

Latin Music

HOLIDAY EDITION

AND ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE INTERNATIONAL

Carlos Santana

Bridging the past to
a supernatural future

cypress hill

Cool, confident, and
their cup runneth over

Kumbia Kings

A.B. Quintanilla surfaces with
an exciting new sound

LOS LOBOS

Cooking up savory side orders without
skimping on the main dish

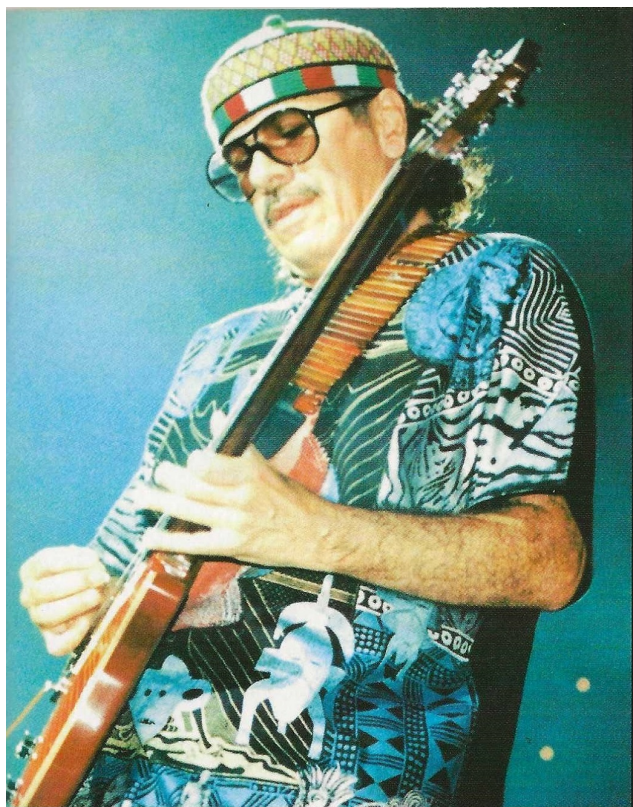
MARC ANTHONY

Meshing the energy of the Puerto Rican
tropics and the urban streets of the U.S.

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DECEMBER JANUARY 2000



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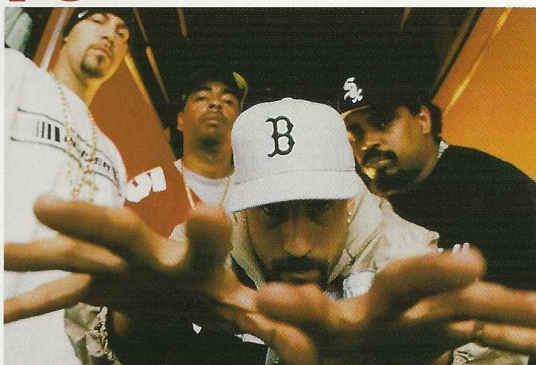
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T R A N

WITH HELP FROM SOME BRIGHT STARS OF THE

S C E N D

PRESENT, LATIN ROCK LEGEND CARLOS SANTANA

E N C E

BRIDGES THE PAST TO A SUPERNATURAL FUTURE

"We got one more tune for you," Carlos Santana croons to the capacity crowd, counting off *Soul Sacrifice* with hand claps. That said in his throaty purr, he doesn't sing, but plays: Staring up to the sun, eyes closed in reverence, he channels transmissions from on high like a bushy-headed Bob Marley.

This day, he sports a thin goatee, cutting past his Latino mustache like a switchblade in *West Side Story*. Though he famously covets custom Paul Reed Smith axes, this day his searing solos emanate from a stock Gibson, such as the one played by AC/DC guitar god Angus Young. In jeans, a brown suede vest buttoned across his bare chest, he wails up the neck as if possessed, stoking 72nd notes like a flamenco zap gun, chugging at rhythms that bring to mind his classic-rock staple *Black Magic Woman*.

