

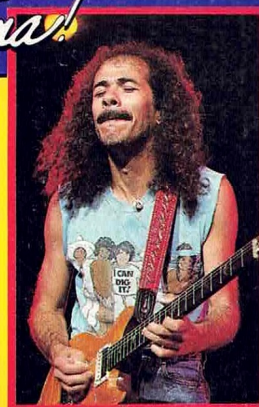


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# Guitar Player

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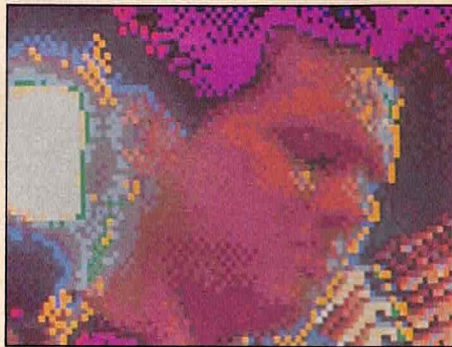
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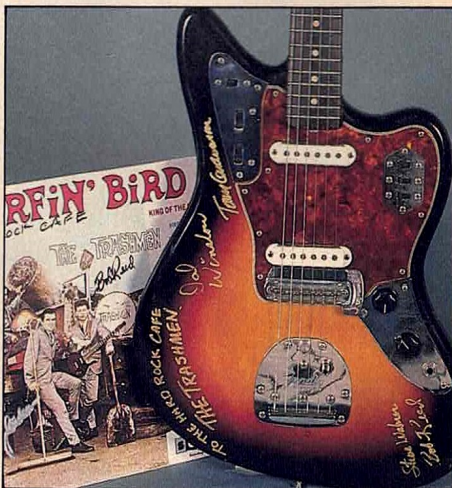
By Dan Forte. Burgers and fries are served up with a side order of rock and roll history, including guitars and memorabilia from Buddy Holly, Jimi Hendrix, the Ventures, and others. Photos by Jon Sievert.



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*"Let your playing  
put wings  
in people's hearts."*

# Carlos Santana

S O U N D P A G E E X C L U S I V E

**S**MILING BROADLY, CARLOS SANTANA STRIDES INTO the main room of the Record Plant in Sausalito, California. He pauses to pound a fiery pattern on a conga, and then settles down on a carpeted platform in the corner of the studio. He lights a couple of incense sticks and the first of many Marlboros, and begins in a gentle Mexican accent:

"Remember when we used to go see a band in the '60s? You'd see Wes Montgomery play at the Matador from 9:00 to 1:00, and then you'd follow him to another funky club on the other side of town, and he would play there until 4:00 in the morning. Well, that's the kind of feeling that I'm trying to get lately on certain ballads. It's funny, because 4:00 in the morning is 4:00 in the morning. What do you do at 8:00 at night? How do you capture that after-the-party feeling? It's challenging. Somebody from the Grateful Dead said to me, 'When music starts playing you, you don't play music anymore,' which makes a lot of sense. Music starts playing itself through you, instead of you trying to make it happen."

*You're one of the few guitarists who is instantly recognizable. Why is that?*

It's an accumulation of a lot of things, man. My love for [saxophonist] John Coltrane and his tone. My love for B.B. [King] and his tone, or Aretha [Franklin]. All the things that my father passed on to me. My father is a musician; he taught me everything I know on the guitar, as far as the technical chords and stuff like that goes. His father before him was a musician, and my grand-grandfather was a musician. The main thing is the cry. It's not whining. You know, sometimes you go to a funeral, and maybe the guy wasn't such a good guy, but people still want to say something nice about him. Well, the tone in the music that I'm trying to write now is for people to learn to let go gently and quietly. It's to enhance the beauty that, let's say, Jaco Pastorius had. I immediately erase all the *National Enquirer* stuff out of my mind, so all I remember is the great times that I had with Jaco Pastorius when we did get to jam and spend some time together. That's what I'm trying to do with the tone. It's the cry of exalt the elegance in humanity.

