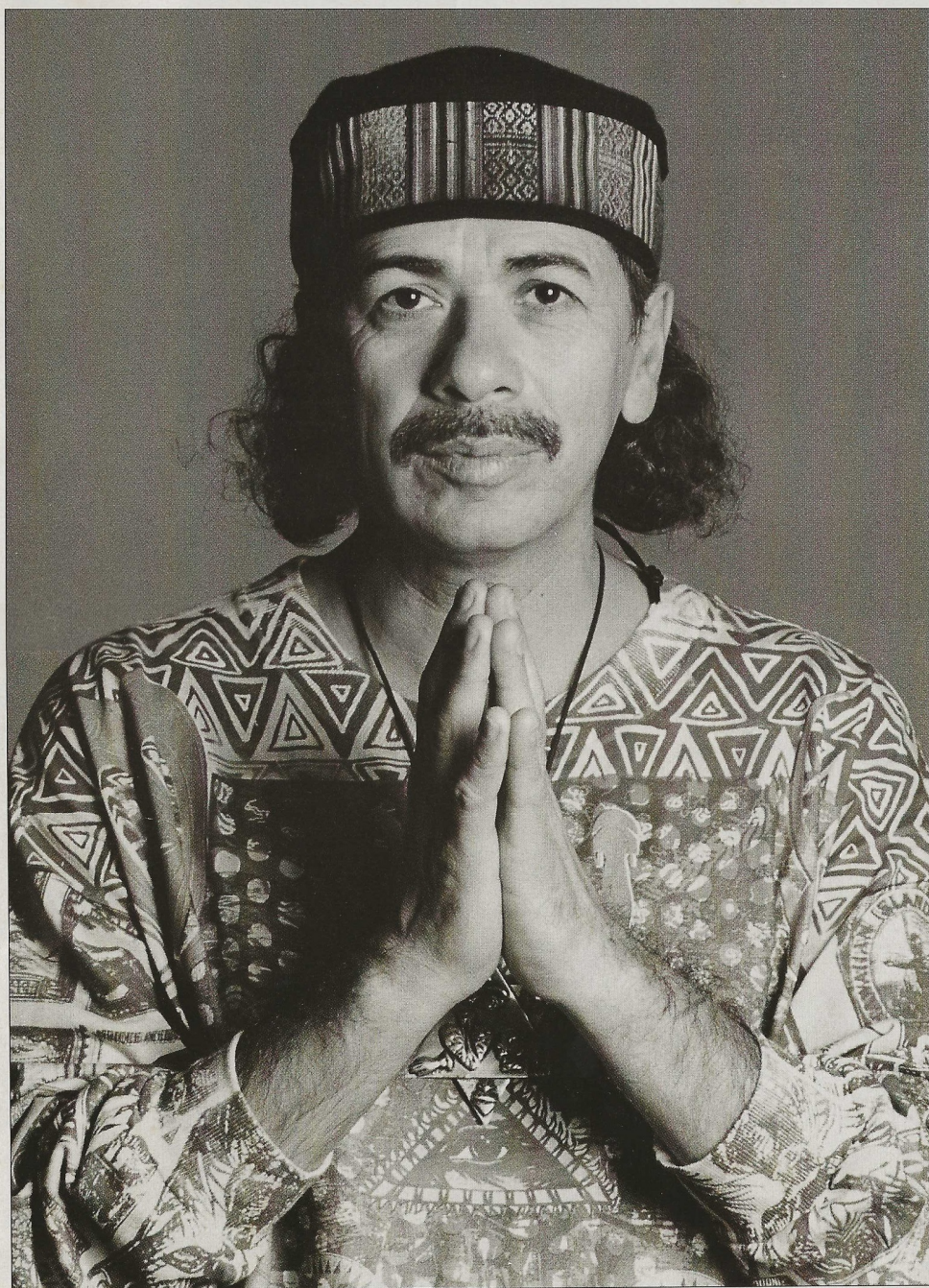


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PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID GAHR

## CARLOS SANTANA The Century Award

Billboard's  
highest  
honor for  
distinguished  
creative  
achievement

A Portrait of the Artist  
By Timothy White





**B**illboard honors Carlos Santana with its highest accolade, the Century Award for distinguished creative achievement. The laurel is named for the 100th anniversary of the publication in 1994.

While Billboard traditionally has reported on the industry accomplishments and chart-oriented strides of generations of talented individuals, the sole aim of the Century Award is to acknowledge the uncommon excellence of one artist's still-unfolding body of work. Moreover, the award focuses on those singular musicians who have not heretofore been accorded the degree of serious homage their achievements deserve. It is a gesture unprecedented in Billboard's history, and one that is informed by the heritage of the publication itself.

"Carlos Santana will now publicly join the other 'foundation' artists in the Century Award pantheon," says Billboard editor in chief Timothy White. "In doing so, he helps illustrate the diversity and still-expanding breadth of the annual honor. A virtuoso guitarist/composer of visionary stature and transcendent spirituality,

Carlos has pioneered and exemplified the vast Latino contribution to the historically intertwined strains of blues, rock'n'roll, salsa, jazz fusion, and world beat experimentalism.

"Setting lofty new standards for pancultural outreach and barrier-shattering improvisational passion,

Carlos merged traditional Mexican and modern Afro-Cuban styles with contemporary South American, Caribbean, and East Asian influences to create fiercely fluid hybrids. Along the way, his guitar work retained a remarkable purity of tone.

Thanks to Carlos Santana's deeply soulful efforts, rock's adventurous artistic cusp is keener, spicier, earthier, more uplifting, and more international in scope than any prior practitioner thought possible."

White adds that "the Century Award encompasses all musical genres and is always given to living performers as they move into a more dramatic stage in their careers. For 1996, Billboard can think of no artist more deserving than Carlos Santana of our highest honor for distinguished creative achievement."

# CARLOS SANTANA

Designed by jeweler/sculptor Tina Marie Zippo-Evans, the Century Award is a unique work of art as well as an emblem of artistic supereminence. Struck in bronze once a year, the handcrafted, 14-inch-high statue is a composite representation of the Greco-Roman Muses of music and the arts (among them Calliope, epic poetry; Euterpe, music; Terpsichore, dance; Erato, love song; and Polyhymnia, sacred hymns). The form is female, in keeping with an ancient definition of the arts: "Sacred music is a symbol of nature in her transitory and ever-changing aspect." The lyre held by the Muse is a specially made adornment that changes yearly in order to personalize the honor for each recipient. In homage to Carlos Santana, the 1996 lyre is sterling silver and is adorned, at the artist's request, with crystal.

