

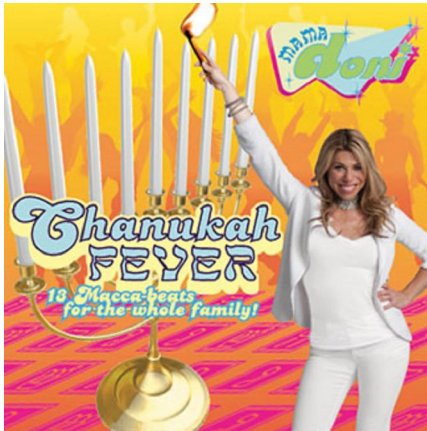
NOVEMBER 10 2009

Family-Friendly, Dreidel-Ready Chanukah Tunes

Despite the fact that it occurs every year, I am always flabbergasted when Christmas products hit shelves as soon as the Halloween candy has left them. However, in this spirit of planning in advance, I am laying out my Chanukah playlist. Chanukah starts earlier this year, December 12 to be specific, so I have about a month to get Maia excited for the "festival of lights" and some of the tunes that go with it. Since we celebrate the traditions of both December holidays in my house, we try to select songs that match this festive, but not particularly religious, spirit. While it is fairly obvious the quantity of tunes will never measure up to those of Christmas, there are a few kid-friendly jewels to keep the flame burning.

As a quick editorial note (and I realized this is actually a hotly debated topic), I have chosen to go with the "Chanukah" spelling.

Mama Doni – [Chanukah Fever \(13 Macca-Beats For The Whole Family\)](#): Set to be released November 24, I had a chance to preview this comical take on the holiday from Mama Doni, aka Doni Zasloff Thomas. Filled with Jewish humor and a novelty-spin on the holiday, Mama Doni takes a multi-genre approach with her music, covering hip-hop, swing, dance, Latin-pop and even the self-described "Jewgrass" genre. Titles sure to get the kids singing, and giggling, include "The Funky Gold Menorah," "La Vida Dreidel," and "I Say Chanukah (You Say Hanukah!)." Sure, this CD is "shticky," but Doni seems to embrace this point and run with it. Unlike some of the Chanukah titles, this one is "kid-safe" from start to finish. Doni is currently touring JCCs around the East Coast to promote "Chanukah Fever."



She's got the fever for the flavor of fried potatoes

LeeVees – [Hanukkah Rocks](#): Released several years back, this project is a collaboration between Adam Gardner of Guster and Dave Schneider of hockey-loving band the Zambonis. Like many Chanukah music projects, the LeeVees were inspired by the lack of original holiday tunes. While some of the indie-pop style songs may not be kid- apropos (not so ready to play Maia a song called "Goyim Friends"), there are some true gems on this. "Latke Clan" should be the true token Chanukah radio song, wiping Adam Sandler's tired tune away, with its Beach Boys-inspired melodies and witty lyrics. The fist-pumping "Gelt Melts" is a punk-rock ode to the chocolate money ever-present at this holiday. The indie pop tune "Applesauce vs. Sour Cream" brings up the classic debate about the best topping for your potato pancake. There is even a slow-groove song mourning the healthy makeover of Jewish noodle pudding dish "Kugel." The CD is especially notable for its production, with Peter Katis (Interpol, The National) behind the decks.



Indie pop that will melt your gelt

Erran Baron Cohen – [Songs in the Key of Hanukkah](#): Another album inspired by lack of quality musical product for this Jewish holiday, this album takes a less humorous approach. Erran Baron Cohen, brother of actor Sacha Baron Cohen ("Borat"), is already an accomplished musician, scoring soundtracks for his brother's projects and releasing albums under his ZOHAR band. "Songs In The Key Of Hanukkah" combines multiple genres, including klezmer, reggae, electronica, and hip hop, as well songs in English, Hebrew and Ladino. For this album, I cherry-picked out a few of my favorites that were more kid-friendly and more tradition-based vs. religion-based. Cohen completely reworks classic songs "Hanukkah oh Hanukkah" and "Dreidel" to re-inspired klezmer/hip-hop mash-ups that take the songs seriously. "Spin It Up" has a reggae feel, and despite minimal lyrics, seems to be a celebration of dreidel time.

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