*Maybe that's what Jimi Hendrix meant by calling an album The Cry Of Love.*

*Continued*

**By Jas Obrecht**







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## CARLOS SANTANA

Yeah. Sometimes you can laugh so much that you start to cry. Sometimes you can cry so much that you start to laugh. That's *pure emotion*. That's the foundation for my music, first of all. Some people learn all about the great composers and base their stuff on that, and that's fine. As long as we all get to the ocean and get wet together, it's cool. The approach is not as important as getting to a place where, like, Aretha or Patti LaBelle go when they sing a certain note and their eyes roll back to their ears, and they take you with them wherever they go. That's the goal for me in writing songs now. Whether it's fast, slow, reggae, African, or whatever, what can I do to get the listener intoxicated with it?

*What advice would you give young, technical gunslingers for getting more emotion into their playing?*

The only advice that I can give is that all that stuff is toys in their approaches. Nothing hits the listener in his heart of hearts faster than sincerity. I'll take sincerity over soulfulness *anytime*. Whether you play fast or slow, if you're sincere, the people will pick it up. If you are just running the changes, chord scales, and all that kind of stuff, it's like Sugar Ray [Leonard, champion boxer]. Sugar Ray can get you with 50 blows really fast, but if [singer] Marvin Gaye just hits you once, you're going to go down. It's the same thing when certain fast musicians jam with, let's say, Otis Rush. These cats can run the length and breadth of the guitar, playing all the notes at blinding speed. But if Otis Rush puts his finger on that guitar and hits you with one note and milks totally the cow, nobody stands a chance. I've seen him put away just about everybody in a nightclub in Chicago because of the *tone*. The tone is more important to me than anything else, because it will disarm the listener to let go of whatever is in your mind, and you embrace what's happening. Your soul identifies with it, and then you either laugh or cry. It's opening people's ears to their purest emotions. That's what people try to do when they go to church.

*"Pure emotion is the foundation for my music. I'll take sincerity over soulfulness anytime."*

*How much of your tone is in your hands?*

I would say about 25%. The other 75% comes from my legs, my guts. After I play a solo, my throat and my calves hurt. This is *projecting*; it's not volume. People don't know that there's a difference between being loud and learning how to project. A lot of musicians play from their fingers on out, so they ain't gonna reach you. But when a person hits from his calves—check out Jimi sometimes—and here [slaps thighs, crotch, and stomach] and puts it on that note, man, your hair stands up, your spine tingles. This is not a fantasy thing; this is for real. If you put your whole being into that note—your vitals, your body, your mind, your heart, and your soul—people will react to it.

*What commonly gets in the way of that total connection?*

Your mind. Self-doubt, insecurity. Deception, ego. Those are the things that block pure creativity. Ego, to me, is like a dog or a horse. Make him work for you. Don't you work for him.

*Is your spirit more present in your music at certain times than others?*

Yeah. That's when I feel like I took an inner shower. I'll give you an example: When I came back from this last tour, I heard about Jaco. I went to the Pacific Ocean near Bolinas [in northern California], and I jumped in. It was

*"The tone is your face. Why look like somebody else?"*

really cold. And then I cast, as they say, my troubles in the deep blue sea. Meditation helps you let go of everything—exaltation and when somebody puts you down. It's like emptying your pockets. Once you feel forgiven for whatever things we do as monkeys, imagination comes back. Einstein said that imagination is infinitely more important than knowledge. When you are clean, then you are not blocking the flow of creativity and spirit. Within two or three days of staying in that rhythm, your playing becomes like a telephone. You're just monitoring what wants to come out through you. You become a pure channel. The most beautiful music goes beyond the musicians who played it. Certain people, like Jimi Hendrix or John Coltrane, don't play for just themselves and their immediate families. They play for a whole generation. That means that those people took a lot of time to become a cleaner vessel.

*Don't you feel that you've sometimes achieved that?*

Sometimes you tap into it. It's an everyday struggle. It's putting a leash on your mind and all the things that it brings, and making them work for you. Sometimes we forget that everything is run by grace—the Golden Gate hanging, the planes flying, the note sustaining. You know, when people sustain with [effects] pedals, they are not using God's grace. They are using a company's electronics. There are good parts of it, but the bad part of it is that you are already going to sound like somebody else. The tone, first of all, is your face. So why do you want to look like somebody else? Your tone is how people know you; if you play one note, they know who you are. The most important thing people have to work on a lot of times is getting their own individual tone. I used to fight for this, but now not as much because [engineer] Jim Gaines knows how to capture my sound.

