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Carlos Santana's

Music, like all manner of fashion, is guided by the simple rule, that what goes around comes around. Again. The new wave rekindles sparks from the 60s. 80s metalmania refocuses on today's teenager, while disco has given way to its more syncopated roots in R&B. Covering old hits is not only vogue, but commercially successful. Hey, Harrison, McCartney, and Starr got back together, even if it was done by transcontinental overdub. The fact remains that sooner or later even old high school bands yearn to stretch out in the basement again.

So it is that eleven years after his band's most popular and artistically successful album, *Abraxas*, Santana's current disc, *Zebop*, returns to the sizzling percussion and screaming blues solos that marked the man and his band as major stylists in the first place. Gaining the most from any performance at Woodstock, the Santana Blues Band, as they were billed, exploded onto the scene in 1969. These San Francisco street kids went from the unknown to the unprecedented as their first album went platinum at a time when gold records were still the stuff of dreams.

They ignited crowds from New York to California with a combination of Afro-Cuban rhythms and blues based rock that at the time seemed both revolutionary and unique. Guitarist/leader Carlos Santana recalls the idea wasn't so new, only the mix. "When we came out people were already playing with congas and timbales. We just put them up front. It happened because we had strong personalities in the band and the percussionists (Jose "Chepito" Areas and Mike Carabello) wanted to be right up there with everybody else. Now we're aware that we have a role to play with latin percussion, as Santana. Some people say we were the first, but anytime you put timbales and congas out there you're gonna sound like this band. To get it right is like learning to use spices on food."

The triumph of their second album, *Abraxas*, is a mixed blessing that the man and the group still carry with them. It embodies the best they have to offer; the heat and earthiness of the rhythm section, and the soaring flights of Santana the guitarist. It was here that Santana's "cry", an extraordinarily graceful and melodic guitar style made its entrance. On songs like "Samba Pa Ti" and "Black

Magic Woman," Carlos Santana not only captured the hearts of his audience, he reinvented the blues idiom and defined a new guitar style as well. *Abraxas* remains untouched by time, as contemporary today as it was visionary in 1970.



Cry of the Heart

Santana III featured the addition of horns and the introduction of a then 15 year old guitar wiz, Neal Schon. It also represented the final step in a trilogy of albums that marked the first phase of the Santana band. Thanks to Santana drummer, Michael Shrieve, Carlos was introduced to the music of Miles Davis and John Coltrane. His interest and absorption in these players resulted in the next trilogy of music, *Caravanserai*, *Welcome*, and *Borboletta*.

Caravanserai, released in '72, is the second artistic pinnacle for the band. It's their *In A Silent Way* and *Love Supreme* combined in one disc. Along with Hancock's *Headhunters*,

it's one of the least pretentious fusion albums of the early 70s.

Santana's jazz/rock explorations reflected a time of search and discovery. He toyed with adding real jazz players, while submerging the latin and guitar power of the group. It was a hit or miss proposition with the public, mostly a miss. Released in '75, *Borboletta* only recently went gold. This period culminated in *Lotus*, a sprawling three record live set that revealed the tug of war between the solid ground of the past and the groping search into new areas. "In those days I was like a kid," the 34 year old guitarist remembers. "You go at it blindly and hope for the best. After all this time I begin to understand bebop a little more. But it's endless."

In '73 and '74 he recorded two Coltrane inspired albums, first with guitarist John McLaughlin and then with keyboard player/harpist Alice Coltrane. Both records feature Santana at his most adventurous; they are, however, more of an experiment shared than realized.

Through McLaughlin's example, Carlos becomes a disciple of Sri Chinmoy, who gives him the spiritual name, Devadip. Since then he has developed two distinct personalities. There is the spiritual Devadip, concerned with striving towards perfection. There is also Carlos Santana, who lusts in his heart as much as the rest of us. The two personalities are not necessarily at odds. While striving toward perfection, Devadip is not above normal human emotions.

His music in the late seventies is decidedly secular. With the deflation of the fusion balloon, and with his own audience dwindling, the Santana band tried to recreate the latin success of the past, with the album *Amigos*. Though it didn't top the charts, it did show that an audience was still there. On into *Festival*, *Moonflower*, *Inner Secrets* and *Marathon*, the song, not the guitar, not the percussion, became the way. Aside from the live cuts on *Moonflower*, and a few scattered tunes among the other discs, it was a fallow time for Santana's cry. "That was my decision," says Carlos discussing the lack of fire on those records. "I wanted to be surrounded by singing. Those albums were a manifestation of me experimenting with becoming a songwriter. After a while I realized, 'What am I doing? I have to go back

