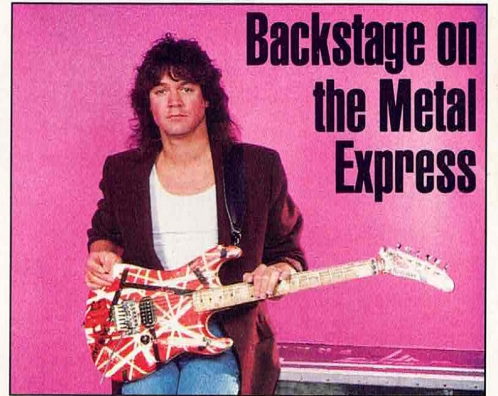


CARLOS SANTANA ■ FRANK ZAPPA ■ GEORGIA SATELLITES

# MUSICIAN

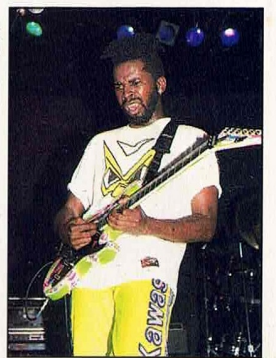
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# Monsters of Guitar



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*by Ted Drozdowski*

EBET ROBERTS



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## MUSICIAN

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COVER: B. GIBBONS BY GEORGE CRAIG, VAN HALEN BY MARK WEISS/MWA, V. REID BY ANTHONY CUTAJAR

# CARLOS SANTANA

## Uncommon Differences

# WAYNE SHORTER

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"Right here, right here, man!" Carlos Santana hasn't even shut the door of the rental car and he wants to get his fave new cassette—by African bandleader Salif Keita—into the tape deck. Priorities. It's a pop tune rife with third-world rhythms, the kind of mix Santana knows something about. As the song kicks in, he starts doing the hipshake in the back seat. Though he can't move around like he wants—he's sitting on a couple of drum stands—the energy starts to build.

"Miles is gonna love it, man. Listen to this break." The groove sounds smart and soulful. "This should be number one in every country on every label," he gushes. "I hear all the tribes in here: Yoruba, Brazil, Cuba. Yeah, Miles will be into this!"

Santana won't have to wait long to find out. He's about 20 minutes away from the

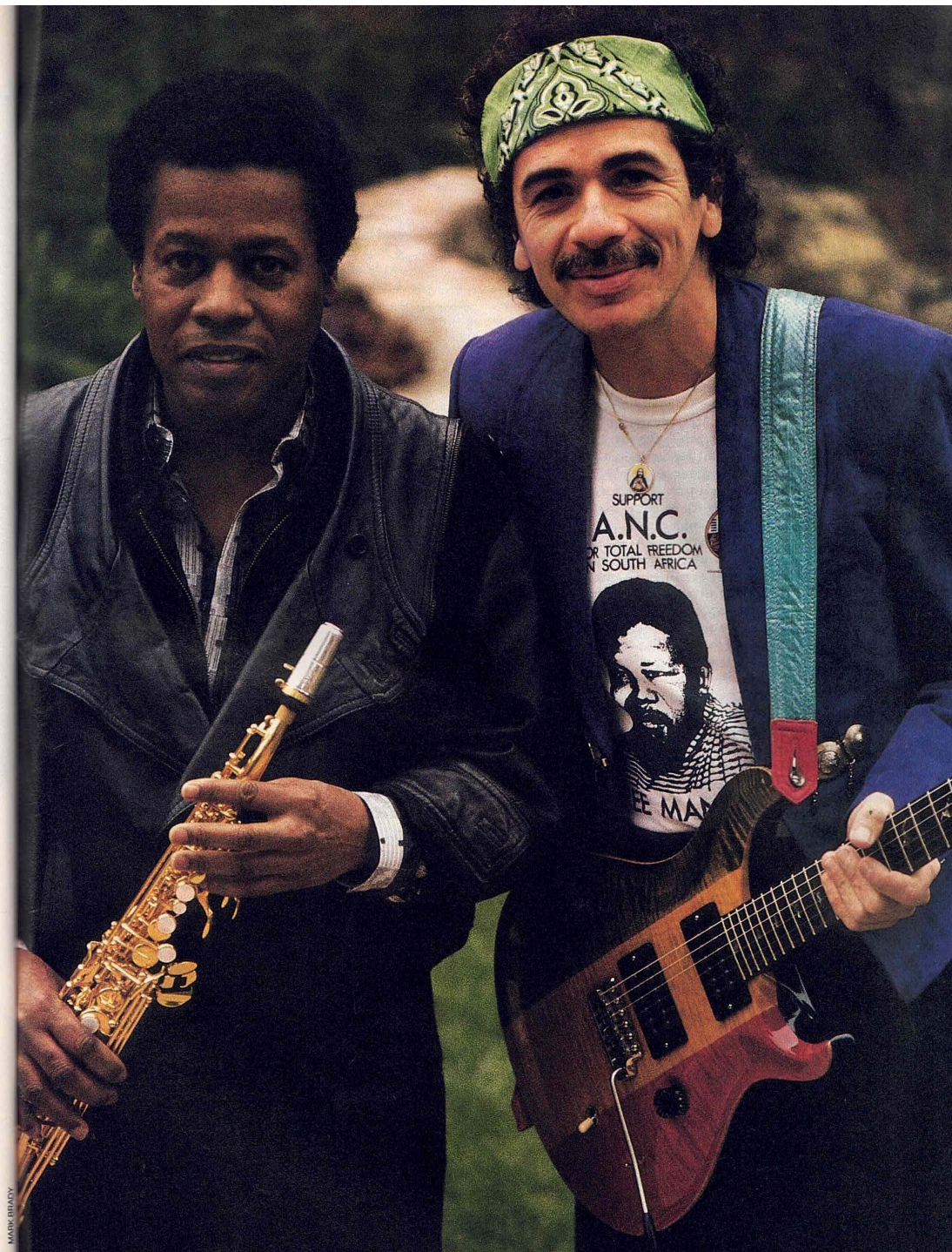
Saratoga Springs Music Complex, where Miles Davis, his good pal and constant inspiration, will take the stage with his current unit of vampmeisters. But this ride up to Jazz Fest North isn't just a trek to prove that Santana is a die-hard Davis fan; the 41-year-old guitarist is on the bill as well. The fact is, he still feels a bit intimidated about following his mentor.

