

RELIX

music for the mind

Vol. 19
No. 4

Neil Young

GRATEFUL
DEAD

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS

Carlos Santana

Savoy Brown

Blue Cheer

Paul Kantner's Starship



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Bob Minkin

EDITORIAL

Music...it can be subtle enough to invoke a pleasant childhood memory, or hard enough to incite riots. No matter how you look at it, music reaches down and grabs you by the root of your soul. Of course, we are each moved by different variances of sound.

A note carefully placed within a tapestry of woven chords can emote the most diverse feelings—a tear, a sigh, joy, anguish. When that moment strikes, when the music does you right, it all becomes astonishingly clear. We are one with the rhythm, and the rhythm is the earth.

Studies have proven that music holds curative power. Mickey Hart is helping to pioneer the foundations of this knowledge. With the research now being conducted, the elderly are benefitting from the rhythmic healing that comes from the stimulation that music brings. The most severely autistic children are being reached and are responding to music. People that suffer from memory handicaps are capable of having their memory responses triggered with the help of music. Such power is only beginning to be tapped as a tremendous source of potential strength.

So remember, when the sunshine isn't as bright as you need it to be and that one thing on your mind won't let you find peace, put on some good music, slap a grin on your face and dance your way through the magic.

—Toni A. Brown
Publisher

An interview with Carlos Santana

by Jym Fahey

Over the history of the human experience, how many sons have walked in the footprints left by their fathers? Hunters' sons have stalked and killed. Farmers' sons have tilled the soil. Sons of teachers have taught. Doctors have raised healers. Even so, there is something magical and mystical about the way young Carlos Santana took to his father's craft.

On July 20, 1947 in Autlan, Jalisco, Mexico, Carlos was born to Jose Santana and his wife, Josefina. Jose, an accomplished mariachi violinist and a musician with a great deal of experience in many genres, fed his son's voracious musical hunger. Before Carlos was five-years-old, Jose had begun his son's musical education.

"My father taught me how to read music," Carlos says of his early musical beginnings. "He plays all kinds of music, not just mariachi music, you know. It's just like I play all kinds of music, not just whatever music people think I play. He taught me how to read, he taught me the violin, the value of music, what it's for, what it should be doing."

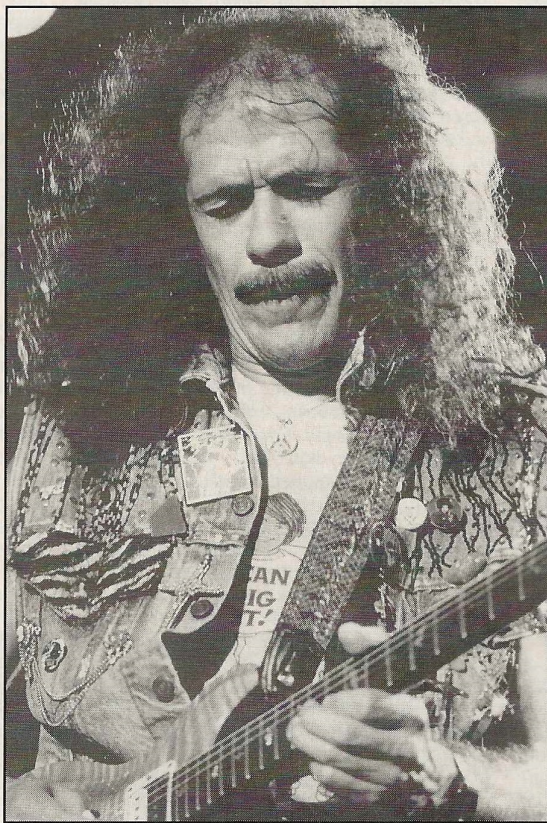
When Jose and Josefina moved with their seven children from the small, quiet, rural town of Autlan to the comparatively bustling metropolis of Tijuana, the boomtown energy and musically charged environment took hold of Carlos. The traditional music he had learned at his father's knee would serve as a solid foundation for the palace of Carlos' musical vision, but he was ready to learn more. Carlos wanted to build on that foundation with the music he now heard filling the border radio waves. Rock 'n' roll in its many forms was rapidly becoming the beat which moved the feet of the world. Its lead instrument was the electric guitar.

Carlos remembers his introduction to the world of the amplified six string. "In Tijuana, in this park around 1957 [or] '58, I first heard a cat play electric guitar, and he was playing really like B.B. King," Carlos recalls of the man he later befriended. "He loved B.B. and T-Bone Walker and people like that. So to hear the sound bouncing against my body, hit me in my heart, between my legs, bouncing off the cars and the trees... And, you know, I started looking around, and I noticed that I wasn't the only one being affected by the tone of that guitar, you know. Everybody was [affected], so I said, 'Hmmm, this is it.' You know, the most immediate way to strike the umbilical cord with everybody for me was the guitar, that tone."

