

Guitar[®]

PLAYER

The Magazine For Professional And Amateur Guitarists

JUNE 1978

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Carlos Santana

BRINGING LATIN,
BLUES, AND JAZZ
INFLUENCES TO ROCK

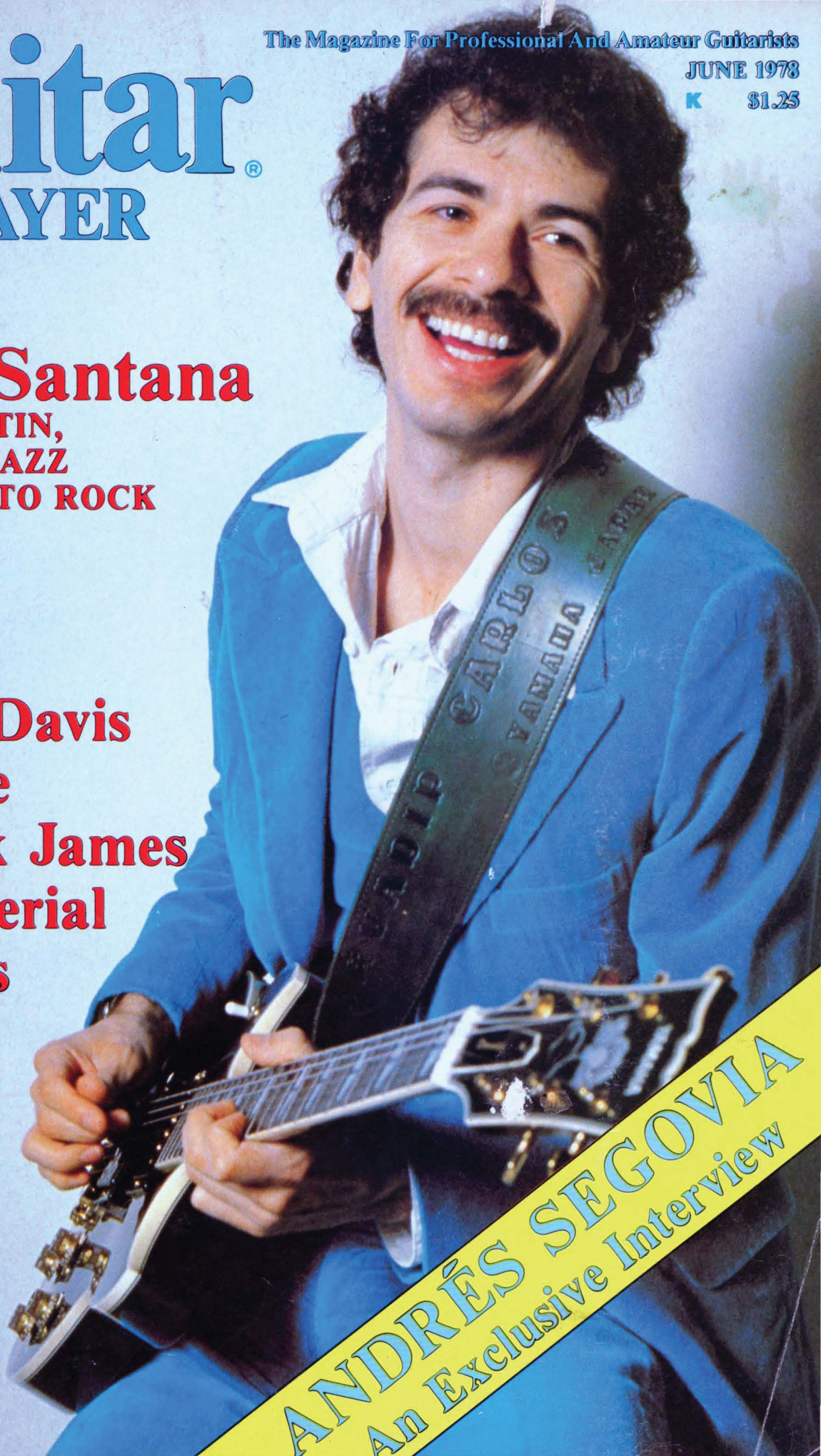
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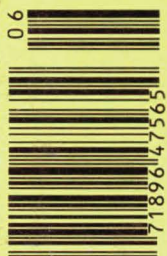
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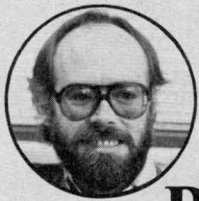
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ANDRÉS SEGOVIA
An Exclusive Interview





From The Publisher

GUITAR PLAYER MAGAZINE'S book division (cleverly titled Guitar Player Books) recently entered a co-publishing agreement with Grove Press. We'll be jointly producing occasional noninstructional books with this major New York company. And our first effort should be out by the time you read this.

Our initial product (equally cleverly titled *The Guitar Player Book*) is about 400 pages of the best material from our first 11 years. There are interviews and features covering all of the major guitarists of the past decade; and we've selected the most interesting and most valuable articles on equipment, history, and more.

I don't want to turn this column into an ad, so I won't rattle on about the book's greatness, but I thought you'd like to know that it exists. We'll be carrying ads for *The Guitar Player Book*, of course, or you can check it out at your local bookstore. Les Paul wrote the intro; I wrote the foreword. Or is it the other way around? Never could get those two things straight.

* * * *

This month's issue of *GP* contains a couple of real exclusives. Neither Carlos Santana nor Andrés Segovia give interviews anymore. But both agreed to sit with our writers for lengthy sessions, just because they care about *you*. The two artists are equally dedicated to the music they produce and the instrument they've devoted their lives to, so the chance to discuss the guitar with writers who know the subject (for articles to be read by players themselves) was too important to pass up.

We all know how valuable their time is to them and greatly appreciate their having made exceptions to the no-interview rule for *GP*.

* * * *

This June issue is the second one to be mailed from our new Minnesota printer. If you're a subscriber and have the time, please drop me a note telling us when you received it and the physical condition it arrived in. This will help our circulation folks, which will, in turn, help you. If the issue came to subscribers after May 18, something went wrong. And if the mails chewed it up too much, I'd like to know that, too.

Thanks.

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Guitar[®] PLAYER

The Magazine For Professional And Amateur Guitarists

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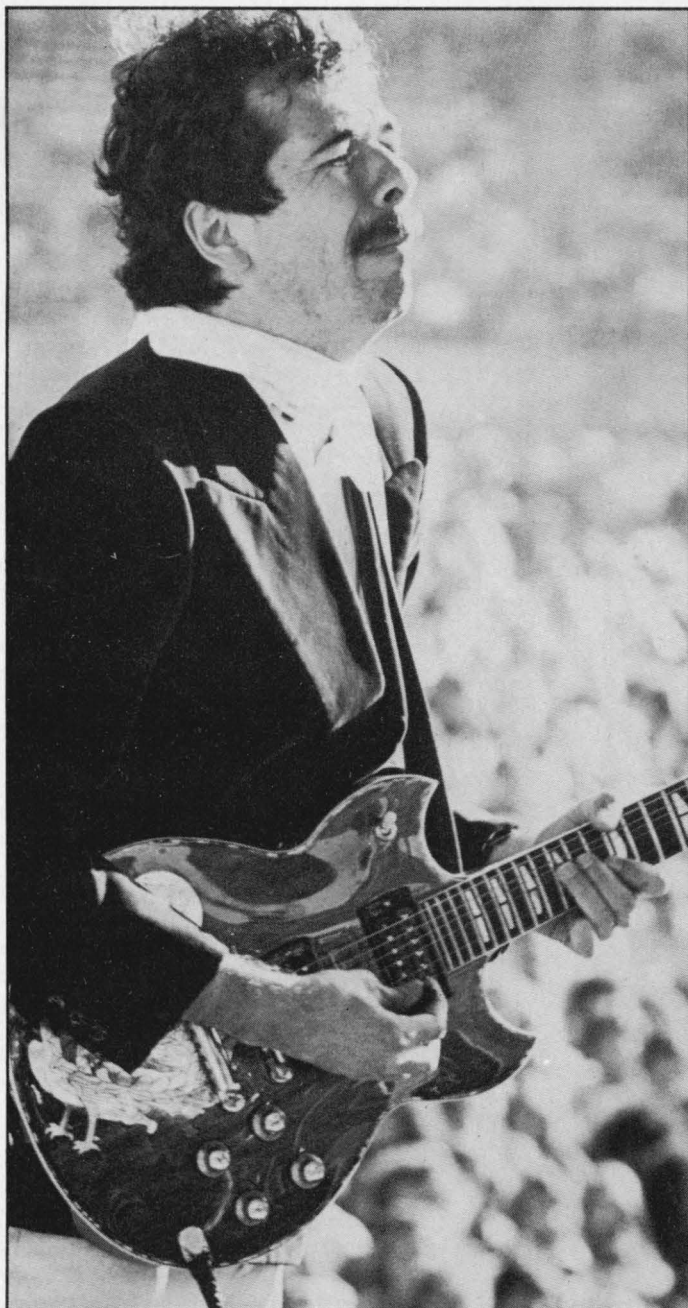
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Devadip Carlos SANTANA

By Dan Forte

Photos by Jon Sievert



TENOR SAXOPHONIST John Coltrane, one of modern jazz's true innovators, once said, "We are always searching; I think that now we are at the point of finding." Devadip Carlos Santana, like Coltrane, is a searcher—or, as he puts it, a seeker. The similarities between the two artists don't stop there. As with Coltrane's music, Santana's music has reflected the spiritual lifestyle he has chosen. Like Coltrane, he is an innovator and above all an individual voice on his instrument, the guitar.

John Coltrane was a major inspiration for Carlos, so the parallels are no doubt more than coincidence. The title tune of the Santana band's seventh album, *Welcome*, was a Coltrane composition. The guitarist collaborated with the saxophonist's widow, pianist/harpist Turiya Alice Coltrane, on the album *Illuminations*. At one stage Devadip would even sleep with a tape of Coltrane music playing all night long.

But Santana was wise enough to know that there could only be one John Coltrane, and he listened to the music for inspiration—not to cop lines or even stylistic modes. Carlos Santana [see *GP*, Nov. '74] is such an individualist that it's difficult to hear direct traces of the musicians he cites as influences, except on rare occasions. He will talk for hours about his deep love for the blues, rattling off an endless list of favorite performers of the genre; yet in his ten albums with the Santana band and his various solo projects, he has never recorded a blues tune—at least not in standard blues form. The blues, like the other factors that make up Santana's sound, is reflected as a feeling—not as notes or rhythms.