Carlos shouldn't worry so much. Anyone who's spent much time following his career recognizes in Santana a distinctive solo voice and improvisational talent, the soul of a jazzman itching away in more tightly constricted pop/rock formats. This summer, he's decided to scratch that itch. But to do it right, he needed a guy with long fingernails. Someone incisive, inventive, musically compatible. Voilà: Enter the great jazz saxophonist Wayne Shorter.

BY JIM MACNIE

Shorter and Santana are spending a couple of months traipsing around together: East Coast, Europe, a swing through the Southern states. Along the way they hope to shake up a few minds, open a few hearts, rip apart a few preconceptions.

Early on they headlined a New England show that could have been called "The Monsters of Fusion," or maybe more appropriately, "The Monstrosities of Fusion." Yes, the biggies were on *bored*: Chick Corea's Elektric Band and Herbie Hancock's Headhunters II did their best to keep their endorsements flowing, proving once again why fusion hasn't hit a meaningful note in 10 years. (Possibly because it favors sound over substance? Possibly because it kowtows to the trivial rituals of



MARY BRADY

*"The street has a different story to tell. That's what I'm looking for, that substance. The clean thing's not for me; I need the dirt, the essence."*

show-biz?) After a few hours, the yawns were as predictable as the noodling.

The Santana/Shorter conglomerate contains many of the same accoutrements of fusioneseque improv: a couple of keyboards (Patrice Rushen and Chester Thompson), a pair of hand-percussionists (Jose Chepito Areas and the Armondo Perez), and a trad rhythm section (trap drummer Ndugu Chancler, bassist Alphonso Johnson), while the two leaders wax hard on their respective axes. But for Santana, that means gutsy, high-on-the-neck blues references, choked out like someone's holding tomorrow captive. For Shorter, it means his most rip-snorting tenor work in eons, stuff that slices up space and razors through complacency.

Therein lies the diff: With only a few rehearsals under the belt, the Santana/Shorter unit said more in one tune than Chick and Herbie did all evening. Thanks to the band's percussion-heavy composition, even the infrequent moments of coasting had an underpinning of accessible complexity; the overall approach suggests the grand sweep of an orchestra—at least one led by Miles. It's not jazz exactly (Santana readily admits the rhythmic twists of swing are slightly beyond him); the motifs are ethnically tempered versions of progressive rock. Yet there's plenty of open space and textured corners for both to toy with. That, according to Carlos, is what he's been waiting for.

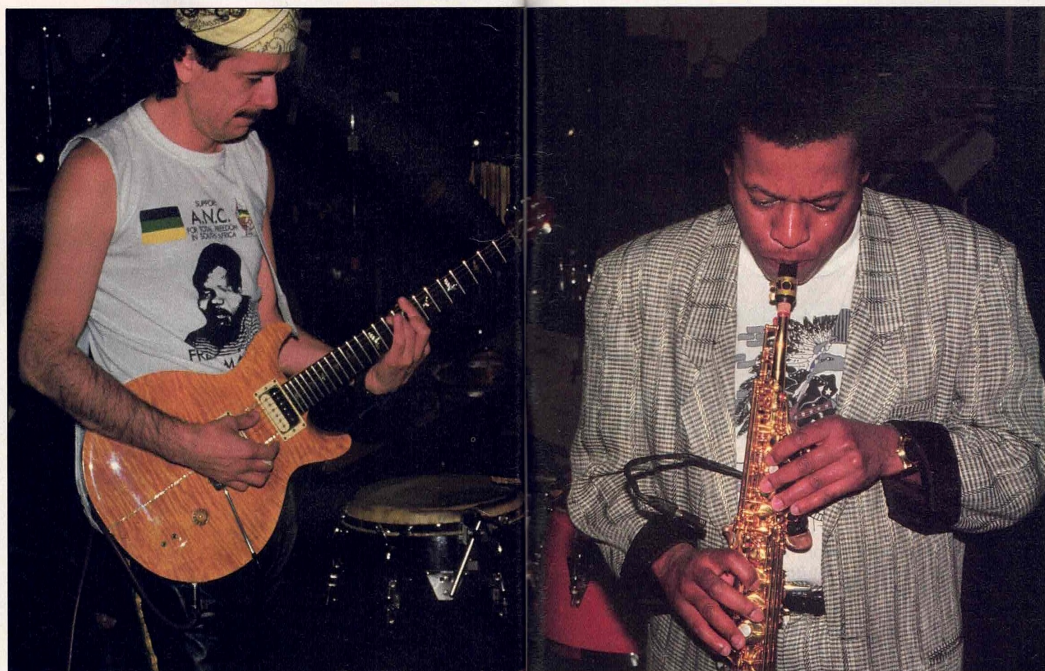
This union comes at a time when both Santana and Shorter have laid past projects to rest. Santana the group is kaput, though an upcoming retrospective by CBS and an attendant "reunion" tour will remind us that they covered mucho ground. *Blues for Salvador*, Carlos' latest LP, recalls 1972's *Caravanserai*; it's an elaborate series of vignettes which hang together like a suite. This approach is smart, feigning expansiveness while avoiding the histrionic tedium that too much space can create. Judging from the oozy sustain, the curt flourishes and the heartfelt wail, Santana hasn't left his old guitar persona behind, either. Structurally, the record suffers from lightweight, clichéd compositions. Santana's still finding out what to do with his freedom.

Shorter, who turns 55 on August 25, knows what to do with his. Weather Report has been a memory for a couple years now, and Wayne currently presides over an everchanging ensemble whose best work has taken place on the stage. His studio prowess is becoming more focused. The new *Joy Ryder* is the most rewarding of his three post-WR offerings, with beguiling settings, feisty playing and house-of-mirrors writing. It seems Shorter's pen, once considered the most engaging in jazz, is hitting its stride again. His playing chops were never suspect.

Since the closing years of Weather Report, Shorter's been taking it on the chin from fans and crits for maintaining such a low-profile stance. He counters that "there are lots of other

things I'm interested in besides being Wayne Shorter." For the moment he and Carlos are a team, one which looks at just about any option and says "Maybe..."

