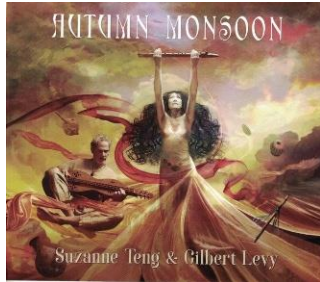


Suzanne Teng & Gilbert Levy
Autumn Monsoon



I got on the **Suzanne Teng** bandwagon a little late, but I am so glad to be here now and loving the ride. Her expressive flute playing is medicine for the spirit. Then you add talented percussionist **Gilbert Levy** to the mix and you have **Autumn Monsoon**, a 10-track harmonious journey to a place unexpected. Teng on several different kinds of flutes and Levy on hang drum, tabla, and many more banging objects complement each other on a collection that is somewhat genre defying, but could be labeled New Age, ethnic, Native American, and World, with some atmospheric crossover pieces.

Generally, we equate monsoons with the wind and rain and storms that originate in the Indian Ocean and travel northeast over much of Asia. This time however, we travel to America's southwest, to Arizona and New Mexico and maybe across the border. It is sometimes referred to the Southwest Monsoon, but on this occasion, I'm sure it's the Autumn Monsoon.

Subtle hang drum and flute deftly coordinate on the opening number **Autumn Monsoon**. The Native American flute in this piece is a benevolent wind, caressing the land. The percussion is the heartbeat of the earth. This song is much more delicate than I would have imagined, but then the planet is always in a fragile state of balance.

We find ourselves in the southern part of North America where desert meets jungle and life is very different. Suzanne and Gilbert's song, **Maya**, reminds us of one of the most advanced and yet, mysterious societies to grace the planet. Farming, science, and mathematics were only a few of their talents. We measure time today by their concepts. We build from their knowledge of architecture; we feast from their ancient, bountiful table. The music is a bit dark and mysterious, with a pair of flutes that influence the tune with a hint of bliss.

The flute and drum keep a steady pace. The sky is azure blue. The desert is dry, the sun fierce. He cannot stop, for he is the **Traveler**. He has stories to tell. History to impart. Then on to the next village. Many Native Americans tribes used oral history to keep their records. Tales around the fire and stories to keep the long winter's cold away. Coyote was often called the traveler. He is meaningful and relentless. This is his music.

A shake of rattles, a pounding of drum is heard. Dancing around an unseen fire, Teng's flute voice rises like musical flames heavenward on the tune **Canyon Ghosts**. The gentle, undulating melody reminds us that there is great wisdom in the voices of our ancestors. We must heed their warnings.

The tune **Journey of Life** seems to sum up the entire theme of the album. The musical mystical excursion maybe have southwestern flavor, but the principles behind it are global. If we take care of this earth, then we can take care of its inhabitants. The lesson could not be any simpler. This is a rather complex tune with methodical drumming and an exquisite flute melody that is way past

hypnotic. The background synths are resonant and melodious. Everything meshes perfectly on this one. It quickly became my favorite on the recording.

Suzanne Teng is a world-class flute player with more accolades than can be noted on a single page. She has done music for film, television, and multiple record labels. Gilbert Levy is a well-known percussionist that has contributed his talents to rock and jazz bands including Wynton and Branford Marsalis. He also plays a number of exotic stringed instruments on many of the cuts on the album. Teng & Levy are joined on Autumn Monsoon by their band members (Mystic Journey) Dann Torres on guitar and John Ossman on bass. The entire album is relaxing and peaceful. Teng's flutes, more than a dozen of them for this offering, have an exotic air about them that fit just about any mood. I highly recommend this album. – R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews