

[http://www.metroactive.com/features/columns/silicon-alleys\\_20120111.html](http://www.metroactive.com/features/columns/silicon-alleys_20120111.html)

## Glen Grammy

David Sharpe recorded his Grammy-nominated kids' album at Open Path Studios in Willow Glen  
January 11, 2012 - by Gary Singh



**PAY ATTENTION TO THE MAN BEHIND THE GUITAR, KIDS:** Even in his own neighborhood, David Sharpe can't compete with a giant kangaroo.

THE ONLY BAND ever to perform on a Willow Glen sidewalk with a giant kangaroo is now nominated for a Grammy award. Local musician and songwriter David Sharpe, along with his band, PapaHugs, will take an entourage down to L.A. next month, because his CD, *Are We There Yet?*, is up for Best Children's Album in the 54th Grammy Awards on Feb. 12.

Entirely self-taught, Sharpe never took formal music lessons for a second, but over the course of his first career as a doctor, he wrote and played songs for his children and grandchildren. Eventually, it led to the recording of his first CD in 2006, which, in turn, led to the formation of a band and public performances. *Are We There Yet?* is his third CD, recorded at Open Path Studios in the back of the mythical Gordon Stevens building at 1202 Lincoln Ave. in Willow Glen.

As we talked in a secret upstairs office at the rear of the complex, Sharpe told me it wasn't easy getting his music to the right people in the Recording Academy. It took a major effort.

"I'd been working very hard, campaigning and getting it to the right people, so they could listen to it," he said. "In the Recording Academy there are voting members—that's how the Grammys are decided. The big names win and get nominated because their record companies always promote them and get the votes for them. But we were able, as an independent, to spread the word with social media and other outlets, to get enough votes to get nominated."

The band includes Sharpe's nephew Jeremy Hoenig on drums, plus Tim Volpicella on guitar, both of whom produced the CD at Open Path. Carole Mayedo contributes fiddle parts while Ed Ivey plays bass and tuba. All the music is original—Sharpe wrote every song—and characters depicted in the lyrics appear on stage with the group, including Wonder the Kangaroo, Fitness the Frog and Stinky Beetle.

All together, they perform on a regular basis at schools, libraries, children's theater festivals, a zoo or two, kids' retail outlets and anywhere else where children are present. On Jan. 21, the band will play at the Children's Discovery Museum, with two shows, at 1 and 2:30pm.

Sharpe says he doesn't try to preach to the kids; rather he touches lightly on specific issues like nutrition, fitness and the environment. For the gigs, the band focuses on engaging the children, proving them with visuals and lyrics they can remember. The kids tend to sing, jump around and supply more than enough reciprocal energy.

"With some children, this might be the first time they've ever seen live instruments," said Sharpe. "It creates an impact on them that they might remember for the rest of their lives, so we do a lot. We have our characters, we give out things, kazoos, glow sticks—everything I give out is related to a song we have. We want it to be fun. I don't care if the kids make noise or run around. Just like an adult show, where you want to feel the energy back from the audience, we want to feel it back from the kids."

One of the remarkable elements of this story is that Sharpe originally didn't even know Open Path Studios existed, essentially right around the corner, in his own neighborhood of Willow Glen.

One day, he randomly noticed their sign at 1202 Lincoln and wandered in to see what was available. There he met Volpicella, who wound up playing in the band and co-producing the music. The rest is history and San Jose will represent at the Grammys in February. Volpicella and Hoenig can officially claim to be Grammy-nominated producers.

"The whole band's going down," Sharpe said. "They all got invited. My family's going. We'll be down there for a few days and hopefully come back with the award."

Volpicella said Sharpe's music has no pretense at all: "He writes for the kids. There's no ego involved. That's one thing I like about David. It's just doing the music and doing it for the kids. There's no ulterior motive, like there is with other entertainers."

## **PapaHugs**

Jan. 21, 1 and 2:30pm

Children's Discovery Museum, San Jose