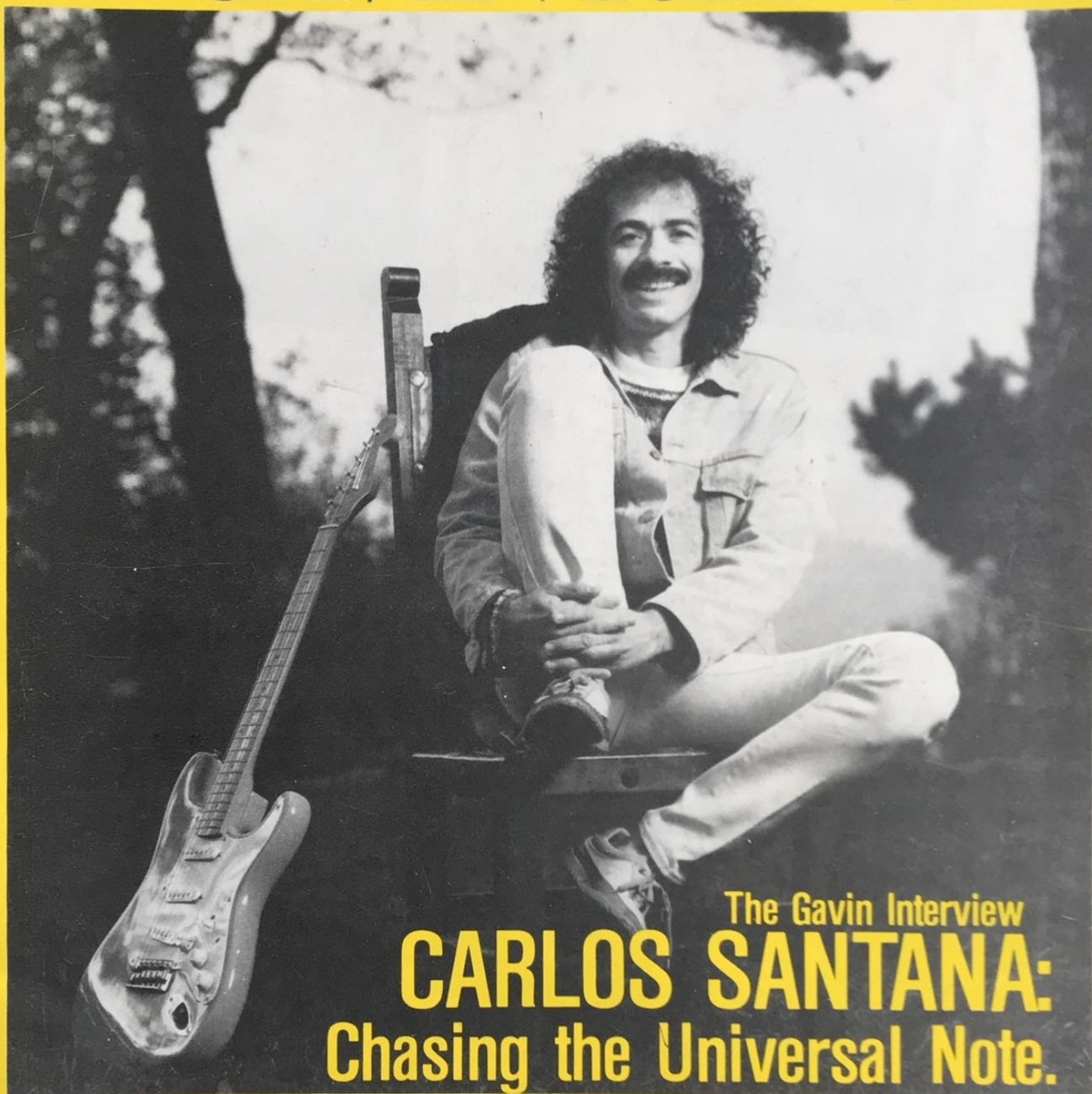


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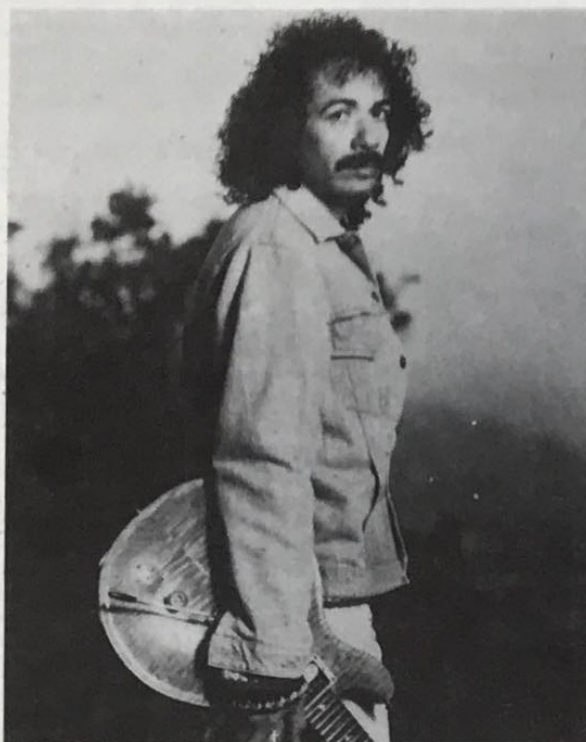
The Gavin Interview
CARLOS SANTANA:
Chasing the Universal Note.

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CARLOS SANTANA: ONE NOTE WONDER

"Like a quarterback, I try to call the plays."

by Keith/Kent Zimmerman
Assisted by Jon Varnedoe

When he refers to his living, his occupation, Carlos Santana doesn't play guitar—it's always the guitar. Santana, as you can easily see from the musical reference points peppered throughout this interview, is a Musician with a capitol M. While he aligns himself with rock 'n' roll, he aspires and achieves respectability by performing with, befriending, and admiring jazz musicians the caliber of McCoy Tyner and Miles Davis. As we were forewarned, an interview with Carlos doesn't mean discussing his current album or the brand of picks he uses. With the three of us, it turned out to be an interview in the strict sense of the word—interspersing viewpoints and beliefs, dissecting music right down to the core of one central universal note.

KZ: When did you actually get started as a musician? Let's think back to when it was the Santana Blues Band.

CS: We started here (San Francisco) when

I first came from Tijuana as a blues band because Paul Butterfield hit so hard with the blues and he made us aware of Muddy Waters and Little Walter and stuff like that. Later on it was Eric Clapton with John Mayall and the Blues Breakers. So when we started, that's mainly what we liked, the blues. I grew up in Tijuana, and being a border town, a lot of black people go over there and a lot of the times they'd stay over the weekend just playing blues. So that's always been my main fascination, the three chord blues, because anybody from a genius to a guy just picking it out for the first time on the street can play. It's just a matter of learning how to express yourself.

KZ: You were into blues before you were into the Salsa and Ray Barretto.

CS: Oh, yeah! When I was a kid, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Bobby Bland, Ray Charles, that was it for us! Anything with congas, to us, was Desi Arnaz and corny. (laughter) That's because I grew up in Tijuana and in Tijuana there's not that

many good Latin bands. But when I came to San Francisco, I became aware of Afro-Cuban and Brazilian music. I said, "Hey, this would be great with blues." So here in San Francisco, I became aware of Tito Puente and people like that. By the time I went to New York, they REALLY blew me away.

KZ: Outside of the whole musical thing, what made you want to be a band leader as opposed to a guitarist?

CS: Necessity is the mother of invention, and when the first band disbanded and there were so many directions . . . I always ask for opinions. If there's ten of us, I try to cypher all the positive things from everybody and then, like a quarterback, I try to call the plays. So just maybe out of necessity, I found out that some people were just inclined to do just Latin music. With me, I like everything and I like for everything to be intertwined without losing its purity. So my role is always to bring Afro-Cuban or blues or jazz or certain ele-

ments together. After a while, I found out people started to trust me more with my feelings and their feelings, so I took the role as a leader. But it was mainly out of necessity because I wanted—a cop-out—to just close my eyes and play. But you can't because you're at the mercy of a lot of things. If you have a vision, then first you should try to execute that, and also try to enhance the people around you, make them feel like nobody is going to laugh at them if they hit a wrong note. Just play. Just have a good time. It just goes back to necessity, but now I like it. I like it a lot.

KZ: You said you like everything, pretty much. Does that include hit records? How do you reconcile having esoteric tastes and trying to please a mass audience?

