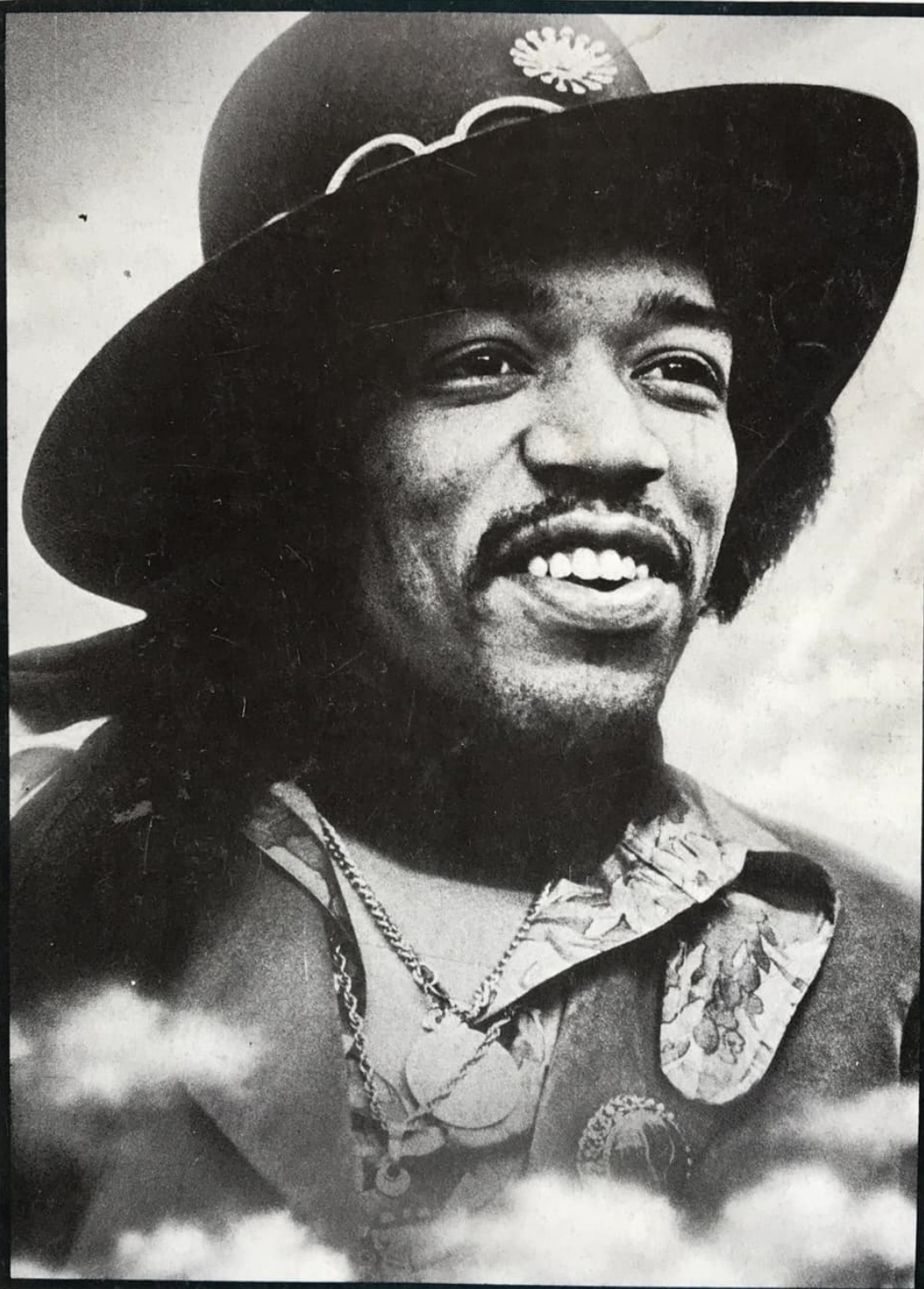


DECEMBER 1970/50¢

CIRCUS

HENDRIX-PEACE



JIMI HENDRIX

1942-1970

DECEMBER 1970

Santana: Singing Winds, Crying Beasts



Santana: There with the right thing at the right time.



"Abraxas" is not as speedy as their first album.

Carlos Santana stood around backstage at the Fillmore, totally exhausted after another fantastic bout against the limits of electric expression. He smiled a shy smile, begged off another interview, signed some autographs for three beautiful young girls who had somehow insinuated their way in, and went off to recharge his rechargeables for yet another show that night.

Was he pleased with the new Santana album? He laughs, shrugs his broad shoulders, and tells you to go listen for yourself.

Santana is the epitome of the mercurial climb to renown; in the space of one short year they have become one of the inner cricle of groups to be considered *the* group, have an amazingly successful record out that has earned them over \$300,000 and now a new one, about which nobody in the group will speak, but about which they are all beamingly proud.

