Meditation on a CD? A small bronze Buddha wearing headphones? After practising various forms of unguided meditation for more than ten years I was perhaps a little sceptical, but this CD has been a pleasant surprise. The peaceful cover features the aforementioned Buddha and promises to "revitalize your day, boost your creativity, improve your alertness." The first of a series of three CDs, Quantum Meditation is produced by an NLP and Reiki Master (Merrigan) and a multi-instrumentalist and composer (Lomax). The short introductory track (four minutes) gives basic information about what constitutes meditation and what health benefits may be achieved. Specifically, the ability for meditation to rebalance the body's sodium and potassium levels. These trace minerals are normally held in balance within our bodies and even minute changes affect mental clarity and correct body functioning. As the typical Western diet is high in sodium anything that helps redress this balance has to be good for health. Regular meditation has also been linked to increased mental clarity, enhanced immune function, lowered blood pressure and improved ability to cope with stress.

The male narrator's voice is calm and relaxing but is quite deep and this may be intrusive for some listeners; a female voice might be more accessible. Guidance is given on achieving the maximum from the three meditation tracks and listeners are warned not to listen to the CD in the car or whilst operating machinery. Specific exercises introduce the concepts of meditative awareness and draw on the practical aspects of several key forms of meditational practice without introducing any particular religion or belief system. Attention is also given to ensure correct posture and a relaxed breathing mode. After the introduction three further tracks offer deepening levels of meditative state; Alpha meditation – level 1; Meditation – level 2; and Meditation – level 3. Each track features a short narration with backing sounds to provide information and visualizations beneficial to achieving a meditative state, prior to the listener being immersed in just the soundtrack. The soundtrack for each section seems to be quite repetitive but this is only on a superficial level. The real strength comes through the subtle interaction of carefully created music that features some pretty sophisticated processing. These sounds help the left and right hemispheres of the brain to gradually balance their activity and then slow their pace, leading to states of deepening meditation through a process called entrainment. Researchers in the field of brain states discovered that when sounds that differ by small degrees (5–20 cycles per second) are reproduced via headphones to the left and right ear of a listener then their brain waves start to slow, falling into step with this oscillation. Normal awareness is measured at 15–40 cycles per second (cps or Hz) and is called Beta, characterized by arousal. Alpha features brainwaves in the range 9–14 Hz and is associated with quiet reflection and light meditation. Theta is found between 5.5–8 Hz and occurs during states of light ‘trance,’ often caused by simple repetition. It leads to ‘gaps’ in awareness – for example not remembering anything about a particular stretch of empty motorway on a long drive. The deepest state is called Delta (1.5–4 Hz) and is found during deep sleep, it is characterised by a lack of conscious awareness. Quantum Meditation will help the listener achieve states across the range Alpha – Delta.

The music is composed of computer-generated ‘synth’ sounds that oscillate and evolve slowly over time, leading to a rapidly immersive sonic environment. A quiet ‘toccata’ alternates between the left and right ear. I found this a little distracting at first but this soon resolves into one of the main components that assist the shift into altered awareness. The overall effect is one of deeply relaxing music that delivers its benefits without listener awareness of this happening. Each section is finished with the sound of a Tibetan tingsha (chime) to allow the listener to come back to full awareness.

Listening to this CD over several days it is clear that real benefits can be felt with regular use. The level one meditation takes just eleven minutes but left me feeling calm and relaxed. Level two lasts twenty three minutes and helps the listener achieve a deep level of meditation quite easily. Whether listening to this directly following level one or coming to it directly this track quickly led to a deepening state of relaxation. I found this level brought feelings of lasting calm, refreshed my energy levels and allowed my mind to be alert but free of mental ‘chatter’. Level three is twenty six minutes long and leads to a profound level of meditative state. During this meditation my awareness of self and time dropped away and an all-pervading sense of expansion and connection to the universe was felt. This is the state I am familiar with when meditating alone but it seemed to be achieved in less time and more easily than through unguided meditation alone.

I would happily recommend this wonderful CD to all those unfamiliar with any form of meditation, those who prefer guided meditations, or anyone who finds it difficult to make the time for such discipline.

About the Reviewer:
Jonathan Cope has studied the therapeutic and healing properties of sound for the past 12 years. He has trained with many leaders in this field and now leads regular workshops throughout the UK via Sound For Health. These experiential workshops focus on the transformational aspects of sound through the use of mantra and chant, Australian didjeridoo, ‘throat’ or overtone singing, Tibetan prayer bowls, crystal bowls, gongs and drums. He is also a musician with several CDs to his name, author of two books in this field and is currently training for a formal qualification in Sound Therapy with BAST. Jonathan can be contacted for workshop booking or CD and book sales on Tel: 020 7627 1791; info@soundforhealth.com www.soundforhealth.com