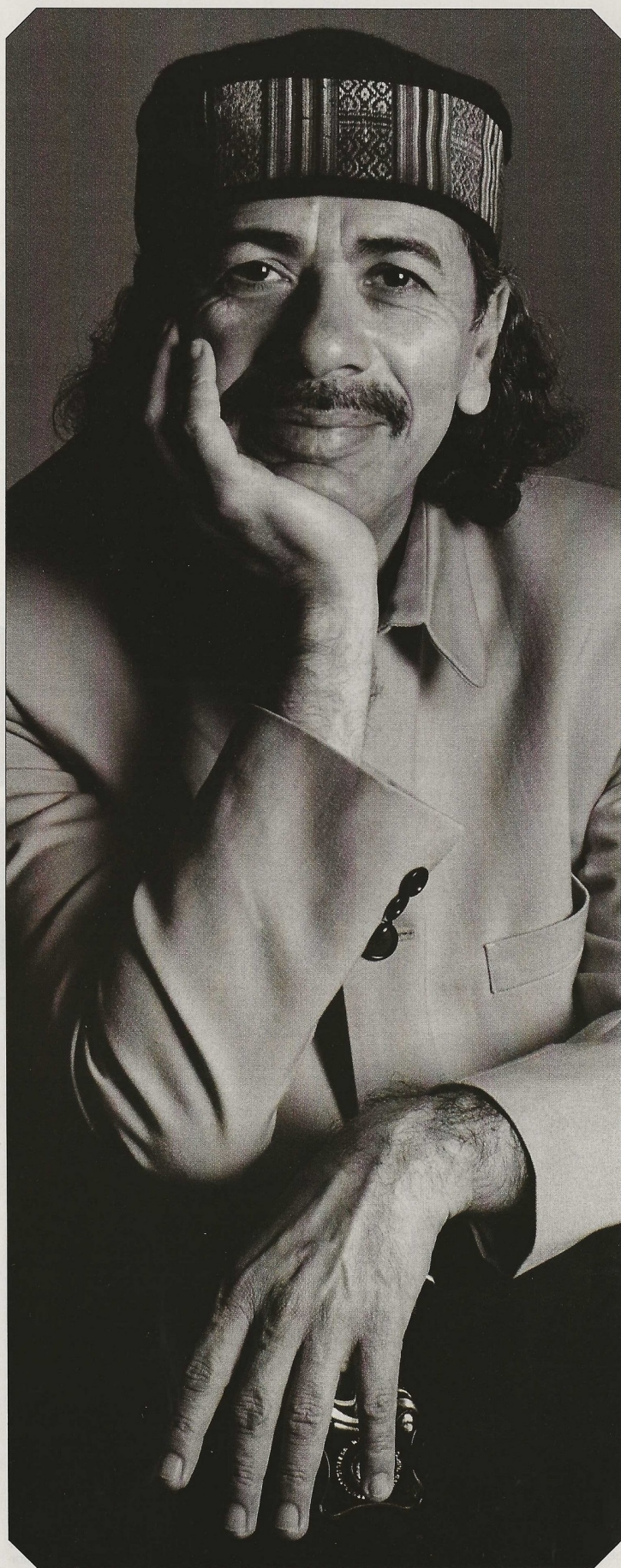


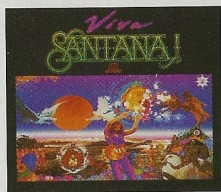
PHOTO BY DAVID GALT



Carlos

"Spirits express themselves by whistling. When the stars come out at night, that's how the spirits greet them. Each star responds to a note, which is its name."

—from "Memory Of Fire: Genesis" by Eduardo H. Galeano, 1940

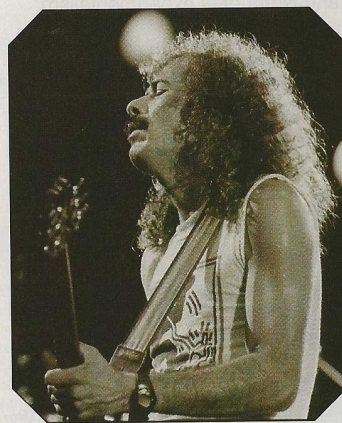


He entered the fabled City of Sin shortly after sundown on the ancient heathen feast day, when witches scheme, spirits rove, and demons play havoc on their way to Hell. Separated from his loved ones, isolated by his ambition and his hunger for experience, the 15-year-musician sensed that it would take guts and grace—that is, the guts of an adult and the grace of the sacred—for him to find the right path through the pagan parade that now engulfed him. Making his way on foot at 7 p.m. through the notoriously debauched Mexican border town of Tijuana, Carlos Santana passed skeletons and werewolves streaming past him in the narrow, shadowy thoroughfares, the masqueraders heading off to honor the Lord of the Dead in celebrations in bars, dance halls, and bordellos within the seedy downtown district.

Several blocks from the bus station, Santana suddenly found himself on the corner of Second Street and Avenue Niños Heroes, standing before the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The church was consecrated to the vision of a dark-skinned Virgin Mary who first appeared in 1531 to an Indian peasant during a series of three visitations at Tepeyao, outside Mexico City, at the site of what had previously been a sacred Aztec sanctuary of the goddess of the earth—a female creature attired in a gown of snakes and hearts and hands called Tonantzin. Borne upon a pillar of light so tall it was impossible to tell if it fell from the sky or rose from the soil, the Virgin had materialized clad in simple

nia. And I ask that you give me a gig tonight in this town so I can survive on my own."

Carlos lingered awhile that evening in the church, and then he mustered his courage and made his way to a strip club where he had once played guitar, back when his family still resided in town. The people who ran the place started to shoo away the underage musician—until he gave them a note of permission from his mother—whereupon the owner of the place turned to a fellow strumming onstage and yelled, "Hey!



scendence, Carlos is equally comfortable in the more earthly realm of street-corner busking—from whence sprang the inspiration in 1966 for Carlos' first San Francisco-based group of his own: the Santana Blues Band.

He was heard in 1968 by legendary Bay Area entrepreneur Bill Graham, who would become his pivotal supporter and co-manager, regularly featuring Santana on bills at the Fillmore West, Winterland, and other local auditoriums. But Carlos' incendiary rock/blues/Latin/R&B/jazz-fusing combo leapt to international prominence during his show-stopping set at the Woodstock festival in August 1969, which climaxed with a simultaneously uplifting and deeply libidinous rendition of "Soul Sacrifice."

Signed to Columbia Records in 1969, the band (its name now telescoped into Santana) then consisted of Carlos on guitar and vocals; Mike Carrabell on congas and percussion; Dave Brown on bass; José Chepito Areas on timbales, congas and percussion; Mike Shrieve on drums; and Gregg Rolie, Carlos' early fellow street busker, on piano, organ, and vocals.

