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JOHN McLAUGHLIN

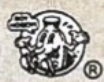
Come Home
PETER TOWNSHEND

Salvation Slapstick
with the
GURU MAHARAJ JI

JERRY LEE LEWIS:
Loud and Proud

Exposed!
The Brutal Energy
Atrocities of
**EMERSON,
LAKE & PALMER**

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March 1974

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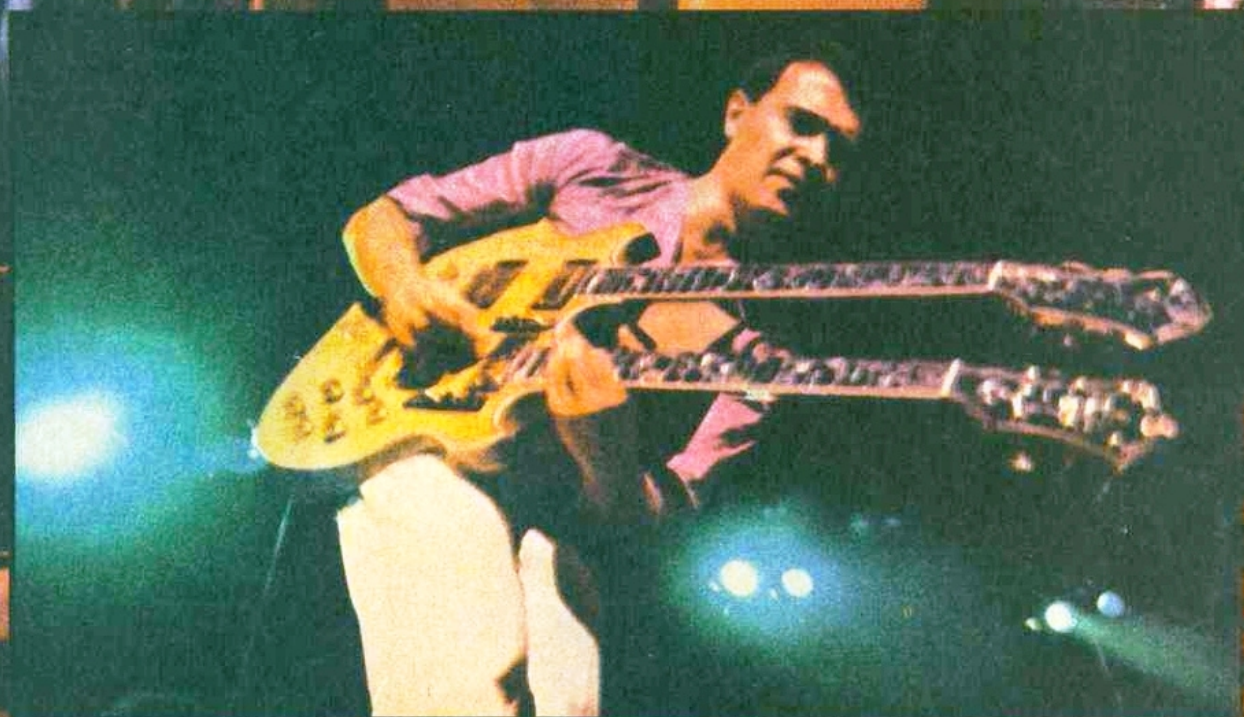
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Cruisin' With The Guru

The backseat revelations of Carlos Santana & Mahavishnu John McLaughlin

by David Rensin

Silence.

Dual spotlights pick out the immobile figures of Carlos Santana and John McLaughlin standing with heads bowed in silent meditation onstage while a noticeable tension grows in the air.

Bzzzzz. Hmmmmm. Zap! A faulty amp cuts through the stillness and a roadie hurries to correct the problem, to restore the balance. The noise stops, but the crowd remains restless, torn between respect for the requested 60 seconds of silence and a tempting desire to take the dare and scream or whistle. Anything. Just to pierce the everpresent reverent atmosphere.