To this day, the name Santana brings to mind a picture of a battery of Latin percussionists behind their leader, who leans backwards, eyes clenched shut in concentration, as he *squeezes* the notes from his guitar. The Santana band was the first group to successfully blend Latin and Afro rhythms with rock music. Originally known as the Santana Blues Band—later shortened to its leader's surname—the group built a strong following at Bill Graham's Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco, eventually headlining shows with the likes of Taj Mahal, the Youngbloods, and Melanie before they had even recorded. The young band received national acclaim, thanks to the Woodstock festival in 1969, the same year their first LP, *Santana*, debuted. *Santana* produced two hit singles in "Jingo" and "Evil Ways" and turned platinum within a year—an achievement few groups of that period could claim.

More hit albums and singles followed—"Oye Como Va," "Black Magic Woman/Gypsy Queen," "No One To Depend On"—despite numerous personnel changes in the group. The Santana band's direction changed as did its guitarist/leader's ideals. Guitarist Neal Schon and singer/keyboardist Gregg Rolie left to form Journey following the group's first major departure from "Latin rock," *Caravanserai*. The album, the band's fourth, revealed the jazzier influences that had been absorbing much of Carlos Santana's energies. Artists such as Coltrane, Charles Lloyd, McCoy Tyner, Thelonius Monk, Miles Davis (whom Santana calls "the Muhammed Ali of music"), and the group Weather Report provided the inspiration that had previously come from B.B. King, Jimmy Reed, and others.

What Carlos was searching for, musically and personally, he found in Sri Chinmoy, his spiritual guru. Santana was introduced to Sri Chinmoy by electrifying guitarist Mahavishnu John McLaughlin [see *GP*, Feb. '75]. The two artists joined forces on *Love Devotion Surrender* in 1973, which was as much a religious statement as it was a musical one. Though McLaughlin has since dropped the Mahavishnu title and is no longer a follower of the guru, Devadip (Santana's spiritual name) has stuck close to Chinmoy's teachings.

But the more Santana's music began to mirror the tranquility and inner peace Devadip had found, the less it sounded like the energetic, feverish group that had insured "street music's" inclusion in the list of psychedelic San Francisco rock outfits. Carlos began to realize that the concert-opening moments of silent meditation and the extended improvisational excursions were alienating some of his old fans. People wanted to move and dance.

While on tour with McLaughlin in 1973, Santana dropped by a Seattle beer bar to jam with one of his early, pre-guru inspirations, Elvin Bishop. The ex-Butterfield Blues Band guitarist's brand of ham-and-eggs rock and blues—and the crowd's involvement with it—brought Carlos to the realization that “the highest form of spirituality is joy. If you don't have that, man, then I don't care for spirituality.”

Along with the two longest-surviving members of the Santana band—keyboardist Tom Coster and percussionist Ndugu Leon Chanler—Devadip took a retrospective look at the group's history and sought to reignite the spark that had separated Santana from other rock bands in the first place. The result of their research appeared in the 1976 LP, *Amigos*, and articles immediately proclaimed the “return” of Santana. 1977 produced two more albums on basically the same track—*Festival* and the double-album *Moonflower*—and Santana's international popularity is now probably as high as ever.

Along with the increased recognition of the band, Carlos Santana's guitar skills have finally received the notice they deserve, and his position in the elite of rock guitarists is secure to say the least. Last year's *Moonflower* was voted Best Record Of The Year in the first annual Bay Area Music Awards, sponsored by San Francisco's *BAM Magazine*, and in the same poll readers chose Carlos Best Guitarist. In last year's *Guitar Player* Readers' Poll he placed high in both the Rock and Overall categories.

Whether or not one chooses to use adjectives such as “best” when describing Carlos's abilities on guitar, the 30-year-old instrumentalist must surely rate as one of the most distinctive and emotional players around today, regardless of style. And whether or not one wishes to believe in the spiritual path Devadip has chosen to follow, one thing is obvious—it works for him. And Santana and his music will no doubt survive long after other artists are either dried up or burned out.

* * * *

WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP, did your father play in mariachi bands? Did he teach you things?

Yes. I started playing the violin first. I was playing Beethoven's “Minuet In G” and *Poet And Peasant Overture* by Von Suppe—you know, classical songs. But I hated the violin. I just hated the sound of it and the smell of it. And to me anything I played on the violin sounded like Jack Benny when he was fooling around [laughs]. I know he could really play well, but when he was joking around, that's what I sounded like at my best. I couldn't get into it. Later I saw this band in Tijuana, where I grew up, and they were totally imitating B.B. King, Ray Charles, Bobby Bland, and Little Richard. They were from Tijuana, and when I heard them playing I said, “Oh, man! This is the stuff I want to get into.” I was about eleven or so; it was the first blues that I'd heard. And then Javier Batiz, the guitar player, took me to his house, and we got to be friends. He had a very beautiful sound, and you could tell that he lived with records by B.B. King, Ray Charles, and Little Richard. That's what knocked me out. I'd see my sister screaming over Elvis Presley, and even though I was a kid I had the attitude that it was just a fad. But I never felt empathy with Mexican music. Not that I hated it; I just couldn't relate to it—there was so much around me. I usually equated Mexican music with drunk Mexicans having a brawl and overemphasizing the macho trips, so I really couldn't get into it. I grew up with that environment. I could get into the blues more; it was more natural to me.

When you moved to San Francisco, did you eventually get into the white blues movement that was happening at that time?

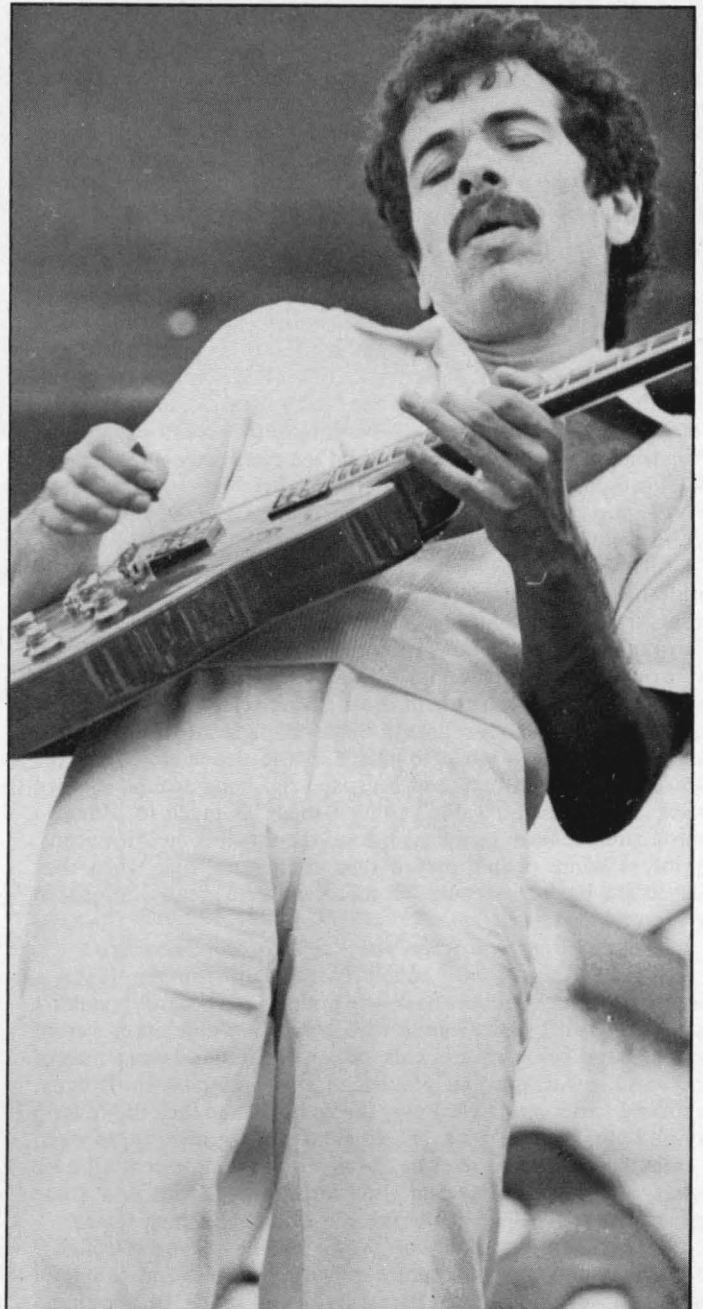
Paul Butterfield? Yeah, he was the one who started the whole thing for a lot of people. See, when I came to America, my American friends would be listening to the Dave Clark Five and the Beach Boys, and I couldn't stand that. I'd say, “Why are you into these guys? They aren't even saying nothing, man. Listen to Ray Charles and Bobby Bland.” And they'd say, “That stuff is old.” And all of a sudden, two things hit me: One was seeing Paul

Butterfield and Muddy Waters; and the other was Cream's first record [*Fresh Cream*, RSO, RS-1-3009]. It just totally turned me around; I said, “How can these guys play blues like that?” That's when I started to play hookey from Mission High and started hanging out on Mission Street. Stan Marcum, who subsequently became my first manager, took me to Winterland to see Paul Butterfield and Muddy Waters when Muddy had Little Walter on harp. Man, I was knocked out for weeks; I was in a daze. I don't know how many dishes I broke working as a dishwasher after that. I couldn't believe what blues could do to people. See, I wasn't getting loaded at the time, so when I went to Winterland I was totally aware of my surroundings. It wasn't like when people get loaded and become so overly aware that they [whistles]—they're everywhere at the same time, so they miss something. But I could see people's eyes and faces and the way they were reacting when the band was playing the blues. I could see that the group was feeding these people, and they were feeding me. It was one of the most fantastic concerts I've ever been to.

Did that lead you to search out records by older bluesmen?

Yeah, yeah. I got into Little Milton and all those people. I think the blues is about the most beautiful contribution that the

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CARLOS SANTANA

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black man has given to the United States, because anybody can claim them. If you're in high school you can feel the blues—because most people who are in high school don't know where to go. You ask them, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" "I don't know." And that in itself is a burden, and that can give you a certain amount of the downers, you know, the blues. So when you listen to James Cotton or Little Walter or Junior Wells, you totally feel like they know, and they've been through what you're going through. Being from the West, that's the most universal music. Maybe if you're from India, you can't relate to it, but being from the West, that's the most universal music we have.

Did the original Santana Blues Band play blues standards?

We did songs by B.B. King, Ray Charles—like "Woke Up This Morning" and "Mary Ann"—and we would do our own versions of the first two Butterfield albums. We even did "East-West." And that's when I eventually started getting into drugs. I always saw so many people around me taking drugs, but the only thing I remember that would stop me from trying it was that I would practice with the band for a long time to get some numbers down pat, and we'd really be burning. Then we'd take a break, and they'd all go smoke some weed and come back and forget the changes. Because weed can make you trip up, you know. And I hated that; I said, "Man, that's not the way we rehearsed it." But once somebody left the house and left a joint in the ashtray for me and had *Sergeant Pepper's* or *Revolver* by the Beatles on the turntable. So I thought I'd see what it was about. It does make you aware of other things, other possibilities. But it's like tennis shoes: If you wear size eight, why put on size six? You already went through that three years ago, and it doesn't fit anymore. That's how I feel about drugs now; they just don't fit me. But if I hadn't ever taken drugs I'd probably be kind of square and be more prejudiced. I don't think I would have been as open to things like [jazz flautist] Charles Lloyd and [saxophonist] John Handy. It can make you receptive and sensitive to a certain level, right? The Beatles, Cream, and the Yardbirds were all doing it, so you say, "Gee, maybe there's something to it." It did play a role. Plus when I was a kid in Tijuana, I'd see everybody smoking pot, but I wouldn't do it.

