

STYX: SET AN OPEN COURSE FOR THE VIRGIN SEA

By Chuck Miller

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As the intro to "Come Sail Away" began, Todd Sucherman was ready to play. Imaginary sticks were hovering over pretend drum skins, Todd's foot ready to strike a fantasy bass pedal. He knew the song backwards and forwards, both the LP and 7" versions; and he practiced it hundreds of nights on the air-drum in his Chicago bedroom in 1978.

Except this wasn't 1978 in his bedroom. He was at the World Theater in Chicago, in 1996, playing the drums as a member of Styx, with a hundred friends and teachers and family in the audience. Dennis DeYoung was playing the intro on the keyboards, Tommy Shaw and James Young were ready on the guitars, Chuck Panozzo looking over from his bass setup to the drum kit, with a knowing smile of confidence. "It was an epiphany," he recalled. "I had a literal flashback during the song, where I was in fourth grade, sitting at the edge of my bed, and I remember vividly, air-drumming to records after school, imagining that I was doing the big hometown rock show. And it struck me like lightning behind the drum set at that very moment."

Sucherman's dream may have been to play in Styx, but for Dennis DeYoung, James Young, Tommy Shaw, Chuck Panozzo and John Panozzo, their dream of a successful rock and roll band became a 35-year-long rollercoaster. They had four multiplatinum records in a row; they also recorded in studios where the paneling fell around their heads. They broke up, they reunited, they fought, they made up, and created classic rock and roll songs through it all.

And it all began in 1960 on a sweltering summer day in Chicago.

The South Side of Chicago is the baddest part of town, and if you go down there, you'd better just beware of a band called the Trade Winds. In 1960, the Panozzo twins, John and Chuck, were playing music in their house when one of their grade school classmates, Dennis DeYoung, heard their music, poked his head through an open window, told them he liked what he heard and asked if he could bring his accordion and join the band.

"I knew the Panozzos," said Dennis DeYoung. "I didn't know they played instruments, but it was a hot summer day, and at that time

nobody had air conditioning, so everybody's doors were open. And I heard this music coming out of their house, and I poked my head in. There were the Panozzos and some kid on the accordion. They were just kids, they were starting out, the kid on the accordion had only been played for a year and a half, and Chuck had just started taking lessons on the guitar. And I had a full eight years on the accordion under my belt, I was a pretty good accordion player. I told them, 'come on over to my basement,' and they brought their stuff over, and that was it. And that other accordion player was gone."

"When Dennis came over and played his accordion," remembered Chuck Panozzo, "I looked at my brother, and John and I agreed this is a guy we could play music with. And we ping-ponged back and forth, sometimes my place, sometimes his place, sometimes outside. And we did this all summer long, instead of going out and playing softball in the street. I'm sure our neighbors were very happy that their houses weren't being pelted with softballs."

The group, along with guitarist Tom Nardini, became the Trade Winds, and played at dances, parties, weddings and get-togethers throughout the South Side. Their stage outfits - black suits with long ties, Dennis with his accordion, Chuck with his Gibson guitar, and John's drum set with a painted palm tree on the front - made them look as professional as any band in Chicago. "The fun part about those times were our parents were so proud of us," said Chuck Panozzo, "because we were doing something constructive. And we were serious about our music. We'd go back and forth with our instruments from our house to Dennis' house to practice. And sometimes we would practice in the front room, and Dennis' grandfather would take his cane and pound it on the ceiling of his basement, and we said 'Oh-oh, it's kinda loud for Charlie.' We were very young men in 1962. Who knew that we would be able to look back at this body of work and all these memories, and it all started here."

In 1965, when another group called the Trade Winds had a hit with "New York's A Lonely Town," the Panozzo-DeYoung-Nardini Trade Winds changed their name to There Were Four ("TW4" for short). That lineup lasted until the late 1960's, when Tom Nardini left the band, and the Panozzos and DeYoung enrolled in Chicago Teachers' College, a division of Chicago State University. Still keeping their musical dreams alive, TW4 sang and performed in the college cafeteria, where

their college brethren cheered their every performance. Another student, John Curulewski, played an acoustic guitar in the cafeteria one day, and Dennis DeYoung invited him to join TW4.

At the same time, a guitarist named James "JY" Young was trying to get his band in position for the same gigs TW4 were playing throughout the Windy City. JY, who loved the music of Jimi Hendrix and the Chicago blues scene, was a guitar prodigy since his early days at Calumet High School in Chicago, a few miles from the Panozzo-DeYoung practice basements. "I had Eric Clapton's Crossroads album," said JY, "and I would play at it 16 rpm so that it was in the same key, but an octave lower, and half the tempo, so I could figure out how he must have fingered it to play the part. I grew up probably about five or six miles away from where Dennis and the Panozzos grew up, and we were in rival groups in a sense that we were competing for work as cover bands. But while TW4 were a great cover band, and they'd perform Side A of Abbey Road, my group would be doing a re-arrangement of Creedence Clearwater's 'Born on the Bayou' that we'd heaved up."

By 1970, JY was ready to graduate from college, and he wanted to get his band into a rock festival that summer. After much begging and pleading, JY convinced the concert promoters to put his group on the bill. "We went down there and had to set up early on a Friday afternoon, and there were 8,000 people cheering for our music. But soon thereafter someone came along and convinced the bandmembers that rock music was the music of the devil, and so they went into Jehovah's Witnesses and left the group. So I looked around for a band where I could just go out and earn money with and hone my craft. And TW4 needed a guitarist, and Dennis and the Panozzos both had come over to audition my band with some booking agents they had that was booking them on some shows."

Eventually JY did join the group, and the five-member TW4 forged ahead. To supplement their income, some of the members of TW4 used their college degrees for teaching jobs - imagine a student's school schedule with music theory teacher Dennis DeYoung, band teacher John Panozzo and art teacher Chuck Panozzo.

In 1971, TW4 was the hottest cover band in Chicago. They played concerts for promoter Dex Card in northern Indiana, breaking attendance records with every performance. Each night they honed

their chops performing covers in bars, clubs, concert halls, anywhere there was an appreciative crowd and enough power plugs for the amplifiers. Then came the next step - one night after a successful TW4 concert, Bill Traut, a representative from a small Chicago-based record label, Wooden Nickel Records, offered TW4 a chance to record some albums for them.

"A local record company guy from Wooden Nickel came up and saw the band," said DeYoung, "and said to us, 'Hey, wanna make a record?' We were playing Beatles covers at the time, and our goal was not to play the Beatles, but to be in them. We got that record deal, and thought to ourselves, 'here we go.'"

When TW4 signed with Wooden Nickel, the label told the group to drop the name TW4 and come up with something better. The former TW4 scribbled down plenty of nicknames and bandnames. Eventually it came down to three choices - Torch, Kelp or Styx. "TW4 didn't suit the times," said JY. "And fortunately the guys went along with it. Styx was the one name no one hated. Mystical sort of names were in vogue at that time."