CS: I just try to remember when I went to junior high school and the songs that I used to like driving around to—commercial stuff. To me, commercial doesn't put me off. What puts me off is Hollywood, not the people in Hollywood, but the people in charge of the media. What puts me off is how they seem to plasticize everything. For example, flowers are commercial and we all need flowers. You know, for our mom, our sisters, our lovers, and while flowers are commercial, they're really beautiful. The only thing I've got against commercialism is when people use music to sell shampoo, Levi's, perfume or legs. Suddenly it becomes entertainment for fashion; whereas a real musician will captivate you with two or three notes, it will make you stop and appreciate life in a whole different way. There's a difference between a musician and an entertainer. I like both. I like quality and quantity. Sometimes it's hard because they don't want to go together.

KZ: How would you explain to a non-musician your music, section by section and how it fits?

CS: Melody is feminine and rhythm is masculine. I'm sure most Americans know it's very exciting at kick-off time when you kick the ball. The guy at the other end of the field catches the ball and runs all the way home with it. But you can get that feeling from the percussion—from the music. Once it starts roaring, it's like going to the zoo at lunchtime when you get to hear the lions roar. That's really dynamic. That's what drums do, congos and percussion. It creates this dynamism that makes it easier for melodies and chord patterns and lyrics to glide on top of that. That's how I see music, especially percussion. It's fuel for joy.

KZ: So the rhythm is a masculine backdrop?

CS: Yes. A lot of times I write songs that don't have percussion, though. Or maybe I can play the percussion just with the guitar by playing more staccato. Different kinds of rhythm always cause different kinds of enthusiasm.

KZ: You have two lead vocalists making this album you just finished. What's the

concept of using two guys? Are you going to travel on the road?

CS: I believe so. They're both great in their own right. You know, I noticed a few times Greg (Walker) would be in the band and Alex (Ligertwood) would be in the audience and they would come over and jam, or vice-versa, they would sing different. It's like Ali and Fraser, Bjorn Borg and McEnroe. That's why it's important for both of them to be there. They both bring something special out in each other. It can be competitive, but it can be constructive competition. I need that. Now I get to see Greg drinking from Alex's soul. So when he's singing and his eyes are closed, I can see Greg looking at him and saying 'Ooooh, this cat's bad' ... Someday I'd like to do a trio—just a guitar, drums, and a bass kind of album—at least for a few

"The same thing Bob (Dylan) has is the same thing Picasso and Miles has. One minute they're brilliant, the next minute they can't even tie their shoes."

songs. But right now my heart needs variety. It's like going to a circus, you never know what they are going to throw at you next. The thing is not to become predictable, and maybe that's why people are still around after all these years. Especially live, people always say, "We know you guys are gonna deliver." Live, the band always bites, you know, it just tears it up. I feel grateful because we have opened up with the Stones or the Police and this or that and I always see the Stones or Police come on stage when we're playing and say, 'Man, you cats are gettin' them up, by the time we go and play, they're ready.' So that turns me on.

KZ: You made an album with Miles Davis' band, with Tony Williams. That must have been like a dream come true for you.

CS: It was a dream come true and I was scared to death.

KZ: Really?

CS: Yeah, because they're supreme musicians. They're like the PhD's about what they're playing. And I'm still trying to get the coordination together. But I was really grateful and really honored. We got five stars, the most you can get, in *Downbeat* magazine. They picked up on one thing. I may not be an Einstein or whatever on the guitar, but there was enough sincerity, enough conviction for it all to work. They pick up on that. That's what I call helium in sincerity. If there's sincerity in whatever you do, then things are going to get off the ground and it's going to be good.

KZ: Is that the difference between jazz musicians and rock musicians?

CS: Yes.

KZ: But what is the difference? As a player you can come across from one end (rock) to the other end (jazz).

