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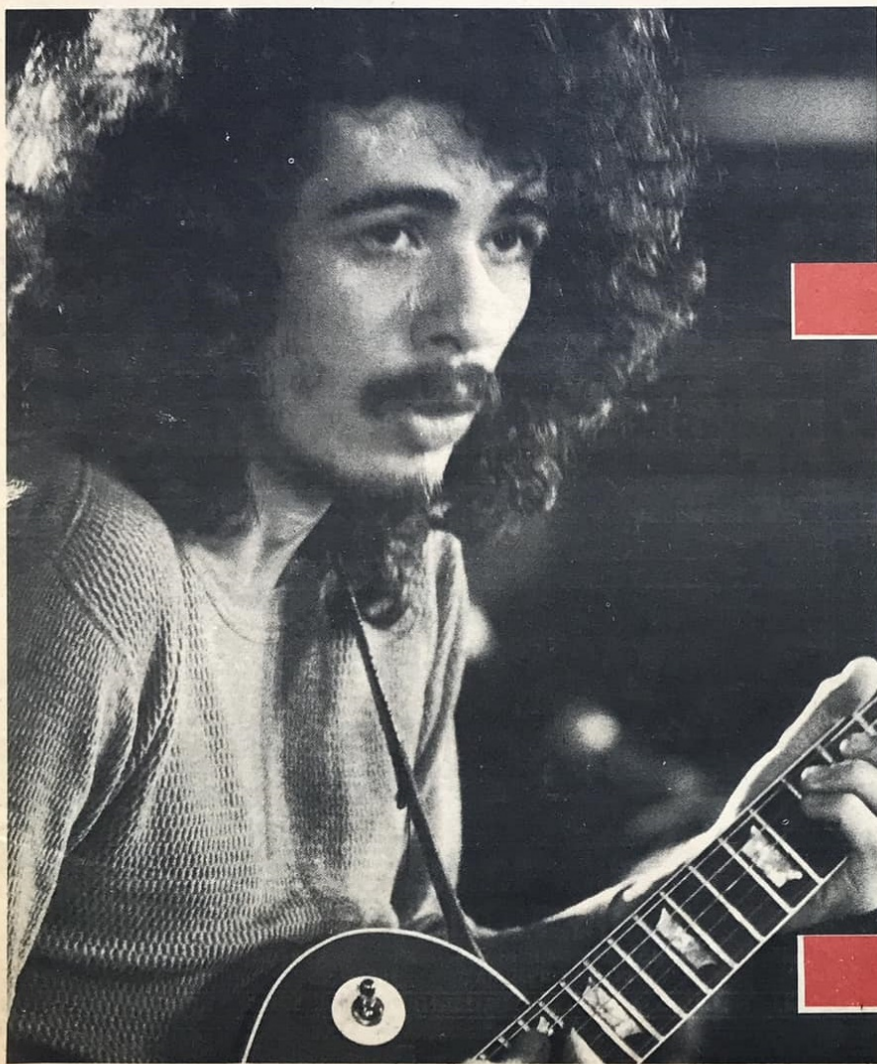
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ANOTHER SCOOP!

Santana talks to the NME

First British interview!

THIS Saturday, Santana will be making one of their rare British appearances at the Odeon, Hammer-smith, where all the 7,000 tickets were sold out without any advanced publicity.

NME's Nick Logan saw their concert in Paris and Roy Carr met up with the group at last week-end's Rose D'Or Festival in Montreux, Switzerland, when, for the first time, Carlos Santana and various members of the band broke their pledge of silence to speak to the NME.

Now turn to Page Two, for this exclusive report.

SEE PAGE TWO

CARLOS SANTANA: Picture shy but caught by NME's camera on stage at Montreux, Switzerland, last week-end.

SANTANA MUSIC RELATES TO SEX

NMExclusive interview by Roy Carr

SAYS CARLOS

IT would either take a very brave man or a doting idiot to disclaim the undeniable truth that Carlos Santana is a damn fine guitarist. He is one of the few possessed with a highly distinctive style that sets him miles apart from the ever multiplying plagiarists.

Carlos doesn't speak much, except to joke or pass mumbled pleasantries — to the Press he doesn't speak at all — but this is not to be misconstrued as indicative of aloofness. It's just that Carlos prefers his music to act as his own official spokesman.

However, the indiscribably relaxed atmosphere of conviviality that enveloped the entire Rose D'Or De Montreux held in the opulent splendour of the Casino on the mist covered shores of Lake Geneva at the weekend made both Carlos and the other members of the band momentarily step from behind their cloak of anonymity, to just sit and chat without any applied pressures.

Not one to mince his words, Carlos is as direct as his music. Cocking his head to one side which reflected a twinkle in his eye he admitted:

"I guess that it would be true to say that all our music relates to the sexual thing."

"Yeah... like eh... making music is just like making love," he continued with an appropriate grimace which trailed into a laugh. "You build to a climax... it's all down to true emotions."

True, there is no denying that basically Santana's Latinesque

music has a deep primitive undercurrent of raw sexuality, yet it is presented with a subtle gesture. Not the bump and grind routine of, say, the overtly camp Stones, or the now you see it-now you don't exhibitionism of Flasher Jim Morrison, but plain, simple esoteric insinuation.

"Santana set a trend without realising it," commented Coke, the satorially attired Mexican timbale player who has become the semi-permanent dep for the ailing Chepito Areas.

New trail

Continuing in his fast mongrel Mexi-Frisco twang he said, "Hey Man... until Sanata came along, people's ears just weren't open to what he's putting down. He's made a whole new trail into Latin music... I mean you only have to look around and see all the rock bands who are now using congas and timbales in their line-ups. Santana made these instruments popular again."

Making it a point to avoid being trapped in the personality cult, Santana have become much respected international pacesetters purely on the merits of their music... full stop.

Though on stage they mesmerize their audience, they have no preconceived visual image — which pleases each and every one of them — they wouldn't want it to be any other way.

Santana must be one of those rare phenomenons who have now achieved so much more than they ever anticipated, yet are still motivated by the prime

factor that originally brought about their inception... the sheer joy and personal satisfaction of making good music.

But not for one minute will they allow themselves to be cajoled into playing against their will. They choose to perform whenever the spirit moves them and Friday night was a prime example.

For it transpired that they were enjoying their stay in Montreux so much that a last minute decision was made to hold an extra concert before Saturday's official opening. With little time to advertise the event it was left to the word-of-mouth grapevine to draw a large crowd.

As if this wasn't enough, various members could be seen in the wee small hours jammin' with local musicians.

"Man... I'll tell you this," Carlos began, as he sat enjoying a drink.

A whore

"I'm a whore... if I like you, then I'll play with you." A sentiment colourfully elaborated upon by organist Gregg Rolie, the band's organist-vocalist, looner.

"We get on so well together," he added, glancing at the others who were sat around the table.

"There's a lot of brotherly love in this band. Again it's all down to emotion and feeling."

This prompted Gregg to reply, "You gotta enjoy it — if you don't enjoy what you're

doing, you ain't doing much — right?"

Having witnessed three consecutive Santana shows in two days, superlatives become meaningless, for one seems to get transfixed by the music to the point where you just ride along with it. They have that indefinable magic essence which only really great bands display. One which wasn't blueprinted, but just evolved naturally about four years ago.

Gregg along with bassist David Brown was a founder member, so it was up to him to reveal their origins.

"When we started the band up we were into playing real hard blues and rock music. The congas had always been there in the band, however it was to be some time before we evolved

this style. Funnily enough I don't know how we came to get such a distinctive sound, for as I have already said it just kinda happened."

"One of the first tunes we ever rehearsed which featured the congas was 'Chim Chim Cheree' from Mary Popins which was played in 6/8. We used them some more — along came 'Jingo' — suddenly it

became more Latin in its concept."