By 1972, Styx recorded and released their first album. But during the recording session, the band noticed that something about their new label didn't seem right. "John Panozzo was not only a drummer," said Chuck Panozzo, "he was really a percussionist. So the first time we were in the studio for Wooden Nickel, this producer saw all of John's percussion instruments, which he considered nothing more than trinkets, and he says, 'Oh well, you're just wasting your time with all this stuff.' And we turned around to this guy and said, 'You're supposed to be a record producer, don't you hear sounds from percussion instruments that add to the complexity and texture of the music?'"

Still, Wooden Nickel promised the band a good promotional effort, including distribution through their parent label RCA. So when in September 1972, Styx' first single, "Best Thing" / "What Has Come Between Us" (Wooden Nickel 0106) hit the Hot 100, the band thought success had finally hit. "'Best Thing' came on the charts at #88 the first week out," said JY, "and we said 'hey, what's so hard about this?' And the next week it got up to #82 - but the next week it was 82 without a bullet, and three weeks later it was gone. And we said, 'I guess we figured out what's so hard about this.'"

By the time Styx began work on their second album, Styx II, Dennis DeYoung wanted to take a crack at songwriting. He wrote or co-wrote five of the seven songs on Styx II, including a ballad dedicated to his wife Suzanne. Pouring out his emotions on a grand piano, DeYoung composed "Lady" (Wooden Nickel 0116), a song devoid of rhyme, but full of passion and sincerity. "Some of my songs rhyme, some of them don't, and 'Lady' doesn't rhyme. For popular music, at any rate, the most important thing is to convey the emotion and to convey the idea. But 'Lady' was the first song I wrote by myself ... ever ... for a record. That was me defining myself at the age of 24. I played the piano on that, I didn't own a piano until two years after I recorded that song, I went in there and bludgeoned my way through a piano in the studio. I invented myself at that moment, but I didn't know it. And I thought the album was a really good piece of work for what we were doing."

Wooden Nickel sent the album out - and it flopped. The band later found that Wooden Nickel had spent the grand total of \$161.00 to promote Styx II, mostly for postage to mail copies to radio stations. "I'm looking at all these artists in the Wooden Nickel office," said Chuck Panozzo, "and I said, 'Why does everybody only have one album? One album does not make a career.' I didn't know anything about what distribution meant, and people came up to us and asked, 'When are you going national?' There was a little bit of exploitation going on here. Everyone thinks you make an album and you're on the top. Well, it doesn't work that way."

"Styx II was such a miserable failure at first," said Dennis DeYoung, "that for the next two albums I tried not to be me, because I was convinced people hated songs like 'Lady.' For the next two albums, I wrote all these goofy songs because I thought, 'Okay, they don't like me, I'll be someone else.'"

Resigned to the fact that they had to take control of their own musical fate, Styx began to tour all over the Midwest - not just the Chicago-Indiana area. They played in Wisconsin, in Michigan, basketball courts in Pennsylvania, hockey rinks in Ontario. They even performed in Utah and South Dakota and Arkansas, where "Lady" actually had some airplay. If Wooden Nickel couldn't bring the music to the fans, Styx would do it themselves.

By October 1974, Styx had recorded their fourth album for

Wooden Nickel, Man of Miracles. While on a visit to Chicago radio station WLS, a 100,000 watt clear-channel AM rock and roll station, Styx received the big break that would make them 10-year-long overnight successes.

"Prior to the release of our fourth record," said JY, "we went up to WLS and asked them about playing something off our new record. He said no, but Jim Smits is the guy's name, and we're forever in his debt, even though it's 25 years later, and he said, 'I'm not going to play anything off this new record, but I'm getting requests for this song 'Lady.' I never get this many requests for songs that are not on my playlist.' He tells us this is a hit song that nobody really got behind. And he said he would play it once a day until it was a hit."

"WLS said they were going to play Lady at 8:00 that night," said DeYoung, "and they were going to play it once a night until it was a hit record. That's like winning the Lotto. WLS was the biggest radio station in America, the most powerful, the most influential. That was tantamount to saying you struck it rich here, baby. We were stunned, completely and totally stunned. I had been a lunatic for 2½ years with the record company and with everybody saying, 'You guys are idiots, this is a hit record,' and WLS listened."

And so did RCA. Noticing the groundswell of response for "Lady," Wooden Nickel re-released the song (on Wooden Nickel 10102), and gave the record an RCA promotional push. This time, the song became a monster hit, reaching #6 on the Billboard national charts. "RCA opened up the rest of the country to 'Lady,'" said JY, "and it became a #1 song in every market it was played in, but it peaked differently because it broke in different markets at different times. So ultimately it was never #1 on everybody's playlist at the same time. But WLS was crucial, and without them, it wouldn't have happened."

Meanwhile, as "Lady" was dominating the pop and rock charts, another musician and his band were playing clubs throughout Chicago and the surrounding states. Tommy Shaw, a gifted guitarist from Montgomery, Alabama, was on tour with his funk-rock group MS Funk, trying to live the rock and roll dream. "Oddly enough," said Shaw, "most of the members for the band were from Nebraska and Kansas. We were in Muscle Shoals cutting some demos, and the engineer said, 'You guys sound like good ol' Muscle Shoals funk.' And we couldn't think of a name before that, so we went with MS Funk. We found that

there were a lot of gigs around the Chicago area - Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, and they were all within a short drive. So we wound up getting an apartment in Chicago, and found that if we advertised ourselves as 'MS Funk from Chicago,' we could get more money in the bars over in Michigan and in Wisconsin if they thought we were a Chicago band."

After the success of "Lady," things returned to the status quo for Styx. A song from Man of Miracles, "You Need Love" (Wooden Nickel 10272) only got as high as #88; a re-release of "Best Thing" (Wooden Nickel 10329) didn't even chart. "I went through a period of what I call acute smugness," said DeYoung. "I went up to everybody who doubted me on 'Lady' and saying ha ha, told you so. Which is only human nature, you know? But then right away we were back to trying to figure out how to have another one. That's the problem with hit records. You had one, big deal. Now what?"

Eventually it meant leaving Wooden Nickel completely. "After 'Lady' ran its course," said JY, "we were still playing the gigs we'd been playing around here for years. And we all looked at each other, and said wait a minute, we had a top 10 song and a gold record, and we're still doing the same friggin' thing. So we decided that our then-management and our then-record label really didn't know what was going on. We wanted to go to some other label that was more in tune with the progressive rock thing we were doing."

"After we had that hit with 'Lady,'" said DeYoung, "we got wooed by CBS, Warner Bros. and A&M to sign. CBS and Warner Bros. offered us more money, better deals in terms of royalty points. But I convinced the band to go to A&M, because I believe that our recordings wouldn't be a one-off album to them. That they would try to allow us to have a career. Those were the golden days of the 70's to be at A&M Records, because Jerry Moss and Herb Alpert really believed in the artists. It wasn't just bullshit, it was real."

