

CHAMBER VOICE ARTICLE – MAY 2016

By John Groh

More than 20 million records sold. 29 movie soundtracks. Touring internationally since 1973. More than 5,000 shows performed - including *four shows* the same week they were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. And, to boot, a newly released album currently number 31 on the Billboard charts – their highest ranking in 28 years.

That's Cheap Trick in a nutshell.

The band's home here in Rockford has traditionally been known as a blue collar, working class, manufacturing town. A place where innovators innovated and others led rewarding lives making things.

None of these are easy endeavors. Neither is music, as it turns out. Just ask the members of Cheap Trick, who have logged millions of miles in planes, trains and automobiles in a career that began in various Rockford garages when they were teenagers in the frenetic, creative Rockford of the 1960s. It wasn't easy and Cheap Trick was the opposite of an overnight success, but the band has been exporting music and smiles to the world for decades. As they've traveled the world, Cheap Trick has brought positive attention to Rockford and the region.

Out there on the road at times, for "the hardest-working live band in the world," hard work was its own and only reward. But, like the manufacturing innovators and blue-collar workers who surrounded them in their childhoods, the band had - and has - a never-say-die attitude.

Even today, Rick Nielsen says, incredulously, "Retire? Nah. We're too dumb to quit."

It's a good thing they didn't quit! Forty-three years after they first gathered in Rockford for a handful of rehearsals before their first paid gigs, Cheap Trick is being counted among Elvis, Dylan, Jagger, Richards, Lennon, McCartney, Townshend, Daltrey and a pantheon of others as members of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. What a stunning, amazing accomplishment. What an *inspiring* accomplishment.

The best things we can do as residents of their hometown is to not take Cheap Trick for granted and proudly claim the band as our brothers and heroes (just as the band has always claimed Rockford as home). More so, let's celebrate their achievements and congratulate them on their success.

The City of Rockford and Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau have made a commitment to do those things and more. On Induction Day, Friday, April 8, 2016, Mayor Larry Morrissey "officially/unofficially" renamed Rockford, "Trickford."

We're ceremonially renaming the streets on which the band grew up. We're posting billboards and banners and erecting signs that proudly proclaim, "These Streets Are Patrolled By The Dream Police." A new "Cheap Trick Trail" and website – www.gotrickford.com – invites residents and visitors to explore Cheap Trick's Rockford.

And, RACVB has announced that we are working toward culminating our celebrations with a multi-day music festival this fall. In the meantime, we will continue to look for new opportunities and will celebrate everything that makes Cheap Trick such an amazing band and Rockford such an amazing place to live and visit.

Let's face it; as a community, not unlike Cheap Trick, we've put on some hard miles, too. We've suffered our share of defeats. We've had to accept hard work as its own reward on a few occasions. But Rockford is on the rise again, just like our hometown band. It's time for a party, and we're going to throw one. As Roy Wood wrote in California Man, the tune Cheap Trick made famous, "goin' to a party, meet me on after school."

We hope you will join us in celebrating Cheap Trick!

John Groh is the president/CEO of the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau.