

# Charlotte actor touring with 'Annie'

Continued from page 1D while the play is going on. Benjamin said parents make sacrifices when they

have a child in show biz, but it's worth it. "When you see that your child wants to (act) it's up to us as parents to cultivate

it," said Benjamin, who is also Jaida's manager and agent. "I wear three hats," she said. "It's more than just say-

ing my kid is cute. This is bigger than what people think." "Annie" opens September 17.

# New 'Transformers' film celebrates the return of the 1980's TV classic



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES—The Police and the Stray Cats are on tour. Leggings, pegged pants and wide belts are in style. "Transformers" are the hottest toys on the market. What year is it?

It's 2007, the year the '80s came back.

It used to take generations before trends reappeared. The hippies of the '60s turned to fringed cowboy jackets and Native American beads from hundreds of years earlier. In the '70s, pop culture turned back the calendar two decades, with

'50s-inspired shows like "Happy Days" and groups like Sha Na Na. In the '90s, the flowery, flouncy clothes of the '70s came back big time, as bell-bottom pants, hip-hugger jeans and halter tops re-emerged as hot styles. One of the bigger TV hits that began in the '90s: "That 70s Show."

Experts say trend recycling happens much more quickly now, driven by nostalgia, technology and marketing.

"This embrace of styles from the past, at least for people of a certain age who are in the position of social arbiters, has to do with a social equivalent of comfort food," said Alice Echols, a

professor and cultural historian at the University of Southern California.

"The '80s ... was before terrorism, before any kind of 9/11 consciousness. People didn't worry about terrorist attacks. It was a somewhat tranquil time," she said. Given the state of the world today, it makes a lot of sense that that kind of escapist fare would be very attractive.

The Transformers, a line of toys that change from robots into vehicles, were born at Hasbro Inc. in 1984. Shortly after their introduction, the Autobots (the good guys) and Decepticons (the bad guys) inspired cartoons, comic books and a 1986 animated film, "Transformers: The Movie."

"Transformers has a huge dormant fan base," said Hasbro's Samantha Lomow, global vice president of marketing. "It goes back to that emotional connection. ... A lot of people now who are having kids are looking to share experiences across their families."

Executive producer Steven Spielberg is one of them. He's been a fan of the toys since their debut.

"I'm not talking about buying the toys for my kids," he said in studio production notes. "I'm talking about reading the comic books and buying the toys for myself. I'd play with them at home with my kids, but I'm the one who was enthralled with them."

While today's generation is too young to remember the original Transformers, all things retro are cool with young people, said Kevin Jones, historian at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising.

"It's the post baby-boom generation that's driving today's products, and it's brand new again because we

ourselves are bringing it back for this youth market," Jones said. The United States' "baby boom" generation was born in the mid 1940s through mid 1960s.

But the Transformers, as Spielberg emphasized, aren't so childish that adults can't still enjoy them.

"You feel good talking about the Transformers as a grown man," said Tyrese Gibson, one of the film's stars. "It doesn't make you feel like you're talking about the Care Bears or something."

Advanced computer-generated graphics keep the cool-factor high and help modernize the story, which involves 30-foot-tall robot aliens interacting with a human cast that includes Shia LaBeouf, Josh Duhamel and John Turturro.

Technology has caught up and finally a studio has the opportunity to bring this property to life in an ultra-realistic manner," Lomow said. "This property is being reinvented for the long term."

Many of the movie's writers, actors and artists are "hard core" fans of the original Transformers, said producer Lorenzo di Bonaventura, and the film taps into the same qualities that made the shape-shifting robots popular in the first place.

Their mythology is about good versus evil on a very basic level," he said, adding that in that regard 2007 is the perfect time to retell the Transformers story.

In the '80s, "the world didn't seem quite as threatening a place, but from a creative point of view, it ... was a decade when people seemed to want to explore larger-than-life characters and take them to a place they had previously not been doing," he said. "It was a time period that was searching for its own identity, much as we are now."

On the Net: [www.transformersmovie.com](http://www.transformersmovie.com) [www.hasbro.com/transformers/](http://www.hasbro.com/transformers/)

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# At 70, Wilson 'an angel' of jazz

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK—Nancy Wilson is hardly the retiring type, even though she is trying to spend more time with her grandchildren these days.

Last year, the singer retired from touring, but she continues to record—her last album "Turned to Blue" won the Grammy for Best Jazz Vocal Album earlier this year—and perform selected concert dates.

On Friday night, she found herself sharing the Carnegie Hall stage with many old friends—including three of the top vocalists on the current jazz scene, Nnenna Freelon, Dianne Reeves and Kurt Elling, as well as guest musicians such as violinist Regina Carter—for a concert called "Nancy Wilson's Swinging 70th Birthday Party," a highlight of this year's JVC Jazz Festival.

"It's really fine to let everyone know

what 70 can be," said Wilson, whose birthday actually was Feb. 20, at the start of a program celebrating milestones in her 55-year career. "It doesn't get much better than this."

After Freelon spiritedly swung her way through "They Can't Take That Away From Me," the younger singer took the opportunity to thank Wilson for mentoring her years ago, calling her "an angel in my life."

Turning to the svelte, silver-haired Wilson, she quipped, "If this is what 70 is all about, I can't wait."

Elling paid tribute to the 1952 "Nancy Wilson/Cannonball Adderley" album, considered among the best jazz vocal recordings of all time, by performing the soulful "Save Your Love for Me."

Pianist Herbie Hancock completely reharmonized Cole Porter's romantic bal-

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