



Laurie Berkner says being a mother gave her less time to spend with kids while creating "Rocketship."

# Liftoff for 'Rocketship'!

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## Making new CD was hardly child's play for kids music star

If you think recording an album of children's music is all sweetness and light and fun and games, think again.

Kids music superstar Laurie Berkner's latest CD — "Rocketship Run," out this week — took about a year to record, involved plenty of sleepless nights and was filled with as much stress as any U2 recording session.

"We were a month late delivering it," says Berkner, who was raised in Princeton, N.J., and lives on the upper West Side with her husband and 3-year-old daughter, Lucy.

"We had set up a mastering date we were already paying for. So we were mixing at [her producer's place] while the guy was mastering the ones we had already finished. It was that down to the wire."

"Rocketship" is her fifth CD — and the first in six years for Berkner, a mainstay on the Noggin children's channel, especially the series "Jack's Big Music Show," on which she has already performed some of the tunes from the album.

Adding to her stress, in a good way, was the fact Berkner was now a mother, which meant she was working a lot less with children while trying to write music kids would enjoy.

"It's been a long time, and I have less daily interaction with lots of kids," explains Berkner. "I have much more daily interaction with one kid. It's funny — I worked with so many more adults and so many fewer kids. I actually found that somewhat stressful."

"When I'm working with the kids, it's like, 'Oh, you like this? Great. This one will be fun.' You can feel it working. I felt like I was depending on myself and the reactions of adults. I'm glad adults like [the CD]. But if kids don't like it, no adult is going to buy it."

Berkner, 39, began her music career with choirs, then segued into playing music at day-care centers and pre-schools.

She performed in a rock band called Lois Lane, but it wasn't until she started writing songs for children that the tunes really began to flow.

Now, kids are teaching her an important lesson: Share your toys. For the first time, Berkner has recorded original songs written by her band members (Susie Lampert and Adam Bernstein), as well as having a lot more input from her producer.

"Yeah, I stopped being a control freak," laughs Berkner. "I've been working on that."

Her instinct is to keep the music simple, while producer Bob Golden leans toward complexity. But they found common ground in what she calls the "tummy test."

"He would play a song for me and I would say, 'You know, when I hear that one it makes my stomach feel bad. So play it again.' He opened up all the possibilities, and if I didn't like them, they were gone."

Berkner, who has performed at Carnegie Hall and in Central Park, is debuting her new CD at Lincoln Center's Avery Fischer Hall on Sept. 1 at 1 p.m.

"I wanted to play a beautiful space that's made for music, whether it's our music or opera," says Berkner. "I would like a place to really celebrate that this album is out and take it seriously. That feels good to me — to really take seriously what I'm doing so that other people feel that. And then have as much fun as I can with it."

Michael Giltz