The debut "Santana" record went platinum and yielded the hits "Evil Ways" and "Jingo," but it was the follow-up record, "Abraxas," a No. 1 smash with domestic sales of more than 4 million units, that became the mind-flexing commercial and artistic breakthrough for the band. The 1970 album was named for the angel (also called Abrasax) in the cabala who is known as the prince of aeons. A frequent presence in Persian and Egyptian mythology as well as occult Hebrew literature, Abraxas is the source of the magical incantation "abracadabra," i.e., "I bless

# A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST

BY TIMOTHY WHITE



garments so luminous that they blotted out the sun. She spoke in the Nahuatl language and announced that she had come to offer hope for the world's poor and defeated, asking that the Aztec shrine be replaced with a new house of worship erected in her honor, because, she proclaimed, "I am the mother of God." In the 400 years since, the Virgin of Guadalupe had become the patron deity of Mexico, the churches named for her now innumerable, her Dec. 12 feast day a national event, her presence so enmeshed in the Mexican identity that the slogan "Viva Guadalupe!" was commonplace even at political rallies, with all prayers to her deemed more potent than any other possible expression of faith.

Santana stepped into the great church, leaving behind the hobgoblins teeming in the streets, and walked to the front of the tabernacle. Looking up at the statue of the Madonna, young Carlos said, "Virgin Mother, I was here almost two years ago with my brother Tony. We walked on our knees from the entrance of the church all the way to your altar as a penance, a sacrifice, because my brother wished to ask you for something."

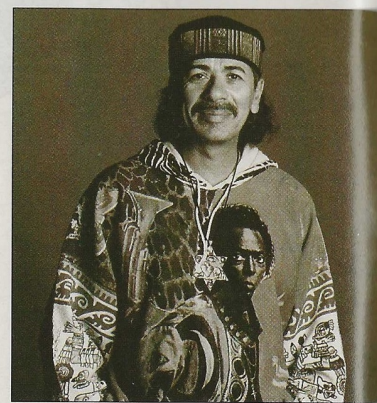
"At that time, I didn't ask you for anything, I just did it with my brother," Carlos continued cautiously, mindful that his last \$20 with which he'd begun his journey was almost gone. "So I figure you owe me one. I just ask that you take care of my mom and dad and sisters and brothers, who have all left Mexico to go live in Califor-



You can go home, man, Carlos is gonna take over!"

Such is the power of faith and the unique career duality of Carlos Santana, whose embrace of his musical destiny has required a constant, seemingly contradictory balancing act between the sacred and the sexy, the pious and the profane.

Born July 20, 1947, in Atlán de Navarro, in the Mexican state of Jalisco, Carlos is one of seven children of journeyman violinist José Santana and his wife, Josefina. Devout in his commitment to his artistic gifts and the belief that they can dispel any obstacles to spiritual tran-



the dead," which refers to the aeons or cycles of creation and stems from the Hebrew "ha brachah dabarah," meaning "speak the blessing."

Most important, the angel Abraxas was reputedly appointed to watch over 365 heavens and act as a mediator between God and the animate creatures of the Earth. Carlos, in his own way, was trying prompt the same sort of dialog between his band, the godhead, and the rock audience's most joyful impulses on "Abraxas" tracks like the hits "Black Magic Woman/Gypsy Queen" and "Oye Como Va."

Guitarist Neal Schon joined Santana in 1971, his intense style an exciting counterpoint to Carlos' elegant fluidity. In the spring of 1972, the explosive musicality of "Carlos Santana And Buddy Miles Live!" (recorded in Hawaii's Diamond Head volcano crater) satisfied the escalating appetites of fans for more Santana-sized spectacle. That platinum blow-out also cleared the air for the contemplative genius later that year of "Caravanserai." A million-selling masterpiece imbued with Eastern philosophy and admiration for the kindred explorations of Miles Davis and John Coltrane, "Caravanserai" was co-produced with Shrieve and nominated for a best pop instrumental Grammy.

On April 20, 1973, Carlos Santana wed Deborah Sara King, daughter of Louisiana blues great Saunders King (whose "Empty Bedroom Blues" was a top 10 R&B hit in 1949). At the time, Deborah was, like Carlos, a disciple of a guru—in her case yogi Paramahansa Yogananda, author of "Autobiography Of A Yogi" and leader of the Self-Realization Fellowship, and in his case, guru Sri Chinmoy, the United Nations-

"Shades Of Time": A photo gallery, clockwise, this page and opposite. At top, Carlos Santana at the Pier, New York, 1986. Next page, Santana band at Tanglewood, Mass., 1970. Middle portrait, Carlos 'Just Lets The Music Speak,' 1996, Brooklyn, N.Y. Bottom, playing 'Beyond Appearances,' New York, 1986. All photographs by David Gahr.

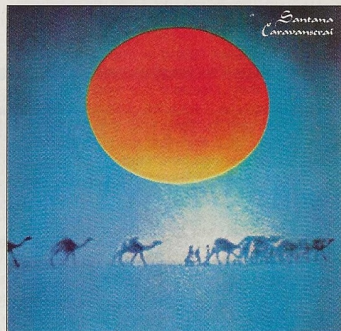


affiliated author, poet, and proponent of meditation best known as the recipient of the Ghandi Peace Award and the UNESCO Peace Medalion. For his part, Carlos was given the name Devadip, which meant "The light of the lamp of the Supreme."

Santana's joint interest in Sri Chinmoy and the legacy of Coltrane led to tandem recording and concert undertakings with fellow guitar virtuoso Mahavishnu John McLaughlin, most notably their gold 1973 album, "Love, Devotion, Surrender." Four other often collaborative and largely spiritual jazz-fusion albums ensued with Turiya Alice Coltrane, Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, and Ron Carter between 1974 and 1980. But Deborah and Carlos parted company with their respective gurus in 1982.

Santana's equally venturesome quests with the ever-evolving Santana ensemble or as a solo artist never slackened, however, and his marvelous catalog of more than 30 always enjoyable and usually engrossing records includes the standout "Lotus" live collection (1974), "Amigos" (1976), "Moonflower" (1977), "Zebop!" (1981), and "Blues For Salvador" (1987, a track of which earned the Grammy for best rock instrumental performance), and the splendid "Viva Santana!" (1988) and "Dance Of The Rainbow Serpent" (1995) Columbia-era retrospectives.

In 1991, Santana signed with Polydor Records, issuing the excellent "Milagro" (1992) and "Sacred Fire: Live In South America" (1993) albums. He also established his own Island Records-distributed imprint, which has issued two projects: "Live Forever" (1993, an anthology



carnal with the spirit.

