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**There was Woodstock.
But then there was Manson...**

The Dark Side

How rock'n'roll really did dance with the dev

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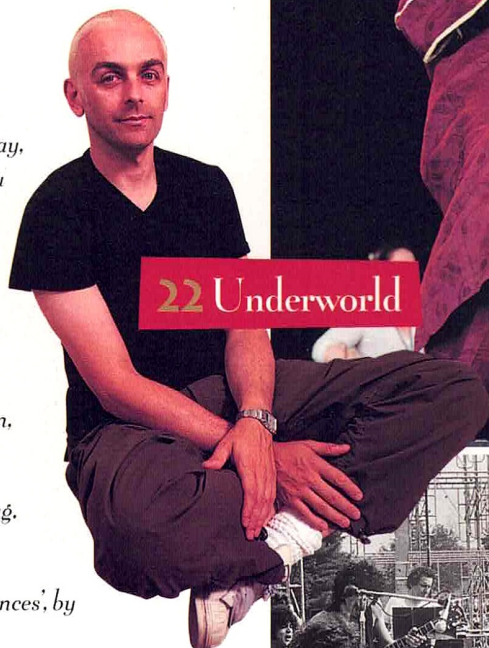
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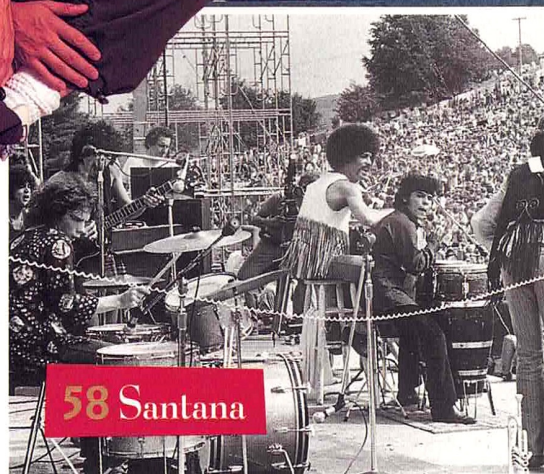
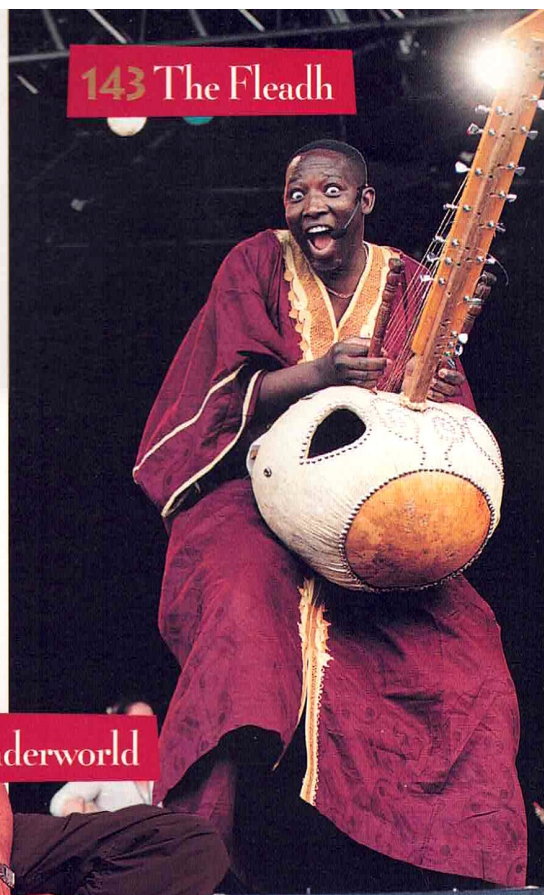
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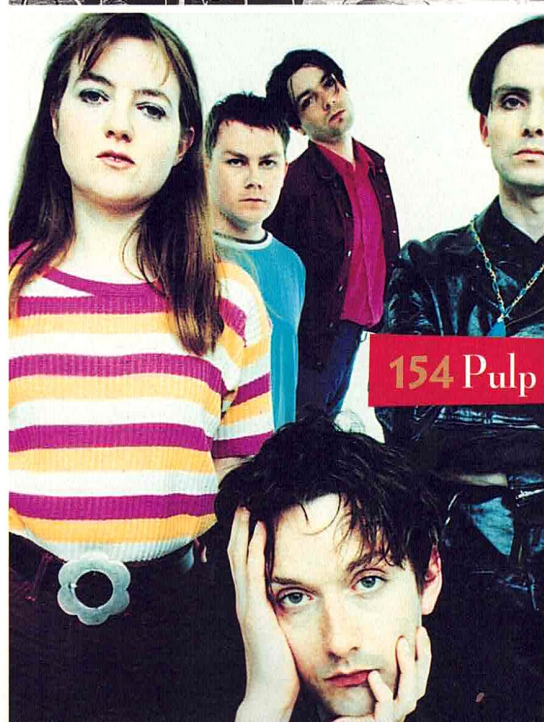


