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Pop icon Neil Sedaka takes on children's books, music to delight new generation



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NEW YORK — Where has Neil Sedaka been all these years? Wiggling his way into the hearts of a new generation, for one, through picture books accompanied by mini-albums offering playful takes on some of his hits.

At 73, the singer-songwriter enlisted the aid of his twin granddaughters as kiddie backup singers on the three-song CD tucked into “Dinosaur Pet,” released this month by Imagine Publishing and inspired by his 1960 song “Calendar Girl.”

It’s Sedaka’s second picture book using child-tailored lyrics, a popular marketing hook for other performers looking to bring their oldies music to children. Two years ago it was an alligator character for “Waking Up Is Hard to Do,” based on Sedaka’s “Breaking Up Is Hard to Do.”

“My grandchildren love Papa Neil’s old rock ‘n’ roll songs. I used to sing them at their piano,” he said in a recent interview.

He still works plenty hard entertaining grown-ups at gigs around the world. The classically trained pianist, who loves Maroon 5 and Adele, recently finished his first symphony and a piano concerto, “Manhattan Intermezzo,” that he’ll debut at London’s Royal Albert Hall on Oct. 17.

“Being a Manhattan person, I wanted to give my musical feelings about being a New Yorker,” Sedaka said.

There’s also a planned musical based on his early life, “Laughter in the Rain,” covering his heady days atop the charts in the ‘50s and early ‘60s and as a Brill Building songwriter at age 19, before the Beatles and other British invaders edged out the early rockers.

There were later successes as well with the help of Elton John’s Rocket Records and the Sedaka-penned Captain & Tennille hit “Love Will Keep Us Together.”

Retirement isn’t in Sedaka’s future.

“It’s nice to be a legend, but it’s better to be a working legend,” he said. “I’m very fortunate that my voice has held.”

Online:

<http://www.neilsedaka.com/>

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