

What would you say the band's greatest moments have been? And what has been your proudest moment?

"There have been many! Here are a few that instantly spring to mind! The time I heard our song 'Gypsy' on the radio in 1970 for the first time was a proud moment. I was driving along in my car and nearly went off the road with excitement. I had to pull over and park. Our first Gold/Platinum discs were obviously a very proud moment. Playing the Albert Hall in London. After that the rest of the family stopped telling my mother to tell me to get a real job! (laughs). Playing Wembley was also rather special and being the first western rock band to play Russia in December 1987."

You've released a brilliant and varied collection of 20 albums, what have been your favourite albums or tracks?

"It is so hard to pick and choose as I am so close to them all. However there have been some markers along the way. The first album *Vary Easy Vary Uumble* was very important, as that set the template for what we are all about musically. We chose to play some really heavy guitar, organ driven music like 'Gypsy' but also we were not afraid to play something as beautiful as 'Come Away Melinda' on acoustic guitar.

Salsbury was an album that we experimented with a 27-piece brass section on a very long piece of music with quite long guitar solo parts. But it has stood the test of time and is a favourite of many of our fans.

Look At Yourself was where we really found our direction and decided we wanted to become a straight ahead rock band. 'July Morning' was on this album and is a song with lots of dynamics in it and has been in our live set for many years as a firm favourite.

Demons and Wizards with 'The Wizard' and 'Easy Livin'' is probably the album that took us onto the world stage. We found ways of writing lyrics in a very magical, mystical way that captured everybody's imagination. Plus, we had our first Roger Dean cover that really made the album a complete package with music and artwork. *Magicians Birthday* followed on a similar theme to *Demons and Wizards*, but the title track had an exciting guitar and drum duel that received a lot of attention.

Abominog was a good rock album of the '80s. It had a very '80s production, but we had a lot of success with it in the USA. We had a song called 'The Way That It Is' that was Top 40 in the USA charts and we had a video which was on high rotation on MTV.

Raging Silence was the first studio album recorded by this line up of Box, Bolder, Kerslake, Lanzon and Shaw, and it was the first album we actually got good reviews in the British press all round, so that was nice for a change. *Sea of Light* was an album that the fans liked as we once again used Roger Dean for the cover and the music was in the true tradition of the band. *Sonic Origami* with a Pip Williams production (Status Quo, Moody Blues) was well received, but unfortunately we were let down by the record company with

distribution and promotion."

Over the years there have been numerous line-up changes, were there any times that you felt that it would all have to end?

"We have had many changes, but the quality of musicians that have come and gone has always been very high. The only time I felt it might end was after we recorded *Conquest* with John Sloman on vocals. John did not sing the classic songs how they were written and the fans didn't warm to this. At the end of a very long European tour I decided to end it. I stayed in my apartment in London and drank copious amounts of vodka and woke up the next morning with a raging hangover. I telephoned Lee Kerslake to wish him all the best, as he was off to the USA with Ozzy, and he said "I am not going, as Ozzy wants an all American band." Well I had a record contract, a publishing deal, and I was looking after the management side, so I said to Lee come over and let's talk. Lee left in the first place because of management problems, so with me at the helm that was resolved. I found out that Bob Daisley was left in the lurch too, so we invited him to join and we had the nucleus of another Heep. I remembered Pate Goalby from our auditions, where we took John Sloman over him and I called him up. He was off for a short tour of the USA with a band called Trapeze. He said if the job was on offer when he returned he would love to come to London and try out for the band. We waited and when he returned he came to London and that was that, we had a singer. For keyboards, Heep had worked with a band called the Heavy Metal Kids supporting us in Europe and I remembered John Sinclair for being a good keyboard player. I tracked him down in Los Angeles, called him and he came over, and the band was set. We recorded *Abominog* and everything was on the up!"

The press was always quite hostile towards Uriah Heep in the early days — why do you think this was? Would you say the press have had to eat their words?