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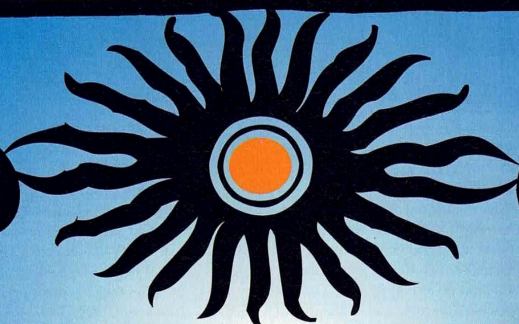
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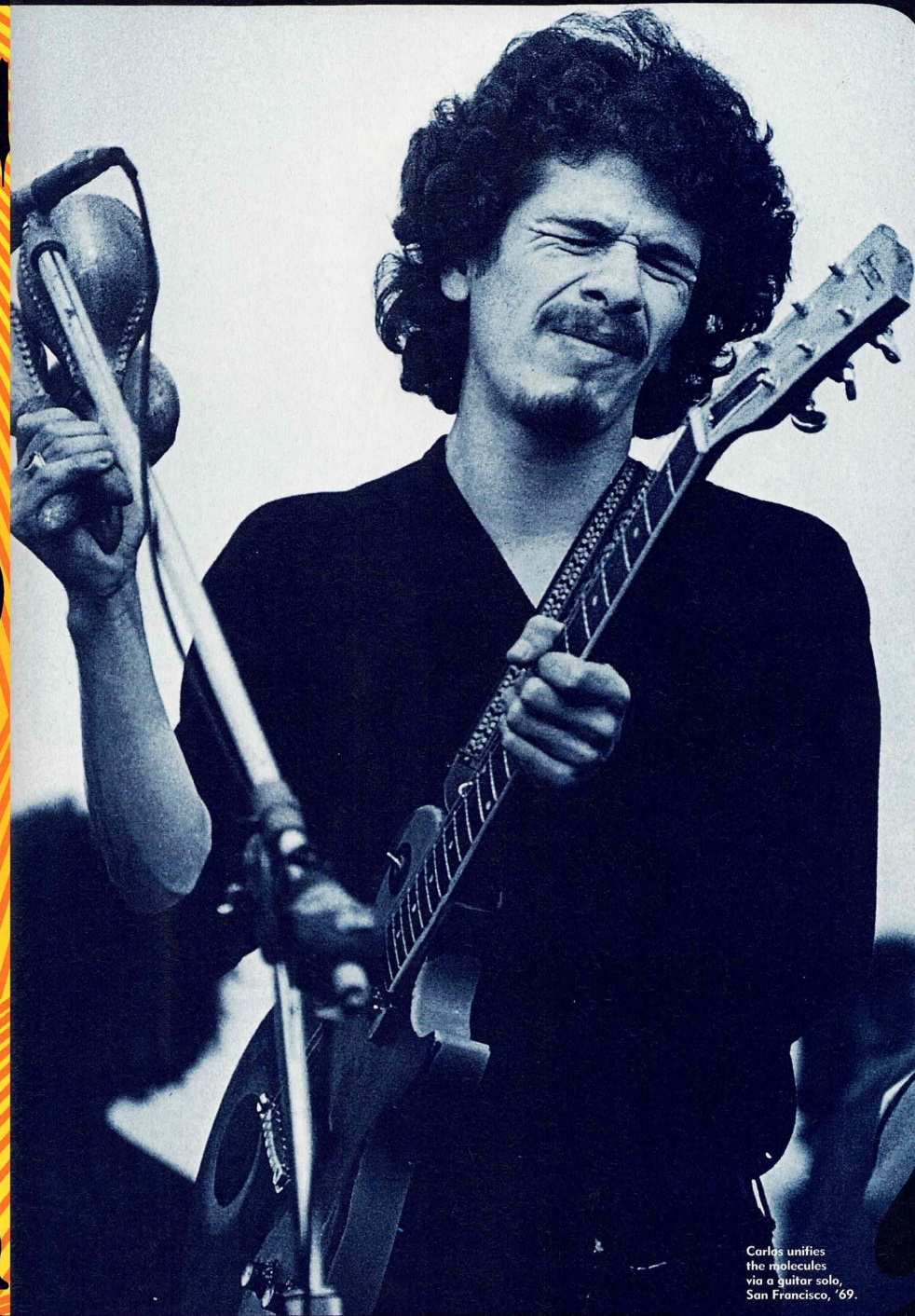
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WE ARE STARDUST WE ARE GOLDEN



He rescued peace and love at Woodstock. He made the hippies put on their dancing shoes. And he survived Altamont. Now, 30 years after most of his peers abandoned their utopian ideals, **Carlos Santana**'s mission remains the same: to take us all higher.

By **Andy Gill**.



Carlos unifies the molecules via a guitar solo, San Francisco, '69.

Robert Johnson/Retna



FOR OVER A YEAR, SANTANA HAD BUILT A REPUTATION the hardest but most reliable way, by word of mouth. In their home town of San Francisco, the latino-blues-rock combo had become an established headline draw despite having no product to promote, and through steady touring they were slowly spreading the word further afield. All that changed suddenly when, on Saturday, August 16, they played the performance of their lives at the Woodstock Festival.

The Love Generation's tribal gathering had gotten off to a slow start the previous evening with a completely acoustic, folk-based line-up whose efforts seemed oddly out of kilter with the burgeoning size and scale of the event—rural music for what had overnight become a hippy conurbation, complete with inner-city problems. By the Saturday, as those problems escalated to catastrophic proportions, it was touch and go as to whether the entire event would disintegrate into full-scale disaster. Coming on third on Saturday's bill (after Quill and Keef Hartley), at around 2.30 in the afternoon, Santana saved the festival with one of the stand-out performances of the weekend. Not only did their searing latin-blues grooves effectively kick-start the slumbering event, they also managed to unite the disparate sea of humanity into a single joyous throng.

The band were paid \$1,500 for their appearance, with an extra \$750 for the film rights—no windfall even at the time, though when Michael Wadleigh's film of the festival (and the accompanying triple-album soundtrack featuring their show-stopping *Soul Sacrifice*) appeared the following year, it became the most effective promotional device any band ever received. (Compare Santana's subsequent globe-girdling fortunes with those of The Band and The Butterfield Blues Band, whose manager Albert Grossman refused to let them appear in the film for such a derisory fee.)

A few months later, however, the fragility of the hippy spirit was brought home to the band when they played at the ill-fated Altamont Festival, a few thousand miles away but light-years distant in attitude. That time, Santana weren't in the movie. "Oh yeah, it was really evil,"

recalls Carlos of Altamont, "a harsh vibe. We were supposed to be in that Stones movie *Gimme Shelter*, but we declined." He pauses to reflect. "It wasn't harmonious..."

THOUGH HE'S LOST MUCH OF THE PHYSICAL FRAILTY that marked his early endeavours, there's still something fragile and precious about Carlos Santana in person, as if his physical self were paying the karmic dividend for a lifetime's spiritual exertions. His hair is shorter and smarter these days, of course, but he still stands out against the restaurant's lunchtime crowd by dint of his outfit: a casual but dark top, akin to a Nehru jacket, with a primitive blue monkey figure, four or five inches in height, hanging on a leather thong around his neck, sending off the subtlest of voodoo/*santería* vibes. Against the restaurant's background buzz, his faintly accented English has a lilting, restful quality that's disarmingly soothing—and entirely indicative, one supposes, of Carlos's spiritual equanimity. He would be equally believable as a priest or a New Age psychotherapist.

