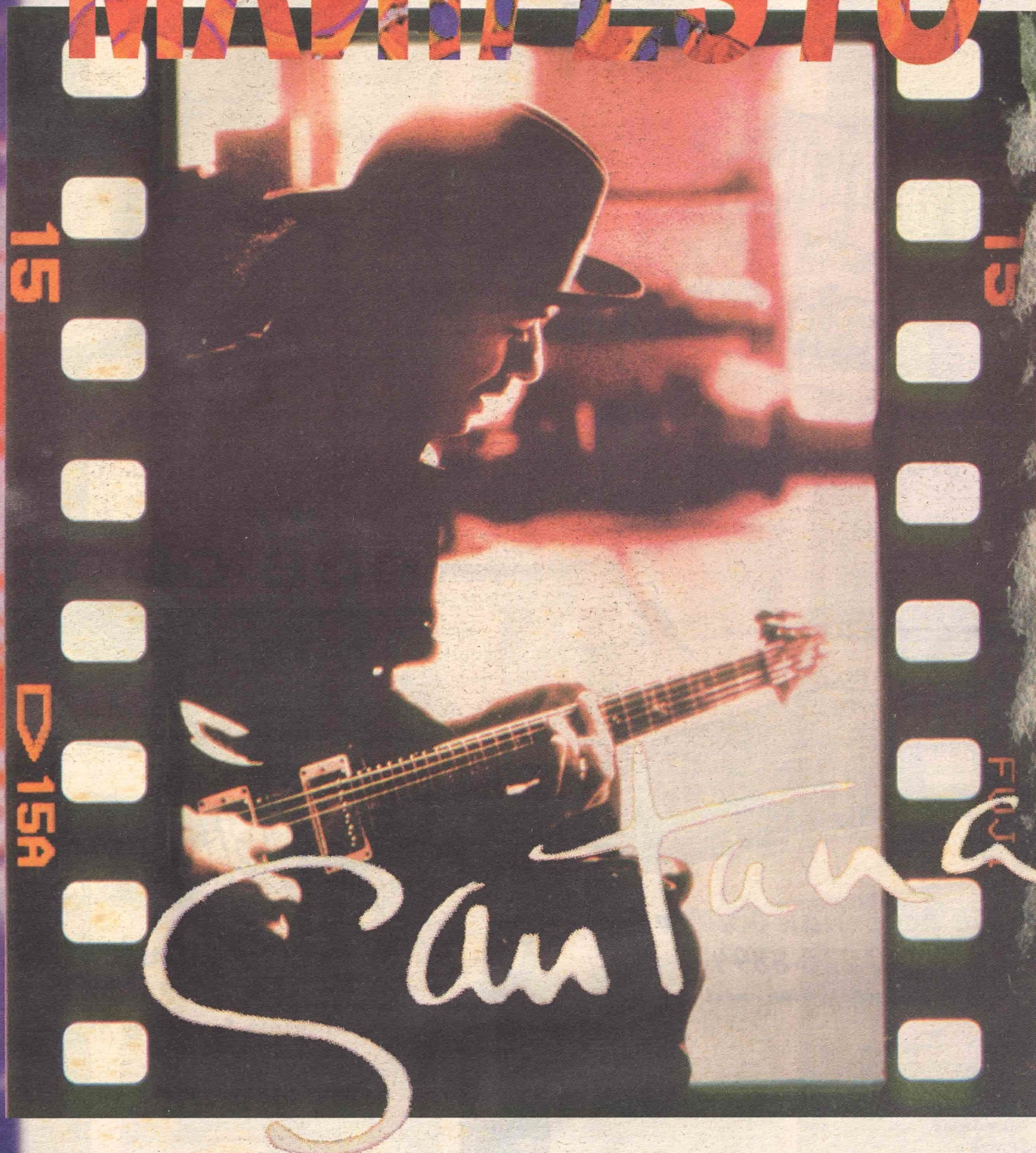


july 1999

an all music magazine

MANIFESTO



pharaoh sanders

john mclaughlin

frank black

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One of the undisputed geniuses of rock guitar, Carlos Santana has been continually making music for over 30 years. He has matured and grown, but still retains the forceful spirituality and singing lyricism that made him a star in 1969, as well as one of rock's most influential musicians both at home and abroad.

