

## Squeaky Clean's songs for kids are fun & delightful

BY BARBARA ARNSTEIN

"When my soul's in need of healing,/ I get a nostalgic feeling./...That song makes me smile just like comfort food."

This quote from "Comfort Food," a song from the new CD by Squeaky Clean, the Queens-based rock-n-roll band that presents educational programs at schools throughout New York City and Long Island, could describe the CD's guiding philosophy. It's carefully selected family-friendly songs from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s offer messages of harmony, reassurance, inspiration and fun.

The performers on the CD include husband and wife Glenn Paul Manion and Suzanne C. Smithline, band members Phil Leone and Alan Michaels, family members Coralynn, Addison and Leila Manion and saxophone player Jeff Newell. As producer and arranger, Manion also did the lead and background vocals, played the electric and acoustic guitars, the keyboards and the trombone, while

Smithline also did lead and background vocals, and played the upright and electric bass. Squeaky Clean performs most often at junior high schools, sometimes visits high schools, private parties and even nursing homes. Recent gigs include appearances at the Great Neck Library, PS 206 in Brooklyn, and the Westchester County Center in White Plains.

If the famously soothing children's show host Mister Rogers had ever made a



The cover of Squeaky Clean's newest CD "Pull Together."

rock-n-roll album, it would have sounded like this. The lyrics of the upbeat tunes offer a nice assortment of remedies for problems common to both adults and children. Listening to your favorite music ("Comfort Food") is suggested as a way to conquer heartache. A 1960s Beatle song, "We Can Work It Out," recommends looking at a situation from the other person's perspective and rethinking angry words. "Everyday People" reminds its listeners to view every person as a fallible human being: "Sometimes I'm right and I can be wrong.../Makes no difference what group I'm in."

"Some of our songs remind kids that our common ground is greater than they might think," said Glen Paul Manion.

The addictive melody and amusing lyrics of Manion's "This Marvelous Relationship" complement each other as

beautifully as the friends in the relationship it describes, between a small African bird and a rhino. ("On the African savannah, I finally found my niche/feasting on the tasty bugs that make my best friend itch").

The 1950s fears catalogued in Manion's "Civil Defense Nightmare (Duck and Cover)" are softened by their presentation within the context of a dream. The terror in the refrain, "When they yell 'Duck and cover', I yell 'Mama!'" is offset by lines like those describing a small child's imagined future visit to the family's bomb shelter: "It's cramped as it can be./My brother sneezed on me./All day long we eat green beans and play Monopoly." Manion's new song, "The Kids From Queens" is wonderfully welcoming to new Queens residents, assuring them, "We've all learned to get along by living side by side./Here in Queens the rainbow-colored future has arrived."

During Squeaky Clean's school shows, the songs performed link up to various historical images displayed on a screen. "We talk about teams from the 1960s, like Robert Culp and Bill Cosby, Jack and Jackie, before we sing, 'I Got You, Babe,'" said Manion. The Sonny and Cher hit is included on the album, along with another show song, "At The Hop," an energetic ode to the 1950s 'sock hop.'

"Kids are amazed when they find out that kids in the 1950s weren't allowed to wear sneakers to school, that they had to take off their street shoes and dance in their socks at school dances," said Smithline. "They learn certain things just from seeing us. For example, that you can have fun without drugs, and that a girl can play in a rock-n-roll band. Some of them can't believe that we're performing live, that we're not lipsynching."

Adults may remember the CD selection "I'm A Believer" from the heyday of the Monkees, while kids will likely recognize it from the finale of the animated hit "Shrek." No matter how you and your family know—or don't know—the songs on the CD (which also includes "Downtown," "A Little Bit of Soul" and others), its catchy rhythms and smooth ballads could bring you some harmony, and maybe even some harmonizing! The CD is available at the band's website, <http://www.gmfmusic.com>.



Members of the group Squeaky Clean: Phil Leone, Alan Michaels, Suzanne Smithline and Glenn Manion.