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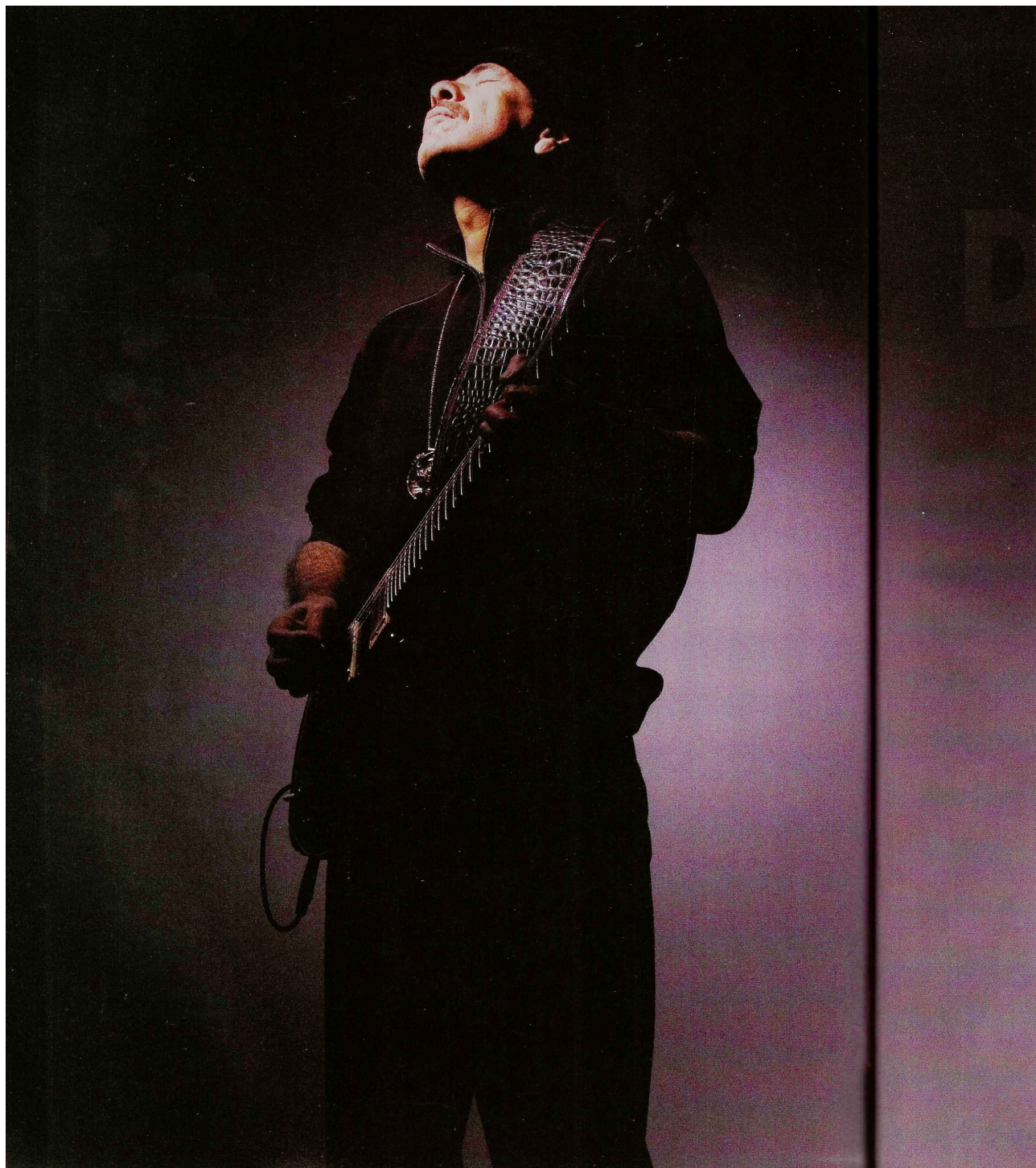
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Carlos Santana

PHOTOS: THIS PAGE, COVER—PAUL HAGGARD





# Multi-Dimensional Miracles

## Carlos Santana Celebrates the Power of Intangibles

By Michael Molenda

**IN ADDITION TO BEING A GREAT FRIEND TO GUITAR PLAYER OVER THE YEARS,**

Carlos Santana has endeavored to fire up the magazine's creative juices by hippping the staff to noteworthy under-the-radar guitarists, as well as sending us mix CDs full of music that has inspired him. Every few months, I'll receive a little package from his San Rafael, California, offices bearing something delightful, inspirational, or out-and-out humbling. It's kind of a one-way relationship, however, as Santana is so in tune with what's going on in every musical universe that it seems hopeless I would ever come across an artist, style, or technique that would surprise him. (I don't think my quest for the perfectly distorted punk-rock A chord qualifies as a "discovery of note.") Furthermore, his adventurous and inquisitive spirit leads him to consider much more about what it means to be a guitarist than one's choice of a favored style and the gear needed to construct a suitable tone.

So it wasn't really a surprise when Santana artfully dodged a discussion of his gear and tonal evolution in the wake of his new, dual-CD compilation, *Multi-*

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL HAGGARD



## COVER STORY Carlos Santana

*Dimensional Warrior* [Columbia/Legacy]—a handpicked collection of vocal songs and instrumentals spanning nearly four decades of the guitarist's prodigious musical output.

"I'd like to talk about intangibles," he said when first contacted about this cover story. "I haven't changed my gear all that much since the last *Guitar Player* story [June '05], and I'd like to get beyond those physical things and think about the roles of the heart and mind in making music."

Santana was so excited about the concept that he proceeded to suggest several more article ideas, a few twists on the typical guitar book and lesson DVDs, and, I think, even a live-concert event. (It was a bit hard to keep up with the snappy tempo of his well-considered proposals.) And, trust me, when Carlos Santana is that thrilled about a subject, you go with it. So what follows is a bit of a different *Guitar Player* article, but one that is no less instructive or valuable than a treatise on tone and technique. Few artists in these pages have attempted to detail the messy and often inexplicable engines of imagination, inspiration, and creation. (The last time was likely Bill Nelson's "Chasing the Muse" feature in the March '04 issue.) By necessity, the discussion tends to leave the world of the pragmatic, and sails into areas that can be uncomfortable for many players—God, spirituality, openness, self-assessment, self-awareness, ego, habit, ambition, and the potential evil of comfort zones. But if a player seeks to truly jettison stylistic mimicry, and fight like a cornered jackal to develop a unique and personal musical fingerprint, then studying the creative ramifications of intangibles is an essential part of the mission. In this quest, you couldn't have a better guide and confidant than Carlos Santana.

### What directed your selection of the songs on *Multi-Dimensional Warrior*?

What happened was that I had just come home from Hawaii, where I realized how Bob Marley's music was made. It's all from the islands and the clouds and the waves. It's very calm and peaceful and pure, and you can just focus on nothing—which is very difficult for the ego to do, because the ego has "ifs" and "buts" firing off all the time. And while I was not thinking about anything, I heard a voice say, "Carlos, go to your cassettes, records, and CDs, and compile a letter to your fans." I found myself drawn to music that didn't get heard anywhere near as much as *Abraxas* or *Supernatural*, as well

as the desire to turn people on to freedom and the light within themselves—like Bob Marley and John Coltrane. Everything just came so naturally that it was like composing a love letter.

**Some musicians might consider a "letter to their fans" to be a greatest hits package, but as you consciously avoided that approach, what does this collection represent for you?**

Thank you for asking that. There's a part of me that loves learning from musicians such as John Lee Hooker, Jimmy Reed, B.B. King, and Miles Davis. But there's also a part of me that wants to invest—like Desmond Tutu or the Dalai Lama or Harry Belafonte—in the healing of the common man. So it's not enough for me to play music, learn from all these guys, and be recognized worldwide. I also want to serve—to be of service. We are capable of creating miracles ourselves, and the greatest miracle is to create a masterpiece of joy out of your life with no excuses. This is what led to the combination of songs on *Multi-Dimensional Warrior*—I wanted people to taste their own triumph through this music. In fact, I was amazed how many times the word "light" appears in all the songs with lyrics.

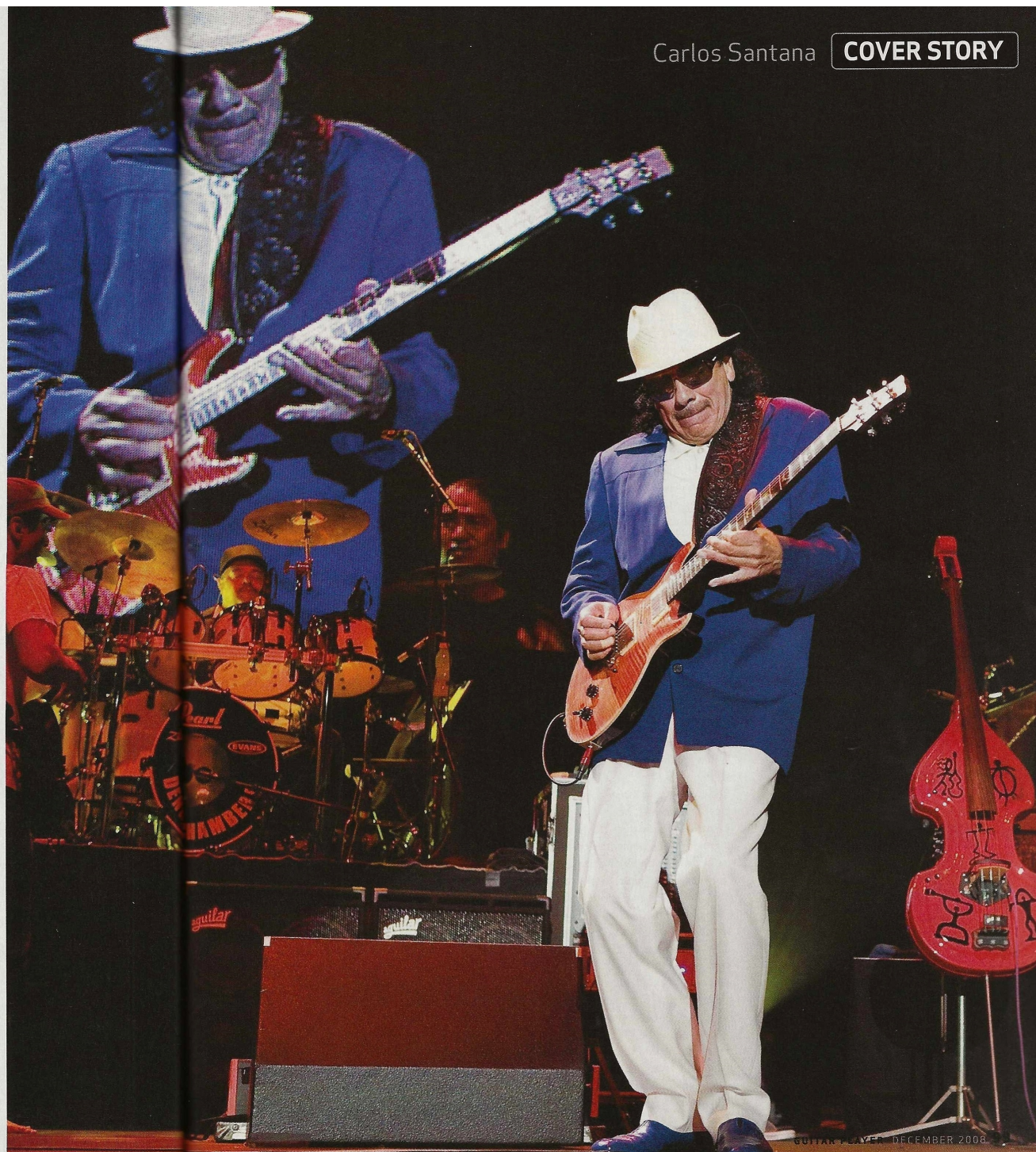
**So I'm assuming the album title isn't just a clever turn of phrase?**

Oh, no [laughs]. When people have asked me to define "multi-dimensional," I say that it's not being stuck or stuck up. When you start thinking that you're superior or inferior—that's being stuck. Your fear has betrayed you. Being free is seeing the beauty of you in everybody else. You say, "I can see myself in this guy and that guy. I want to phrase like Otis Redding and Nat King Cole and Wes Montgomery." You see the connections between what you do, and what all the musicians before you have done, and between what every musician is doing right now. So I'm grateful that your magazine is here, because you remind people that we're all in it together. *Guitar Player* is multi-dimensional.

**Could you elaborate on what you mean by saying "your fear has betrayed you?"**

Fear only has one agenda—to negate your beauty and your truth. Ego only has one agenda—to create death, destruction, and failure. That's the only function of the ego. We should compliment it, because at least it's predictable. E-g-o stands for "Etch God Out." But even an atheist can understand the need for wonderment. You don't have to believe in God. God believes in you. God

## Carlos Santana COVER STORY







## Santana's Love Letter

"When I started picking out songs, the process just flew, and I didn't hesitate over anything or second guess any of my choices," says Santana of his personal selection and sequencing of the tracks on *Multi-Dimensional Warrior*. "Everything just felt right. It was like writing a love letter."

The 28-track, dual-CD release is a welcome left turn from the typical repackaging practices of many labels. For one thing, there's the obvious fact that Santana himself was intimately involved in the project—even to the point of supervising the recording of brand new parts for a few songs. He added guitars to "Spirit" and "Right Now," had Chester Thompson lay down a piano on "Let There Be Light," and directed Barbara Higbie to track harp melodies for "Praise" and "Let There Be Light."

Perhaps most importantly, however, Santana abandoned the (re)hawk-the-hits tactic in favor of presenting an uplifting and undulating soundscape of moods, vibes, and rhythmic feels from the past 30-plus years of his oeuvre. As a result, *Multi-Dimensional Warrior* lives up to its title, unfolding as a harmonious symphony of themes, rather than a disconnected collection of songs. It's also one of those rare occasions where we get a peek into an artist's re-evaluation of his or her music, guided and nurtured only by the experiences and wisdom they've sustained over the passing years, and uncorrupted by purely commercial considerations. Oh yeah, and the guitar playing totally rocks. —MM

could not care less if you call him Buddha, Allah, Jesus, or Krishna. The best part of you—that's what God is, and it is in all of us. It's called the spark of the divine.