"Well, Black Sabbath, Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin were already established, and then along come Uriah Heep in a blaze of publicity. I think for the press it was one too many of the same ilk. Also, the music scene in London was turning away from heavy rock and it was the time Bob Dylan was playing the electric guitar and causing mayhem with all the Dylan hardcore who saw this as sacrilege. Still, after selling in excess of 30 million albums and surviving for 35 years, playing in over 48 countries, I am not complaining. I think the hostility, to be perfectly honest, made us a people's band. If you finish a show and the audience have demanded three encores and you get some person write a damning review as if he or she had not even been there, then that is madness. Say that the show was not your thing but the audience loved it, that is a balanced critic. They sold the audience short, but luckily the audience saw right through it thank goodness."

Have you always used Marshall throughout your career?

"Always have and always will! There is

nothing to touch Marshall equipment for sound, durability and look! You play hard rock, you play Marshall, simple as that!"

What have been some of your favourite Marshall amps?

"The 1959SLP heads and two 1960B straight bottom cabinets is classic! The JCM800 heads, two 1960B straight bottom cabinets I also love. I only ever use one amp and one cabinet though."

What amp are you using live and in the studio?

"My favourites of course! The 1959SLP head and JCM800 head through one 1960B cabinet."

Do you use any pedals or FX?

"Yes I do, a D'nloop Original Cry Baby Wah Wah, Marshall Guv'nor pedal (original), the new Marshall Echohead pedal, B'ss Chorus pedal, M'rye Pro Series Volume pedal."

You were at the launch of the 40th Anniversary stack. What were your thoughts?

"Very impressed indeed, Bernie Marsden showcased it and he did that to the maximum. The sound was brilliant and the look fantastic. I was bowled over... it was spot on!"

Who are your main influences?

"My favourite all time guitarist is Jeff Beck, but when I first started it had to be Barney Kessel, Tal Farlowe, Les Paul and Mary Ford, Django Reinhardt, Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran etc. . ."

How long will Uriah Heep keep going?

"Well, we will hopefully complete another album this year and then we will put in an 18 month touring schedule to promote it. To be honest this line up of Box, Bolder, Kerslake, Shaw and Lanzon has been together for 20 years this year (2006). We are the best of friends, we travel the world together and enjoy playing shows in over 48 countries. We have a great fan base on the web, www.uriah-heep.com, and there is no better place to be than in Uriah Heep at the moment. I think, to be honest, the business retires you and you do not retire from the business. If there is no audience then it has to stop. Thankfully, we have a worldwide audience that still enjoys our music and our shows."

What's next for Uriah Heep?

"Hopefully record a new album this year. On the touring front we have an RTL TV show to do in Germany that goes out to five million people, then we are off to India (two shows Mumbai, Bangalore) Indonesia (two shows Jakarta, Surabaya) Thailand (one show Bangkok) then we headline the *Heroes of Rock* festival in St Petersburg, Russia; then we go to Kiev and another eight shows in the Ukraine, then on to Israel (Tel Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem), then festivals throughout Europe in the summer. With the touring schedule and the recording we are as busy as ever. We are ever thankful for that!"

The comprehensive Chapter and Verse spanning the 35 year career of Uriah Heep over six discs is out.

After 35 rocking years, album sales in excess of 30 million, playing in over 48 countries and still continuing to fill arenas all over the world, Uriah Heep must be one of the most underrated rock acts that Britain has ever produced. That is according to the Rock Press. Rock fans however, embraced Uriah Heep and have never been fooled by the critics. Marshall Law catches up with Marshall man and Uriah Heep founder Mick Box. Marshall Law defies anyone to knock the success of this band after reading this interview . . .

URIAH HEEP

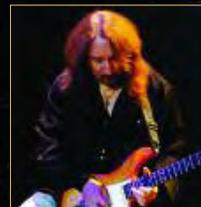


Photo: Vincent Lagana