With the release of ***Supernatural***, Santana's stunning new album, he is joined by a host of friends from all walks of the music life, from rock to hip-hop, and most significantly, from the world of rock en español. It closes a circle for Carlos, as well as opening up new frontiers, as he pays respects to the rockeros who he has influenced.



SANTANA

I first heard Santana as the opening band in a June 1968 concert at the Fillmore in San Francisco, and though no album was out yet, I was overwhelmed by this new, unique sound that was a powerful blend of rock, jazz, and ethnic Latin sensibilities. The sound was extremely clear, crisp, and well thought out, something lacking in most Psychedelic bands of the period. There was not only an intelligence behind this music, but the pulsing heart beat of the planet that Latin percussion can so accurately emulate.

I noticed at this same time that a drum circle had formed at the mouth of Golden Gate park, as well as at the Aquatic Park by the bay. In this circle were drummers and percussionists of all ethnic backgrounds that would play in harmony. Members of this public circle would come and go as the day progressed, sharing music, smoke, and kinship, but the beat never stopped for one second. The same rhythms that would spontaneously ripple through this drum circle were now echoed on stage through Santana's own unique songs, for they were indeed the rhythms of the streets at that time.

As the years have gone by, I became passionate about a genre of music that Santana has been a major influence on: Rock en Español (rock in Spanish). The first song to peak my interest in this musical genre was "Matador" by Argentina's Los Fabulosos Cadillacs (the Fabulous Cadillacs), a powerful rock song with a Brazilian carnival drum beat. This movement of Spanish language rock is by far the most creative exploration of rock music on the planet today, spanning many continents. I've also continued to be a huge fan of Carlos, following each step in the evolution of his musical career, and was very excited when I heard that he would be releasing a new album, *Supernatural*, his first studio effort in 7 years (his last being *Milagro* in 1992). In addition, his guest spot on Rock en Español superstar El Tri's 1997 disc, *Cuando Tu No Estas*, cements his connection to that movement, bringing the original rock of Santana and the current rock en Español movement full circle.

by David Hulse



ORIGINS

Carlos Santana was born on July 20, 1947 in Autlun, Mexico in the state of Jalisco, the same state of origin for the super group Maná. His father was a mariachi violinist from three generations of professional musicians, whose violin playing must have first given Carlos a sense of his own unique musical destiny. His father first taught Carlos the violin when Carlos was 5 years old. In 1955 Carlos moved from Autlun to Tijuana, and at 8 years old shifted from violin to guitar. The fact that Carlos was first taught the violin, and then the guitar, is very revealing in light that Carlos' classic signature as a guitarist is to make the very strings cry out in song, giving voice to the guitar, something that tradition usually attributes to the magical nature of an enchanted violin.

Then in 1961 Carlos, following the call of his musical destiny, moved to San Francisco. Carlos met Greg Rolie in the Summer of Love, 1966, and out of a jam session the Santana Blues Band was born. By 1967 the band shortened its name to just Santana. Their first self-titled album appeared late in 1969 shortly after their stellar performance at Woodstock. This coincides closely with the first album release in Mexico of Alex Lora's group, Three Souls in my Mind, in 1969. I see this time period, beginning in the late sixties and extending through the seventies, as the first wave of rock en Español, known simply as rocanrol (rock and roll).

Both Santana and Three Souls in my Mind, later to become El Tri in 1984 at the beginning of the rock en tu idioma (rock in your language) movement, are the two leading influences to create a distinct voice in rock for Latin music in the early seventies. Both groups sang in English and Spanish at the beginning of their musical careers. Santana tended towards English lyrics as their career matured, while Three Souls in my Mind sang exclusively in Spanish from 1971 onwards. These two groups developed their own unique sound independent of one another, but their paths finally crossed in 1997, when Carlos Santana was a guest artist on El Tri's "Virgen Morena."

