**JOHN LENNON SONGWRITING CONTEST GRAND PRIZEWINNER**

**KELLI WELLI**

**TO RELEASE**

***BABY NINJA***

**JUNE 16, 2023**

**“A kiddie record with true Rocky & Bullwinkle-for-adults sensibilities, you really have to have a necrotic heart not to get a kick out of this no matter who you are. Totally cool.”**

**– *Midwest Record***

**“VERDICT: Each song is presented in an entirely original way, making this album a must-have.”**

**– *School Library Journal***

**PORTLAND, OR (May 1, 2023)** – ***Baby Ninja,*** the fourth album for families from John Lennon Songwriting Contest Grand Prize winner **Kelli Welli**, is set for release on **June 16, 2023.**

Take a little bit of pop, a pinch of Americana, and a dash of African rhythm. Add in a taste of Cajun flavor, a touch of country and western with a Japanese flair, (and some dirty socks), and you have what fans have come to expect from **Kelli Welli**: originality, personality, a dose of the ridiculous, and lots and lots of love. The 16 tracks on ***Baby Ninja*** explode with **Kelli Welli’s** creativity and include contributions from fellow kids' artists and talented friends **Uncle Jumbo, Claudia Robin Gunn**, **Nanny Nikki, Stacey Peasley**, and the album’s co-producer and multi-instrumentalist, **Bryan Daste.**

“We’re having a great time making this music, but we also try really hard to make even the silliest of our songs smart, respecting kids’ brains and hoping the parents enjoy them just as much,” says **Kelli Welli**. “We have been so excited to create and share ***Baby Ninja***! The title track trumpets from the album’s onset that we’re continuing to stretch the ways we present songs for kids and the people who love them.”

**Kelli Welli’s** songs tell goofball stories, celebrate love, nature, and languages, and honor the small moments that come with raising the little people in our lives. Kelli, who has been called “hysterically funny” and “superbly talented,” doesn’t believe music should be "dumbed down" for kids. “I have tons of respect for kids, remembering a lot from my own childhood ... what mattered to me and what it felt like to navigate a big world,” Kelli says. “Music always marked important moments and was like a friend in tough times.”

***Baby Ninja*** bursts out of the gate with the album’s title track, infused with a Southwestern, retro-martial-arts spy vibe underscored by this takeaway: never underestimate the very real power of a baby! Other highlights include an unabashed ode to joy, “You’re a Sunny Day,” featuring **Uncle Jumbo**, and “When You Dance,” a chant performed by **Kelli Well** with friends **Nanny Nikki**, **Claudia Robin Gunn**, and **Stacey Peasley**. “Water Baby,” written for and about Kelli’s daughter, Kira, who absolutely loves being in the water, features a great vocal harmony background and a dazzling organ solo by **Jenny Conlee** of the well-known Portland-based band, **The Decembrists**. Kelli’s son, Ryan, is heard on “Ryan the Lion,” which he co-wrote with Kelli when he was seven years old.

The traditional “Frère Jacques” is sung in five languages, each paired with an instrument that represents the language’s native country.“Dirty Socks” is a sibling song to **Kelli Welli’s** popular “Stinky Shoe” from her 2022 album, *Robots Don’t Tell Jokes*. Kelli swears that “Dirty Socks” was written by her dog, Piper Peach.

Incollaboration with illustrator **Belén Toscano**, Kelli has also created an accompanying 40-page comic book based on ***Baby Ninja’s*** title track. A bold statement about the amazing and powerful things babies do every day, the ***Baby Ninja*** comic book will be released alongside the ***Baby Ninja*** album.

**About Kelli Welli:**

**Kelli Caldwell,** who performs for kids as **Kelli Welli,** is an active songwriter in both the children’s and singer-songwriter/Americana (“grown-up”) music arenas. She has released three award-winning children’s albums and was the Grand Prize Winner in the children’s category of the 2021 John Lennon Songwriting Contest. All three of her first full albums won the prestigious National Parenting Products Award. She is a three-time winner of the West Coast Songwriters International Song Contest and was a finalist in the Great American Song Contest. Kelli is currently a finalist in the International Songwriting Competition, where she also reached the finals in 2020, 2021, and 2022. Although Kelli is relatively new to the thriving Portland kindie performance scene, she was named a TOP 5 Parent Pick by *PDX Parent* magazine in 2020 and 2023.

Reviewers and peers have placed Kelli on a par with some of the Pacific Northwest’s top children’s artists, saying her unique style places her “very much on her own pedestal, unmatched by other artists” and that her work is “a true testament to what happens when you listen to children, rather than suggest what children should listen to.”

Kelli has a Master of Publishing degree from Canada’s Simon Fraser University and a B.A. in Speech Communication with minors in Japanese and German from Oregon State University. She’s been a prolific writer and songwriter for over 20 years, was a board member of the Portland Songwriters Association for eight years, and is a member of the Recording Academy, West Coast Songwriters, Nashville Songwriters Association International, Children’s Music Network, and the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators.

Previous releases include the albums *Robots Don’t Tell Jokes* (2022; National Parenting Products Award), *Let’s Go, Pistachio* (2021; National Parenting Products Award) and *Ooh La La Too Doo Na Na Oop Bop* *Oop Bop Ribbit* (2020; National Parenting Products Award, Moms Choice Gold Award), as well as three EPs released in 2016: *LOVE*, *Turtle Doggie Monkey Froggie La La La La La,* and *Lullabies: For* *Kids and the People Who Love Them*.

***Baby Ninja*** will be available for purchase on Amazon, Bandcamp, and at kelliwelli.com and streaming on all major platforms.

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Album Details: ***Baby Ninja***

Release date:June 16, 2023

Label: 1st + 1st Media

SRP: CD: $12, Digital: $10

For all ages, but especially for ages 0 - 8

Run time: 30 minutes

**Robots Don’t Tell Jokes Track List**:

Baby Ninja

You’re a Sunny Day (feat. Uncle Jumbo)

Water Baby

Clean Your Place – 1st Try

I Put My Heart Into

Dirty Socks

Skunk in a Handstand

Clean Your Place – 2nd Try

Superstar

Hey Little Hero

Ryan the Lion (feat. Ryan Segelken)

Dog Clean Your Place – 3rd Try

Dogs Doin’ Dishes

When You Dance (feat. Nanny Nikki, Claudia Robin Gunn, and Stacey Peasley)

Frere Jacques in Five

Dirty Socks Reprise