

Santana at 50 Years and Counting: Michael's Rock and Roll Posse

Fortified with New Mexican dinner from Frontier, across from the UNM campus, and accompanied by Tina, IHM Seminarian classmate Valentin Varela, and Posse member Michelle Varela, we attended the Carlos Santana TRANSMOGRIFY concert July 1 at Albuquerque's Isleta Amphitheater. The venue was completely filled, about half the concertgoers in the grass, which was slightly wet from a half hour shower two hours before. It dried up, bringing the humidity to about 40%, half of the level these days in Houston. They started at 8:10 pm, and ended after several encores, at about 10:15.

Santana has always been something of a traveling circus, with dozens of rotating members, encircling Carlos in whatever musical phase he is in. This current tour includes him on guitar and vocals, with two other guitarists: Tommy Anthony (rhythm guitar) and Benny Rietveld (bass); three drummers, including his wife [Cindy Blackman](#) Santana (percussion), Karl Perazzo (percussion, vocals), and Paoli Meijas (congas, percussion); David K. Mathews (keyboards); and singers Ray Greene and Andy Vargas, who also played several instruments. As everyone can imagine, it is his guitar and the three percussionists who predominate. Given all the turnover, and even the reassembling of the almost-all-alive original Woodstock-vintage members (including the unmatched drummer Michael Shrieve) for the recent Santana IV, any provenance and lineup are in service of his guitar virtuosity, immediately recognizable to his listeners. Many of the audience were our age, but there was also a large number of younger fans in the Albuquerque audience, probably many of whom first heard him through his 1999 *SUPERNATURAL*, which included the Matchbox Twenty vocalist Rob Thomas, among others, and which won 9 Grammys. I know this is how my nephew Steven Aranda was introduced to him, and Steven thanked me for introducing him to vintage Santana (and Don McLean), neither of whom he had ever heard.

Santana is a very generous musician, explaining his many and diverse collaborations, such as those with John McLaughlin, [Lauryn Hill](#), Sheila E, Clapton, Wyckle Jean, John Lee Hooker, Buddy Miles, Dave Matthews, and dozens more. I have seen him and the various incarnations of his group(s) four

times, spaced out over the years since 1971, my first time and a year and a half after his astonishing Woodstock appearance—which he swears that he doesn't recall, inasmuch as he was stoked on mescaline the whole time. As part of the film loop playing on the scrim, there are dozens of snippets of him, Shrieve, and percussionist [Chepito Areas](#) performing in the unforgettable documentary.

He intermingled fresh and classic work, and he understands the unspoken contract between fans and vintage rockers: it is ok to play new and unheralded work, as long as the spine of the concert is well-known and flawlessly-executed earlier work. He has played steadily for more than fifty years, and continues to grow as an artist, with a growing repertoire, adding to his signature earlier singles work, such as "Evil Ways," "Soul Sacrifice," "Black Magic Woman," "Oye Como Va," "Hope You're Feeling Better," "Everybody's Everything," "No One to Depend On," "Let the Children Play," and "Samba Pa Ti," as well as over 60 LPs, including studio, live, collaborative, and compilation albums.

I will also note that YouTube has literally hundreds of singles and entire albums of Santana's outpouring. I have almost all his major albums, although I wish he could corral all his major works into a double CD, with Love, Devotion, and Surrender, and the best of his more recent work. So treat yourself to his work, and decide which CDs you want the most:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfRCTJmmgpY>. And see him at his semi-regular gig in Las Vegas, and if his caravan comes to your town. He is in Sugarland tonight, and there are probably tickets available.

Soon: guitarfest continues with John Mayer in Albuquerque at the same venue.

Michael