Playing American blues music in Tijuana, did you relate more to the Mexican people or the Americans?

All the musicians that I hung around with had this beautiful pride in being hip to all the black musicians who'd come down from America to cop drugs. They'd come down to this club where I worked, and that's how I became aware of that music. They were singing the latest songs by Ray Charles and Bobby Bland, and we'd have to learn them. So I wasn't really into a Mexican atmosphere; I was more into a black man's atmosphere. Like I said, it took me a while to relate to the Beach Boys and the Beatles, because of that, and because I did hang around a lot of black musicians. So I don't think I relate as much to Mexican music and Mexican people as I do to the low-income Americans. A lot of white people played over there, too, and when they played the blues you could tell that they were greatly influenced by Jerry Lee Lewis.

How old were you when you came to San Francisco?

It was 1962, so I must have been twelve or thirteen. It was a drag, because they put me back into junior high, because I couldn't speak English. I had to learn to adapt to a whole other way of thinking and being around kids, because I thought I was a man of the world—working and playing in this nightclub in Tijuana, watching ladies strip. We'd play for an hour, and then they'd strip for an hour, then we'd play.... To me, I was a grown-up, so when I came here I had to live the life of a young adolescent all over again, and I couldn't relate. But fortunately, I did find some musicians who helped me make the transition much faster.

Were you on your own, working for a living as a kid in Tijuana?

In Tijuana I was working for a living; I wasn't going to school anymore. And when I came here, that was a burden, because I had

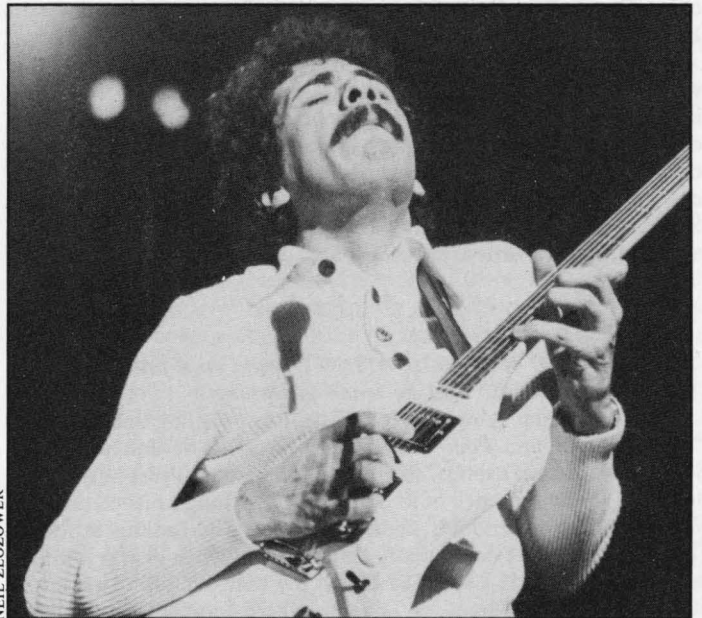
to go back to school—and I hated school. I mean, I always knew I was going to be a musician even before they put me in junior high. So I couldn't see why I had to know algebra and that sort of trip. But what was fascinating—which many Americans take for granted—is that you meet so many friends in one day of school, with the different teachers and classes. In Mexico, you have the same kids all day.

Did you want to come to America, or were you content playing in clubs in Tijuana?

I was very content there, because I was making my own money, nobody was telling me what to do, and I didn't have to be home at any special time. I was living on my own; I'd had a falling-out with my parents, and they were up here already. When you're a kid, it's like nothing is a burden.

Did the Latin influences creep into the Santana band because of the things you'd heard as a kid, or did an outside musician bring that element to the band?

[Long pause.] It took me a long time, just now, to remember when the congas came in. We were exclusively a blues band at first. People ask me a lot of times how the change took place, and I think the reason was that we'd go around "hippy hill" and Aquatic Park [in San Francisco], and they used to have congas



NEIL ZLOZOWER

and wine—they probably still do—and that's where we got the congas in the band. And then I heard Gabor Szabo [see *GP*, Dec. '69], and his album *Spellbinder* has congas on it. Somebody brought this conga player to jam with us, and he threw us into a whole different thing. Actually, we never play "Latin music"—you know, it's a crossover. I just play whatever I hear.

Did you originally plan to add a conga player, yet continue playing blues?

Yeah. Even when we had a conga player it was still the Santana Blues Band. Later we got Chepito [Areas], and he was playing congas and timbales. Then we dropped the "Blues Band" and started to play more of a crossover. And we were listening to Miles and the Jazz Crusaders. After that it was really interesting, because even Chicago came out with congas. Actually, Harvey Mandel [see *GP*, May '77] was probably the first guy to put congas on a rock and roll album [*Cristo Redentor*, Phillips, PHS 600-281]. I saw him and Charlie Musselwhite [as the Southside Sound System] at the Avalon one time, and they played "Cristo Redentor" and "Wade In The Water," and I was knocked out. I learned a lot from them. I really admire guys, like Harvey Mandel, whose sound I can identify, because it takes a lot of work. Nobody can say that you are born with it; you work for it and carve your own individuality. In fact, if people want to find out

Continued on page 119

siderably, and that's why we were using the chrome- or nickel-plated parts instead of gold. We had saved the body wings and necks, because usually when we would run individual parts we would make several hundred, and if the guitar didn't do too well, instead of throwing away the parts we would store them. I always had a feeling that when players caught up with our design, there might be some requests for the Flying V." He was right. ■

LETTERS

Continued from page 4

After reading the February issue of *GP*, with the feature "Is There A Future For American Guitar?", I feel that I must voice my opinions. Mr. Mossman is correct; the influx of lower-quality instruments has adversely affected American tastes. The American public, in general, has had the wool pulled over its eyes long enough. Our leading minds in Detroit and Washington tell us that so many of the foreign autos will get fabulous mileage, thus putting dollar signs in our eyes at the fuel pump. They fail to tell us that a medium-sized American car with an overdrive transmission and 15" wheels, instead of the automatic with 13" wheels, will do almost as well and still keep the American auto worker in business. I agree that the American public has generally learned to accept second best, when all along there is no need for it. The U.S. has people who are willing to work and produce, but they must have a market for their products. Without people like Maurice Anderson of MSA Micro, Shot Jackson with Sho-Bud, and Buddy Emmons of Emmons, as well as many others, where would

the American guitar be? The American industry needs the piecework incentive that Mr. Ball speaks of, for without it we lose a touch of quality that must be there in order to survive. I can only conclude that there is a chance for the American guitar, just as there is for the American automobile, or any other product, but the public must open its eyes and understand this, or before long everything will have "Made In Japan" printed on it. Before you buy something that you'll make a big investment in and have for a long time, ask yourself what you think it will be worth in 25 years, how well it will perform, and how well it will endure.

Bob Christian
Slidell, LA

I would like to offer a word of praise to Larry Coryell on his column devoted to Lenny Breau in the January '78 issue of *GP*. He has convinced me that there are still people who appreciate the talents of Lenny Breau. Lenny is living and performing now in the state of New York, and is still one of the greatest guitarists alive.

Randy DeFord
Lenny Breau Fan Club
422 W. Market St.
Logansport, IN 46947

CARLOS SANTANA

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how to develop this: A good way is to get a tape recorder and for half an hour turn out the lights in your house and get into a room that's kind of dark, where you don't have interruptions. Then just play with a rhythm machine. After a while it's like a deck of

cards on the table, and you can begin to see the riffs that came from this guy, the riffs that came from that guy, and then the two or three riffs that are yours. Then you start concentrating on yours, and, to me, that's how you develop your own individual sound. You play a couple of notes and say, "Gee, that sounds like Eric Clapton" or "That sounds like George Benson." But then you play two or three notes and say, "Man, that's me." Not until a couple of years ago did I consciously start doing it that way. I'd just sit down and turn everything off and get a rhythm machine and just play and play.

Do you find much time to practice guitar these days?

Yeah, I still do it a lot—as much as I can. Mainly with the rhythm machine. I practice so that my fingers will respond to what I feel. Sometimes I have this incredible craving just to get a music teacher to teach me chords and fancy scales that you'd find in *The Thesaurus Of Scales And Melodic Patterns* [Charles Scribner's Sons, 597 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10017]. I pick up that book once in a while and play two or three lines. Sometimes it scares me, because I start playing something really significant. Then sometimes I start sounding like everybody else, and I don't want to sound like that—I leave that stuff to Jerry Hahn and Larry Coryell, who are really great at what they do. I admire their craft,

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From the editors of
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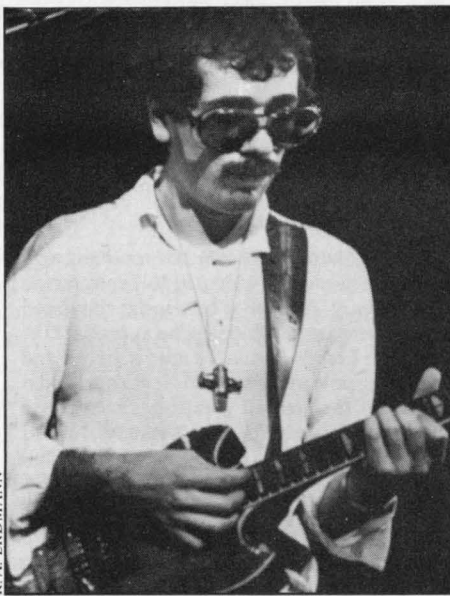
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but I prefer simplicity. It's like eating: If you don't discriminate what you eat, you get sick—you know, indigestion. It's the same thing; you have to know what's good for you. You are digesting it by learning it. It is stored up in your memory cells. Recently I was playing a song by Roberta Flack with Donny Hathaway, "The Closer I Get To You" [*Blue Lights In The Basement*, Atlantic, SD-19149]. That's one way I practice: I put on a record when there's nobody home, and if it hits me, my face contorts and I start crying. I feel that if I can't cry to something that is moving, I'm not going to cry onstage. I think a lot of musicians become very callous, and after a while they can't feel pain. That's not what music is about. Before I found Sri Chinmoy I used to take LSD just to feel pain, where all I had to do was look inside my heart and it's all there. I think that's what saved me from real hard drugs and that self-destructive path that a lot of musicians take.

Where did you learn chords?

From my father. He taught me the basic chords. My brother George [guitarist Jorge Santana; see *GP*, Apr. '73] has been teaching me chords and showing me how it takes years to unlearn what some books throw at you. He's been teaching me how you hear the chord and start building other

chords around it just by hearing the notes. I didn't even know this stuff until about three days ago. George came to my house and showed me. I'm going to stick around my brother, because he does know a lot about chords, and I need it. I think if I'm



R.A. ERDMANN

really lacking something it's harmony and chords. I don't think I'm lacking as far as imagination or visions are concerned.

Most of your playing is single-note lines—not many chords.

Right, but I know that sometimes when Tom [Coster] is playing a solo, he yearns

for somebody to throw chords at him, so he can take it to something else. I can see his point. It's to his advantage and my advantage.

Do you prefer to do concept albums rather than just collections of songs?

Yes. that's the only thing that I always deal with. Mostly, it's like a vision. Each song is a vision, rather than a musical approach. It's like painting: I don't think of what kind of stroke I'm going to give it; I just picture it, and then I know instantly what instrument, what color, to use. It's just easier for me, because I can't read music. I don't know nothing about music. Tom helps me out with the music. I give him a feeling—I hear something—and we work together, and he'll say, "What you're talking about is a B diminished 7th...." "Oh really?" I should get into music, and I probably will this year—chords and harmony. It would make it easier. I used to think it would get in the way, because I've seen musicians who are so technical with music that they always get caught on a technique of approaching a song the same way. They're bound to a technique, whereas a child who never practiced music—he can get the song any variety of ways, because he's not bound to a certain approach to music. Of course, I've heard a lot of pros and cons about music. I was always put off by a lot of snobbish musicians who can read music, but, fortunately, I met a lot of good musicians who had an open attitude

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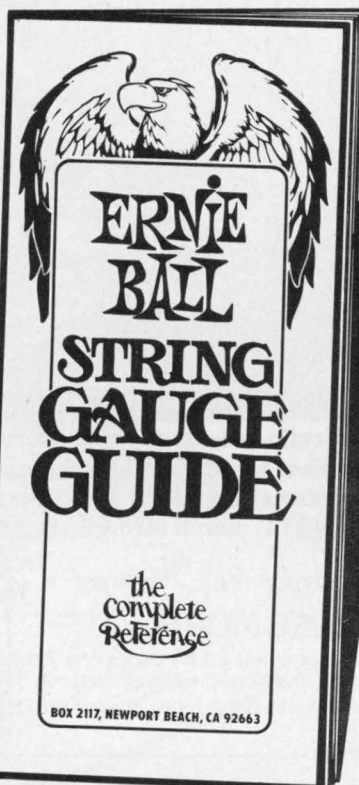
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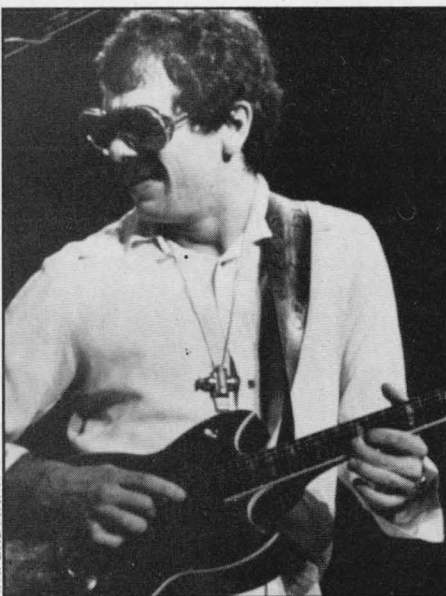
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about it. I once heard someone putting someone else down because he couldn't read music, and it was almost like in the movie *Never On Sunday*, where the mandolin player was feeling so down—they told him he wasn't a musician, because he couldn't read music. Then somebody told him, "Birds don't read music." So, in a way, it's an excuse, and I know that I should learn it and really make an effort to understand more about music, so I don't have to stutter as much. But I always feel I have enough spontaneity and enough vision not to be bound by, "Gee, I have to start with a C#."

Have you ever felt hindered by your lack of formal training when you're playing with someone like Stanley Clarke or Chick Corea?

We can play together easily. As soon as I close my eyes, it's like where you're sitting right now—you can just take for granted that you're sitting. But when you close your eyes and feel the chair holding you, and you start feeling your surroundings, then it makes it easier, because you remove your mind out of the way. To me, the heart is always in tune with the time and the melody. But if you start to think about, "I wonder what key he is playing in," then you can't even tune your guitar, because you spend so much time calculating and fabricating and criticizing that by the time you get to the song, they've finished already. But if you just feel, it's the most

natural thing to do—if you just feel, you can create. I think music training would help me from the point of writing my own songs a little bit faster. Sometimes it does take me longer, because what I hear I have to search for in different positions until I



find it—instead of saying, "I think what I hear is a D-something."

Do you mainly write songs by trial and error?

Yeah, I just hear something, and I have to look for it. A lot of times I don't have to look for it; I just find it. Other times, what

I'm finding is—since I'm getting away from three-chord progressions or *G* minor to *D* major kinds of things—you have to use so many chords. And it's just natural to be a product of what you hear sometimes in your environment, like Stevie Wonder. I'm hearing more harmony, so it takes me a little bit longer now.

When you hear an idea for a song in your head, is it usually a melody or a set of changes or a rhythmic motif or what?

It's a cry. It's a crying melody. That's mostly what I hear, and then I have to find the chords. Sometimes it's the other way around, and one chord could almost make up for three melodies. But sometimes the melody is so clear, you want to find three passing chords for that melody.

Your guitar solos seem to stay pretty close to the melody of the song itself, as opposed to players like, say, Al DiMeola or John McLaughlin, who use a lot of scalar things. Are you thinking of the song's basic theme throughout your solo?

Yes. To me, the heart of the song is the melody. And I approach the melody from a singer's point of view—a simple singer, not a singer who scats a lot like George Benson. If you'll notice, a lot of guitar players riff like horn players. And I don't really like guitar players like that. Not that I dislike them with a passion, but it doesn't appeal to me; it's boring to me. I think more like the layman kind of person sing-

Continued on page 122

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CARLOS SANTANA

Continued from page 121

ing [sings], "Lovely Rita meter maid..." You don't care what chords are underneath; it's the basic feeling of the song that gets you immediately. I listen to the radio a lot, so I don't think like *deedleedoodah* and that sort of thing. And I figure, why do it like that when there are so many thousands of cats who can do it a zillion times better? That's what they are, and I just get into what I am now. It's like your signature. This is a very valid point for me now—some people may think it's negative, but I think it's positive—because I am aware that out of thousands and thousands of guitar players, there are only, like, thirty who you can listen to and know who they are. The rest all sound the same—at least that's what I think. And it took me a while to realize that that's a very beautiful gift, your own individuality—even if you only know three notes, man, if you are able to play those well and know who you are. I don't think I was aware of my sound until three or four years ago. Even when I did that album with Mahavishnu [*Love Devotion Surrender*], after a while: "Gee, who's playing what?" It even took me a while to figure out who was doing what; because we were playing so many notes, after a while the sound was all the same. Then I started hearing a certain amount of chops, and I said, "That's Mahavishnu"; and then I'd

hear three notes and say, "Well, that's me." I think it goes back to when I was listening to Johnny Mathis and Dionne Warwick and playing behind the melody, rather than doing what the trumpets and horns or somebody else was playing. I really didn't listen that much to bebop; I missed that era. I was into all these blues people like Jimmy Reed who only play three notes—but they grab you. As far as I'm concerned, the point of music is to tell stories with a melody. All that stuff about playing notes, to me, is just like watching some cat pick up weights. After a while, who wants to see somebody flex their muscles?

Your guitar playing is extremely vocal-like in tone and phrasing, yet you've never been the lead singer of the Santana band. Do you try to compensate for that in your playing?

Right; I think that's exactly it. I sing through the guitar. The main theme is always haunting melodies.

Your sets in concerts are almost like concept albums in that there are very few breaks between songs, and the transitions from mood to mood are very subtle.

Yes, it's the mood. I learned that from Miles. He goes through an hour-and-a-half, and it's like showing you a whole desk of beautiful jewels and just looking at them without breaking the continuity—like, "Okay, I'm going outside to put a dime in the parking meter." You just sit there, and all of a sudden it hits you like that. I think

mostly I learned that from Miles—to put everything so that it's constantly transcending itself. You try to make it peak and resolve. Sometimes we feel like we do have to pause and let the people, like, gulp it in and digest it for awhile. But I like to go from song to song to song. It's more fun.

Is Lotus [Santana's triple-set import] ever going to be released in the United States?

I don't think so, because they want to condense it into one or two records—and that would destroy the whole thing. That was all one concert, you know. We recorded that in '73, in Japan. We were playing close to four hours in those days. But you can only play for so long like that. It's like giving people too much food, instead of giving them a nice portion so they don't start yawning and falling asleep. But we don't like to break, because then you lose momentum—whereas if you're already sweating you're getting into it. Once you stop, you don't want to start again.

When you were listening to Miles Davis and John Coltrane, was there any particular band or period in their careers that you especially liked?

Well, I identify with their music and them so much—not what they're about, but what's inside them. Not the personality; I don't identify with a part of the personality at all. But the creative and spontaneous musician, I totally identify with him and everything that he does.

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Sometimes I wake up and start listening to Miles's quintet, when he had [drummer] Tony Williams [with bassist Ron Carter; keyboardist Herbie Hancock; and saxophonist Wayne Shorter], and I can just go

The only period that I really can't get into still is the old, real cool jazz and bebop with [alto saxophonist] Charlie Parker. It still takes me a while to get into that. I put it on, and it's like being a little kid and somebody

to listen to it as much as I can, but after a while I can't relate to it. I can listen to [pianist] Thelonius Monk more than that, but in some of the other stuff there's too many riffs for my taste. But then I'm not a bebopper.

What about Miles's later period, beginning with, say, Bitches Brew?

I can relate to it, because being into airports and being into New York streets, I could see where that comes from, and I begin to love it, because I've been there—I've been through all that. It's like someone flashing you a year of New York in twenty-five minutes, and they pick the best outrageous scenes and put them to music. Miles is an incredible story teller of outrageous, funny things.

