

Musical ecstasy

# Santana hits new heights with 'Swing' album

By ROB MONATH

Devadip Carlos Santana

*The Swing of Delight*

**D**EVADIP Carlos Santana teams up with some of the greatest contemporary jazz and funk musicians to make his most sophisticated musical statement to date on *The Swing of Delight*, his latest solo album.

All but one of the songs on the LP are instrumental odysseys which guide the attentive listener through a broad range of musical and emotional moods, as the feel of the music slips back and forth between a kind of Latin swing, Miles Davis-type, 'heady' jazz and "sophistifunk."

Santana himself has improved tremendously. As several years in seclusion and a lot of drugs were key elements to guitarist Jeff Beck's surprising growth, jamming with friends like avant-

garde guitarists Al DiMeola and John McLaughlin and heavy doses of Eastern religion have kindled an unforeseen musical metamorphosis in Santana.

## Records

On songs like, "Swapan Tari," Santana embellishes his characteristic guitar motifs with new technical finesse. His modal and often brisk riffs lend a fresh dimension to his traditionally melodic and emotional style.

In accordance with this shift to a jazzier flavor, Santana avoids the heavy rock emphasis of past albums like *Abraxas* and, subsequently, features jazz and funk masters Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams on a number of cuts on *Swing*.

Wayne Shorter's soprano saxophone accompaniment and solos on "Love Theme from Spartacus" wail with emotion.

Herbie Hancock's keyboard work is sprinkled like light rain through the bouncy track "Jharma Kala," and gets very funky elsewhere. Ron Carter comes in with a vibrantly moving acoustic bass solo on "Gardenia."

Some vestiges of the old Santana percussion remain, and these, coupled with the superb drumming of Tony Williams and Graham Lear, keep the pulse fluid and exciting throughout.

Because the album has been recorded digitally (a new recording process which substitutes numerical code for conventional magnetic tape and produces increased clarity), it has four shorter sides instead of two longer ones and cost a little bit more.

For those who wanted Santana to put out another pop album like *Inner Secrets*,



*The Swing of Delight* will be disappointing. For others who've always wondered what it would be like if Santana leapt to a higher musical plateau, the album will be musical ecstasy. **M**

Rob Monath is *Weekender* record critic.

## Weekender

is the feature magazine published each Thursday by *The Daily Tar Heel*.

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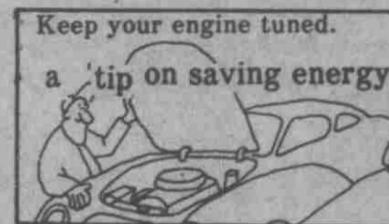
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