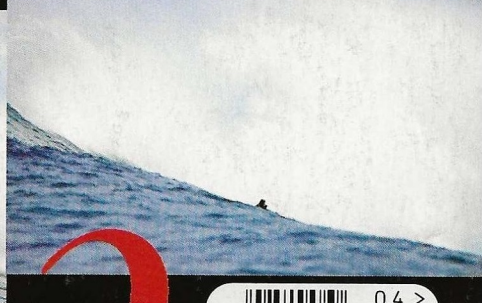


Surfing®

APRIL 1996



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Some musicians have a sound that is so authentic, so particularly their own that from the very first note you hear, you care about them. They strip you wide open and tear through your defenses. Forcing you to dance, to move, to feel, even to cry. The tone of Carlos Santana's music does just that.

Born in Tijuana, Mexico, Carlos began learning music from his father and was soon playing for the young American crowds in the border brothels and saloons at the ripe old age of 14. It wasn't until 1966 in San Francisco that the Santana Blues Band began to come into prominence by playing regularly at the Fillmore West on an invitation from the late Bill Graham.

Through the 1970s the Santana guitar sound became synonymous with surfing. If you made a wide-release surf movie in that decade, you hadn't finished until a Carlos track was in there somewhere. Santana's music just seemed to fit the riding of waves; a truth which holds today, though he is completely surprised when informed of his surf movie renown. "I'm flattered," he says. "I had no idea."

Nearly 30 years to the day since San Francisco, and Carlos has just greeted me at the door of this awkwardly ordinary hotel room, just a few miles from his birth. The room smells of incense, and there are two candles lit by a picture of a man smiling with great joy. Fresh flower petals, a simple gesture, perhaps an offering. It is obvious Carlos has just finished a meditation.

dK: In an interview a couple of years back in *Surfing with Phish*, guitarist Trey Anastasio quoted you as describing their live performance in a very interesting way, that you felt that the music was like water and that the band was the hose and the audience a sea of flowers. Could you expand on that idea?

CS: Yeah, I am happy to hear Anastasio say that. You know I've been saying that since '72. 'Cause the truth about music is that it just is, and when you begin to understand that, you don't have the headache of having to make the sound, you just have to open up and get out of the way. Real musicians can't be singing *I Did It My Way*, real musicians don't play that song because one knows it's more like channeling, it's God's grace. The best surfers will probably tell you that it's a

balance, a surrender to the flow. Surfers don't have to worry about creating the waves—they just have to put themselves in the right spot, be in tune with it. It's like that with me, the musicians in the band create the wave and I just have to ride it. You use the water as a metaphor so often. Has the ocean ever been a part of your life? Have you ever surfed?

I learned how to bodysurf in Tobago in '80, I was listening to Bob Marley and Led Zeppelin for about three weeks; that's where I lost my fear for the ocean. When I was a kid it really beat me up. My mom taught me not to trust the ocean because it was a living thing and if you wanna ride by it it would kick your butt, and it really did. Right here in Rosarito Beach between Tijuana and Ensenada I just went out there and I was foolin' around near the water. Somehow the sand wasn't stable so I just fell in. It wasn't like quicksand but it was like the sand just wasn't right. Then a wave scared the hell out of me. When I came out I was all cut from the rocks and stuff and for a long time I was really paranoid of the ocean. But when I was in Tobago I saw my friends bodysurfing and it looked like so much fun I said "damn I gotta", and eventually I'd jump in and the waves would hit me so hard it would literally take my underpants off. I'd

come out of the water totally naked. The ocean is a living force and so is music and I think if people would leave the ocean alone for a while it would cleanse itself from all the impurities that people have put in there. It has the capacity, salt purifies.

What was it like being a young musician in San Francisco during the '60s?

It was fun, dangerous, chaotic, confusing, exhilarating. It was everything that people go through today, the only difference is that back then it was innocent, the first. On one hand you have the British invasion; Yardbirds, Beatles, Rolling Stones—the real bands. We knew they were real because they listened to the people who we loved, who were from Chicago. We knew that the Rolling Stones sounded good because they listened to Jimmy Reed, Slim Harpo, and the blues, *our* stuff, and I can say our stuff because I'm from America. The Beatles were very important. They controlled the top 10, but they were also hungry for expansion, LSD, mescaline and the Gurus—they were like Pac Man, they wanted to eat consciousness and project consciousness. We learned from the Beatles and they learned from us. They came to San Francisco, George Harrison hung out at Haight Ashbury and he saw that we had something that they didn't have. All of a sudden he saw that real hippies were like reincarnated American Indians, peaceful warriors.