Carlos Santana

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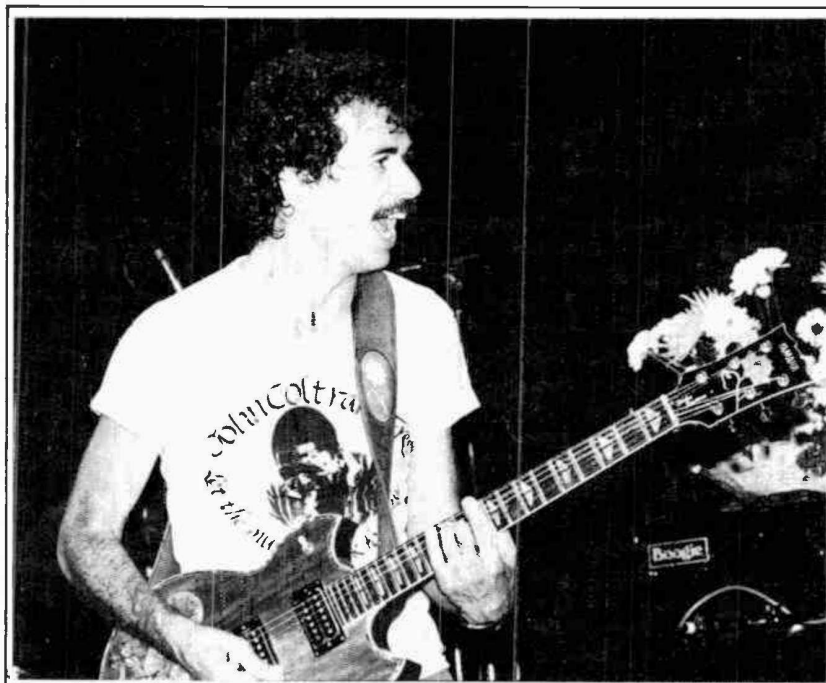
and play solos again! It's funny, I've got songs in the can that sound tailor-made for James Taylor. I've got other songs that sound like Buck Owens. I don't know why I write these, they just come out." Among his favorite compositions are "Song For My Brother," "Gardenia," "Open Invitation" and "Samba Pa Ti." "You become more rounded when you compose," he adds. "That was a transitional time for me, a time to learn."

Santana's greatest teacher has always been B.B. King. "For my personal taste, he is number one," Carlos begins. "I hear the best of Bloomfield and Clapton, the best of everyone, and B.B. King is still the summit of feeling. There are other people that have other significant things to contribute. I treasure Miles Davis for his imagination and vision. I adore John Coltrane for his cry and devotion to God. If I were to name one person who had all these qualities, Django Reinhardt is the cat."

"I listen to a lot of sax and trumpet, so they tend to get in there on my guitar. But after a while other musicians become like tatoos. It takes longer to get rid of them than to actually learn what they're doing. When I go back to B.B., he reminds me where the basics are. You can still learn from these other great musicians, but B.B. always teaches you to simplify and get to the heart of the song."

Zebop's return to the blues/latin flavor is a reflection of current influences and good band chemistry. "I started pulling out Sonny Boy Williamson records and tons of Little Walter," Carlos replies to the question about his return to blues. "I've also been hanging around with the Fabulous Thunderbirds. It's inevitable that the blues feeling has got to rub off on me. Now Clapton's playing with John Mayall was fantastic; when you play like that you're almost possessed — he can play that way anytime. But you need the right environment, which depends on two things, timing and people. Your surroundings are what makes you play the way you do."

Beyond the point where guitar is everything, Santana holds close to Pat Martino's philosophy that you've got to go out and live outside of the music or you'll have nothing to say when you play. Carlos's current passion is tennis.



All photos: Fhet Roberts

"Tennis is important because it teaches you concentration. The goal is to play a perfect match, to be right on top and not give up. It's pretty much the same with guitar playing. The goal is to play a perfect solo. A perfect solo is the best of your imagination, feeling, sincerity, and simplicity. You put all these things together and that's a tremendous solo. All that stuff happens unconsciously. But I'd say it's there on "Europa," "Samba Pa Ti," and some latin things. But those two songs are the most consistent."

"Gregg Rolie (Santana's original keyboard player) helped me a lot with "Samba Pa Ti." Many people didn't want to record it. Gregg stuck by me and encouraged me to do it. I remember I had no conception for the solo. When the song was over, my earphones were not on my ears, they were on my nose and the back of my head. The first thing I said was 'How was it? Do I have to do it again?' Gregg said, 'No man, that's the one.' For that stuff you surrender to a higher force and that force plays through you."

