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MOST POPULAR

Atop the youth market, the Jonas Brothers are the princes of all media

BY MICHAEL GILTZ

Kids rule the world. Or at least the entertainment industry. The tween market is insatiable, despite the economic downturn. And there's nothing it craves more than the Jonas Brothers.

The Jersey-born trio spent 2008 crisscrossing the country, playing 85 concerts and performing in front of nearly a million people. This year, the brothers made a pit stop in Washington, D.C., to entertain superfans Sasha and Malia Obama on inauguration night.

Now, Hollywood expects them to sell 3 million tickets in just one weekend to "Jonas Brothers: The 3D Concert Experience." The film, which opens on Friday, will be the latest test of just how popular the brothers have become.

They guest-starred in the 3-D movie "Hannah Montana/Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds Concert Tour," which became by far the top-grossing concert film of all time when it made \$65 million last year. (No. 2 of all time? "Madonna: Truth or Dare" at \$15 million, followed by "U2 3D" at \$9 million.)

"The Jonas Brothers film is a little bit different," says David Mumpower, the founder of Box Office Prophets, a movie-grosses Web site. "It's kind of hard to gauge how popular they are. But the fact that we're talking about a possible \$20 million or \$30 million weekend is telling. They're doing all the right things."

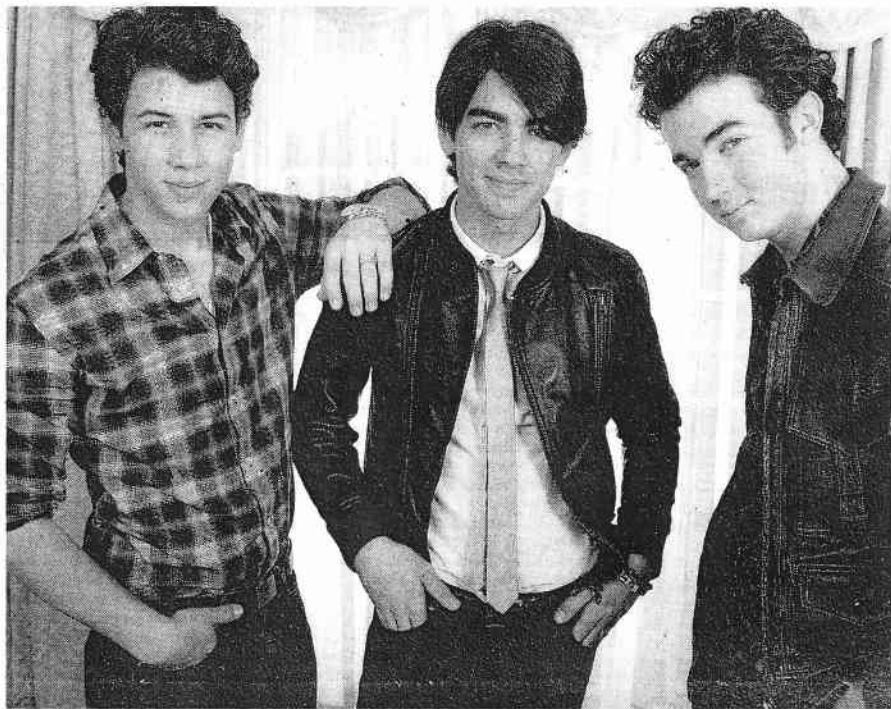
That includes gaining credibility with adults. The Jonas Brothers have been musical guests on "Saturday Night Live" and championed by Ellen DeGeneres. Elvis Costello has hung out with the three at their request. Conan O'Brien says he sings their songs while driving his kids around. Stevie Wonder joined them in a jam session at the Grammys, and Timbaland has asked them to contribute to his new solo album. They also became the youngest act (Kevin is 21, Joe is 19, and Nick is 16) to make the cover of Rolling Stone.

So while their audience is definitely dominated by the screaming girls who made "Twilight" a phenomenon (the guys will be on the soundtrack to the sequel, by the way), those girls won't exactly be dragging their moms to the movie theater. The wholesome kids — Christians right down to their purity rings — sheepishly admit a lot of moms scream for them as well.

But how big are they? As big as 'N Sync in its heyday?

Last year, the Jonas Brothers sold 1.5 million copies of their critically acclaimed third album, "A Little Bit Longer." 'N Sync sold 1.1 million copies of its critically acclaimed third album, "No Strings Attached," in one day.

On the other hand, 'N Sync's concert film "Bigger Than Live" grossed \$1.8 million in 2001. The Jonas Brothers are



expected to gross four to five times that just on opening day. In this post-record-store world, album sales almost appear irrelevant. "It seems like ringtones might be the best judge of popularity," jokes Mumpower. Well, they've sold millions of digital singles and ringtones, too. Billboard's list of Top Music Money-makers of 2008, had the brothers at No. 9, with \$62 million. Everyone above them was an iconic act like Madonna, Bruce Springsteen, Bon Jovi and the Police. Coldplay, Lil Wayne, Michael Buble, Miley Cyrus and Taylor Swift ranked below them.

Disney has showcased them in every possible way, from launching an album with a concert at the ESPN Zone in Times Square to putting them in an episode of "Hannah Montana" that aired right after "High School Musical 2."

But like every young Disney-designed star from Annette Bening to Justin Timberlake, the Jonas Brothers have genuine talent. They write or co-write most of their songs, tour relentlessly and keep ticket prices low.

Then there's the TV-movie sequel "Camp Rock 2" and a TV show called "J.O.N.A.S." on the w (with the series morphing from a spoof about rock stars doubling as secret agents to simply a day in the life of pop phenoms), plus live-action movie called "Walter the Farting Dog" based on the best-selling kids' books and directed by the Farrelly Brothers.

They've got even bigger plans. The calm, composed Nick may be the youngest, but he's the de facto leader of the band. Kevin and Joe often say Nick will be President in 2036. They're joking. Sort of. ♦

A Midas-like group gains credibility with grownups.

Girls rule at Disney High

The Jonas Brothers may be the prom kings of Disney's class of teen titans. But it's girls who dominate the scene. Meet the female mini-moguls. Like most teen girls, they're wild, hyper-accessorized and they love their Jonas Brothers.