*How do you make a note sustain?*

First of all, you find a spot between you and the amplifier where you both feel that umbilical cord. When you hit the note, you immediately feel a laser between yourself and the speakers. You hear it catch like two train cars coupling together. It is like driving a real, real high-performance car. If you don't know what you are doing, man, you're going to be off the road [laughs]. So you have to be prepared for



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## CARLOS SANTANA

that. You have to practice with that intensity of playing. As Jimi Hendrix said before he left, he played loud, but his sound was never shrill. Even with all the knowledge they have, some people today sound shrill, which blocks a lot of the good that you're doing. But if you roll a lot of the highs down and put on a lot more bass, then you still sustain, but you don't have that piercing sound that kills dogs.

*Do you have any special recording techniques for guitar?*

For some reason, they always take the natural sound of the guitar to the board. It's hard for anything to sound the way we hear it. That's why they haven't invented microphones to capture [drummer] Tony Williams' sound or my sound or T-Bone Walker's sound. I don't use batteries on my guitars. Some people use preamps and a lot of pedals to sustain and stuff, and that's like having an automatic car. I like to stick-shift. Automatic means that you gain all these great sounds, but you sound like everybody else immediately. The only way you can tell who they are is by their chops—not by their tone anymore. The people whose tone I like still are B.B. King and Otis Rush, because they are back to playing with [Fender] Twin Reverbs, just naked. The emotion creates all the things that you are supposed to create, not the gadgets. The gadgets sound too generic.

*What's the most important element to capture on tape?*

For me, it's the ghost tones. I'll give you an example: If you blow into a balloon three times, the third time it will explode. And when it pops, you hear ghost overtones. That's what stimulates us to create. Unless you have a good engineer, when they run you straight into the board, the first thing they take from you is the ghost sound, the spirit sound—so they leave you really dry. The way to put it back is to open up things to give it that room sound. Sometimes we do that with a Lexicon [224X digital reverb], and sometimes with an extra microphone away from the amplifier. Without the ghost tones, I may as well be

*"There is a lot of fool's gold and flash out there for kids, but that doesn't cut it when you put the note where it's supposed to be."*

doing gardening or something else.

*The ghost tones, then, are the harmonic overtones that help create sustain?*

Yeah. The ear picks up a lot of things. To me, when the sound is right, everything rejoices in life. Whether it's a blues, up-tempo, Brazilian, shuffle, whatever—when the groove is right and the tone is perfect, it all fits.

*Can you get your tone from most guitars?*

I can just about get it from any guitar. But I really go out and jam with a lot of people, and a lot of times as soon as I put my finger on a guitar, the guitar will say to me, "Who are you, and why are you playing me this way?" [Laughs.] So you know you are going to have

to approach it differently. With my guitar, it's like, "Where do you want to go?" Amplifiers—unless they are old Twins or just straight Marshalls or old Boogies, I can't use them. The new stuff all sounds like Saran Wrap around your ears. It sounds very, very harsh. Even the new amplifiers that Boogie makes or a lot of people make today sound edgy like transistors, like something on your teeth. It's weird. With anything that's tube and old, you already have an elegant tone to begin with. This is true for anything that's pre-'75; in '75 they started getting weird. Old amps make you hear the song completely.

*"Even when I'm playing 'Black Magic Woman,' I force myself to feel like I don't know how to play."*

*How many left-hand fingers do you use to add vibrato while sustaining a note?*

Sometimes the first three. Mostly I use my 1st and 3rd. I call these the emotion expression fingers. You can tickle it with the index finger [demonstrates a trill], and you can get total emotion with the ring finger. The middle finger is to help you with the chord or to go up and down for horn-like or piano-player-type chops.

*Your choice of a large triangular pick is unusual for a linear player.*

I just got in the habit of playing with big ones like that when I was in Tijuana. I can turn them any way I want to, and even if I make a mistake, it just keeps rotating. With the little ones, you've only got one way to pick the strings; I would be stuck. This way, if the pick is weird, I've still got two other edges. Once in a while I don't play with the pick, but if I want to play fast, I have to use the pick. I'm not like Jeff Beck, who's fast without any pick at all.

