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New Kids on the Block: Grown-up boy band's still got it

Females love their (not so New) Kids on the Block

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They scream. They jump up and down. They hold up banners saying things like “I love you, Jordan!”

All these years later, the females still seem to love their New Kids on the Block.

It surprises even Jordan Knight, one of five singers in the late '80s boy band. These women might be wives now, and they might be moms, too.

But the excitement is still there.

“There’s still a lot of that hysteria,” says Knight, 38. “You’d be surprised. If it was at 100 back then, it’s now at 85.

“The girls just get so excited.”

One of those excited “girls” is Jayce Kanyuh of Lehigh Acres, who can’t wait to see Jordan, Jon, Donnie, Danny and Joey at Germain Arena on Thursday.

Kanyuh has already seen the New Kids — twice — but both times were back in the early '90s. Now the Kids have reunited, and she can’t wait to see what they’ve learned in the meantime.

“I never thought they’d get back together,” says Kanyuh, 35, whose bedroom used to be covered in New Kids posters. “I didn’t think I’d feel the same way about them after all this time, but I do.

“The amount of love I have for them is still the same. I don’t think it ever really went away.”

The New Kids reunited last year after longtime hold-out Donnie Wahlberg — who has made a solid career for himself acting in movies such as “The Sixth Sense” and the “Saw” series — finally agreed to the project. The turning point? Unlike the group’s '80s and '90s albums, the new album, “The Block,” features songs written by the group.

The album has a solidly adult R&B vibe and is nowhere near as squeaky-clean as the Kids’ teen image. Randy song titles include “Dirty Dancing” and “Sexify My Love.”

Knight says they never could have gotten away with such sexuality in the old days. Now they’re back together again and calling all the shots. Which means better lyrics, a hipper sound and a less annoying merchandising blitz.

Knight says he used to resent all the New Kids products being sold. It was simply unsettling — and uncool — to see his face on lunchboxes, dolls and pretty much anything you can think of.

“It was a little surreal, at first,” he says in a telephone interview while taking a break from painting his 9-year-old son’s bedroom. “That kind of stuff was a little silly.”

Even super-fan Kanyuh agreed that the merchandising got a little out of hand. And this is from the

woman who once owned New Kids buttons, books and even a bomber jacket.

“Some of that stuff, it’s like, what were they thinking?” she says. “It was a marketing machine. Anything that had their faces on it, it sold.”

Still, Knight says, the band’s reunion has helped erase a lot of those old, bitter feelings. Now they can do things on their own terms — without the dolls and other junk.

“Now we can look at the past differently,” he says. “We’re at it again, and we’re doing it better.

“How many other people get a chance like this? Not many people at all.”

Knight says it’s great to be performing with the other four guys again — and he doesn’t mind singing some of the juvenile lyrics on songs such as “Please Don’t Go Girl.”

They even do all the old dances. “It’s like riding a bicycle,” he says. “I think with dancing, you’ve either got it or you don’t.”

There are a few changes, though. He’s 38 now, and that means some aches and pains that weren’t there in his early 20s.

“My right knee may ache before a show,” he says. “But during the show I don’t feel anything. It’s happiness.”

Additional Facts

IF YOU GO

What: New Kids on the Block

When: 7:30 p.m. Thursday

Where: Germain Arena, 1000 Everblades Parkway, Estero

Tickets: \$37-\$67; Concert promoter Live Nation is offering a four-pack deal: four tickets for \$99 at livenation.com.

Info: Call 948-7825 or go to the Germain box office. You can also get tickets from Ticketmaster by calling 334-3309, going to ticketmaster.com or visiting local Ticketmaster outlets.