With a cowbell, he joins in the percussion love jam incited by the conga player with taped hands, Afro, and Ron Jeremy mustache. By that time, Santana's white-boy drummer is off rocking like Ginger Baker. Organ pumping – hippie girls agog in the audience, collective jaws in the dirt – the band performs a dead-on stop, but they

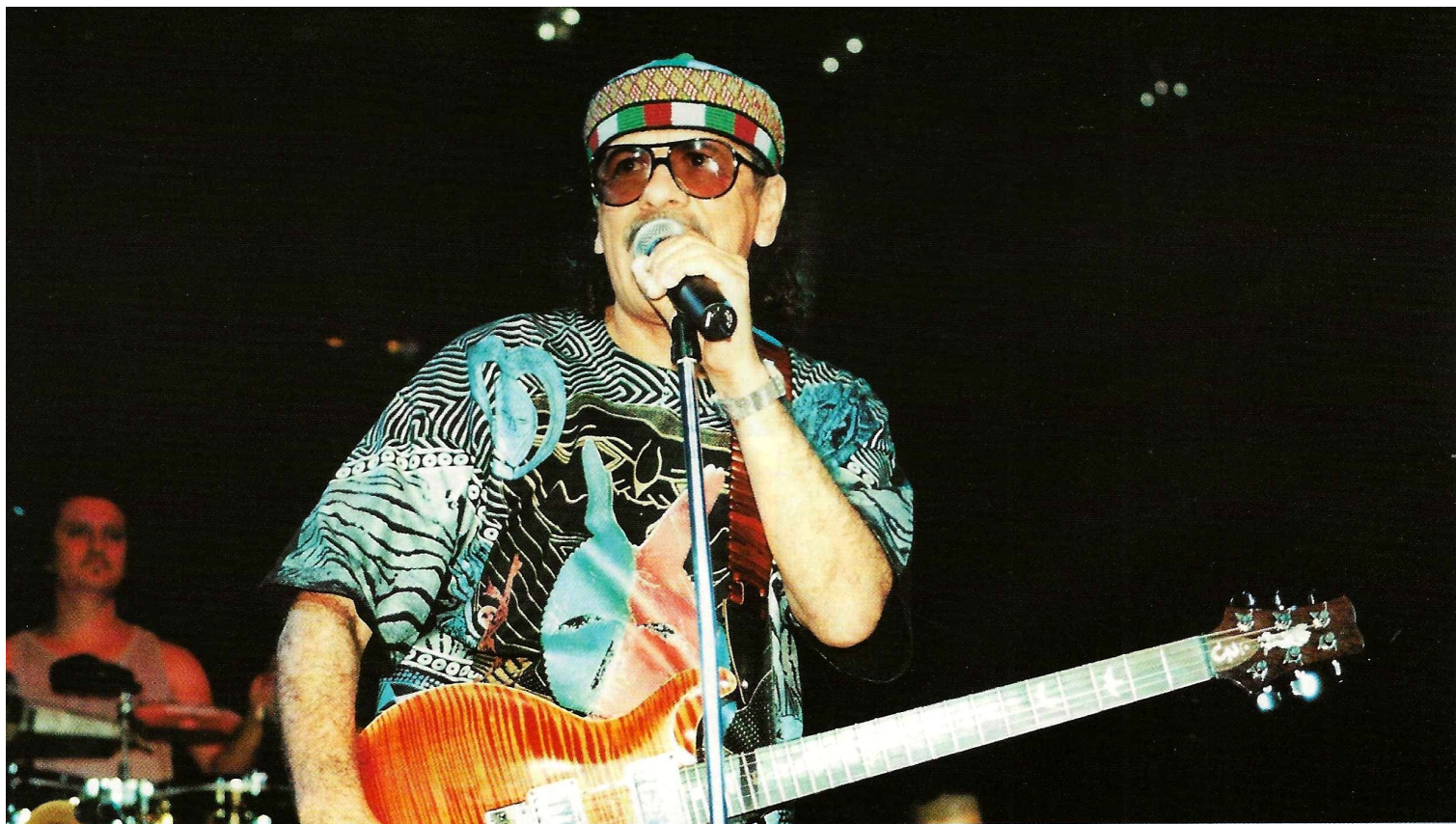
aren't finished. The moment grows pregnant with pause, then the Santana band launches full-on back in, guitar screeching and the whole hillside lifting off in a sweaty fury of jamming transcendence.

The moment is 1969, and for the earthy original Woodstock, Santana's riveting performance braced like a cleansing. The Who blew their minds, Jimi Hendrix incited an electric revolution, but it was Carlos Santana who set the muddy masses writhing in hip-swinging pagan ecstasy. It stands as one of the most free-world rockin' moments in the entire "Three Days Of Peace And Music."

Sandwiched in the Academy-Award-winning concert documentary between nude bathers, an interview with chief of police ("These kids ... they can't be questioned as good Americans"), and the buck-chopped Sly of Sly and the Family Stone, saying, "Most of us need approval before we can let it all hang down," Santana sounded like nothing in the rock lexicon. With primal Afro-Cuban rhythms and a fiery guitar that languished in sustained notes, Santana's band bridged more cultural boundaries in one performance than an entire decade of British invaders.

STORY BY BILLY MILLER

PHOTOS BY ANNETTE CRUZ



DIVERSITY AS A SIGNATURE

Such diversity became his signature. Though already a staple on the thriving San Francisco music scene, Woodstock propelled Santana to international rock renown — an improbable fate for the Mexican-born son of a mariachi violinist who came into his own playing guitar on the bustling Tijuana bar strip. His band's first three albums — *Santana*, *Abraxas*, *Santana III* — went double-platinum, quadruple-platinum, and double-platinum, respectively.

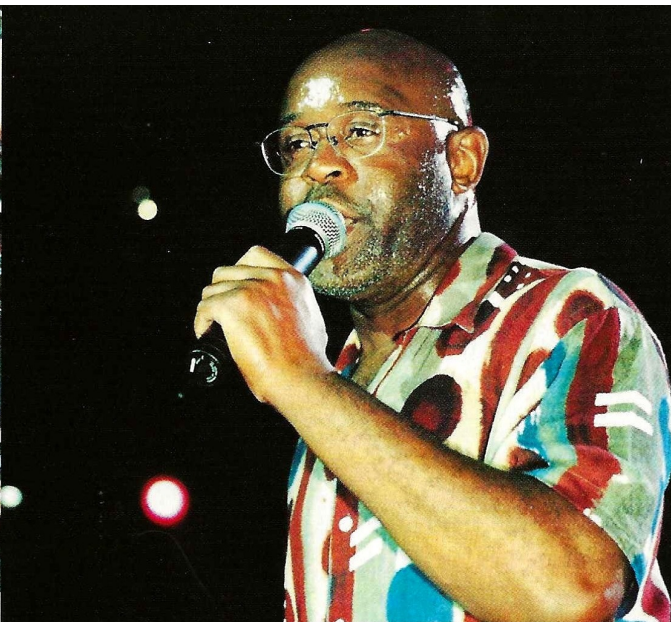
Now, today — Grammys, Bammies, a Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame induction, a star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame, 40 million albums sold — Santana reunites with Clive Davis, who signed him to his first recording contract 30 years ago. The result is *Supernatural*, a spooky melding of Santana's impassioned guitar sound to the contributions of some current chart-reigning Carlos admirers, set to a zesty Latin beat.

It's as if time has accelerated so much at century's end that the present caught the past by the tail. Here's '60s-icon Carlos Santana with a video played on MTV as much as VH-1. The spicy, mid-tempo Latin single *Smooth*, sung by Matchbox 20 heartthrob Rob Thomas, has the new disc hovering on the charts. Five weeks in the Billboard top five and counting, a 51-year-old guitar hero is schooling the Backstreet Boys and driving Britney Spears crazy. What's interesting about *Supernatural* is not how the young Turks liven things, but how Carlos Santana's sincere, down-to-earth reputation serves to produce genuine collaboration. The resulting mix of artistry shows not only what new tricks old guitar dogs can learn, but what Santana teaches their generation about making music from the heart that can span cultural boundaries. Past and present collide again.

Love of My Life, for instance, features the quirky vocals of Dave Matthews, who routinely sells out shows of his own. But it's Matthews' Band drummer Carter Beauford and Santana's meaty guitar line — sounding classic and new at the same time — that drives the ditty. *Put Your Lights On*, a haunting gem written by former House of Pain rapper Everlast (the first song he wrote after open-heart surgery), shows that Santana recognizes the simple power of the lyrics and arrangement enough not to overplay. Instead, he sprinkles his guitar seasonings deftly from the background — how many legends know enough to stay out of the way?