He was born in July 1947 in the small Mexican town of Autlan, near Guadalajara, into a family of four sisters and two brothers. His father, a professional musician who taught him to play guitar at an early age, moved the family to Tijuana in search of work. "In Autlan, he had a piano player, a cello, contrabass, guitar, accordion and violin—music that leaned more towards Carlos Jobim than straightforward border-town Tex-Mex," explains Carlos. "Then, when we moved to Tijuana where the tourists like to get drunk and hear mariachi, there were so many of us to support he had to play that kind of music, too."

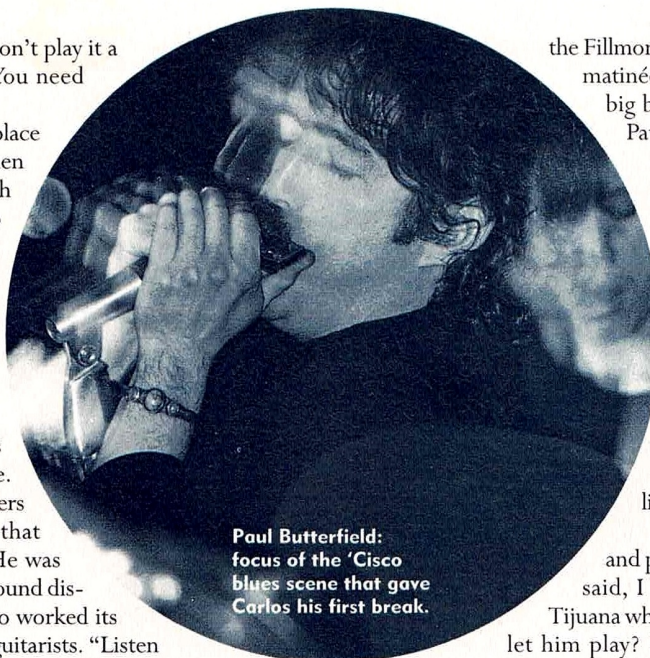
But for Santana junior, in the absence of any notable home-grown Mexican rock'n'roll ("they'd just transcribe everything into Spanish, so it was kind of generic-sounding, it didn't sound like the real thing to me"), the extempore blues of John Lee Hooker, Lightnin' Hopkins and Jimmy Reed had a vitality and expressive spirit that fired his enthusiasm. He learned a few licks, and before long 14-year-old Carlos was working in the nightclubs—"from four in the afternoon 'til six in the morning; we'd play for an hour, then the hookers stripped for an hour. I ate when I wanted to eat, I didn't have my mom telling me what to do—I enjoyed that lifestyle. In Tijuana, since it's a really funky town, it was basically a

Don McCoy/Black Star/Colorific, Gerns/Redferns, Elliott Landy/Redferns

gutbucket, cut'n'shoot sound – if you don't play it a certain way, they cut and shoot you! You need three bodyguards when you play it!"

Colourful and sleazy, Tijuana was no place for a skinny little kid to grow up in, so when his parents upped sticks and moved north to San Francisco in 1961, they had to kidnap the reluctant teenage musician from his low-life haunts. "I didn't want to go to San Francisco, but my mom was bigger than me, and so was my brother! But now I'm really grateful to them, because I probably would have died over there, in jail or whatever."

In San Francisco, young Carlos's musical education went into overdrive. From listening to the likes of Muddy Waters and Bobby 'Blue' Bland, he learned that blues had a more sophisticated side. He was particularly taken by the Chicago blues sound disseminated by Chess Records, which also worked its magic on a generation of young British guitarists. "Listen to three or four notes by Otis Rush or Buddy Guy, and you realise we all come from these people, it's not just B.B. King," he says. "Names like T-Bone Walker, Lonnie Johnson, Django Reinhardt, Charlie Christian – they're the ones that invented the shoe; we created a style with it, but they invented the shoe!"



Paul Butterfield:
focus of the 'Cisco
blues scene that gave
Carlos his first break.

the Fillmore Auditorium. It was there, one Sunday matinée in 1967, that Carlos Santana got his big break, at a "blues bash" featuring the Paul Butterfield Blues Band and friends.

"It seemed like everyone was on acid," recalls Santana. "Paul Butterfield kept gazing at the wall like it was a television! He hadn't slept in two days, and I thought, he's too fucked up to play, so they're just going to jam. There were parts of The Grateful Dead, and parts of the Jefferson Airplane, and Michael Bloomfield on keyboards – his guitar was just sitting there! Nothing was really happening, and I was salivating, staring at Michael Bloomfield's guitar, like it was calling to me."

"I thought, I can't just go out there and pick it up, so I went to Bill Graham and said, I know this skinny Mexican kid from Tijuana who plays some really nice blues, will you let him play? Bill said, 'I'm not in charge, go ask Michael Bloomfield.' Bloomfield said, 'Yeah, sure, man, pick it up' – he was very gracious – so I strapped it on, and waited 'til a few people had played, and when he said, 'Go ahead', I stepped on it. The next thing I know, when I'd finished, Bill Graham was asking me, 'Hey, man, have you got a band?'"

"Bloomfield got too tired to play, he would stay up for two or three days at a stretch, so physically and mentally he was spent. So Bill Graham says, 'Carlos, can you do me a favour and play?'"

Besides the blues, there was the influence of the Mission District of San Francisco where the Santanas lived. "It's mostly Spanish-speaking people: Mexicans, Nicaraguans, Salvadorans, Costa Ricans, Panamanians, Brazilians," explains Carlos. "There's a lot of artists, a lot of murals, a lot of colour, musicians play congas in the park. To me, it's the heart of San Francisco, it deals with real people, not phony, generic people. The food is different, too – it's got nutrition, but it's got a lot of flavour to it, too. The same thing with the music – it had a little pinch to it, y'know?"

Fired up with ambition, primed with blues and latin music, it wouldn't be long before he would be adding his own pinch.

BY THE TIME CARLOS SANTANA ARRIVED, the San Francisco Bay Area was in ferment. "The mid-'60s were an important time in San Francisco – the Black Panthers, LSD, and people protesting the Vietnam War," he says. "San Francisco truly gave birth to consciousness revolution, with a cross-pollination of Ravi Shankar, The Beatles, Ray Charles, Miles Davis, Coltrane, Jimi Hendrix. It wasn't uncommon to see people on LSD or mescaline in the streets, and they weren't freaking out, they were enjoying the difference."

