

# A Talk With Dennis De Young

Part II

## More From Styx' Main Man!

**RockLine!** Dennis, talk a bit about the cut on your album, *Desert Moon*, called "Boys Will Be Boys."

**Dennis DeYoung:** "Boys Will Be Boys." My parents went away to New York City when I was a teenager and they left me all alone in the house. What a deal. At the end you can hear the whole story. It's about being seventeen years old and you live in the Northern climate and it's the first warm day and you can't believe it. It's been all winter and a girl walks by, she's got shorts on and it's almost like she's nude, you can't believe it. It looks like someone landed from Mars. So you roll down the window and turn the radio up loud and act like a complete ass.

**R!** Kind of like *Risky Business*.

**D:** No, *Risky Business* is a bunch of -- as far as I'm concerned.

**R!** Why?

**D:** Because I understand it to be a fantasy, but come on. Sorry, I never knew anyone at seventeen who had that fantasy come true. It was a little too sophisticated. It's not that I disliked the movie. I thought it was an enjoyable movie. It just didn't smack of reality. It's nothing that I could relate to.

**R!** "Desert Moon."

**D:** It's a song about those summer nights when we were young and we bragged of things we'd never done. And in our haste to grow too soon, we left our innocence on desert moon. It's a song about lost innocence. "Suspicious." A song that would definitely not have been on a Styx album. Musically, it's something Styx just wouldn't have done. It's a bluesy jazz, that light jazz bluesy, feel the blues, the BB King guitar style. "Dear Darling." If you read all of these lyrics closely, you'll see that the same guy keeps popping up in all of them. In this song, he's saying, "Just because I'm not really good at vocalizing my feelings for you, doesn't mean I don't care about you, doesn't mean I don't love you." He says, "It's hard for me to show emotion. But don't be fooled, my heart is open and you are the only one I really need." He's telling her that, and the guy's saying, "Why is it when I'm with you, I can't seem to tell you how I feel about you. So, since I can't, I'm gonna write it in a letter cause I figure, if I write it down, then every time you wonder, you can pick it up and look at it."

**R!** There are a lot of guys in the audience who can identify with that.

**D:** Well, God bless them if they can, and -- them if they can't take a joke.

**R!** Playing with a bunch of new musicians—how did you find them?

**D:** We met at the YWCA.

**R!** How did you really find them?

**D:** I just got a bunch of tapes. I used a bunch of guys from Chicago. I wanted to use people who could maybe use a little exposure, a little change.

**R!** So they were not people you knew?

**D:** No, I didn't know any of these people before I started working with them. I auditioned them and I said there's a lot of talented people. It would be simple to call up x, y, or z from LA or NY and have them come and play on the record. You can do that. They're out there. I'm a firm believer that there's a lot of talented people who never get an opportunity and should be given one, if their talent is good enough. So I just went looking for people who I thought were talented enough.

**R!** You're on tour now. For how long?

**D:** I don't know. We'll come by your apartment and set up there if you want to invite a few people over.

**R!** What kind of venues are you going to be playing?

**D:** My expectations are zero at this point on who I am and who wants to see me, a question that will be answered certainly in the future, not at this moment.

**R!** Is it strange to ask yourself, "Who am I?" Not being part of Styx now, being alone?

**D:** No, I know who I am. But who am I to other people? That's what I'm saying. In terms of this particular album and now taking complete responsibility. Styx had a lot of success. I was responsible for a lot of it with those guys. After all that, if I can't feel comfortable with my own identity, in the fact that, if I never do another thing, I've done more than most people will ever dream of doing, then I'm in trouble. Then the next 30-40 years of my life will be pretty miserable. So I've got to make my songs, write 'em, record 'em, somebody's going to like them, I know that. Maybe not 10 million people, but somebody.