They are well within their rights. Called *Abraxas* (that which is inscribed upon a gem to be used as a charm, a mark or an inscription to keep evil spirits away. Most frequently used in magic. Origin: Greek. Other form: abracadabra), it is a further development of that peculiarly Latin,

Mexican bluesy rock charged with more energy than can be confined in a truckload of amplifiers. It is a kind of magical record, heavy on the things that ought to be heavy, but calibrated well and subtly arranged. It is a record you can get lost in, and the beat is as commanding as the music. In a sense it is a very clever move in the rock movement, synthesizing Latin with progressive rock with Latin energy and speed. Seemingly innocent, the record is outlined with interweaving themes, harmonics and rhythms, giving it an overall textured effect.

Every few years Latin music bursts forth on the North American pop scene. Xavier Cugat. Carmen Miranda. Mongo Santamaria. That ole Latin beat hits the sagging American scene, revitalizing it when the culture begins to hurt for that sort of thing. The Cubans come up with bananas in their hats, filling the gap left by the tired, jaded repetitious sophisticated music. Every generation. Now Santana is there with the right thing at the right time. Amazing isn't it? Not that it ever goes away, merely that the rest of the culture dips into it when it feels the need for innocence and life.

The difference, however, between all those other people and Santana is that

Santana takes their music seriously, working on it, polishing what is essentially rough and rhythmic. But the two exist in a heavy tension. "We're street kids," says drummer Mike Shrieve, youngest member of the band. "We latch on to our environment, make it into music and let it go."

Where it has gone is phenomenal, largely because of the rhythm section. Mike Carrabello, one of two really fast conga players in the group, says, "We have not taken Latin music and changed it, so much as we as a group have found our own synthesis in the joy and peace of the moment. We like to make people feel good, which is what Latin music is all about," he states, calloused hands resting easily on his hips.

Abraxas is not as speedy as their first album. It is more relaxed, which is not to say it ain't tight, which it is, but it reflects a sureness of the power of their music, an easiness that lets none of the potential of what they want to be playing escape.

It indicates that they have been rehearsing, and have incorporated new keyboard backup techniques and lead guitar riffs that flow in and out of some very competent bass lines. No one in the group likes to talk to reporters,

partly out of a fear that their sound will be labelled and hence categorized to death. Piano-organist Gregg Rollie is the most reluctant. "It would take a gun to make me call it Latin rock," he says almost petulantly. "It is the height of unfairness to music and to musicians to keep groping around for the right word to characterize a particular kind of sound. What we do is invent, synthesize, rehearse and get together the joint product of our creativity."

America seems ready for another romance with their kind of music, and they are there ready to be accepted, with less violence and more syncopation.

The group has become more of a San Francisco band, drawing noticeably from Steve Miller, especially on the album opener, "Singing Winds, Crying Beasts," which sounds dangerously close to Miller's "Song For Our Ancestors" from the *Sailor* album.

But *Abraxas* is better produced, with a cleaner sound and tighter movement than their first album, even though it lacks some of the original ingenuity. Or maybe it just doesn't strike the listener as being *that* unique the second time around.

From the first few seconds it is evident that the group has gone through some significant changes. Gregg Rollie, his piano and organ at work, exude a mood not evident before, in either recorded or live work. It is a shimmering, a melodic sound which adds another, more musical dimension to the group's heretofore overly kinetic machinery.

This album is more diversified, containing bossa novas, rumbas, screeching guitars, and tunes that Astrud Gilberto could easily slip into.

"Black Magic Woman," the second cut on the album, is soft, extremely danceable (an asset these lazy days) and is followed by the bossa nova, "Oye Como Va." What hampers this tune is a middle section they could've left out without much of a loss.

The first side ends with a song called "Incident At Neshabur" and, wherever the hell Neshabur is, the song brings you right back to Woodstock. With crashing beats and insistent rhythms, it is the second best cut on the album. As it builds, it reaches a peak and then drops into a very beautiful break with Rollie's superb keyboards assisting magnificently.

Interestingly, Carlos Santana has only written one song and it is the best on the record.

Opening up the second side is the Santana of old, hard bongo rhythms. The first two cuts are easily forgettable until Carlos hits you with "Samba Pi



Carlos, (shooting), Greg Rolie, Mike Carrabello and Dave Brown take some time out for a game of basketball. Carabello also enjoys a local rock concert.



Photos: Amilie R. Rothschild

Ti." It's the third cut on this side and the first where Carlos is really highlighted; he takes the opportunity and offers the most imaginative and tasteful guitar on either record. It is a brilliant piece of guitar work.

The album is well done, it can't be denied. The critics who knocked the first for being a speed freak's delight will have no complaints here. They might even enjoy it.

Jonathan Eisen

With "*Abraxas*," the group has become more of a San Francisco band; a tighter, cleaner synthesis of their latin heritage mixed with post-Woodstock Americana. From the first few chords, it is evident the group has undergone some heavy changes.