Backstage at Saratoga, Santana is leading a "We want Miles" encore chant. With help from Kenny Garrett's alto and flute, Davis' septet has laid down a sharp set. Miles tests the crowd's psyche for at least five minutes' worth of applause and howls. Finally he relents and starts stirring up a funk reprise. Santana splits for the tuning room, explaining to some friends how Muddy Waters and Little Walter are the Miles and Coltrane of the



blues. In conversation, he comes across as an unabashed fan, in love with music and any number of musical forebears.

As Shorter and the rest of the ensemble trickle in, it's obvious that "The Adventure Tour" enjoys an unusual amount of camaraderie. Watching them perform, their ease becomes infectious. Santana beams when Shorter solos; Shorter watches Rushen with piqued interest; everyone bears witness as the 75-year-old Peraza imbues complex patterns with a shrugged simplicity. On paper it looks like a one-off project; onstage it sounds like a band.

Catching up with the two leaders proves more difficult; they're leaving for Europe the next day. We talk in the tuning room, on the bus ride home from the gig, after trips to the mall for last-minute necessities, before tennis matches and during brunch. Not surprisingly, the topics of conversation are as varied as the settings; alone and together, Shorter and Santana discuss their perception of audiences, how to get an

individual sound, the vileness of artistic constraints and the sickness of Muzak, how this particular partnership sprouted and why it seems so fruitful.

As he speaks, Santana is test-driving a Casio synth guitar. Tito Puente strolls in to say hello. A burning stick of incense sweetens the air.

**MUSICIAN:** *Would you ever use one of these synth guitars?*

**SANTANA:** Nah. I'm not old-fashioned, but to me the most beautiful sound is T-Bone Walker and Wes Montgomery, Django Reinhardt, Jimi Hendrix. Those four guys are the primary colors and everything else is derived from them. With T-Bone you've got all the Kings, B.B., Albert and Chuck

Wayne, well, I would rather give that money to Wayne, right? And have him play on my album. Because these things sound generic; it isn't the real deal. Cellos and pianos sound good; guitars always sound terrible. Even the new guitar players: They all get this box from Los Angeles, it sounds like Eric Clapton, Neil Schon. The tone is the same. Listen to Otis Rush or B.B. King now that he's back playing through Twin Reverbs. If you don't have the tone, you're not going anywhere.

I'll give you an example: A deer rubs itself all over with musk, and it runs everywhere trying to find out where the smell comes from. But it's coming from itself. That's what B.B. King taught me. It's a sound you're born with. It's good to pay attention to other guitarists, but the more you practice, the more you should shed yourself of people that you love.

Studio musicians resent when I talk like that, but there's really a big difference between studio and street musicians. Studio musicians sound stale, they sound uninspired and they sound like they're playing from the fingers on out. B.B., Albert, Jimi...when they finish playing this hurts [*grabs his foot*], this hurts [*grabs his heart*] and this hurts [*grabs his crotch*]. Because they're giving you something else. They're getting those extra tones, those overtones. And it's not volume, man; there's a big difference between projecting and volume. You can project while you whisper. Some people make the mistake of thinking that when you play soft, the intensity goes out.

**MUSICIAN:** *That's one thing that made you different on the bill the other night. You guys were the only ones using understatement.*

**SANTANA:** Well, Wayne, he's a master of that, him and Miles, that's what they teach you. Finesse is extremely important, but you should never lose the, excuse the expression, *cojones*, behind the music. Playing soft doesn't mean that you play half-heartedly.

I grew up in Tijuana, playing nightclubs from four o'clock in the afternoon until six o'clock in the morning. Prostitutes undressing everywhere. And you learn how to strip people with your guitar, and I don't mean the people who work there. A lady who just got married and just got to Tijuana and her old man got a little drunk and he's looking at this fine-looking prostitute, and she's a bit high herself, and it's tit for tat...you play some music and you can draw her to you. You can do all kinds of things with music. You can seduce people or you can inspire people.

I learned a lot of my music in the streets and I give the streets a lot of value, because there are a lot of street guys who

Berry, everything. With Django you've got Jeff Beck. And Hendrix, well...

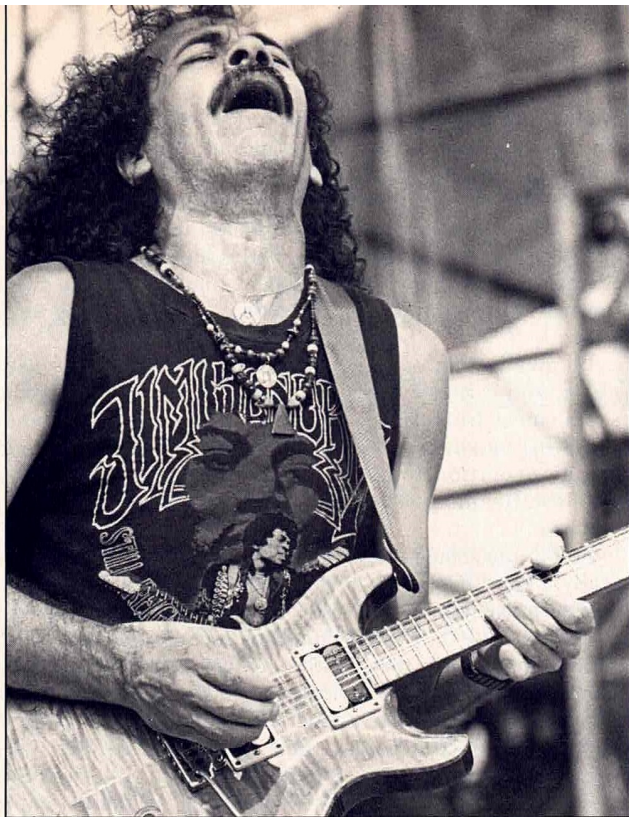
**MUSICIAN:** *But you keep up with technical advances?*

**SANTANA:** They're not keeping up, not to what we want to say. For example, [synth guitars] have a quick action but you're getting the same tone that everybody else has got, it's nothing. I'm in the business of tone. When they make guitars that, instead of DX7 sounds they put in acoustic 12s and nylon-string sounds like Bola Sete, chord voicings like Wes, a straight-ahead Telecaster sound like Albert Collins...then you can use the guitar, because you've sampled the right stuff. Emulate the James Brown horn section, man.

If I was to buy one of those Synclaviers—they cost something like \$65,000—to get a sound like

*"You've got to grow up sometime and question why you're stretching out solos. Is it indulgence? Practicing? Using someone else's time? It's avarice; you get greedy."*

MARK BRIDY



can beat up a black belt. The street has a different story to tell; that's what I'm looking for, that substance. The clean thing's not for me; I need the dirt, the essence...from Africa or somewhere. If it don't have that it will lose my ear.

**MUSICIAN:** *How do you utilize the studio, like you obviously did on *Blues for Salvador*, and not come off sounding slick?*

**SANTANA:** The main thing is that you don't have a lot of producers and people from L.A. come in. It's true. They're more into the production than the vision. On *Blues for Salvador*, there really was no producer; it was one-take Johnsons, just do it. That appeals to me a lot.

**MUSICIAN:** *Was there a time you worried that you wouldn't get the tone you were looking for?*

**SANTANA:** No, not even in the early days. In Tijuana, one of the baddest guys was named Javier Batiz. He had a beautiful tone like the guy who played with Bobby Bland in the early days—which is still T-Bone. When I started jamming with him, I was still a kid, and when I picked up the guitar I heard him say, 'What's that? Who's playing that guitar?' As raw as it was, I knew I had something different already; I wasn't aware of what until the tour I did with John McLaughlin. I was a bit afraid, the same way Eddie Van Halen might be afraid to go into a club and square off with Tony Williams, say. But I realized that after John said whatever he said—be it fast and loud, or soft and subtle—people responded. And it made me believe that music is like a huge garden, there's room for all the textures and aromas. As long as you play from your heart, your flower's not made out of plastic.

**MUSICIAN:** *Was that initial sound similar to the sound you get now? The wide tone?*

**SANTANA:** Yeah, but more crude, raw. I spent many nights with Charlie Christian, many nights with T-Bone, with John Lee Hooker. It was the essence of the street musicians. I didn't know what I was doing and I still don't. But I have more of an idea when to stand forward and when not to.

**MUSICIAN:** *When was the turning point for Santana's embrace of improvisation? When did it feel right to stretch pop structures?*

**SANTANA:** After I played with John McLaughlin. I tried with the first band, but it didn't work.

**MUSICIAN:** *Were you initially intimidated by your decision to change the music?*

**SANTANA:** Yeah, but I knew I had to do it. I was intimidated when I saw [Tony Williams'] Lifetime, definitely. The other time I was so intimidated that I couldn't play was with Larry Coryell. They were playing odd times that I didn't understand. With odd times you have to be like a cat, the rhythm is like a pendulum: Pick your spot when you want to claw it. Hahhhh! Because if you count it sounds weird. The best part about guitarists who play odd times is when they make it 4/4, it's so fluid. Any time it sounds like you've got a guy with a wooden leg, I can't stand it.

**MUSICIAN:** *How about surprise, when the rhythm seems to be one thing, and it turns out to be something else? Would you avoid coming around corners like that?*

**SANTANA:** No, that's cool. That's what blues players do. They lay back so much that they come behind you. And if you're not ready for what you're doing, they'll laugh at you. They're not slowing down, they purposely stretch time. There's a lot of little tricks to make the music more alive.

**MUSICIAN:** *You seem to be making a political statement with the title of *Blues for Salvador*. Do you think music and*

*"Studio musicians sound stale. B.B., Albert, Jimi...when they finish playing, it hurts. They're giving you something else, those extra tones."*

*politics should be intermixed?*

**SANTANA:** Nowadays they have to. If musicians didn't stand up like we stood up in Woodstock, we'd still be in Vietnam, we'd still have Nixon. [Ed.: *We still do.*] Music is what alleviates...I promise you the reason that people have bad days, grab a machine gun and start shooting is the damn ugly, atrocious music you hear in elevators. And in the shopping malls. It starts cancer, brain damage. But if you play the right music, it will transform negativity into positive possibilities.

People think I'm presuming too much when I say this. Bob Geldof said I was self-indulgent. But I'll tell you, if he plays in front of Macy's for a living, he will starve to death. He didn't create Live-Aid. Bill Graham and all the managers of the bands are the ones who raised that money. He didn't.

If music doesn't get involved with politics what's going to happen is the same thing that happened to the American Indian. Fifty years from now they're going to say Duke Ellington was white. It's true. Just like they think that Elvis Presley started rock 'n' roll. You have to get involved with the politics of the day—Hendrix doing "Machine Gun."

Actually Coltrane obliterated all that when he did *A Love Supreme*. Because politics is about segregating, dissecting, blowing up the concept of oneness, uniqueness and individu-

*“My mother used to remind me: ‘Don’t get so cool you can’t communicate with anyone. Just remember, everybody’s got to go to the toilet.’”*

ality. *A Love Supreme* is about embracing and transforming.  
**MUSICIAN:** Are you worried that you’re getting away from commercial music?

**SANTANA:** Like the guy says to Dexter Gordon in *‘Round Midnight*, “Man, those three notes you played changed my life.” Music has that power, it gets you pregnant with a certain ideal and then you want to live up to it. Commerciality is not a bad word, though. The most commercial music in the world is “Mona Lisa” by Nat King Cole, or Dinah Washington singing “What a Difference a Day Makes.” That’s good company.

**MUSICIAN:** When you’re putting together bands, do you want players who can create friction as well as coexist?

**SANTANA:** Yeah, definitely. In this band Armando is the fuse, he sparks the house. He’s 75 and he gets the drummer going, Chepito going. He never drags his butt. He’s got tremendous dignity, just like Miles. I’m sure there are times when it’s appropriate to shut the door to the hotel room and just collapse, but you’ll never see that side of him. That’s a standard to keep up with.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you labor over what context you want to play in? How big the band should be, who’s in it?

**SANTANA:** No, I turn it over to the Lord. I just figure it out. I’m not going to go through names, but I’ve paid my dues as far as being a psychiatrist, baby-sitter, traffic cop, all that kind of thing. Now I just want to have fun. But it’s like being a quarterback, deciding what pockets I want to stay in. When I see people flaunting something, I see a fall ahead. Onstage, everything falls apart; they can’t hide ineptness. Whereas people who get up in the morning and thank the Creator, like Coltrane did, are making music for the generations. Einstein gave us a secret: “Imagination is infinitely more important than knowledge.” If you can’t hear it, you can’t play it.

