

# 10,000 Thunderstorms

*the spirit of evolution*

## Reviews and Quotes

review by Theron Shaw, Seattle, WA

Alan Tower & Free Energy is an innovative San Francisco-based sound collective, using unique instruments and compositions to create musical montages that invite the listener into reflections on our place in this wild and untamed universe.

Free Energy weaves together the haunting, resonant melodies of the huaca (a three-chambered ocarina), one-of-a-kind percussion instruments, didgeridu's, throat singing and rare antique instruments from around the world. Their compositions are musically complex, each drawing on the diverse talents of Free Energy's twelve members to create tone poems that point listeners to the points of Awe in the creation around us.

The group's crowning accomplishment to date is entitled 10,000 Thunderstorms *the spirit of evolution*, and takes listeners on a musical inquiry into the ethics and evolution of our unfolding Universe. The album draws listeners into a conversation beyond words through musical inquiries into such themes as indigenous cultures, nature's sometimes cruel idea of justice, and the Big Bloom that birthed this Universe.-

10,000 is an Octave Alliance release (inspiring social change through music) on the Ancient-Future.com. OA is breaking new ground in the musical world by combining nature-inspired music, unique acoustic instruments and a focus on the activist potential of music. OA is also raising funds to bring its unique compositions to live stages, for small and large group experiences focused on sustainable culture. Octave Alliance unique graphics are created to engage the listener with both the music and the ideas that inspired it. The 10,000 album notes are 16 color pages, with a one page reflection on each piece. The music and album notes together provide a rich opportunity to engage heart and mind in honoring the wonders of creation around us.

Free Energy has several past and pending releases that continue their themes of combining unique music, storyline and nature sounds. The 1996 record *Waves*, remastered in 2001 combines solo compositions for the three-chambered huaca vessel flute with underwater recordings of orca pods, volcanic tremors and sounds of unknown origin. It is a poignant and beautiful eavesdropping on the underwater world. Projects for 2002/2003 include several exciting releases. *Bearing Witness* will integrate didgeridu solos with snips of disappearing languages from indigenous peoples around the world. *Arktos* will be a collection of solo and duo acoustic guitar pieces by Free Energy leader Alan Tower. Both are expected out in 2003. *The Good, the True and the Beautiful* will provide a lyrical counterpart to 10,000 Thunderstorms due for release in 2005.

First encounters with the sounds of Free Energy will leave listeners fascinated by the numerous instruments and sounds which many will never have heard before. As one spends more time with their work, it continues to engage mind and spirit, both musically and philosophically. If you're interested in unique acoustic instruments and the potential of music for sustainability activism, Free Energy and Octave Alliance are names to watch.

- Alan Atkisson, sustainability activist  
author of *Believing Cassandra* and former editor of *In Context*

I LOVED this. Really really musical. Very satisfying.

Peaceful. Lovely stuff. I could hear Michael Hedges influence and Ancient Future and even

Chuck Mangione and lots of people I like, but it was also wholly original.

- *Judy deReus, Campus Planner University of California, San Francisco*

10,000 Thunderstorms is an imaginative, spiritual blend of sounds and melodies, both of the natural world and human-made, and a delightful interplay of traditional and original musical instruments. I found the music to be relaxing, light hearted and intriguing. It was fun reading the thought provoking prose and quotations while listening to each piece, and understanding the composer's thematic inspirations. The richness of the music, text and visual imagery exude intelligence, creativity and artistic depth. This body of work is, in itself, evolutionary. Sometimes haunting, sometimes soothing, Waves is culturally and ecologically sensitive with the mysterious musical sounds of the huaca and mammals of the sea.

*Judy Cumbee, social and environment activist*

10,000 Thunderstorms is amazing. I had somehow not carved out the time for the requisite listening. Yesterday, I thought, ok, this is not the way, but while I'm washing dishes I'm going to start listening to this c.d. But within 3 minutes there was a loud snap in the house, and then the rumbling of thunder outside. OK, I did not have to wash a dish. I sat on the sofa doing nothing but reading about the pieces and listening., sometimes not being sure whether I was hearing birds on the cd or just outside on the feeder. Alan, it was quite astounding that just as "10,000 Thunderstorms began" the rain here began to pour, beating down. Listening to the cd was quite an experience. Afterwards, I had gone back to Intrauterine Cannibals when my dear friend, Esther, from down the hill walked in. She has been pouring herself out in organizing for an annual Good Friday demonstration against the death penalty; at least 70 people turned out. I instantly offered her the cd to nurture her spirit too. THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH

*Brian Harwell, Foundation for Global Community*

I've got to tell you, I was mesmerized by 10,000 Thunderstorms. I honestly think it is truly exceptional work and captures the essence for which you were striving.

*Kitty, KZYX*

10,000 Thunderstorms is amazing. I love the instruments, the variety of moods and how the themes are handled. Another masterpiece. Thank you all for sharing your talents and inspirations, your passion with the world!

### Quotes on the back cover of CD

Scientist

If you sense that the destiny of the human is more than turning the Earth into commodities, *10,000 Thunderstorms* was created for you. It's a gateway into a secret. The universe worked fourteen billion years to shape a human for one primary function: to become stupefied by beauty. To celebrate Being. To revel in it. *10,000 Thunderstorms* is undeniable proof that, however violent and short-sighted we humans sometime become, we are nevertheless capable of profound amazement and the deepest gratitude for existence.

- *Brian Swimme, physicist, cosmologist and author of The Universe Story & The Heart of the Cosmos*

Music Journalist

Free Energy's union of instrumental conceptualism and creative audio technologies achieves a new zenith in this outstanding effort. A dynamic synergy of wind, wood, hardware, bronze, software, clay and skin that transcends its own perfect mix.

-Randy Alberts, author of *Tascam: 25 years of Recording Evolution* & contributing editor for *Mix*, *Digidesign* and *AV Video Multimedia Producer*

#### Magazine & Book Editors

This record is a mystery. On the one hand it's through-composed world music using one-of-a-kind experimental acoustic instruments. On the other hand it's music with a mission i.e bringing music to the center of social change efforts.

A lot to chew on - I recommend planning a long dinner. Prepare for a banquet that takes you deep into evolution's spirit.

- K. Lauren de Boer, Editor

*EarthLight Magazine*

"During one of his discourses, the Buddha said that in our time the ear would be the best sense door through which to achieve enlightenment.

This record is devoted to our awakening -- on it you will hear the sound of life echoing its own history, of consciousness reflecting upon itself, of humans expressing their deepest wisdom and feelings."

-Wes(Scoop)Nisker, author of *Buddha's Nature* and editor of *Inquiring Mind*

Octave Alliance's 10,000 Thunderstorms brings together a stunning array of unusual musical instruments, both traditional and new, in the service of an expansive musical, historical and social vision. The special qualities of each individual instrument come across beautifully and lucidly, even as each finds its place within the context of the compositional whole.

- Bart Hopkin, Editor, *Experimental Musical Instruments (EMI)*