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SANTANA'S SUPERNATURAL KEYBOARDS

Thirty years of incredible keys, as recalled by the B-3 giants who helped make it happen

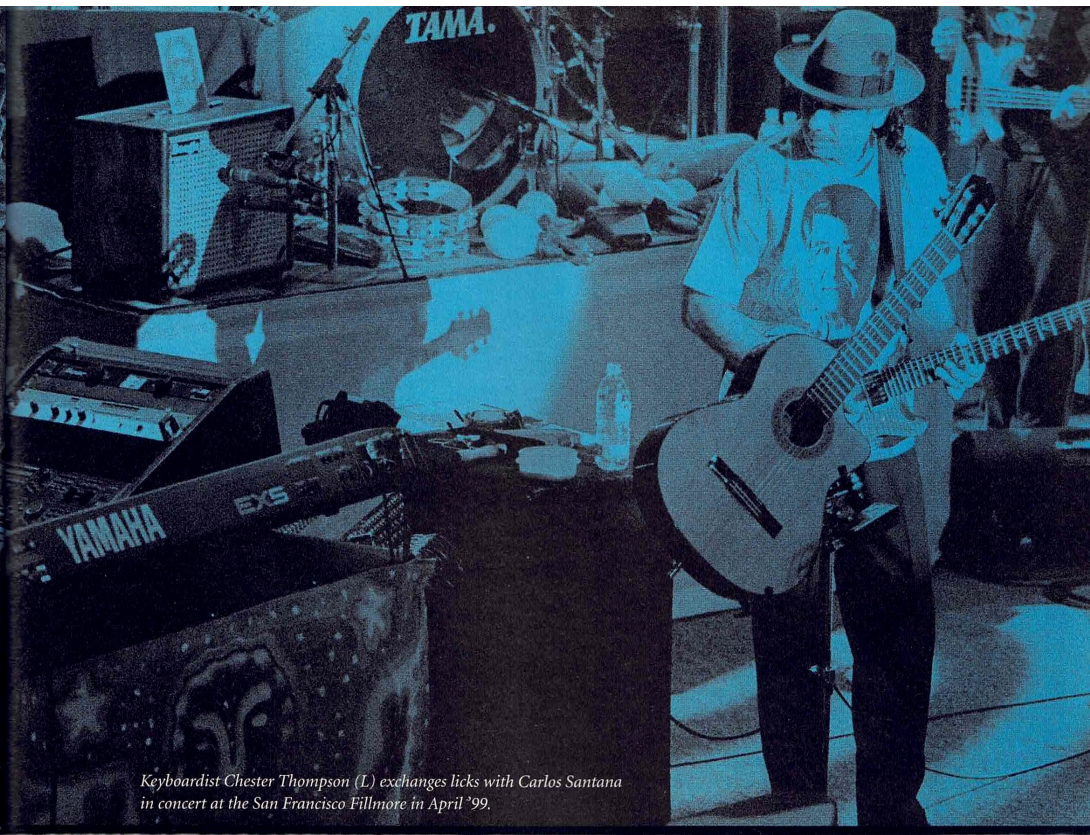
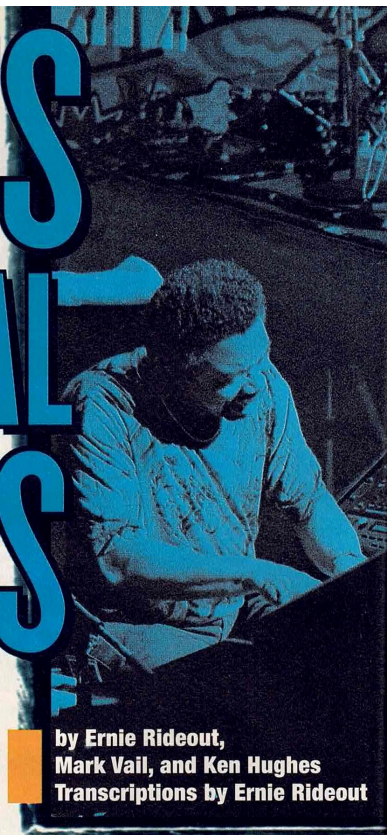
by Ernie Rideout,
Mark Vail, and Ken Hughes
Transcriptions by Ernie Rideout

For over 30 years, Santana has rocked the world with a Latin-inspired sound that constantly strives for growth and evolution, yet always is recognizable. The most consistent element over the years, of course, has been Carlos Santana himself, whose soulful, singing guitar style is identifiable in a heartbeat, and whose vision of peace has guided the band's direction. A phalanx of Latin percussionists has also helped forge the band's identity over the years.

But at the heart of Santana has always been a close partnership between Carlos and a particular associate with a predilection for playing the daylight out of the Hammond B-3. In the late '60s and early '70s, it was Gregg Rolie who shared composition duties and helped pick up the commemorative platinum record plaques, as well as being inducted into the Rock and Roll

Hall of Fame along with the rest of the original lineup. With dazzling, jazz-based chops, Tom Coster held up his end of the globetrotting, chart-topping Santana band into the '80s. And who shares responsibility for the domination of both the Grammys and the pop charts by the band's latest CD, *Supernatural*? Chester Thompson, who joined Santana 17 years ago after nearly a decade of pumping out Oakland funk with Tower Of Power.

