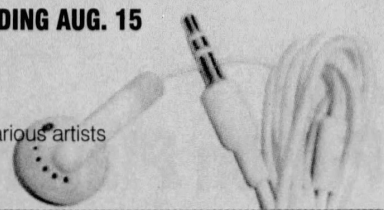


# E TICKET

## ITUNES' TOP 5 ALBUMS FOR WEEK ENDING AUG. 15

1. "Watch the Throne," Jay-Z, Kanye West
2. "Tailgates & Tanlines," Luke Bryan
3. "21," ADELE
4. "NOW That's What I Call Music, Vol. 39," various artists
5. "Torches," Foster the People



## ETV



GAETANO SALVADORE

**Meredith LeVande** released her first "Monkey Monkey Music" CD for children in 2004. LeVande's videos run between programs on 20 TV stations and will soon be shown on 30 more.

# More 'Monkey'

*Already on Montana station, LeVande's videos for kids expand*

By **LINDSEY GALIPEAU**  
for the Missoulian

She sings about bubbles. She sings about jumping. She sings about numbers. And her "Monkey Monkey Music" is taking over public television.

Meredith LeVande's children's music videos are already running between programs on 20 stations, including Montana Public Television and KCET in Los Angeles. Starting in September, 30 more stations will add the videos to their lineup.

The New Yorker's brand of preschool children's music focuses on education and connectivity. Her live-action videos feature kids instead of animations.

"When children see people, I think that it's a breath of fresh air for them," said LeVande. "I think there's a very deep human need to connect."

LeVande made all of her videos out of pocket. Most of her props, which run the gamut from giant balloons to chopsticks, are found at home.



GAETANO SALVADORE

**"People I love** kinda remind me of little monkeys," LeVande said of the title of her CD. "When I see something really cute and responsive to music, I just call them monkey."

"I believe my videos are an extension of how I had to improvise as a child," said LeVande. "I got really creative."

She hopes the videos will inspire kids to do the same. She purposely features crafts, like paper-bag

puppets, that children can make themselves.

LeVande puts a lot of thought into what she writes and creates for children to watch. She doesn't take her responsibilities as a children's performer lightly

and considers many factors when writing a song.

"Will the child jump and move when I sing this song?" LeVande asks herself. "The other form of it is really thinking about where kids are at a developmental level. Ninety percent of a child's brain is formed by age 5. You're forming what they're seeing and what they're doing. I really need to think about what I'm doing."

LeVande's own childhood was cut short at a young age. Her grandmother died and her mother was very sick.

"I had to focus on survival," said LeVande.

With that in mind, LeVande went into law school upon entering college.

"I really felt pushed and compelled to do something very safe with my life," said LeVande.

After law school, she earned undergraduate degrees in English and women's studies and a master's in music.

See **'MONKEY,'** Page E8

## FROM PAGE E3

## 'Monkey'

### Continued

"Singing was something that was so true to who I was. It was just something I had to do," said LeVande.

So she began writing and performing songs about the female image in pop culture. By happenstance, LeVande found her love of children's music at one of her adult shows. An abnormal number of youth were present so she played kids'

songs to entertain them.

"I loved the way the children reacted," said LeVande. "It wasn't about me. When that happened, it was sort of an instant gravitational pull."

That was 10 years ago. LeVande published her "Monkey Monkey Music" CD in 2004. The name reflects LeVande's quirky personality.

"People I love kinda remind me of little monkeys," said LeVande. "When I see something really cute and responsive to music, I just call them monkey."

Though "Monkey Music" in the singular form was already taken by an artist in the United Kingdom, LeVande thinks having twice the monkey suits her well.

"Now I have double monkey!" she said.

The same year LeVande published her CD, she started lecturing at colleges about how women are portrayed in pop culture.

"Meaning that, literally, I would give my lecture and wake up (the next morning) and do a birthday party," she said.

The heavy traveling and discouraging reception of her lectures led LeVande to finally quit giving talks last year. It was children's music, after all, that made her happiest.

"If I really put that aside and really focused on my children's music, then good things were going to happen. So that's what I did," said LeVande.

And she was right. Several stations called LeVande about her videos after she was accepted by a main public television distributor. The Montana Public Television station

was one of the more unexpected calls. The most memorable, said LeVande, was the call from KCET. They were the first to air her videos.

"It made me feel so validated," she said. "It'll be one of those things that was just so meaningful to me."

Public television is not Disney or Nickelodeon, but LeVande prefers it that way.

"I really love the concept of public television," she said. "I love the idea of educational broadcasting.

I believe that education is the key to life."

LeVande doesn't have her own children to call her "little monkeys," but she doesn't need them to know she loves kids.

"I feel that motherhood comes in many different ways," she said. "Maybe it's my quest in life to work with children in a different way."

*Intern reporter  
Lindsey Galipeau can be reached at 523-5361 or at lindsey.galipeau@missoulian.com.*