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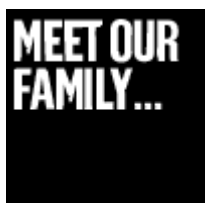
Led Zeppelin: The Origin Of The Species

By Allan Tong

September 14, 2006

The latest of the "critical review" DVDs delivers with an honest look behind the controversial rise of Led Zep, from Jimmy Page's hired gun years through to Led Zeppelin II. Page's early career relies on talking heads and obscure audio clips of his session work. One treat is a vintage TV clip of Page's skiffle band where he declares his ambition of being a biological researcher. Yardbird Chris DeJa dominates the middle section by recounting the departure of Jeff Beck (who does not appear) and the entrance of the upstart Page. The infamous "Blow Up" clip is included here but it's the obscure TV performance of "Happenings Ten Years Time Ago" that is a highlight. The program gains momentum as white soul belter Robert Plant and monster drummer John Bonham join the fledgling New Yardbirds, now under the wing of manager Peter Grant. We hear rare clips of Plant's early soul, blues and quasi-psychedelia bands tracing his influences, which he would absorb into the Zeppelin sound. Unfortunately, a lot of the Zeppelin film clips are found on the band's superb authorised DVD set. The critics pick up the slack by doing audio comparisons of Zeppelin's numerous plagiarisms from the first two albums. The best example is hearing the Small Faces' "You Need Loving" juxtaposed with Plant's vocals for "Whole Lotta Love." To their credit, respected rock critics like Chris Welch and Keith Altham, along with '60s singers Chris Farlowe and Dave Berry, give this program insightful analysis without hyping Zep. They point out the rampant thievery of bluesmen Willie Dixon, Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf. We hear Jake Holmes's original "Dazed and Confused" and declare Page guilty as charged. One critic hits it on the nose: Led Zeppelin were an awesome band, but their steals will forever diminish their reputation. The extras feature a 20-minute gem: an interview with Chris DeJa, who delivers an oral history of the Yardbirds from start to finish. (Now, where's the critical review of this band?) Plus: "The Story of the Yardbirds with Chris DeJa," Zeppelin quiz. (Sexy Intellectual)

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