Many other keyboardists have left their mark on the sound of Santana, either onstage or on record, and you can find out who they are in the Selected Discography on page 40. But with their incredible chops, dedication, and inventiveness, the three players profiled here are the ones whose musicianship and spirit have done the most to create one of the most distinctive ensemble sounds in popular music. ERNIE RIDEOUT



Keyboardist Chester Thompson (L) exchanges licks with Carlos Santana in concert at the San Francisco Fillmore in April '99.

CHESTER THOMPSON

As the longest-running member of Santana besides Carlos, Chester Thompson has an important role in the stability of the band's sound and in the day-to-day operations of the organization. In fact, when we caught up with the characteristically modest virtuoso at the prestigious Effland Studios in New York City, he was handling the mixing duties for an upcoming Santana TV special that will air on the Fox network. "I'm Carlos's creative partner," he admits, almost reluctant to seem more important than he believes due. "Carlos and I have written a lot together, and had quite a few successes. I have a good sense of what Carlos is trying to achieve, and what he wants out of the other musicians. So I'm looked on as a music director, too."

In the past, Chester has also acted as a co-producer on Santana's recordings. But not this time. "Making *Supernatural* was different from how we've made other albums," he explains. "This time, we had a lot of different philosophies that came to the table with one objective: Santana. Much of the material was recorded by the writers using their own troops. Wyclef Jean recorded 'Maria Maria' with sequencers. No one in the band played on that song besides Carlos. Dave Matthews used his own musicians on 'Love of My Life.' On 'Smooth,' though, the whole band played, sticking pretty close to the demo [see sidebar, "Smooth Accomplish," page 36].

"I co-wrote 'The Call' with Carlos for Eric Clapton. That was interesting. Carlos had this groove that we'd been jamming on, as well as a lot of other things, but he didn't know which ones Eric would be inspired by. So we threw a lot of stuff on the table. What worked was the drum loop from the jam, which we fed into the control room. We just started jamming on it. Afterwards we attached a ballad that Carlos and I had written, and spliced it in with Pro Tools. We did some editing, came up with some vocals, and boom. It was done."

Generally, when the Santana band writes a tune, it comes from playing together. "Sometimes it comes from a concert. We often like to 'go fishing' — just create something onstage. Sometimes you get a fish, other times you only bring up the bait. But a lot of songs were created that way. Whenever you write like that, though, you need a melody to latch onto. A lot of times the melody can dictate how you approach the harmony."

Covering the Parts

Thinking back on his transition from Tower to Santana, Chester says, "Carlos didn't expect me to be on top of Afro-Cuban piano and rhythms when I joined. I've learned the style by being exposed to it in this band, and by listening to people like Rebeca Mauleon-Santana. But even if you have experience with Latin music, with someone like [percussionist] Armando Peraza in the band, you go to the source for information. No matter what kind of music you're playing, it's important to honor it and to give it as much legitimacy as possible by educating yourself about it. Understanding where



Chester onstage with Tower Of Power in December '76.



It just keeps getting better: Chester with Santana in April '99.

each idiom is coming from while treating it as your own is the only way you can really perform, whether it's reggae, jazz, delta blues, whatever. I try to honor all the idioms that way, so that when I participate in it, you get a sense that I come from there. I'm like a sponge. I want to soak it all in and be able to use it where I can express myself in another way."

Joining a band with a string of hits can be a challenge. Just imagine playing the intro to "Black Magic Woman" exactly the same for 17 years. Not surprisingly, Chester assumes the mantle of responsibility graciously.

"Keyboard parts come about because of the songs themselves," he explains. "A lot of the keyboard parts identify the song, they establish the song. Hopefully, the parts I create become such an identifiable part of the song that that's all someone needs to hear to identify it. I play songs like 'Black Magic Woman' just like Gregg played it. The only way you can really do justice to the song is to keep it close to its original state. Not only the keyboard parts; everybody in the band plays it as they played it."

"Tom Coster was in the band when I first joined, and he had his own approach to some of the old material. So on 'Europa,' for example, I approach it more like Tom did. Over the years, I've developed more of my own approach to most of the songs."

There have been other musical challenges for Chester besides learning Latin styles. In 1988, Santana recorded and toured with composer and saxophonist Wayne Shorter. "I think of things like this more as opportunities to be inspired, rather than as challenges," he says. "But this was one of the heights of my musical career. I'd been listening to him since the Art Blakey and Lee Morgan days in the late '50s and early '60s. Then to actually get the opportunity to play with him, to be able to share his new music and participate in its creation — it was great. We played only his music. We had to read it; he writes everything out in these really long charts. Even Carlos had to have charts onstage. It was a real education."

On that same tour, Chester experienced one of those classic road challenges. "I was using rented gear, which was a problem," he recalls. "Finding a Leslie that sounded good was impossible. So they ended up stacking a lot of different speaker cabinets behind me, about ten feet tall, and sure enough, one of them fell over on me while I was playing. I didn't even flinch," he chuckles, "I just kept on playing."