**MUSICIAN:** You seem to be a rock star who hasn’t bought into the notion of being a rock star.

**SANTANA:** Since Tijuana I’ve known good musicians and weekend musicians. I could tell that guy playing behind Ricky Nelson [James Burton] could play. But terms like “rock star” aren’t what we call ourselves; they’re given to us by the industry. Like the term “groupies”; musicians don’t say that, lawyers do. I always knew I was going to be a musician, whether I played on the sidewalk or in Madison Square Garden. My father’s a musician. I knew. Real musicians don’t subscribe to the philosophy that there’s a sucker born every minute. That’s not a musician, that’s an opportunist.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you think the line between pop and jazz is getting thinner? Was that a goal for Santana, to mesh improvisation and structure?

**SANTANA:** I might have thought like that pre-’83, but from where I sit now, it had already happened. Lee Morgan’s “Sidewinder” or Horace Silver’s “Song for My Father” are pop tunes, I think. But I don’t want to sell anything. I just want to play. Music is about upholding values and having

fun. Teenagers don’t want to hear a lot of things and the least they want to hear is that freedom comes from discipline.

**MUSICIAN:** With the Santana retrospective coming out, it’s a good time to see what those bands accomplished. What made you want to extend the pop format?

**SANTANA:** Jimi, when he died. We were in Denver opening up for CSN and when I heard about it, I felt dizzy, I felt cheap, I felt like I was being raped



Miles Davis and Wayne Shorter

by the system, by Phillip Morris, Coca-Cola. My guts hurt, I threw up. My soul said, “Learn from this, do something that he wanted to do.” That’s what I’m trying to do. Look at what I’ve been doing for the last two years, working with the Neville Brothers, the Caribbean All-Stars, John Lee Hooker, Eddie Palmieri, Gato Barbieri—there are very few cats who will go to these places and play with those people. South side of Chicago with Otis Rush, Buddy Guy, because you are going to get scratched. “Hi, nice to see you, screeaaaaah!” “Thanks, I needed that, good to see you, too.” That’s part of the process, you know?

Jazz is like an ocean, rock music is like a swimming pool, and right now I’m swimming away from the pool, going toward the ocean. You get wet either way, so if you’re going to get wet, plunge yourself.

**MUSICIAN:** You were talking about odd meters and different rhythms before; have you thought about utilizing more overt swing into your sound?

**SANTANA:** Yeah, but at the same time swing is still very evasive to my mind; it’s like my brain’s on 110 and bebop is on 220. Really. I need time to convert. Because the chord changes and structures and nuances and lifestyle are different. Charlie Parker, Charlie Christian, Jimi Hendrix—very few people will do what they did, which is stay up three days in a row, party, run the gamut of physical stimuli, then pick up the instrument at six in the morning on the third day, and sound like that. Jan Hammer can’t sound like that.

I’m talking about latitude, that’s all I’m talking about through this interview; latitude is your wings.

**MUSICIAN:** Has playing with Wayne brought an aspect of swing closer to you?

**SANTANA:** No, that’s the last thing he wants to play, from what I understand. I want to learn, but it’s not something I want to do unless I do it correctly. With all due respect to all the great bands in the world, I’ve yet to hear a band on the face of this planet swing as good as Sun Ra. Just straight-ahead swing. I mean, when Sun Ra played San Raphael, California, he went from Fletcher Henderson via Mars. I said,

"Jesus, this is like Lightnin' Hopkins, Jimmy Reed, Muddy Waters...everything I love, and it's *happening!*" It's the first time I understood that order of swing, and unless I'm going that way, I don't try it, because I don't want to pee on music. The reason I play with certain musicians is...I may not have a Ph.D. like they do, but I respect it enough to complement them when they say, "Tell your story."

It's about 94 degrees out. Carlos signals a break by grabbing a beer and washing his hair in a sink. Do you think there'll be a time when the blues won't inform your sound? He laughs: "The blues is the bone in the avocado, man, and you don't have an avocado without the bone."

The next day the co-leaders settle into a booth at the hotel's empty restaurant. Neither is exactly a motormouth, but when we do get rolling, these two West Coast residents (Santana, San Francisco; Shorter, L.A.) weave ethereal notions of chance, mysticism, fate and self-direction into their opinions on their music, past and present. I'm not Calibashing, but, speaking together, the conversation sometimes drifts into a place that recalls stoned afternoons in the park. Carlos speaks in a whisper, perhaps a method stemming from prayer. Wayne seems to absorb questions before he speaks; he wants to know where you're coming from. As forks mosey through spinach salads, we drift toward matters concrete.

**MUSICIAN:** *Is swing an ancient language?*

**SHORTER:** There's room for everybody. The danger is when someone tries to monopolize the past, using straight 4/4 time and A-B-A structure. There's room for nostalgia; the Blue Note kind of stuff is popular again, the Marsalis kind of stuff.

**MUSICIAN:** *Do you hear yourself in any of today's younger players?*

**SHORTER:** A little, attack-wise, you know, they jump into a solo the same way.

**SANTANA:** The greatest gift is your individuality. You've got to guard it, treasure it. I got this album from an African guitar player and one of the songs goes, "My wife said no, my daughter said no, my manager said no, my best friend said no; here it is anyway." [laughter]

**MUSICIAN:** *How did you guys get together?*

**SHORTER:** Back at an early-'70s gig, a bunch of guys from Santana were sitting onstage in Texas, checking out Weather Report. We thought that was nice, really human. Sometimes in jazz people get real stuck up; they're invited everywhere and they never go.

**SANTANA:** It was funny because Michael Shrieve and I were apologizing to Wayne and Joe because our audience didn't have the capacity to understand them. I have tapes of those concerts, where people were screaming "*Santana!*" in the middle of a Wayne statement, and I feel like killing the guy.

**SHORTER:** My mother used to remind me: "Don't get so cool that you can't communicate with anyone. I don't care if you

become president of the U.S.A. or if you get all the Oscars in the world; just remember one thing, everybody's got to go to the toilet."

**MUSICIAN:** *Is the band much different from your initial conception?*

**SHORTER:** I like it because it reminds me of when I was a kid. Me and my brother would just sit around and make up movies, make up our own dialogue and plot.

**SANTANA:** Frustration always follows expectation. We got Armando and Ndugo and Alfonso and looked for what chemistry was there. Out of a 10, we were getting 7½, 8 consistency. So I said, "Maybe this band could accommodate Wayne's stuff." It's a challenge, because he doesn't write songs, he writes compositions. That's been the challenge for everybody, to relax with Wayne. Not because he's unfriendly, but because everybody's in awe of him. We needed to come out of the spell and start kicking.