Carlos set out to strike that cord at the age of eight. His development was rapid. Soon, he was adding his own sound and vision to the songs he had been hearing from local bands

like The T.J.s. While he paid his dues on the "Tijuana Strip," he honed his skills to a razor's edge. At the same time, the money he earned was welcomed by his family.

In 1960, when his family moved north to San Francisco, Carlos remained behind to continue playing and, in a reversal of the standard immi-



"I remember when I did come up to the city and moved in with these guys," he remembers. "I literally slept on the couch. [Percussionist] Michael Carabello was living there along with Carlos, Gregg Rolie and myself. From the aspect of where I came from musically, what I had listened to and what I had played, what these guys were listening to was very different. I mean, I came from a jazz and R&B background."

Keyboardist/vocalist Gregg Rolie's taste ran more toward the Beatles and assorted rock 'n' roll. The differences in musical roots were actually a bonus to the band. He says, "The unifying thing is that we would attempt different things. Some of the tunes, like 'Oye Como Va,' is a good example. They played it for me, [the original version by] Tito Puente, and I'm going, 'Huh? You're kidding.' But we just said, 'Okay, we'll do it. Let's try it. Let's make it work.' And that was the difference."

By late 1969, the band included David Brown on bass, and Chepito Areas on percussion. The combination produced a deadly mix of rock, blues and soul wrapped in an explosive Latin percussive cover. The group's intensity caught the ear of Bill Graham, whose guidance had a tremendous influence on the band's path. With Bill's help, Santana got their big break—a gig at the Woodstock Music & Art Fair on August 15, 16, and 17, 1969.

Bill recalled, "The people who were putting Woodstock together called my office and asked if I could advise them, help them in some way, putting some bands on that they couldn't reach. I said fine, and I don't want any payment but in return for that, there's this band that you guys don't know about that we'd like to bring back east."

The promoters agreed and Santana's debut as a national act first stunned the live festival crowd, and later, those who saw the Woodstock movie or heard the soundtrack. Their version of "Soul Sacrifice" vibrates just as strongly today as it did 23 years ago.

Carlos recalls that the band had more than just the usual dose of stage fright. "The challenge was tremendous. We were gonna play at six or seven o'clock at night or something so I was hanging around Jerry Garcia at the time and I was saying, 'Well, we'll just relax,' you know, and everybody was getting high. Just as I was getting high, at the peak of whatever I was getting high with, the people said, 'You got to go on right now. The band that was supposed to play now didn't show up. If you don't play right now, you're not gonna play.' So that [was the] total extreme of adversity, you know, go over

grant story, sent his earnings northward. After a year, he joined his family in San Francisco where the rhythms of the diverse cultural fabric of that city caught his ear. He added more pieces to his musical palace and in 1966, shortly after graduating from Mission High School, he formed the Santana Blues Band. Searing guitar and pulsating, throbbing rhythms became the trademarks of the band. The anchor of that sound on the early recordings was drummer Michael Shrieve.

Michael recalls, "The first time I ran into Carlos and the band was down the Peninsula from San Francisco. They played in a park in Palo Alto. I said to myself, 'I would love to play with this band.'" Michael's wish became a reality when, a little while later, he not only played with the band but shared a house with them in San Francisco.

Bob Minkin

there and do your best. We had one chance and really had to put everything together.

"The exciting thing was we started playing and people were looking at us like, 'Who are these people? I mean they don't have a new record out or anything.' But all of a sudden the infectious thing of us taking it to each other [kicked in]. People knew it from the faces [we made] to each other when we were playing 'cause we were trying to bring the best out in each other. We started doing that to each other and then people started doing it to us and all of a sudden it was tremendous absolute oneness. The hypnotizing rhythms are hard to ignore. You know, they disarm you."

The magic of the Woodstock performance was not lost on the giants of the day, including the biggest one of all, Jimi Hendrix. For Carlos, Hendrix's approval was a vitalizing tonic. "I didn't know how strong all that stuff was until I went to this theater with Jimi Hendrix's old lady, Devon," he recounts. "Jimi Hendrix was in Maui and she called us up, you know, the band, and says, 'Hey, man, I want to take you guys to see the Woodstock movie. It just came out.' We went over there and when ['Soul Sacrifice'] came on, she says, 'Jimi flipped out when he saw this part, man.' That's the first time that I really saw the potential of the band, and [saw] that, you know, before that, we were just adolescents—kids out of high school, man—and the only thing we wanted to do was make everybody dance, including the cops. That was the only goal that we had as musicians when we played in Woodstock. We didn't know about Cecil Taylor or Charlie Parker or Che Guevara or Gandhi. We didn't know nothing. All we knew was that we wanted to make everybody forget about the rent and just dance."