The Hammond Connection

There is a critical aspect of the music of Santana that has nothing to do with particular idioms. "Santana is an organ band," says Chester, "and that probably has a lot to do with why I'm there. Even though we've got all these

labels, Latin rock or whatever they want to call it, the organ, guitar, and congas are still the main elements of the band, just like it was for Gregg.

"The B-3 is the most inspiring instrument to play, for me. I've been playing it since I was a kid. I like being able to carry my own bass, to control all the dynamics, to control the whole picture. It allows you to be three people. It's physical. I enjoy playing everything, but I spend a lot of time on the B-3."

Chester's phenomenal mastery of the pedals and highly percussive style were a key element in the sound of Tower Of Power. "I started out kicking bass," he recalls. "I was taught to play organ in church using my feet. I thought everybody did it. So when I listened to all these great organists like Jimmy Smith, I learned all the bass parts with my foot, no matter how fast or difficult. Then when I finally had a chance to see those guys, I said, 'Hey, wait a minute . . .,' since most of them just use their left hands for the bass. I learned to do both."

"When I was coming up, I was the bass player in most of the bands I was in! I use my foot the way an electric bass player uses their thumb or fingertips: just for the attack. I think Jimmy Smith and those guys were trying to duplicate the sound of an acoustic bass, but I was after the Fender bass, too."

Got No One to Depend On?

Learn more about how Santana's keyboardists do their thing in the following articles from previous issues of *Keyboard*:

"Tom Coster Reverts," Nov. '98.

"Gregg Rolie Works His Black Magic," April '98.

"Tom Coster on Modern Synth Comping," June '96.

"Road Report: Chester Thompson," April '96.

"The Heart of Salsa," by Rebeca Mauleon-Santana, Jan. '96.

"On Track and Under Budget," by Tom Coster, Sept. '91.

"A Private Lesson with Tom Coster," May '87.

"When we used to do 'Squib Cakes' in Tower, Rocco [Prestia, bassist] would drop out and I'd take over the bass with my feet, and when I'd drop out, he'd take over again. We did that all the time onstage, and on a lot of those albums. We tried to do it naturally so you couldn't tell. We wanted it to sound like one instrument. The [Keyboard Products modified] organ I use now is set up so that the bass is powerful; I can take over for Benny [Rietveld, bassist with Santana], too."

Centered around that B-3, the rest of Chester's current rig includes a Yamaha EX5, E-mu E4, Kurzweil K2000, Korg M1 Rex, Yamaha A5000, and Roland JV-1080. "I use the E4 for my piano sound. I don't use a real piano onstage because I don't want to go through any physical or mental adjustment when I switch to the action on a B-3, or on a synth. It's easier in performance if the actions are all the same. Every now and then a song will come up that will require me to use some sort of sample. When we play 'Maria Maria,' I do have a loop that I use for the beginning that I sampled from the hip-hop version of the tune — but just the first four bars of it. Other than that, we don't use sequencers, or any kind of automation. Everything I do is in real time, and the way we record is real time. What I play onstage is what I played in the studio, and vice-versa. Strings up, piano on, switch to the B-3 in the middle of the bridge — all that I do in real time, recording or onstage."

Itaal Shur: "Smooth" Accomplice

Matchbox 20 frontman Rob Thomas's name usually comes up when the topic is Santana's megahit "Smooth," but part of the story is largely unknown. Thomas was aided and abetted by former Groove Collective member Itaal Shur, whose co-writing credits also include "Ascension" from Maxwell's 1996 *Urban Hang Suite*.

Shur comes from a musical family. His father is a composer, and his brother, when he saw young Itaal's interest piqued by '80s pop radio, schooled Itaal on the Beatles before he would allow him to absorb another drop of the current flow.

"He wanted to show me the real deal first, and I'm happy for that," Shur says.

Tipped by his manager that Arista was still seeking material for *Supernatural*, Shur put on his poker face. "I didn't have any material but I said I did. I ran through my library inside my head, picked a chord, made a bass line, got a percussionist to come over, and did the track. It was inspired by War's 'Lowrider' and Donny Hathaway's 'The Ghetto.' I've always loved that Latin-rock montuno feel.

"I programmed the beat on [an Akai] MPC2000," he continues, "and there was a little breakbeat in there too. I sampled the percussionist. The sound of those old Ampeg electric upright basses that the Latin groups used to use was what I had in mind for the bass line, and I got pretty close to that sound with my [Studio Electronics] SE-1. I played piano and guitar parts on a [Roland] JV-1080."

Shur says the CD version of "Smooth" stuck remarkably close to his demo, preserving many of his production touches, the most obvious example being the "telephone EQ" used on the vocal. Santana even played the same opening solo that multi-instrumentalist Shur had suggested.

Upon hearing his demo, Arista responded to his manager with urgent interest while Shur was traveling in Brazil. Arista also wanted some revisions, so Shur got on the next plane to New York and went to work with Thomas. "We really got along. Rob's a great hard worker and really down to earth. I had written lyrics and a melody, but the label wanted a rewrite. Rob had verses, and we rewrote the chorus until it fit them."

One thing's for sure: Shur will be busy for quite a while, with three film soundtracks in the works and upcoming projects with artists as diverse as Lisa Loeb, Brian Setzer, and Ricky Martin. For now, check out Shur's *Big Muff*, on indie label Maxi records. **NEN HUGHES**



Spirituality

The direction of the Santana band has always been influenced by Carlos's own spiritual journey. In the early '70s, he became a disciple of Sri Chinmoy, and eventually added the spiritual title "Devadip" to his name. Though he no longer does so, music and spirituality are still closely linked in the band, and so it is for Chester as well. "My upbringing was in church, and I've had my own spiritual experiences," he explains. "Those are built into me. When I play, that's what I feel. I've always felt that way, way before Tower Of Power. I don't want to carry a flag to let people know this — just as long as I know it when I play. It's part of my make-up; it's what allows me to play a certain way. Playing from your heart, for me, is very important. Having the spiritual connection makes it even more so. As far as Carlos is concerned, that's where we're connecting."

"Carlos believes in humanity, in all people. It bothers him to see people deprived, to see the table unbalanced. To hear that onstage is a rare thing in this profession, at this level: a person who is reaching out to all people, not just trying to sell more records or to inspire anyone sexually. The most important thing to him is connecting people together. It's his way of letting everyone know that in his mind, everyone is one, we are all the same. I tip my hat to him. It takes a lot of courage for a person in his position to get up and speak about things that our industry doesn't necessarily embrace."

While he's quietly proud of the runaway success of *Supernatural* and grateful for the attention the band has received as a result, Chester notes that it hasn't really changed life for the band. "We've always been touring," he points out, "We tour six to seven months of the year, every year. As long as the *Supernatural* singles keep coming out, we'll keep touring to support it. After that, we'll tour to support the next album."

As to what the future holds for Santana, Chester's hopes are as you'd expect: modest. "It's hard to top nine Grammys," he says, "but I'd just like this to go on as it always has. As long as we're all healthy, as long as we continue to write good music, that's my hope. I hope that we can always maintain that level. For me, it's always felt that way, long before *Supernatural*. Otherwise, I wouldn't have been here for 17 years." **ERNIE RIDEOUT**

TOM COSTER

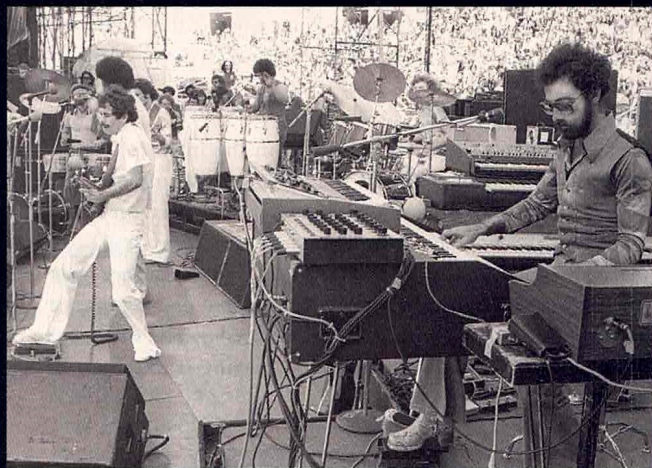
Tom Coster is a musician's musician. He should be familiar to long-time *Keyboard* readers, thanks in part to his popular Rock Technique column, which ran from June '79 to June '85. Among those he's recorded with are John McLaughlin, Patty Labelle, Third Eye Blind, Joe Satriani, Boz Scaggs, Larry Coryell, and Frank Gambale. He also manned the keys in the all-star house band at *Guitar Player's* 25th anniversary concert in San Francisco in 1992. Tom currently divides his time between Vital Information and Yo Miles, but what really put him on the map were the eight years he spent with Carlos Santana, taking over for Gregg Rolie from '72 through '78, then returning for later shifts in '83 and '86.

Prior to that, Tom played a lot of club dates. "I ended up going from playing jazz and soul on organ in clubs to doing one-night concerts with a band called the Loading Zone," he recalls. "With that band I had to learn how to play rock organ. It took me a couple of years, but I was able to make the transition."

"It was the voice of the Hammond B-3 that really got me that gig. Carlos used to hear me play live with a guitarist named Gabor Szabo. When we'd come to San Francisco to play, Carlos would usually be the first guy there and he'd stay until the very end, admiring the band's performance. That's how I eventually got the gig."

Don't Share Drawbars

"I was fairly versatile at that point," Tom continues, "so I was able to play with a lot of different bands and fit right in. But when Carlos asked me to join



Tom Coster (R) wails on his modified B-3 with Santana in '77.



Tom in the studio in June '98.

his band, Santana was going into more of a jazz format. Because of that they decided to call on keyboard players who could fit that bill, and Richard Kermode and I were the guys they chose. Richard was a very good jazz and Latin player who played organ with Janis Joplin. He passed away about two years ago. We complemented each other really well, plus we had the same keyboard setups: Rhodes, Clavinet, and Hammond organ. The longer we played together, the more apparent it became that I should primarily be the organist, even though we rotated all the time. Carlos felt my organ playing was more of what the band needed, and Richard was mostly playing Rhodes. Eventually I became Santana's sole keyboard player."

Two keyboardists in Santana? I've been a fan since "Evil Ways" and the first album, but had never known that. "[Drummer] Michael Shrieve and Carlos were big fans of Miles Davis, and Miles's band had two keyboard players at the time. So Carlos wanted to have two keyboard players as well." See the Selected Discography (page 40) for more information on additional players.

Technique & Favorite Axes

Of all he did with Santana, Tom is most proud of his interaction with the guitarist. "On an emotional level, it seemed as if he and I were coming from the same place. Rather than just play sounds when he played, I would listen carefully to his phrasing and answer it. It wasn't just comping; I was caressing his guitar sound. The way the organ and guitar would weave through the music was often very sensuous. They became the two important voices in the band.

"On more high-energy tunes, my custom B-3 — which I purchased in '66 or '67 and eventually sent to Keyboard Products for modification [see "The Soul of the Santana Sound," at right] — had presets that made it sound a lot like a synthesizer. It allowed me to rise above the occasion, get slightly more than the generic B-3 sound, and keep up with Carlos's solo guitar on the searing tunes. When I left Santana, I got many compliments from people who said they missed the way I complemented his guitar sound with the organ and the different types of instrumental conversations we had together.

"I was very lucky because I got to play a lot of solos. At the same time I was careful not to put too much of myself into the band where it might take it somewhere that it didn't belong. A keyboard player can change the sound of the band tremendously. Santana had already been very successful before I joined the band, so my goal was to complement it at the same time that I created my own identifiable sound."

Tom also developed his organ technique: "I came mainly from a jazz background where I'd been playing a lot of left-hand bass. Since both of my hands were busy, I was somewhat limited as to what I could do with the B-3's drawbars. With Santana I learned how to manipulate the drawbars, especially since we were playing a lot of music from *Caravanserai*. But

you have to know when to pull the drawbars. It has to be synonymous with phrases: the end of phrases, the beginning of phrases, swirling in the middle of phrases. One of the great players who did a lot of that was Larry Young, but I also very much loved the way Gregg Rolie used the drawbars on *Caravanserai*. It was absolutely ingenious and incredibly creative."

While the B-3 is undoubtedly Tom's favorite axe, he experimented with numerous synths during his Santana tenure. "Most of the gear we used we'd seen played by other musicians such as Joe Zawinul, so we knew what to expect once we got them. In the case of the Minimoog, Carlos and I saw Jan Hammer play it with the Mahavishnu Orchestra, so I had to get that. We had a lot of trouble with it holding up on the road, though. I usually had two or three Minimoogs and two ARP Odysseys onstage, because they weren't roadworthy in those days. There were times with the Memorymoog — which I absolutely loved — when [keyboard tech] Brian Bell and I would have it ripped apart to the extent we didn't know whether we could get it back together in time to play. We'd actually hold the show up for 15 to 20 minutes so we could put it back together and hope that it would turn on."

Santana's Influence

The most important lesson Tom learned from Carlos Santana may have been about music itself. "Carlos taught me to write and play music from my heart rather than thinking about it in an academic way — considering harmony, chords, melody, and modes. I was one of the more educated musicians in the band, but I was working with highly successful people who looked at music through different eyes. They painted pictures in their

The Soul of the Santana Sound Rolls On: Keyboard Products Hammond & Leslie Modifications

We were saddened to learn in March '99 about the untimely death of Bill Beer of Keyboard Products in Southern California. Bill was one of the most renowned and respected Hammond and Leslie technicians in the industry. The Santana band was but one of his many customers. Gregg Rolie, Tom Coster, and Chester Thompson all have played (and continue to play) B-3s and Leslies modified by Keyboard Products.

As we went to press, we learned that Bill's torch has been passed to Scott Schwam. Under a new company name, Beer Music Technology, Scott offers support for previous Keyboard Products customers, carries Bill's custom accessories, and will continue the business by restoring and modifying Hammonds and Leslies. You can reach him at 877-464-2323 or check out his website at www.keyboardproducts.com. MARK VAIL

minds. Carlos would often ask me to play as if I was seeing a beautiful sunrise or sunset. He made me realize how a chord might make someone feel. It was important to approach music by applying and implying moods and pictures to it: How does that harmony fit a particular picture you're trying to create for a listener? What does that progression mean to a listener? Does it mean purple? Does it mean red? Does it paint a picture of water? Does it paint a picture of the burning sun over a desert? Carlos taught me alternative ways of approaching music.

"That also translated into the way I program synthesizers. I don't look in the window to see how many increments I'm turning up the filter cutoff. I close my eyes and turn knobs until a sound that has an effect on me emerges. When people think too anally about settings, their patches sound very generic and not necessarily musical."