CS: They wanted to cross from one end to the other but a lot of times what prevents them is the right kind of chemistry. For example, I just like to enhance, whether it's John Lee Hooker or McCoy Tyner. I want to be open to enhance what they're doing because I know they're going to enhance what I'm doing. So today, I received a phone call from (pianist) McCoy Tyner and he wanted to know what I would think about going to Japan together and putting a band together. The media puts people in boxes. Okay, here comes McCoy and Ron Carter and Freddie Hubbard, I mean he's been doing that for a long time. Incredible music. But there's no new catalyst, I know he (McCoy Tyner) needs a new catalyst. I need to play everything from Milton Nascimento to Willie Nelson. And I would work with Julio Iglesias, but I feel the helium has to be there, and I'm not gonna do anything for somebody just to make them famous. I'm just not into that. Having your cake and eating it too is to be able to sell platinum albums when nobody knows what you look like.

KZ: What about you, though; you must get recognized?

CS: Yeah, I cut my hair then I let it grow. It's a compliment and an honor. But I do like it when people like McCoy Tyner call me and he feels something positive and something that the Japanese will like and maybe it's something to even go to Europe with that band. I just want to stretch, and just be able to articulate as many forms of music as I'm able. There's a lot of great musicians I still aspire to play with and at the same time, there's an incredible amount of fantastic musicians coming out of high school now.

KZ: So what's this whole thing with sports that seems to be creeping into what we've been talking about? I've seen you on stage with jerseys on. Is there any kind of correlation with sports and music? We talked to (John) Fogerty and his album is called *Centerfield*.

CS: America's greatest resources have been sports and music. When I see Mary Decker or Carl Lewis breaking the record, my soul is with them at that moment, breaking time and space. When you see a musician really getting down, he's doing the same thing. If you go see Mary Decker and they're not really going for a world record, they're just going around the track to get loose, you don't get excited. It's the same thing with musicians. It's got to get you excited because he's sticking his neck out and he might hit a couple of wrong notes in there, but he just might create something that—like walking a tightrope, you don't know if he's gonna fall or break his neck. So that's how I guess most

people today co-relate sports and music. They both have the same kind of impact.

KZ: So that's why you have a song called "Touchdown Raiders"?

CS: Yes. I was fooling around with the guitar with the sound down and I was watching the Oakland—I mean Los Angeles Raiders and Marcus Allen put a move on somebody and when I listened to it back—I was taping—I said, "Hey, that's a nice little phrase." So, it came from that.

KZ: This new album, working with Val Garay, how was it working with him?

CS: It was great. I learned a lot again. With Val Garay, I learned a lot about the board. About how he records. I really appreciate his vision and his conviction. It was great. All I can remember now is a big traffic controller conducting traffic between himself and the musicians. It was a great experience for me because he's unusually gifted when it comes down to things like really listening. But on the other hand, I'm sure that he learned a lot, also. I'm sure that the next time he sees a guitar player or a conga player, he's gonna tell them, "Man, you got to play those things, you can't just tap it." Because that's the way this band plays. We don't use congas as make-up. We use congas to (punches his fist into his palm) state something. So we both learned a lot. If I was a stranger and picked up the album for the first time and it didn't matter who did what or how it came about, it's either happening or not happening. Because the main quality that I can say about this album is that it has, again, spiritual muscle. And brotherhood is right now in a lot of those songs. It has that thing that I needed to express to the listener, that I'm aware of a lot of teenage suicide, there's a lot of pressure on them and all they need to hear is that no matter how hard or how far they fall, there is always something there to heal you and to take you away from your pain. In other words, I want to let people know we are all important and all in body. There's a living promise and I just like to make people feel special.

KZ: What if you had a four or five piece band for two weeks and you could pick the musicians, who would they be?

CS: Well, it would definitely be Tony Williams on drums. I was telling him that George Lucas should do a movie on one of his drum solos alone. Patti LaBelle (on vocals), McCoy Tyner and Chester Thompson would be the keyboard players in my band. Or McCoy and Herbie (Hancock)—somebody who can handle piano plus synthesizers. On bass, I'd have to think about the bass player. He'd have to go from Ron Carter to Paul McCartney and come back because that's the kind of music they'd end up playing. That's a good idea, different people like that together. That's what I always miss.

KZ: You mean like the old triple bill concerts?

CS: Right.

KZ: Miles Davis, The Grateful Dead, and The Band. Remember that one?

CS: That's right.

KZ: Were you born to be a musician or did you learn it? Is it something that's God given?