Though Santana's classic sound is by no means rock en Español, it is the inspiration behind all rock bands attempting to capture the Latin "soul" in their own sound. This is true for every band under the banner of not only rock en Español, but also rock en tu idioma. Carlos Santana's unique talent of first blending African, Cuban, and Latin rhythms and then translating them into a modern rock idiom, which is still not dated thirty years after its original distillation, is the hallmark of his musical genius.

THE EMOTION & GRACE OF CARLOS SANTANA'S SUPERNATURAL GUITAR

Supernatural contains thirteen new songs, one for each letter in the name Carlos Santana. This is Carlos' greatest artistic achievement to date. The first thing that hits the listener is how fresh this album really is, for a performer who has been recording for thirty years.

The title of the disc refers to a comment by Carlos

on fellow guitarist Peter Green (who wrote the classic Santana hit "Black Magic Woman"). In describing the most important elements that make up great guitar playing, Carlos stated that there were only two: "emotion and grace". In describing Peter Green's transcendent guitar playing on his most famous instrumental composition, "The Super-natural," which appeared on John Mayall's *A Hard Road* (Polygram, 1967), Carlos stressed the same two elements, that it was all "emotion and grace". These same two key elements are the driving force behind all the new songs on Carlos' latest album. It is very fitting that Peter Green joined Carlos for a duet of "Black Magic Woman" during Carlos' recent induction in 1998 into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

The sheer variety of contributing artists is overwhelming. So many different voices rise to the surface on the many cuts of this album, but steadily flowing throughout this kaleidoscope of talent is the clear, strong, soul-stirring guitar of Carlos. In a sense this is a great tribute album to Carlos in which the participating artists pay homage to the Master. Artists outside the Latin rock movement who make this album such a pleasure to listen to include Dave Matthews, Everlast, Rob Thomas, Lauryn Hill, Cee-Lo, Eagle-Eye Cherry, the Dust Brothers, the Product G & B, and last but not least Eric Clapton, another guitar player whose guitar stylings exude both emotion and grace.

But the real supernatural mystery of this album is that it is the closest thing Carlos has ever done to capture the essence of rock en Español (outside "Virgen Morena"). *Supernatural* is so tight, so varied in each of its tracks, and so full of the Latin spirit in rock that has recently come to full flower in the worldwide rock en Español movement. Guest Latin artists who have contributed to this album include K.C. Porter (producer of Selena and Ricky Martin), the superstar band Maná (including lead singer Fher), and Raul Pacheco of Ozomatli. All greatly enhance the rock en Español ambience of this CD.

The CD starts out with a Cuban mozambique rhythm in "(Da Le) Yaleo," showcasing the jazz/rock fusion that Carlos has made so popular in his long musical career. Carlos' voice with Tom Lindsay serenades us with Spanish in this great lead song (which was written by Shaka Ra, Santana, and C. Polloni). Carlos' guitar is the first note we hear on the CD and it is clean, precise and deliberate, with no wasted energy. His playing throughout this masterful CD never rambles, nor is it ever out of focus, but rather shows a strength and maturity never fully harnessed in any previous outing.

The next song, "Love of my Life," is with Dave Matthews, and starts out as an easy jazz riff, with Carlos playing a lead line against his own back up guitar. Matthews' mellow voice is easily supported by the lead guitar, and then midstream into this cocktail lounge atmosphere, Carlos' powerhouse guitar playing takes off to a samba beat and replaces Matthews' lead vocal line.

"Africa Bamba" is beautifully sung in Spanish by Carlos, in an emotional duet with the voice of his own graceful, singing guitar. We return to pure Latin rock in

continued page 22...



THE SOUL OF LATIN ROCK MEETS THE GRANDFATHER OF ROCK EN ESPAÑOL

In El Tri's 1997 release *Cuando Tú No Estas* (When you are not here) (WEA Latina, 1997), the two giant rivers of Latin rock converge into a single, forceful stream of pure, unequivocal rock en Español. Carlos accompanies El Tri on the first cut, "Virgen Morena" (The Brown Virgin), which must be seen as one of the most powerfully evocative songs of Alex Lora's long career.