"Evil Ways!" cries one loaded soul in Berkeley, breaking the spell. More outbursts follow quickly. "Why don't you creeps shut the fuck up?" queries one. "Hey, we paid for music not silence," yells another. The duo raise their heads, aware of the shattered equilibrium, and smile at the audience. Invigorated by their brief devotional, McLaughlin begins strumming the 12-string neck of his dual throated guitar, creating what Santana calls "waves of sound." In a few seconds the crowd gets their wish as the theater is transformed into a reverberating chamber of sound. The walls and ceilings strain as the silence gives way, and, as one Columbia executive puts it, "the three hour fuck begins."

"Why do we want silence?" repeats McLaughlin, drawing his legs up underneath himself on the bed. Relaxing in the bedroom of Devadip Carlos Santana's Mill Valley home, Mahavishnu John is tying his musical and spiritual threads together into a Gordian Knot — very hard to undo. Santana, meanwhile, runs around lighting incense, putting on a John Coltrane record and talking with his wife Debbie before settling down.

"Silence is dynamic," McLaughlin says. "It causes people to feel unity within themselves. It changes the mood and consequently the music starts off



Chuck Pullin

*"My hair is short
because it's Guru's will."*

on a better and deeper note. The people who scream and whistle during the meditation are like so many monkeys chattering. They expose themselves, but perhaps that is good."

"It's possible that they just don't relate to the music," Santana adds. Seeing Carlos sans hair, in the flesh, takes some getting used to.

"My hair is short because it's Guru's [Sri Chinmoy's] will," he explains. "When it starts getting long, I start swearing, man, and saying 'Yeah, fuck, far out.' But when I cut my hair, I feel this whole other consciousness that symbolizes inner growth and purity. I

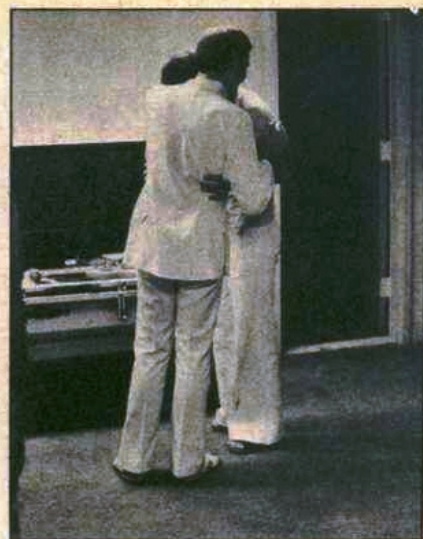
begin to talk more humbly and act more sincerely.

One thing both musicians seem rather hesitant to do is talk about their music. They'd rather speak of Sri Chinmoy and the Supreme. However, since music and their faith are inexorably tied together, they become willing to reflect, especially on their recent tour together — another venture carried out at the request of Sri Chinmoy. Was it all they expected? Carlos sums it up: "Some of the audiences have accepted my new directions, they got into it on *Caravanserai*, but not all. Some just go back to the Rolling Stones, a bag we were in on *Abraxas* when Greg Rolie was writing a lot of stuff with that loud, self-inflated English cast to it."

Much of the tour's proceeds may go to the Guru in the form of equipment and products necessary to insure the continued existence of the various Sri Chinmoy Centres and the furtherance of the Guru's wisdom in print. The two musicians don't just give money to their mentor, but contribute in various other ways. Santana and his wife have opened up a restaurant in San Francisco called Dipti-Nivas (Boat of Light) as sort of a service to humanity.

Santana has gone all out in his new found devotion to Sri Chinmoy. McLaughlin, meanwhile, will tell you how he woke up one morning with the idea to play and record with Carlos, and how his manager called with the same idea on the very same day. All heavenly coincidence, no doubt. Santana and McLaughlin had met some time back, but the first real confrontation came when the Mahavishnu Orchestra played at Winterland and Carlos was among those in the audience. After the show he went backstage thinking "these guys are from Mars."