*What do you listen for in pickups?*

I go through a lot of them now. The ones that I'm married to, I'm married to, because under any weather, any condition, any hall or bar, those suckers are going to sustain and sing the song. The pickups that work best for me are the old humbuckers—like the Gibson Patent Applied Fors—especially when they are dipped in wax. And even those are hard to find now. Pickups are your voice. The worst pickup setup for me gives you that out-of-phase sound—unless it's a Stratocaster. I like Stratocasters that are in the second or fourth positions; their single-coil pickups sound good. But I just can't use a double-coil pickup that's out of phase. It's immediately like playing with half a man, half a tone. I need the whole tone on the treble and on the bass to be able to sustain. Out-of-phase means half, and I can't use half. I have to have it all the way.

*Have you ever tried scalloped fingerboards?*

I practiced one time with John McLaughlin's guitar. He had one of the first ones that Gibson made in Kalamazoo. It was hard for me to stay in tune. It's hard for me to stay in tune, period. But with that it was even harder. It's like learning to walk correctly on a tightrope.

*Are you hard on strings?*



Yeah, but I don't break them as much as I used to. Sometimes I can go for a month or two without breaking a string. We change strings every two weeks. I use a heavier-gauge string at home to get my chops up, and on the road I mainly use .008s on the Strats and .009s on the regular ones. So it goes .009, .011, .014, .024, .036, .042 [high to low].

One of your Paul Reed Smith guitars has a whammy—a device you're not usually associated with using.

Sometimes I use one. It's not something I go wild with; it doesn't fascinate me. But when I use it, I try to fingerpaint with the notes. It's easier to use the whammy when you're playing up-tempo, because then you're like a surfer making your own waves. But I usually just depend on bending the note; you can bend the note a certain way, in and out with your three fingers, and it gives you that whammy sound.

Do you do anything special to help the guitar stay in tune?

Yeah. When I change strings, I pull all the strings four or five times, count to seven, really stretch them almost to the point of breaking, and then let them go. By the third time, it'll stay in tune. They behave. They really give, even if you give them the whammy. Of course, it also

You've jammed with a who's who of post-'50s rock, jazz, and blues. Are there any musicians you would like to have jammed with?

My deepest regret until I die is going to be not playing with Bola Sete. I didn't find out until not too long ago that he really liked my music and wanted to play with me. And like an idiot, I never made it a point to give him the time. When I was a kid, his music or Joe Pass' music used to sound too restricted. That was something my father would play, not what I wanted to play. I wanted to play more raunchy. Now, that music is not so subdued anymore. It's just as powerful as Van Halen

ful side of humanity to a supreme extent.

Will your forthcoming Anthology project feature the Santana tracks that come closest to that spirit?

Yeah. I'm looking for sincerity. I have gone through accommodating a lot of producers and record companies, and finally all of us have come to an agreement that the only thing we need to accommodate from now on is the *moment*, the sincerity of the song. I have the experience now not to accommodate plastic producers with their plastic attaches and their plastic ideas, so it's easy for me to concentrate. If I was going to a Santana concert, what would I want? I want joy and a lot of vitality. I want the spirit of when a pastor tells you something really precious at church that applies to your life—something that's not condemning you or making you feel like you should apologize for being a human being. Whether in a cry or in a party atmosphere, the music should exalt humanity and the spirit of humanity, which is the Lord. That's enough, because anything else will be the crust. This is the real pure water.

Will Anthology present material from your whole career?

Yeah, just about. The album celebrates our anniversary; we started in '67. Sometimes it seems like we're starting over; other times it seems like we're continuing. Especially when I see the tapes of what we taped. That's 20 years old and beginning to fade. If I don't see them, I feel like I don't understand music. It's a little bit like you have to be careful that I'm not in any era or any particular style. I want to see unreleased material. I want to see a reunion with your origi-

...ight back. The chemistry... We can play right now, split. I still don't know if... together. We would have... days before I could get... and and say, "Let's do it... of bands stay together... of the exceptions to the... ad; obviously to this day... But a lot of bands have... themselves. Thank God... ve finally realized it. So... convenience thing. [Saxo... rter says, "If I feel that... ngs in there, I'd rather

ough these tapes, have... your style?