**SHORTER:** Same thing from this side. I like to be in good company, and that has to do with all of human life. I want to play with someone who can perceive depth. When I worked with Milton Nascimento it was quick: I just knew I wanted to. I kind of knew it when I hooked up with Carlos, too.

**MUSICIAN:** *What turned you on to his sound?*

**SHORTER:** His openness. You might say he has a kind of drive and his guitar sound was like singing; that's a plus to me. He has a way of getting to the point without revving up, without using a lot of notes.

**MUSICIAN:** *Carlos, what about Wayne's sound?*

**SANTANA:** It's the commitment, you can hear it. MIDI's not going to give it to you. But Wayne's MIDled to another world.

**MUSICIAN:** *I saw you really laughing, really getting off on one of his solos last night.*

**SANTANA:** I'm drinking from his well, man. A friend of mine said I'm playing with him just so I can have the cassettes of the performances. Other musicians stick around and watch the whole show, you know? With some bands, if you've heard the first three songs, you've heard it all. We're trying to bring a bouquet, mix it all up.

**MUSICIAN:** *You sound like you feel at home with Latin and South American rhythms, Wayne.*

**SHORTER:** We're trying to probe different areas. At our first gig, at the Fillmore, we tried to work on our *differences*. Wouldn't it be interesting to explore the *uncommonness* of people? And when you get to the bottom of it, give it everything you've got. You'd need 30 lifetimes for that.

**MUSICIAN:** *It seems that your two approaches are different. Carlos rides the groove, and Wayne throws punches into it.*

**SANTANA:** We've got a lot of help. Armando and Chepito create undertows and that keeps it moving. I try to tell the players certain things without offending anybody. The musicians have got to listen closely to their monitors. One thing we're learning is that Wayne has a tremendous sense of patience, and that's a real, real strength. He waits for ideas to peak, then goes right to the center of it.

**SHORTER:** You don't get upset about the rented instruments or not being able to hear yourself. The stage is an environment where quite often everything's not right. You'd have a stroke every day if you worried about it.

**MUSICIAN:** *Do you guys ever lose yourselves improvising?*

**SANTANA:** I like to get lost in a positive way, so that you play a note and you don't know whether you're in China or America or Mexico. You're just gone.

**SHORTER:** Many times you *do* become the experience. You're doing it in the same way a magician does: sleight of hand.

**MUSICIAN:** *Being so established, is it hard to break new ground? Sad to lay a band to rest?*

Carlos Santana's sound comes directly out of his gut, speaking through Paul Reed Smith and Yamaha guitars. The strings he strangles are D'Addarios and that instantly identifiable sustain-laden wail is brought to you by Mesa Boogie amps (a Mark I stuffed with Altecs, and a C-300 lined with E-Vs) via Monster Cables.

Wayne Shorter looked puzzled when I asked him about his horns, but his curved-neck soprano (which sounded tougher onstage than it does on recent records) is a Yamaha, and the producer of those "subterranean" growls is a Selmer Mark VII tenor. Don't underestimate its power.

**MORE DIRT,  
LESS PLASTIC**

**SHORTER:** Not for me. It's like when they were tearing down the old Met, and somebody asked an opera singer, "Are you going to miss it?" And he buzzed back, "No!" The same thing with Miles: He knows he had good times with Trane and the others, but last night he was just as happy to introduce me to his current players. If you're proud of your work, you're not going to be sad about it. Something that's sadder is putting a band to rest before it's had a chance to develop, to say anything itself.

**SANTANA:** Same here. I don't need to be bound to anything except the groove in my heart. I love my wife and kids, my mom, but the groove is what's happening.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you ever wonder who's listening to you?

**SHORTER:** I just spoke to my wife on the phone and I'm still knocked out by this one: She was at a party a couple nights ago and Marlon Brando came up to her and said he dug *Nefertiti* and *Miles Smiles*. Wild. It's weird when word-of-mouth comes in from another field. I recently got a letter from a surgeon who said he listens to all kinds of music: ballet, opera, and that my stuff with Milton has inspired him to be a better surgeon in the operating room, better husband to his wife, father to his kids, citizen in the world.

**MUSICIAN:** What's your reaction to that response?

**SHORTER:** I better be cool. Take a look at myself and do what's right.

**MUSICIAN:** Fusion seems to be a music of broad gestures. And all these big, showy moves substantiate the negative criticism. Do you think fusion brought a bad rap on itself?

**SHORTER:** I've been listening to Chick since he's been on his own and his Elektric Band and all that. Sometimes I get the feeling that when they stand there in a line in the front of the stage, they're like warriors or something. I think he's trying to communicate a spirit; that's probably the essence. But the essence is missed by some of his grand gestures.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you guys have to watch out for overstatement?

**SANTANA:** See, overstatement, it's like burping in somebody's face. I saw Muddy Waters once go onstage with five guitar players. And he'd nod and one guy would take two steps out and sound like Bill Doggett's guitarist on "Honky Tonk." Then Muddy told him to go back. The next guy comes out and solos like Albert and B.B. They did it all until it was Muddy's turn and he turned up the slide and made everybody's hair stand up like cactus. So I can respect "warrior" and all that kind of stuff. But you have to balance your intellect with straight, gutbucket heart.

To a certain extent, that's what this band is testament to. We haven't recorded an album, we don't have a bunch of guys hyping us out. It's not pompous. Yet we have a certain admiration and oneness with great musicians every night.

**MUSICIAN:** You do seem to avoid the showy aspects.

**SANTANA:** When I go to the circus, I expect the bear to do tricks the other bears can't do. But it's not the same for a musician.

**MUSICIAN:** Because you're all pals, a lot of fans wonder if you two will ever play with Miles. Could that happen?

**SANTANA:** Us three? It's not impossible. He knows that Wayne and I have nothing but respect. We don't kiss his behind or talk behind his back.

**SHORTER:** Miles wants to communicate more with both of us. We've been getting together on the telephone in California. I can feel the wheels turning in his head. Like those kids: "Can you come out and play?" We were exchanging tapes with him last night and the mood was real good. Don't rule it out.

The bus is getting ready to leave for the airport as Wayne Shorter, seemingly nonchalant, doodles on a pad. His futuristic cartoons have graced his recent album covers and dust sleeves. He's a movie buff as well; on the bus, the rest of

the band tests his memory of obscure movie plots, and he's stumped only by contemporary fare.