Musically to be around Haight Ashbury and the Fillmore West and Bill Graham would force you to listen to Buddy Rich if you wanted to listen to Ten Years After, force you to listen to Miles Davis if you wanted to listen to the Grateful Dead, force you to listen to Roland Kirk if you wanted

Carlos, alive and electric in '95, and (left) with the Santana Band, 1967—what a trip it's been...

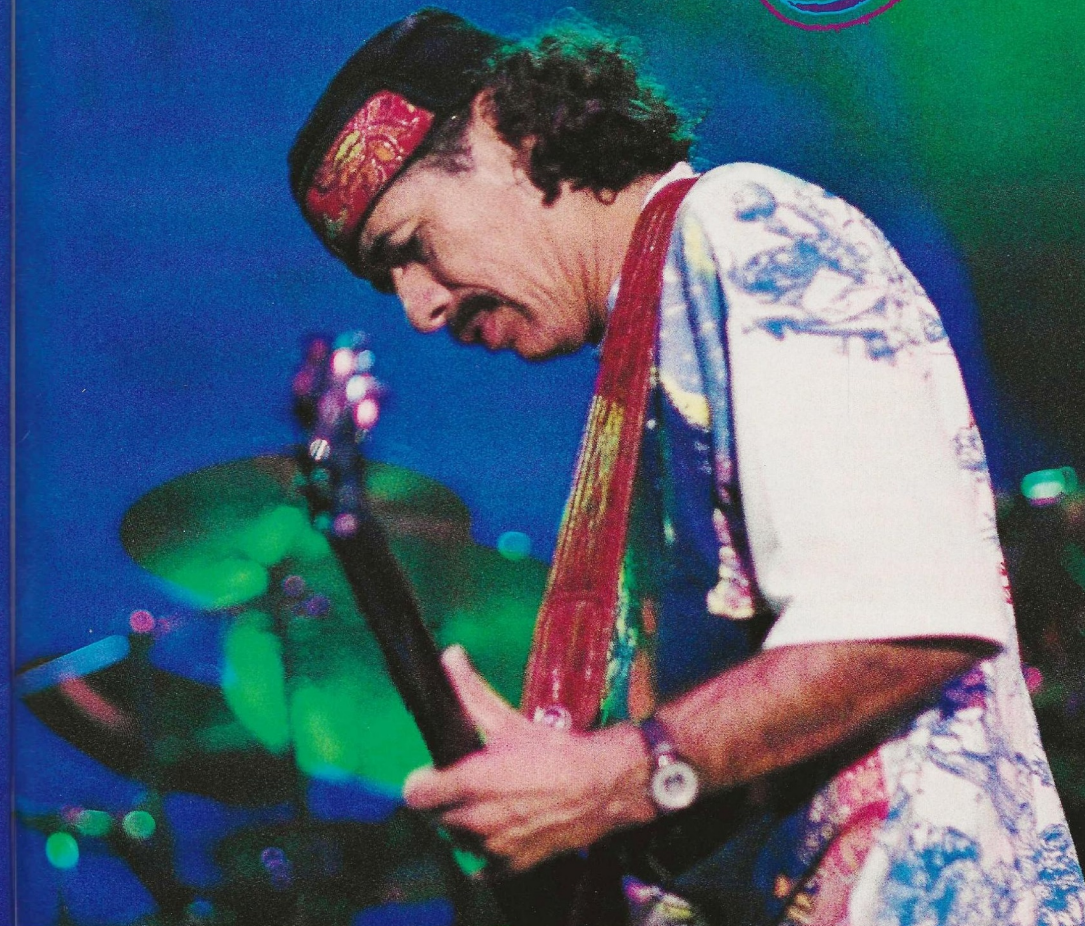
interview by dK

SANTANA

music like water



CON BEESON





to listen to Santana. It was the best university you could attend because all of a sudden music wasn't like Doris Day and *How Much Is That Puppy In The Window* or Fabien. All of a sudden it was all included, a humongous buffet, and I remember, like Bob Dylan says, bringing it all back home.

In the '60s people seemed to turn on to a new way of thinking of acting with each other, one of cooperation not just with themselves but with the animals with the planet as a whole.

Yeah that's it, someone turned on the lights around the '60s on this planet 'cause when somebody turns on the lights in a teenager's room and for a whole year it hasn't been cleaned, then it's a mess. I can say a teenager because America is a teenager. We haven't moved past Marilyn Monroe and James Dean, teenage consciousness. It's a young country, it's time to clean it up. You don't like living in a pigsty, you don't like what we're doing to the forest, the ocean. This music is to continue to turn on the light in people's consciousness because that's the only thing we have, really—our consciousness.

