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TIME

Pirates in the Sky

®

SANTANA IN ACTION AT TANGLEWOOD
With an Oriental intricacy.

Latin Rock

Most rock bands enthusiastically imitate one another. Small wonder, then, that an original and distinctive group like Santana has taken flight like a Poseidon missile exploding out of a sea of mediocrity. Santana triples the basic rhythmic element of rock. Flailing away in the midst of a dozen percussion instruments, three players pound out different sets of rhythms until the beats converge into an orgy of machine-like energy. What makes Santana unique is the fusion of rhythms: African, Cuban, Mexican, blues, as well as subtle Latin ingredients whose exotic sound has rarely been heard in rock.

There is nothing simple about Santana's music. The group's second recording, *Abraxas*, released this week by Columbia Records, shows less propulsive violence than the first, *Santana*. What it offers instead is a rare poetic delicacy. Rhythms move in parallel layers, interrupting, overlaying, penetrating one another, multiplying into mathematical complexity, finally merging into one overwhelming musical thrust. Unlike many rock groups, Santana uses lyrics rarely, avoiding cultural ferment in favor of musical bite. Though it offers an occasional vocal solo (as in the bluesy *Hope You're Feeling Better*), most of its featured solos are on electric guitar, organ or electric piano. Outwardly innocent, Santana's instrumental solos are long-lined and full of musical guile, bending, flatting and sharping with something of the intricacy of Oriental music.

The group got started in San Francisco about four years ago. It included Pianist-Organist Gregg Rolie, Guitarist Carlos Santana, Bass Guitarist Dave Brown and two others now departed. At first they called themselves the Santana Blues Band and were the idol of San Francisco's heavily Spanish Mission District. In early 1969, they were joined by José Areas (conga drums, trumpet, timbales), Mike Carrabello (conga drums) and Mike Shrieve (drums). From the beginning, the group has been managed by a music-struck local barber named Stan Marcum.

Explains Carrabello: "Stan sold his clothes for us. He went out and cut hair while we all stayed home and played music. He really pushed us into it." Two years ago, they achieved star billing at the fabled Fillmore West without ever having made a record. They played at Woodstock last summer; their performance in the subsequent documentary movie—with Shrieve on drums—is one of the longest and most arresting single acts presented. A year ago, Columbia Records released the first Santana album. So far it has sold 2,000,000 copies and has earned the group $300,000 in royalties.

Street Kids. After an appearance at Tanglewood last month, Gregg Rolie listened to the shrieks coming from the crowd of 17,432 packing the Music Shed and spilling over the lawns. "That's what I want to hear," he said. "There are symphony people out there." The group follows a heavy rehearsing and concert schedule. Says Drummer Shrieve: "When we don't have anything to do, we go to somebody's house and play music. We don't consider ourselves a rock-and-roll group even," he adds. "We're street kids. We latch on to our environment, make it into music and let it go."

To the despair of their handlers, the boys have a habit of drifting away whenever potential interviewers show up. When actually forced by Promoter Bill Graham or Marcum to meet journalists, they become as uncommunicatively polite as children who have been ordered to be nice to the visiting preacher. Carlos, who is designated "leader" only because the musicians' union insisted that the group had to have a leader, will not turn up for a press conference at all. One reason may be the group's abhorrence of the common journalistic practice of putting labels on things—especially the tag Latin rock, so often and justly used to describe Santana's music. "It would take a gun to make me call it Latin rock," says Rolie. "The only thing revolutionary about us is that we have guitars rather than horns. Otherwise, it's just feeling and timing."

Passion and Purity

"All English sopranos are virgins," a noted Broadway composer once moaned after an afternoon spent listening to British recordings. Chastity aside, there is a definite odor of sanctity in the tones of most English sopranos. At their best in church music by Bach, Handel and Mozart, they tend to frost the edges of more hot-blooded music. An exception who can deal both with purity and passion is British Mezzo-Soprano Janet Baker. Recently at Aldeburgh, England, she proved it with the English Opera Group by singing the tricky title role in Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*.

When he composed the opera in 1946, Britten must have had in mind a voice like Janet Baker's. He gave an unusual twist to the tale of violated-honor-and-suicide-from-shame. After the rape that precipitates the Roman Revolution of 510 B.C., Lucretia's husband consoles her by saying, "If spirit's not given, there is no need of shame." Alas, Lucretia, who found herself secretly and pleasurably stirred by the rape, promptly stabs herself in remorse.

Few singers have managed to suggest a Lucretia whose internal temperature is drastically higher than her cool exterior. Though she came on looking as wholesome as an English garden, Baker did just that. She seemed aquiver with passion, then overwhelmed with shame at her own suddenly revealed sexuality. Her voice, which can sound as pure as any singer's, took on a smoldering quality that reinforced Librettist Ronald Duncan's words:

How cruel men are . . .
They wake us from
The sleep of youth
Into the dream of passion
Then ride away
While we still yearn.

For Janet Baker, Britten's Lucretia is one more success in a recent series of remarkable operatic portraits: the giggling, compliant Dorabella in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, and twin Didos (Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Berlioz's *Les Troyens*). Still, she is a relative newcomer to opera. Her main work so far has been done in oratorios and lieder.

Janet Baker was born 37 years ago in York. She revealed musical taste early. After hearing a local Gilbert and Sullivan production, she was asked if she had liked it. "No," said the youngster. "It isn't good music and it wasn't well done."

In her teens she worked as a bank clerk to pay for voice lessons. When