When I played with John... three years; you tend to... on't want to, but we are... vironment. It's like Jeff... times I can't stand my... a break from my tone... r times, I can't believe... my fingers. To this day, I... ate at night, and it feels... n putting my fingers on... nist] Keith Jarrett inter... hat he was learning to... e, and for the first week... Miles. Then he started... ned, and he didn't like it... words, there is a certain... e Miles Davis or John

## Santana's "BLUES FOR SALVADOR"

Guitar  
Player  
Magazine

20085 Stevens Creek, Cupertino, CA 95014

CARLOS SANTANA  
& CHESTER THOMPSON  
"Blues For Salvador"

SOUNDPAGE™ #40  
JANUARY 1988



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Do you use effects devices onstage?

I usually use a wah-wah and a chorus, and lately I've been using a DOD or Ibanez octave divider to get that low sound. Sometimes I use a Morley volume/wah pedal instead of the Cry Baby, but I took the volume control out of it so I could use it as a wah-wah.

What's your all-time favorite guitar and amp setup?

Right now it has to be the Paul Reed Smith guitar and an old MESA/Boogie with a 12" speaker. But if I want to just play at home and get the sweetest, most beautiful tone, it's still the old Strats or Les Pauls through anything old that's Fender. The amps they had with the separate reverbs—that stuff is the best. In fact, the best sound that I've heard lately from a guitar player was Eric Johnson.

What appealed to you about Eric's tone?

He had the most beautiful tone all the way around. It was very, very masculine, and round and warm and dark. And his playing is great, man. I'd like to record with him someday, because he is very pure. You can tell what people have in their eyes—malice, expectations, the beauty of things, this or that. With Eric, it's "Okay, I got my tone and my vision, and that's enough. The Lord will provide the rest." He has a beautiful soul. Even though he is from Texas, he doesn't have the gunslinger mentality: "I'm going to kick your butt with my gun." When we jam, we both complement each other, which is what musicians are supposed to do. Eric is somebody who should be playing with [keyboardist] Joe Zawinul, Miles Davis, and people like that, along with other musicians like Bill Connors. Those guys should be given a shot sometime at playing with the great musicians, because they have a lot of diverse techniques. Eric knows a lot of musical expressions; he understands that language a lot.

You've jammed with a who's who of post-'50s rock, jazz, and blues. Are there any musicians you would like to have jammed with?

My deepest regret until I die is going to be not playing with Bola Sete. I didn't find out until not too long ago that he really liked my music and wanted to play with me. And like an idiot, I never made it a point to give him the time. When I was a kid, his music or Joe Pass' music used to sound too restricted. That was something my father would play, not what I wanted to play. I wanted to play more raunchy. Now, that music is not so subdued anymore. It's just as powerful as Van Halen

## Santana's "BLUES FOR SALVADOR"

Carlos Santana's fiery yet lyrical style and instantly identifiable tone truly make him one of our national treasures. At the time of our interview, he was celebrating his 20th anniversary as a bandleader by preparing tracks for the soon-to-be-released *Anthology* retrospective. Our Soundpage, he says, is a main contender for inclusion.

The studio cut "Blues For Salvador" appears as the title track of Santana's latest album, *Blues For Salvador* [Columbia, FC 40875]. Our Soundpage presents another version of the same instrumental: "It's from a taping we did in Los Angeles for the *Top Of The Pops* television show," Carlos details. "We did three versions of the song. During the first one we were trying to feel each other's way. The second one [snaps fingers] was right on; the third, we passed it again. So the middle take was the best one, and that's the one on the Soundpage." Santana ran his Paul Reed Smith guitar straight into a Marshall amp, while keyboard synthesist Chester Thompson provided all other parts. Carlos contributed an Essential Listening article to the April '82 issue, and was profiled as our June '78 cover story.

when you see Joe Pass doing his thing. Bola's record *Live At Monterey* [Verve, out of print], man, is just pure brilliance. He could play behind his back and between his legs like T-Bone Walker, and at the same time go right into Segovia. I see in Bola the same elegance as Duke Ellington and the fire of Hendrix, but he's sustaining this overtone on a natural acoustic guitar. And most of all, like John Coltrane, he had that tone and that way of putting notes together that made it more than mortal music. Mortal music deals with my baby left me, I can't pay the rent, or whatever. Bola's music tells you that inside we have roaring cosmic lions and that we're elegant and beautiful. His music enhanced the beauti-

ful side of humanity to a supreme extent.