At the centre of the city's musical activity was Bill Graham, the entrepreneur who took the disorganised hippy eruptions and made them commercially viable. Alerted to the city's burgeoning music scene by the success of concerts organised by Chet Helms' Family Dog organisation at the Avalon Ballroom, Graham effectively co-opted their audience by putting on his own, more professionally organised, shows at



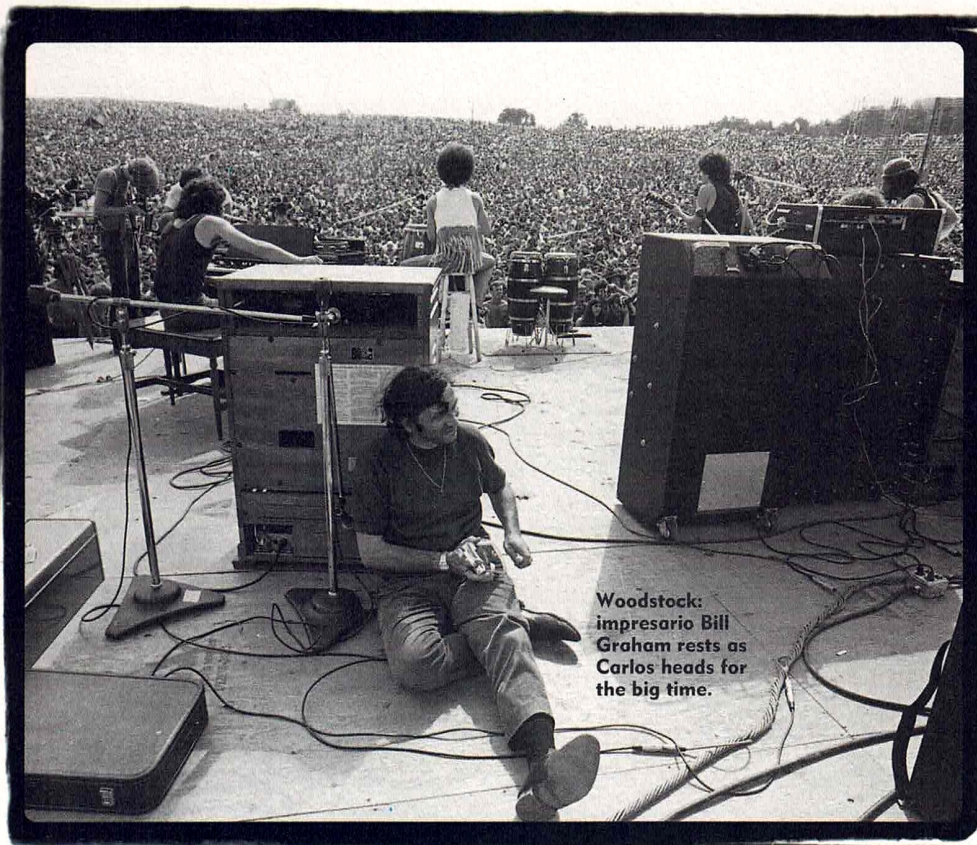
Jamming pals:
Al Kooper (top)
and Mike
Bloomfield.



As it happened, Carlos had been playing with his own rhythm section of Denny Harrow and Garth Rodriguez, doing a few low-key shows and support slots, "making a positive noise around town", without making enough money to give up his day job. The Butterfield gig, however, changed all that. "As I was washing the dishes at the Tick-Tock diner where I worked, this guy stuck his head round the door and said, 'Carlos Santana? I been looking for you, man – I saw you jam at the Fillmore with those guys, and I want to know if you want to join my band. We play stuff you like, blues, not silly shit. What time do you get off?' I said, In an hour. He said, 'Why wait?' So he picked me up and took me to Palo Alto, and there was Gregg Rolie playing keyboards. We started playing, and it just felt really good."

It was, Rolie later realised, the first time Santana had played with an organist, and the two quickly revised their musical ambitions to include the other. Not that their meeting was a completely auspicious occasion. "We smoked one joint, and the next thing we knew we were surrounded by cops," recalls Carlos. "And like always, they got a good cop and a bad cop – one cop said, 'Hey, this kid sounds pretty good, George, let's let him go' – but no, George wants to take him down the station..."

Rolie was a suburban white boy whose musical tastes centred firmly on the British Invasion staples of The Beatles and the Stones; he had even suffered the indignity of donning a ruffled shirt to play with a Top 40 covers band called William Penn & His Pals. Under the managerial guidance of a hairdresser called Stan Marcum, Rolie and Santana ➡



Woodstock: impresario Bill Graham rests as Carlos heads for the big time.

← gathered The Santana Blues Band around themselves, a multi-racial crew modelled on Sly Stone's band, with a black bassist, Dave Brown, a latino conga-player, Mike Carabello (soon replaced by a black percussionist, Marcus Malone), and a white drummer, Doc Livingston. Bill Graham, taking a paternal interest, gave them support slots with The Who and the Butterfield Blues Band, but just as they were about to follow them up with a prestige slot on a Steve Miller/Howlin' Wolf bill, Carlos was taken ill with tuberculosis, and hospitalised for six months.

"That gave me a chance to really reassess my life," he believes. "After I saw B.B. King the first time at the Fillmore, I knew I would be a complete 24-hour, whole-year musician – I couldn't be a musician on the weekend any more and spend the rest of the week washing dishes. It was painful to leave home – I didn't want to crush my mom's heart – but after I split it was easier to create some momentum.

"The word started getting around about The Santana Blues Band. We opened up for Creedence Clearwater, Sly Stone, and every time we played with those people, we started taking their crowd – especially the ladies, who noticed something different about our music. Soon, we were headlining the Fillmore, without an album. The next thing we knew, record companies were after us."

CARLOS SANTANA MADE HIS FIRST APPEARANCE ON RECORD early in 1969, as a guest guitarist on *The Live Adventures Of Al Kooper And Mike Bloomfield*, a double-album follow-up to the former Dylan sidemen's surprise hit album of the previous year, *Super Session*. Like that record, this one was intended to feature the organist and guitarist jamming with heavy friends, live at the Fillmore, but their plans swiftly went awry through Bloomfield's unreliability. "Michael Bloomfield got too tired to play," explains Carlos. "He had no discipline, he would stay up for two or three days at a stretch, so physically and mentally he was spent. Bill Graham said, 'Carlos, can you do me a favour, come over and play?' I was aware of the Kooper/Bloomfield/Stills *Super Session* album, but I wasn't too into it; I felt the jamming thing was very nebulous, it wasn't really grounded. But I did it as a favour to Bill. It was my first recording, and it did open doors for me, but it's not something I did from my heart."

