



JUF News

Chanukah

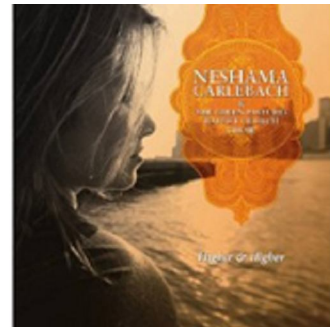
It's The Annual Chanukah Wrap-Up!

By Paul Wieder

This is the 11th installment of the ever-popular Chanukah gift-giving guide. Special for this year—some new CDs that actually have Chanukah as their theme:

Mama Doni— Chanukah Fever

One of the best Chanukah albums to come along in quite a while. Mama Doni (rhymes with “Bonnie”) has the imagination of a 5-year-old and the energy to match. The material is all (and quite) original, and based in many song styles, although she prefers reggae and country. The title track is disco-funk, followed by “Latke Man,” who might be the cousin of the Boogie-Woogie Bagel Boy from Avenue B. There are also two outright parodies, “Funky Gold Menorah,” (based on Tone Loc’s “Funky Cold Medina,”) and the “La Vida Dreidel.” Doni has an upbeat, engaging style, and the production values are tip-top (tip-dreidel?). This is the kids’ album you’ll find yourself playing again after dropping the kids off.



Cantor Deborah Jacobson—Chanukah Live

Like the impossibly talented high school on Glee, Temple Ahavat Shalom in Florida is full of musicians and singers. Here, they present many of the favorites, both traditional and contemporary. They put a new “spin” on “I Have a Little Dreidel,” with a doo-wop version. Cantor Jacobson’s own composition, “Light the Lights of Chanukah,” fits right beside the Debbie Friedman and Peter Yarrow standards. The concert concludes with two numbers by Stephen Schwartz, who gave us musicals from Pippin and Wicked to Pocahontas and Enchanted; the last song is his “When You Believe,” from The Prince of Egypt. Wrong holiday, but where miracles are concerned, we’ll let it slide.

Doda Mollie: Chanukah Pajamika!

This CD solves a major dilemma—You can’t light Chanukah candles until it gets dark, but by then it’s time for bed! Doda Mollie’s solution? Pajamas first, then candles! All the standards are here, like “Maoz Tzur,” “Mi Yimalel,” and “Al Hanisim.” But Doda Mollie also adds some Chanukah songs you likely didn’t grow up with, especially some Israeli and Russian songs and the Ladino “Ocho Kandelikas.” Then she sprinkles on kazoos, slide whistles, and a springy Jew’s harp for cartoony effects. “Doda” is Hebrew for “aunt,” but Mollie Wine also has a master’s degree in education and is a cantor.

Shelley Posen: Menorah: Songs from a Jewish Life.

Posen is a Jewish answer to Bob Gibson—folksy, funny, and warm. Despite the title, only two of these tracks are Chanukah-related: “My Mother’s Old Menorah,” and “Will Their Children Light the Candles?” The two other themes are other special times—Pesach, Purim, and especially Shabbat—the Jewish national pastime: food. Not surprisingly, the themes overlap more than once; two standout tracks are the country-rock number about Shabbat “Cholent,” and “Everyone Loves Shabbes but the Chickens,” a Sousa-like march. Posen also waxes nostalgic for his late parents on several tracks, including the very touching “Fork Garden.” A great sitting-by-the-fireplace album.

Michael Levy: King David’s Lyre