CS: It's both. It's something that's God given but some people never awaken to it. It's God given, but you have to work from the moment you're nine until you're seventeen. You have to give up stealing cars or playing hooky or whatever teenagers do until you become a natural. People say "Oh, he's a natural." Children or teenagers. They feel the same thing Einstein or Miles feels. We all feel the same thing. The only difference is that



"When I was a kid, anything with congas, to us, was Desi Arnaz and corny."

Miles and Einstein knew how to express it. They knew how to get right to the get-go and express their inner feelings. Put it into music or words or numbers. You do have to work real hard to be a McEnroe. They say he's a natural. Don't believe it! That one-to-one thing, I learned a lot from Bob Dylan. He just plants himself in the ground with that acoustic guitar and he starts singing all those incredible songs with an infinite amount of poetry and imagery. I was in awe. I was there watching him, and man, this guy was incredible.

KZ: Did you ever play together?

CS: Yeah. We played every night.

KZ: What about Black music?

CS: I like Afrika Baambata. A lot of stuff sounds good. It doesn't sound repetitious or jivey or phoney. A lot of stuff sounds valid, juicy, and good. It's that "helium" again. Although, I must confess, that aside from Michael Jackson and a few other people like Al Jarreau, I can't stay there too long. It gets boring. I need to go back—and maybe that's the word, go back and reminisce about B.B. or Albert King and all those other cats. Because they don't lie. They're not hiding behind props and make-up. I know that a lot of black people are not keen about blues. They feel that that's life when they used to pick cotton or whatever. But to me, that's the music. That's the root of jazz. It's like Armando Peraza says, "If you can play the blues soulfully and sincerely, you can play

anything." If you can't play the blues, just a slow song, and make that note alive, you're just jiving through everything else. That's a fact.

KZ: Did Shelia E. used to be in your band?

CS: Her father (Pete Escovedo) used to be. She recorded a couple of things. I have a lot of things in the can that I haven't put out.

KZ: How did Willie Nelson end up on your Havana Moon album?

CS: The main thing about the Havana Moon album was that I felt really bad. My father has always been a musician. He taught me just about everything I know on the guitar, yet he's never been recorded. We got a chance to record my father-in-law. In fact, I've got posters with my father-in-law with Art Tatum and Billie Holiday on the same bill. Somehow my conscience said, "If you don't record your father before he dies, you'll feel awful." So instead of buying my dad some shoes or a shirt for a birthday present, I put him on an album. Jerry Wexler had this song called "We All Went To Mexico." And when I first heard it I said, "Aww, this would be great for Los Lobos, but I don't want to do this kind of thing." And he (Wexler) says, "It's got something in it!" I left the room, I left the studio, got in my car and I'm sitting there saying, "Man, I don't wanna do this stuff." I turn on the radio and (snaps his fingers) on comes Willie Nelson. So I said, "Hmmm, unless Willie Nelson or Bob Dylan sings this song, I'm gonna can it." So I went in there and said, "Guess what!" and I told them. So Booker T. Jones, who produced the LP *Stardust* said, "Hey, I know the guy. Why don't you let me call him?" The song was recorded already so we sent it to Willie Nelson in Austin and he put his voice on it. So when you hear "We All Went To Mexico" and then you hear my father on the last song, my father doesn't sound so bizarre on a Santana album. It really helped me out to present it to my dad. It was worth it because when I took the album to them finally finished, my mom and dad sat down and listened to it. They both started crying. They felt so good. I thought, this is it. This is my platinum.

KZ: Your solo LPs serve as creative pitstops from regular Santana releases.

CS: Yes, stretching out. A lot of times I'll be writing songs and it sounds like something for James Taylor. I grab something else and it'll sound like something for McCoy (Tyner). I don't question it anymore. I just write as much as possible. Right now I'm writing a couple of songs for Jimmy Cliff that would be perfect for him to sing. I know I could cry on it. Someday I'd like to record with Los Lobos without making them feel they're gonna lose something.

KZ: Was there a time when you were working with Greg Rolie (from Santana and Journey) on a project called Friends Again?