El Tri's name has a double meaning: it refers to the three founding artists who made up the original Three Souls in My Mind (Alex Lora on Bass and Vocals, Sergio Mancera on Lead Guitar and Carlos Hauptvogel on drums), and it also refers to the tricolor flag of Mexico (of green, white and red). And on the cover of El Tri's *Hecho en Mexico* (Made in Mexico) (WEA Latina, 1987) TRI is the acronym for Trabajadores (Workers), Rock'n'Roleros (Rock and Rollers), and Institucionales (Institutions).

"Virgen Morena" is, in essence, a hymn to the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, and its real magic lies in how subdued Alex's vocals are on this one song. Alex is usually shouting his lyrics, but by holding back, this chant like song is beautifully extended by Carlos' own impeccable guitar playing. As the song progresses, Carlos' guitar begins to sing as well to the Virgin, making a beautiful duet with Alex's subdued vocals. This duet turns into a wonderful exchange, where Alex's words are echoed in Carlos' forceful guitar improvisations, both coming together as a devotional prayer to the Virgin, of brown complexion, of Guadalupe.

This is my favorite of all El Tri songs (and one of my all time favorite works of Carlos), and the real power of this song is that it bridges three worlds: the Latin rock of Santana, the rocanrol of El Tri, and the rock en Español movement as a whole. The political and religious nature of this song should not be overlooked, for it speaks directly in its imagery to the poor working class of Mexico, and appeals to the neglected and downtrodden, rather than to the ruling elite.

S A N T

CONTINUED...

this elegant song, with a Brazilian-like jazz line and a tango drum beat, and again Carlos does not waste one note on this song, ending in an exciting Puerto Rican salsa beat. This song definitely has all the elements of a rock en Español song: lyrics in Spanish, a strong lead rock guitar, and complex Latin rhythms interpreted through both drums and percussion.

Lauryn Hill's contribution, "Do You Like the Way," is in some ways the most unique on the album, blending hip/hop, rap, jazz, and rhythm and blues. It starts with Lauryn's powerful rap and ends in a sixties R & B mood with the vocals of Cee-Lo, reminiscent of Otis Redding. And of course in the background is the ever clear, ever eternal guitar of Carlos. Lauryn's rap sums of the genius of Carlos exhibited on *Supernatural*: "in the rhythm, Santana lick the guitars with precision, not accidental, intentional conscious decision".

"Maria Maria" is sung by the Product G & B, and is produced by Wyclef Jean and Jerry "Wonder" Duplessis. The subdued flamenco guitar becomes transformed into a crying electric lead. The song contains this wonderful line: "She fell in love in East L. A., to the sounds of a guitar, yeah, yeah, played by Carlos Santana", and ends with the Product G & B's high praise: "Yo Carlos, man, you makin' that guitar cry".

The eighth song, "Migra," is the most pop of all the cuts. K. C. Porter contributes accordion, programming, and vocals, as well as production. The drumbeat is African Burundi (as popularized by Adam Ant and Bow Wow Wow 20 years ago), the trumpet and trombone are pure Latin, and yet in the programmed sequences there is an Algerian Rai flavor (not unlike the Latin rock of Shakira, Santa Sabina, and Maldita Vecindad). The wah-wah guitar of Carlos, as always, drives this powerhouse of a song. This song could be a likely candidate for a rock en Español song appearing on a top ten play list of any alternate Latin rock radio station.

"Migra's" lyrics are mix of Spanish and English (like so many of Santana's early songs), and the Spanish is quite politically powerful (another key element in much of rock en Español). Migra means Immigration and a rough translation of the Spanish lyrics in this song is: "Immigration, Immigration, fucking Immigration leave me alone. I see malice in your eyes and contempt in your heart. It is time to recognize that we are all one voice. Embrace my concept, we come from the same voice. You need me more than I need you."