"We went to A&M," said JY, "and the attorney we used was Michael Rosenfeld, who was the attorney for the Eagles at one point in time. He said, 'I think you guys got to put the dynamite by the door and take a risk, or you'll shrivel on the vine at RCA because it's not what they do.' It cost us some money to leave Wooden Nickel, but ultimately it was the very absolute right move for us."

Styx immediately began work on their first A&M album, Equinox

(A&M 4559). Their first A&M single, a rocker called "Lorelei" (A&M 1786) bounded up the pop charts, eventually reaching #27. "I love that imagery of Equinox," said Chuck Panozzo, "with that album cover art, a big cube of ice on fire. To me it symbolized Wooden Nickel melting away. One of my favorite tracks on that album is 'Suite Madame Blue' - that's a very long song. In 1975, when you recorded it, if you made a mistake, you had to start the whole song over again. There was no mercy. We laid that track in one take - that's pretty amazing, because a lot of times when there's a song that's 6 ½ minutes long, there's a lot of chances that you could play it for 6 minutes and 29 seconds, and that last second, if you ruin the take, you had to start from the beginning. And what you always try to avoid in the studio is take 3 or 4, because the best material is right in the beginning."

But even as the band began a concert tour to support Equinox, there was growing friction within the group. John Curulewski left the band in December 1975, leaving Styx for a life with his family. "The Equinox album came out in November," said JY, "and we were out on the road. And it became increasingly clear with every tour stop that JC was becoming less and less happy with his life and what was going on around him, and I don't exactly know why. He was extremely negative for that whole month, and ultimately he wound up quitting right around Pearl Harbor Day in 1975."

The band needed a new guitarist - and fast. As luck would have it, Styx's tour manager remembered seeing a band called "MS Funk" playing at the Rush Up club in Chicago, and thought their guitarist would be worth a tryout. "They put out an all-points bulletin for a new guitarist-vocalist," said Shaw, "and I had moved back down to Alabama. I left my phone number listed - I don't know, I just felt like if anybody needed to get a hold of me, they'd be able to get it from Directory Assistance. They didn't know where I was, so they said, 'Isn't he from like Birmingham or something?'"

"Our tour manager had seen Tommy quite a bit," said JY. "I had never seen him personally, but he said this guy was really good and could sing the high parts, because John Curulewski sang the high note on 'Lady' in the chorus, and we needed somebody to do that."

In mid-December 1975, Tommy Shaw readied himself for an audition with Styx. "This roadie named Yaz (Jastremski) picked me up at the airport, and took me over to Dennis' house, and the whole

band was over there. I met everybody. I took my demos with me, and they had a guitar there. But we talked a little bit, and they played me 'Midnight Ride' from the Equinox album, and it just blew my mind. I thought with songs like 'Lady' and 'Best Thing,' that this was a pop band. And "Midnight Ride" completely threw me for a loop. It made me forget the guy's name who brought me there. So we sat around and sang - they gave me this unbelievably high note to sing in 'Lady,' which is what you do to the new guy to test his worth. And they started singing, and it was so freakin' loud - by now I had been playing in this little bar in Alabama, and we were doing Eagles and Dan Fogleberg acoustic rock stuff. But I found a way to blend in with them, and so I got the job."

Shaw also brought another element to the band - besides just "hitting the high notes," he could sing lead vocal and write his own songs, adding a new creative outlet for the band's profile. In fact, one of the Shaw songs he played at the audition, "Crystal Ball," eventually became the title of Styx' new album (A&M 4604).

"Tommy's original version of 'Crystal Ball,'" said Dennis DeYoung, "was more like a Crosby Stills and Nash song, like 'Helplessly Hoping' - a completely three-part harmony song. And I told Tommy no, you should sing that song, it should be personal, one person singing that, not three people harmonizing. It was a beautiful acoustic song. But we 'Styx-i-fied it,' put the Marshall guitar on it, told that song to stand up tall now."

Tommy Shaw discovered that even though this was a rock band with two Top 40 singles to its credit, they were still touring in two station wagons. "I always remember the first time we met over at the Panozzos' mother's house, and we were leaving to go in our two rented cars with the luggage racks on top, that's how we toured the first couple of years. And John Panozzo was sitting in the passenger seat in the front, and I was sitting behind the driver in the back, next to Chuck Panozzo. And the Panozzo brothers started fighting - kicking the shit out of the seat between them, and I'm right in the middle of it. And I'm thinking, oh what the hell have I gotten myself into?"

Armed with their new guitarist, Styx returned to the concert stage in 1976. Ever since the TW4 days, Styx knew the live concert scene and played every night like there was no tomorrow. Every song, every lyric, every guitar riff and piano chord and drum roll was played

with a solid balance of enthusiasm, professionalism, energy and fun. They changed their clothes in dingy arena locker rooms in Muskegon; they changed flat tires for stranded motorists on the Massachusetts Turnpike.

And woe to any group that took Styx on as an opening act, because the boys from the Windy City might just steal the crowd away. "We cut our teeth being a live band, we were very enthusiastic," said DeYoung. "I still think we were the most entertaining 70's rock band in person. We got dumped a couple of times. Seals and Crofts dumped us - that may have been because we were big and loud. But bands didn't really want us, they'd turn the volume down on the sound and turn the lights on too soon, all that stuff."

"We were always a strong live act," said JY. "The vocals were there when we sang live, it was not manufactured in the studio. Particularly after Tommy got in the band, there was enough energy and there was a hit song in our repertoire with 'Lady' and 'Lorelei,' we could go out there and give the big guys a run for their money. Aerosmith put us on the bill opening for them in the Northeast, which is their stronghold, but they were arguing with each other on stage during their set, and when we went on there, we were loaded for bear, and we killed every night. There's no experience like that, there's no boot camp for the big-time rock stage that would whip you into shape better than that."

"We were the opening act from Hell," said Tommy Shaw, "the opening act that can eat your lunch. The one act that we didn't blow off the stage was Queen. We went there and put in our set, but Freddie Mercury - nobody was touching his lunch. His lunch was secure."

During breaks from their tour, Styx recorded their third A&M album. Calling in every stroke of luck they could muster, the album was released on July 7 - the seventh day of the seventh month of the year 1977 - more 7's than Walter Payton with the football and daylight to go. Within weeks, that album - The Grand Illusion - raced up the charts, and tracks like "Come Sail Away" and "Fooling Yourself" dominated the airwaves. And although songwriting credit listed on the album may have been awarded to one person per song, the record was a collaborative effort all around.

"The chorus and a couple of parts of 'Come Sail Away' came from an MS Funk song called 'Ain't Gettin' Down,'" said Shaw. "The lyrics

went like this, 'Ain't gettin' down, ain't gettin' down, ain't gettin' down for you.' Even after Crystal Ball, there were still bits and pieces of my recent past that were becoming Styx songs."