CS: I told him the only way I want to do an album is to write songs from the get-go. I don't want songs I have half written and you have songs you have half written. I don't want to do it like that. We started to do it and there was Steve Smith (from Journey) and my bass player and it just felt weird. Greg told me he wanted to do something that was between Kenny Rogers and John Cougar. And my first reaction was like—WHY? So we did two or three songs and after a while I would get a headache on my way to rehearsal. It wasn't really him, it was the chemistry. I do feel like I can enhance his music and he enhances mine. We understood each other, we grew up in high school together, and I have a lot of respect for him. He makes that organ sound unique. But the direction at the time, I told him was like going to the dentist. To me, rehearsal shouldn't be like going to the dentist or getting a headache. That's how we left it. I'm sure in the future we'll work together.

KZ: What about Alphonso Johnson, did he play all the bass on Beyond Appearances?

CS: He played about 60-70%, maybe 75%.

KZ: We were listening to the tape trying to figure it out. This guy's rockin' out, which is different than the jazz licks most remember on his work with Weather Report or his solo albums. A bassist like that, getting him to play rock 'n' roll, is that a natural progression?

CS: Yeah, because if you notice the albums where he's on his own, they're mainly more rock oriented than jazz, that is, if you look at the three albums that he did. It's great. That's what I like about America. I've always been looking for a bass player like Alphonso and I'm really honored that he's in the band because sometimes you get a bass player who has a reputation for playing only the way he's known for playing. Alphonso is more flexible. I can ask him to listen to Jack Bruce or Paul McCartney or whoever and he'll say, yeah, give me the record. He'll check it out.

KZ: So you did give him direction.

CS: Yeah, all of us exchanged direction. That's part of the chemistry of this band.

KZ: How about percussionist Armando Peraza, who played with Cal Tjader, amongst many more? Did you have to take him through a process? You obviously liked him even before he joined your band.

CS: Yes. He has a whole other kind of dynamism. It's like Charlie Joiner, that guy who just broke the record for San Diego for catching passes. They're both clutch. Whenever you get stuck, you give them the ball and they're going to have everyone on their feet. That's where Armando is. He's a master at what he does. The first time I heard Armando Peraza, was on a Harvey Mandel album and I heard congas in there and I said, "Hey, this is gonna work!" so what he brings to the band is great because he's

also willing to try a lot of things. He's not the kind of musician who only wants to play Afro-Cuban music. He grew with Billie Holiday and Charlie Parker, so he went more to be-bop. A lot of people in New York just stay mainly to the purer concept of Salsa or whatever they call it nowadays. But Armando was always a joy sharing, which is really useful in this band. We don't want to lose the purity of the traditional, yet at the same time we feel it's important to make a listener be aware of these other beautiful things and not just ham and eggs.

KZ: Do you feel pop radio kind of encourages that sometimes?

CS: The reason, I believe, they do that consciously is because there are two kinds of people—people who can actually stop and listen to a favorite like Barbra Streisand or Lightnin' Hopkins and they'll stop everything and they'll listen. And



some people can't listen to music. They only listen to the cash register. That's their only music... anything else becomes a wall; they're not receptive to it. I think a lot of the people who run the media, I think they're like that. They care that the cash register rings. And very few actually stick their necks out to say, "Man, if people like The Doors, maybe those people are going to love John Coltrane because it's the same kind of band."

KZ: How would you sell to a child that's older than (Carlos' young son) Salvador, music by Coltrane or Miles Davis? What is it about their music that you would have to explain to a kid who's not used to listening?

CS: First of all, kids go through Alice Cooper then Prince and the obvious things, they're after the autograph kind of thing. But if I take my son to see Picasso and show him little things he did for children, well what Picasso and Miles are is that they have the soul of a child. They can go from Einstein to the soul of a child in a second. That's how I can open the door for people who one day they're into Alice Cooper and the next day they're into Little Walter. They might say, "Man, my mother punished me and I had to stay in my room and it was raining and, man, I'm hooked." And I say, "If you like Little Walter, then you're gonna LOVE John

Coltrane because Little Walter is the John Coltrane of the harmonica." Thank God that everybody is receptive. We all have a mouth. Even people who only listen to the cash register, it's all how you tap them and when you tap them. It can be an imposition or it can be an illumination, and I like that. I like turning people on and I like people to turn me on to great things. Stevie Ray Vaughn to Magic Sam. If you want to rebel, then there are things to rebel to. Check out Ornette Coleman.