Do you remember that scene in *2001: A Space Odyssey* where the astronaut was being bombarded with all these colors? It's like some type of Coltrane solo, or Jimi when he's feeding back. That's what we call the stream of consciousness—which is actually the state of grace, because all is one and one is all. The mind is not equipped to understand that, because the mind likes to compartmentalize. The heart just takes it all in.

**But how does a musician transcend compartmentalization? In many ways, we are driven to embrace specific styles such as rock or jazz or blues—which are large compartments—and then there are mini compartments such as scales, chords, and riffs.**

The thing I focus on—whether I'm playing with Kirk Hammett or John McLaughlin—is going straight to the heart. I go to mine first, because if I don't feel it, you're not going to feel it. I take a deep breath, and I remind myself that before I give it to you, I have to give it to myself. I have to receive it. It doesn't matter if I drink a shot of tequila, or half a glass of wine, or if I smoke a toke, or if I'm totally straight and just drinking water—none of that is going to get in my way. We are talking about intangibles now. The intangible is that thing you put your finger in, and it's wet and it gives you chills. It's half of the equation. It's not just the amplifier or the string. It's not Fender. It's not Gibson. It's not your technique, or Dorian scales, or even chords. When I am open to the intangibles, I can play with Buddy Guy and hold my own, because Buddy Guy is a hurricane, and if you're not playing from your heart, he will wash you out.

**Although musicians talk about it a lot, I think the role of the heart in actual creative performance remains a huge mystery. A guitarist can more clearly understand technique. He or she can say, "Buddy Guy is over there, and I've practiced this blues scale forever. I can fly over the notes, add a few tricks, and not give any ground. I'm going to burn."**

That's not going to help you. I've seen Buddy destroy a couple of musicians. I won't say their names, because I don't want to hurt their feelings. But they were playing a gazillion notes per second, while he was holding one note, and he looked like a man who was on top of the Grand Canyon wielding a lightning bolt that sounded like Jimi Hendrix. He's holding that one note, and he's grinning at these guys playing a bunch of little

notes that sound like mosquitoes stuck in a screen door. *That's* not going to hurt him. But he'll hurt you with one note that transcends the blues, and all the equipment he's using. That's the heart, and Buddy Guy has an incredible heart.

**Well, once again, that's fabulous for Buddy Guy, but how can someone who has been taught to trust the rewards of practicing gestures best understand the implications of following their heart?**

Everyone has a heart, of course, so it typically comes down to how much you are willing to let it come out. How fast can you get to your heart and not let anything get in the way—children, the rent, the set list, taxes, nothing? How fast can you get to that place in your heart where you don't even have to think about what to play, because the notes will play themselves? Those are the best notes. Listen, carrying a melody is very difficult for a musician, because in order to carry a melody, you have to let go. A lot of people carry chords and speed. Let them go. Let go of everything you have learned, and, in return, receive the thing that will be channeled *through* you. Don't the best articles you've written just appear? And you go, "Wow, I don't even know how I put those words together!" This is the center of it. Musicians hear 1,000 voices saying they're not good enough—that they're just lucky, that they always play out of tune or their tone sucks, that they never get it right. John Lennon once said he hated everything he did, because he could have done it better. That's the ego. All those voices are the ego in disguise giving you guilt, shame, judgment, condemnation, and fear that you're never going to be good enough. Then, you have one voice that is very quiet, but it's louder and clearer than the other voices. This voice says, "Pick up the guitar. Here it comes." And out comes a song that's like Jeff Beck playing "People Get Ready" [*sings the main melody*]. Bam! Your freaking hair stands up, you've got tears coming out of your eyes, and you don't even know why. These are the things that drive me to go inside my heart, and going there is the only thing that is worth attaining for me. When I'm there, the heart will lead me to play a melody that makes families put all their sh\*t aside, and just see how beautiful their families are. That's what is really beautiful about music—it brings you into harmony. The other stuff you can learn by repetition, like a hamster. With willingness, you can truly



# FIVE COOL CHARACTERS

Carlos Santana

**COVER STORY**

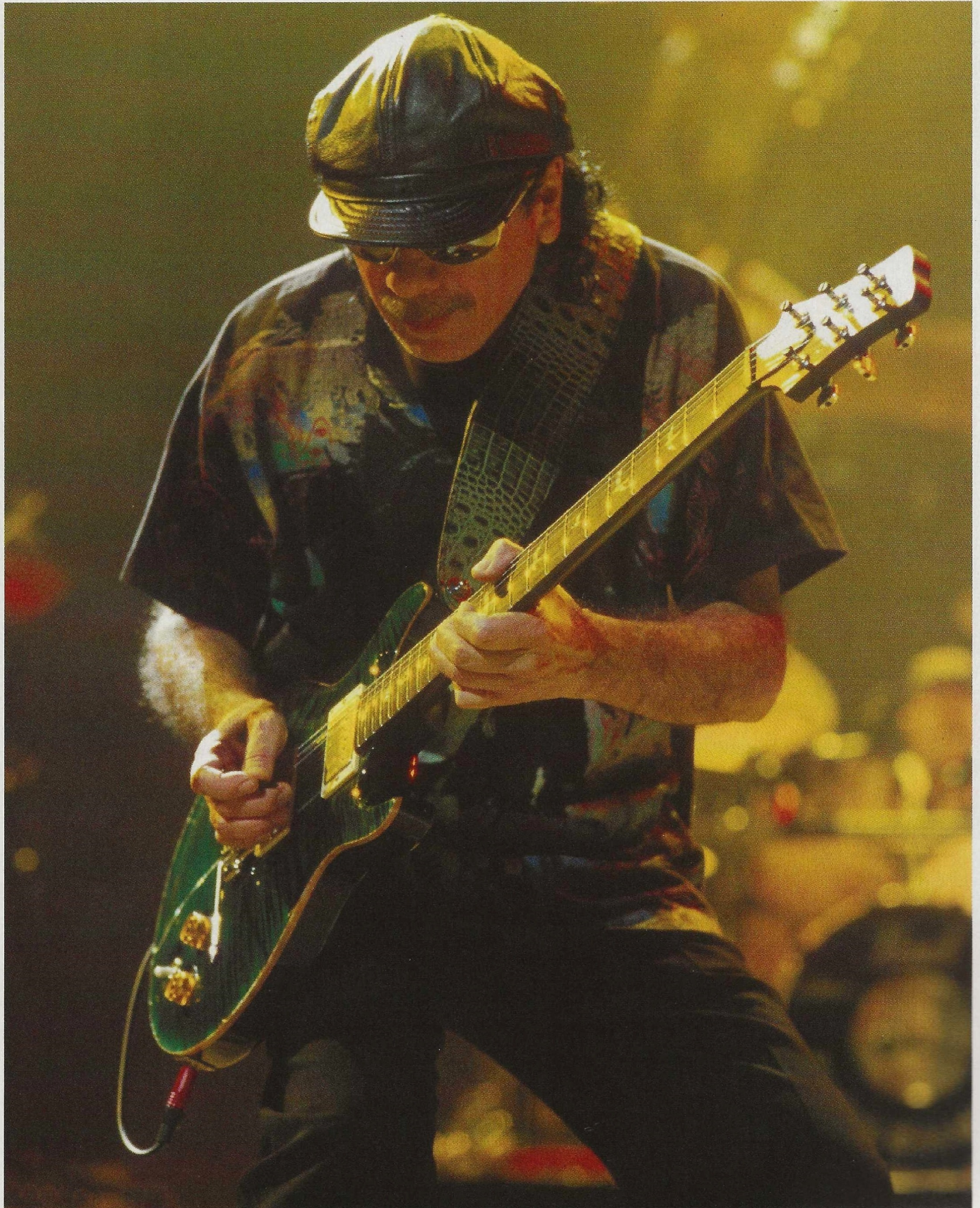


PHOTO: KEN SETTLE

GUITAR PLAYER DECEMBER 2008 **101**





## Sharing Intangible Thoughts

What are the personal “intangibles” that come into play as you develop melodies, riffs, and songs? What mysteries do you dip into to create your music? How do you define “playing from the heart?”

Please post your thoughts in the GP Forum at [guitarplayer.com](http://guitarplayer.com) by starting or joining a thread labeled “Intangibles.”

The goal here is to launch a virtual roundtable of different creative approaches that go beyond technique and gear. This was one of Carlos Santana’s ideas—to ask noted guitarists how they employ the intangible in their musical explorations. But I thought it would be fun to hijack the concept and hand it over to *Guitar Player* readers. And here’s a little something to inspire your muse: The most thought-provoking answer—as voted by the *Guitar Player* staff—will win its author a groovy PRS SE One (a \$640 value). —MM

learn why people adore Jimi Hendrix.

**Can you be a bit more specific about the role of willingness?**

Let’s look at it this way—what is this intangible world that Jimi Hendrix and Beethoven dipped into? You can call it hocus pocus or whatever, but this world exists. How often are you willing to dip into it? Do you dip into it at all? Do you ever have those moments where you’re playing by yourself, and you think you’ve been at it for 30 minutes, but you suddenly realize you’ve got sweat and saliva all over your guitar because you’ve been at it for more than two hours? I think this is the next step for *Guitar Player* magazine. You should invite people to go beyond the mechanics of the physical brain and the fingers, and go to that place where—like one of my favorite bands, the Doors—we can all open the doors to perception. When you hear Robby Krieger’s creepy minor-major blues thing at beginning of “The End,” it’s like Dracula giving you a hug, but you don’t mind it. I love music that makes me feel like I’m seven years old, going to the movies for the first time and experiencing Panavision. That’s why we love Jimi Hendrix—he assaults all of our senses. His music has a wide circumference. Hendrix is another name for a bridge to the unknown, because what he was playing, even *he* couldn’t reproduce sometimes. He couldn’t quantize it—as much as he might have tried to get back there by taking seven tabs of acid and a little bit of wine and some coke. Sometimes, it’s nothing—just the willingness. The willingness to take a deep breath and take what was given to you. It’s inside you, as John Lee Hooker said, and it has to come out. But maybe you won’t let it out, because you want to analyze it before it comes out. Don’t analyze it. Leave that for other people. Just take a deep breath, stop what you’re thinking, and let go. Let God light you up, and let it come out. Then, you can get rid of all the sh\*t you know, and play things that sound like singing water.

**Intangibles and willingness are, by definition, far more mysterious than pragmatic results—such as mastering a difficult melodic run. The poet William Blake was a visionary who spoke to angels, Jackson Pollack was a drunk, and Jimi Hendrix took drugs. Those are just three examples of artists swimming in pure creative inspiration. While I’d never advocate the abuse of alcohol or pharmaceuticals, is there some trigger needed to launch a musician beyond the concrete and into the unknown?**

I don’t need to take acid or mescaline to trip anymore, but I learned enough from that

stuff to realize what Einstein meant when he said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” Your imagination is your best equipment, and you cannot learn it or earn it—it was given to you. Take it. It’s yours. You don’t have to go down to the crossroads, and wait for a black cat or the full moon. You don’t have to sell yourself to the devil. What for? You have God’s love, and what can be better than that? Whether you’re Yngwie Malmsteen or Steve Vai or Joe Satriani or John Scofield, you just need to shut everything off and utilize the main television—your imagination.

You see, the ultimate destination for guitar players is to create heaven and wonderment for both themselves and the listeners. If you’re not doing that, you’re just shucking and jiving. But if you can let go and trust God, then you can change yourself, and then you can change me, and we can change everybody. What is deep inside of you is something that might make Buddy Guy turn around and say, “Hmmm—that’s interesting.” And then everyone else starts saying, “Damn, did you hear this new cat? He has a very fertile imagination.”

Here’s another way of looking at it. I loved the debate in your letters column [September ’08] commenting on Al Di Meola and Kenny Neal [*who were both profiled in the July ’08 GP*] talking separately about whether it’s better to express yourself with one note or one-million notes. But let’s suppose that you *can* express a million things with one note. Let’s consider for a moment that it’s not wishful thinking, or a lazy man’s way of justifying not practicing. How would you go about doing it? Is it the amplifier? Is it your technique? Is it the guitar? Do you need sympathetic strings like Ravi Shankar? Or can you use your imagination to see a note as a crystal that you put next to the sun, and that crystal then reflects the whole spectrum of the rainbow. Now, you can play for half an hour in each color! Your imagination is what makes this possible. You just have to invite your imagination into your creative process.

Now, let me comment a little bit on the pragmatic or tangible aspects of playing guitar that you’ve been mentioning. To me, getting all the scales and gear together is like practicing in a mirror while sucking in your cheeks. You’re posing. Don’t let the scales and the speed and the knowledge of chords and gear get in the way of that note that’s going to disarm other people’s egos and make every hair on their body stand up. Then, they



get to a place where they say to you, "You know, Michael, that note touched me in a place I've never been touched before." All of a sudden, your playing is not about comparing or competing. You go to a place where you become like what Derek Trucks is to me—a minister. In your ministry, you utilize music to take people back to where they have always been, and to where they have never been. You want to play a note that's so beautiful that the audience goes [*makes gasping noise*], and they can't breathe out until you finish your phrase.

Do you know Sonny Sharrock? He could shred like a tornado—like the Tasmanian Devil—and then create melodies out of all that madness. When people smoke cigars while they're playing cards, and the smoke goes to the ceiling and creates something beautiful—that's Sonny Sharrock. He is the person I wish was still alive more than any other musician, because I think he was in between Jimi Hendrix and Coltrane more than anybody.