**In recent years, even gangsta rappers have tried to manipulate Marley's legacy as a source of inspiration, claiming that the man who sang "I Shot The Sheriff" was on their side. Yet that song was actually an anthem of anguish and regret, and Marley's whole life was a mission of rejecting the selfish "rude boy" gang lifestyle he first criticized in "Simmer Down" and embracing instead the life-affirming sense of community that Rasta symbolized.**

Yeah! You're right. And there are certain things that in the future people will not be able to bend to suit their shallow and meaningless means. For instance, when you have people

dred popes. I guess it's like Charlie Parker said: If you don't live it, you not really gonna make an impact on people. 'Cause people still have a heart, and there's a way to touch them. Bob Marley and Coltrane made you and I aware of something bigger than even our ancestors: the totality of our existence.

The so-called music industry, ever since I've known it, is something that's either a service or a disservice. I mean, you can find something meaningful in selling cars if you're selling good cars, ones that don't break down and the brakes work, and then you're doing a service. So that's what I pay attention to in the music I make or listen to, asking, "Is this music gonna help dare other people, whether musicians or lay people, to create a masterpiece of joy in their own lives?"

I go out and I see a lot of bands, but most bands have a ceiling and they don't get past it. They play four or five songs and there's already a ceiling. But when I heard Coltrane, Miles, or certain other people, they break the ceiling, and all of a sudden you're in the microbes and in the galaxy at the same time—in one breath. I like to infuse people with that feeling of totality that makes you laugh, cry, dance at the same time, get extremely aroused. When people make love, what's important is that when they reach that climax, that spiritual orgasm, they always say, "Oh my God!" Even the atheists [laughs]. You know what I'm saying? But that's only if it's really good. If it's not happening, they just say, "Oh me," or "Oh my."

**Let's talk about your family background. You come from a small village in the rugged, semitropical coastal Mexican state of Jalisco, whose capital is Guadalajara. Tell me about Autlán de Navarro.**

I was born there in 1947 and I grew up there until 1955, and my memories of there were that everybody just loved my dad. He was the darling of the town. Everybody wanted my dad to play for their weddings, baptisms, whatever. The village is still the same; it looks like one of those places in the "Treasure Of The Sierra Madre" movie with Humphrey Bogart, where the donkeys and the chickens all mingle together, and there's no fences, no paved roads, no electric lights. There's a few places where they have electricity, but it's still a place in another century. The last time I went there, in 1983-84, it was still like that: simple and beautiful and unpolluted outland, kind of mountainous and definitely peasant culture.

Of the houses we lived in there, there was one that was pretty big. It was a brick house but it was pretty primitive still. It had a lot of rooms, but I didn't have my own room. Since there was seven of us, I always had to share.

**Your father is usually described as a violinist who played the mariachi music that has its historical roots in Jalisco.**

Well, musically, you don't hear much mariachi there now; they only play mariachi in the border towns. Deep down in Mexico they play the *sones*, and waltzes, polkas. Mariachi music has become a border-town sound to please the American tourists. There's a musician/writer named Agustin Lara, and he played a more elegant form of Mexican music. My father started playing mariachi music once he got to Tijuana so he could make a living. Before that he was playing the waltzes and polkas and more refined music like tangos. To me, mariachi music is kind of crude.

But my father's father was a musician, too; his name was Antonino. I heard he played the French horn or something like that in whatever municipal band they had in that little town. The population of that town when I was a boy was maybe 2,000; now it's maybe 10,000. My father supported my mom and my four sisters and two brothers in Mexico with his music. There's something about Mexican families; they're big, and they don't have any TVs or stuff in the countryside, especially at that time, so music was a big diversion.

But I still thank my mom, Josefina, for getting me the hell out of Autlán, because I have learned so much since! See, my mom used to see American movies, and she always had this desire to bring us to the United States, and she thought Tijuana was in the United States!

**What were the circumstances that occasioned the move?**

To make a long story short, she wanted to go looking for my dad, who was living in Tijuana for a whole year already, and I'm sure she was afraid that she and him weren't going to get back together. So she just made a move; she put us all in one car and went to Tijuana in 1955.

The car we took to Tijuana, it seemed like it was a Nash, and all of us got into that car to go find my dad and catch up with him. The house we left behind wasn't ours—we were renting. My mom had received some money from my dad; I guess my dad was trying to appease her, so he sent her money to buy a stove, and she took that money and she went to a little cab business in the center of town, across the street from where the church is.

She said to this guy, "José told me to give you this money and said for you to bring us to Tijuana, and when you see him there he'll give you the rest of the money." Of course [grinning], it was a lie. And the guy said, "That's funny, because I got a letter from him the other day, and he didn't say anything to me about this." My mom said, "Well, he said so in this letter here that he sent ME." The guy said, "Let me read that letter." My mom said, "No! This is private, so you can't read my husband's letter." But she convinced him, and she also took whatever furniture that belonged to us and put it out on the street to sell. Whatever she could collect,

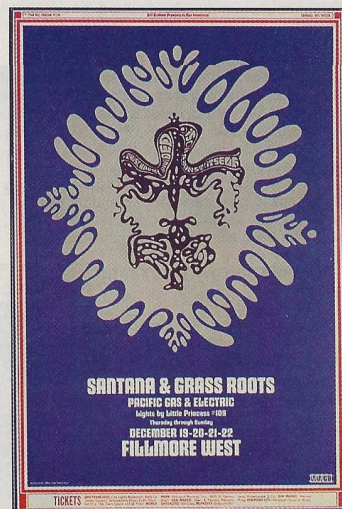
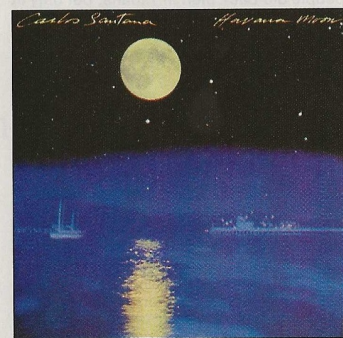


of rare live material by heroes Jimi Hendrix, Marvin Gaye, Bob Marley, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and John Coltrane) and "Brothers" (1994, a guitar collaboration between Carlos, brother Jorge, and nephew Carlos Hernandez that was nominated for a best rock instrumental Grammy). The name of Santana's label is Guts and Grace.

Three decades since he supplicated himself in the dim light of a Tijuana cathedral, asking for divine intercession in his personal and artistic destiny, Carlos Santana is still making music in the service of his higher self, using the guitar as a tool of worship and an instrument of thanksgiving in which all listeners are invited to share. This interview with Billboard's 1996 Century Award honoree took place in Manhattan on a warm afternoon in October.

**Speaking personally, what role does popular music currently play in offering any sort of cultural uplift?**

In the '60s a lot of artists like Jimi Hendrix and John Coltrane felt that the resonance of their principles were gonna change a lot of people. I mean, I can understand now more than ever why Coltrane would play "My Favorite Things" and lullabies, because his music was so far beyond people's comprehension that he had to put it on a different kind of level so that mortal people could understand it. I still don't hear anybody with that intensity. My four centers are Jimi Hendrix, Coltrane, Bob Marley, and Miles Davis. But still, I think Coltrane and Bob Marley went the furthest beyond the music, and they infused people with a different kind of message beyond entertainment. It was a real unification of the



she used for gas money, and we took off.