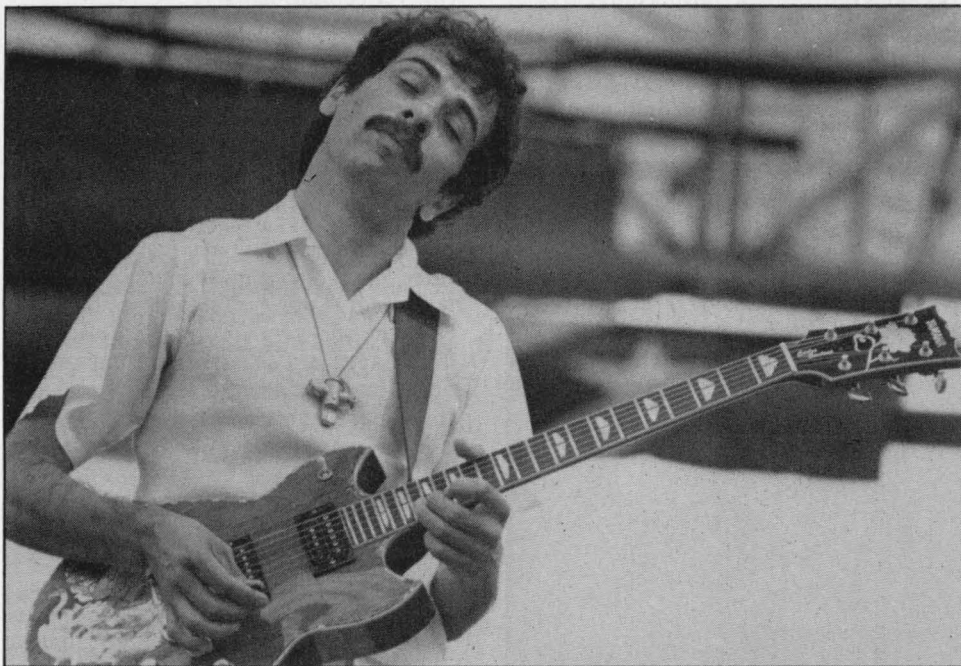
Have you ever met him?

Yes, I've met him a couple of times. We've done a few concerts together. I begged Bill [Graham] to put us on the same bill. We did a couple of concerts at the Fillmore when he had Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett, and I couldn't believe the audience's response.

Did you ever have occasion to jam with him?

No. One time he invited me to play in this club, and like a fool I said no. He kept pressuring me to go get my guitar. I kept looking him straight in the eye, and I was so insecure about my playing at the time—I think because of the dope. If I had been

Continued on page 124



JON SIEVERT

through the day. Other times I can listen to it, and I don't get as much out of it as I would from, say, when he had [percussionist] Ntume and [bassist] Michael Henderson. It depends on what kind of mood I'm in. I love all of it, and I can relate to all of it.

puts on Guy Lombardo. When you're a kid, you don't want to hear nothing like that; you want to hear Mickey Mouse or maybe Chuck Berry. So with this kind of music, I don't think it's really over my head—I just don't think it's my style. I try



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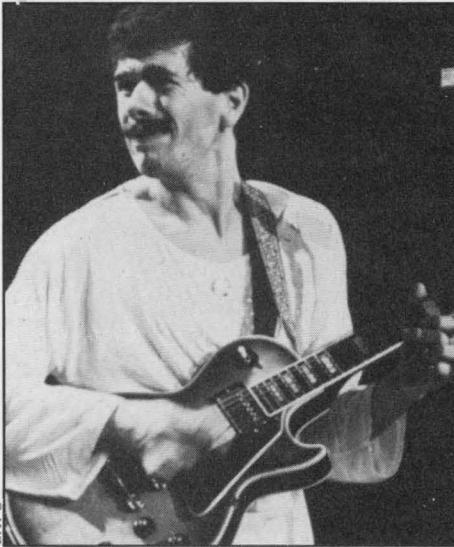
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aware of what I'm aware of now, I would have said sure. I should have trusted my ears to know what to play and what not to play. But at the time I was so paranoid. But that feeling was valid, because most rock and roll musicians that I know get paranoid when they see a jazz musician. You feel like those guys are older brothers. It's like being a kid and your brother tries to get you to swim on the deeper side of the pool, and you don't know how to swim that well [laughs].

Is there anyone today who you'd be afraid to jam with?

When I have a good meditation it would be pretty hard for anyone to intimidate me or for my own mind to intimidate me, because then I'm in my heart. If I was in my mind, anyone could scare me. When I close my eyes, I completely identify with Joe Zawinul and Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter and people like that. No, I don't think I would be intimidated if I felt at one with myself. I was really surprised when they told me that George Benson had chosen me to play with him on TV on *The Midnight Special*. I was really honored. In fact, I was overjoyed when I did talk to him, because I found out that success has changed him so much for the better. He's become more aware that people are listening to him. A lot of jazz

musicians play in small clubs, and they couldn't give a heck who's listening to them. They just play, and they play incredible stuff. But to me the first duty is to make people relate and have a good time. It's like a mirror; you start feeding off each other. One time I saw George at the Both/And, and he was playing a little more to himself than to the people, and to me that's disrespect, because the people paid, and they feed you—I don't care what anybody

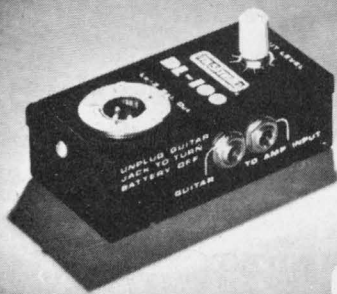


says. If you want to be a musician, it takes two hands: One is to feed yourself, and one is to feed the people. But the last time I saw George Benson he was so incredibly recep-

tive to the people; he had become warmer. It was really nice.

When you two played "Breezin'" together on TV it seemed to come off especially well because your styles are so different, yet complementary.

Yeah. One time I saw another guy who was incredible. I couldn't believe he could play like he was playing when he jammed with George Benson. Glen Campbell. I said, "Wait a minute!" But it's interesting to never underestimate any musician, because everybody has a heart, and when they become one with the heart, man, they can scare you. They can just play two or three notes and say so much. Jamming with George was very significant to me because he was very courteous to me. Some jazz players try to make you uncomfortable; they have the attitude that rock and roll guitar players—"What do they know?" George made me feel very comfortable, and that's what you have to do with musicians to bring out the best in them—make them comfortable. I think George has become aware that there's something extremely valid in the Beatles and the Beach Boys and Chuck Berry. It's just as valid as Charlie Parker and John Coltrane, only in a different way. God flows through everybody and everything, and that's what you have to realize. I think that's the best thing that crossovers are doing to people—making them aware that, "Okay, far out. Nobody can play jazz the way you can, but



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try to get into a straight B.B. King shuffle and *swing* it like B.B. swings it." You're going to have a hard time, unless you're open to that kind of music.

Have you ever seen or gotten into any "guitar battles" onstage?

I don't like that kind of pressure. I used to hang around the Fillmore and see a bunch of guitar players come up to B.B. King like they were gunslingers—you could see in their eyes that they wanted to burn him. And B.B. would just come out with some Django Reinhardt or Charlie Christian licks, and then after that play some B.B. King. I'd just laugh at the looks on those other guys' faces. When I went on tour with Mahavishnu we did about twelve concerts together, and for about the first six I think I was really intimidated by him. After that I started seeing how people were waiting for me; like, they'd had enough of him. And I said, "Well, maybe I do have a position where I'll say something and they'll listen." I was intimidated until I saw people being moved by what I was playing. After a while we gave some concerts together with acoustic guitars, and it's like anything: If you remove your mind, you can give someone a good run for their money, and you can even scare yourself. You just have to go inside yourself. If you spend your whole time thinking about what you're going to say, it's gone. You don't have time when you're onstage; you have to just go within and hear and feel and

play. One time B.B. invited me to play with him and Bobby Bland at Winterland. I was backstage, and all of a sudden he announced me, and they put the light on me. I walked out there with my eyes about this big, and he put his guitar, Lucille, in my hands, so I started playing. Growing up listening to those two, I felt like they were my fathers. I started playing, and B.B. and Bobby were singing, and old Bobby came over and put his arm around me. I have a



picture of it, and I'm standing there with my mouth hanging open. I felt like a three-year-old kid next to those guys. To me it was really significant, because they're

almost like the forefathers of the blues. The blues is such a familiar part of me. I guess it is for most Americans, too. The first time Santana played in Chicago, believe it or not, the show was Led Zeppelin, us, and Albert King in the afternoon, and then B.B. King, us, and Albert King that night. I was sandwiched between B.B. and Albert, and I said, "Great. As long as I don't play no B.B. King or Albert King licks, I'm going to be cool." And I just played what I had from the Santana band, and in fact it was good, because playing this kind of almost Latin music in between two blues players was a perfect contrast. It went over very well.

What was it like the time you jammed with McLaughlin and Eric Clapton in Michigan?

That was a great one, man. See, Mahavishnu has this thing where you know when he's totally into his heart, because he gets into this little dance. And no matter where time goes, he is like the equator on earth; he holds it together. And he started playing all this stuff and dancing, and Eric yelled and took his solo, and then he passed it to me. Then I passed it to Mahavishnu, and we started trading around. Alphonze Mouzon was on drums, too. It was incredibly fun. It was a beautiful combination, really. One cat just elaborates on a ceiling kind of level — Mahavishnu, right?—and the other cat just

Continued on page 126



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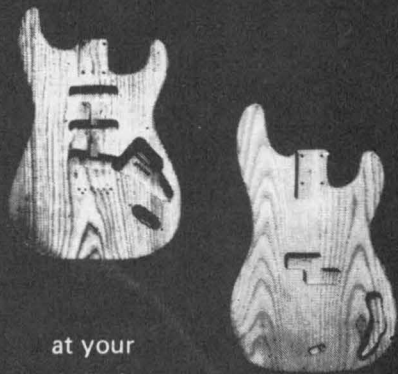
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CARLOS SANTANA

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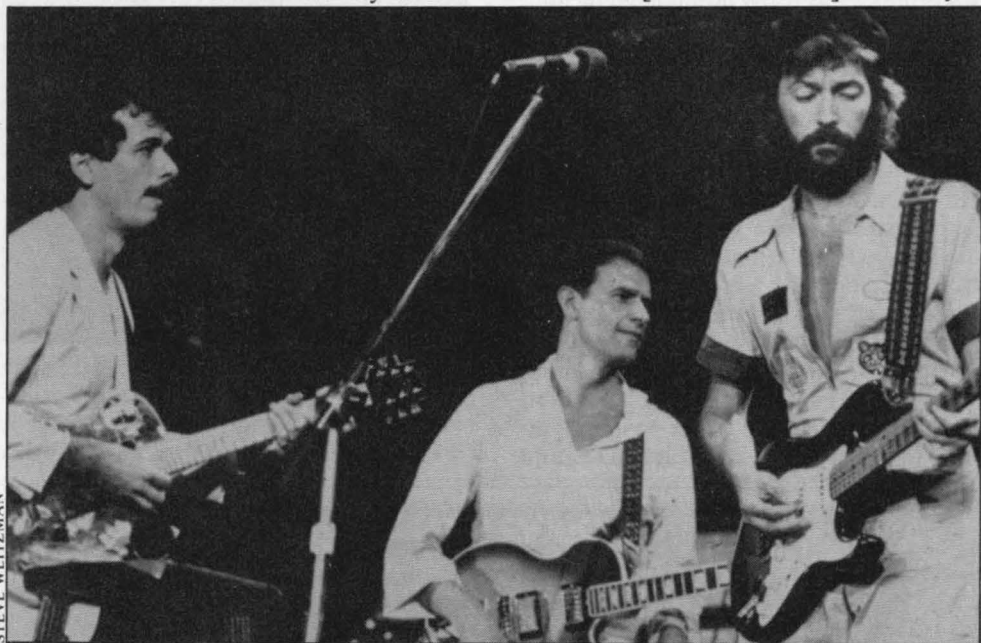
plays two or three notes, man, with simple, hard power. And I'm somewhere in between. Eric Clapton is one of my favorite human beings of all time.

