

Kid culture MUSIC

Two great CDs for the 8 to 10 set

Two veteran children's music performers, Tom Chapin and Red Grammer, have released new CDs worthy of your attention. Each is an award-winning artist with a commitment and history of creating exciting and memorable music for children and families.

SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED,
by Tom Chapin, Razor & Tie,
\$15, www.tomchapin.com;
ages 8-10.

It is hard to believe this is Tom Chapin's 11th family CD. It seems like it was just yesterday when I first listened to "Family Tree," his first release—which is still a favorite at home and with my students.

Chapin continues to make his mark in this genre by releasing one delightful recording after another. Each time he strives to create another recording of original, exciting and family-friendly songs. He certainly accomplishes his goal with this new release.

Chapin is a songwriter at heart and knows the power of a well-crafted song to reach children. I've been listening to his music for more than 15 years and Tom Chapin is my favorite songwriter for kids in the 8- to 10-year-old age group.

My third- and fourth-grade students love every Chapin song that I bring to class and my 9-year-old son has played "Great Big Words" (from Chapin's "Billy The Squid" CD) dozens of times this past week.

Chapin knows kids and is a clever and masterful songsmith. Like many children's music performers, Chapin started writing songs because he recognized a need for quality and appropriate music for his own children who at the time had "outgrown toddler music, but weren't ready for the radio yet."

The title of "Some Assembly Required" could be a metaphor for growing up and Chapin suggests, "There's a sense that you have to put this life together one piece at a time, and sometimes there's instructions, and sometimes there's not." What parent wouldn't agree?

This universality comes through loud and clear in these 15 songs. From the first track, "Puppy at the Pound," with its familiar family conversation set to Cajun-flavored music, to the proverbial

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lament "Only One Shoe," to the hilarious twist brought to the dance floor in "Don't Make Me Dance," all spotlight Chapin's magical ability to make the everyday ups and downs of life a delightful adventure.

There are many outstanding songs on this recording including "Questions," designed to get families talking and thinking, "Brown Gold," a kid-friendly lesson on composting, and the tender "Home Is the Welcoming Sound," written and sung from the heart by a daddy who travels and works on the road.

But the one that reaches out and grabs me every time is "Walk the World Now, Children." It features Dan Zanes with New York's Pilgrim Baptist Choir and the press release calls it a "moving environmental anthem" that "feels like an old folk

classic." I couldn't agree more.

The first verse sets the tone:
*Walk the world now, children. Walk it now with me.
Walk the world now, children. Walk it now with me.*

*Walk the world now, children, treat it lovingly,
And the world will last forever and a day.*

Other verses include "drink the water, breathe the air, work the land" and follow the same lyrical format.

This is another superb example of how the emotion of a simple but profound lyric is taken to a higher level with a musical arrangement that complements and supports the melody and passion of the words. This is the artistic touch and sensibility that all performers strive for but is elusive for so many.

It is no accident that Tom Chapin is a multi Grammy award-winning artist. He is the genuine article—doing family music for the right reason.

It doesn't hurt that he is incredibly talented, too.

It's tough to find appropriate and engaging music for the 8- to 10-year-old group, so be sure to check out "Some Assembly Required" and Chapin's other family music releases at www.tomchapin.com.