I am in rock en Español heaven with the next cut "Corazon Espinado (Thorned Heart)" which has as guest artists the complete band Maná (manna, defined by the group as "positive energy"). This is a very strong Maná song with Fher's great lead vocal harmonizing at every twist and turn with Carlos' guitar to a steady cha cha cha beat. This song could easily be on a Maná CD as well, and Carlos is consistently playing better than ever on this CD. Carlos is touring with Maná this August, and as such Carlos is generously acknowledging one of the most popular (and controversial) groups in the Mexican rock scene. Winners of the 1999 Grammy Latin alternate rock category (an award they protested, leading to a possible future creation of an exclusive Latin Music Grammy ceremony), champions of Greenpeace and the preservation of the rain forest, and highly criticized by some purist rockeros who believe Maná is pop en Español rather than rock en Español, Maná nevertheless is a great rock band that has evolved in artistry on each of their six releases since 1987. And Carlos shows what rockeros Maná can really be in their own right on this rock song.

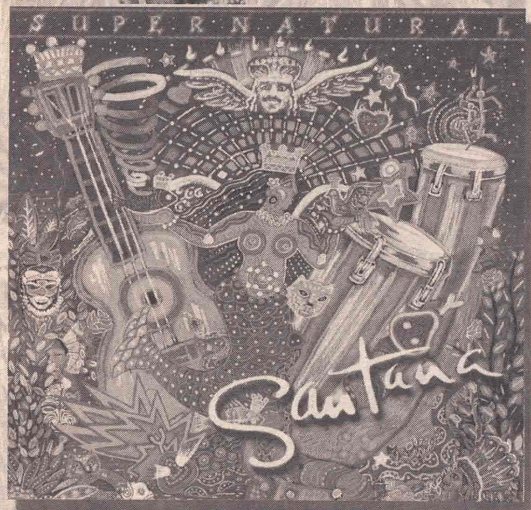
"El Farol (the lamp)" is a very languid danzon with a slight samba mix. It is an instrumental interlude that is the most gentle moment on this CD, swaying gracefully like the wind in the trees. Raul Pacheco from Ozomatli, a band hailing from Southern California, appears on this cut on rhythm guitar and percussion. I feel Ozomatli to be one of the most exciting alterlatino (alternative Latin) rock bands in America today. Their premier self-titled CD (on Almo Sounds, 1997) is a must buy. Though they view their own band as broader than rock en Español, I feel their music has all the earmarks of great rock en Español. Carlos is very astute in including their influence on *Supernatural* (Ozomatli will be touring with Carlos and Maná this summer as well).

The band's name, Ozomatli, has a very symbolic meaning connected to the rock en Español movement, as well as Latin music as a whole. For Ozomatli is derived from the Ancient Aztec Sun calendar, that divides the year into thirteen cycles of 20 day signs. Ozomatli is the monkey, the deity of the eleventh day sign, whose attribute is gracefulness (one of Carlos' two key elements in great guitar playing) and who rules the destiny of all actors, dancers, and musicians. As such, the graceful monkey Ozomatli is the presiding Aztec deity over not only rock en Español, but all of Latin music.

"Primavera (Spring)" is another wonderful song that could definitely be seen as rock en Español. Fher (of Maná) does background vocal while K.C. Porter does lead vocal, and again their wonderful sense of Latin rock shines through. Carlos' steady hand plays throughout in a sparse, elegant fashion, accompanied by a Latin guaracha beat, allowing the vocals to be the main focus. Yet in the middle of the song the vocals drop away to allow Carlos to rock the world with his own unique guitar interpretations.

Supernatural ends perfectly with "The Calling," a duet with Eric Clapton and Carlos Santana, that resembles a blues duel at the crossroads. Eric and Carlos move like two dancers, notes being shared between fret boards, to the point that where Eric leaves off Carlos continues and vice versa. After the song seems to come to its conclusion, a flamenco guitar emerges to play richly against a John McLaughlin-like orchestral background, only to loop back into the song once again. Right after hearing this last song, I was compelled to play the whole CD over again immediately, truly believing that I had just heard the best artistic effort to date by Carlos.

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THE SANTANA FACTOR IN ROCK EN ESPAÑOL

I have coined the term "the Santana Factor" in one of my earlier articles. This term reflects the great influence that Santana has exerted on the bands from around the world performing rock en Español. In certain songs either a measure, or the song as a whole, captures the musical spirit of Carlos Santana. It is not a copy, but rather a tribute to this great musical genius. Here is a sampling of groups that have incorporated the Santana factor into their own songs.