Will your forthcoming *Anthology* project feature the Santana tracks that come closest to that spirit?

Yeah. I'm looking for sincerity. I have gone through accommodating a lot of producers and record companies, and finally all of us have come to an agreement that the only thing we need to accommodate from now on is the *moment*, the sincerity of the song. I have the experience now not to accommodate plastic producers with their plastic attaches and their plastic ideas, so it's easy for me to concentrate. If I was going to a Santana concert, what would I want? I want joy and a lot of vitality. I want the spirit of when a pastor tells you something really precious at church that applies to your life—something that's not condemning you or making you feel like you should apologize for being a human being. Whether in a cry or in a party atmosphere, the music should exalt humanity and the spirit of humanity, which is the Lord. That's enough, because anything else will be the crust. This is the real pure water.

Will *Anthology* present material from your whole career?

Yeah, just about. The album celebrates our anniversary; we started in '67. Sometimes it doesn't seem that long; other times it seems like an eternity, especially when I see the boxes of cassettes of what we taped. That's when I feel like I'm 40 years old and beginning to feel the bones. But if I don't see them, I feel like I'm just starting to understand music. It's a three-album thing, so I have to be careful that I don't shortchange any era or any particular band. I have a ton of unreleased material.

You recently had a reunion with your original band.

Yeah, it took me right back. The chemistry of that band is intact. We can play right now, and it's like we never split. I still don't know if we are going to get together. We would have to rehearse for like five days before I could get married again to that band and say, "Let's do it for six months." A lot of bands stay together for convenience. One of the exceptions to the rule is the Grateful Dead; obviously to this day they make new music. But a lot of bands have musically exhausted themselves. Thank God the Rolling Stones have finally realized it. So with me, it's not a convenience thing. [Saxophonist] Wayne Shorter says, "If I feel that there's any dead songs in there, I'd rather avoid it."

Listening back through these tapes, have you noticed growth in your style?

Yeah. I can tell when I played with John McLaughlin for about three years; you tend to sound like that. You don't want to, but we are all products of our environment. It's like Jeff Beck says—a lot of times I can't stand my playing. I need to take a break from my tone and everything. Other times, I can't believe that it's coming out of my fingers. To this day, I still pick up the guitar late at night, and it feels like it's the first time I'm putting my fingers on the fret. I read this [pianist] Keith Jarrett interview where he said that he was learning to play trumpet for a while, and for the first week or two he sounded like Miles. Then he started sounding really polished, and he didn't like it anymore. So in other words, there is a certain beauty in playing like Miles Davis or John



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## CARLOS SANTANA

McLaughlin—play like you don't know how to play. Take chances and make new mistakes. Go for what you don't know, and make it brutally honest. That appeals to me a lot, because then when you do get to the goodies, you rejoice. If you get to the goodies really quick, it means that you're playing something that you've already conceived. There's joy in rediscovering.

*What path would you suggest for a young child who wants to play guitar?*

My son is four-and-a-half years old, and he's already asking me, "Is Jimi Hendrix badder than Michael Jackson?" First of all, I would just give him heavy doses of John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, Jimmy Reed, and Lightnin' Hopkins for two or three years. Once I feel that he's got that combination, then I'll say Muddy Waters is the Miles Davis of Chicago, and Little Walter is the John Coltrane. By the time my son is listening to something like "A Love Supreme" by John Coltrane, he would have understood the order all the way from Django Reinhardt to Charlie Christian to Wes Montgomery. I want him to understand that order, because I don't want my son to be fooled by fool's gold. And there is a lot of it out there for kids, a lot of flash and guys who have the right poses for the right strokes on the guitar. But that stuff doesn't cut it when you really know how to play, and you put the note where it's supposed to be. I want to teach my son not to fake anything, but to earn it.

*Is it important that he learn music theory?*

Yeah. I'm going to have to make sure that he learns the old way of learning music on the piano—do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do. It's going to be hard, because there's not that many teachers who teach that nowadays. They teach C, F, G, and all that kind of stuff. But I still think in terms of do, re, mi; I still think in Spanish. When I record with, let's say, [pianists] Herbie Hancock or McCoy Tyner, that's how I have to write the melody for chord changes that are given me—a do, re, la, sol, mi, kind of thing. That's how I hear my line, whether it's blues or whatever. It gives you a point of reference for where the melody falls. You know, if you teach your child the right vocabulary, he's on his way to really speaking the universal language, not just cowboy music or some other kind of music. Universal language is deeper than the surface. That way, when you play cowboy music, even the Japanese will be doing a hillbilly dance.