REUTERS

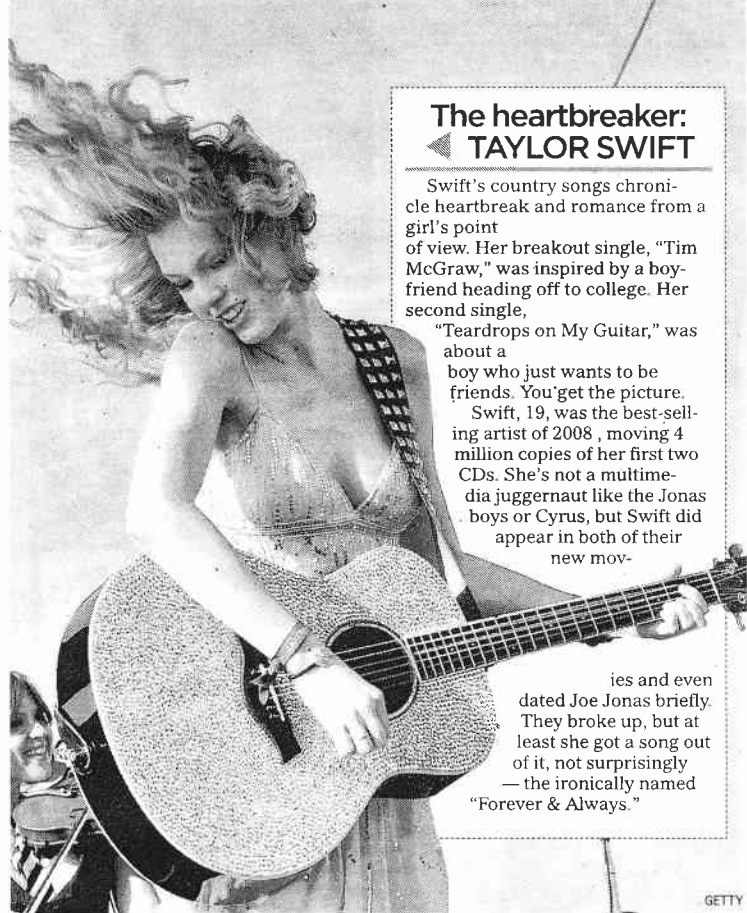
▲ The prom queen: MILEY CYRUS

By now, everyone can figure out the split-personality world of Cyrus and Hannah Montana. Both are pop superstars; Hannah is the alter ego of Miley Stewart, who is played by Cyrus, the daughter of one-hit wonder Billy Ray ("Achy Breaky Heart") Cyrus, who plays Miley/Hannah's dad on "Hannah Montana." Montana went supernova in popularity when her 3-D concert film (featuring the Jonas Brothers) grossed more than \$30 million when it opened a year ago.

Part of Cyrus' girl-next-door appeal is that it's easy for teens (and their kid

sisters) to picture themselves in Cyrus' sparkly shoes.

That appeal will only grow when "Hannah Montana: The Movie" opens April 8. Like the Jonas Brothers, Cyrus, 16, has written or co-written many of the songs on her two solo albums, both of which hit No. 1. She dated (and broke up with) Nick Jonas, and is now linked to 20-year-old aspiring country singer Justin Gaston. But her current love seems to be posting YouTube videos she calls "The Mandy and Miley show," shot in her bedroom with friend Mandy Jiroux.



GETTY

The heartbreaker: TAYLOR SWIFT

Swift's country songs chronicle heartbreak and romance from a girl's point of view. Her breakout single, "Tim McGraw," was inspired by a boyfriend heading off to college. Her second single,

"Tear Drops on My Guitar," was about a boy who just wants to be friends. You get the picture.

Swift, 19, was the best-selling artist of 2008, moving 4 million copies of her first two CDs. She's not a multimedia juggernaut like the Jonas boys or Cyrus, but Swift did appear in both of their new mov-

ies and even dated Joe Jonas briefly. They broke up, but at least she got a song out of it, not surprisingly — the ironically named "Forever & Always."

The new girl: DEMI LOVATO

Lovato, 16, was launched to pop heaven not by recording an album and touring but by making the TV movie "Camp Rock" with the Jonas Brothers. She played a fresh-faced kid who learns the importance of being true to yourself when at summer camp for would-be rockers.

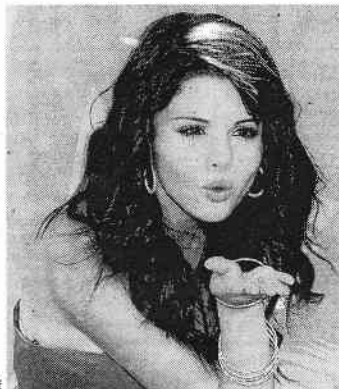
Born Demetria Devonne Lovato in Dallas, she released a debut album last year (with a few songs co-written by the Jonas Brothers, because Lovato — a fan of heavy metal — says her own material is "too dark"); it'll be reissued next month with new songs and a DVD. She has her own series spun off from "Camp Rock," called "Sonny With a Chance," duets with Joe in the Jonas Brothers concert flick and co-stars in the Disney TV movie "Princess Protection Program" with Gomez, a good friend she met while auditioning for "Barney & Friends." ♦



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The cheerleader: SELENA GOMEZ

Gomez, 16 — named after the late Tejano singer Selena — is, like her pal Demi Lovato, from Dallas. She's made her biggest impact as an actress, hitting big with the silly sitcom "Wizards of Waverly Place" (she recorded the song "Everything Is Not What It Seems" for the show as well). Last year she did the romantic-comedy sequel "Another Cinderella Story," and she has an upcoming TV movie, "Princess Protection Program," with Lovato. Watch for her pop album this summer, and expect it to have at least one heart-break ballad considering she just broke up with her boyfriend — Nick Jonas, of course.



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