



atomic family

home issues » media reviews dining out features » atomic family fav stuff » events about us »



The Kids Are Alright

1 Comment 02 April 2012

by Emily Soares Proctor



Amy Handler is the host of "The Kids Are Alright."

The 7-year-old sits wearing headphones and a smile in front of the mic, waiting for his cue. He's one of several kids Amy Handler has brought into the WMLB studio in Atlanta to record some knock-knock jokes for the April Fools' Day edition of "The Kids Are Alright" radio show, "kids music for everyone." There is no Justin Bieber, Selena Gomez or anything from High School Musical. Instead, listeners get a masterful hodge-podge of material shaped around themes that we all cherish, like Halloween, car trips, weather, monkeys, ice cream, mummies (for Mother's Day) and birthday parties, with the show's special twist. Kids love it, but so do their parents and grown-ups without anything at home resembling a child.

Enthusiastic but never too cute, eclectic without trying, Handler has created the perfect one-hour respite for all of us wanting to hear everything from songs like "Gary, Indiana" coupled with Michael Jackson's "Going Back to Indiana" (for the road trip show), to vintage cuts culled from kids' albums now too obscure to show up in a Goodwill record bin. You also get all kinds of rock, blues, folk, old commercials, musical scores and bites both recognizable and arcane from motion and audio media.

It's no surprise that Handler, whose life-experience is as jam-packed as her record library, has a background in children's television (Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network) and education. Her ability to entertain and enlighten is evident throughout her show. "I like opening kids' minds," she says. "They might only like Justin Bieber or what's popular because they've never heard other things. Give them the opportunity to choose."

marketplace
a listing of vendors



Enter your email address:

Delivered by FeedBurner

Handler, who has an MFA in children's theater from the University of Texas at Austin, teaches a creative movement class and noticed that when the kids pretend to swallow a random song and show how it makes them feel, their creativity goes over the top. "But when they hear something popular, their eyes get big and they stop making their own movements and start copying each other like mindless zombies."

To inspire her listeners, young and old, to move and be anyway they like, Handler links her content and imagination-boosting narration to tunes most kids haven't heard before that match the show's theme.

"I'm very specific about my choices," she says. "The theme has to be in the lyrics. I wouldn't use 'You Don't Bring Me Flowers' in a gardening show, because it's not a flower song; it's a love song. The song needs to tell the story, but the lyrics have to be easy to understand. When there's a song on the radio, my son Oliver asks, 'What is it about?' Kids want to hear stories."

Creating atmosphere is another part of the project, enveloping kids in the feeling of places, eras and adventures they haven't experienced, but would like to. It's Handler's way of counterbalancing the omnipresence of bright, shiny nonhistory in so many kids' lives and exposing them to what their parents and grandparents listened to.

"In my family, we all listen to the same music. Kids' music isn't separate. My children have always liked the Ramones, the Muppets and Johnny Cash. I play them on the show, along with old rock and roll, Beatles, rockabilly, country, Michael Jackson, Sesame Street, Louis Armstrong, old movie and TV music," she says. "We're such collectors and hoarders; I try to make it like we're not by curating it all and organizing it for kids to streamline their experience."

Handler got her radio start while at Washington University in St. Louis, where she double-majored in dance and theater, doing "The Rutabaga Show," an experience that laid a lot of the groundwork for "The Kids Are Alright." "I've always collected kids' music," she says. "That's always been my taste."

With a love of all things old, quirky and plain silly, Handler says each jam-packed hour of the show is an extension of how she lives.

"It's just what I like; it's who I am. I listened to 1690 for a long time and loved how eclectic it is. I thought, 'They need a radio show for kids and I need to do it!' I got in touch with them and came in with a stack of Flashbeagle, Huckleberry Hound Tells Uncle Remus Stories and The Muppet Movie records and they laughed at me because it's all computerized now. But they do have a place to digitize records in the studio."

Handler soon found herself on the air Saturday mornings at 9 a.m. and Sundays at noon, garnering all kinds of acclaim, including a "Best Kids Radio Show Not Just for Kids" from Creative Loafing in 2010.

Handler keeps the surprises coming with guests such as Mo Willems (Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!); King of Pops popsicles founder Steven Carse; Rosemary Newcott of the Alliance Theater; Kathy Goldsmith, Dr. Seuss' art director; kid fiddlers, kid singers and many more. There are also birthday requests, unbirthday requests (available 364 days a year), story time and an intriguing question of the day like, "What's your favorite green thing?" Kids can post their answers on

Send an email to:
editor@atomicfamilymagazine.com
 including their names and a paragraph detailing why they should be featured!

apparel artsy fartsy baby
 book books CD celebrate
children christmas crafts
 dad daddy daddy rocks decatur
 dining out eating eating
 out event families
family father Feature gay
 green Green Bean guitar holidays
humor kids kindie
 Little Shop of Stories mama
 rules media mom mommy
music parenting
 read recycle **review**
 shopping skateboard toddler
 toddlers website

Facebook.

So what's next for the show?

"It's evolving all the time," Amy says. "I do favorite thing shows sometimes and themes inspired by new music that is sent to me or that I've discovered. I'm also doing kid co-hosts."

Handler is taking the show on the road, too, playing festivals, events and private parties and hopes to do compilation albums. "I'm looking forward to expanding the show off-air and online," she says.

"Knock-knock," the 7-year-old begins.

"Who's there?" Handler responds.

"Amy."

"Amy who?"

"Amy's alright!"

And with a show that delivers all kinds of weird and wonderful cultural detritus for kids, her listeners think she's even better than that.

"The Kids Are Alright" airs Saturdays at 9 a.m. and Sundays at noon on WMLB 1690 AM. Follow the show on Facebook and Twitter. Contact Amy Handler at kidsalright@gmail.com.



Be Social:



« The Palladinos

DidiPop Goes to Hawaii by DidiPop »

1 COMMENT



amy

APRIL 3, 2012 AT 11:36 PM

Reply ↗

you can check out the April Fool's Day show mentioned in this fabulous article at
<http://1690wmlb.com/the-kids-are-alright/>

POST A COMMENT

Name *

Message*

Mail (will not be published) *

Website

[Advertising](#) [Contact Us](#) [Marketplace](#)

© 2016 ATOMIC FAMILY MAGAZINE.