My mother had an address in Tijuana from the letter Dad sent, so when we got there my mom got out of the car and knocked on the door, asking after my dad. This woman who opened the door said, "No, I don't know what you're talking about. He doesn't live here. You got the wrong place." So, of course, my mother's heart sank to her feet. But I remember there was a guy on the corner sitting down and he said, "Lady, who you looking for? José Santana? Yeah, he's inside!" Then he said, "Are you guys his family? You look like a nice family. Knock again. He'll come out."

So my mom went and knocked again, and the lady came out screaming, "What do you want? I told you he's not here!" But my father stuck his head out, and he saw us and the car. It's the first time I saw my dad's face become like the NBC peacock rainbow, turning all the different colors of surprise, frustration, anger, fear—everything.

He and my mom fought for a while because she didn't ask his permission. In those days in a lot of Mexican places, a woman had to ask permission for just about anything. Anyhow, they eventually took us to this place in the shanty part of town in Tijuana, and for two months it was pretty mean. I remember they were building this house, so they put us in there but they hadn't put in the doors or the windows yet and had hardly finished the roof, and there was no furniture. Us being kids, we didn't trip on it too much, but for my mom I'm sure it was trying. So



that was the hardest time, poverty-wise, although we didn't stay there too long—probably two to three months.

Initially, my dad would just come around once or twice a week with two bags of groceries, and then he'd split. But once my mom and dad made up, things were better, and I have a feeling I was a big part of that because I was my dad's darling. Somehow, there was always a connection between him and me; he loved the whole family, but there's always one who's more endearing and I guess I was it, 'cause I kept looking at him during his brief visits and he kept looking at me. So my dad started coming around more, and then he took us out of shantytown and put us in another part of Tijuana that was a little better.

It was around that time that I started getting the feeling of John Lee Hooker and Jimmy Reed, because the local Mexicans would play *norteño* music like Flaco Jiménez, but I preferred Bobby Bland. For some reason, the traditional Mexican music just wouldn't go inside my body; it would not accept it. It was like somebody else's shoes or somebody else's teeth. I just didn't want to touch it. That, of course, was a problem with my dad, because he wanted me to follow his steps. And I said, "Nooo. I like Little Richard and B.B. King."

**Yet you did play violin for a little while, didn't you?**

Yeah, I played violin from '56 to '59 or '60. I had my own, just a cheap fiddle, but I couldn't ever stand my sound with it, or the feel or smell of the instrument. Violins have a smell just like guitars, and you pick up the smell and it gets in your clothes. And as a kid, if I couldn't get a tone out of something, it was no good. On violin I sounded like one of those pussycats on the cartoons, or like Jack Benny when he was fooling around. I thought, "Man, this is sad. I don't want to sound like this!"

But the good thing was that since my dad taught me to play the violin, I could pick up on anything from the radio or elsewhere and find it easier on the guitar because a guitar has frets.

**How did you get your first guitar?**

My dad moved to San Francisco in 1960-61, looking for more work, and once my father had left I had said to myself that now nobody's gonna make me practice. But my mom didn't want all that time that my dad had invested in me to go to waste, so she took me to see this rock'n'roll band in the Palacio de Municipal, a park in Tijuana. And once I heard the guitarist hit an amplified note, boy! When you're not taking LSD or mescaline, and you hear, for the first time, a note bounce against cars and trees in an outside concert with amplifiers, for me it was like "Close Encounters Of The Third Kind." It was something magnificent.

And that's when I met this guy named Javier Batiz, the leader of this band in the park. It was the first time I saw the big mop heads like Little Richard, with pressed khaki pants like switchblades, and they were playing "Last Night" and "Green Onions" and stuff like that. And he had that twang already like Mike Bloomfield and Peter Green, that guitar thing. I'd heard acoustic big bands before in Tijuana with a lot of horns, but that was nothing like drums and bass and amplifiers and saxophones.

Javier's band was called the T.J.'s, for Tijuana, and I played with them later on, once they let me in. But first I started following them, like a puppy dog, just to learn. I was fascinated with the way this guy had his hair—he had a pompadour, a big sucker like Little Richard in the '50s. They were playing Freddie King, B.B. King, mixed with Ray Charles. They played clubs, like Club Latino-Americano on Sixth or Seventh Street, but also in the park just to get attention, to be better known.

The Club Latino-Americano used to have battles of the bands. It was like a dance hall, a gym kind of thing like you'd see in "West Side Story," with a band on each side of the room, taking turns playing for one hour. And at the end, like in the Apollo, they see which one the audience

liked best.

This in '61, so I was like 12, and I was in public school. I couldn't cut it in those parochial schools, those Catholic schools, 'cause I just don't like people screaming at me or hitting me [laughs]. So my ambitions were headed in a direction leading away from school. I'd go to hear the T.J.'s playing at the Latino-Americano on Friday nights, and I still wasn't playing. I was just sucking the music up and learning.

So my dad sent me a guitar once he found out I was interested by seeing this guy. My mom told him, "Carlos is interested in music again." He sent me back an electric guitar that was almost like a Wes Montgomery model, a fat L5 Gibson with one pickup. I didn't know you needed steel strings for it, so I was still putting nylon strings on it [laughs]. So my ambitions didn't matter since he didn't send me an amplifier either, and I didn't know you needed one.

One early song I learned on it was "Apache" by the Shadows. I started learning Joey Dee stuff like "Peppermint Twist." At that time, Joey Dee & the Starliners were really popular in Tijuana. His music was hot, and the bossa nova was coming on quick, and Jimmy Smith with "Walk On The Wild Side."

But as I started learning Javier's stuff, his friends would say, "Why don't you learn Javier's stuff from where he's learning it from?" I said, "Oh, where's that?" And they said, "Well, here's B.B. King," and they had stacks of B.B.'s records on Kent and Crown. I started copying them, note for note, and because of all that training that my dad gave me on the violin, it seemed easy.

**So when did your practical band experience begin?**

In Tijuana, I joined a band called the Strangers that was in competition with the T.J.'s, but we were sad compared to the T.J.'s. With the Strangers I started playing electric bass, a Kent, because the leader of the band owned all the equipment and told us who would play what. After a while, people told him that I played too many notes for bass [laughs], and he should let me play guitar. I left the band after three or four months, and this point I was 11 or 12. Then my mom got the buzz again to move. She just didn't see her children getting married or settled down in Tijuana, so she filed for immigration papers for us to come to the U.S., specifically San Francisco, because she wanted to follow my dad there.