Progress towards the Santana band's own album was even more fraught. Signed to Columbia by the shrewd Clive Davis, the initial plan for the group – now named just Santana – to record a live album of their own at the Fillmore was scotched; instead, the band were slated to

meet at an LA studio in January 1969 with Columbia's talented young producer David Robinson, who had already midwived the debut albums by Taj Mahal and Moby Grape. The night before the LA trip, however, disaster struck when percussionist Marcus Malone was involved in a violent contretemps with one Edward Amido over his girlfriend, Amido's estranged wife. Outweighed and overpowered by Amido when the latter broke into the woman's house, Malone grabbed a kitchen knife and plunged it into the intruder with such force that the blade broke. Leaving Amido bleeding on the sidewalk, Malone was just about to flee in his car when the police showed up and arrested him on a charge of assault with intent to kill. Not unnaturally, this cast something of a pall over the recording sessions. And when, three weeks later, Amido died in hospital, the charge was changed to first degree murder.

"Well, he was a pimp," is Santana's take on Malone. "A bona fide, serious pimp – he had the clothes, the car, the prostitutes, and he played congas. We used to tell him, you can make more money playing congas than pimping, you should give it up, and he'd say, 'Don't tell me what to do!' And so one of his ladies, her ex-husband came back to her house and he was there, there was a scuffle and there was

a knife, and he stabbed the guy, and so he went to jail for a long time."

Things got worse before they got better. The LA sessions were unusable, not least because of drummer Doc Livingston's alcohol-related shortcomings. When the band reconvened at Pacific Recorders shortly after, he was summarily sacked, leaving them without a drummer or percussionist. The drum seat was soon filled by Michael Shrieve, a brilliant young musician who had appeared at the very same Kooper/Bloomfield jam show a few months earlier, while Mike Carabello was reinstated on congas, bringing along with him a tiny Nicaraguan timbales player, Jose Chepito Areas. Santana was transformed from a routine blues band into the fiery, polyrhythmic latin-rock unit that burned up the Woodstock Festival a few months later.

"Extremely gifted, both of them," says Santana of Shrieve and Areas; but their effect went much deeper than just their abilities as performers. "Michael Shrieve turned me onto Miles Davis and Coltrane," acknowledges Carlos. "I was very ignorant when I was young, I thought jazz was phony, cocktail, suit-and-tie bullshit music, and I was into the gutbucket, cut-and-shoot thing, where there's no floor, just dirt, and you play shuffles and blues. Michael said, 'No, this is serious music, you should hear it,' and he brought over a bunch of Coltrane and Miles records, where they were playing blues. He said, 'I'm going to leave these records here, man, because you remind me of them, you think like them.' Then I started getting into *Bitches Brew*, and the Atlantic Coltranes – nothing too out there; his later stuff would have lost me. I discovered that jazz was a more intelligent, sophisticated way of articulating the blues, with European, sophisticated changes." Chepito Areas, by contrast, was totally into the latin music of Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri and Ray Barretto, while Carabello favoured the new psychedelic soul of Sly and Hendrix. Alongside Rolie's Brit pop and Carlos's blues leanings, this made for a musical stew quite unlike anybody else's.

"We were all learning from each other, saying, Well, why don't we put a little bit of that into it?" explains Carlos. "It was a real natural way to expand – the original Santana band just had that chemistry. It was immediate – the first time we played together, we knew." Like Shrieve, Carabello had already had a sizeable influence on Santana's musical education. "When I was in hospital with tuberculosis, he would bring me grass and LSD, and a big reel-to-reel tape recorder, with some Gabor Szabo [Hungarian jazz guitarist] on it. That's how I learned ➡

Baron Wolman

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⚡ Spellbinder, playing it over and over when I was in hospital. It weaned me off of B.B. King – I learned to do things differently with the guitar, I became aware that there are other ways to express the blues. That helped me bring together the things on *Abraxas*, so that when Peter Green saw us he said, ‘Oh, this band is good, they’ve got something different from Elmore James or B.B. King, what are they listening to?’ It was Jose Feliciano and Gabor Szabo.”

BUOYED BY THEIR SHOW-STOPPING APPEARANCE AT Woodstock, Santana’s first album was an immediate success on its release in September ’69, climbing to Number 4 on the American charts. Eschewing the services of David Robinson, the band co-produced the record themselves with Brent Dangerfield, who handled the live sound at the Straight Theater on Haight Street. As a result, it strongly resembled their live shows, with a batch of steaming band grooves like *Soul Sacrifice* leavened by covers of African drummer Olaturunji’s *Jingo-Lo-Ba* and latin star Willie Bobo’s *Evil Ways*.

Until then, the group hadn’t really learned how to write songs, as distinct from riffs and grooves, and much of their early set was made up of covers they had adapted to their own needs, some of them from the most unexpected of sources, like *Chim Chim Cheree* from Mary Poppins – “we would do it like Wes Montgomery, in 3/4, like Coltrane’s *My Favorite Things*, so it was poppin’, it had vitality, it wasn’t corny at all. We had some really slick breaks in it!” Carlos credits Bill Graham, whose fondness for the band was rooted in his own taste for Afro-Cuban music, for encouraging their development as songwriters. “He made us aware of songs,” says Santana. “You have to remember, in ’68 everybody was playing long songs; we didn’t know about verse, chorus and bridge, we just played, y’know? Bill Graham said, ‘You need songs to get into radio.’ But it wasn’t until the first album and *Abraxas* that we learned to say, Hey, we gotta get away from Jack McDuff and Jimmy Smith, we gotta get our own stuff. Hearing, that’s the key word: if you

started playing it. I added the Wes Montgomery kind of intro, and it felt so good we played it that very night, and people went nuts.