**R!** So you take a great deal of security from your accomplishments with Styx?

**D:** I want to accomplish more. I would be a liar if I said I didn't want to sell as many records as Styx sold and more. Of course I do. Who wouldn't want to do that? Any artist you meet that tells you they don't care how many records they sell—I want to give them people a pap smear or something. I don't trust them. I don't know what their motive is. But if it doesn't happen, I made a good record. Listen to it. I made a real good record. There's something to be said for that.

**R!** Did you ever make a record that you thought was bad?

**D:** Of course. You always think you can do something better. Whenever you hear it, when it's finished, you say, "Why didn't I?" But, quite frankly, early on, we made an album that sounded terrible without someone to take control of the production of it and it sounded so bad it was an embarrassment. The third (Wooden Nickle) album. When I say things publicly, people say, "Oh God, I loved that record." I thought it was terrible. And I was disappointed. At different points in my life, I've been disappointed with my output, personal, toward the record. Some records I looked and said, "Well, I compromised myself on that. Why didn't I do this? Why didn't I just do what I felt in my heart? This happens sometimes."



**R!** If *Desert Moon* is received well, would you consider not going back to Styx?

**D:** I'm going back to Styx.

**R!** Regardless?

**D:** Well, that's a big word. Regardless of what? Does that take into consideration acts of God?

**R!** Regardless of say, three number one songs?

**D:** Regardless of my success? No, I don't think that's the issue. The amount of success is not what would determine that kind of thing. It would do with other factors.

**R!** You've been working with Styx or portions of that band since you were a teenager?

**D:** Yes, 20-some years.

**R!** And never with anybody else?

**D:** Never.

**R!** Seems really tough.

**D:** Not at all. I was never scared one bit. See what maturity will do for you? If you're worried and concerned, because you're 15 or 16 years old, and you can't figure out life, don't worry. When you're older, you still can't figure it out, but it isn't quite as important.

**R!** In other areas, aside from music, are you as self-confident, because you're older and more experienced—or were you always self-confident?

**D:** Well, sure. I think that for a while, you're self-confident for no good -- reason. And then, you get slapped in the face a couple of times, hard, and some of that goes away.

**R!** Some performers are painfully shy, and continue to be so as adults. Always insecure.

**D:** No, I'm not insecure.

**R!** Are you nervous about playing on stage?

**D:** One gig out of a hundred. Mostly when I play in front of my family and friends, because it's in the blood. It means something different. But generally speaking, no.

**R!** Are you going to have back-up singers on stage with you?

**D:** I will have musicians who will sing. Rosemary Butler has expressed an interest in touring.

**R!** How about answering some personal questions?

Where do you live now?

**D:** In Chicago.

**R!** Do you still have a "large, woodsy estate"?

**D:** I don't have an estate, my goodness. Well, one man's floor is another man's ceiling. I suppose.

**R!** Any pets?

**D:** No. Yes, a dog.

**R!** Name?

**D:** Snooky. It's my kid's pet, not mine.

**R!** Do you have any brothers or sisters?

**D:** Yes. One sister.

**R!** Is she in show business?

**D:** No.

**R!** The rest of the family. You have a wife, Suzanne?

**R!** Yes.

**R!** Your children, Karen Ann and Matthew. Karen Ann is 12.

How old is Matthew?

**D:** Four.

**R!** Does Matthew understand what you do for a living?

**D:** I don't know. He's four—he likes it, it means nothing to him. It's like—what I do. That's all he knows. Karie, the same thing.

**R!** Your wife is not in the business?

**D:** No.

**R!** Is she a housewife?

**D:** She doesn't work. She's not really a housewife. She doesn't work outside the house.

**R!** You've been married how many years?

**D:** Fourteen years.

**R!** What was your very first ambition, Dennis?

**R!** I don't remember that far back. Probably to be a policeman, like every kid. Who knows?

**R!** As a teenager, you never thought of being an architect or something?

**D:** No, I always wanted to be a musician. Always. You can strike policeman. I'm talking of a 5-year-old.

**R!** What are some of your favorite rock groups?

**D:** Probably the Beatles and the Who. That would suffice. That's enough, I think. Don't you?