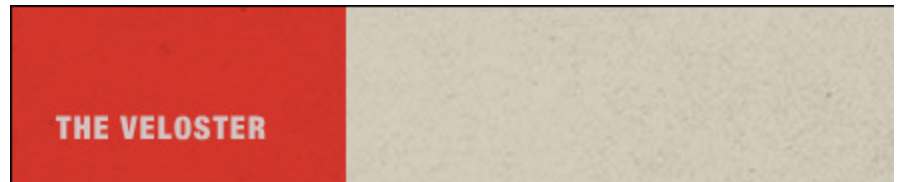


Search



[ABOUT](#) | [SU](#)



[FEATURES](#) ▼ [COLUMNS](#) ▼ [BLOGS](#) ▼ [NEWS](#) ▼ [MUSIC](#) ▼ [FILM](#) ▼ [TELEVISION](#) ▼ [DVDS](#) ▼ [BOOKS](#) ▼ [COM](#)

## DVDs

[Home](#) > [DVDs](#) > [Reviews](#) > [Robert Plant](#)



## 'Robert Plant's Blue Note': Chasing a Sound

By **Christel Loar** 21 October 2011  
PopMatters Associate Music Editor

*Robert Plant's Blue Note* is not authorized by Robert Plant. However, it isn't your typical unauthorized biographical documentary, either. The titular blue note refers to the more emotionally expressive sound that a young Plant first found in the music of Elvis Presley. The filmmakers posit that it is Plant's search for this blue note that has led him on every musical journey he has taken over the course of his nearly 50 year career.

Beginning with that discovery of Elvis, which led to a lifelong fascination with American blues, the feature presents Plant through the observations of his friends, colleagues and collaborators, as well as biographers, journalists and music historians. There are also clips and excerpts from Plant himself, mainly speaking on a radio show in 2010. The production spends a great deal of time—more than the entire first hour of its 155 minute running time—on the early bands Plant formed or followed, as well as on the general musical climate of England in the early-to-middle '60s. It's interesting and informative stuff, with clips of Alexis Korner, the Rolling Stones, The Yardbirds, and other artists of the time. None of it is new or revelatory, but it's very engagingly presented, in fact, for most of that portion of the DVD, it would be easy to forget that it is part of a piece on Plant, and mistake it instead for a primer on the British Blues movement.

Of course, it does eventually come back around to Plant, as he and John Bonham are recruited to join Jimmy Page's New Yardbirds. Led Zeppelin fans might be a bit disappointed in this segment, because it's scarcely 25 minutes long and within that, further discusses Plant's love of the American west coast sound as demonstrated in groups like Moby Grape. Still, it has some of the



### Robert Plant

Robert Plant's Blue Note  
(Sexy Intellectual; US DVD: 23 Aug 2011; UK DVD: 26 Jul 2011)

[Amazon](#)  
[Listen at MOG](#)

Like 65

7

[PRINT](#)

[EMAIL](#)

[0 COMMENTS](#)

[SHARE](#)

Text: [A](#) [A](#) [A](#)

most interesting anecdotal commentary from the interviewees. For instance, the Yardbirds' Chris Dreja talks about seeing Led Zeppelin early on in New York City:

The last time I played with Jimmy, it was for five thousand people at a university in America... then they went off and did this show in front of thirty thousand people. Completely blew my mind... I mean the sound—they started off in those days with 'Whole Lotta Love—and they were rocking this fucking building, man! It was concrete, you know. The whole damn thing was shaking..."

*Blue Note* then rather quickly glosses over Bonham's death and Zeppelin's end, jumping in rapid succession from Plant's solo career in the early '80s with entertaining comments by guitarist Robbie Blunt and producer Phil Johnstone, to his formation of the Honeydrippers that took him back to roots rock, and then his expansion into more eastern sounds again (with a particularly interesting look at his interest in Egyptian singer Oum Kalthoum) in the late '80s and '90s. Remember, the feature is tracing Plant's pursuit of the "blue note", so it keeps returning to the blues, in its myriad forms.

The narrative becomes more in-depth again when it reaches Plant's collaboration with Page—and the combination of Led Zeppelin's heavy blues with Moroccan and Egyptian influences and instrumentation on *No Quarter: Jimmy Page and Robert Plant Unleaded*. Hossam Ramzy, the percussionist who arranged the North African ensemble parts, and toured with Page and Plant succinctly draws connections between American blues and North African music, and recounts his experiences of rehearsing for that album and tour. He believes Plant has a keen ear for the blue note, and that's why he's constantly chasing it.

Things come full circle as Plant returns first to the Delta blues influences with *Walking Into Clarksdale*, and then moves, again, toward North African sounds. *Blue Note* moves rather quickly through those intervening years and projects, until it hits Plant's collaboration with Alison Krauss on the Grammy-winning *Raising Sand*. Journalist Amanda Petrusich supplies most of the commentary on Krauss, but after that, very little is said.

Strange Sensation is touched upon, as is the Mali group Tinariwen, but the *Robert Plant's Blue Note* wraps up rather abruptly. Not that that's necessarily a bad thing, because although most of the footage is wonderful and it's great to have such a complete portrait of such a continually fascinating artist, more than two and a half hours is stretching things more than a little bit.

The DVD includes a six minute bonus feature on Plant's love of Leadbelly, as well as biographies of the various interviewees.

**Rating:**   
**Extras rating:** 

---

Christel Loar is a freelance writer and editor, a part-time music publicist, and a full-time music fan. She is often an overreactor and sometimes an overachiever. When not dodging raindrops or devising escape plans, Christel is usually found down front and slightly left of center stage reveling in a performance by yet another new favorite band.

---

Like < 65 7 0 

---

RELATED ARTICLES



**Old Country Comfort: How the British Might Save American Music (Again)**

By [Jedd Beaudoin](#)

17 Oct 2011

The British saved rock 'n' roll, reignited the blues, and may just make country music more American.



**The 70 Best Albums of 2010**

By PopMatters Staff

24 Dec 2010

*PopMatters is on its annual publishing break until 3 January 2011, except for some film reviews and blogs. In the meantime, enjoy some of the year's best...*

The year's best albums are highlighted by the emergence of a future superstar, two veteran and virtuoso rappers, and a Dream Team of indie bands releasing career peaks.



**The Best Americana Music of 2010**

By [Steve Leftridge](#)

16 Dec 2010

2010 was a splendid year for Americana releases; then again, that's something you can say about any year given the sprawling range of sub-genres under Americana's vast umbrella, a point reinforced again by this year's Top Ten.



**Robert Plant: Band of Joy**

By [Steve Leftridge](#)

22 Sep 2010

The golden rock god burrows deeper into gothic American roots music, trading T-Bone Burnett and Alison Krauss for Buddy Miller and Patty Griffin, thereby finding the only sound that matters.

[More Related Articles](#) ↓

COMMENTS

Like

Add New Comment

[Login](#)



Type your comment here.

Showing 0 comments

Sort by popular now ▾

✉ [Subscribe by email](#) 📡 [RSS](#)

© 1999-2011 PopMatters.com. All rights reserved.  
PopMatters.com™ and PopMatters™ are trademarks  
of PopMatters Media, Inc. and PopMatters Magazine.

[ABOUT](#) | [SUBMISSIONS](#) | [A](#)

PopMatters is wholly independently owned and operated.

Welcome to Phillydealphia.