

Procol Harum are still going strong. March 2014 sees a new double CD, *Inside/Outside*, celebrating over forty years of studio and live recordings. In addition the spring will see a new download-only release, *Some Long Road*, featuring tracks from the band's 2012 US tour. Alongside this Procol continue to tour many parts of the world, and are considering options on three continents at the moment.

You could not be blamed for thinking that, with the monumental success of Procol's first smash hit, the band just stopped there, like so many others. Even the recently-awarded accolade of 'most-played single of the past seventy-five years' has not quelled their need to go forward: hence 2014's new live album.

In the past couple of years they have released ten re-mastered CD albums, plus the 2CD anthology *Secrets of the Hive* (all generally available in Europe, and sourceable on import); their DVDs *In Concert with the Danish National Concert Orchestra* and *Live at Union Chapel* have been widely acclaimed. There's also a special 4-disc CD/DVD box-set compendium – aptly entitled *All this and More* – featuring 68 of the band's many unique compositions: this prompted *Classic Rock* magazine to observe, 'it's small wonder The Who's *Tommy* and Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* can be traced to Procol's influence'. It could be termed a plethora of Procol.

The quality of writing and performance has remained Procol Harum's gold standard through the gradually-mutating line-ups: each participating musician has kept the ideas flowing and prevented Procol from resting on their laurels. The band has been in the studio when other commitments have allowed, and this year schedules more work towards a new album.

Singer/pianist/composer **Gary Brooker** is most famous as the founding member of Procol Harum, yet music fans have also appreciated his excellent work with such artists as George Harrison, Ringo Starr, Eric Clapton, Bill Wyman, Kate Bush, Wings, Mickey Jupp and even Lonnie Donegan.

Below decks lies a purring engine of a rhythm section in the hands of bassist **Matt Pegg**, who joined Procol in 1993. Following the footsteps of his father (Fairport's Dave Pegg) Matt toured with Jethro Tull, and collaborates with folk-rock supergroup The Gathering, Francis Dunnery, Chris Difford of Squeeze, The Drifters, and The Stone Roses' Ian Brown.

**Geoff Dunn**, in the hot seat at the back, joined in 2006, and – having been the driving force with such luminaries as Jimmy Page, Dave Stewart, Van Morrison and Manfred Mann – brings his own personality to the Procol catalogue, contributing added excitement for band and audience alike.

**Josh Phillips** started deputising on the Hammond for Procol in 1993 but has been in full charge since 2004. His career started in 1979, with a long and fruitful association with Pete Townsend. His 'office job' is writing TV music (with ex-Chris Evans producer Dan McGrath) such as the award-winning theme-tune for the BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing* (*Dancing with the Stars*); for live work he is busy dividing his time between Procol Harum, Midge Ure and The Crazy World of Arthur Brown.

Last, but never least, we have twenty-two year veteran **Geoff Whitehorn** who, since filling the sizeable boots of Paul Kossoff in Back Street Crawler, has supplied lead guitar by appointment to the British rock aristocracy in the form of Roger Chapman, Elkie Brooks, Paul Rodgers and Roger Daltrey, to name but a few.

Procol's undeniably illustrious pedigree guarantees them a golden future. The secret of the band's continuing success, Brooker firmly believes, is the material: "We don't do pop songs as such. Procol Harum is a soul and blues band, which has these other influences because of the people who are there. *A Whiter Shade of Pale* wouldn't have been such a big hit, nor *A Salty Dog* or many other songs, unless they'd had soul."

Brooker is still happy performing Procol's classic hits and crowd-pleasers, yet there is always a mix of new or rare songs on the setlist to titillate the legion of fans who follow the band more than casually. And the material – never written with fashion in mind – has never dated. As he says, "Take (1974's) *As Strong as Samson*, which is to do with the problems of war: the words are just as relevant now. And *Holding On* from (1991's) *The Prodigal Stranger*, that was written during the Gulf War: put it on again today – the world hasn't changed." Or listen to the prophetic message of *The Wall Street Blues*, written in 2002, and understand that this is a band that keeps you thinking as well as entertained.

While you wait for the new Procol Harum studio album, you have the chance to enjoy this year's releases, *Inside / Outside* and *Some Long Road*, in addition to the existing catalogue. But hurry if you want the collections, *Secrets of the Hive* or *All This and More*: they are already in short supply.

Download albums are available on I-Tunes and other media, but are also available at 320kbps through 'Beyond the Pale', ([www.procolharum.com](http://www.procolharum.com)).

The re-mastered catalogue albums are *Broken Barricades*, *Live at Edmonton*, *Grand Hotel*, *Exotic Birds and Fruit*, *Procol's Ninth* and *Something Magic* – all including a number of bonus tracks, some previously unreleased.

Procol Harum rocks on, in all their splendour: a galleon in full sail and soul.