I owe so much to my mom, because she immigrated everybody, although at the time I didn't want to go. I had found a steady job at a strip joint called the Convoy Club on the strip on Avenida Revolucion, which is like the Broadway of Tijuana. I was 13, and I would start at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and end at 6 o'clock in the morning, playing one hour, and then watching the hookers strip for another hour. Six hookers would strip, and then we'd play for an hour. But you'd learn a lot, man.

Timothy, I learned a lot about how the drummer and the music helps a woman to walk when she's onstage; otherwise she can look stupid. The drummer would roll whenever she was gonna roll those little tassels on her breasts, and I noticed that if he wasn't playing the rhythm right, she would take her high heels and throw them at him, 'cause he had to help her out.

So I learned a lot about music and expression from places like that. Because, as Miles would say, you should play the music as if it's an extension of you. I got a big education in there. There were a lot of black American musicians there who'd go to Tijuana to play in the nightclubs. They'd go initially to score some

drugs or whatever, spend all their money there, and then not want to come back to the United States until they'd made a little money, so they'd stay and play in the clubs. The club owners would hire them because they were better than guys like us, who were just starting, and that's how I learned songs like "Misty," "Georgia," "I Loves You, Porky," "Summertime"—a different repertoire than "Hide Away" by Freddie King.

**So when did your mom make the move to San Francisco?**

My mom immigrated in 1961-62, but I didn't come to the U.S. until 1963. Actually, I first came to San Francisco for three months, but I put my mom through hell because I didn't like it. I wouldn't eat, and I'd just be angry all the time. So she sent me back, saying, "OK, I'll give you \$20 and you can go back," but that's all I got. It was kinda scary going back to Tijuana after I'd been in San Francisco for three months. When I got back to Tijuana I noticed that the highest building was seven floors, and it was like a shack. Tijuana looked so differently all of a sudden. Before, it had been paradise, but San Francisco had spoiled me.

Back in Tijuana in the evening on Halloween was scary, not only because everybody was dressed like werewolves and skeletons but because I realized, "Damn, I don't know anybody here as far as family." It dawned on 15-year-old me: I'm alone. And that's when I went to the temple of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron of the Mexican people, to say my prayer.

After that, when I went back to the Convoy Club hoping for work, they told me, "We know your mom moved to San Francisco, but we also know that she's pretty strong and we don't want her to throw the cops on us." But the Virgin Mary must have heard me, because I was able to pick up the guitar and stay there at the Convoy for another year. Actually, I think the guy who'd been playing onstage when I showed up was happy to go home anyway [big laugh].

**For someone so young, you seem to have descended into a pretty strange lifestyle.**

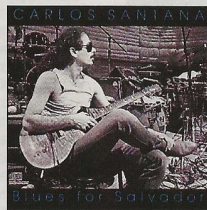
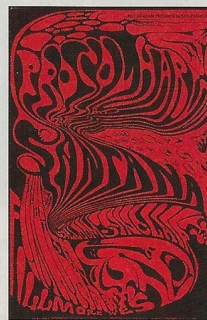
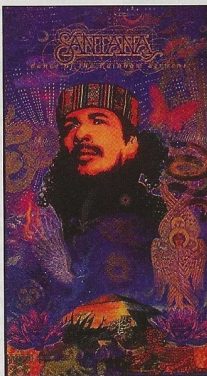
See, from always hanging around adults and seeing all this happening in Tijuana, going back to being a kid in junior high in San Francisco was just a culture shock. Because when you listened to what the kids talked about in school, it was dumb compared to what the older people talked about—not that the older people were any brighter.

But yeah, this was my life back then. First I stayed with the drummer at this funky hotel his aunt used to own; then we both got thrown out, so my mom sent a letter and I started staying with one of her friends back in the old neighborhood, checking people doing grown-up stuff like smoking pot—although they never offered me any; I never got turned on to it until I was back living in San Francisco. It was something people did back then in Tijuana, but only in alleys.

**You truly were entirely on your own, eh?**

[Nods.] It was a lot of fun, especially because you learn so much from the relationships between the women, the dignity that they have even though they're prostitutes. There's a certain code there. They don't choose it because they like it,

they do it because they have kids they need to feed. I've learned from traveling around the world that dignity is something that a lot of royalty, a lot of real queens, don't have as compared to these Tijuana prostitutes when it comes to taking care of their own children.



That's why I don't judge a book by its cover anymore.

Come Sunday morning, the same prostitutes will dress their children in pristine white clothes, give them white candles, and send them off to their Catholic Church traditions. And though I'd see these mothers at night, during the day they don't know me and we don't know each other when we pass in the streets. So it's a beautiful code of dignity. You can't buy class.

The funny thing is that during the day I'd either be sleeping or go the Playa de Tijuana, the Tijuana beach, or go buy some hot-rod magazines or Mad magazines—all kid stuff since I was still just a kid!

And by this time the club had its own guitar, a Stratocaster. The one that my dad had sent me, I sold it for something else, a Les Paul Junior, kinda yellow, green, and black. And I got it for \$35 with a small amplifier, so you know it was stolen, "hot," but I didn't even know what that expression meant [laughs]. So I walked around with my amplifier and my guitar. But it was so much fun picking up from all the musicians who came in from San Jose or San Diego. The band at the Convoy Club learned "Stormy Monday Blues" and "You Can Make It If You Try."

**Sounds like this situation could have gone on forever. Why didn't it?**

Because my mom came with my brother Tony, and she just kidnapped me! She knew I didn't want to go, so my older brother, who was really strong, just grabbed me and said, "Your mama's there." I tried to sneak back to the club but they were already there—they knew all my tricks—so they just put me in the car and we crossed the border, but I was pissed. And I stayed pissed for a long time, two months, and finally my mom said, "I can't stand your silence and your anger. Here's \$20 again, but this time I won't get you back." I took the \$20, walked out the door, and I got as far as Mission Street in San Francisco, and my stomach said, "You don't want to go back over there to Tijuana, man."

It was about a month later that they shot John Kennedy. The year after that, the hippie thing started happening around Haight-Ashbury.

**Tell me about the further development of your music from the San Francisco perspective.**

Actually, even before the hippies, I had a band in San Francisco, though we didn't have a name. Back when I came to San Francisco for the first time—before I went back to Tijuana—these guys where my brother was working making tortillas, they had instruments. My brother's boss was pretty well off, and his son had his own drums. The son told me, "If you don't go back to

Tijuana, we'll buy you an amplifier and guitar and you can join our band." I said, "Nah, I wanna go." 'Cause I didn't want to teach those guys Etta James' "Something's Got A Hold Of Me," because these guys were basically playing pop music, and all I wanted to do was learn.

