

## STYX: CHAPTER 8

### A Brief Synopsis of Chapters 1 thru 6:

1963, the era of The Beatles. Chicago, Twin brothers Chuck and John Panozzo are learning to play bass guitar and drums, respectively. They are joined by neighbor Dennis De Young on accordion.

By 1967, the trio had added two guitarists, John Curulewski and James Young (J.Y.). named themselves The Tradewinds, and were gigging throughout Chicago, though their audiences mainly wanted to hear current hits. "The real test" keyboardist Dennis recalls, "was to perform original material and have it accepted."

In 1970, they signed with a local RCA subsidiary, Wooden Nickel Records, and chose a new name for themselves: STYX. "It was one of a hundred names we tried and it turned out to be the only one that none of us hated," J.Y. remembers.

At yearly intervals STYX I was followed by STYX II, THE SERPENT IS RISING and MAN OF MIRACLES. Each enjoyed minimal sales and for a time it looked like all the nickels were indeed wooden. The band was keeping its members alive by performing regularly throughout the northern Midwest, but the critical success element, airplay eluded them. However, Chicago's WLS began getting an increasing number of requests for a tune from the STYX II album, "Lady." The station played the album track at night and the requests increased phenomenally. Reissued as a single, the song became a national hit and nudged the album to gold status. Still, stardom proved elusive, and Styx went label-shopping.

They produced their first A & M album EQUINOX, which drummer John Panozzo calls "the discovery of our own niche in the spectrum of music." Days before the band was to set out on a national tour, John Curulewski decided to drop out. A frantic search to find a replacement turned up Tommy Shaw, a golden boy from Alabama who was born with a guitar pick between his teeth. Within a week he was on the road. Tommy's melodic guitar friffs were a perfect counterbalance to J.Y.'s roaring brand of rock and the physical differences between the two on stage provided a perfect theatrical counterpoint.

Skilled manager Derek Sutton, who had helped steer the careers of Procol Harum, Jethro Tull and Ten Years After took over management of the band and the wheels began rolling. STYX broke the sound barrier to stardom first in Canada where EQUINOX was soon certified platinum.

STYX 1978 album *CRYSTAL BALL*, the first with the new voice and writing talent of Tommy Shaw, increased the public awareness of the band. At the end of the 200-date tour in support of *CRYSTAL BALL*, the group knew that their musical magic was finally becoming substantive. The time was right for a giant leap forward.

### Chapter 7:

It came on 7-7-77 when STYX released their 7th album. *THE GRAND ILLUSION* took listeners through a splendid funhouse of the mind; it was refreshing, original and brilliantly self-produced. "Come Sail Away" became a Top 10 hit, legions of fans swarmed under the new STYX banner and the group broke internationally. *THE GRAND ILLUSION*, by now climbing toward triple platinum, had the distinction of remaining on the charts over a year after its release. STYX gave up their role as "the best support act on the road," joined the ranks of the headliners, filling major arenas throughout the country.

### Chapter 8:

*PIECES OF EIGHT*, STYX' eighth album, is here. "We had enough material for a double album." Notes Tommy Shaw "but there was a tremendous pressure to exceed ourselves. We all knew this album had to be our best, and that pressure forced us to work a great deal harder than we've ever worked before."

The eight new songs (and two instrument innovations) evidence a maturation of the STYX sound. The varied complexity of theme and style is made possible by three co-equal writers/singers and relies

# Biography

heavily on the near-telepathic link in the twin-brother rhythm section. Each of the songs stands alone, and each one is almost an encapsulated movie score. The album is love (over 44 minutes) which cased technical problems. "There is nothing that we could cut," says Dennis. "There isn't a weak song on the album."

The 1978 STYX tour billed as "*The Main Event*", will be an extraordinary traveling show which will use theatrics and special effects to heighten the already dramatic musical presentation. "We always make sure, however," cautions Dennis "that the effects don't overshadow the music--we don't want to become a circus!"

The quality that has allowed STYX to maintain its

momentum through the lean and difficult years is an unswerving commitment to pleasing their audience without sacrificing personal integrity. They are entertainers in the grand tradition. "We were never hyped," James Young says matter-of-factly. "We were never one of those bands that made the covers of magazines because someone wanted to give us an easy shot. We worked for our success."

STYX made it to the top of the bill and to the multi-platinum plateau they now enjoy the hard way. There's a tradition in the music business that says that only those who have made the long and hard climb are able to maintain it once they hit the top.

PIECES OF EIGHT makes it clear, STYX is on top to stay.

