of all kinds set up in the station's Brooklyn Heights studio for a live concert. No canned applause, no commercials — just the musicians and the radio listeners. It's like MTV's "Unplugged" for the younger set.

The show is part of the Radio for Youth Foundation's (RYF) vast array of kids' programming on WNYE — the station owned and operated by NYC Public Schools. The response has been so good that the "Summer" appellation is being dropped and "Song Fests" will continue year-round.

Performers have included Karan and the Medicine Show (songs about brushing your teeth, being with mom, fuzzies) and Over the Moon (kiddy rock from Hoboken).

Headlining this Wednesday is singer-



JEFF SORG will be crooning to kids this Wednesday afternoon at 3.

guitarist Jeff Sorg. He'll be doing tyke-pleasers such as "Old McDonald," "Ghostbusters," "Twinkle, Twinkle" and some of his own, like "My Radio" and "We're Going on a Car Trip."

"I try to encourage the kids to sing with me," says Sorg, who has been doing sing-alongs for kids in public libraries for five years. "I like to let them know that music can be done in a simple fashion."

Next month the show welcomes singer Tony Soll and the banjo-guitar team of Bill Gordh and Brook Hedik.

Sorg and his fellow "Fest" entertainers represent just one of many opportunities for kids to tune in to tunes and other kinds of fun. WNYE carries almost eight hours of children's programming every Monday through Friday. And that's largely due to RYF.

The nonprofit foundation was established in January 1991 by Michael

Pollack, 40, an ex-video retailer who saw a need for children's radio.

Through an associate, Pollack met the managers at WNYE and talked about his ideas. The station was favorably impressed and offered Pollack a chance to greatly increase the number of children's shows on the air.

Pollack says he set up RYF to produce shows and import them from all over for WNYE. He himself hosts two of the station's programs. On "Mike and Me" (M-F, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.), Pollack ("Me") and his silent partner ("Mike") spin records and yarns, do the weather and hold contests and giveaways. "My show on one day is more than most stations do in a week," says Pollack.

And if that weren't enough, Pollack also hosts "Call, Talk or Listen" (Tues., 3-4 p.m.; Thurs. 3-4:15 p.m.), the only call-in show for kids in the metro area. On Tuesdays, various experts discuss issues that are meaningful to kids and parents. Thursdays, children's entertainers talk with callers.

Pollack doesn't shy away from too much, he says. "In this listening area, there's nothing that they're sheltered from." Call-in topics have included AIDS awareness, the environment, marine life and sneakers.

If you're 2 to somethingteen, there's something of interest on WNYE. Other shows include:

■ **Boomerang!** (Tues., 2:30-3 p.m.): An audiomagazine for kids with letters to editor, feature stories, etc. — all reported by kids.

■ **Go For It!** (Wed. 4:15-4:45 p.m.):

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JEFFREY SORG

Conversations with kids 19 and younger who have made outstanding contributions to their communities.

■ **Goodnight Moon** (Varies): Stories and lullabies to pacify squirming tots.

■ **Knock on Wood** (Wed., 2-2:30 p.m.): Ventriloquist Steve Charney and his sidekick, Harry.

To round out the day (9 a.m.-4:45 p.m.), WNYE has other shows with stories, games, songs and short dramas — all for children.

"Some people are put off by the idea of kids' programming," says WNYE producer Megan Howard, "but once you sit down and listen to it you realize this is a mature sound." She says the station needs volunteers to help out in the office — and in developing programs: "We want to expose children to radio so that they can consider it an alternative to television, to give them programs they'll see interesting. We try to promote literacy and self-esteem, particularly the idea that what they have on their minds is really important."

Even if that means Reeboks — or warm fuzzies.

(Schultz is on The News' editorial staff.)