"The way the songs are credited," said JY, "there were elements in 'Come Sail Away,' that Tommy contributed to that song, while the suggestion of that outerspace middle part, and then the suggestion that the ship become a starship, those were my input into the song. Meanwhile, Dennis turned around and helped contribute a chorus idea in 'Miss America,' so we worked together on that stuff."

"'Come Sail Away' is the quintessential Styx song," said DeYoung, 'in that it embodies all the things that Styx is musically. It has the piano ballad, it has the artsy rock middle, and it has that kind of hard rock edge to it. It's all the things that the band really embodies, and that's why that song has been the most remembered of all Styx songs. After we had mixed 'Come Sail Away,' I just turned to everybody and I said 'Look, if that ain't it, I'm going back to teaching, because I can't do much better than that.'"

"That opening riff on 'Fooling Yourself,'" added JY, "Dennis heard me playing that on the keyboard one day, and he said that sounds like something, so that's how that found its way onto 'Fooling Yourself.' Even though 'Miss America' says me, and 'Come Sail Away' says Dennis, and 'Fooling Yourself' says Tommy, we had all contributed to each other's tunes."

And while Young, DeYoung and Shaw contributed to the writing, Chuck Panozzo contributed to the album cover, working with a graphic designer to adapt a Rene Magritte print for The Grand Illusion. "Some of these album covers I've been more involved in than others. I had this wonderful experience with The Grand Illusion album cover. When I brought it back to the guys, I said, 'What do you think of this?' And a few people had some other people come in, and they were making all these other suggestions, and I said 'Oh, I'll consider the other suggestions, but it's going to be this.' Because I thought this was a wonderful piece of art, and it was a great illusion in itself. That album was really a wonderful collaborative by everybody. When I look at it, back to this date it's been our largest selling album, and I know why - songs like 'Fooling Yourself' and 'Come Sail Away' are timeless classics."

The Grand Illusion sold over 3 million copies, and stayed on the

album charts for over two years. Of all those copies sold, one was purchased by the Sucherman family of Tucson, Arizona. A young Todd Sucherman and his brothers were visiting his uncle in Tucson for Christmas, and one morning during the vacation, Todd saw his uncle putting *The Grand Illusion* on the family phonograph. "Myself and both my brothers, our ears perked up, who is this band? My brother had the 45 of 'Lady,' so I was familiar with Styx and they were a Chicago-based band. But that's all we knew at that time, But that was the first time I remember hearing an album from beginning to end and going wow. When I got home, I bought the record myself. I became a Styx fan that day."

Styx followed *The Grand Illusion* with *Pieces of Eight* (A&M 4724), another Top 10 album. With songs like "Renegade" and "Blue Collar Man" hitting the Top 40, Styx were now headlining to 20,000 enthusiastic fans each night. "I was big into conceptual things," said Dennis DeYoung. "People place too much emphasis on us as performers, and *The Grand Illusion* was my way of trying to tell the audience that this is an illusion we created, that's all it is. We don't have any more ideas about what we're doing than you do about what you're doing. *Pieces of Eight* was a concept I had after we finally made it, we were so successful in such a 12-month period financially, that it was about what happens with your friends, and what is this thing about money, what is this pursuit of money. Is it really what we're looking for? And that's not a new concept, but that's what I was going through."

And along with success came a new label - that Styx was just another "corporate rock" band, a group that critics accused of being nothing more than the equivalent of musical fast food. "Ironically," said Tommy Shaw, "we got labeled this corporate thing, and I think it was all because of this one interview our manager did with the *New York Times*. He talked about the marketing of Styx as being like McDonald's hamburgers. I still don't know where he got that from. It was something that he just said flippantly, and that label stuck to us. We never had a corporate sponsor, and still haven't. We've been self-conscious about that. Me, personally, if somebody wants to sponsor our tour and help us out with getting the whole thing started and doing that sort of thing, fine."

For their next album, *Cornerstone* (A&M 3711), Styx decided it

was time for a change. Their original recording studio, Paradise Studios in Chicago, was falling apart, and at Dennis DeYoung's suggestion, the group moved to nearby Pumpkin Studios. "I think Dennis was on some levels disappointed in retrospect with his contribution to Pieces of Eight," said JY, "because the two biggest songs to emerge from that record for the first time were 'Blue Collar Man' and 'Renegade.' So I think Dennis felt that what he needed to do was sort of refocus himself on what his plans were. On Cornerstone, Dennis went for a softer sound, where the vocals he felt were natural-sounding and less processed. Some people viewed that as a departure from what we had done in the past - in some levels, I did - and we definitely had some discussions about it."

While at Pumpkin Studios, Dennis began work on a song called "Babe," a love letter to his wife Suzanne. Because the grand piano in Pumpkin Studios was out of tune, DeYoung recorded the demo on a Fender Rhodes piano. "There was something about the way I sang 'Babe' the first way, it was very sad in my mind. So I just winged that whole demo on the Fender Rhodes on that four-hour demo session. 'Babe' was a straight ballad, and I didn't think the band would ever feel comfortable with a straight ballad, because of all the testosterone that's necessary to play guitar in a rock band. 'Babe' was originally meant to be played on a grand piano, but my point is, dumb stupid luck. Luck counts for an awful lot more than planning things out."

Dennis got the rest of the band to add a Styx-i-fied bridge to the demo, and added the finished song to the Cornerstone album. "I had never rehearsed Babe," said Chuck Panozzo, "I never heard the song before we recorded it. We did one take on it, one take."

"Babe" heated up the charts during the winter of 1980, eventually hitting #1. After 16 years of Trade Winds and TW4 and struggling at Wooden Nickel and endless touring and performing and recording and rehearsing, Styx was now the #1 act in the country.

"We sold millions of albums before that," said Tommy Shaw, "but 'Babe' introduced us to a new audience, the ones that don't necessarily buy your albums - they like hearing it on the radio - but through all that, the rock fans came to see the show. 'Babe' was a double-edged sword, and we knew it as soon as we heard it. We knew - well, this is going to change things. But we also knew, the guy in the band wrote a song that's going to be a hit, you can't tell him it can't be

on the record because it's a hit. But it forever changed the way a lot of people look at Styx. But at the same time, it brought in a bunch of new people. It was not a bad thing, it's probably the biggest song the band ever did, at least in America."

And the fans agreed. In 1980, Styx was voted the most popular band in the country, according to a Gallup poll. They were nominated for a Grammy; they won a People's Choice award. And in 1981, Styx released a new masterpiece, a concept album called Paradise Theatre (A&M 3719), a disc that would eventually become the band's fourth consecutive multiplatinum album.

"It's a wonderful concept on Dennis' part," said JY, "to make the parallel between this incredible movie palace that was built on the West Side of Chicago at the height of the Roaring 20's, only to have the Great Depression happen a year later. The building was originally built to stand forever, but because of the Depression it fell on hard times, and ultimately it became a parking lot. There's an escapist thread that runs through our music. Even to this day, people's lives are difficult enough on a daily basis, with their job and everything else that people in the modern world have to deal with. I used to view what I did as a really frivolous occupation, that had really no value intrinsically onto itself, but in the last three or four years, I've realized that people need to be surrounded by joyful, wonderful things, and by beautiful things. People have to remove themselves from the reality and the heartache and the sadness that we all face as human beings."

