

Some artists strive their entire careers to fill a niche—one that seems to change with trends, musical tastes and maybe even the blowing wind. Others—like Denver & The Mile High Orchestra—simply carve their own, then fill it up to overflowing.



Having come together just over a decade ago at Nashville's Belmont University, the popular band has traveled the world, performing for thousands at churches, festivals, even at the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City and 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece. On top of that, they're Christian music's premier Big Band, creating a wall of sound with trumpet, saxophone, trombone and rhythm that has audiences dancing in the aisles. With multiple acclaimed recordings under their belt—including *Good To Go*, *Timeless Christmas*, *Stand*, and the band's 2000 debut, *Act The Scat*—Denver & The Mile High Orchestra are turning their creative focus to their first children's project, *Groovy*. Blending the ensemble's trademark upbeat arrangements with fun songs that will have kids singing along about their Creator, it's likely to have some new fans playing air trumpet, too.

So what's one of the top contenders from FOX's "The Next Great American Band" doing making a kids record? Shouldn't they be buying hip new clothes and trying to fit some pop music mold to capitalize on their success? Not so fast—because for Denver and his band mates, *Groovy* IS the dream. Being a godly parent, raising great kids that love Jesus—and have an appreciation for all different styles of music, to boot—that's the dream God gave this band.

"We walked away from that show with a deep sense that our band was supposed to do music for the American family—positive, uplifting messages for families," says Denver Bierman, lead vocalist and founder of the group. "And honestly, my wife had a lot of foresight, too. She's been saying for a long time that the kind of vibe and energy we have would really translate for kids and families. Then we met up with Go Fish's Jamie Statema and God put a lot of things into place."

When the opportunity to partner with Go Fish came along, as the first outside signing for the veteran children's entertainers' recording label, gfk Records, the decision for Denver was easy. And in turn, the pairing became "a really cool marriage," he says, noting that each group benefitted from the other. "They're vocally driven; we're instrumentally driven." Plus they had more fun than grown men should be allowed to have, choosing songs from their own childhoods and writing new cuts for their new—if slightly shorter—audience.

One immediate sing-a-long for the under 5-foot crowd (and their parents) is the classic "I Am A Promise." Penned by Christian music pioneer Bill Gaither, the song holds a special place in Denver's heart. "Growing up in 'Bill Gaither country' in Indiana, there are a few songs I remember every single word of from children's church, and 'I Am A

Promise' is one of those," he recalls. "The melody of this song really lends itself to a Big Band treatment."

Another legendary songwriter leaves his mark on *Groovy*, as the band creates their rendition of Bob Dylan's "Man Gave Names To All The Animals," originally from his landmark 1979 release, *Slow Train Comin.'* Partnering with their Go Fish friends to showcase the vocal blend, and utilizing no instruments but percussion, the song is sure to leave kids mooing, oinking and baa-ing—which, from this audience, is high praise indeed.

"We went into recording this album and said, 'Let's make this fun. Let's not worry about whether something is the right sound for radio—we'll just use instinct and energy, and have a blast,'" says Denver. "And I think that stuff translates—it's an intangible thing, when you're having fun."

The fun they had making *Groovy* is contagious for the listener. Great arrangements of catchy songs will please both parents and adults, from "Groovy ABCs" to "Sunday School Swing," a medley of classics that includes "The B-I-B-L-E," "Joshua Fought The Battle Of Jericho" and "He's Got The Whole World In His Hands." And, of course, Denver & The Mile High Orchestra stay true to their focus of bringing a Christian message to these little fans with big ears. "All Of My Heart' is a worship song we think a child will really love," Denver says. "In fact my own son recently started belting it out, singing, *I love you Lord with all of my heart.* It was amazing."

While communicating the Gospel and leaving a legacy of faith are unquestionably the band's top priorities, as seasoned musicians, they're also passionate about helping cultivate the talents of a new generation. To that end, Denver and the band lead seminars for young people through DMHO-U, clinics they present featuring master classes and private lessons for aspiring musicians.

"We want to expose youth to, and really encourage them in, the fine arts, where they can explore and find their creative talent. Give them a chance to hear music they don't hear every day—bring horn music to kids of this generation," says Denver. "And hopefully they'll hear music that is very melodic, *and* with a quality message."

That message and music will be showcased for families as Denver & The Mile High Orchestra tour the new songs from *Groovy*, blending them into the shows they've already been doing and adding some special concerts just for kids and families—not to mention the possibility of a few appearances with their new partners, Go Fish.

"My goal is really to put a smile on a bunch of kids' faces, and make music that will bring families together," says Denver. "We have a lot of fun on stage, but it's an honor that we don't take lightly."

