

Musical Duo Has Children Singing About Seatbelt Safety

By Brandie M. Jefferson

Kids love to sing. And sing. And sing. But what are they singing about? The latest top-40 radio hits? Couldn't they learn something while they sang?

How about a tune that teaches them the virtues of wearing a seatbelt?

And, really, would it be too much to ask that it doesn't offend the ears of anyone older than 6?

Leeny and Tamara to the rescue!

"Climbing in the back seat/Safety first, before you turn the key/Listen for the click/Make it nice and tight/When everybody's buckled up/We'll drive, drive, drive, drive, drive."

"Put On My Seatbelt" is the opening song on "Sharing the Same Stars," a 14-song album that spans topics from safety to breech babies to the importance of vitamin C.

The album is the result of a musical reunion between Ilene Altman and Tamara Hey — college friends who hadn't written music together since they were students together at Berklee College of Music.

Ms. Altman, a Massachusetts-based children's musician, and Ms. Hey, a New York-based folk-and-rock musician, are full of goofy stories, sound advice and even geography facts.

"Parents are always suggesting song ideas," Ms. Altman said. "One of the themes ... is struggling to get kids in the cars, buckled in and ready for trips."



Ilene Altman and Tamara Hey say parents need to model seatbelt safety to get their children to follow suit.

But it's not just about kids, Ms. Hey said. Sometimes, parents will take every precaution in the world with their kids, then hop in the car and take off, unbuckled.

"I'd imagine the song" — and listening to your kids singing it — "makes it less attractive to parents to drive without seatbelts," she said.

The pair offers free use of the song for organizations involved with child-passenger safety.

Ms. Altman and Ms. Hey are concerned about safety, but there's still plenty of fun in the song, reminiscent of Dolly Parton's "9 to 5."

"It's not something to preach about," Ms. Alt-

man said.

The rest of the album bears the same philosophy — fun.

There's the girl-group-inspired "Little Sister" and the 1950's, Buddy Holly-esque "Ladybug, Ladybug, Ladybu-u-ug," which is used by the Lost Ladybug Project, which tracks ladybug populations.

Sure to be a hit: "Hold It," on a subject every kid can identify with. "Astronauts are cool/They go in their suits/Maybe that's/ because/There aren't any bathrooms on the moon." (Remember this summer's mishaps with the International Space Station toilets?)

The album's final song will be a favorite for travelers. Ms. Altman had the idea for "Across the USA" while working on her first album, "Be Nice," written with Steve Equi.

She wanted a song with a line about every state. AAA's TripTik Travel Planner inspired it, she said. She wants to visit all 50 states.

She hasn't yet made the tour, but you and the kids will learn a little something as you sing along.

Fun, educational music you can grow with.

"It's an album about feelings, about respect for yourself and the world around you," Ms. Hey said. And, just as important, Ms. Altman reminds us, "It totally rocks!"

Find information about using the songs for educational purposes, as well as buying a copy for your kids at www.leenyandtamara.com. 