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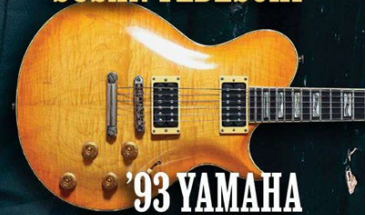
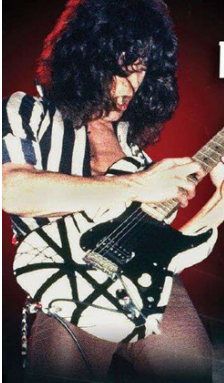
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# PAGEANT OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Santana's *Caravanserai*

By Oscar Jordan

**B**y the summer of 1971, 24-year-old Carlos Santana and his band – Neal Schon on guitar, drummer Michael Shrieve, Gregg Rolie on keys, bassist David Brown, and percussionists Mike Carabello and Jose “Chepito” Areas – had finished their third album, *Santana III*, and the pitfalls of fame and fortune were taking a toll.

Fueled by alcohol, drugs, and sexual escapades on tour, they were on a bad path. Being so young and admittedly misguided, Shrieve today acknowledges they weren't equipped with the maturity to deal with their surroundings, but points out they *were* self-aware.

“Carlos and I were making a shift, spiritually, and making different choices after having been through a whirlwind of success,” he told *VG*. “There were a lot of influences, and we felt it was time to get away from them and do something more spiritual.”

Brown, who had succumbed to heroin addiction, was fired. Santana himself even left the group for a short time, refusing to return until Carabello and manager Stan Marcum were fired for supplying the drugs. After some discussion, Carabello was voted out and Carlos returned.

In his 2015 biography, *The Universal Tone: Bringing My Story to Light*, Carlos recalls needing to step away for fear of the band becoming a caricature.

“When you overindulge, staying up all night doing whatever you're doing, then the next day you gotta play, and now you take cocaine to get the energy back – and now you're tired, wired, and you smell funny – and you look horrible. We were like, ‘This s\*\*t is depressing, man. We gotta do something different.’ We needed spiritual discipline.”

With the goal of achieving a shift in consciousness, Carlos and Shrieve began reading the same books, making better choices, and becoming informed by the zeitgeist of early-'70s San Francisco. Carlos rejected the business of Christianity and religion, preferring to lean into the inclusiveness of spirituality and Christ consciousness. This included the teachings of Buddha,

Santana onstage in 1972.

Carlos Santana 1972: Michael Zagaris.

Rama, Krishna, and Allah. Their shifting mindset pushed the music of Santana to become much more profound and universal.

Seeking fresh *musical* identities, they immersed themselves in the work of Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Pharoah Sanders, Weather Report, Antonio Carlos Jobim, and others, nurturing their spirits and giving them the courage to take chances in a world of brands, labels, and targeted consumerism.

“All this music was coming out and it was exciting,” said Shrieve. “*Bitches Brew* blew the doors open, and the beautiful thing about Miles is that musicians that came from him went on and became fruitful. They multiplied.”

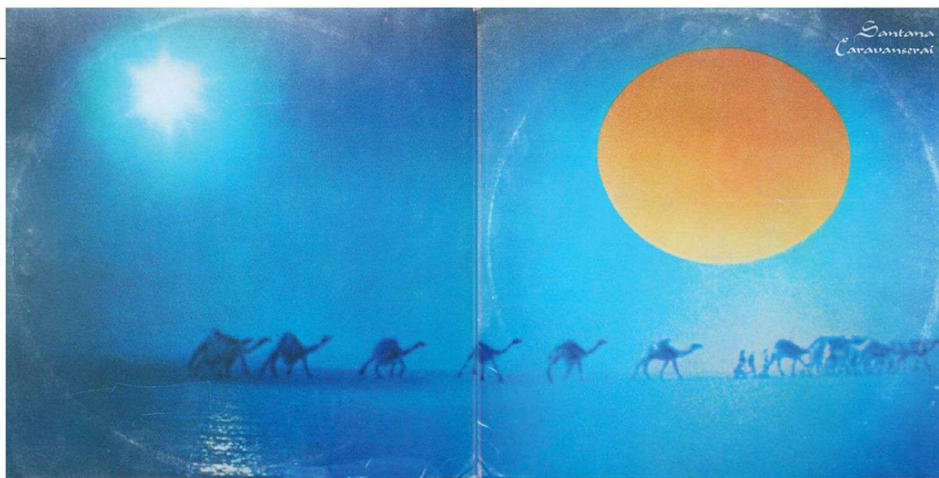
“It was Michael who... corrected my twisted perception that ‘Jazz is only for old, fuddy-duddy people,’” Carlos says in *The Universal Tone*. “He went through my record collection, saw what I *didn’t* have, and decided I had to hear Miles and Coltrane. He brought over a big stack of records. ‘Whoa, what is *this*? It’s really different from John Lee Hooker.’