"Paradise Theatre was written in 1980, right after the end of the 70's," said DeYoung. "From Nixon through Carter, from the oil embargo to the fiasco in Iran, interest rate 19%, other countries saying 'America, you suck,' and we thought we sucked. And I was sick of it. And I thought the old theater thing was a metaphor for what had happened to America, and our confidence. Paradise Theatre was a statement on what I perceived needed to happen in the 80's for us to right ourselves. When I saw the whole thing developing between Carter and Reagan, I thought to myself, Reagan may be full of shit, but he says the right things. He says, 'You know what, we are the greatest country in the world, and we're fucked up, but we're still the greatest. And we stand on the side of right more often than we stand on the side of wrong.' And so Paradise Theatre was a comment on the situation that I saw in America in 1980. And how I felt it's time for us

to right ourselves on this thing. We are still good people, we let everybody into this country, we're still a melting pot, and we still have the right idea."

One of tracks from Paradise Theatre, a Top 10 hit called "Too Much Time On My Hands," was written and recorded just before the album was ready to be pressed. "I had not written very much for that record," said Tommy Shaw, "and it's the last day of pre-production before we go into the studio. I was living in Michigan then, and I had a two-hour drive to get to the rehearsal place. And I'm going, 'I don't have a rock song on this record.' And about 10 blocks before I got to this place where we were rehearsing, I got it in my head - the opening riff. I walked right into the studio, and I said, 'Chuck - play this.' And I sang him the bass line. I was calling out chords. 'Now change to D here, same thing but in D.' And it was an audible - we were calling audibles, and we worked it out right there. It was in the very last minute that the song made it on the record."

"When I first heard the intro," said Chuck Panozzo, "I'm thinking it would be a great part for a keyboard player, but playing it on a bass wouldn't be as succinct. But we had played so much that by then, I guess after playing as much as we did, I don't know why I would doubt myself for a second. But we knew at that point that that was a pretty cool song, and it came together very quickly."

And people who purchased the vinyl copies of Paradise Theatre or the first pressings of Styx's newest top 10 hit, "The Best of Times," got an added bonus - as an anti-counterfeiting experiment, A&M added laser etchings directly on the vinyl, so that graphic artwork could be seen in reflected light, essentially a vinyl watermark. "I saw a serigraph of the Paradise Theatre in an art gallery, and I bought it and showed it to the art department of A&M, and they came up with the album cover. Jeff Ayeroff was a fan of the band's, and he's gone on to bigger and greater things. He was head of the art department at A&M at the time. He loved when I showed him the Paradise Theater picture, he just loved it. We were the biggest thing on A&M Records at that time, so you get the nice packaging at that time. Split Enz also got that laser treatment for their album, I really liked their music as well."

"The lasering came from A&M," said Chuck Panozzo, "and they really made a most beautiful package that I think is just to me, to this

day, is so gorgeous. Even when we got our gold and platinum records for Paradise Theatre, they actually have those designs lasered onto the discs that we have."

Another song on Paradise Theatre, a JY composition called "Snowblind," also received some AOR radio airplay - but it was also targeted by some religious groups as both a pro-drug song and as a "play it backwards and you'll hear Satan's message" record. "There was a right-wing group," said JY, "that started listening to music backwards. And they had chosen the song 'Snowblind' as something that had a backwards satanic message on it. The whole concept is ludicrous - anyone that says I tried so hard to make it so, anybody that's ever said that, said some combination of the words, or even 'make it so' - that's where 'Satan' comes from, so every time Jean-Luc Picard says 'Make it so, Mr. LaForge,' then he's actually saying 'Satan' backwards. See - that Vulcan with those pointed ears, he's a devil, I tell you! The Devil!!"

By 1982, Styx was hard at work on their new album, a concept album unlike any they had ever done before. Instead of songs wrapped around a common theme, this time the songs would be threaded together as a rock opera - rock singer Robert Kilroy (DeYoung) framed for murder by the music-hating censorship leader Dr. Righteous (JY) who, with the help of his henchmen (the Panozzos) throw the singer in jail. As the singer is tortured by futuristic buddah-faced prison guard androids, a music fan, Jonathan Chance (Shaw) uncovers the truth and sets Kilroy free.

The album, Kilroy Was Here, was envisioned by DeYoung as a statement by Styx on both censorship and the invasion of a society of robotic technocracy. "We had just toured Japan," said DeYoung, "and I came back to American and I saw a PBS special on the factories in Japan, where all the lights were off - because machines don't need lights. And it struck me about technology. Technology is a dangerous thing, with every advancement comes incredible threats to mankind. And I believe it. Ten years ago, I didn't even have cable. And the news wasn't 24 hours a day. I think that's why people are taking Prozac. It's too much. Calm it down a little bit. I always wanted to write a rock opera like Tommy, and I came up with this idea with this fictitious rock star, and I had very high aspirations for it. And I dumbed it down to do it on the record, because we were all very

nervous about it, the band was nervous about it, but I forged ahead. And I thought I had a good idea, I wanted to say something about censorship, it was before the Parent's Music Resource Council existed. We even put a sticker on our label as a joke, but you know what? Stickers became an issue 2-3 years later."

Along with the release of Kilroy Was Here came an updated stage show, including an 11-minute motion picture explaining the story of rock singer Kilroy and his battle with Dr. Righteous. "Kilroy Was Here was a difficult album for people to understand," said Chuck Panozzo, "because Paradise Theatre was our first toe into a theatrical presentation. We used to open our shows with strobe lights and the William Tell Overture. Then we started another tour with a backlit scrim with the City of Chicago, with the intro of 'Rhapsody in Blue,' And that would roll up, and we would be revealed that way. But When Kilroy Was Here came out, and the movie started, people didn't understand what that was all about."

The first single from Kilroy Was Here, "Mr. Roboto," eventually peaked at #3 and became a worldwide hit - but according to JY, it may have alienated another segment of their core audience. "'Mr. Roboto,' which seemed like a good idea at the time, I mean it's obviously a very kitschy pop techno kind of thing, and it still is a clever sounding tune, but it definitely alienated another segment of our core audience. I'm a hard rock fan, and I like things that had power and attitude, and 'Babe' was a shift away from that first-off, but if we could be successful with it, I learned how to embrace it as best I could. And 'Mr. Roboto,' which I thought was clever and fun, and honestly after four multiplatinum albums in a row, I always thought that as an artist you have to take risks. And Kilroy Was Here was a risk. 'Mr. Roboto' was a risk. But I said hey, sometimes you've got to say what the heck. Out comes 'Mr. Roboto,' and I had my 'Heavy Metal Poisoning' on that, I got a chance to dress up and do make-believe things, and it was a fun departure on some levels for us to do."

