

## Extended play

### More than three decades later, Journey finds a new audience

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BY KEVIN JOY THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

In May, the end of the premiere of *Glee* -- a Fox comedy series about a high-school choir in small-town Ohio -- found the ragtag group of misfits belting out a brassy rendition of *Don't Stop Believin'*.

Soon after, the 1981 song shot to No. 1 on iTunes.

Not the original Journey version -- but the one by the young *Glee* singers.

The tune was also featured in a *Family Guy* episode from 2005 on Fox: The animated characters became one-night celebrities after singing the song karaoke-style (and a widow nearby was instantly snapped out of her grief by the wafting strains).

*Don't Stop Believin'* was used last year in a Hillary Clinton campaign video and in recent years on the TV shows *Scrubs*, *South Park* and *Laguna Beach*.

And, in 2007, the song saw perhaps its widest -- and oddest -- pop-culture exposure: as the closing music for the finale of the HBO mob drama *The Sopranos*, whose last scene abruptly cut to black.

Such modern ubiquity baffles Journey members, who composed the hit in less than three hours.

"It's sort of a cosmic thing," said keyboardist Jonathan Cain, who wrote the song's opening piano riffs -- among the most recognizable in modern pop music.

"This song is still speaking to a generation, even 25 years later. That's something every songwriter and singer could ever hope for."

Yet the band -- set to perform Wednesday in Columbus -- has never hid its ambitions.

The San Francisco group first formed in 1973. The musicians raised the bar visually with giant video screens and elaborate light shows during live stage performances in the 1980s (aesthetics of the



JOHN POPPLEWELL

**Being accepted by a new generation, from left: Journey members Arnel Pineda, Deen Castronovo, Neal Schon, Jonathan Cain and Ross Valory**



current go-round are more modest, Cain said).

Journey continued to maintain a polished songwriting style, despite poor critical reception (*Rolling Stone*, for one, was harsh on the group's earliest efforts).

"Critics tried to put us in a box," said Cain, 59. "We made radio records, really good records. They sound effortless when you listen to them."

They had 26 singles chart on the *Billboard* Hot 100, with their biggest hits including *Open Arms*, *Who's Crying Now* and *Separate Ways (Worlds Apart)*.

Several hiatuses and numerous personnel changes, though, were hiccups.

Lead vocalist Steve Perry left in 1998 after band members issued an ultimatum for the frontman to stop delaying hip-replacement surgery so as to facilitate a reunion tour. Singer Steve Augieri joined that year but left in 2006, citing a throat infection. Jeff Scott Soto stepped in to complete the tour and parted ways the next year.

Arnel Pineda, a 41-year-old Filipino cover-band singer whom the band discovered via YouTube, made his debut last year.

"He's just absolutely dynamic," Cain said. "He brings a fresh, young take to our songs."

Although Journey has always been a juggernaut -- with more than 80 million albums sold to date and a greatest-hits compilation that's said to move almost 1 million units per year -- the aging commercial-rock giants have only recently garnered a peculiar sense of youth-approved cool.

The ages of concertgoers have decreased dramatically, Cain said. The band has 204,195 Facebook fans. Their music brings the house down at college bars and sporting events. (Perry performed in a parade with the Chicago White Sox after the team won the 2005 World Series.)

As a teenager in the 1970s, Mark Dantzer wouldn't have imagined such a scenario.

"You could not even consider, as a guy in my school, to like Journey," said the Columbus disc jockey at WVMX (107.9 FM) and a wedding DJ. "It was nerdy, not manly enough."

Now, *Don't Stop Believin'* is his most-requested song at receptions.

The online cover-band directory [www.tributecity.com](http://www.tributecity.com) lists 63 Journey tribute acts nationwide.

"Journey tends to get a bad rap, but they're all phenomenal players," said Jeff Kolbfleisch, keyboardist for the Pittsburgh band Bon-Journey, which covers the music of Journey and Bon Jovi (and played to a packed house Aug. 14 at the East Side venue Screamin' Willie's).

The 37-year-old paralegal wasn't familiar with Journey's catalog until he joined the five-piece band, which tours in the Midwest and on the East Coast.

"I was dumbfounded by the quality of the material," Kolbfleisch said. "The fact that it's highly commercial is icing on the cake."

"People act like it's too cool to have fun with it -- but once we start playing, they can't help themselves."

For Mike Hilliard, bass player for Columbus "live karaoke" band Fonzie Monroe, Journey is a staple of the group's sizable singalong repertoire.

"It's definitely '80s ballads that are huge with the college crowd right now," said Hilliard, who is 32. "Stuff like that is just huge -- . . . what their parents listened to growing up."

Cain, too, agrees that nostalgia for his decades-old fare -- even to those who weren't alive during its heyday -- is what drives Journey's curious longevity.

"We were lucky to have hits when times were good," Cain said. "The Reagan years and all that -- everybody was making a lot of money, having babies, making out in back seats.

"Those songs ended up meaning something to people's lives. I think the music is bigger than all of us."

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Jonathan Cain  
keyboard player

## The path to ubiquity

**80**

million

*albums sold*

*worldwide*

**18**

*Top 40 singles*

**2**

million

*downloads*

*from iTunes of Don't Stop*

*Believin'\**

**4**

*lead singers*

**14**

*former members*

**63**

*Journey*

*cover bands on*

*the national*

*database*

[www.tributecity.com](http://www.tributecity.com)

\* the best-selling pre-digital-era "catalog" song on iTunes