KZ: When I was in high school, that's how I rebelled. I was in the school band and I hated it. John Coltrane and those guys helped me. Actually, what's even weirder is that Keith and I used to hear (Miles Davis') "In A Silent Way" on the radio in the middle of the night, (KSan's) Voco Kesh used to play it every night. I think that even sometimes when we were sleeping, it affected us. We deal with a radio publication now, but sometimes I think it was the weird music that brought us here. Do you ever feel that?

CS: Yes, but it's always art. I always feel that it's like a river of art. I was reading this article about Cecil Taylor, which I must confess, I don't have one of his albums at home, I don't think.

KZ: It's demanding stuff.

CS: Yes. It's demanding on your attention, your concentration, but they were asking him, "What are you practicing nowadays, scales, music theory, harmony or what?" He says, "No, I just practice one note until that note is in touch with the whole universe." Now that makes a lot of sense because I hear a lot of music, whether it's Barbra Streisand or Miles or whomever, they seem to hold one note that seems to have an umbilical cord on it. That's what he's (Cecil Taylor) talking about. So, a lot of guys practice all the silliest scales, whoever, Van Halen or Alan Holdsworth. But a lot of times you can just hit it with one note. With one note, you can make anybody stop and say, "Oh, let me sit down and really drink from this, this is happening."

KZ: Interesting.

CS: And all that's important, Van Halen, The Police, it's important. But what is important is that once in a while, I guess like (Weather Report's) Wayne Shorter says, "You take the time to visit the note." I guess it's like a zen thing. Music could also be zen. When you hit the note, don't be in a hotel somewhere in Pittsburgh, when you're right here in the studio. Just become that note absolutely! That's what he was talking about, Cecil Taylor, making that note a part of the whole universe. A lot of musicians may be playing, but they're not really chewing or masticating or savoring anything. If they're not enjoying it, you're not going to enjoy it.

KZ: Do you find that some heavy metal is just scales?

CS: I love a lot of Cream, Hendrix, or Led Zeppelin, but that's about as far as I go.

Sometimes I can check out AC/DC for the guitar playing, but the rest of the things sound childish. Led Zeppelin doesn't sound childish to me, I think they were serious about what they were doing. Especially the last album, I can wear that thing out, *In Through The Out Door*. If you take Bob Dylan, and Jimmy Page, you can see who their fountains are. A lot of Lightnin' Hopkins is in Bob Dylan, even to this day, and there's a lot of Otis Rush and a lot of blues players in Jimmy Page. So, there's the connection again. It doesn't have to be just black. If you just listen to (cellist) Pablo Cassals, you could pick the same thing from him that I would get from Miles or Coltrane or Lightnin' Hopkins. There's a lot of beauty around and that's what I want to turn people on to and that's what I want to turn myself on to all the time!

KZ: You toured with Dylan in Europe. How did that go? Do you play together?

CS: Yes. Twenty-five dates. Yes. Jimi Hendrix, Coltrane, Miles and Bob Dylan—they're my four cornerstones. If I was in a ring, they're my four cornerstones. So, going out there with Bob knocks me out because I learned so much. I learned again and again, the same thing Bob has is the same thing Picasso and Miles has. One minute they're brilliant, the next minute they can't even tie their shoes. I mean literally, and to me that's the mark of a genius. To really come up with the music that's okay to listen to, you've really got to lose yourself to find yourself and that means sticking your neck out. When you stick your neck out all the time, you're going to sound like a kid sticking your neck out for the first time. He sounds like that sometimes, then other times he sounds like he's revealing a big chunk of God's Universe through his poetry. That's what I've always learned, they go hand in hand—that childlike purity and then all the other brilliance. I mean, I see it in Miles all the time and in Bob.

KZ: You worked with John McLaughlin. How is his style different from yours? He's amazing but very different.

CS: John is an intellectual, I think. His mind is fantastic. He's brilliant and also what he gets from soul is that he listens to a lot of Indian music, which has that kind of Muddy Waters thing. Being an American now—

KZ: Wait! Indian music having that kind of Muddy Waters thing?

CS: That's right. It's the same pathos, inner pathos. That kind of cry that you're not crying for yourself, but for humanity, Martin Luther King.

KZ: Yes.

CS: And that's when John is brilliant, when he plays Indian music and he pulls it all together. I personally love it when he plays more blues than shakti because a whole lot of stuff comes from inside of him like on (Miles Davis' LP) *Jack Johnson*.