"I heard them play and was overwhelmed. When I talked with John he said it was Guru through him and in him that made the music. I knew before he



Photos by Chuck Pulin

"When I looked into Jagger's eyes, I was myself a year ago. . . a prisoner of the system."

came that a spiritual wave was about to hit and I wanted to be part of it if I was ready."

According to McLaughlin, he "saw a devotee" in Santana. "I had a very powerful feeling toward him. I saw God in Carlos because of his spiritual devotion." (Jesus at the time.) The meeting put Santana on the path to a new spiritual involvement and the decision to record was only steps away once McLaughlin had woken with his inspirational thoughts. During the recording of their album *Love Devotion Surrender*, Santana's interest in Sri Chinmoy grew until McLaughlin finally took him to one meditation meeting and then another. Santana received Chinmoy's blessing and soon asked to become a disciple.

It's true that McLaughlin was falling off stages in his younger days, stoned out of his mind while Santana was the symbol of freedom and rebellion to hordes of whites and non-whites alike. It's a label he'd rather not have: "People often make the mistake of labelling me as a spokesman for Chicanos, but I don't identify with La Raza. La Raza never did anything for me." Neither retain those old traits, but McLaughlin, who has been with Chinmoy for years now, seems much more constant, much more schooled in the ways of spiritualism than Santana. With Carlos, his child-like devotion is like a new toy. Almost every one of his sentences contains an innocent yet pleasurable reference to the Supreme. He is reserved, yet joyful, where McLaughlin is instructive and distant. Both are serene.

It's also equally valid that McLaughlin opened up a whole new realm of listening experiences to the general rock audience after Columbia took a chance with him. His records also sell a substantial amount, but it was the Santana name that pushed *Love*

Devotion Surrender over the top, making it go gold, just as his name was the impetus behind the brashly commercial and artistically awful Santana/Buddy Miles debacle. It's something that Carlos readily admits to these days.

"Yeah, it's true. I just feel sorry for Buddy now. Unless people are marinated by divine essence, they remain products of their environment. If people begin to stay on a certain level, after a while they become like a flower that hasn't reached the sun. It starts getting dry and the music is less juicy. Buddy is a prisoner on a level that's held him for a long time."

Carlos is into new things now. He wants to jam with Eric Clapton, Steve Winwood and Dave Mason. He wants to do albums with Alice Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders. He wants to stage a concert billing Santana, the Mahavishnu Orchestra and the Rolling Stones together.

"I would like for people to see the different levels we are on. It is an unbelievable thing to see the people who come to see the Stones, man, to see the hunger in their eyes and how they leave after the show. The concerts are like seeing things in the Roman days — you know, we're getting bored so throw in another Christian."

"Mick wanted to jam once when we both played at the Nicaragua benefit in Los Angeles, and I said 'Sure, except for one song, 'Sympathy For The Devil.' He said 'Why not?,' and I answered, 'Well, I have no sympathy for ignorance.' I was almost tempted to ask him to sing 'You're So Vain' because I knew how to play it. I was looking right into his eyes and was going to do it because he was bringing it out of me. But when I looked into his eyes, I saw myself a year ago — a prisoner of the system, playing what the people wanted, not what they needed. I felt it would be wrong to

offend him because there's a soul inside that body that wants to be free."

Carlos has been working on an album of his own as well as *Welcome*, the new Santana LP. Santana's solo effort will contain "things that the band don't usually like to play, things that are more personal to me." He'll be using some presently unspecified members of Santana on the record.

As for McLaughlin, he simply wants to add symphonic structures and instruments to his act. "Not necessarily increase the size of the Orchestra, but perhaps have two of them onstage." Both he and Carlos are looking forward to another tour and album together sometime next year with plenty of "new things," he says.

McLaughlin's band, most of whom are rumored to believe that McLaughlin thinks of himself as a superstar by divine right, are glad to take a rest. Santana's band thinks his collaboration will elicit positive results. "All the guys love Mahavishnu's music and by the time I go back to my band they know I will have learned a lot more about direction. I won't be so hard to work with," Santana explains. "Sometimes my brothers were offended by my talk of spirituality because they just weren't ready for it. They wanted to talk about 'some chick they'd laid' or something else that was out. But now, I'm not contradicting myself in their eyes anymore like I once was."