Did the collaboration with John McLaughlin come about because you were both involved with Sri Chinmoy?

I was a seeker, and I still am a seeker. Even music is secondary to me—as much as I love it. Mahavishnu called me and said they wanted to know if we could do this album together, and he also wanted to know if I was interested in coming to see Sri Chinmoy. He felt that I was aspiring or crying for another kind of awareness—because at that time I had already made a

nical guitar styles are almost the antithesis of your melodic style.

Well, I don't listen to them as much anymore—that's why I can say they're my favorites. The people who I listen to a lot are my favorites in another kind of way, because they're so close to me. I put them in another category. The people that I'm really close to, I don't even consider them to be guitarists; I consider them to be more like painters. But Mahavishnu and George Benson and Pat Martino are definitely guitar players. B.B. [King] doesn't seem like a guitarist to me; he seems to cry and play the blues and that kind of stuff. So when I hear him play, I don't even hear a guitar; I just hear this cry. If I was really into guitar players, I would say Django Reinhardt [see *GP*, Nov. '76] was really a



Santana (L) with Eric Clapton (R) and John McLaughlin, 1975.

commitment to close the book on drugs and booze and that kind of stuff. I just felt that it was like being in the same classroom and seeing the same people; I had to move on. Then I started reading books about India and about spiritual masters, and it inspired me to work harder. Some people call it ambition, but I call it inspiration. When you have that, it's like having a different kind of energy—pure energy—a different kind of fuel. Sometimes it's totally in this center of creativity, and it just flows through you, and all of a sudden you don't have to worry about who's going to like or dislike it. When it's over, you feel just like a bee: You don't know why you did it, but all of a sudden you've accumulated all this honey. So that's what brought us together; we had the same cry for the same purpose. But I did learn so much from him; he's an incredible musician. Of course, you always find the number one guitar player that you never heard before—someone who's probably never been recorded—but since I don't know him yet, Mahavishnu, George Benson, and Pat Martino are probably my favorite guitar players.

That seems odd, since their very tech-

“guitar player.” He had both—he could cry with the melody, and then scare you to death with a couple of runs. He had everything. When we were first playing in Haight-Ashbury at the Straight Theater, this friend of the band brought me this album by him and said, “This is who you should listen to, because you remind me of him.” And I listened and was totally blown out. He could play runs like a horn player, a piano player, or a guitar player, and then play some sweet melodies. And then when they told me he only had two good fingers, I really flipped.

Do you think the LP with Mahavishnu worked musically?

Yes, but our intentions weren't to bring any music together. Our purpose was to make people who are on the edge—like we were—of pursuing a different awareness, seeking a different goal, become aware. That was our purpose—the core of it. It wasn't really a commercial or musical piece.

How much do you think the music of Santana has changed over the years?

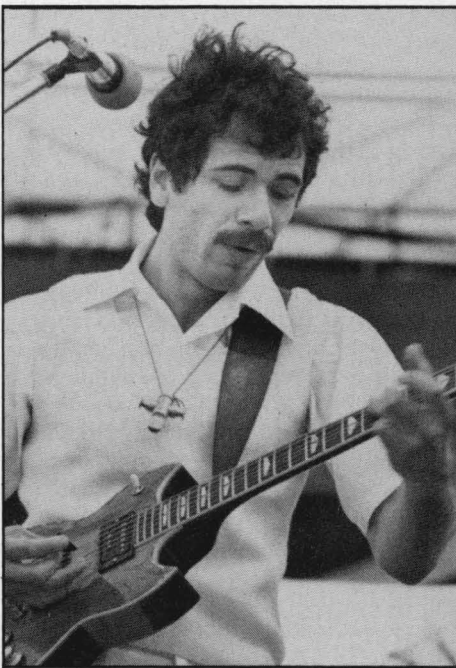
Well, it changed, because in the beginning I was flowing with [keyboardist]

Gregg Rolie and everyone who was affiliated with the Santana band, so we were all a collaboration. We'd write everything together; we'd all put our two cents in. Later on, I found myself writing more alone, and it just took a different kind of route and purpose. I don't think it changed what I'm about drastically, because what I was always about, even when I wasn't aware of spiritual values, was that I really wanted to have people dancing and enjoying themselves. Forget about the rent and all the other problems and just have a good time. I still feel like that's my primary motivation—to inspire people. If they want to dance, fine. But the other way that it did drastically change was that—instead of the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix—I got more into John Coltrane and Miles Davis and Mahavishnu and Weather Report. It's like what you eat is what you are after a while. It's got to affect what you play. But it's like everything; you try something, and then you go back to what's natural to you. And with all that music around you, why not listen to it and see how somebody else approaches a song? But now I'm back into dealing with what's more natural to me, instead of struggling in different kinds of music. I mean, it's still a struggle to get into my own sound and own individuality that God gave me; you always transcend yourself, no matter what you play. But at that time, I was struggling a little more, because it took me hours and hours. I would even sleep with a tape recorder on. I bought a tape recorder that would play both sides continuously, and I'd listen to John Coltrane all the time—because I couldn't understand the later albums; they were so hectic. Then all of a sudden it wasn't hectic at all; it was so sweet. It's like everything: You have to condition your mind to see that there's crying children in it, the love and compassion of a mother in the notes. The most significant thing that I learned in my whole life about music is the consciousness of it. It's like if you go to a bar where Elvin Bishop is playing, there's a certain consciousness he puts out. It's almost like being in a barn where there are chickens and pigs, and it's a very beautiful, happy atmosphere—very down-to-earth. Whereas if you go to a church or, say, to India, every music has its own consciousness. Music becomes like an empty glass, and whatever you put inside is the consciousness. If you play country and western or Brazilian samba music or whatever, that's just the shell. It's how you feel, what you put inside the music, that's really significant.

Around the time of the Amigos album a lot of articles came out stating that you'd "come back home" to the kind of music the Santana band had started out playing. Was that a conscious decision, or had you just absorbed different influences?

It was both. At the time that Jeff Beck came out with *Blow By Blow*, I was seeing the last of the musicians who got into the Mahavishnu thing, and I said, "Man, I'm

ready to move on to something else." Why should I keep listening to John Coltrane and trying to play like that? So I went to New York and started listening to Latin music again and started listening through a lot of people's ears—how they listened to the first three Santana albums. I started learning something about myself. Even Earth, Wind, & Fire and a lot of people gained something from the Santana band's approach to music. So if they were willing to even say in an interview that they learned something from us, I figured, "Well, what the heck am I doing looking for something else? Maybe I already got something within myself—my own individuality." That's when I started getting into the room with the tape recorder and separating my playing from all the other musicians. Then I



started realizing that I like Latin music and the Beatles and Eric Clapton, and that I shouldn't live in a world of nothing but Thelonius Monk and Art Tatum. Some might think that's a whole galaxy in itself—and it is. They're all great, but why limit yourself to a certain standard?

Did you notice the music affecting the audience in a different way?

We went for a year without a vocalist, and we were just playing as avant-garde as we were ever gonna get—like some things on *Lotus*. But after a while I started seeing people yawning, wondering when we were going to play something they could tap their feet to. You know, it was going a little bit over the ceiling, so I said, "Wait a minute. Maybe I should try to make a bridge and not be so drastic." Although I was having fun at the time, it's no fun if you're alone—I don't care what anybody says. At least for me, it ain't fun if you're trying to play basketball and all the other guys are on the other side of the court, and you're over here with the ball [laughs]. You know. So Tom Coster and Ndugu [Leon Chanler] did a little bit of research on the

Continued on page 128



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CARLOS SANTANA

Continued from page 127

band and picked up what people sort of liked about the old band, and they started arranging songs like that. But I don't think that until the last album, *Moonflower*, has everything felt more natural to us. We don't have to go back to the first three albums to write like that anymore. We just get together, and it starts happening.

With a song like "Europa," which is very emotional, is it hard to play that night after night and still feel it as deeply as you did when you wrote it?

It's not as hard as it used to be, because I learned a trick to it, a way to condition the mind. I used to listen to B.B. King and say, "Wow, it took me forever to learn that riff, and I still don't have it down pat the way B.B. hits it." Then after I saw him play, I could see that he'd make a certain face and then hit the note. Every time he made the face like that, he'd hit the note. And I figured that he would go back somewhere in time to a certain place or somewhere inside himself and then hit the note. So that's what I do now. I forget that I'm maybe a significant figure in the world of music, and I become like a child who doesn't know anything except that I'm crying for spiritual values. I don't have to fabricate any grandeur trip or anything; it's like I'm very, very natural. Which is what a spiritual master does. I think of Sri Chinmoy, and it makes it easier. I don't have to think, "Jesus, Al DiMeola is out in the audience" or any of that kind of stuff—all that pressure. I just feel like I'm playing for guru, and instead of all those people around it's just one person, my spiritual master. I keep a picture of him next to the monitor.

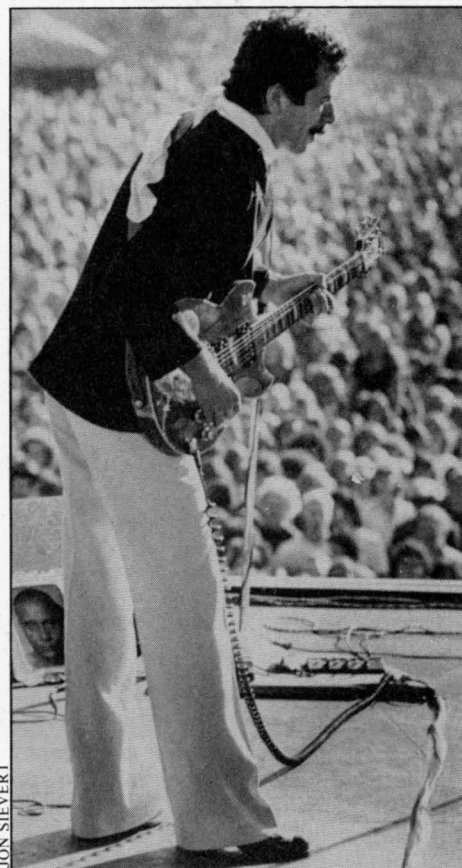
Your father [Jose Santana] plays violin?