“Seeing Peter Green’s face the first time he saw us play it, he had two different reactions: one was, This is my song! The other was, Whoa, this is different! His band was in a state of flux, and he was looking for a new direction, and he’d come over and hang out with us. I have nothing but deep, deep respect for him – I used to play him a lot, late at night. I play Peter Green for legato, Coltrane for staccato. That’s the way I look at it: long, pretty notes: legato; sharp, fast notes: staccato. I think all musicians should balance their lives with legato and staccato. If you’re too legato, people crap on you! New York is very staccato, and the country is very legato. Both Peter Green and Eric Clapton are very legato.”

By this time, Santana were stars in their own right, and Carlos found that the interest he took in the music of Green and Clapton and Miles Davis was cutting both ways. In his autobiography, Miles was uncharacteristically generous about Santana. “Man, that motherfucker can play his ass off,” he wrote. “If I was in the same city where he was playing I would go and catch his concerts.” When Santana played New York for the first time, Carlos looked up at the balcony to see both Miles and Tito Puente checking the band out. “Miles was there to see us every day,” marvels Santana. “It builds the confidence a bit, to know that he’s hanging around with us, beyond the ladies or whatever stimulants were available – it gives you a sense of security.” Not, of course, that the ladies were exactly an insignificant factor in all of this. “It was the women that changed Miles,” reckons Carlos. “He had this girlfriend named Betty Davis, and she was hanging around with Jimi Hendrix, Devon Wilson and Colette, there were about six or seven of them, all foxes, and they were all going to bed with everybody – including themselves! It was a free-for-all. And they were telling Miles, Why do you dress like a square? That stuff is old – check out these guys, Sly Stone, Jimi Hendrix! So the women were making Miles dress differently and hear differently: between the women and Bill Graham and Clive Davis, they pulled Miles out of a jazz thing.”

“You need the timbales and the congas to make the women dance a little differently, their nipples get hard. The men would look at their women and go, ‘Hey, you don’t dance like that at home!’”

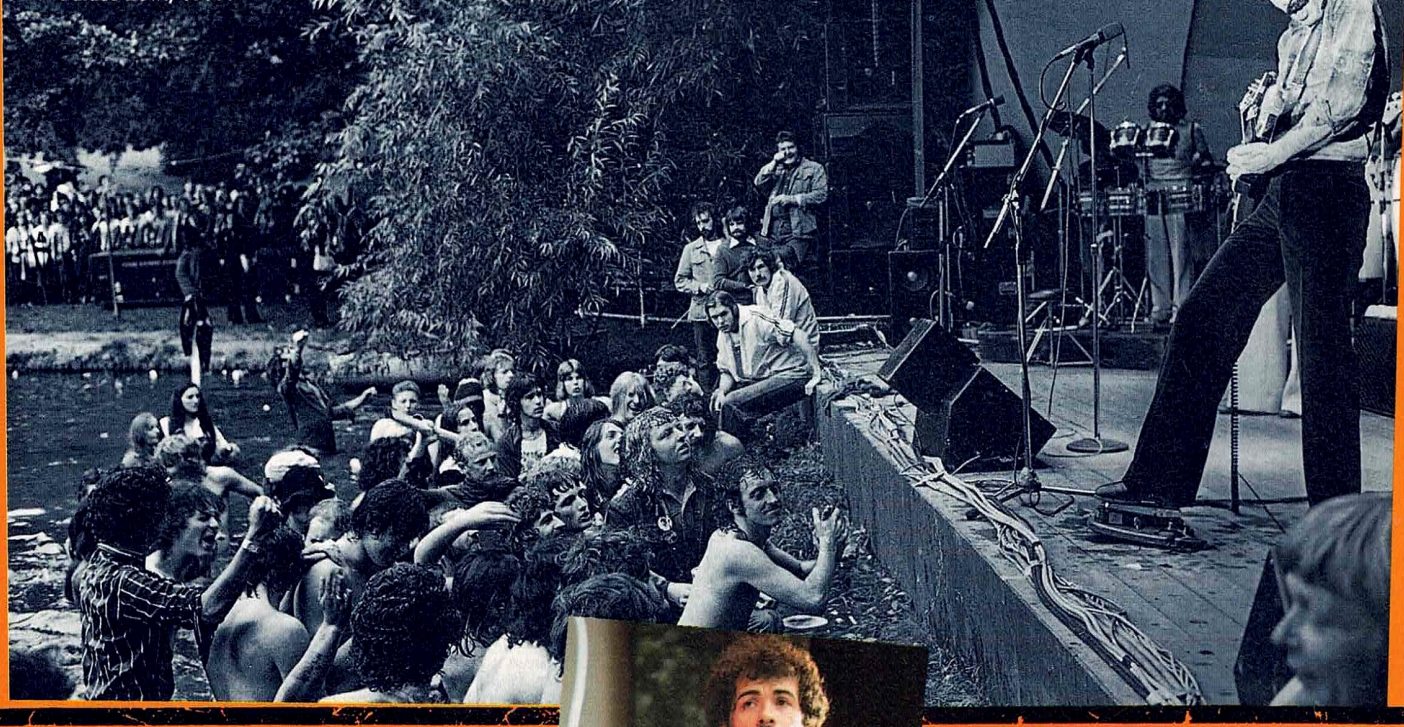
can hear it, you can play it, and we started hearing our own babies. One of the first was *Samba Pa Ti*, where I just heard a voice singing. Once we learned how to do that, it gave us confidence to find our own place.”

Samba Pa Ti remains one of the band’s pinnacle achievements, a guitar instrumental of unparalleled grace and beauty, lyrical but impassioned, on which Carlos’s Gabor Szabo influence is at its strongest. The album on which it appeared, *Abraxas*, is by common consent their best, a landmark release which spent over a year on the UK charts and eventually went quadruple platinum, cementing the band’s position as one of the most vibrant, fertile units of the era. It was a giant step on from their debut, bearing the first suggestions of the jazz leanings which would come to dominate on later records, and the material was nicely marinated in the band’s various musical flavours – nowhere better than on a gorgeous version of Fleetwood Mac’s *Black Magic Woman*, which was transformed into an elegant samba and served with a side-order of Szabo’s *Gypsy Queen*. “Gregg Rolie is the one who turned us on to *Black Magic Woman*,” recalls Carlos. “We did a soundcheck in Fresno, and he

Santana, TV rehearsal, November '69: (from left) José Chepito Areas, David Brown, Michael Shrieve, Carlos, Mike Carabello.