A conversation with Wayne is revealing: You can literally watch ideas spring into his head, or at least watch his reaction as they show up on his face. His countenance is at once wise and youthful, his remarks as candid as his solo on "Footprints." He's also prone to metaphor—Wayne loves to draw parallels—though not in an evasive way. He's sipping sparkling water; when offered some grapefruit juice, the man who helped combine the turfs of jazz and rock tells the waiter to bring them both. "I like to mix them up sometimes."

**MUSICIAN:** You were in one place—*Weather Report*—for so long. Were you itchy to do more?

**SHORTER:** Sort of. When you're off, when you're not playing, when you're doing hobbies and such, that becomes the time for you to realize that you're the same person, but there are always other interests.

**MUSICIAN:** People always expect you to be Wayne Shorter. Did it feel good to let that role slide?

**SHORTER:** Yeah, I even went back to drawing a bit. It's the same old business about boundaries. It's fun to play with Joni Mitchell—they don't even have a name for her stuff anymore. Richard Stoltzman does that; he's not playing classical all the time. He's involved with Ellington or Woody Herman. Same thing with Friedrich Gulda, the great Viennese pianist that Zawinul went on tour with. He gained the reputation of being a maverick or a gypsy, breaking away from the traditional classical concert circuit.

**MUSICIAN:** When Jack DeJohnette wrote "Where or Wayne," did you feel loved, missed or think people were expecting too much from you?

**SHORTER:** They wanted to hear more of a general everything: writing, playing, expression of compositions. Now I know the feeling. There's a writer I'm currently reading

named Robert McCammon, who has only written two books, and I want to read more. I think, "What's he doing now?"

**MUSICIAN:** You utilize the tenor sax more with the Santana band; with *Weather Report* you usually played soprano.

**SHORTER:** There's a nice sound between the tenor and the guitar when we do ensemble pieces. The way keyboards are being handled, they don't drown out the tenor. Another thing that's good is that I'm on a remote control system now. I can walk around and that leaves you less tired than if you were standing still. You get like a rod of iron in your neck when you're standing in front of a microphone; the tension buildup after 25 years is tough.

**MUSICIAN:** Carlos was giving you a compliment about the tenor sound the other day.

**SHORTER:** He likes it because it's kind of vocal in a sense, and there's not a lot of affectation. Some people will play too much. Like Miles says: [scratchy whisper] "Don't get cute now." Cuteness covers up your real intentions. Sometimes I think you can only receive someone's real intentions when they play it straight. It's almost like baring your soul.

Miles plays like he sings. A lot of people never heard Miles sing. I heard him singing on the telephone. Some kind of flamenco thing. "You like Spanish music? Ddehhh, ddehhh, deehhh, deh; plunk plunk plunk, like that." Ha ha!

**MUSICIAN:** So there's a different approach to soprano?

**SHORTER:** Soprano feels more like I'm playing a trumpet. It's a fun instrument: like fish jumping around the top of the ocean. With tenor it's more subterranean, you know?

**MUSICIAN:** How is it to interact with a guitarist in the front?

**SHORTER:** It feels good, although it makes you want to add things to the limitations of your instrument, give it other colors, MIDI it up. But if you go without all that synthesizer stuff, you'll find out that you're pulling yourself by the bootstrap to complement the guitar, because the guitar's got

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## SANTANA SHORTER

so many variations in sound.

The best thing you can do is express yourself sincerely. Sometimes I feel that guitar players will solo and the sax player coming up next will go through a lot of fidgeting and adjustments. They want to be just as eloquent, sound-wise, but they go through a whole lot of calisthenics and honking to say, "Look at me!" That's because he's not plugged in; you've got the reed and the horn and you're subjugated to three or four tonal nuances, maybe five if you're lucky. But there's always the surprise one where the emotions are in charge, where something comes out of your horn that you can't practice. How can you fake an emotion? If you do fake an emotion, something funny is going to come out of there.

**MUSICIAN:** Have you enjoyed other guitar/sax pairings?

**SHORTER:** The only other combination I liked was Trane and Wes Montgomery.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you write with different instruments in mind?

**SHORTER:** Only when it comes to the parts they're supposed to play. Lately I've been thinking in a whole spectrum of sound, that's why I'm carrying around score paper. I'm writing something for an orchestra. Part of it has already been played by the New Japan Orchestra in Tokyo.

**MUSICIAN:** You seem to be returning to the more hyperactive approach you used to have on the tenor. You played some real rambunctious passages last night.

**SHORTER:** You can do that when you have these one-hour-25-minute gigs, and we have quite a few of those in Europe. In Weather Report, we got to be masters at the 40-minute set.

**MUSICIAN:** Is it tough to make a statement in that time?

**SHORTER:** It can be if you're thinking about stretching out

and you say, "I can't do it unless I stretch out," but you've got to grow up sometime and question why you're stretching. Is it indulgence? Practicing? Using someone else's time? It's avarice; you get greedy, spending other people's time.

**MUSICIAN:** So being concise is a goal of yours?

**SHORTER:** Yeah, saying something that's heard immediately and absorbed and lived immediately. Charlie Parker never took long solos.

**MUSICIAN:** I saw the look on your face when you started to rip it up last night, though; you were getting off.

**SHORTER:** It's just paying attention. With Chester and Patrice on keyboards, I have to make sure what I say works, stay away from opposing tone colors. It's like walking down a crowded street in New York and trying never to bump into someone. You could say it's another part of being in rhythm with the whole action of life. It seems clinical and academic, but you've got to remember, you don't want to bore people.

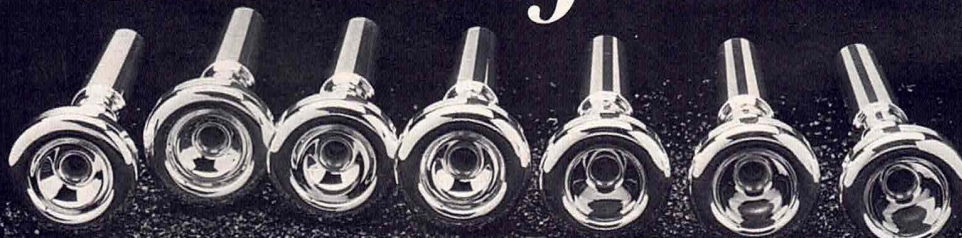
**MUSICIAN:** Do you enjoy throwing caution to the wind?

