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Lily Dawis offers 'Bubbles of Love' for kids, Neha Nathani writes

Motherhood by Music, All Her Own

Lily Dawis poses with her album and children's book. Photo courtesy of Lily Dawis



It's as simple as telling my children 'I love you,' but instead I make songs for them

Lily Dawis

With just 24 hours in a day, there's only so much a mom can do. And sometimes the to-do list seems never-ending: incessant diaper changing, delivery of milk upon every demanding shriek, washing dozens of baby bottles, trying to overcome the impossible task that is bath time. Then there is soothing the bundle of joy into a peaceful slumber — hopefully without the high-pitched wails.

As far as patience goes, there is bound to be some inevitable hair-pulling and impulsive screaming. But Lily Dawis, the inventive mother of two, with a third on the way, has put her parenting-related bellows to good use.

With "Bubbles of Love," an album and children's book, she has turned the daily struggles of motherhood into a collection of effortless, melodious harmonies.

Ever since Lily can remember, she has made up little tunes to accompany her day-to-day activities.

"I never actually sat down in front of an instrument with a pen and paper in my hand to record my creations in musical notations, even though I knew full well

that I could," said Lily, who graduated from the University of California, Berkeley.

At first, Lily was overwhelmed by motherhood. "It all came rushing in," she said. "I often found myself wondering how I would manage everything. I was young and very unprepared."

Lily, though, is a perfectionist, and she countered her uncertainties by devouring parenting books to improve her caretaking skills. That's when she had her sonic epiphany.

"After reading countless self-help books, I noticed one thing they had in common: music," she said.

"Music does not only aid in improving sensory and physical developments, but it also stimulates a baby's mental capacity," she added.

Lily started singing to her first-born, crooning catchy tunes by day and soulful lullabies at night. She noticed how the sound of her voice comforted her daughter in way no other medium could. And the repetitive, elementary lyrics were something the toddler had a shot at understanding.

Her husband noticed it more than she did. Unbeknownst to Lily, he set about trying to covertly catch her on camera singing to their daughter. After skulking around the house with a video camera for a while, he eventually had enough of her tunes to compile them into one mix, and he showed it to Lily.

"I didn't even realize how much I had been singing myself," Lily said. "I hadn't sung for a while and I honestly thought that I wasn't good enough."

Things took off from there.

"By the time I had my second child, the singing had become a large part of our family," Lily said. "I would sing with them about virtually everything. Brushing their teeth, going up and down the stairs and bedtime were especially among all-time hits."

As the list of songs grew, so did Lily's curiosity. She began to wonder if there existed a "world bank of music where all the music of the world was stored" and whether her songs were similar to music that already existed.

That was when a close acquaintance arranged a meeting with James F. Sundah, the Indonesian music producer responsible for discovering divas like Vina Panduwinata and Ruth Sahanaya. Going into the meeting, Lily wanted to find out if her music and lyrics were as original as she thought they might be.

For Lily, the encounter was "trailblazing." She learned from James about an institution that resembled her imagined "world bank of music" — the US Copyright Office.

More important, she earned a fan. "The moment James requested that I sing him one of my songs, I froze," she said.

"Although I eventually mustered the courage to open my mouth and belt out a song about bathtime to a grown man, I felt extremely concerned. And his inanimate silence didn't help me one bit. To my relief, James's 'poker face' quickly melted into one of giddy surprise."

James told Lily that he had long been disappointed with the way children were so freely exposed to genres of music unsuited to their age level.

"Songs about infidelity and heartbreak should be kept as far away from young children as possible," Lily said James told her. "If anything, their innocence should be preserved."

So Lily and James set about turning Lily's songs into a child-friendly album meant for parents and their kids all over the world.

First they cataloged the songs and sent them to the US Copyright Office to determine if they were original. The out-

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