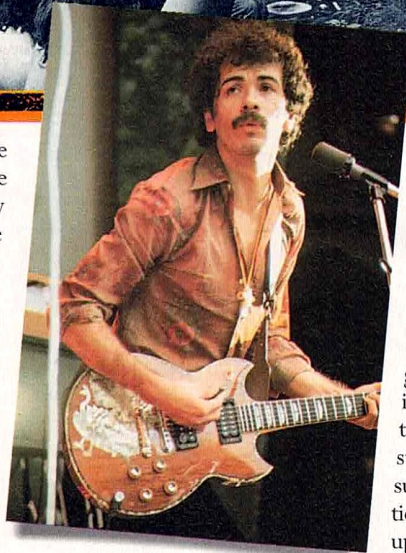
"I didn't fall off a cliff!": Carlos and post-Schon band, London's Crystal Palace Bowl, 1977.



After a while, Santana also noticed that artists like Chicago, Hendrix, Miles and even the Stones were introducing more percussion into their sound. "They saw that you need the timbales and congas to make the women dance a little differently – their nipples get hard, they dance differently, and instead of catching butterflies like this (Carlos waves arms in air in typical hippy-chick fashion), they started doing this kind of thing (Carlos essays a more sensuous, groin-oriented movement). The men would look at their women and go, 'Hey, you don't dance like that with me at home!' We'd say, Don't worry man, we're just getting her ready for you, don't be jealous, you're taking her home!"

BUT EVEN AS THE BAND WERE HITTING THEIR CREATIVE peak, the seeds of their eventual dissolution were growing. As ever, drug problems and musical differences. Auxiliary member Alberto Gianquinto, a Black Panther-connected pianist whose *Abraxas* composition Incident At Neshabur prefigured the group's move towards jazz, had moved in with bassist Dave Brown and introduced him to heroin. Carlos favoured acid and mescaline (he was tripping on the latter during the band's epochal Woodstock performance), while Carabello never left for a tour, it's said, without at least an ounce of coke to hand.

With different drugs came different attitudes, and Carlos found his own more mystical leanings increasingly at odds with the rest of the band's rough, tough, gang mentality. While on-stage the group could operate as a streamlined machine, off-stage they frequently deteriorated into screaming, knock-down arguments – though not, as one might expect from the band's diverse make-up, on racial grounds. "We never threw in anything about being white, Mexican or black, that was never the issue," states Santana. "The issue was mainly that they had become aware that my priorities – even though I was right with them with the drugs and the women and everything – my priorities were more concerned with honouring things. If a lady knocked on the window of our limousine and started chatting with us, telling us what good musicians we were, and somebody yelled 'Fuck off!' it would really hurt my feelings. That would create friction between me and the band, because a lot of the band thought that rock'n'roll thing was cool."



"So I'm feeling an alienation between myself and the other members; they might be thinking, 'Who do you think you are? We made the mistake of calling the band Santana, and now you think that you're the guy!' I didn't know how to respond. I had two modi operandi: angry, and angrier. I wanted something spiritual, but all I had was anger, and I can see why they might have thought, 'This guy's going nuts!' Also, I realised that we had platinum albums collecting dust, but we hadn't practised in a while and we had started to really, really suck! You can only have so much sex, or so much sugar, so many platinum albums, so much stimulation before you get fucked up. Your timing gets fucked up – you go to hit the note, and it's not there."

With his wife Urmila, Carlos turned to Hindu guru Sri Chinmoy for spiritual guidance, adopting the name Devadip ("The light of the lamp of the Supreme") upon his conversion. "Sri Chinmoy held meditations at the United Nations Church, across the street from the United Nations," explains Santana. "In his books, there were things which couldn't be twisted – for instance, he said, 'When the power of love replaces the love for power, man will have peace'; that's pretty powerful, that's like a Hendrix or Coltrane lick. I wanted to know where he got that from, and my wife and I wanted to balance our lives." Carlos and Urmila remained devotees of Sri Chinmoy from 1972 until 1981. "We basically learned what we needed to learn, and we knew when it was time to leave," he explains. "I honour all the things that I learned, because the discipline did keep me away from excess."

As Carlos became more spiritually oriented, the tensions in Santana increased to a point where the band could no longer hang together. The rift was particularly deep between Santana and Carabello, and a little while after their third album was recorded, the guitarist issued an ultimatum that either he or the percussionist had to go. Initially, the others called his bluff, continuing for a couple of shows with teenage guitar prodigy Neal Schon playing both his and Santana's parts. But the loss of such a key element of the group's sound was ultimately untenable, and Carabello soon departed, leaving the way clear for Carlos to return and exercise a new domination over the band, bringing in new members and pulling Santana closer to jazz than ever on the subsequent ➤

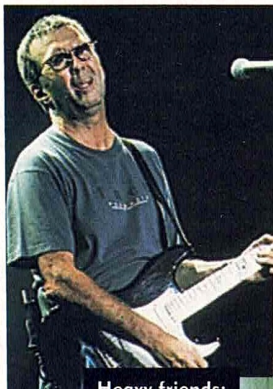
← *Caravanserai* album. Resentful over the guitarist's machinations, however, Gregg Rolie and Neal Schon left soon after to form Journey, one of the less interesting stadium-rock outfits of the '70s, while Santana continued his route jazzwards, bringing in guest musicians like Stanley Clarke and Airto Moreira for band albums, and releasing his own albums of improvised duets with fellow Sri Chinmoy devotees, harpist Alice Coltrane and guitarist John McLaughlin.

"Like anything, it was time for them to do their own thing with Journey, and it was time for me to do my own thing," says Carlos. "You have to know when it's time to follow your own voice. We have a gratitude toward each other now because we understand that it took all of us to do it, that none of us did it alone. And whether they liked it or not, I didn't fall off the cliff as soon as they left the band. I maintained a certain standard."

MORE THAN A QUARTER-CENTURY LATER, CARLOS Santana is still trying to maintain a certain standard. The intervening years have seen countless Santana releases – though few, it must be said, pack quite as much punch as those early albums – and various side-projects, while the guitarist has been frequently honoured for both his musical and charitable works. Unlike most rock'n'rollers, he has managed to retain an instinctive grasp of ethical issues, performing at Live Aid, the Moscow Peace Concert and Soledad Prison, and at benefits for Native American rights, Ruben Carter, the Special Olympics and – way back in 1975 – raising funds to make up a shortfall in San Francisco's education budget.