The tour, with its myriad of costume changes and technical setups, didn't run as smoothly as prior Styx tours. One show in Chicago at the World Theater had to be scrapped when the projector that ran the opening film broke down, forcing Styx to cancel the show and send thousands of their fans - including an eighth-grade Styx fan named Todd Sucherman - home for the evening.

But the group was starting to break apart after 20 years of non-stop touring and performing. Tommy Shaw, for instance, had developed a recreational drug habit that eventually convinced him to leave Styx after the Kilroy tour. "I was at the height of my recreational partying years, so I was just walking resentment most of the time. I was the guy that represented that side of the band back in those days. Everybody did a little bit here and there, but by today's standards, we were total wimps. My story - when I look at what's going on right now... I was just partying and drinking and the occasional gram of cocaine here and there, that was about it. But it was enough to influence my decision-making - although I haven't done anything like that in ten years now, I couldn't imagine getting up every day and doing what I have to do and the decisions that I'm faced with and the responsibilities that I have. I see now why things were so fucked up back then."

"Tommy quit the band during the middle of the tour," said DeYoung. "Tommy was going through some admittedly chaotic times in his own personal life. That'll change your perspective on things. So he ran off to have his own solo career. And the remaining three guys - JY, John and Chuck - wanted me to replace Tommy at that moment and go forward. And I said I wouldn't do it, because I really believed that Styx was ingrained in peoples' minds as those guys. Styx, to me, was really those personalities, and most primarily Tommy and myself, who did 95% of the writing and the singing. And I felt that was just not the thing to do - to replace Tommy. Since Tommy went and did a solo record, I said I'll wait, I'll go do some solo albums and see what happens. Because I just didn't want to do anything that would denigrate what I thought was importance to the Styx legend, and that was keep those guys together."

So after A&M released a live album, Caught in the Act, and a one-off single, "Music Time," Styx went on hiatus. Dennis DeYoung released some solo albums, and had a Top 40 hit with "Desert Moon." Tommy Shaw released some solo albums, appeared on American Bandstand, and scored some motion pictures, including the main theme to Remo Williams: The Adventure Begins. James Young released some solo albums, including a collaboration with John Panozzo and synthesizer wizard Jan Hammer. And Chuck Panozzo went back to school.

"I became the king of adult education classes. I did what I wanted to do, I just didn't know how to fit in - how do you fit in going from one of the biggest rock bands in the world and say, okay I'm here, do you have a job for me? John and I toyed with the idea of putting a trio together. But a lot of entertainers have problems when that rug is pulled out from underneath them, it's a very difficult transition. Because people only see you from what they think you are or what they project you to be. But by the 1980's, my drive was over. And I needed a break."

By 1989, Styx' break was over. A few phone calls here and there, and most of the band put aside their differences and began work on a new album, Edge of the Century.

Tommy Shaw, meanwhile, was working on a new album of his own, this time as a member of Damn Yankees, a rock supergroup featuring Ted Nugent, drummer Michael Cartellone, and Night Ranger frontman Jack Blades. "I had done my third solo album, and I was with a manager in New York who had managed me and Glen Burtnik. And we were all in New York, and I had done my third solo album, and had gotten that out of my system. So I went into Bud's office and I said, 'I want to be in a band again.' And he picked up the phone and called John Kalodner, and at that very moment Ted Nugent's manager was in Kalodner's office, having the same conversation with Kalodner. So he said, 'How about you and Ted?' I had known Ted's manager since I was in MS Funk, and so it was just a simple matter of Ted coming to New York and plugging in where the band that I already had, which included Michael Cartellone, we were already rehearsing. He came in and plugged in, and it was like - 'Well, that works.' A couple of months later, Jack Blades made the same call to Kalodner, and Kalodner sent him to my house in New York, and he knocked on my house and came in, and the next day he was in the laundry room, and I heard him singing, 'I don't want to hear about it anymore...' And I'm thinking, where's the rest of that song? He didn't say anything, and I said, 'Jack, come up here, I think I know the rest of it.' And we sat around and we wrote 'High Enough,' in a couple of minutes. It was another one of those serendipity things where we just had the chemistry. And it's on that damn Monster Ballads compilation that's on every morning and every night, with the guy that skydives out of the plane. I'm like the second or third face you see on that commercial, singing 'High

Enough.' I must not look like myself any more, because somebody said to me, 'There's somebody on TV singing one of your songs.'"

Meanwhile, as "High Enough" was rising up the charts, Styx released their new album, Edge of the Century, with Glen Burtnik replacing Tommy Shaw on guitar. The first single from that album, "Love Is The Ritual," flopped, but the second song, a ballad called "Show Me The Way," began to rise up the charts.

During the chart run of "Show Me The Way," the United States was involved in the Persian Gulf War. This inspired two radio stations - one in Washington, D.C., one in Knoxville - to create their own "Desert Shield" versions of "Show Me The Way", by adding soundbites from George Bush, Norman Schwarzkopf and Colin Powell, all inserted into the instrumental portions of the song.

"I was surprised by it," said Dennis DeYoung. "because the song had nothing to do with Desert Storm, and it happened about 4-5 months after the record came out. I let them play that version on the radio, but I said I didn't want to sell that version. To me, that was like selling war. You can't do that. Guys who were in Desert Storm come up to me all the time and tell me what that song meant to them. And that's great, and that's how it should exist for those people and in that way, if they so choose."

"There was little sound bites," said JY, "some of George Bush and some of others, and the one little tear-jerking moment is when a little girl says, 'I want my daddy to come home.'"

"When we play that song on stage today," said Chuck Panozzo, "Dennis will say that the song became connected with the Gulf War, but that's about all he'll say about it. But we played in Germany, and I saw all of the American GI's, all very young people. That made me feel a lot differently about the song."

During 1991, both Styx and Damn Yankees undertook cross-country tours in support of their albums. For fans of Styx members past and present, it was a dream come true. But an incident during the Damn Yankees' concert raised bad feelings between past and present members of Styx.

"We're pretty goofy on stage," said Tommy Shaw, "and we did this gag in half a dozen cities where we finished a song, the audience is screaming everything, the lights go down, and I go to center stage with an acoustic guitar and say, 'you know, I didn't write this song, but

I've played on it, and I'm just going to sing it for you.' So I start playing 'Babe,' and I get out the first half a lyric of it, and Nugent comes walking up, taps me on the shoulder, and says, 'scuse me, let me check your guitar, I think it's a little out of tune.' And he takes my guitar and smashes it into a million a pieces and leaves me standing there in a pile of wood and strings, and walks off. It was funny. We did it at the World Theater in Chicago, and Dennis DeYoung's daughter was in the audience. And she didn't think it was very funny, and I guess she told Dennis, and Dennis was very upset.

