

RICHMOND PARENTS

Homework Happens

Parents, teachers speak up

Reflection on
September 11

Darrall Green's
Foundation in Richmond

New Ideas from
the Dumpy Zone

Parents' First Choice for 16 Years

RPM KidSpin

By JOSEPH W. CATES

And the Cradle Will Rock

They Might Be Giants

"Here Come the ABC's"

Walt Disney Records, 2005

Hot Peas 'n Butter

"Volume 3—Mo Hotta Mo Butter"

Hot Peas N Butter, 2005

I'm pretty sure that none of us can recite the ABCs without singing the infectious nursery melody we were taught as children. But if you want to test this out, go ahead. My guess is the best you can do is get to elimenopee.

This month we examine two CDs that might have you singing a different tune when it comes to letters and numbers. And though they may be just as insidious as the old rhymes, at least you get guitar, bass and drums to rock out to along the way.



"Here Come the ABC's" by They Might Be Giants is the second full-length kids' album the alternative rock veterans have unleashed and the first that has the Disney stamp of approval, complete with matching animated DVD.

Some of the songs suffer without the video's contextual clues (for example, "D & W"), but a handful are charming and one is an instant classic. In typical They Might Be Giants style, the track number one is just fanfare. The first real song is the anthem "Alphabet of Nations." "Albania, Bulgaria, Columbia, France..." Read that aloud. Feel the rhythm? It continues straight through to The Zambia and worms its way into your brain in a way that only an alphabet song can.



With their third album, "Mo Hotta Mo Butter," New York-based band Hot Peas 'n Butter has also opted for companion videos (as seen on cable TV channel Noggin!), but the Peas' songs stand alone better than many of the Giants'. With lyrics in French, Spanish and Hebrew as well as English, "Mo Hotta Mo Butter" brings depth to a collection of counting and geography songs.

Tracks like "Deep Down" and "I'm So Glad I'm Here" may be repetitive, but they are the kind of lyrical mantras you want your children to have running through their minds all day.

Many of the songs encourage kinesthetic movement. "Number One" is sure to get your family moving with its slinky funk-rock beat and simple directions. By the time you get to number five you should be laughing and dancing around the living room.

The two absolute standouts are both in a mix of Spanish and English. "Que Lleuva" is a Latin-inspired imaginative journey into a cave to wait out a rainstorm. "Que Bonita Bandera" is a trip around the world to look at beautiful flags. The shift back and forth between languages should help everyone who is old enough to learn a few good phrases in Español. **RPM**