Yes, and sings Mexican folk songs. My father is like mariachi-type music. I'm doing this solo album called *Oneness: Silver Dream, Golden Reality*, and my father is going to be on it, and my wife, my brother George, [percussionist] Narada Michael Walden, and my father-in-law, Saunders King. You know, I think it was in *Guitar Player*, they asked B.B. King to name his favorite guitar players [see *GP*, Mar. '75], and one he mentioned was my father-in-law, Saunders King. He plays tremendous R&B guitar. I can pick up where Wes Montgomery and Kenny Burrell heard things from him. His sound is very big, fat, Rolls-Royce, classy—not just fast chops. In fact, he doesn't play that much; he plays a couple of lines and then rests. But it's what he says. We played together at the Old Waldorf [in San Francisco]; he opened for us. It was an incredible experience. That's going to be a very interesting album, because it covers such a range of music just with people who are very close to me. Like, I want to mix my father's Mexican music with Cuban music—you know, with mariachis and all the strings and then bongos

and congas, too. And my father-in-law sings so sweet; I can't even think of anybody who he sounds like. It almost sounds like a high, soulful combination of Eddie Kendricks, Nat King Cole, and Billy Eckstein. It's very unique.

What kind of gut-string guitar do you play?

It's a Yamaha. I just endorsed them, and I'm really happy I did, because they go out of their way to make good instruments. The reason I left Gibson was because I feel like they're like McDonald's now; they just wrap a hamburger and throw it at you. There's nothing individual about it. Where-



ION SIEVERT

as Yamaha, to me, is more like my wife at Thanksgiving: She spends a whole day in the kitchen just to knock you out with the food. She puts effort and time and love behind it, and you can feel it. People might think I'm crazy, but you can feel it when you pick up that guitar. You know whether or not somebody put something of himself into it with his hands. And Yamaha has that—in their pianos and guitars. They're ambitious; they want quality.

Was your Yamaha electric built to your specifications?

Yeah. It's almost shaped like a Yamaha SG body, but it's really fat like a Les Paul. It has more frets, and for sustain I asked them to put a big chunk of metal like a grand piano right where the tailpiece is. You hit it, and it's like hitting an acoustic grand piano; it really resonates. When Yamaha first approached me, the guitar felt like a toy—you couldn't believe it. Really light; you couldn't get nothing out of it. The frets were really thin. It just didn't feel like a guitar. It was like something

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you'd get in a hock shop—really cheap. So I sat down with them and said, "Look, I can't play the guitar, man. I hope you won't be offended, but I just can't play it. But if you make it more solid, and put more wood on it..." Now I think they make them like that for a lot of people.

Does the guitar weigh a lot?

It weighs a lot, although it's not too heavy. It's just heavy enough for you; when you hit the note you don't have to use all those gadgets to sustain. In fact, I never use sustain pedals, and it really sustains better. Gadgets always make you sound like you're frying hamburgers through the amp. You have to find a kind of guitar that resonates.

There's some really nice acoustic work on Amigos. When did you get interested in that?

Well, my father had an acoustic nylon-string around the house, and that's how I learned Mexican folk songs. I noticed that when you play with the thumb it gives it that sound synonymous with classical, or Spanish. There's a certain way of playing it. I don't know how to use my fingers—I use a pick on my thumb—but I heard enough Spanish music in my life, and I know what it sounds like, and I know how you can make it very emotional. If you've ever been to a Greek restaurant and seen those guys dancing, you know the emotional buildup—this is the same thing. I met Paco de Lucia [see *GP*, June '77] in Spain, and I really got the chance to see what a real Spanish guitar player can do. It's such a beautiful art. I like him, because he's a crossover, too. I'm probably going to get a lot of letters from people, but some guitarists put me to sleep. I have to have something that's close to me personally—what I'm into—and he is very close to me. He reminds me of Gabor Szabo. I like Gabor a lot; he's very expressive. The thing I like about Gabor is that he's a spellbinding kind of man. The way he stands is like watching a mongoose; it charms the snake and hypnotizes it until he gets it. Gabor does the same onstage with his music and his presence; he catches the groove, and you forget where the floor is and where the drink is, and he just engulfs you and drenches you with his presence. And Paco de Lucia has this, too. He starts playing and you forget that you have arms and legs—you just become his feelings.

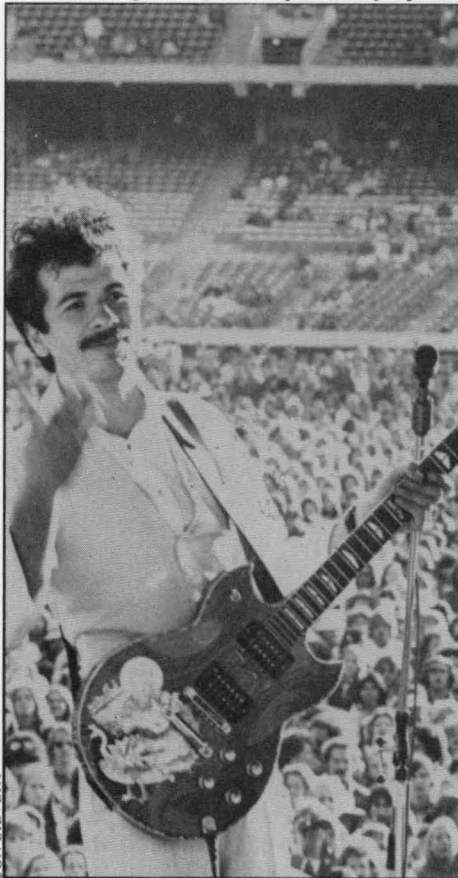
When did you start using the Mesa/Boogie amp?

My brother George turned me on to that. I was in New York, and I was really unhappy with my Fender Twins. It gave me headaches just to try to sustain. When Leo Fender left the company, he took something with him, because almost overnight I couldn't get sustain from the new Fenders. George came over and said, "You got to try this amp." And it really looked like the Tubes' amplifiers. It had a snakeskin kind of cover—really cheesy looking [laughs]. But, man, it sustained like crazy and was pure. So I never gave it back to George

[laughs]; I left him on the road without it—but I think he had another one. After a while I met Randy Smith [of Mesa Engineering, Box 116, Lagunitas, CA 94938] and I endorsed them. I'm sure that we started something, because Mahavishnu and Chick Corea and George Harrison and Elton John and everybody are playing them. The beautiful thing about it is it has three volume controls.

How do the controls work?

Well, if you want to practice really fast like Allan Holdsworth plays, you can still have that edge like you're bowing a violin—sustaining like that. Or you can play soft



ION SIEVERT

enough where the guy next door won't even hear you. By putting the first knob on the left on 10 and then the master on 1, you sustain like crazy, and it's about as loud as I'm talking right now. Or you can put the master a little louder and bring the other ones down, and you can play at the Berkeley Community Theater. But I never play with any of them above 7½.

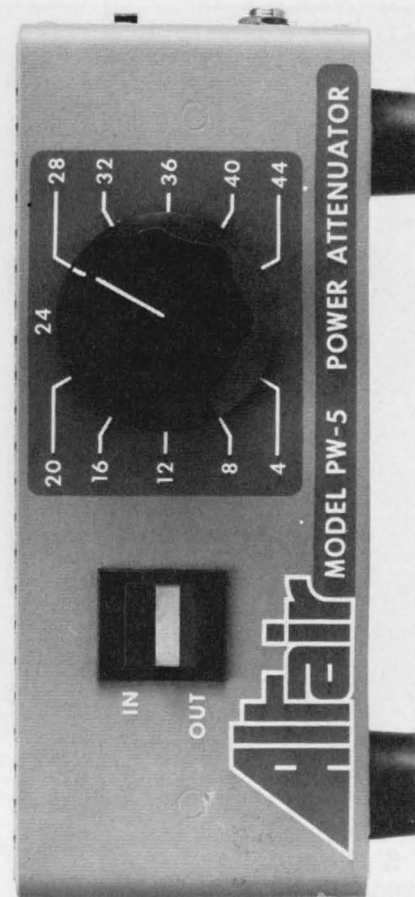
Not even onstage?

No, all three volumes are at 7½, and that is really loud, and I don't even have them put me through my monitors.

What other controls are on the Mesa/Boogie?

Treble and bass, and it has another one called gain, which I put on 7½ or 8 also. And it has a reverb and this [presence] button that you turn on and then pull the three volumes, and you get even more edge on it. I don't use that unless I'm going to play something really 1960s psychedelic. I don't like too much fuzz, but it's there if you want it. It also has a graphic equalizer,

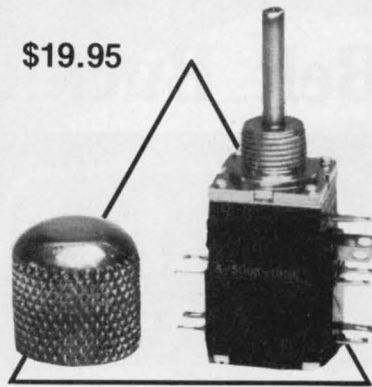
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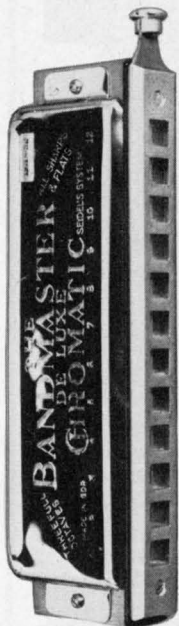
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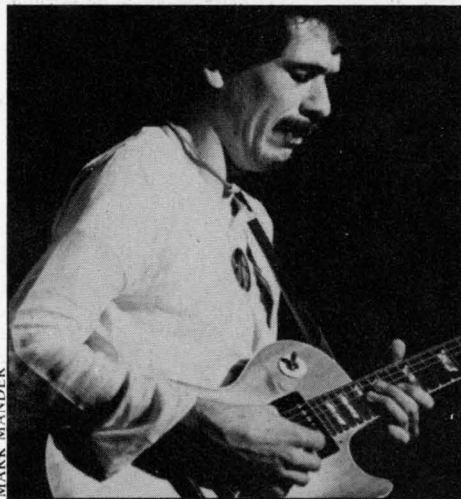
CARLOS SANTANA

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but I don't use that much. I use it in the studio, but not onstage.

What are your tone settings?

The treble is at 7 1/2, and bass is, like, 1 or 2. I don't like too much bass. Fred Meyers [Santana's sound man] did something where I'm playing through six 10s just by flipping a switch. Then I flip the switch and I go back into the Boogie output. But the Boogie with one 12 is enough. When I play through the six 10s, that's when I play rhythm; it's clean and naturally gives you a lot of bass. I don't know how the Mesa/Boogie came about, but I remember going to Randy at Prune Music [10 Locust Ave., Mill Valley, CA 94941] and saying, "Man, I wish somebody would come out with a volume that I could sustain at any kind of level." And he said, "Man, you're dreaming" or something. Then all of a sudden he had three volume controls. He's a very remarkable



MARK MANDER

man, and I think he beat a lot of people to the punch. A lot of people still wouldn't think of that.