**Actually, Sharrock taught me about savvy repetition. I forgot the name of his song, but I played it constantly because it held onto a theme seemingly forever, but it was never boring. In fact, it was quite beguiling, and I drove myself nuts trying to deconstruct what Sonny was doing to make something that should have been mind-numbingly tedious so evocative and musical.**

It's a good thing you brought that up, because I think people need to understand that there's a difference between repetition and a spell. A spell is another word for wonderment. No matter who you are, that's what you long to get into. Otherwise, you're going to get bored with your sh\*t. But you will never be bored with your wonderment. Wonderment has nothing to do with scales or repetition or amplifiers. It has to do with your own being, and what's inside your heart. Your mind will just be like, "Okay, I can't quantize this or understand it, so I'll just shut up and be quiet." Behold—that's wonderment.

You know, being from San Francisco, like you, we have something over the rest of this nation. I don't consider San Franciscans inferior or superior, but we do have an edge because we dare to think outside the box—musically, politically, aesthetically, and philosophically. We get accused of—"Oh yeah, that reminds me of the cows and the cheese. You know how the California people are." But, the fact is, we invest time and energy pursuing the intangible. That's the

vortex we're talking about—that state of grace where you go beyond what you know and the equipment you're using. You get into that place where everybody in your band is looking at you, and they're going, "Damn! What the hell was that?"

Here's a recent example of what I'm talking about. I played a benefit concert last year for Angela Bofill with [drummer] Narada Michael Walden and [keyboardist] Chester Thompson at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, and, as I was waiting for my solo, a voice said to me, "Carlos, this is the Grace Cathedral, and people are used to hearing 'Ave Maria,' but I want you to go to this Sonny Sharrock/Coltrane place and bug out. You're going to show people and yourself that the halo and the horns are cool. Go for it." But, just then, I looked at Chester and he was gone. His eyes were closed, and he was giving it his all. I looked at Narada, and he was gone, too. He looked like a cross-eyed lion. And I realized, "Man, they're *there* already. I have to go to another place. Can I do it?" So I changed my stance, and I went for it. I said, "I'm going for it, and if I get a freaking heart attack, then I die. I don't care." A month later, people who saw the concert were still telling me, "You created this vortex between heaven and earth that I know wasn't of this planet." I said, "I know exactly when I went for it, and I'm glad you picked up on it." You see, people intuitively applaud your pursuance—not necessarily the attainment. For example, you can perform a perfect solo, and the people might say, "Eh, whatever," because maybe you were 99 percent perfect, but you were an asshole about reaching that final one percent of perfection. You weren't open and giving, and your ego was too involved, so people will only remember that you were an asshole. The true beauty is in the pursuance, so I'd recommend looking at that one percent "shortfall" as the sacrifice you had to make in order for the other notes to be perfect. It's funny, Wayne Shorter once said, "I like mistakes. Sometimes, big ones—like scars."

**That's interesting. I just interviewed Alvin Lee from Ten Years After about how the British Invasion players took American blues and revved it up into the blues-rock hybrid. He said that, back then, they didn't really have a lot of influences to relate to, and that many of the blues solos they heard were far from perfect. There were tons of mistakes. So what he and his peers got from the original blues guitarists was their energy and passion—which is why he said he still cranks up**

**his amp and goes for feel over precision to this day. The whole thing about striving for so-called "perfect" rock solos came later.**

Here's where we crystallize this statement—for you, for me, and for everybody. Perfect perfection exists in the heart, not in the mind. Perfect perfection is—I just learned this word, man, and I want to share it with you—"unalterable." It means something that you can't add to, because it's already perfect. People say, "What's that?" The sun. The sun has never said to the earth, "You owe me," so it's unalterable. The Mona Lisa is unalterable. You can't add anything to it, or subtract anything from it. The eyes of a brand new baby are unalterable. Within those eyes is pure innocence, and they are incapable of disappointing you. I think it's good news to understand that perfect perfection does exist, but there are certain things musicians need to identify in order for them to play music that uplifts, transforms, and moves people beyond show business—beyond "look what I can do"—and to a place where people drop their guard and go, "Wow!"

A lot of people practice everything meticulously, and they go onstage and play it meticulously exactly the same way. Now, this can be incredible, but, after a while, it's like watching something through Plexiglass—you can't get to the other side. Me—I need a hug. I don't kiss the air like the kids in Los Angeles. Give me a hug. So I feel that people really need to learn how to hug that note.

**How do you "hug" a note?**

Well, I was recording this supreme singer once, and he said, "Carlos, I'm inside this vocal booth, and you're out there in the control room, so tell me where I am." Now, whether it's Pavarotti or Larry Graham, I always say the same thing: "You're going around the block. Get inside the sheets." That means to get a little closer to the melody. And don't make it staccato—make it legato. Legato is a hug. That's why we love Peter Green—"The Supernatural" is all legato.

**So you're not down with staccato phrasing—like, say, how a horn section might place its accents?**

Oh, there's also a need for staccato. It's fun. It's like skipping rocks across a lake. "Ch-ch-ch-splash." Hey, can you skip it seven times?

