

There's no reason that children's entertainment has to be corny or square. So says Andre 3000, member of the hip-hop rap group OutKasts; who has just signed a first-look deal with MTV and Nickelodeon to produce theatrical films and cable projects for the Viacom outlets, Variety reports. First up is a big-screen feature called The Hit, in which the OutKast rapper will also star, a story about a boy whose efforts to find his single dad a new wife get an assist from a mysterious next-door neighbor, who turns out to be Cupid. Viacom's Paramount will distribute the movie, which will shoot sometime in 2006.

Hip-hop star Dre, who has a 7-year-old boy of his own (mom is Dre's ex, Erykah Badu), told the Associated Press that today's kids, weaned on hip-hop, are ready for hip movies. ""I've noticed that kids, they're looking up to the Jay-Zs, they're looking up to OutKasts,"" he told AP. ""so kids" movies and cartoons, they're getting smarter ... because it seems like kids are cooler.""

The deal, which gives MTV and Nickelodeon the first shot at any of the Grammy winner's movie projects, adds to his already blossoming film and TV career.

The rap artist (real name: Andre Benjamin) appeared earlier this year opposite John Travolta in Be Cool, and he'll be seen later this summer alongside fellow rapper-turned-actor Mark Wahlberg in the drama Four Brothers.

He and his OutKast partner Big Boi have a musical set to debut later this year on HBO. And Andre has yet another kids" movie in the works, having signed on months ago to lend his voice to one of the barnyard animals in an upcoming animated version of Charlotte's Web.