We are waking up as global citizens. Not too far from now, the flags, religion, politics, the borders and all that bulls--t is gonna be dealt with for what it is, an illusion, to separate one man from another. I really believe that is gonna happen. When you see

good surfers you don't care if he's from Australia, Hawaii, or California, the guy who has the best balance and the best heart is gonna catch the best one all the way home. That's what's happening.

So you see your music as being part of all that?

If you look in the dictionary the word healing means to be whole and sound. Everybody needs healing on this planet because we all, one time or another, were hurt. Somebody put the hurt on you. Everybody needs healing psychologically, emotionally, physically. I don't think anybody needs healing spiritually, because I don't think the spirit is ever separated from God. It all comes back to Shakespeare, Hamlet: "To be or not to be". To me that's the highest the mind can say: *to be or not to be*. You can't say that to yourself in a club in Chicago, they'll just shoot you 'cause you have no business on stage playing like that. Not in front of Albert King or B.B. King or Buddy Guy or Otis Fresh. You can't have doubts. You can't be on a big wave saying *to be or not to be*, you'll get killed. You have to have soul's conviction. The soul is like a beautiful lake, not one ripple on it. The soul doesn't need healing,

SANTANA

music like water

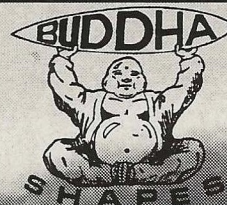


Carlos with Neal Schon, Winterland, 1972.

the soul is the one that heals. The more we meditate and pray the more we identify with the power and beauty of the ocean. Again you identify with not being the little drop, you're the ocean. This is what I said when Jerry (Garcia) left: He left to another dimension.

turn to page 128

Nine year old Sterling Spencer,
youngest surfer to ever conquer Typhoon Lagoon
on a Pro Motion surfboard.



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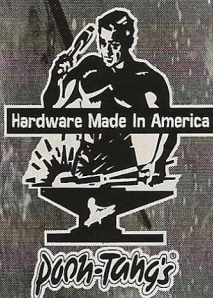


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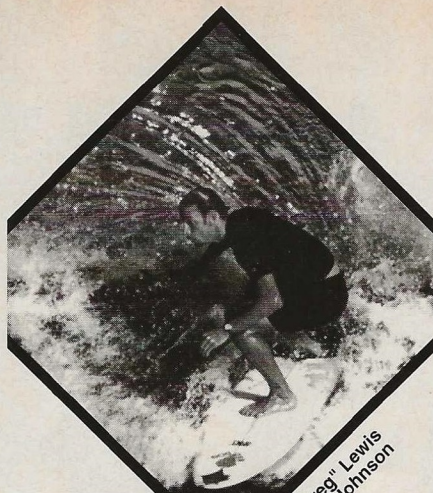
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music

from page 124



To live is to dream, to die is to awaken. I play music to wake people up to their possibilities as much as possible.

The whole thing about music to me, is about reminding people that everything is in harmony, everything that got here; cells, the universe, the galaxies, the planets, everything's in perfect harmony. I'm just trying to put to work the things I learned from the Aborigines, American Indians, and the elders. That's what they call the wisdom keepers, the elders, because they're the ones who say things that just purify your whole day. It's like, I was out of tune and now I'm in tune. Jerry Garcia was like that to me, he was a wisdom keeper, and Bill Graham, they were instrumental in teaching me, Carlos, to look at the things that count.

How did you do that?

The '60s would force you to look at yourself away from how your mother sees you, your friends, your boss. You have to ask yourself who are you, what are you here for, who you're doing it for, and how you're gonna do it. Those are the most important things you can ask yourself. Once you can answer those questions clearly, you're gonna have a ball on this planet. If you don't ask those questions you're gonna be like a leaf that's not on the tree or on the ground. You'll be like an Indian with one foot in the canoe and one on the earth. You won't be stable. These questions are crucial, they help you to be centered, which is what it's all about. You can't be happy if you're not grateful, that is the law. Money can't buy happiness.

It sounds like these issues are timeless, that it seems like it's not that much different for us today.

That's right, you're on the right track. We need to teach consciousness expansion, about spirituality, not religion, because religion is a business. Like Bob Marley said: "We gotta wake up and live".

Thanks Carlos!

You're welcome. Thank you!



KEN FRIEDMAN