He remains strongly on the side of the people, and occupies an iconic status throughout Central and South America, where he plays to crowds of 90,000 at a time, but won't let himself be associated with politicians. "I have a reputation of not playing for the Pope or the President," he admits. "I've been invited three times to play for Clinton, and I've been invited to play for both the Pope and Castro. I play for the people for free, but I don't want to play for people I don't see eye-to-eye with. If I go to Cuba, I'll play for the people for free, but I don't want to see Castro's soldiers around."

As the '70s slipped into the '80s and then the '90s, however, the shine progressively faded from the Santana imprimatur, until Carlos found himself in the comparative limbo of a Polydor contract, treading



Heavy friends:
Clapton,
Cherry, Hill.

water and wondering what to do. Help arrived in 1995, in the familiar form of Arista boss Clive Davis, who as head of Columbia had originally signed the band back in 1968. "He asked me to call him as soon as I was released from my contract," says Santana, "and when we got together he asked me point blank, 'What is it that Carlos Santana wants to do at this point?' I said I wanted to unify the molecules with the light through music. He said, 'OK, how do you propose to do that?' I said, Well, Coltrane played *My Favorite Things* and *Afro Blue* 'til the day he died, Miles played *Time After Time* and *Human Nature* – it's the same for me as for Barbra Streisand or Frank Sinatra or Miles Davis, we all need a song that grandma and papa and the baby can get off on. Santana will always be two things, the spiritual and the sensual. He said, 'Oh, we can work together!'"

Davis realised that it was necessary to revitalise Santana's image, to plug him into a younger audience, and that the best way to do that was to set the guitarist alongside more contemporary artists.

It didn't prove too difficult: he discovered that Lauryn Hill was a big Santana fan, and put them in touch; Carlos played on her album, and she returned the favour on the eight-minute R&B cut *Do You Like The Way*. Santana then appeared with her at the Grammy Awards, where his old friend Eric Clapton was in the audience. "He called me and said, 'Carlos, I'm going through some changes in my life at the moment, but I'm calling to see if you still hear me on your album – I'd love to play on it, if there's any room for me.' When Eric tells you that, what are you gonna say?"

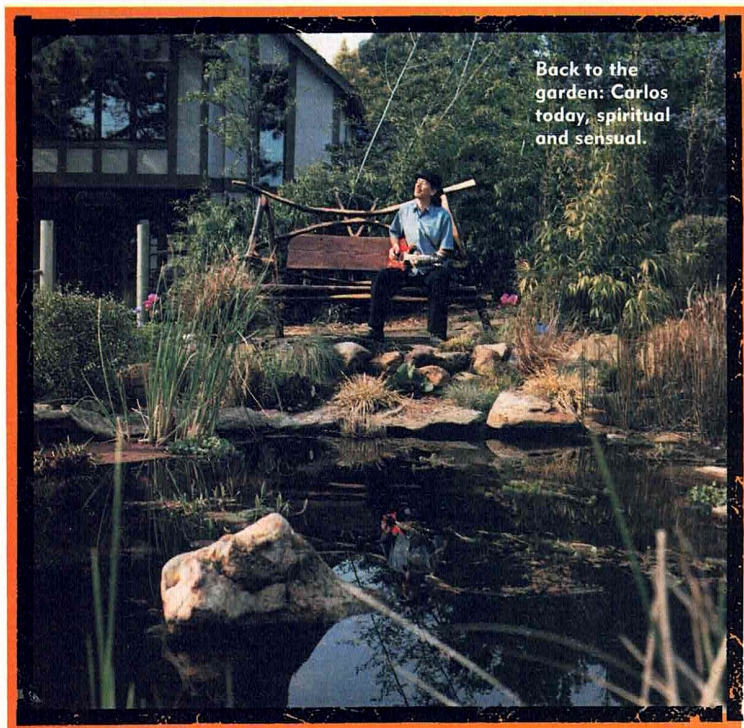
After Lauryn Hill got involved, Wyclef Jean wanted in, too, bringing a breakbeat approach to the track *Maria Maria*; Eagle-Eye Cherry, Dave Matthews, Mexican star Mana, current multi-platinum rap/blues success Everlast, and Rob Thomas from US faves Matchbox 20 all contributed vocals to various tracks, while The Dust Brothers and SD50's Dante Ross added their production skills to the mix.

"All the people who played on the album said they had heard my music before I called them, or that I appeared in their dreams, or something," reveals Santana, never one to undervalue synchronicity. "They knew something was happening before they got the call. It was the same for me: a year ago, my eight-year-old daughter turned me on to Dave Matthews. My children turned me onto The Fugees, too – when I told them I was going to record with Lauryn Hill, they were like, 'Naw you ain't, you're just dad!'"

The resulting album, *Supernatural*, is a diverse, contemporary affair whose strands and styles are bound together by Carlos's trademark guitar sound. "Miles Davis put it beautifully," says Santana. "He said, 'I'm not what I do, I do what I am.' That's exactly right. Music is not notes and licks and chord changes and dorian and arpeggios, music is life. You're supposed to tell a story with this note, so they don't sound like notes, they sound like a mother's hug, like your lover licking you. One note should be able to lift people beyond their boredom or their misery. And if you do hit that note, then for months afterwards people will still be hearing it. That's how it is with Peter Green or Jeff Beck, they play one note and it hits you right in the umbilical cord, and there's no shadow of a doubt that you feel what he's feeling when he plays it."

"The first time I met Eric Clapton was in 1970, at Wally Heider's Studio in San Francisco – but I was too amoebacised to play! I was in such a state I couldn't even pick up my guitar, it was all out of my control. For me, there's a supreme balance when you play an instrument, and you have to be able to touch five things in one note: soul, heart, mind, body and your *cojones*. If I can't do that, I'd rather not play. Because if you don't feel it, why should your audience? We still love Marvin Gaye and Bob Marley and Jimi Hendrix and John Coltrane, because there's a sound vibration, a resonance, that rearranges our molecular structure to the point where your hair stands up, you laugh and cry, you feel like touching bodies, horny, all at the same time. And that's not entertainment. It's a whole other kind of spirit."

Paul Bergen (2), George Chin/Redferns



Back to the
garden: Carlos
today, spiritual
and sensual.