In developing new sounds Devadip plants a musical garden and then does his own weeding. "I still find the best thing to do is play in a dark room for a long time and tape it. Listening back to

the tape, you get rid of unnecessary things, and find precious things about yourself. It's like a man sifting for gold. Out of that sifting come songs and personal melodies. I'll play a lot, until my fingers pretty much respond to what I feel. Then I put the guitar away for a while. Otherwise it can be like you're talking without meaning it. The notes become like paper bullets, they don't penetrate."

The melodic grace of a "Samba Pa Ti" found its way into Santana's guitar style, by way of 60s pop singers. "I listened to a lot of Dionne Warwick and Johnny Mathis. For a long time I wouldn't listen to guitar players, only singers, because I wanted to sing through the guitar. Many guitarists, unless they are flamenco players, tend to sound too saxophonish. For some reason they bore me, they don't capture my attention. I'm spoiled. I always think of the guitar as B.B. King, and he is like a voice."

"The other thing is that Dionne, Mathis, Miles, and Coltrane, all sound invisible. They're like water. They're black but they're not black. They're white but they're not white. It's not like you can say that's just typical blues or typical latin. Nat King Cole could do a Mexican ballad or a country and western song and reach the Jews

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Carlos Santana

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and the American Indians. That's what I look for in my sound, that universal thing."

Santana's universal appeal has always been stronger on stage than on record. Never a heavy sales item, they have sustained themselves from the road. As their manager, Ray Etzler, explains, "Touring and record sales don't match up for us the way they do for most bands. We may not sell a lot of records, but people always want to

see this band perform." In concert the percussion — the true heart of the band — stays up front, where it belongs. While Santana's guitar playing — that fusion of furious passion, soaring sustain and gentle phrasing — is given more room than any player on the road. "This band, live transcends any record I've ever recorded. The effect is exhilarating."

Devadip's front line guitar is the Yamaha SG-2000 prototype. The

instrument was originally developed to his specifications and later given a name and mass production. Using the same sustain principles as a grand piano, Carlos suggested inserting a metal bar near the bridge. The guitar is newly outfitted with Seymour Duncan's replacing the Gibson Patent Applied For pickups he originally installed. Other specs include a Gibson Tunamatic Bridge, Schaller pegs and a Yamaha tailpiece. He uses Yamaha strings which (from high E to low E) are .008, .011, .014, .026, .032 and .042.

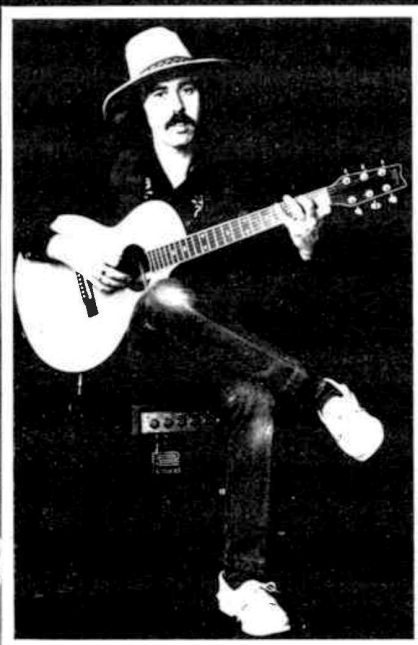
His second line is a custom built Paul Reed Smith guitar with Duncan pickups, Schaller pegs, a modified Stars Guitars bridge, tailpiece and vibrato, and a nylon roller nut which turns with the strings as they bend. His backup is a '58 Gibson Les Paul. "The Yamaha is the standard. It's like a Citroën, a French car — comfortable and economical. The Paul Reed Smith has a tremendous edge to it. It's a fast, ballsy, powerful instrument. It's like a Maserati. You've got to know what you're doing or you'll wipe out. The Gibson Les Paul is the old standby. When something goes wrong with the others, it will be there. To be quite frank, each one could replace the others. I could play a whole night on any of those three guitars. It's just that they all have a uniqueness for certain songs."

Beyond that Carlos views the pickups as having distinct personalities and purposes. He is one of the few soloists who constantly switches between them. When asked to explain why, he responds, "There's something extremely soulful and haunting about Miles Davis playing with a muted trumpet. Those soothing things are the neck pickup. The hard edged one is when I step on the Wah. It means you're going for the eyes or the jugular vein. There is anger there. Sometimes as much as your mother loves you, she must be stern with you. That's the bridge pickup. So there's the justice and the compassion pickup."

