

# USA WEEKEND

Reader's top trip:  
Boone and Blowing  
Rock, N.C., page 8

## THIS WEEKEND'S PASSIONS

### NEW AGE MUSIC

## A way to a sound mind and body?

Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast. New Age music lovers say that adage is truer than ever. The mellow sounds help reduce stress.

### HEALTH

Authentic New Age music — compositions with no beat, no vocals or pounding drums, and certainly no dissonance — “provides balance for a lot of the stress that’s created in society by reducing tension,” says Jonathan Goldman, director of Sound Healers Association in Lexington, Mass.

The anti-frantic music is played on bamboo and silver flutes, clarinets, guitars, sitars, harps, violins, pianos and high-tech acoustic synthesizers. Imagine whispers, wind chimes and ocean waves.

The result is a polished arrangement that’s in sync with the body and easy on the ears: 60 beats per second vs. 120 for rock, says Steven Halpern, a New Age pioneer, composer and psychologist in San Rafael, Calif.

“Anytime you have that rhythm (as in jazz and rock ‘n’ roll), you’re grabbing hold of the listener’s nervous system and forcing unnatural rhythms on the body.” The result may be harmful: arrhythmia and stress-related diseases like hypertension.

“Since anti-frantic music has no predictable beats, the mind doesn’t analyze or create tension by expecting certain rhythms,” says Halpern.



Therapeutic New Age music — not to be confused with New Age pop and jazz that have become popular — can begin to relax you in 15-20 seconds, compared to 15-20 minutes of classical music, says Halpern, who has conducted brain-wave, skin-response and heart-beat tests.

To benefit most from New Age music, here’s how to listen:

- ▶ Sit or lie down in a relaxing position. Close your eyes and free your mind. Listen through headphones.

- ▶ Don’t try to analyze the music or identify the instruments.

- ▶ Listen to it while doing yoga or stretching, before or after an aerobics class. Relaxing music will allow your muscles to stretch out more easily, claims Halpern.

- ▶ Try listening while you are eating. New Age music can be an anti-gulping technique. Eating more slowly aids digestion and might help you eat less.

- ▶ Recite your mantra and meditate.

- ▶ Some artists: Steven Halpern (Sound Rx), Dawn; Georgia Kelly (Global Pacific), Seapeace, Daniel Kobialka (Li-Sem), Timeless Motion.

By Gayle Verner