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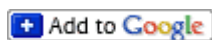
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Led Zeppelin: Origin of the Species

[Music Video Distributors](#) // Unrated // \$19.95 // August 8, 2006

Review by [Louis Howard](#) | posted September 25, 2006 | [E-mail the Author](#) | [Start a Discussion](#)

Covering their years of struggling in session studios and amateur band scenes in the 60's, **Led Zeppelin-The Origin Of The Species** moves through the successes of their respective tenures with The Yardbirds and Band Of Joy, culminating in the birth of the band, their first two albums and a band on the verge of massive world acclaim and popularity. Featuring rare musical performances, obscure footage of interviews and photographs, this 70 minute documentary mainly moves along on comments, insights and reminiscences from Alan Clayson, former Melody Maker journalist, Chris Welch; ex-1960s NME editor, Keith Altham; Yardbirds guitarist, Chris Dreja; and several others.

A program much in the vein of other Under Review type fare, this is an entertaining and enlightening documentary that takes the viewer from Jimmy Page's school days all the way to the release of the Led Zeppelin II. Indeed, for the most part this is very much a Jimmy Page driven vehicle, and rightfully so considering the essential role he played in the creation of the band. Yardbirds guitarist and almost Led Zep member Dreja is instrumental to this program, giving much of the insight into the Yardbirds here. This seems appropriate as it is the band from which Led Zeppelin rose, the Yardbirds having a rather rich history in itself what with being able to lay claim to having Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and



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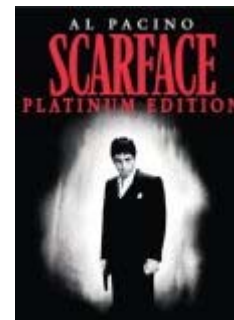
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Jimmy Page as band members at one time or another.

There is a bit of background into the other members' respective early years, but not nearly as much. Robert Plant, while having both a profound love for blues as well as the chops with which to sing them, nearly became an accountant. John Bonham, while having quite a reputation for being a fine drummer among other bands, had considerable renown for being an incredibly loud drummer, to the point that his bands were frequently paid off halfway through a show for fear he would break windows and glasses amongst the clubs in which they played. John Paul Jones was a music student with a degree of renown for musical arrangement work and was plenty busy when he approached Page about playing in the band and was quickly accepted.

Also discussed is the rather amusing fact that the name "Led Zeppelin" was originally conceived by John Entwistle (though Keith moon tried to make claims to such) at a time when the two had become disenchanted with their tenure playing in The Who. "Led" was spelled so for fear that American audiences would pronounce the word "lead" literally.

Quite a bit of the material here goes into the building of the supergroup, and its quick rise to fame; interviewees fairly gush about both the first and second albums, breaking them down track by track and discussing them in detail. One such member states that the advent of the debut Zep album truly marked the end of the 60's pop-ish music and the beginning of the tough, heavy, blues-laden sounds that were to come. One point that is seemingly made to stir the pot throughout the program is the fact that much of the material that Zep is renowned for could be construed as being at best emulated and at worst plagiarized, with Page and Plant taking credit for the work of other musicians, a subject that is directly confronted here. Indeed, "Whole Lotta Love," stolen from blues bass player Willie Dixon, is subsequently attacked for outright plagiarism, as is "Black Mountain Side", which seems to have borrowed from the tune "Blackwater Side". Listening and comparing the songs here leads one to believe that Page and Plant certainly took some liberties in both songwriting as well as execution of their material.

Given the fact that this is an interview-driven work there are a number of interesting musical pieces on hand; several live performances of the band are shown, along with some interesting footage from The Yardbirds and snippets of a number of blues numbers that were instrumental to the Zeppelin sound. One gem here is an interview from the BBC's '50s children's TV show, "All Your Own", in which the 14-year-old Jimmy Page explains that although he was quite a good guitarist, he didn't plan to become a musician



but instead a biological researcher; happily this didn't turn out to be the case. There are also a number of Yardbirds sessions as well as snippets of an early Zeppelin music video type segment from a Swedish TV show and some excellent footage of the band onstage after the release of their first two albums.

(NOTE: Die hard Zeppelin fans, feel free to write me with mistakes I might have recounted here, and I'll correct them!)

Video-

Aspect ratio for the disc is given as 16:9 widescreen. For the most part both old and new footage here looks quite good. Colors appear accurate and sharpness is sufficient.

Audio-

Sound is stated as being "Stereo Sound Mix" so I assume that means 2.0 stereo. The track given is clear and easy to understand, fine for documentary purposes.

Extras-

The Birth Of The Yardbirds- As the band The Yardbirds is the launch pad for Led Zeppelin, the group had a rich heritage with Eric Clapton and Jeff Beck before the advent of Page and is discussed in detail in this 20 minute documentary.



The Hardest Led Zeppelin Quiz In The World Ever- 25 questions pertaining to Led Zeppelin.

Final Thoughts-

As is the case with many films such as this, its an entertaining enough documentary with some fine commentary given on both the background and beginnings of Led Zeppelin, but none of the band members are on hand to give any insights of their own. While I think this is a worthy addition for any diehard Zep fan to have on their shelves, for the casual fan of the band I recommend that you **rent it**.

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