In the foreseeable future, Santana intend to pursue this direction ever further. This prompted me to ask Carlos how personally involved was he with Latin music.

"Oh Man, I'm really into it," was his reply as he rocked back and forth in his chair. "But I tell you I haven't played with a Latin band."

Expressing the wish to play with such doyens of Latin music as Tito Puente and Ray Barretto, this led him to relate a story about Puente, the Master.

"Once I saw Tito go up to this band of Soul Brothers who were really into this afro thing. Now can you imagine this... he went up to one of the drummers, tapped him on the shoulder and said, 'Listen Man... you're outta time.'"

Heavy

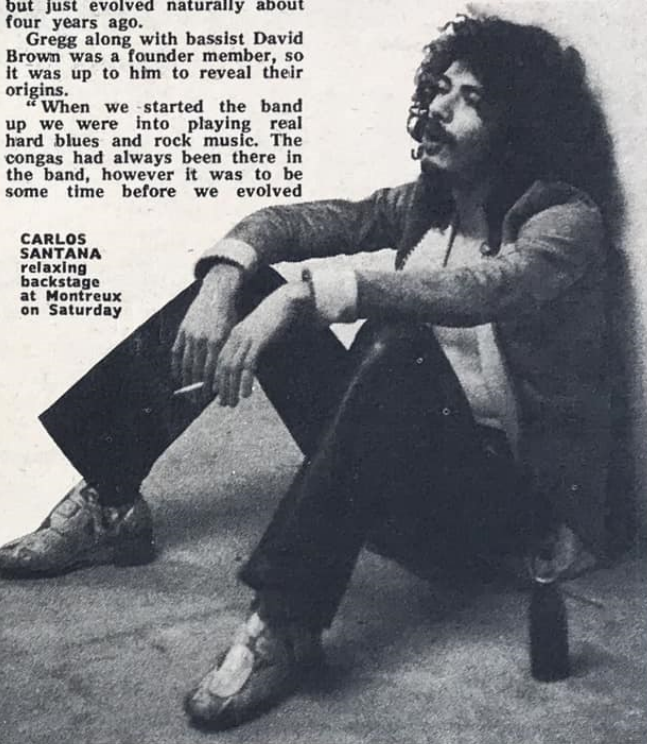
Phew... can you dig it, actually saying something as heavy as that to a Soul Brother. It could well be that later this year we'll do a concert with Tito and his band, now that is something that I'd really dig doing."

Though Santana the band, have only been in existence for just under four years, Carlos has been involved in music for much longer. Born into a poor Mexican family 23 years ago, he first started studying the violin at the age of four under the watchful guidance of his father who played in a fariachi band.

"When I was just into my teens, I played bass guitar in some local Tijuana night clubs, and to help the family out I also worked in a Tick-Tock (a Wimpy Bar)."

His fourteenth birthday found

contd on page 21



CARLOS SANTANA relaxing backstage at Montreux on Saturday

SANTANA

(Continued from page two)

him in San Francisco, the year was 1962 and Carlos was just playing with some friends before he teamed up with Gregg and David to form the catalysis of what has become one of the most successful and respected bands of this generation.

Conga drummer, Mike Carabello was also a charter member, who split only to return to the fold. Like all the members of the band he just happened along.

"I was just hanging around the beach doing nothing before I joined the band. I dig it . . . because we're not into that whole personality trip. The kids dig us just for our music and that's fine by me."

Santana are a cooking band, with an internal rapport which is almost telepathic in its conception. Even their most wildest moments are performed with taste and precision, yet they are loose enough to avoid becoming mechanical, tending to underplay as opposed to overplay their individual roles.

Again it was left to Gregg Rolie to give a summation of the band, when he stated: "It's not so much what you play, it's what you don't play . . . it's the spaces that count."

NEXT WEEK: Exclusive interviews with the two new members, 17-year-old guitarist Neil Schon and Timbale star Coke.

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