What type of strings are you using?

I use Yamaha strings—generally .008, .011, .014, .024, .032, and .042.

It's surprising that you get such a full-bodied sound with such a light setup.

Well, it depends on how high you put the bridge, too. The lower you bring it down, the more you can bend the lighter strings. But if it's higher, then it's more comfortable for me. Mine's not too high, but not too low. Sometimes I feel kind of lazy and I don't feel like really bending, so then I go to the acoustic guitar and start building myself up all over again.

Have you been using the Yamaha electric on your albums?

I've used it ever since *Amigos*. They made me another one, a beautiful green one, and it's better for ballads, because the pickups are original Yamahas. I always change the pickups—that's the only thing that I change from Yamaha—but this time I kept them on. On the other Yamaha, I had Larry Cragg [see *GP*, Sept. '77] put in new pickups that he rewires, and the

response is incredible. Larry knows what I want and what I need, and he goes for it. He really knows me, but I don't think he's ever listened that much to our albums—I've just been to his shop [Prune Music] so many times.

Do you still use the Gibson L6-S that you were using before the Yamaha?

Well, Yamaha came out with a guitar called a Super Combinator, and the body looks like a takeoff on a Stratocaster, but it's got all those phases that the L6-S has. It sounds like a Telecaster, or like a Strat with the switch between the pickup positions. That's why I liked the L6-S—because it was a Gibson, but it sounded almost like a Strat. But I've got to tell you the truth: That guitar was like a General Motors car—within two months, man, something would always go out. I found myself almost bleeding to sustain a note, and I know it wasn't all the amp's fault.

Before the L6-S you were playing a Les Paul, right?

Yes. It was a 1968 or '69 model. Neal [Schon] and I got them at the same time, but his got stolen. It's a very good guitar.

Have you ever played Fenders?

I play Fenders in the studio. Onstage I don't, because to sustain I have to play almost twice as loud on a Fender. See, I don't beef them up; I don't do anything to the pickups. And for sustain, Gibson humbuckers have always been hotter, from the get-go. On the other guitars you have to have gadgets to sustain, or you have to play even louder, and I'm not ready to make the jump. But in the studio I use Fenders a lot. I played a Stratocaster on "She's Not There" [*Moonflower*].

Ever play hollowbody or semi-hollowbody electrics?

Yeah, I played a [Gibson] Byrdland on *Amigos* for chord work. But they might have mixed me out [*laughs*]. You know, it's incredible, because each guitar makes you play totally different. You don't even have to try, and the Strat will throw you into a different way of playing, like Montrose—really raunchy. But every time I play the Byrdland I find myself playing more like Kenny Burrell. I was into him for a long time. When you play the Byrdland, you want to use the thumb more to get that beautiful tone. It's really solid for playing jazz guitar.

What's in the rest of your guitar collection?

I have most of the ones Gibson put out, Yamahas, most of the old Fenders. Don Wehr [Don Wehr's Music City, 817 Columbus, San Francisco, CA 94133] called me, because he had a real old Stratocaster in very good condition, and that's the one I play a lot when I record. But the rest just occupy space. Mostly I just play the Yamaha now. A friend of mine, Linda Manzer, built me a guitar that has a great tone. Just recently I got a new white [Gibson] SG with three pickups, because I wanted to get a tremolo. And it's mainly because I was

listening so much to Allan Holdsworth, and I know that's what he uses. He's one of my favorite new players. I'd like to record one song with that kind of sound; of course, I can't think or play like him. Certain notes and bends he does are extremely unique.

You've mentioned several artists as being crossovers, which is somewhat controversial, since some jazz purists no doubt resent a rocker like Jeff Beck winning this year's Playboy poll as Best Jazz Guitarist. In fact, the term "jazz" has been used by some to describe your playing.

And I'm not, right. I don't know why they classify certain artists like they do, but I'm not bothered by it, because I know that first and foremost I'm an instrument myself trying to play something back to you. I don't consider myself a guitar player as much as I am a seeker who wants to manifest his vision through that particular instrument. I consider a guitar player somebody who *sounds* like a guitar player. In this day and age, it's hard to tell who's

ten to real Latin music, we don't sound like that.

What would you consider real Latin music?

Real Latin music is Tito Puente, people from Puerto Rico, people from Cuba, and some in Venezuela. Everyone else is a conglomeration; they hear something that sounds like Latin music, and they adapt it to their own style—like [tenor saxophonist] Gato Barbieri and myself. Which is a healthy thing. Like Blood, Sweat, & Tears did on their second album with jazz and Latin things. Even Steve Winwood and Traffic put out some Latin things on *Mister Fantasy* [United Artists, UAR-6651]. But it's not a real Latin sound; it's Latin-colored. By me saying this, I feel that I really cleared the air to a lot of people—Latin people and any other kind of people. I don't want to be labeled like that, because I don't play like that. You know, if I wanted to play blues, it takes a long time to play the blues and really be known as a blues player.



not a crossover, except Keith Jarrett. Even McCoy Tyner sounds like a crossover, although he plays acoustic piano. But the variety of songs he does—with strings or people singing—is a positive crossover. I don't consider "crossover" to be a negative term. Some players have used it just to make more bread, and their heart isn't in it, and that's prostitution. But somebody who is making an honest attempt to master another kind of music his own way is a positive crossover. I think the only one, to my ears, who day or night doesn't sound like a crossover is Keith Jarrett. But to me it's a challenge to learn everything on earth. One time I felt like it was my duty to be a pioneer, but that kind of stuff I leave to someone else now. I don't care to be a pioneer, except for my own heart. But consciously I wouldn't make it a commitment to put that kind of pressure on myself. I just play whatever is comfortable without offending or belittling my instrument or my own integrity.

You said earlier that you don't play Latin music.

I mean strictly Latin music. If you lis-

Even though your original band was called the Santana Blues Band, you've never put a straight blues tune on any of your albums.

I only use blues for feeling. I think as close as I came to playing blues on an album was a song called "Practice What You Preach" on *Borboletta*. I always wanted to do a blues, but to play blues you have to have a blues keyboard player who can play like Otis Spann—someone like Alberto Gianquinto. He used to play with B.B. King, James Cotton, and Charlie Musselwhite. That cat is a monster. You can tell that his main people are Thelonius Monk, Otis Spann, Horace Silver, and Chick Corea; those are the people he's really into. I collaborated with him on "Incident At Neshubar" [*Abraxas*, *Lotus*, and *Fillmore*, *The Last Days*]. I did the last part of it, and he did the 6/8 and played piano on it. He helped us on the first two albums, because we'd never cut a record before. He said, "Look, all you have to do is take the fat out. Don't be going on and on, overstating anything; just pick the best

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Continued on page 132

CARLOS SANTANA

Continued from page 131

part of the song." That's what we did. Otherwise, we would *still* be there [laughs].

Your first album didn't come out until 1969.

We were playing at least two-and-a-half years before we put out an album. That's how we got the reputation. We were headlining the Fillmore a couple of times, and we didn't even have an album out—you can ask Bill Graham. We must have been doing something right.

A Selected Santana Discography

With Santana: *Santana*, PC 9781; *Abraxas*, KC 30130; *Santana* (better known as *Santana III*), KC 30595; *Caravanserai*, PC 31610; *Welcome*, PC 32445; *Borboletta*, PC 33135; *Lotus* (Japanese import), CBS 66325; *Amigos*, PC 33576; *Festival*, PC 34423; *Moonflower*, C2 34914; *Fillmore, The Last Days* (various artists), Z3X 31390. **With others:** *The Live Adventures Of Mike Bloomfield And Al Kooper*, KGP6; *Carlos Santana & Buddy Miles! Live!*, C31308; *Mahavishnu John McLaughlin, Love Devotion Surrender*, KC 32034; *Turiya Alice Coltrane, Illuminations*, PC 32900; *Narada Michael Walden, Garden Of Love Light*, Atlantic, SD 18199. [Ed. Note: All albums on Columbia unless otherwise noted.]

WHAT'S IN A NAME

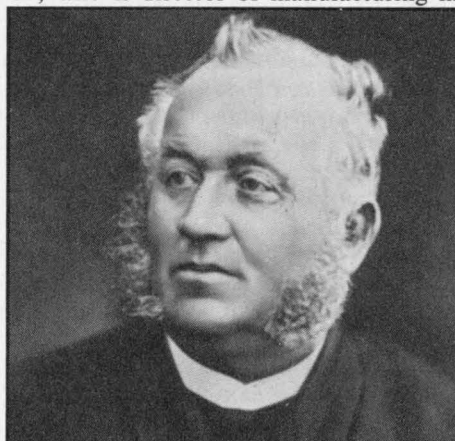
Continued from page 12

Over the 120 years of its existence, the firm has had its share of ups and downs. "We were subject to depressions like everybody else," Frank says, "but the company never closed down. Exports were limited by the second World War, but we always remained in production."

Historically, the major part of Hohner's yearly revenues comes from the sale of reed and keyboard instruments, though in recent years the sale of guitars has become increasingly important. They were added to the company's American line fifteen years ago on a small scale and on a larger scale eight to ten years ago. "Since 1973," Frank says, "we have increased our guitar business on the average of thirty-five percent each year up to now. The parent company doesn't make guitars as such—we develop designs and have them made for us primarily in Japan based upon our specifications." The Hohner guitar line includes pedal steel, bass, electric, and acoustic guitars in prices ranging from \$49.95 upwards to \$795.00. Furthermore, the company sells tone modification devices, harmonicas, melodicas, diatonic accordions, piano accordions, electronic keyboards, recorders, amplification systems, portable electric organs, and educational musical instruments; the firm also carries the world's largest and most complete library of music for harmonicas, melodicas, and diatonic

accordions.

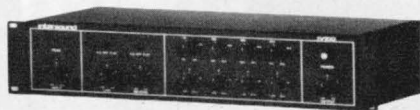
The Hohner dynasty does not end at the current president's desk. Frank sees the future of M. Hohner, Inc. in other family members: "We are now in the third, fourth, and fifth generations. Right now with the firm is one cousin whose name is also Matthias. And there's my cousin Walter, who's a managing director. There is even a fifth generation Hohner—Matthias Hohner IV, who is director of manufacturing in



Matthias Hohner, 1833-1902.

Trossingen. This is not to mention numerous in-laws scattered around the globe. The younger Hohners are being trained to take over the company." And they, like Frank, are unlikely to ever work for anyone else. As Frank succinctly puts it: "I've always been quite busy with what we had on hand."

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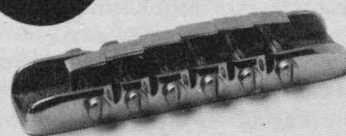
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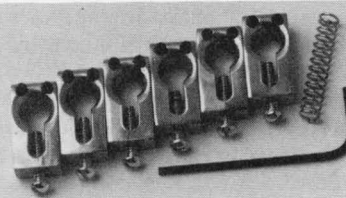
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