For his part, Santana showers praise and thanks on his contributors. "You can really feel God's hand in this," he offers. "Usually, when you do a CD with so many incredibly talented people, there's no glue, there's no cohesiveness. But on *Supernatural*, everyone involved, from the musicians to the engineers, understood the intentions, motives, and purpose of making this."

It would appear so. For his playing on her multi-Grammy-winning *Miseducation*, Lauryn Hill returns the favor, producing, writing, and rapping on *Do You Like The Way*, with Cee-Lo of Goodie Mob. Rather than mating hot-selling rap to hot-selling Latin, the track has a lively mix of its own that is somehow neither but both. The same goes with Hill's Fugee counterpart Wyclef Jean on *Maria Maria*, and Eagle-Eye Cherry and the Dust Brothers on *Wishing It Was*. And lest old school fans be put off, Santana does some New Age-y tracks and noodles around the fret board with Eric Clapton on the closer, *The Calling*.



SUPERNATURAL IS A SPOOKY MELDING OF SANTANA'S IMPASSIONED GUITAR SOUND TO THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SOME CURRENT CHART-REIGNING CARLOS ADMIRERS, AND ALL SET TO A ZESTY LATIN BEAT.

It's a singular effort that cements Santana's Dude reputation as solidly as his status as a rock legend. There is too much real music here, from too many different kinds of rock stars to think otherwise. Says Smooth vocalist Thomas, "Somewhere in the recording, it really hit me I was actually jamming with Santana. As a musician, songwriter, and a lover of music, something like this has made me better. To spend five minutes with Carlos is to look into someone who is without pretension and one who is pure talent. He is as fresh today as he was in 1968. He matters even more, in fact."

HOW HE DOES IT

"Good evening. Buenos noches," Carlos Santana coos in his throaty purr. He's downright chatty tonight, speaking to the capacity crowd in English and Spanish. It could be his appearance on "Live At The Hard Rock," or one of the hundred concerts he still plays a year, new release or no. After playing to an estimated 20 million people around the globe, from a jazz tour with saxophonist Wayne Shorter to an appearance in 1987 at the Cold War-thawing, joint U.S./Soviet Rock n' Roll Summit, Santana's music is rooted in live performance.

But this is the New '60s: The rows crowded with happy hippies come to hear the umpteenth rendering of Oye Como Va, or Black Magic Woman, or Evil Ways, are now swelled with Latinos young and old, as well as curious music fans of all types drawn in by opening acts Ozomatli or Maná, who've stayed to see a real '60s relic.

But this outing, Santana has the new tunes in place of the warhorses. Prowling the stage end to end like a jungle cat, he's got

video vixens up on a moon screen, skipping in the village to Smooth's boppy shag. Forceful, he plucks jazzy lightning, while his three percussionists put up a wall of beats that open up your chest cavity. A Supernatural mural lights the stage in a swirl of purple, red, yellow, green, pink, and turquoise. People sprint up through the reserved section to take snapshots. Their own mediated moments. A personal visitation.

He settles in a slow ballad, and the standing reserved section sits, revealing just how many were sneaking up illegally from the back pews. They all look around sheepishly, like border runners caught in the headlights of La Migra, and squeeze onto each other's laps.

They're not going anywhere — not through all the percolating grooves or the booty shaking that erupts when he finally drops into Black Magic Woman, when all the women who fancy themselves thus, get theirs. They dance like lunatics, pulsing when Oye Como Va, breaks into Never Go Back to Georgia. Suficiente? Not until Mana is invited up to recreate their cool Latin Supernatural track, Corazon Espinado. By the time they're done, there must be 30 people on stage, soaking it up. Like something Phish guitarist Trey Anastasio said Carlos told him, "The guitar is a hose, the notes are the water, and the audience is full of flowers."

Santana also told Anastasio that the best way to get your head together after a rock-star tour is to go home and garden — literally, put your hands in the dirt. The crowds he draws when he plays guitar want to hitch his ride to the Promised Land. But I'd bet Carlos Santana would say you can get there just by listening. **LM**