

Budgie snuggler

John Levine's music puts birds to sleep and he hopes to do the same to you. By SAMANTHA SELINGER-MORRIS.

Entertainment wisdom says that one should never work with children or animals - just ask any member of the crew of *Look Who's Talking*. But had meditation expert and composer John Levine not entranced a trio of budgies one spring day three years ago, he might never have become the new age musical success he is today.

While living in Poland, the Sydney-born Levine marketed a CD of his "alphamusic" to friends and family. The arrhythmic, wordless music encourages the brain to produce alpha waves, a slower, more relaxed frequency than the beta waves we more regularly produce.

One friend was startled by the impact the CD, *Silence of Peace*, had on her three budgies. After 15 minutes, they were sound asleep - in the middle of the day, an unusual time for the birds.

"To my amazement, after I turned the music off, they became more active again," she says on Levine's website.

"I wonder how would it influence other animals [such as] turtles?"

The jury is still out on that one, but Levine is keen to test his tunes on a wider audience. He will be appearing at the MindBodySpirit Festival this Sunday to spread the word about the uses of alphamusic, which he says include insomnia, behavioural problems in children, depression, even loss of sex drive. Er, how?

Levine says an alpha-brainwave state "promotes the immune system and good working of the body".

Perhaps my lengthy pause after he made this statement tipped him off, because Levine twigs that I'm a sceptic.

"I get the feeling that you're a little cynical about my work," he says.

OK, he's right. I'm sceptical about his claims that by listening to his music for four short minutes, one can

attain the sort of calm that normally comes only after years of meditation. But the Europeans, he assures me, are lapping it up. One Polish magazine company commissioned an album, *Orange Grove Siesta* - I'm assuming the language barrier had something to do with its local acceptance.

For Levine, now based in Cambridge, England, this weekend's performance will be the first time he has presented his music in Australia. Does he believe we'll be as receptive as the Europeans?

"In some ways, probably more so," he says. "Health is a greater issue [here] than it is in, say, England, where no one talks about MSG."

"It's been suggested a couple of times that I [offer my services to the *Super Nanny* television program]."

I'll be keenly awaiting that day. If alphamusic can soothe the tantrum-frenzied midgets she grapples with, I will gladly count myself among Levine's converts.

events



John Levine will hypnotise chicks next.
Photo: Natalie Boog

MINDBODYSPIRIT FESTIVAL

Where Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour

When Daily, 10am-7pm, until Sunday

How much Daily tickets \$15/\$10

Bookings 1300 651 933

More information

Levine is on Sunday from 10.30am-1pm, \$33



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