Less than a month after Woodstock, people everywhere were dancing to the hypnotizing rhythms of the first Santana album. The record was the first in an incredible string of thirteen straight gold or platinum records for Carlos Santana's bands (as well as two gold solo records). Powered by the sounds of such classic songs as "Waiting," "Persuasion," "Jingo," "Evil Ways" and "Soul Sacrifice," *Santana* was all over the radiowaves through the rest of 1969 and into the fall of 1970. Santana had arrived and people from coast to coast and around the world became familiar with the honesty and fire which typifies his music.

The follow-up to the band's smashing debut came in October of 1970 under the title of *Abraxas*. The title was derived from the novel *Demian* by Herman Hesse. The sensuousness of the album cover was matched by the music inside. Songs like "Black Magic Woman/Gypsy Queen," "Samba Pa Ti," "Oye Como Va" and "Incident at Nesbabur" ignited the country's radios and solidified Santana's reputation worldwide.

Carlos recounts a story about the first time he played in Moscow, at the Interdependence Concert on July 4, 1987. "I was walking, like one o'clock in the morning, in the streets of Moscow by Red Square and one guy recognized me and says, 'Hey, "Black Magic Woman," right?' Yeah, they know about us, man."

The next album, commonly referred to as *Santana III*, was chock full of goodies, as well. The Tower Of Power horn section graced "Everybody's Everything" and songs like "No One To Depend On," "Everything Is Coming Our

Way" and "Cusjira" became instant favorites. More importantly, Carlos once again proved his willingness to take a risk. He brought a smoking young guitarist named Neal Schon (who went on to form Journey with Greg Rolie) into the band.

"Neal's an incredible player, man," Carlos says. "Michael Shrieve and I were ordained to have the vision, or most of the direction, I think. Because we had that vision, we had enough respect and knowledge to leave the space, to say, 'Go ahead, Neal, this is my best cooking, if you want some of it, here it is.' And then he would say, 'Okay, well, this is my best cooking, you want some?' So we were just like sharing all of that."

"A lot of people, including Miles Davis, told me that they didn't understand why I invited another guitar player. But I follow my heart. A lot of people thought that I was cutting my own throat, bringing such a hot guitar player into the band. But, you know, I really don't think in terms of competition, man. I think in terms of like a florist, making a bouquet. If I was into competi-

tion, I would have been into the football league. But I'm not. I'm into complementing, which is music—complementing life."

Neal complemented the band perfectly. His style of burning guitar licks meshed well with the torrid leads Carlos already provided. The next recorded excursion from Carlos included Neal as well. It was a live album cut with Buddy Miles, of whom Carlos says, "Buddy Miles is an incredible musician who doesn't know what he can and cannot do. I mean, a whole pack of vocal teachers could tell him you can't do this, and he can just turn around and just nail it. It's just direction. It's all a matter of direction with him, what he wants to do and how bad he wants to do it."

"So I had a ball. When we worked with him I

didn't have a band anymore. We had broken the band just about officially. So not only were we beyond bored, we were hurting. We were kind of healing each other, you know, him from Jimi and myself from my band, you know. We needed to just play music to forget, numb ourselves from the reality that it was over. At least for that chapter. We got together and we just jammed for about two, three days at Buddy Miles' house, and then somebody got the bright idea to go to Hawaii and record and we did it. It was just like that. I learned a lot from Buddy. He's very soulful and he can play the hell out of the blues on the guitar. People don't know that, but he can play some blues on that guitar, too."

Inspired and somewhat healed, Carlos headed

back into the studio to record 1972's *Caravan-serai* with the seventh version of the Santana band (which still included Shrieve, Rolie and Schon). With this album Carlos moved in a new jazzier direction, led by the congas and percus-

sion of a then 48-year-old Cuban-born jazz master named Armando Peraza. Armando had

paid his dues with George Shearing, Tito Puente,

Cal Tjader and other Latin jazz bands. His entrance into the band marked a

new beginning for Carlos.

