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KNOW WE'RE TALKIN

By Helen Marketti



An Interview with Dean Kastran

Dean was an original and founding member of The Ohio Express.

He currently plays with 60s band, The CYRKLE.

Dean Kastran still lives in the Mansfield, Ohio area where the band The Ohio Express originated. Their well-recognized hits include, “Yummy, Yummy, Yummy” and “Chewy, Chewy”. During a telephone interview, Dean remembers his early days with fondness and fun.

“When I was growing up, I liked listening to the girl groups like The Chiffons and The Ronettes. I also enjoyed listening to The Beach Boys, Motown, Chuck Berry and of course, The Beatles.

“Speaking of The Beatles, my dad took me to see them on August 20th, 1965, at Comiskey Park in Chicago. I was actually born in Chicago but then we moved to Mansfield when I was four years old. Anyway, by 1965, I was a teenager and my dad and I went to see The Beatles. The tickets were only \$4.50 at that time! Can you believe it?”

“During elementary school, I played an upright bass. I had to stand on a box to reach the neck and be able to play,” said Dean. “Eventually I moved on from that to the bass guitar. My brother and I liked listening to Ricky Nelson and Elvis Presley as well. We started taking guitar lessons when I started playing the bass.

“When I was able to start buying records, the first 45 record I bought was “No Particular Place to Go” by Chuck Berry. And by the time I was in a band, the first song I played was “Twist and Shout”.

Dean explains how The Ohio Express got started: “I went to school in the Mansfield area with members of the group The Music Explosion, as they are from the same area. They had a well-known hit called, “Little Bit O’ Soul”. Their manager knew the guys who ran Super K Productions. They were Jeffrey Katz and Jerry Kasenetz. Anyway, they asked the group if they had any other musician friends in Ohio who were in a band because they wanted to promote “the Ohio sound.” At the time, our band was called Sir Timothy and The Royals but they said that sounded too British so they picked the name The Ohio Express and that’s how it happened.”

He continues, “After our hit, “Yummy, Yummy, Yummy”, we were able to tour and appear on television shows. We opened for many other artists. The closest thing to an actual tour was a short stretch where we opened for The Who. I believe we did three or four shows with them and we got to hang out with them for a little bit, which was a thrill. Some of the other bands from that time that we performed with were The Beach Boys, The Troggs, Neil Diamond, The Box Tops, Herman’s Hermits, The Association, Billy Joe Royal, B.J. Thomas, The Turtles, Steppenwolf, The Music Explosion, 1910 Fruitgum Company and Dino, Desi & Billy.

“It was an incredible time

for us,” said Dean. “We also covered songs from other artists in addition to our own material. We covered songs by Buffalo Springfield and Jimi Hendrix which may have been “heavier” than what The Ohio Express played. Our music was known as Bubblegum Music. At first, we didn’t like that label on us but after a while you realize it’s a real genre and many people like it. The songs were known to be upbeat, catchy, uplifting and happy.”

The Ohio Express played on several television programs during the later 60s such as American Bandstand hosted by Dick Clark, the Lloyd Thaxton Show, and Upbeat which was based in Cleveland. “We were scheduled to play on The Ed Sullivan Show the same week that Robert Kennedy was assassinated in 1968,” remembers Dean. “Unfortunately, we were not rescheduled so that opportunity was lost.”

Dean left The Ohio Express in 1968 to join the Air Force.

These days, Dean still keeps his love of music going by playing whenever he can, which includes being part of the current line up for the 60s group, The CYRKLE. “I sat in with them a few times,” said Dean. “As time went on, they eventually needed a bass player and I jumped at the chance to play with them. It’s fun to play with another band from the 60s era. The group is family oriented so our wives come with us on tour. I still love the music and enjoy playing.”

Dean wraps up our interview with some final thoughts. “Those days in the 60s were a lot of fun. It definitely wasn’t for the money. The music of that time still stands today. The Beatles changed everything in life. I was infatuated with them. It was a great time for music. I’m glad I was able to witness it firsthand.”



Publicity Photo of The Ohio Express. Dean is second from left wearing the double breasted suit