"I guess there was some stuff that went on stage with the Damn Yankees where they ridiculed 'Babe,'" said Chuck Panozzo, "and I think that was very hurtful to Dennis. So when we met up with them, when we were touring, there was some bad vibes there, and I felt kind of bad there. And I felt bad, because originally in 1990 I expected Tommy to be back, and that was the original idea. And suddenly those negotiations broke apart, and so that's when Glen Burtnik came into the picture, who is another great musician and writer. Then there's this new challenge - Styx is going out with a new guitar player, and let's face it, Tommy's shoes are not easy to fill."

"Anyway," said Shaw, "we drove all day on our day off to get to Syracuse because we were playing there the next night. Styx was playing there that night, and I wanted to go see them. So our crew got there first, and they were not treated very well, and we got there, and they wouldn't let us park our bus. We got put in the obstructed section, and they had state troopers keeping me from going downstairs. So I finally worked my way down to the bottom of the stage, and I'm thinking, 'Man I've always dreamed of going up front in a Styx concert.' So I figured one place I'm going to get recognized is at a Styx concert. So I took my hat off and walked right to the front of the stage. And I could look up at the stage and I could see who was mad at me in the band. The next morning, my tour manager told me they were checking out, so I threw my clothes on, ran out and got on the elevator, and when the door opened, it was Dennis."

"Tommy was starting like he was going to play 'Babe,'" said DeYoung, "and then Nugent would say we don't play that crap, and smash the guitar. They were doing that in every show. And I got wind of it, and I happened to meet Tommy, and I confronted him. And I said, 'What are you doing that for?'"

"So we sat down in the elevator lobby," said Shaw, "and he told me how he felt about everything, and I promised him I would never make any more jokes about 'Babe,' and the rest of the band came down there and they got to meet my daughter, whom they'd never seen before, and it was kind of a nice thing in the end. And it wound up not being anything too big."

Styx was actually having bigger problems. Despite the Top 5 showing of "Show Me The Way," A&M Records barely promoted the Edge of the Century album. In 1989, A&M founders Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss sold their label to Polygram, who were more interested in promoting youth-oriented artists than Styx. "I'll never forget," said Chuck Panozzo, "we were in the office of the fellow who managed Ron Weisner at the time, and there was a speakerphone, and we were there, and we weren't trying to eavesdrop, but we were all going to participate in this conversation, but he wasn't aware that we were listening to what he had said, because the meeting had just started. And he said, 'Oh, you know Styx, I don't know what you're trying to do with them, they don't even look like a rock band.'" We were there, and we couldn't believe what we just heard. What do you say when you're getting ready to put out an album and someone that's now directing the record company says that? It was Wooden Nickel all over again. We had produced all these albums for them and made them a ton of money, and then they're bickering about how much they want to give us for more albums. That record went almost gold, 30,000 copies away, and then all the promotion stopped. It was almost like A&M saying, 'We're not going to let that go gold for you, guys.'"

It took four years for A&M to smooth things over with the band, and eventually plans were underway to release a Styx greatest hits album. "In 1995, Damn Yankees hadn't done a record in a while," said JY, "and Tommy had recorded an album with Jack Blades, which was a good-sounding record but didn't find an audience at that point in time. Tommy called me up out of the clear blue, I hadn't heard from him since 1991, and we started chatting. Then A&M tried to license the original master of 'Lady' from Wooden Nickel, who weren't interested in licensing it - they had what they called The Best of Styx, and 'Lady' was the only real chart single that was on that record. And they felt by licensing that to A&M, nobody would buy their Best of Styx. So we just chose to re-record it. And Dennis and I were talking,

and I said, 'I was talking to Tommy, maybe he'd come in and sing the high part on "Lady.'" Indeed he did. We spent some time together, and it seemed all the old scar tissue had healed."

And for John Panozzo, things were getting tougher. He had gone through a divorce in 1990, and a recreational drinking problem became a life-threatening battle with alcoholism. "It was very hard for me," said Chuck Panozzo, "and I could not change it - he had been in rehab in 1990, and then he went into rehab one more time for alcoholism. It just didn't work. Tommy was very helpful, JY was very helpful, the first bout I addressed pretty much by myself, and the second time the band tried to be more involved."

A second A&M Greatest Hits package was released in 1996, which included some classic album tracks like "Snowblind" and "Boat on the River," as well as Top 40 hits like "Mademoiselle" and "Sing For The Day." It even included two new Styx songs - which eventually proved to be the last songs recorded with the classic lineup.

John Panozzo's health was getting worse, and there was no guarantee he would be able to perform at the top of his game every night for a 50-city tour. The band began a search for a temporary drummer, somebody who could fill in until John could get his strength up and rejoin the band in mid-tour.

By now, Todd Sucherman had made a name for himself as a session drummer, recording jingles and radio advertisements throughout Chicago. "The guy who was doing my cartage for sessions, Keith Marks, he had been the assistant tour manager with them," said Sucherman, "and had dealt with Styx and with both Dennis and JY in their solo projects in the past. When it was clear that John wasn't well, that he was going to be unable to play a 2 ½ hour rock show every night, Keith went to the guys and said, 'I've got the guy for the gig.'"

"The first time we were in rehearsal with him, two years ago," said Chuck Panozzo, "I met him for the first time, and I walked in rehearsal. It was he and JY and myself, and so we played 'The Grand Illusion,' and by the end of the song the poor guy was just sweating bullets. And I said, 'Gee, that's after the first song.' I had a funny feeling that Todd was so nervous he thought I was going to jump across the drum set and strangle him. But I had to reassure him that he was taking John's place, and at that time we had hoped it was only

temporary. I didn't know how I was going to feel, because I had only played music with my brother since childhood, I had never played with another drummer. But at the end of the song, I was totally happy with what I heard, he's rock solid, he holds the beat perfectly, and I said, 'This is a man I could play music with.'"

So Styx went on tour, as Todd Sucherman took the skins until John Panozzo could return to health. "We had known that John was not a well man," said JY, "and that's why we told him he really should not come on the tour, that he needed to focus on maintaining his health and improving his health. It was a sad thing, we had given him as many chances as we could to see if this would get him going and get him on some new healthy regimen that he hadn't tried before, to lift him back up into a spot where he could do this. Sadly, he really wasn't capable of coming on the road, and I think that sort of was the beginning of the end for him."

On July 15, 1996, Styx were preparing for a trip to New Jersey to play at the Garden State Performing Arts Center. Dennis DeYoung went on the Rosie O'Donnell TV show for a publicity appearance. By the end of the day, they learned their worst fears had come true - John Panozzo had passed away in his Chicago home, the cause of death being ruptured blood vessels resulting from a hemorrhage.

"We thought he had a lot more time," said Tommy Shaw. "It was awful. It's still surreal thinking about standing over Johnny's open casket, next to Chuck, who was just as healthy as a tick. And just being there with these brothers like that, it was just - it still doesn't seem real. Because Johnny was such a big part of Styx. His humor and his sarcasm and his - this twisted way of looking at things is still part of the Styx vernacular and the Styx way of looking at things. Johnny's spirit is still with us."