The performance amp setup includes three different amp/speaker configurations. For that "wall of China sound" there's a 100 watt Marshall powering a Boogie Scorpion 4 x 12" cabinet with Celestions. For lead and sustain he uses a Boogie 100 watt lead amp, in the 60 watt position; it powers a 12" Altec. With this amp he uses a Roland Analog Delay. For

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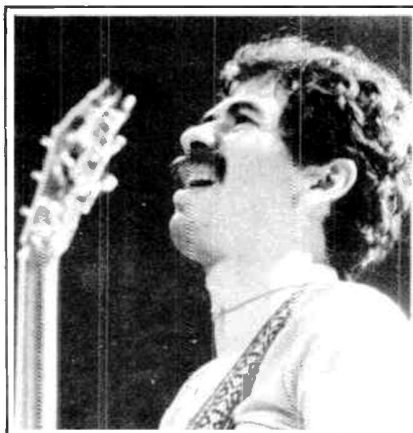
Carlos Santana

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rhythm passages Carlos prefers the Series 300 Mesa/Boogie going into a Scorpion 4 x 12" with E.V.'s. On this amp he has a DOD Dual Speed Chorus Effect. In front of all three combinations there is a Mutron Volume/Wah with the volume circuit removed. The whole setup is then connected to a computer bypass circuit, so he can select any amp at any time.

"When it comes to phase shifters, I like Pat Metheny. He's the genuine thing. But like Pat Metheny we have to be careful how we use those sounds. Before Jimi went out he was getting a sound I wasn't too fond of. A lot of times you can put the guitar through so many signal processors that the real connection between the cry of the heart and the notes on the strings is too filtered."

Responding to the mention of Andy Summers, Santana exclaimed, "He's the best! *Andy Summers is the Joe Zawinul of the guitar.* He uses only the quality sounds. And when it comes to putting all the elements together in a contemporary sound,



Allan Holdsworth has got it. I give him more credit than anyone for just pure expression in soloing. He and Andy Summers are on the same level. They have something totally beautiful."

When asked about jazz greats, Sidney Bechet, Charlie Parker and John Coltrane, Santana's response is equally enthusiastic. "Sidney Bechet is truly soulful. He sounds like a voice, the way Bessie Smith used to sing the

blues in the 20s and 30s. It don't care too much for his tone, but his feeling is incredible."

"When I think of Charlie Parker, I think of Picasso and Stravinsky. Parker just penetrates. His will was inspired and burning like crazy. People like that offer so much and leave so much behind. But as far as what I look for in music, I'm infinitely closer to John Coltrane than anyone else. I'd say *Ballads* and *Coltrane's Sound* are my favorite Coltrane sounds. I like the late Atlantic albums the best.

"The stuff I'm most fond of deals with lyricism more than chops. Let's face it man, lyricism deals with simplicity. Willie Bobo describes me as somebody who makes a small chair into a sofa bed. I like to make myself comfortable. I admire Mahavishnu, Bill Connors, and Allan Holdsworth, for their dexterity. But dexterity alone is about as interesting as the mind talking all night and saying nothing. It's intellectual dexterity. The guys I love don't do that — *they play from the heart.*"

John Stix

Grateful Dead

original audiences a great deal. We still have a lot of lights and things like that focussed on the stage and it's a big time rock'n'roll band, but the audience is more participatory now than they were in the early seventies.

"Commune" (Garcia—Weir)

Jerry: Well, we never have been a commune in the classical sense. We've had a life style which you could describe as communal, but we've never been a functioning commune. We were on the same piece of land, but early in our development our scene got to be so large that really you can't find places that are big enough to hold that many people.

You see, a thing that happened, too, in California was that Californians got to be very frightened about the whole hippy thing. And they started to pass legislation about how many people who are unrelated can live under the same roof, that's the truth.

The place on *Workingman's Dead* is actually not anywhere near where we

lived. In fact you will notice that the low factories that you see in the background are actually drawn in with a pencil. Stanley Mouse, the guy that did that cover, he took that with a polaroid camera, a cheap old polaroid camera, on a street corner in San Francisco and he just sort of filled in the . . . you know, to give it that sort of industrial wasteland look. There really is no such place.

Bob: We do have a pretty close brotherhood. We understand each other and we understand each other's musical vocabulary and we have toured with each other etc., and given that, and given the success that we've had and learning how to play and learning how to play with each other we would be foolish to throw it away. For instance if we come upon some enormous commercial success and don't have to work any more, I'm sure we still would.

Jerry: We had to be our own community, like a life boat, we've been like a little life boat with a life boat

culture and the experience has had a positive feedback effect. In other words, the further we've gone in that highly personal direction the more it's reinforced itself. I mean, we are surviving after all this time. Not only that, we are more successful than ever.

We've continued to grow. Our curve has been very slow but very steady. Now we sell more tickets than almost anybody in the United States. And it keeps the experience for us a vital one and fresh. It's never had an opportunity to get boring. It works.

We couldn't have imagined it when we began.

Thank you very much, good night. ●

Hans Wichert