**Let's talk a bit about leading a band. When I saw you perform at the Fillmore in San Francisco last month, I was amazed at how much your band members were listening to everything going on**





around them. It seemed you never had to cue them—you'd change a feel, and they'd just adapt immediately, as if everyone was psychic. These moments didn't seem rehearsed or choreographed—they'd just happen. How do you ensure every player is on the same wavelength?

Thank you for saying that. My answer to your question is "trust." My band members trust me. The only things I ever rehearse are grooves. I want to make sure you put your finger in it, and you touch it with your tongue, and it's freaking divinely delicious. The tempo has to be right for a certain song. We can't fall in different places. It's just like football—there can't be no penalty flags! We all have to hit the collective "wa." You should do an article in *Guitar Player* on wa. What the hell is the wa? Imagine 100 women in a circle around you in the middle of a field, and they're all going, "Hey ya, nay nay....wa!" When you all hit the wa together—that's when music is happening. So I tell my band, "I need the wa. Let's hit the wa together. Don't overstate it, but visit it." All music, whether it's Segovia or Paco de Lucia or Hendrix has the wa. If you don't hit the wa, your music is redundant, repetitious, and monotonous. James Brown called it "hitting on the one," and he visited the wa enough to put a collective conscious on it. A lot of bands have come from James Brown.

**Do you listen for melodic clues from drummers?**

Absolutely. Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Mitch Mitchell, Ginger Baker—these are

drummers who know how to be possessed, and, as a result, they can take the guitar player beyond what he can play. Drummers play melodies in the cymbals, and if you hear them—whether you're Pat Metheny or John Scofield—it's like, "Man, you played something in the cymbals that brought me to a whole other room in the house I haven't visited before."

**Again, we're talking about being open and trusting yourself to finding inspiration in everything around you.**

My Uncle Max used to say, "By any means necessary." So show me the brilliance. Show me the wonderment. Don't show me excuses. No ifs, no buts, no slipping, no sliding, no superiority, no inferiority. Don't let what you know get in the way. Get to that place where everyone is uplifted in spirit and revived.

**Unfortunately, there's a fair amount of pressure on ambitious young musicians to clone what's successful, as many of today's besieged record labels are practicing strict "risk management." Do you feel you can embrace the spirit and still serve commerce?**

The more McDonald's that are out there, the more you need a grandma who spends all day in the kitchen stirring the sauce on Thanksgiving. This is why I'm very grateful to Derek Trucks, Ben Harper, Trey Anastasio, and others like them. They are successful, and they play from their hearts. Now, there are a lot of successful posers, as well. These are the musicians I was talking about who practice in front of mirrors, and plan every

note to do a certain thing. It's all calculated. But I think these people would be afraid to get onstage with Jeff Beck, Buddy Guy, and me, because they would think they'd have to compete with Jeff Beck, Buddy Guy, and me. I don't compete or compare, man. I just wait my turn.

**Can we explore that a bit? You've shared stages with a lot of amazing guitarists and other instrumentalists. How do you approach your performance when you're sharing licks with another player?**

If they go up and down, I go from side to side. I'm going to bring counter motion to whatever is happening in the room. I figure the best way I can be welcome is to bring something different from what they're doing. That's what I learned from Miles Davis: Always go for the counter motion. It's a great insight. He said, "If you hear something, don't play it. Play what's around it. Play like you don't know what to play." Again, this is about letting go of what you know.

**I'm still a bit of a coward. If I'm hearing A, C#m, F#m, D, I'm probably going to surrender to my comfort zone and play an A major scale.**

Here's that word again: Trust. In order to trust, you have to be able to see something beautiful first, and then feel something beautiful. I can close my eyes, and in this very second I can be Buddy Guy, John McLaughlin, Pat Metheny, and Jeff Beck, and we're all having a ball. We don't even know we're guitar players. We're just saying, "Hey man," and each one of us is telling some marvelous stories. Buddy has some great blues stories about Muddy Waters and B.B. King and John Lee Hooker. So tell me a story with your guitar, man. If I wanted to see a screwdriver or a hammer, I'd ask you to play me scales and chords. You see what I mean? You have to learn how to tell a story. You have to learn to carry a melody. You have to learn to access the intangible at will. These things will make you a different kind of musician.

Ultimately, you should utilize music the same way you utilize your imagination. Sometimes, you can just drop something in, and make people go, "Wow!" It doesn't have to be deep. For example, there's a place in our set—between "Soul Sacrifice" and the finale—where the band doesn't know what I'm going to do. I might play something raw or beautiful, or I'll throw in a *Looney Tunes* theme. Any direction is okay, because music doesn't have to be so boring, constrictive, and serious. Music is supposed to be fun. ■