“When he brought *Miles in the Sky*, it was over. He opened my eyes, my ears, and my heart to a lot of things. Some drummers only have chops, but Michael Shrieve had vision.”

Thus began a new chapter, with a new musical direction and new members in percussionists Mingo Lewis, Armando Peraza, bassist Doug “Dougie” Rauch, and (later) keyboardist Tom Coster. Columbia Records wanted more hit songs like “No One to Depend On” and “Everybody’s Everything,” from *III*, but Carlos has never been one to serve fast food; rather, he needed to combine his evolving artistry with his blossoming sense of humanity and spirituality, and this new iteration of the band was fully along for the ride.

From the opening track of *Caravanserai*, the instrumental “Eternal Caravan of Reincarnation,” Carlos wanted to set the mood with the sound of nature. To get the effect, engineer Glen Kolotkin recorded an ensemble of crickets in his back yard. The track continues with Hadley Caliman on saxophone, joined at 1:44 by Tom Rutley on acoustic bass and Shrieve gently introducing a pulsing rhythm with Rolie’s delay-soaked organ and Schon on guitar.

The intensity increases on “Waves Within,” where Carlos’ guitar plays against Latin



grooves and sparse chordal stabs from Douglas Rodrigues on guitar.

“Look Up (To See What’s Coming Down)” highlights the funk-infused interaction between Shrieve and Rauch against Latin percussion arrangements, Rolie’s gritty organ pads, and Carlos’ soaring guitar lines. “Just In Time to See the Sun” is Rolie’s vocal introduction on the album, which harkens to the band’s previous work.

One of *Caravanserai*’s highlights is “Song of the Wind,” which has Carlos and Schon delivering a classic guitar tour de force that resonates to this day. Side one closes with “All the Love of the Universe,” which offers a potent concoction of psychedelia, jazz, Latin rock, burning organ, hypnotic arpeggiation, incendiary wah-guitar soloing, and Eastern metaphysical philosophy within the lyrics. Side two is even better, with Carlos channeling Gabor Szabo, Antonio Carlos Jobim, and Herbie Hancock’s *Crossings* on the epic “Every Step of the Way.”

Released October 11, 1972, *Caravanserai* stalled at #8 on *Billboard*. And while it yielded

no hit singles, alienated many fans, and was considered a commercial failure, it is today cherished among Santana fanatics as one key to the band’s longevity.

“We thought it was appealing to the ear and to the *soul*; it made me feel good inside,” said Shrieve. “There is a certain purity in the music that had to be recognized, that would touch people if they really listened to it.”

But not everyone was happy with the band’s new direction. Rolie and Schon left and soon after formed Journey.

“[Some people] called it my first career suicide, but I called it dancing with the unknown in unpredictability,” Carlos wrote in 2015. “It takes a lot of courage to do that. People say, ‘You’re going to lose your fans.’ Maybe they were never my fans. My real fans would accept me for my growth and not for who they want me to be. *Caravanserai* is a statement of pure spiritual discipline – pursuing something that your light, your spirit, your soul, and your heart want to do. That’s different than your ego.” **VG**