KZ: Oh yeah, a great rhythm guitar player.

CS: Yeah, I'm sure most people want to hear that, not all the time but more of that. It means you go to the park and you step in dog-do and it's okay, rather than being so spic and span.

KZ: What about female vocalists? I'm trying to think, what role could they play in your music? Do you have any favorites?

CS: Well, if I record with a female vocalist, I wanna try to follow Patti LaBelle, the one who consistently gives me chills. She's not into fashion or Las Vegas. She's not plastic. She just sang "Over The Rainbow" for Martin Luther King's birthday in Washington. She knocks me out and someday I'd like to record with her. I'd also like to use some brass. If I ever work with brass, I always hoped I could work with Oliver Nelson. Now he's gone. So, I think I would call Clark Terry to help me out and do arrangements. I love the way he puts



"Melody is feminine and rhythm is masculine."

things together. When I was a kid, brass Latin music used to turn me off. It meant Guy Lombardo or Lawrence Welk, or something. Give me Chuck Berry! But now, Clark Terry or people like him, someday I'd like to do that. Right now, it's not immediate. Patti LaBelle, it would be a privilege. Also the Sweet Inspirations. There's not that many I want to work with. I know they're musicians although you treat them like ... ladies ... they're musicians like I am.

KZ: What do you think of some of the African music that's out, like King Sunny or Fela Kuti?

CS: I think it's great. You know, here comes that universal note again. I went to see King Sunny Ade and Black Uhuru and King Sunny sounded like country and western and cosmic; did you pick up on that?

KZ: Yes. The steel guitar player.

CS: Yeah! And I said, wow, here's country and western coming out of these guys because of the slide guitar. So, I do listen to African music. One of my biggest inspirations right now, and I've been praying, is to work with Jimmy Cliff. He's the one I really want to work with. I wrote two songs and I think he can really help me out with them.

KZ: Can't you just pick up the phone and call him or is it more complicated than that?

CS: No. See first, I wanna try the inner phone which has worked so far. I'll get records of them, have them in my mind all the time or write his name and all of a sudden they call. That's how I got my timbale player, that's how I got Graham Lear from Gino Vannelli's band.

KZ: Really? I once saw Gino Vannelli play when Graham Lear was his drummer.

CS: Yeah, he's a helluva drummer. But, you know, it's not superstitious to me, it's like an inner kind of phone. I don't have to go through Ma Bell, I just zero in on them and I know they will be thinking of me. I'll think so hard that eventually they'll call. You're right, I should call him, but first, I'm going to sit it out so he says, 'Man, I've been thinking about you a lot.' I'll say, 'Really?'

KZ: Have you ever met him?

CS: We played in Vienna with Van Morrison, us, and Jimmy Cliff, but we didn't get a chance to talk. He was surrounded by a lot of people and I didn't want to say, 'Hey, man ...' I just wait for the right time, but he's definitely the first in line that I want to work with.

KZ: I was shocked to hear him on a Budweiser commercial.

CS: Jimmy Cliff??!!??

KZ: This Bud's for you, yes he did.

CS: Oh no! You're kidding!

KZ: Well, I see a lot of people doing that. Leon Redbone, a couple of others ...

Right now there's probably three Billy Idols being groomed. How come there's never been another Santana band?

CS: I guess that's why I relate to the Raiders (football team) to a certain extent, because it doesn't seem like just computer plays. They're people and it's not always going to be the way a producer in Hollywood wants you to look like. Check out Los Lobos. It's really good. I love how the media picks up on them and how they like them.

KZ: Ever listen to country music?

CS: I listen to some country music. I like Willie Nelson a lot. I like Merle Haggard. I love his voice. I went to go see him. I was so impressed, to me it was like seeing the Beatles or Miles or anyone like that, because I wasn't ready for it. I thought it was going to be Gene Autry.

KZ: He's a great guitar player.

CS: Who, Gene Autry?

KZ: No! (laughter) Merle Haggard!

CS: His voice sounded so incredible. He's got a diamond voice. And then the guitar players with Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard started playing. They were playing Charlie Christian riffs. Hillbilly but it has that jazz orientation. I was blown away. I thought I was just going to hear corny cowboy music. No. It taught me that I need to be constantly open and more receptive because there's a lot of beauty and sincerity. ■