In 1988, Carlos said, "Armando is the

main one, man. All the credit for consistency and dynamic and a standard goes

to Armando Peraza because he's the one. He's 75-years-old and he can still

challenge any man from 17-years-old and up and wear him out. I mean a lot of

people come out fast, with flash, but Armando puts his band on the conga

and hits it and your vertebrae column lights up like a Christmas tree."

At the same time, Carlos was deep

into his explorations in the metaphysical world. He became a follower of guru Sri

Chimnoy (who made a guest appearance on *Illuminations*, an album Carlos made

with Alice Coltrane, the wife of saxophone legend John Coltrane), adopting the

name Devadip and recording albums like *Love, Devotion And Surrender* which he

made with John McLaughlin and members of his Mahavishnu Orchestra. Though he has since dropped the name

and relies more on his own spirit to guide him, Carlos has continued to explore the

textures of jazz and the riches of his spirit in his music (the line between

Santana solo albums and Santana band albums has always been somewhat

blurred). Some of his fans were put off by both his message, which they saw as

too Godly, and his medium of jazz improvisation.

Of the experience, Carlos explains his

final lesson, "Follow your heart, man, don't follow popes or gurus or this or

that, or even the weatherman or astrology. Go to the person who gave all those people their

power in the first place. Go to your inner pilot, which is one with the spirit. Follow your inner

pilot, man, and you will never take wooden nickels from anybody." Carlos continued to follow

his own path, recording *Welcome, Borboletta*, and *Lotus*.

A legendary album, *Lotus*, recorded in Japan

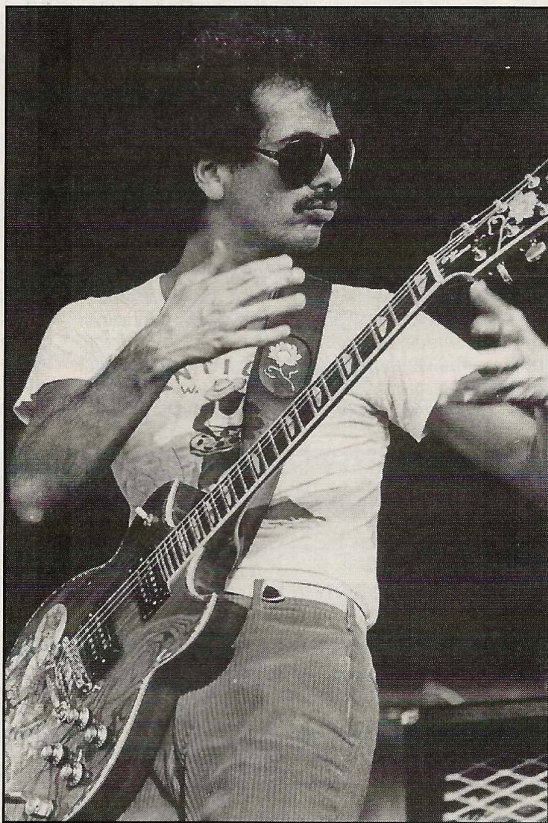
in 1974, was only available as a rare import for a long time, although it has recently been re-

released on compact disc. It is a marvelous album and presents a clear picture of the

Santana band of that era, which Carlos recalls fondly.

"That was the band to beat, for me, for a long

time," he says. "The one with Richard Kermode



Bob Minkin

and Tom Coster, Leon Thomas, Chepito and Armando, Michael Shrieve and Dougie Rauch. That band was at the peak of daring to dare, you know. I'm always talking about that. You know, we dared to believe that we could associate with Weather Report and Miles and Herbie and learn from them and take music somewhere else. We dared to think like that." One listen to "Samb Pa Ti" from that album is evidence of the achievement of that high ambition.

In 1976, Santana released *Amigos* and won over many new and old fans with the commercially appealing "Dance Sister Dance" and "Take Me With You," while continuing to explore the esoteric with the incredibly moving "Europa." The tightrope of commerciality and esoteria continued through the rest of the '70s and the '80s, with gold albums awarded for *Festival*, *Moonflower*, *Inner Secrets* and *Zebop*. Albums like *Marathon*, *Beyond Appearances* and *Blues For Salvador*, though less successful commercially, also made powerful statements. Those statements have always been the important part of music for Carlos, rather than commercial viability which cannot be used as a barometer for a piece of music's true worth.

