

TOP STORY

## Carlos Santana talks sense of purpose and new album 'Blessings and Miracles'

By [Josh Ewers](#) Main Street Nashville

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Legendary guitarist Carlos Santana carries a sense of spiritually-based duty to his role as an artist, an inspirational force that he will carry with him to FirstBank Amphitheater on Sept. 29.

Marylène Eytier

When Carlos Santana comes to FirstBank Amphitheater on Sept. 29, he will arrive with an insightful sense of purpose beyond promoting a new album full of collaborations with modern artists.

The Latin guitar legend has had two distinct and successful careers, whether you're a baby boomer who knows him as the Woodstock enigma who went on to build a storied, innovative legacy, or a millennial who watched him spice up the charts through collaborations with Rob Thomas, Michelle Branch and The Product G&B.

But that's not the way the 74-year-old icon conceptualizes his career or his role in the world.

He spoke with Main Street Nashville on that subject while preparing to welcome his new album "Blessings and Miracles" into the world in October, an album featuring collaborations with Thomas, Metallica's Kirk Hammett, Stevie Winwood, G-Eazy and Chris Stapleton, among others.

"I'm thirsty to reach the four corners of the world with music, especially after the pandemic, to bring hope and courage," Santana said. "Chris and I talked about that. I said, 'Chris, this world is infected with fear and darkness and so this world needs some mystical medicine music to heal that, so why don't we write some lyrics and music to bring some hope and courage to people?' That's what we did."

From their conversations, the two summoned the words and melody of their to-be-released duet on "Joy," which figures to slot in as one of the higher-profile team-ups on the forthcoming album.

The creative process leading up to its release tasked Santana with sliding in with and adapting to modern artists and their methods for the second time in his career following 1999's "Supernatural."

"What's really incredible about 'Blessings and Miracles' is about 60% of the artists I have yet to meet in person or shake their hands. Everything was done

by Zoom,” Santana explained. “It’s a different process, but see, once you close your eyes, you’re in the same room, if you hear the music.”

Being able to work with and adapt to artists in disparate genres and half his age over the years is something the seasoned song maker says he’s quite comfortable with.

“The answer is don’t think, just feel,” Santana said. “Thinking is not a good thing for artists and musicians. It’s probably OK for Shakespeare when he said ‘To be or not to be.’ That’s thinking. For Albert King and Freddie King and B.B. King and Stevie Ray and Jimi Hendrix, you don’t think. You just feel.”

And that inherent idea of being able to feel his way through the modern collaborative element of his musical journey is very much methodically related and philosophically attached to the way he experiences and embraces the world at large.

It’s also what led him to the new album, which will be released Oct. 15.

“I keep hearing inwardly and outwardly voices that says people are thirsty, and people are thirsty for impeccable integrity, righteousness and a living water,” Santana explained. “Living water for me is a sound resonant vibration that helps humans remember their light, their spirit and their soul. All three are immutable. Those three things don’t need to be fixed or corrected: light, spirit and soul. We all have it. We all are it. With that, you can create miracles and blessings.”

During the recording process, Santana described a full-circle moment that might lead some to believe in the divine nature of the current moment in time for the artist, or at the very least in the thoughtfulness of Kirk Hammett.

“One of my favorite moments was being in the same room as Kirk Hammett. We’re playing like crazy on ‘America for Sale.’ He’s going crazy doing an incredible solo,” said Santana, before pausing to make a note on the gear used that day.

“He brought Peter Green’s guitar, and that was a real treat,” he said.

Green is the founder of Fleetwood Mac and the writer behind “Black Magic Woman,” a song of which Santana’s rendition became arguably his most important cultural output. Green died in July 2020 at the age of 73.

“I hadn’t seen her (the guitar) in a while because Peter Green used to come visit us in 1970 on tour, and so I used to see that guitar all the time,” he said. “It was wonderful to touch it again and to see it.”

This time around, the process also led him to collaborate with his children, Salvador and Stella.

“I heard this song and I kept hearing it,” Santana said. “I said I heard it once somewhere and I can’t get it out of my head.”

Upon seeking out its source, the guitarist found it was one of his son’s songs, which he took as a sign. He pitched the idea to both he and his daughter of their old man playing on a couple of their own original creations.

To play with one’s children on a major tour in front of thousands upon thousands is an opportunity afforded only to those lucky few who have persevered through and been blessed with careers similar in duration to Santana’s 55 years of making music professionally.

And yet with little to nothing left to prove, he says he plans to continue creating

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for the foreseeable future.

When asked how long that might be, he quickly dismissed the idea.

“ ‘How long’ is a Chinese name,” Santana said. “I don’t think about it. Somebody tells me my body is 74, but when I close my eyes and I’m into the music, it’s ageless, it’s timeless, gravity-less. But you have to learn to get inside that zone that Michael Jordan talks about, or any artist. You have to find a way to get into the zone where there is no gravity or time.”



**Santana, Rob Thomas, American Authors - "Move"**

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