



**Jeffrey Lesser is the man behind the music of one of the most innovative children's television programs, *The Wonder Pets!***

But he actually started his career in film, working as a negative matcher and eventually a sound man on a few movies. "I really enjoyed doing sound for films, but I felt it took a back seat and I wanted to work where sound was treated more substantially," Jeffrey explained. So he got a job at a recording studio where he learned how to record and edit music, and then transitioned to engineering and producing.

Eventually Jeffrey left the studio and independently produced albums for top artists like Barbra Streisand and the Chieftains. After expanding his skills with television work, he continued to make records but then found his fantastic current home in TV land. Jeffrey spared some time just before his weekly recording session to fill us in on what he calls his "unique, wonderful existence."



## Jeffrey Lesser

### Music Producer & Musical Director, Little Airplane Productions, Inc.

#### What drew you to your job at Little Airplane?

I love surrounding myself with music and working with musicians and composers. With *The Wonder Pets!* I work with a live orchestra every week. And the show reminds me of how amazed I was at the music in the Warner Bros. cartoons I watched as a kid.

#### What did you want to be when you grew up?

Somehow I must have gotten a little bug for this type of work early on, because in 4th or 5th grade I was on the audio-visual-aid squad. I went around to classrooms and threaded [the film] projectors. Also, my school subscribed to radio stations that broadcast educational shows. When a teacher would order a show, I was the one in the office flicking buttons on a little console to tune the radio station into the classroom.

#### What's your musical background?

Music was alive in our household. My mom was a piano player, and my family used to gather around the piano and sing songs together. That really had a terrific impact on me. I took piano and guitar lessons as a kid, and I was in several choirs and singing groups. I went to a high school that specialized in music and art where I learned about music history, music theory, and what a conductor does, and I actually conducted an orchestra. And in college I was in a rock-and-roll band. I've used all those things constantly throughout my life.

#### What are your primary responsibilities at Little Airplane?

Basically, anything that involves sound comes through me. For *The Wonder Pets!* I'm the production sound mixer: I mix all the shows. I produce the music. I record the orchestras. I recommend and choose many wonderful Broadway composers to write for us. Overall, I have my fingers in a lot of areas in the making of *The Wonder Pets!*

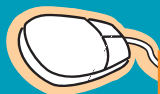
#### What skills and training are necessary for your job?

Knowing how to deal with people and their moods is very helpful. Being a good listener, I'd say, is number one—I know that many producers are very gifted at talking and directing, but it's another gift to listen to what people are saying to you. Whether they are super-experienced or new and naive, everyone has something to offer. Also, knowing how to play a musical instrument and how to read music is always of value.

#### What do you enjoy most about your work?

I never get tired of hearing my work. The thrill never goes away. When I went to see *The Lord of the Rings* and heard some of the music that I recorded and mixed, it was just great. And, of course, having *The Wonder Pets!* on TV is wonderful because you can walk up to almost any 4-year-old in the country and sing, "What's gonna work?" and they sing back, "Teamwork!" It's very satisfying that kids know those melodies. **MA!**

—VERONICA DOMINGUEZ-GARCIA



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