Spirituality

During the time that Carlos was a disciple of Sri Chinmoy and referred to himself by the spiritual title "Devadip," he recorded an intense improvisational album called *Love Devotion Surrender*. Also on the album were "Mahavishnu" John McLaughlin, Khalid Yasin (alias Larry Young) on organ, and others including both former *Keyboard* columnist Billy Cobham and Jan Hammer on drums.

Did Carlos's spirituality have any effect on Tom? "It did, yeah. As time went by and I eventually became a co-bandleader along with Carlos, it was his and his wife's wishes that I become a disciple because they felt I was a good role model. I was the only one in the band who was legally married, I had two young kids, and I was in the music business for no other reason than because I loved music.

"However, it wasn't something I really wanted to do. Even though I consider myself a spiritual person, I didn't feel I needed it on the same level that Carlos did. I didn't need a guru. My spirituality came in other ways, a lot of it from my family. After about two years of pressure, I ended up becoming a disciple. Interestingly enough, that was one of the developments that forced me to leave the band after six years. I thought it was wonderful for Carlos and his wife, because obviously they felt it was helping them. But I didn't feel the need to be that involved to where I was always flying to New York [to meet with Sri Chinmoy] and constantly touring with the band, which meant I was away from my family too often.

"It was really difficult for me to tell the Santanas I didn't embrace that belief any longer. Not to put it down, but it was a little much for me. Rather

than talk about it, I just left. I don't know whether they realized that was a reason for my leaving. They're no longer with the guru either."

Covering the Parts

Everyone knows the right-hand line in the intro to "Black Magic Woman" alternates between B and C (see Example 4, page 42). Everyone, that is, but Tom Coster, as demonstrated on *Moonflower*, where he always played the C and never threw in a B. "I never played it right," he admits with a laugh. "I didn't bother listening to the original, it seemed so simple. So I started playing it wrong, but nobody ever said anything. It's not like it takes a lot of chops to play it right. No one said shit, so I kept playing it like that for eight years!" MARK VAIL

GREGG ROLIE

The co-inventor of the Santana sound currently divides his time between cruising Southern California back roads in his custom hotrods and putting the finishing touches on a new solo album. Featuring Adrian Areas, the son of legendary Santana percussionist Chepito, and former Santana bassist Alphonso Johnson, the disc bears the mark of Gregg's years with the old Santana band. "I don't need a producer telling me what I ought to be playing at this late date," he jokes. "After 30 years, I think I've figured it out."

Indeed. After creating a string of platinum hits with Santana, Gregg went on to form Journey with Santana bandmate Neal Schon. But for all of the changes since then, Gregg Rolie is still close to the music he made over 30 years ago.

Fusing the Styles

Though an integral part of the fusion of rock and Latin styles that was the signature of the Santana band, Gregg downplays his familiarity with Afro-Cuban piano. The mixture of styles came about purely as a consequence of the particular individuals who made up the band, not by design. "I never did any traditional Afro-Cuban playing," he says. "For instance, on 'Guajira' [on *Santana III*], they brought in Mario Ochoa, who could really do that well. I played my own style of what that stuff felt like

Gregg Rolie with Santana in the early '70s.



Gregg in his home studio in early '98.



to me, but he came in to play the solo. I played rhythm piano and organ, which was done as everything was done in Santana: by ear.

"Chepito was the guy who could really play things traditionally, but even he didn't do so most of the time. The rest of us played what we thought would fit. Carlos was very aware of Latin rhythms, but we were playing a hybrid. It never was exact. [Drummer] Mike Shrieve just played what he played, too. Chepito, in my estimation, was the best musician in the whole group. His beauty was that he was a street player. He did things that nobody had ever heard before, and he could adapt traditional elements to what we were doing. We were in New York once, and we stopped into a Latin club where Tito Puente was playing. Chepito got up onstage with Tito and blew his doors off. He played things that were not out of the book. He's possessed when he plays. You can see it in his eyes.

"Even on 'Oye Como Va' [*Abraxas*], the keyboard intro was really imitating the horn section on Tito's recording. In Santana, we had one keyboard player, so we used that one rhythm and made things happen with it. Chepito might put some fills against what I was playing that were totally different from the Tito version. It might have been a traditional Latin fill, or it might have been something entirely new. We didn't think of it in those terms, we just did whatever worked.

"It was so free-form. That original band created a style of music that no one else had ever played before. It wasn't Latin, it wasn't rock, it wasn't R&B: It was what it was. It was played by this certain group of guys, based off the energy more than according to what was correct and what wasn't. We were taking music that normally had horns and violins and then using an organ and guitar to simulate it. It was a whole new way of looking at things."


One of the perennial favorites of any Santana keyboardist is "Incident at Neshabur," from *Abraxas*. "Alberto Gianquinto was a blues pianist who co-wrote that tune with Carlos," Gregg recalls. "Alberto played the piano part, and I played organ. That song goes through so many time signatures, but it feels so natural. I think it's one of my favorite pieces of music for the techniques that we used — which we were so unaware of at the time. It was amazing, cutting the time in half, and making it 6/8, then 3/4, then 4/4. It was all by feel.

"I don't know what the 'Incident' was. Alberto was a bit of a revolutionary, so it probably was of a racial or political nature. I never asked, though, I just said, 'Hey! Cool name!' Which was true of a lot of that stuff. People have ideas of what that music meant to them, and they have their own perceptions as to how it came about. In reality, it was done pretty innocently — 'what's cool, what's different,' is kind of how we approached it. It was all by gut feel. ➤

A Selected Santana Discography

While the band members have enjoyed job stability and security that were the envy of many other groups, it's also true that the Santana stage and studio have been open to the occasional collaborator — especially to a monster on the keys. Early on, James Cotton sideman **Alberto Gianquinto** co-wrote and played piano on "Incident at Neshabur" on *Abraxas*. Jazz phenom **Alan Pasqua** held the chair during the recording of *Marathon* and *Zebop!* and contributed several tunes to the Santana book. **Richard Baker** and multi-instrumentalist **Chris Solberg** were also on hand for those two albums as well as the touring circuit. When serious Afro-Cuban

keys were called for, **Rebeca Mauleon-Santana** (no relation to Carlos) or **Mario Ochoa** would montuno their way through the tunes. The late **Richard Kermode** shared touring and recording duties with **Tom Coster** during some of the more jazz-intensive years. **Sterling Crew** and **David Sancious** joined **Chester Thompson** for another multi-keyboardist period in the late '80s. With several cuts being written and produced by outside artists, *Supernatural* carries on that noble collaborative tradition: R&B giant **Loris Holland**, jazz fusion whiz **George Whitty**, and worldbeat producer **K.C. Porter** all contribute great keyboard parts. **ERNIE RIDEOUT**

<i>Supernatural</i>	1999	Chester Thompson, Loris Holland, George Whitty, K.C. Porter	
<i>Best of Santana</i>	1998	Compilation	
<i>Live at The Fillmore 1968</i>	1997	Gregg Rolie	
<i>Dance of the Rainbow Serpent</i>	1995	Compilation	
<i>Sacred Fire</i>	1993	Chester Thompson	
<i>Milagro</i>	1992	Chester Thompson, Rebeca Mauleon-Santana	
<i>Viva Santana!</i>	1988	Chester Thompson, Tom Coster, Gregg Rolie, Richard Baker, Sterling Croup, David Sancious	
<i>Freedom</i>	1987	Chester Thompson, Tom Coster, Gregg Rolie, Sterling Croup, Cory Lerios, Brian Bell	
<i>Beyond Appearances</i>	1985	Chester Thompson, David Sancious, Mitchell Froom, David Adelstein, Steve Goldstein	
<i>Shango</i>	1982	Gregg Rolie, Richard Baker	
<i>Zebop</i>	1981	Alan Pasqua, Richard Baker, Chris Solberg	
<i>Marathon</i>	1979	Alan Pasqua, Chris Solberg	
<i>Inner Secrets</i>	1978	Chris Rhyme, Michael Boddicker, Dennis Lambert, Chris Solberg	
<i>Moonflower</i>	1977	Tom Coster	
<i>Festival</i>	1976	Tom Coster	
<i>Amigos</i>	1976	Tom Coster	
<i>Lotus</i>	1975	Tom Coster, Richard Kermode	
<i>Borboletta</i>	1974	Tom Coster, Leon Patillo	
<i>Greatest Hits</i>	1974	Gregg Rolie	
<i>Welcome</i>	1973	Tom Coster, Richard Kermode, Wendy Haas	
<i>Caravanserai</i>	1972	Gregg Rolie, Tom Coster, Wendy Haas	
<i>Santana III</i>	1971	Gregg Rolie, Mario Ochoa	
<i>Abraxas</i>	1970	Gregg Rolie, Alberto Gianquinto	
<i>Santana</i>	1969	Gregg Rolie	

Ex. 1. Gregg Rolie's B-3 solo on "Evil Ways" (Santana) is one of the great organ solos of all time. A drawbar change at the end of bar 2 disengages the percussion.

1 Gm C simile

7

"Evil Ways," by Sonny Henry © 1967 (Renewed) Richcar Music. Administered by Universal Songs of Polygram International, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. Warner Bros. Publications U.S. Inc., Miami, FL 33014.

Ex. 2. Gregg had a way of blending blues and Latin styles that gave all those Santana minor grooves intensity.

Ex. 3. "Treat" (Santana) did more to familiarize keyboardists with the II-V progression than probably even Jamey Aebersold. Gregg sounds like he was having so much fun playing this tune, how could anyone resist learning to do it themselves?

a) Gm7 C7 b) Gm7 C7

Ex. 4. We won't even tell you the name of the song that this riff introduces. Just play it, and you'll know.

Ex. 5. The intro to "Oye Como Va" (Abraxas) should tell you all you need to know about how the original Santana band created their unique blend of styles.

Am7 D7

"Oye Como Va," by Tito Puente. © 1963, 1970, 1971 (Copyrights Renewed) EMI Full Keel Music (ASCAP). All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. Warner Bros. Publications U.S. Inc., Miami, FL 33014.

