

The current Styx line-up that recorded new album 'Crash Of The Crown' L-R: Chuck Panozzo (bass), Ricky Phillips (bass), Todd Sucherman (drums), Tommy Shaw (guitar and vocals), James 'JY' Young (guitar and vocals), Lawrence Gowan (keyboards and vocals)

# CROWN JEWELS!

**CHICAGO LEGENDS STYX HAVE** the kind of pedigree that makes them perfect *Rock Candy Mag* cover material. Their music, a cunning mix of pomp, prog, and occasionally pop drove rock fans wild – and US rock fans in particular – during their late-'70s and early-'80s heyday. Between 1977 and 1981, the band notched four multi-platinum albums in the States, such was their commercial clout.

On 'The Grand Illusion', 'Pieces Of Eight', 'Cornerstone', and 'Paradise Theatre' the band – vocalist and keyboardist Dennis DeYoung, guitarists and vocalists Tommy Shaw and James 'JY' Young, bassist Chuck Panozzo, and his drumming brother John – created any number of songs that have come to be recognised as *bona fide* classics. The group's creative hit rate was astonishing. Reeling off just a small selection of their wonderful songs from this period shows how many times Styx hit the bullseye. 'Fooling Yourself (The Angry Young Man)', 'Come Sail Away', 'Blue Collar Man (Long Nights)', 'Renegade', 'Lights', 'Boat On The River', 'Too Much Time On My Hands', 'The Best of Times'. Wow!

**IT'S NO** secret that there were often creative tensions within the band as the five members tried to harmonise their muso-ish instincts with their desire to have proper shiny hit records. Nothing highlighted that push and pull better than the song 'Babe', the band's only US number one single from December of 1979. The super-wimpy ballad was written by DeYoung for his wife Suzanne and while it's a great tearjerker ballad and sold absolutely shedloads, Jimi Hendrix it isn't. Which didn't entirely please JY, in particular.

With tensions intensifying Tommy Shaw was the first to jump ship, leaving the band in 1984, but the group didn't last much longer, going into hibernation after the 'Caught In The Act' live album of April 1984.

Styx came back together in 1990, with Shaw replaced by Glen Burtnik. But by the end of 1991, and with grunge music starting to dominate the US rock scene, the group disbanded, only to return once more in 1995 with Shaw back in the fold.

John Panozzo sadly succumbed to cirrhosis of the liver in July 1996 at the age of just 47, and was replaced

by Todd Sucherman, who had already been filling in for John though his illness. In what was becoming a familiar pattern 1999's 'Brave New World' album led to more internal conflict. Dennis DeYoung departed to be replaced by Lawrence Gowan.

With Chuck Panozzo suffering health problems linked to HIV Glen Burtnik returned, this time on bass, leaving Panozzo free to concentrate on his wellbeing and contribute to the group as and when he could.

Former The Babys and Bad English man Ricky Phillips in turn replaced Burtnik in 2003 and finally Styx found some stability, which continues up to this day.

Over the course of the next 18 years the band have worked hard on the road, while at the same time releasing three new albums. The first, 2005's 'Big Bang Theory', was a selection of covers. But 2017's 'The Mission' and this year's 'Crash Of The Crown' are both full sets of original material. And guess what? Styx's latest studio album, their 17th, is a full-on return to the band's prog and pomp roots, a superb collection of 15 songs full of deep-seated poise and purpose that prove

Not only are Chicago pomp rockers **Styx** a group with a glittering history, they're also a band that's still producing top notch rock music that speaks loudly and proudly of their glorious past. *Rock Candy Mag* celebrates this legendary act with 16 pages of pure, unadulterated Styx-hem!

Styx are still a vital creative force just shy of 50 years after they first formed.

**AS YOU** know, at *Rock Candy Mag* we're all about the retro. But when a heritage band of such stature releases new music that stands shoulder to shoulder with their very best work, then it would be churlish in the extreme not to hail the achievement.

That's why now is the perfect time to dive deep into the saga of Styx, with exclusive interviews with all six current members of the band – Young, Shaw, Panozzo, Gowan, Phillips, and Sucherman – together with intimate appraisals of the four major albums from the band's classic period delivered by the members who helped craft them.

We're proud to be bringing you this massive 16-page cover story on Styx, not only one of rock's great survivors, but a living, breathing phenomenon that still has plenty to say...

**Howard Johnson**

Photo: Rick Diamond