But this time when I came back they still offered to buy me a new guitar and an amplifier if I'd teach them. I decided that their passion was sincere, so we started doing gigs, playing James Brown songs, and we entered a contest, a local radio station's battle of the bands. And it was amazing, surreal. They had a whole high school gym with like a thousand bands in it; the first 500 or so got eliminated because they sounded like the Rolling Stones or whoever, and the judges said they wanted something original. We were backing up a black lady named Joyce Dunn, doing "Steal Away" and "Heat Wave." She lived over where Sly Stone had come from, which is Ocean Avenue in Daly City.

And we went all the way to the top three in the final round at the Cow Palace in San Francisco. That can give you confidence when you're a kid. But the worst thing happened: We got excited, we got nervous, so we got drunk, and we went to play and missed all kinds of changes and were eliminated. But it gave me confidence that I had something.

Once I started hanging around a different crowd at Mission High School that hung out at

(Continued on page 82)



## CARLOS SANTANA: A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST

(Continued from page 16)

Haight-Ashbury, I found these cats named Stan Marcum and Ron Estrada, who had been out of school for a long time and were a little more adult. I went to Mission High School from 1964 to 1965, and I graduated [on June 9, 1965] after they gave me a tutor, because I caught tuberculosis.

### Tuberculosis!

I was in Mission General Hospital for three months. People were dying left and right in the same ward that I was in. All of a sudden they'd just cover this guy nearby with his sheet. I probably caught it from drinking water out of the faucets in Tijuana, because the water's not clean. It was pretty bad, but they arrested it with streptomycin. They shot me so full of holes in my butt that I couldn't sit for a week. I finally just split from the hospital, calling a friend and saying, "Look, bring me some clothes. I gotta get outta here." Because it was kinda like jail.

**Yet you could escape to the incredible new sense of freedom that San Francisco then epitomized.**

That's what was really beautiful about the Bay Area. At that time the Bay Area was a cornucopia of Ravi Shankar, Jimi Hendrix, Duke Ellington. It was fusion before it became confusion [Smiles].

Seeing B.B. King for the first time at the Fillmore was a revelation; Otis Rush opened up, and Steve Miller was second-billed and B.B. King was the headliner. When B.B. King went out there, he got a standing ovation without hitting one note. Everybody stood up and they wouldn't shut up; they just got louder and louder, and I was electrified. Finally he started crying, and the light beams from the spots were hitting his face, big tears coming down. And all I could see were the sparkles from his tears and from the diamonds on his ring. So when he did hit his first note of the night, it was like a whole other world had opened up. I thought, "Oh, *that's* how he does it. You go inside yourself to come out with this sound."

So I went home and I just said that I had to leave my house, I couldn't live with Mom anymore. And I couldn't be washing dishes all week and be a musician only on weekends.

**You decided that you once again needed to be on your own?**

Exactly, and I moved out of the family home, an apartment by Church and Market streets. It was becoming really strained, the relationship between my mom and myself. Because basically she's a very domineering woman. With all the great qualities she has, including her conviction, I've found I'm just like her: I like to question authority all the time. There wasn't room for two people like that in the same house.

So I moved out and started hanging around with different hippies in Palo Alto and San Francisco—anyplace where I could hang around musicians. I panhandled to play in the streets, and I made a connection with Gregg Rolie for the first time. And I started picking out different musicians. The only musicians I had were a bass player and a drummer, and I stopped hanging around with them because they were still very much connected with their domestic obligations, with mom and dad or the store. I said, "Look, you gotta leave all that if you want to hang around with me."

I had this mental image that I was on this river and it was taking me, and I knew I was gonna be playing at the same places that Miles and B.B. did.

I had a dishwashing job at the Tick-Tock Drive-In Diner downtown. I was there from '64-67. I was pretty good at it. I take a lot of pride in saying that I could do a pretty good job at it. But what happened was that one day while I was on my shift at Tick-Tock's, the Grateful Dead pulled up in two big limousines. I had my apron on, full of hamburger pattie, peeling potatoes and shit, my shoes all funky from cleaning floors with hot water and bleach, and those guys came over to the counter asking for french fries and burgers.

I never talked to the Dead that day, I just looked at them. But something in me just said, "Man, you can do that thing, what they do." I walked up to the owner of the Tick-Tock and said, "Man, I quit." The owner said, "If you're really quitting, grab a

card and punch it in the time clock." So I punched it, said, "I'm outta here," and just left.

**So the Dead inadvertently pushed you to get along with your dreams?**

The Dead pushed me in that direction, yes, but once I saw through B.B. King that you could captivate people with no bullshit, no gimmicks, just playing, I knew there was no turning back. So I started putting my band together and started playing at the Matrix or opening up for different bands like the Loading Zone and the Who at the Fillmore. Anytime anybody canceled, we were there, and Bill Graham just adopted us.

Growing up here in New York, Bill Graham's first passion was Afro-Cuban music: Tito Puente classics like "Oye Como Va," that was his thing; it wasn't the Grateful Dead or anything else. He loved to play salsa music, but he only called it Afro-Cuban music. And so we were the closest to that, because we played blues with congas, and we played [the music of] Olatunji. We had a serious talk, Bill and the band, and he said, "You guys got something different, something that makes the pelvis move in a different way. Your music is two things that should never be separated: spiritual and sensual. So stop fighting it!"

With my Catholic upbringing, you get that guilt thing. You're horny, but you're guilty because you're horny. That kind of Catholic trip. But he was the first one who really looked at it for what it was, and he told me that he noticed that the women moved a different way with our music than they did with Jimi [Hendrix] or anybody else.

**What was the process through which Santana became more accepting of its uniqueness?**

It was called the Santana Blues Band from 1966, but then we dropped the "Blues" part because everybody was playing blues: Fleetwood Mac, Jimi Hendrix, Cream. They were just louder and more sophisticated, but it was still the blues. Nobody was really messing with the parameters with Horace Silver or Coltrane or Motown. We started putting it all together, and it was natural for us, and nobody was there to tell us we were bastardizing or polluting rock to play two licks of Charlie Mingus and two licks of something else.

People from Columbia Records came to Santa Clara [Calif.] when we opened for the Grateful Dead, and it freaked them out what we would do to the audience. One of the representatives at that time for CBS said, "Your music is so vibrant that you can start with any song and end with any song, and your music still comes off orgasmic."

It was like that with the Dead, too, but our intensity was of a different kind. The first album took about a week to make: two days to record; two days to mix. On the second album, all I remember is that Miles Davis used to call all the time, talking on the phone in that gruff growly voice, and we'd think, "Miles Davis is calling!"

**One of the most dramatic tracks on "Abraxas" was "Incident At Neshabur," which still has such energy, mystery, and live sweep to it.**

Actually it was based on "Señor Blues" from Horace Silver, if you really look at the bass line. But the other part is Aretha Franklin singing "Call Me," or "This Girl's In Love With You." The guy who helped us produce it was Alberto Giamquinto, an incredible white piano player, and one of the first whites who'd go to the South Side of Chicago and actually play with black musicians. At that time it was taboo—you couldn't do that. But he was a bad cat. He put on the first part of "Neshabur," that staggered section that was from a melodic little vocal riff of his that went, "Can you do, can you dig, can you do the pimp thing? Go ahead brother, right on."