**SHORTER:** Yeah, if I can do it and not linger and linger and linger; if you do it right, the audience can actually go along with you. It's like a passenger enjoying a really good plane ride without knowing the mechanics, or how the pilot feels.

**MUSICIAN:** Have there been times when you felt you were playing it too safe?

**SHORTER:** Um, well, not playing it "safe." There's a whole bunch of more and a lot of lesses if you're on a tone that's really saying something. The tone takes over. You can just play one note from here to there; where you would ordinarily do some acrobatics and try to dazzle some people and say, "Look what I can do; isn't this fun?" A good tone inspires

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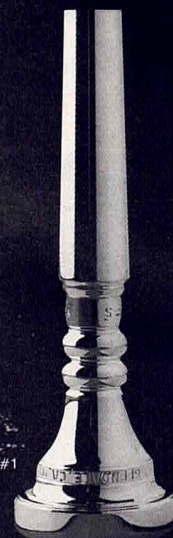


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## SANTANA SHORTER

you to do something that's even more acrobatic than usual. A bad tone would be like a child whining all the time: irritating and unpleasant.

**MUSICIAN:** *I read somewhere that you thought Live at the Plugged Nickel was the most adventurous you'd ever played.*

**SHORTER:** The whole group was doing it then. After that, there were some more recordings with Chick and Dave Holland which Jack DeJohnette gave to me on the Bullet train in Tokyo. Carlos has some of that now; he said, "You all sound crazy!"

**MUSICIAN:** *Are you proud of phases like that?*

**SHORTER:** It feels like a breakthrough. That's what Miles always talks about; he says, [*Milesian rasp*] "We covered a lot of ground, didn't we?" Breakthrough.

**MUSICIAN:** *Are there times when you surprise even yourself when you solo?*

**SHORTER:** Sometimes. But it's the context I want to hear, rather than just me. That's what Charlie Parker was getting at before he died. He wanted not only to play the alto sax, but to be involved with the orchestra, writing and playing music.

**MUSICIAN:** *What prompts a Wayne Shorter composition these days? Do you think they're as adventurous as they have been in the past?*

**SHORTER:** Yeah. They're adventurous in that the forms aren't simply A-B-A. It's like a tapestry or a cinematic style: microscopic waiting to become macroscopic. And the pieces which are coming up are going to be a real surprise.

**MUSICIAN:** *How would you compare your present compositional style with your Blue Note days?*

**SHORTER:** The Blue Notes are leaner, they've got an en-

trance—I mean a front, middle and tail. Then you reverse it; go back through the middle and close the door. There'd be a round of solos, people would express themselves and all that. What's happening now sort of cuts through that process: There are concertos, rondos. It touches all the forms without being one for any amount of time. And not being ruled by the rules, we find out that the rules evolve rather than prescribe.

**MUSICIAN:** *What instrument do you write on at home?*

**SHORTER:** A piano. Unless something comes into me as a whole, I use the piano to check certain parts out. Like "Nefertiti." That came in five seconds one night. I had a bunch of candles on in the apartment in New York, and all of a sudden I played the whole song without stopping. And I said, "Wow, what was that?" But I didn't write it down immediately; I thought if it was valuable, it would come back to me. So I waited a couple minutes and did it again, and it was written.

**MUSICIAN:** *Did you realize it would be such a lasting piece?*

**SHORTER:** I knew it was going to stick somewhere. When I brought it to Miles at a session, he just played the melody over and over, saying, "It's complete, don't need no solo."

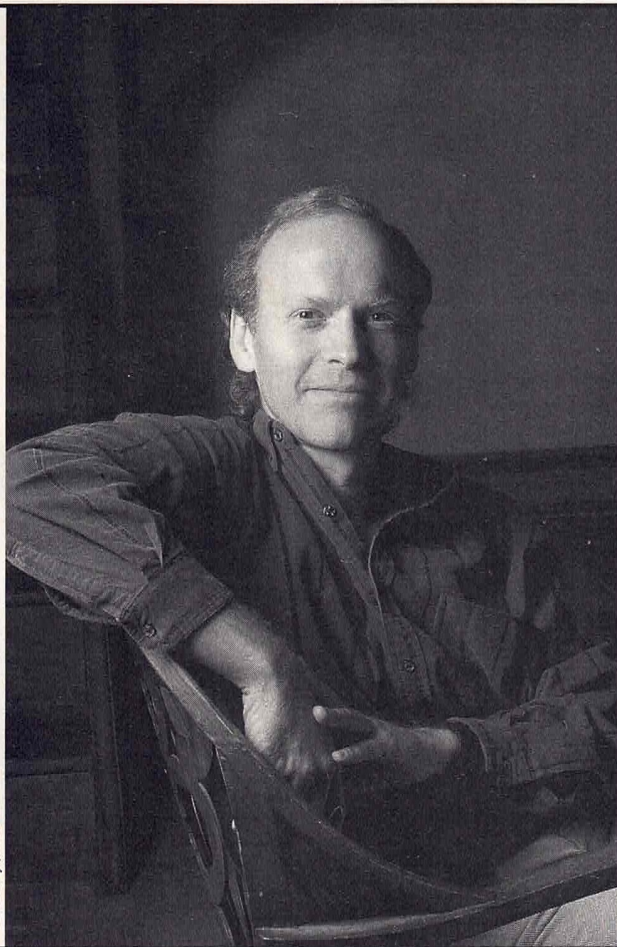
**MUSICIAN:** *What's been the most fun part of this collaboration with Carlos?*

**SHORTER:** The fact that a so-called bandleader doesn't have to be tied to a band. Normally it was the other way around: five men tied to a contract for about 15,000 years. But now bandleaders are saying, "Can I step out of this thing for a second and do something else?" It's a way of saying to record companies and to people who hold die-hard ideas that we do have this freedom. ☐

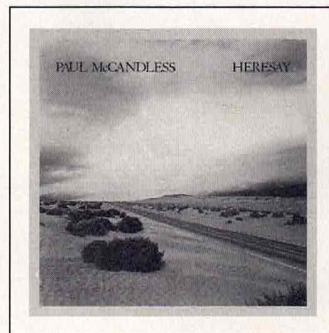
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