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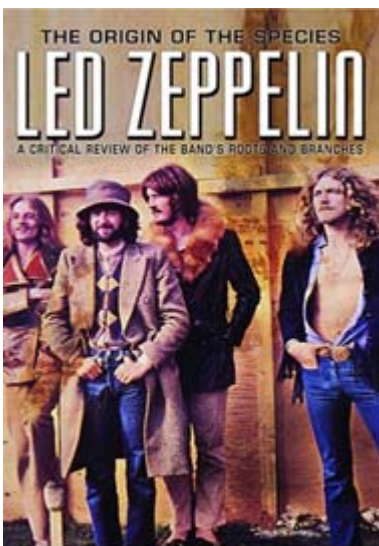
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**LED ZEPPELIN**  
Origin of the Species (MVD)



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You surely know that the roots of **LED ZEPPELIN's** trailblazing music descended directly from America blues. But how much do you really know about the inspirations and influences of guitarist **Jimmy Page**, vocalist **Robert Plant**, bassist **John Paul Jones**, and drummer **John Bonham**, specifically the years before the seminal self-titled debut rocked worlds around the globe? I thought so. That's why "**The Origin of the Species**", a scholarly 70-minute review of the band's "roots and

branches" will inform all but the most diehard **ZEP** fanatic.

Though not authorized by **LED ZEPPELIN**'s members, "**The Origin of the Species**" is a detailed and intelligent overview of the members' lives up through the first two **ZEPPELIN** albums. Dispensing with any artificial pomp and circumstance, the documentary would not be out of place as a **PBS** piece, which speaks more about its knowledgeable cast of commentators and professional appearance than any kind of allusion to stuffiness and boredom. Interspersed among a wealth of rare live footage and photographs are in-depth discussions with the likes of author **Alan Clayson**, **Chris Welch** (ex-**Melody Maker**), **Keith Altham** (ex-1960s **NME** editor), **Chris Deja** (former **YARDBIRDS** guitarist), and journalists **Barney Hoskyns** and **Pat Sutcliffe**. Commentary from musicians that worked with the members, including **Dave Berry**, **Chris Farlowe**, and **Clem Cattini** is also included. The documentary is pieced together in a way that keeps the viewer's attention and leaves one with an entirely new perspective on the sound of **LED ZEPPELIN**.

The pre-**ZEP** lives and influences of all four members are detailed here with **Page** getting the lion's share of the attention, followed by **Plant**, **Bonham**, and **Jones**. **Page**'s early studio session work as a teenager is absolutely fascinating. The guitar legend was bit by the music bug after becoming enamored with **Elvis Presley** guitarist **Scotty Moore** and a host of American blues legends. This ultimately led to hours of said session work and his becoming a full-time member of **NEIL CHRISTIAN AND THE CRUSADERS** as a mere teen. Amazingly enough, **Page** was "estimated to have played on 60 percent of the hit records that came out of London between 1963 and 1966." The DVD is full of informational nuggets like this one and of course includes a good bit of detail on his formative years as a member of **THE YARDBIRDS**, **THE NEW YARDBIRDS**, and finally **LED ZEPPELIN**. Without regurgitating the contents of the disc itself, suffice it to say that the pre-**ZEP** careers of the remaining three members are enlightening as well. Stories of **Plant**'s involvement in several '60s R&B-based and psychedelic groups, such as **BAND OF JOY**, is especially intriguing.

The central portion of the disc is capped off with a compelling review of individual songs on the first two **LED ZEPPELIN** albums, several of which were simply re-arranged versions of old blues and folk songs. Extras include "**The Story of the Yardbirds**" and "**The Hardest Led Zepplin Quiz in the World Ever**". Recommended for aspiring rock historians and fans alike.

- **Scott Alisoglu**

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