I told him, "I like the riff's melody, but we can do

without the lyric." [Laughs] So we left it as an instrumental.

**"Abraxas" prepared people more adequately for the remarkable live shows.**

Frankly, a lot of guys came in and out of the band, a lot of drummers. The whole thing didn't first form itself until we went to Woodstock. That was with Michael Shrieve and Chepito [Areas]. And we stayed together until we couldn't stand each other, which was only about a year. Bill Graham had told us, "Listen, when your first album comes out, you guys are gonna be recognized in the street, and your egos are gonna get so big you're gonna need a shoehorn to come into a room, and it's gonna fuck you all up."

We said, "No, no!" And sure enough, that's exactly what happened. That was because we didn't pace ourselves. Once you live with somebody for a whole year and you're constantly on the road, unless you meditate or do certain things to relax, you really got on each other's nerves. No two ways about it. So for me now, we don't travel very much. Three to four weeks on the road; three to four weeks at home. So when we're on the road it's always inspiring; it's not mechanical or routine.

**When after "Abraxas" did you feel that Santana broke through to a new level artistically?**

From "Caravanserai," but Gregg Rolie and Neal Schon already had eyes to do Journey, and they basically showed up, played their parts, and split. So it was Michael Shrieve and I

who produced and nurtured that vision together. That was because of Michael's and my fascination with the Eastern philosophy, and of Mahavishnu John McLaughlin and John Coltrane.

All of a sudden playing pop music seemed strange, especially because all the pop guys were dying, like Jimi, Janis [Joplin], Jim Morrison. And Sly Stone had discovered Peru, so to speak, so he was off on the sidelines; you either snorted cocaine and shot heroin, or you folded your hands and thanked God.

Maybe I'm too vain, but I couldn't see myself in the streets looking for someone to give me my fix. I've got too much pride in myself. So I chose to follow Eastern religion, and that's how I found John McLaughlin, Larry Coryell, and Sri Chinmoy, Paramahansa Yogananda—the same thing George Harrison was looking for, a different kind of balm or essence to bring you peace.

A lot of people may not know it, but the more successful you are at the peak, like Prince or U2, the more lonely it gets, because when you see people coming and approaching you, you know they're approaching you with different intentions than someone who knows you. It became a weird loneliness, and so you crave to be ordinary.

**How did you met your wife?**

I met my wife because somebody invited me to go see Tower Of Power and the Loading Zone at Marin Civic Center. I went there, and that's where I saw Deborah, and I was captivated. I looked in her eyes, and I knew it was the end of the bachelor thing.

On our first date we went to a vegetarian restaurant on Polk Street in San Francisco. I started going to other shows and seeing her there, and we'd come home together. Soon we were living together, and we were both looking for the same thing. She was going to see Yogananda and I was going to see Sri Chinmoy at the United Nations in New York.

One thing that pulled me through this path with Sri Chinmoy was a saying he had: "When the power of love, replaces the love for power . . ." I said, "Yes, that sounds good, because that's when man will be aware of his totality."

It's not anything that Jesus hasn't said or Buddha hasn't said, but I never heard it put that way. But by 1982 everything that was sugar or honey

with our gurus became vinegar. And that's because Debbie and I were growing in a different way, and we didn't need a middle man to get to our inner self. After a while a guru or a swami or a yogi or even Jesus can get between you and God if you don't know what you're doing. Because what Jesus is about is to discover the same things he discovered. That's what he died for: that you should discover his Christhoodness in yourself, an understanding of what is of the highest good for all people.

Meanwhile, if you want to know who your god is, write down the pattern of your habits over two days. If you don't like that [Laughs], change it.

**When do you think your music changed again?**

It changed with Mahavishnu because we both loved John Coltrane, and still do to this day. I didn't care about hits, and Mr. Clive Davis at CBS warned me, saying I was committing career suicide. And I said, "Thanks for telling me. I actually know you're saying this from your heart—but I've gotta do this!"

In 1988, we toured with Wayne Shorter, and Bill Graham warned me, saying, "Are you sure you want to do this?!" And it was one of the highlights of my life, as far as touring with a musician. There's no one on this planet left who has the brilliant genius of a Wayne Shorter; he's the last of the Picassos, the last of the Igor Stravinskys.

**You reached yet another new level when you completed "Blues For Salvador," which won a well-earned Grammy.**

Around that time I just said, "No, I don't want to appease producers, I just want to play my own music." So you're right, "Blues For Salvador" was the beginning of reclaiming my persona again, if you will. When I did "Blues For Salvador," the song was something that my wife picked up from a cassette that I did the night before—just a jam thing with [keyboardist] Chester Thompson.

My wife heard it on a cassette I left on the table overnight, and she took it along in the car to play as she was getting groceries. She said, "What's the name of *that*?" I said, "I was just stretching out with C.T." She said, "No, you don't understand. I couldn't drive when I heard that; I had to pull over to the side of the road. That needs to go on the album!"

At that time I was really involved with a cause with Bill Graham, a benefit for the children of San Salvador, and I looked at my son—that's also his name—as the song was playing and he heard the phrase "I love you, Salvador." I'm not afraid to tell my son I love him, because my dad, to this day, has never told me yet, because of that old school of being a macho man. But when I saw that, I said, "Yes, this is 'Blues For Salvador.'" And I decided to give the whole album that title.

**What's the concept behind the Guts and Grace label?**

At my house in California, I've got so much live music recorded of Bob Marley's that's unreleased, as well as Jimi, Coltrane, and Miles—tons of it. And so I wanted to release some of this music, by going through the families and estates of these artists, of course, just to honor their living memory. Wayne Shorter named the label. He told me that, just like so much of what I've gone through before, "it's gonna take a lot of guts and grace."

**What's the next project you've got planned?**

The next record is gonna be called "Serpents And Doves." It's the first time I've accepted the so-called discipline of writing singles, those kinds of songs that grab you immediately. I believe there's a lot of powerful message music that can talk to you convincingly without preaching.

In a car you have gasoline, water, and oil, and they're not supposed to mix, but when you step on the accelerator you go! That how God uses all the energy and duality in the world for the highest good of all. And that's what the music on "Serpents And Doves" is about: enlightening people with something beautiful *and* energizing, for the new millennium. ■

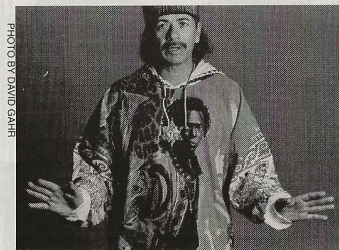


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