*Do you always know what key you're in or what chords you're playing over?*

No. A lot of times I force myself just to go for what I feel, rather than landing at the root note. If you approach everything from the root note, there is no mystery for what you are going to play, because intuitively you are going to go to the same thing. Even when I'm playing "Black Magic Woman," I force myself to feel like I don't know how to play.

*Does this mean starting the solo from a different part of the fingerboard?*

Sometimes. Most of the time it's a matter of where you are going to hit the note from—the stomach, the heart, the legs. Where are you going to tighten up? What muscle are you going to use? The main thing is to approach

things in a new way. If you have a swimming pool, don't always jump in the same way. Surprise yourself.

*Earlier on, you mentioned seeing something in Eric Johnson's eyes. Did you ever notice anything in Jimi Hendrix' eyes?*

I saw Jimi Hendrix two or three times in person. The first time I really was with him was in the studio. He was overdubbing "Roomful Of Mirrors" [Rainbow Bridge, Reprise, MS 2040], and this was a real shocker to me. He said, "Okay, roll it," and started recording, and

*"Whether you're doing it in the bar, the church, or the strip joint, the first duty of music is to complement and enhance life."*

it was incredible. But within 15 or 20 seconds into the song, he just went out. All of a sudden the music that was coming out of the speakers was way beyond the song, like he was freaking out having a gigantic battle in the sky with somebody. It just didn't make any sense with the song anymore, so the roadies looked at each other, the producer looked at him, and they said, "Go get him." I'm not making this up. They separated him from the amplifier and the guitar, and it was like he was having an epileptic attack. I said, "Do I have to go through these changes just to play my guitar? I'm just a kid!" When they separated him, his eyes were red and he was almost foaming from the mouth. He was gone.

*What do you think caused it?*

To me, it was a combination of the lifestyle—staying up all night, chicks, too much drugs, all kinds of stuff. It was a combination of all the intensities that he felt, along with a lack of discipline. In the rock style of life at that time, there was no discipline. You took everything all the time. I know one thing man—it drained me. It made me realize that like John McLaughlin, I needed to know about discipline. Now I know that out of discipline comes freedom. When you've got discipline in your pocket, you've got punctuality, regularity meditation. When things get too crazy with the record, the companies, or the world, you can click a switch and go into your own sanctuary and play music that is stronger than the news.

*Can you offer any parting advice for guitarists?*

Whether you are doing it in the bar, the church, the strip joint, or the Himalayas, the first duty of music is to complement and enhance life. And once you approach it like that then there is order. You have to have businessmen to help take care of you, so you have to develop that trust. You also have to not be naive. You have to know that there are a lot of people out there who are like leeches. They live out of musicians. They work you to get a contract, and then 10 years from now you realize that they stole you blind. You have to know when to trust and when to say, "Hey man, I can't work with you, because I don't trust you. You are dishonest." All of that stuff is part of music, because whatever happens



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## CARLOS SANTANA

between the 23 hours that you're not onstage is going to affect you when you come onstage. So all that is important.

*What's the greatest reward in your line of work?*

It's like that movie *Round Midnight*. There's a part where this guy tells [saxophonist] Dexter Gordon, "When I was in the Army, the way you played these three notes changed my life." People come up and tell me that I did that. Someone said to me, "Man, I was ready to check out, put the gun to my head, and I heard this song. It made me cry, and it made me want to try it again. Now I feel better." That's not *me*, though; it's a spirit through me that wants to exalt itself. It says, "Don't take that out. Don't treasure frustration. Don't treasure depression. This is an imposter—don't make friends with him. You're more than that. Don't focus on the negative things in life. Accentuate the positive; otherwise you become darkened. Light up a candle." That's the tone; that's the story that I want to do through my music as much as possible. That's the best reward, because platinum albums and all that kind of stuff collect dust, and after a while you don't even know where you stored them. When you have children, all that stuff doesn't mean that much anymore. What means something is to be able tell a story and put wings in people's hearts.

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