"The solo I played on that tune was really a one-time event. A lot of my solos were that way. They just came out great. I had to go back and re-learn them after I played them! Everything we did was just jamming. My solo on 'Oye Como Va' is the same way — it fits the tune so well. I love the solo on 'Treat' [Santana], too. We played that song with organ, with piano, many different ways, and that was the take that we saved. We brought Alberto Gianquinto in to help us with the arrangements, and he just said, 'Cut down the solos,' and left! So that's how we arranged things. We re-did 'Treat' to keep it short and to the point.

"The intro to 'Black Magic Woman'? I just came up with it. There weren't any keyboard parts on the original Fleetwood Mac recording. *Abraxas* was my favorite record. It was produced well, the songs were great. To this day, when I look back, that one seems to be the best package."

Spirituality

It was around the time of the third album, *Santana III*, that Carlos began to move in a more spiritual direction. "He wasn't always that way," recalls Gregg. "Like most of us, he may have been searching for

something, but he searched harder than anybody else. But it wasn't really apparent until around the third album."

For all the musical affinity that Gregg and Carlos felt for each other, and for having gone through the intense pressures of going from obscurity to super-stardom together, Gregg feels that he and Carlos never came to a deeper mutual connection. "I didn't understand him, and he didn't understand me, when I think back on it," he admits. "We never discussed things of that nature, I never sat down with him and asked where he came from. I never knew. We were strangers and close friends all at once.

"The band was a true democracy at that time, so Carlos's spirituality didn't affect the whole band so much. In fact, he originally didn't want his name used as the band name because he thought of himself as just a guitar player in a band. The press assumed that since the band had his name, it was his band. But at that time, it wasn't so. We did everything by committee. His spirituality was his own. That wasn't the reason the band kind of went its separate ways, though. Most of all, for me, it was that I didn't care for the *Caravanserai* route. I wanted to get on the radio with the kind of music we had been doing. I thought doing some

ethereal stuff was good, but I didn't want to do only that, and I didn't want to get into playing jazz. It wasn't what I thought the band was about. That record has a very obscure sound. It was all a set of moods, not even song-driven. A lot of it I didn't even understand. We were pulling in jazz players from all over and jamming for ages. Not that it was poor music. It wasn't wrong, it just wasn't what I was looking to accomplish. That was the driving force for me to leave the band."

The Hammond Connection

Once he started playing with Carlos in high school in the San Francisco Bay Area, Gregg began to get serious about his playing. "I got a B-3, and I sat down for about three months in my living room with Jimmy Smith records," he recalls. "I just picked off things that I liked. That was the hardest practicing I ever did. I used the bluesier and rhythmic stuff, but I didn't take to the jazz licks, because I just don't play them. Back then, we played a lot in minor keys, and I didn't want to be jazzy. I wanted to be on the rougher side — that's all I knew."

Except for European tours, Gregg hauled the same B-3 around wherever the band went. "For Europe, I had to rent a B-3 in England that was built for the voltage," he recalls. "I hated that. It was the generator in the B-3 that was the problem. I finally had one built with its own converter. It had a knob so you could detune it! Sometimes that wasn't so great [laughs]."

Gregg has no shortage of B-3 stories. "We played this big festival in Accra, Ghana," he says. "I had bought a brand-new black ebony B-3 and had it delivered there. I hadn't even played it yet. Well, the way they unloaded the plane was by kicking the thing out of the cargo bay and letting it drop onto the runway. It was only about a 20-foot drop. It came onstage in pieces. I never got to play that organ in its original state. We

had it cut down by Keyboard Products [see "The Soul of the Santana Sound" on page 37]. Then there was a hurricane, and my piano filled up with water. It was the worst.

"Around '69, or so, we did the last gig of a tour in Passaic, New Jersey. I had a fever of 103, and I was seeing double. It was really hot, too. Normally I play hard, way harder than I need to. But on this gig, I played so hard that I went right through the keyboard of the B-3. I slapped it on one of the solos; my hand went through the keys. A key was sticking straight up, and I had to keep playing around it. I got cut somehow, and I was bleeding all over it. At the end of the show, everyone was just staring at the B-3. It was covered in blood. They shipped it still covered with blood! Later, I ran into a friend who had been by Studio Instrument Rentals when the thing came back to them. Everyone there was yelling, 'My God! What kind of animal played this?' My friend said, 'Oh, that was Gregg Rolie.' I always liked that: 'Gregg Rolie plays like an animal.'"

Life After Santana

Gregg continued to work with Carlos after he left the band, producing several tracks on *Shango* and playing on *Freedom*. During one of these sessions, all three of our featured keyboardists were present and playing. "We were just goofing around," recalls Gregg, "and I just went to this chord, I didn't even know what I was doing. Tom was looking over my shoulder and he said, 'See? I wouldn't have done that! What made you go there?' I said, 'Well, I dunno. It just sounded right.' He said, 'Well you can't do that! See, you don't have any rules to inhibit what you do. I was never taught to explore anything like that.' It was Alberto Gianquinto who told me that there are no wrong notes, just good ones and bad ones. It's really true. It's all emotional mathematics. I know just enough about music not to mess it up." ERNIE RIDEOUT ■

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