"I don't have any fight against commerciality because commerciality is Nat King Cole singing 'Mona Lisa,'" he says. "There's nothing more commercial than that, yet it's wonderful, like flowers and chocolate. That's commercial. The fight that I've been having is with record producers and record companies and accountants and all kinds of lawyers telling you, 'This is the newest whatever. It's gonna sell like hotcakes.' Well maybe you should open an International House of Pancakes. That's not what I want to do. I want to make some music. I have a lot of people who come to me and say 'Oh, man, I always wanted to produce you and someday I want to produce you 'cause I know how to make a hit for you.' On one hand it's a compliment that they would go out of their way, especially when they're doing people like Aretha or George Benson. But on the other hand it seems really presumptuous because a hit today may be nothing tomorrow...you can't go by the criteria of today to measure something that's lasted, and those things need to be reevaluated on both sides of the fence—on the business sense and on the spiritual purpose of the music. As I said, flowers are very commercial and there's nothing wrong with flowers."

Santana closed out the '80s and swung into the '90s with his last album for CBS Records. The album, *Spirits Dancing In the Flesh*, ended up like most of Santana's work, tip-toeing along the thin line of commercial appeal and striding confidently on the road of artistic integrity. In that way, he couldn't have picked a more appropriate title.

Carlos says, "It's very natural for me to work with the marriage of rhythm and melody. It's also very natural for me to work with tones, the spiritual tones with vitality of the flesh." After

Spirits, Carlos ended his relationship of over twenty years with his first record company and continues to look forward to "the music of tomorrow [that] is coming out of the streets," he states. "It's not something that you make with a General Motors approach to music, you know, it's a lot of hype in the coming out. It's not necessarily something that you want to come into the year 2000 with. That's for the music of Bob Marley and the music of Africa and South American music, resilient music. There's the musicians in there who are gonna take it to the



Dave Patrick

next century and that's what [record] companies need to know. Some people need to get out of the BMWs and really go listen to the music of the street because that's where the future is."

The latest Santana record, *Milagro*, came out on Polygram records. It is an outstanding new beginning. It opens with an introduction by his

Polygram, his new label, made Carlos an offer he couldn't refuse. "It's a total breath of fresh air to be working with people who have a big heart and big ears. You know, that's really what Miles and myself—or anybody who cares for music—we really pray for, that the artist is in charge, not the con artists. In charge of the bus. That's how I see Sony or Polygram, it's a bus. The destination is the same thing for everybody, you know, with all respect to the companies. The people don't care which company you're in, they only care whether your music

can touch them or not, you know, but it does help to be working with a company who can listen to music rather than only the cash register, because that's later." *Milagro* shows Carlos in charge of the bus, with his music, his vision and his fire intact.

It is a career Carlos can look back on with satisfaction. He has played in 44 states and 46 countries. He has recorded 20 albums with the Santana band and seven solo records, over half of which have achieved gold or platinum status. He has sold over 30 million records worldwide. He is one of only eight artists who can boast Top Ten LPs in the '60s, '70s and '80s, and the '90s have only just begun. He has worked with artists from Bob Dylan to Aretha Franklin, from Boz Scaggs to Olatunji, from the Fabulous Thunderbirds to Weather Report.

His marriage of 19 years to Deborah is strong and well, as are their three children. He sees his work with the Larkin Street project for runaway children and the work he and his wife do with Communities In Schools really making a difference. His view of life and music remains the same as it has been for years.

"God created the world round so everybody can have center stage," he says. "That's the beauty that I love about life, and I respect it, man. To me, it's just like can you complement life? Can you make people laugh and cry at the same time? I know people hear this all the time, but that's my water, that's what keeps me sustained in life, man. The day that I wake up and I want to sell albums so that I can be on the *Rolling Stone* magazine, please shoot me. You know it's over. To me, music is to make people feel other feelings sometimes that even their lovers don't make them feel. It's to complement life basically and ultimately."

Carlos Santana and his bands have been sharing the good feelings with people around the world for more than 25 years. His music has spoken louder than any words ever could. Even so, this is an opportunity to let him have the final

word. "The last thing that I want to say is like what my father-in-law says. 'It's the same thing for Charlie Parker or the last guy who's inclined to pick up an instrument and play. When it's your time to play on stage or wherever you're gonna play, where are you going? What are you trying to say? Say it and get the hell out of there, give it to the next guy.' I think kids should learn that and tattoo it in their psyche. It made a lot of sense to me."



Armando Peraza with Carlos

friend and advisor, the late rock impresario Bill Graham. Carlos has dedicated the album to the lives of Miles Davis and Bill Graham. It includes songs he has cleverly intertwined with the music of Miles Davis and John Coltrane, and songwriting credits go to Marvin Gaye, Bob Marley, John Coltrane and Gil Evans. It contains songs with messages about love, politics and life. He records for the first time (on "Saja") with his brother, Jorge (who formed the band Malo in 1971).

Bob Minkin