Before was when both Santana and McLaughlin took drugs. Both are now sworn off, but understand that even realizing the spiritual content of their music, some people still take drugs to get off.

"I can't say it's bad or good," McLaughlin shrugged. "I used to take them myself to listen to and play music. What's good is if people utilize them

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LICE ?

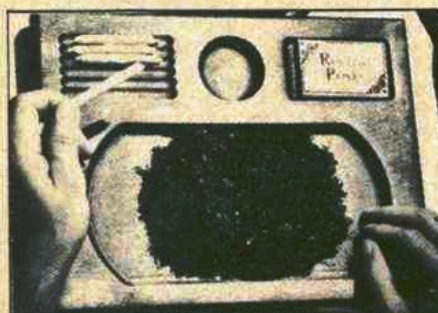
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THE WHO

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35.

of the best things a rock band can do is challenge itself and its customers to own up. That's just what the Who do with *Quadrophenia*. History (particularly pop history) matters now, in a way it couldn't in 1965. We're not like that anymore, so why act like our troubles can be rocked away?

The Who still play their rock and roll on stage, of course, but it is different. *Quadrophenia* is the least accessible part of that stage show, but it is also the most intelligent, and the most important record of last year. I like the *New York Dolls* more, but that is an artifact. *Quadrophenia* is alive, and it is deep; it grows on you, which is why it takes three months to be able to hear it. (In addition, Townshend has thrown in a couple of red herrings. *Quadrophenia* is about the Who's inter-relationship, and it is about Mod, but the Who and Mod happen to be excellent metaphors for the problems of transition between the 60s and the 70s.)

If *Quadrophenia* does not work musically that is just more proof that music is not the most important part of pop. "Where has all the power gone?" I asked in a *Newsday* record cap. The answer, if not the power, is here, at least in part. If you gave me a choice between partial answers, or even good questions, and powerful rock, I'd still take the former. I don't wish *Quadrophenia* were easier to hear at all; I just hope more people hear it.

Santana

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30.

toward a good end. What's bad is if they abuse themselves."

"I've seen some incredible musicians who get loaded," says Carlos, "not just audiences, there I agree with Mahavishnu... and when they do, they do great things. But I've seen others who get loaded (and to me getting loaded and getting high are different things) and the music that comes out is full of paranoia, insecurities and uncertainties. This is what I used to see in Jimi Hendrix. People used to say he was shy,

but I think it was paranoia."

Carlos reacts to our quizzical looks. "Paranoid of just blowing it," he continues emphatically. "Just realizing he was saying, doing or playing something lame. Of realizing that he was maybe being something that he really wasn't. I used to be afraid of that too."

In between shows at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium the dressing room is more crowded than usual or expected. On the counter, propped up against the mirror is a frame holding portraits of both Guru and Jesus. Less than three hours ago, Carlos Santana was sitting in silent meditation before them, just as he meditates before a picture of Guru every time he gets into his car, asking for strength and guidance for the upcoming set.

Now, with the first show over and a stunning success besides, people mill around the performers, eating food, drinking beer, rekindling old friendships and starting up new ones.

"You know, my name is also McLaughlin," the photographer smiles at Mahavishnu. "Yeah, we could be brothers or cousins or something."

"That's right," countered Mahavishnu easily, as somebody knocks over Santana's picture frame. "We're all brothers, if you know what I mean. All brothers."



Jerry Lee Lewis

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 47.

hits prior to the marriage. And it wasn't until he went straight country with "Another Place, Another Time" in 1968 that he was once again on the airwaves. He had switched labels by then, but more likely the reason for his new success was a compromise with bull-headed country program directors. Record country, they said, and we'll play it; what you do in your live shows is your own business. So while he never really quit rocking, he was becoming known as a country star anyhow.

What was he doing all that time between? Jerry Lee says it never changed, that he was out there on the road the whole time giving the people what they wanted, and that he was never fazed by the blackballing. It fig-