From Columbia, **Aterciopelados** (Velvety) on their newest album *Caribe Atómico* (Atomic Caribbean) (BMG/U.S. Latin, 1998) contains the Santana Factor on the fourth cut, "El Desinflar de tu Cariño" (The deflation of your affection). This song starts out with a signature guitar and drum duo. Even though the guitar is sounding only one lone note, the Santana Factor is immediately conjured. Midstream into the song, a Hammond organ joins the guitar and drum line to perfectly invoke the spirit of Santana.

From Columbia, **Bloque (de Busqueda)** (Block search) on their new self-titled album (Luaka Bop, 1998) captures the spirit of Santana. The second cut, "Nena," in its layered guitar and percussion played against a lead vocal and backing chorus reveals this fierce influence throughout the song.

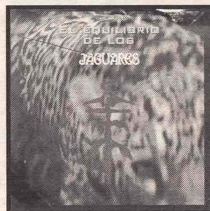
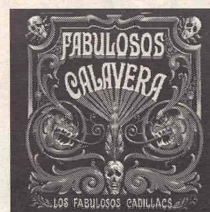
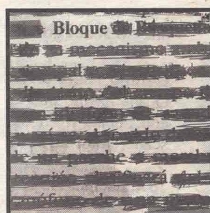
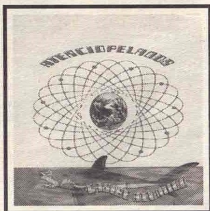
From Puerto Rico, **Millo Torres Y El Tercer Planeta** (Millo Torres and the third planet) on their premiere album *Caminando* (Walking), (WEA Latina, 1999) neatly fold into the end of their ninth song (the title track) a tribute to Santana. Four minutes into *Caminando*, the classic howling guitar, played against keyboard, bass, and Latin percussion perfectly brings to mind Carlos' own musical genius. This is another wonderful example of the Santana Factor in rock en Español.

From Argentina, **Los Fabulosos Cadillacs** (The Fabulous Cadillacs, originally The 57 Cadillacs) won the 1998 Alternate Latin Rock Grammy for their unique *Fabulosos Calavera* (Fabulous Skull) (BMG U.S. Latin, 1997). This CD starts out with "El Muerto (the Dead)." Immediately the drums, percussion and horns ring out in a Santana-like riff, leading into the song. This influence carries throughout the song. This CD is still as radical as ever, and heralded the hardcore wave which is predominant in many new rock en Español bands today.

Also from Argentina, **Vilma Palma e Vampiros** (Vilma Palma and the Vampires) on their newest album *Hecatombe Disco* (Massacre Disco) (Sony, 1998) also contains the Santana Factor on the fourth cut, "RunTunTun (Ale)." Right from the start, the opening notes of the sound clearly bring to mind Santana. The combination of organ and drum is an unmistakable Santana signature.

Finally, from Mexico, the super group **Jaguares** (Jaguars), on the fourth cut "Detra de los Cerros (Behind the hills)," of their album, *El Equilibrio de Los Jaguares* (The Balance of the Jaguars) (BMG/U.S. Latin, 1996), displays this Santana Factor. The first few notes of the guitar, drums, organ and accordion clearly bring to mind Carlos' own musical sensibilities. The whole spirit of the song, with the mesmerizing voice of Saul Hernandez, is carried ever skyward as the song unravels. Jose Manuel Aguilera's guitar solo in its sparse phrasing is a serenade to Carlos' own guitar wizardry. This is the song that made me first realize the undercurrent of Santana's influence in all of rock en Español. In light of this all-pervasive influence by Carlos, the next, great *TRIBUTO* album should be a rock en Español salute to past Santana gems, by today's cutting edge rock en Español artists.

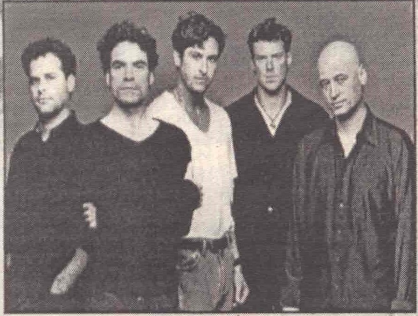
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
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