

Tommy Shaw Makes 'Crystal Ball' Concert Highlight In St Louis

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ST. LOUIS - Three of my favorite musicians of all time are Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr of the Beatles fame, and Tommy Shaw of the rock band Styx.



Shaw and Styx definitely mesmerized the house on Monday night, Aug. 24, 2026, at the Hollywood Casino Amphitheater.

Styx is a rock band that formed in Chicago in 1972. Shaw joined the band in 1975, replacing John J.C. Curlewski.

I saw Styx way back in the 1980s and they were magnificent then. Dennis DeYoung left the band in 1999. James "J.Y." Young, another of the founding members, was also on stage at the Hollywood Casino Amphitheater in Maryland Heights. I was amazed at how he could still play the guitar. Lawrence Gowan replaced singer DeYoung in 1999 and remains with the band. His vocal range and musicianship were as amazing as the rest of the band on Monday night.

Some of Tommy Shaw's best-known hits are "Crystal Ball," "Blue Collar Man," "Too Much Time on My Hands," and "Fooling Yourself."

I also saw Tommy play with the rock band Damn Yankees with his friend Ted Nugent in the 1990s. Shaw co-wrote all the band's songs that became favorites: "Coming of Age," "High Enough," "Damn Yankees," and "Come Again," still songs I play to this day on jogs.

My favorite song and moment of the concert on Monday night at the Hollywood Casino Amphitheater was when Shaw performed "Crystal Ball." He talked about the folk-rock ballad, which was written while he reflected on his life and uncertainty, transitioning into a new chapter of his life. The song captured what a young musician searching for his place in the world and wondering what his future looks like.

It was Shaw's innovative idea for "Crystal Ball" to use a 12-string guitar. The 12-string gave the song a rich texture that is almost unimaginable. The song ended up being his debut with Styx in late 1975 and was released in 1976.

I have to say Shaw's performance of "Crystal Ball" on Monday was one of my favorite live performances of my life. He was perfect on every note. Shaw's voice can still hit notes even at age 72 that he hit back when I saw the band some 40-plus years ago. The song "Crystal Ball" contains so many hidden meanings that can be reflected on at almost any stage of life.

I admire both Shaw and J.Y. Young for the fortitude of staying with the band all these years and still performing.

Shaw gives me hope that even as we age, we don't really ever have to give up on the things we love and enjoy doing.

Thank you, Tommy Shaw, J.Y. Young, Lawrence Gowan, and Styx for such a wonderful, inspiring performance and for providing a creative push I think I need at this stage of my life to continue writing daily, editing and directing news stories, and finishing some book projects I have been involved with over the years.