

CDs are Out:

There's a New Place for Jewish Music

By Joanie Leeds

MUSICIAN / PERFORMER

My music has been featured in *People* magazine and I have played at venues like Lincoln Center and The Kennedy Center, but being asked to include my music on a PJ Library compilation album was like having the Holy Grail find me!

Even from a young age, I have felt a cultural connection with Judaism. Growing up, I was a member of the High Holiday choir, a youth group songleader, and a guitar teacher at Camp Coleman in Georgia. Throughout my decade-long kids music career, I've released eight children's albums – six secular albums and two Jewish albums – but my goal, no matter what the song topic, is to make each tune accessible to all. I found that PJ Library has similar goals with their music and books. That's why, when PJ Library contacted me back in 2012, we became fast friends.

Since then, I have been incredibly fortunate to garner a fabulous relationship with PJ Library, becoming one of the programs musical staples and licensing my tunes for yearly CD releases. Because of PJ Library's wide distribution, I have also had the opportunity to team up with PJ Library partners nationwide,

bringing my interactive musical performances to cities across the US and, most recently, across the pond in England.

What I love about the PJ Library events is that many of them are open to the public, so my fans who aren't Jewish can easily attend; it's a great learning experience for them too. I held my latest album release party at a venue called City Point, a fancy, new shopping mall in Brooklyn, NY. I teamed up with PJ Library for the release of the Brooklyn themed album, *Brooklyn Baby!*, and they set up a table at my show and brought an adorable art project with Yiddish words to complement one of my songs on the album, "Shayne Punim." I think both kids and parents alike learned a whole new vocabulary that day!

Reaching more families through PJ Library is an exciting opportunity for artists like me. Independent musicians are consistently navigating the ever-changing music industry landscape and trying to stay on top of it. Physical albums and even MP3 downloading are phasing out and streaming services are staying put. It's a tricky change for musicians. Because CDs do not sell anymore, most albums

now need to be funded on the front end through crowdfunding campaigns. (PSA: Make sure to help indie artists fund their albums by contributing to their fundraising platforms in advance if you wish for them to continue making the music you love!)

From the musical distribution side however, PJ Library took notice of this inevitable industry change and started PJ Library Radio. PJ Library Radio gives listeners the opportunity to stream their favorite PJ Library artists anytime, anywhere. The website also has music videos, photos, artist bios, and more! It's a platform that gives listeners more music and more access. Parents can look for my music specifically or find new artists to love and support.

As an artist, partnering with PJ Library has been life-changing. As a mom of a 3-year-old, I am also a fan! Each month we are grateful when we receive a new book in the mail, listen to the musical offerings, and attend PJ Library events around New York City. I'm even more of a fan now that PJ Library Radio has become a part of our lives. I can't wait for what comes next in my friendship with PJ Library.



For more information
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& the *Nightlights*,
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