"I just came out of the Rosie O'Donnell studio," said Dennis DeYoung, "and there was a phone call from the management. That John had passed away. It was very sad. There's a song called 'It Takes Love To Make Love,' which John played drums on, it's on the second Greatest Hits album. That's the last real musical moment with all five of us together. John was really ill, but we got him through that session. John was one of those guys who could say the same thing over and over again, and you would laugh for some unknown reason. He was funny to be around."

"John lives on in our hearts," said JY, "and he is a special guy. A character which none of us will ever forget, and typically not a day goes by without us remembering one of his goofy things that he did or said, and makes us all smile. He still brings us joy, and it's great that his legacy lives on."

"John was rated one of the top 20 rock drummers," said Chuck Panozzo, "he had a cover on Modern Drummer long before I was even considered for Bass Player magazine. And he was very hilarious and he had a wonderful bright side, and something happened - he had a disease, and it took away a fabulous career and a brilliant mind."

"It was a very difficult thing when John died," said Todd Sucherman, "and they knew that not only was he never coming back to play, but they were never going to see him again. He had been their drummer, friend and brother for more than 20 years. Everyone in the band and the management and whatnot that knew John all unanimously said he was the funniest man they ever met. And that must be how Kenney Jones felt when he replaced Keith Moon in the Who, just having that personality not there was a very heavy thing. When you have your great jester, your great prankster, and all of a sudden that individual is not there 22 hours of the day when you're not on stage, that's a heavy thing."

Styx would eventually complete the tour, dedicating it in John's memory. And when the tour ended, Todd Sucherman knew his temporary drumming gig was now a permanent job, and the group now had a new record label - CMC International, a label dedicated to the great rock and roll bands of the 70's and 80's. And Styx eventually proved they could still rock with today's bands, as their first release for CMC, a live album called Return to Paradise, with tracks culled from the their 1996 tour, eventually gave CMC International their first gold RIAA certification.

Meanwhile, the Styx Armada, loyal fans of Styx's music for over 25 years, are now businessmen and elected officials and assistant editors at record collector magazines. And Styx's music has been used by television shows and commercial advertisers as a mnemonic device to show the 1970's weren't all Brady Bunch reruns and disco.

"Matt Stone, the co-creator of South Park, called me up and asked me if he could use 'Come Sail Away' in South Park," said Dennis DeYoung. "He was a big Styx fan. He called me up and said he had

some little radio show when he was in the eighth grade or something, he used to call it the Paradise Theater Hour. So I said sure, go ahead. The version they put on their South Park album was fantastic. It was hysterical. I never thought Isaac Hayes would be singing 'Come Sail Away,' but there you have it."

In another TV appearance, a re-recorded bridge of "Mr. Roboto" was used to demonstrate the sound system for a Volkswagen Golf. "We re-recorded the track for the Volkswagen commercial," said JY. "We have to okay these things, so they can't do it without the writers' permission. The record company owned the original master, and they ultimately wanted more money than the people were willing to pay, but Dennis decided, being the writer of Roboto, asked me about what I thought about re-recording it, and I said why not, let's give it a shot. So we did. And the sale of our Greatest Hits albums doubled the week after that thing first hit."

Styx' music has also appeared in this summer's hottest films, including Detroit Rock City, Virgin Suicide and Big Daddy (in which Adam Sandler's character uses Styx's music, including a boast about meeting Tommy Shaw, to win a girl's heart). "It comes down to one simple fact," said Dennis DeYoung. "If you've got a body of work that's really good, and you can still perform it, this is not a sin. You're not robbing Limp Bizkit's audience by playing this music. The people who like the Limpsters are going to go anyway. They don't care about Styx so much. Live and let live. I know Limp Bizkit is the flavor of the year, but do you know how many flavors we've seen over the years? Very few of them last. And I don't know much about Limp Bizkit, maybe they will last, I don't know."

And in 1997, with city school budgets cutting back on music programs, Chuck Panozzo cleaned out his brother's storage unit and found many of John Panozzo's old percussion instruments - cymbals, glockenspiels, drum skins, sticks, tympani - gathering dust. John had used many of the instruments throughout his career with Styx, as well as when he was a band teacher in the Chicago school system. Rather than let them rot in storage, Chuck gave the instruments to the school system - who later invited him to a special concert, where the high school marching band performed a medley of Styx songs as a gesture of thanks.

In 1998, Styx began work on their first new studio album in

almost a decade, Brave New World. But unlike the early years, when all the members would record in the same studio at the same time, the band recorded their material in various studios across the country - then assembled them in one final studio. The end result allowed the bandmembers to work in the conditions for which they felt most comfortable; and thanks to digital technology and overnight mail, tracks and tapes could be sent from studio to studio without any loss of time or energy.

For Dennis DeYoung, there was an added complication. A bout with influenza in 1998 left DeYoung with a mysterious complication - a sensitivity to light and to heat. "It's been a rotten 15, 16 months. I can go out, it's just that I never feel right. It's almost like this chronic fatigue that some people suffer from. It's pretty strange. I've seen so many doctors, I know their tee times and golf course of choice. But it has made my existence rather unpleasant."

Styx is currently on tour supporting the Brave New World album, and radio airplay for the first two singles, "Everything Is Cool" and "While There's Still Time," has been encouraging. But this tour will be the first one without any of the original Trade Winds, the teen friends who performed in Chicago basements in the 1960's. Dennis DeYoung is still battling his photosensitivity illness; Chuck Panozzo is taking time off to grieve at the loss of his mother and his brother. Canadian singer Lawrence Gowan and guitarist Glen Burtnik are substituting for DeYoung and Panozzo on tour until either is ready to return. "When my brother passed away," said Chuck Panozzo, "I really didn't take any time off. And recently, my mother passed away in January. So I've had a lot of personal issues to deal with, and the guys have been very kind to allow me to focus on them. I spoke to Tommy during their rehearsal, before they were ready to play their first gig, and he was very excited, and they've told me that any time I'm prepared to come back, all I have to do is walk on the stage. And that was very nice."

"I had hoped those guys could wait for me to feel better before they go on the road," said Dennis. "In some ways, it's an unfortunate thing. I just recorded this record, and I'd like to go out and tour also. I don't think it's a Styx tour without me."

But the past and present members of Styx did perform together for a worthy cause, a mini-set as part of a fundraising telethon for the Children's Miracle Network. "The Children's Miracle Network

performance was great," said Dennis DeYoung, "It's our job to go out there and perform and be good, that's what we do. I'm just an accordion player who writes songs. I go back to The Grand Illusion, don't look at me like I know what I'm doing. I'm just as confused as you."

"The thing is now, anything goes," said Tommy Shaw. "Anything is cool. And for us, everything is cool. Even within Styx, we were talking about the sexual revolution days, and Todd was sitting there going, 'Hell, I was in the third grade when this was going on.'"