

# 'Origin' is a natural selection

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"Led Zeppelin: The Origin of the Species" is exactly what the subtitle says: "A critical review of the band's roots and branches."

It is a documentary-style report covering the years leading up to the band's formation and the group's seminal first two albums.

Lasting a little over an hour, the film is much like a feature you would find on MTV or VH1 documenting how a band formed and blossomed.

It is not, however, what it states on the back cover of the DVD case: "The ultimate review and critical analysis of Led Zeppelin's formative years." Some parts of the band's background and especially the time when the band was recording the first two albums are left out, but overall the film does what a documentary is supposed to do by offering a fairly in-depth and informative review of Led Zeppelin's earliest years.

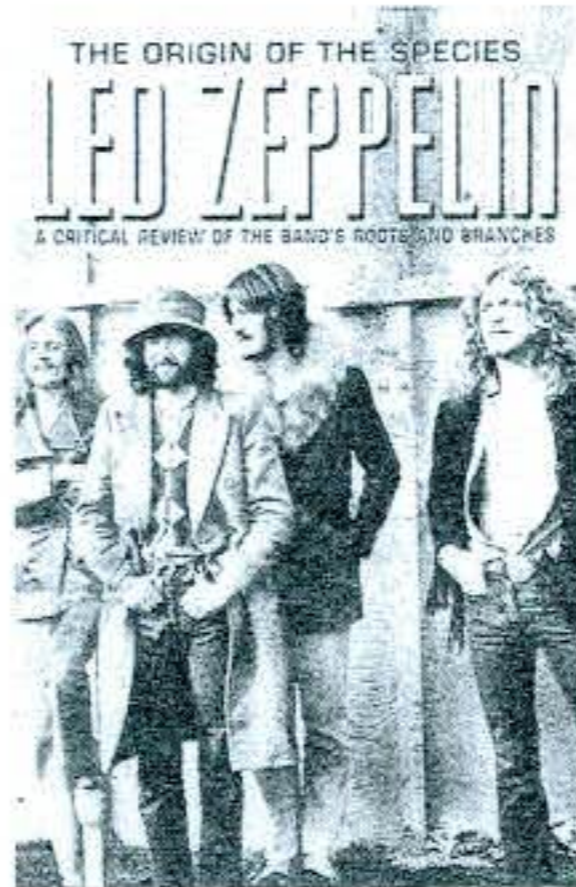
The film is laid out in a very organized and well-structured manner. It begins by inspecting each of the band's four members, focusing the most time on Jimmy Page, the lead guitarist who was the founder of the band.

It stresses the importance that various musicians and types of music, ranging from American blues stars such as Muddy Waters to psychedelic folk-rockers such as Buffalo Springfield even to traditional British folk tunes such as "Black Water Side," had on the group, which was notorious for entire albums based heavily on songs other groups had written.

The film also focuses on Page's early experiences with the Yardbirds, an interesting part of the band's history which is often overlooked. It describes in detail the way each of the four band members joined and how each of their extraordinary talents blended together in a way that made Zeppelin's music a unique new sound that paved the way for the punk-rockers of today.

"The Origin of the Species" does an excellent job of introducing the members chronologically while showing how each of the members were intertwined through a series of musical connections.

The film basically skips the recording process of Zeppelin's self-titled first album, but goes on to describe in detail how



several of the songs on the influential debut came to be. It uses this same format to dissect the group's second album, "Led Zeppelin II," which was, in many ways, more influential than the first.

The disc is light on special features, but the ones that it has are interesting and worth viewing.

"The Hardest Led Zeppelin Quiz in the World Ever" lives up to its name with several questions that could only be answered by someone whose life is devoted completely to Led Zeppelin and the Yardbirds. (This reviewer is obviously not one of those people, since he correctly answered only eight of the 25 questions.)

The disc also includes a bonus segment devoted to the founding and career of the Yardbirds. "The Story of the Yardbirds" sounds promising, but it is essentially just bassist Chris Dreja sharing various anecdotes about the band's formation, career and eventual demise. Ultimately, it comes across as dry and lacking substance.

Overall, "The Origin of the Species" does a splendid job of integrating video clips, audio clips, interviews and narratives into a relatively succinct account of one of the 20th century's most influential bands.

New fans and casual fans will find this DVD very interesting and informative, although seriously devoted Zeppelin fans and folks who are more interested in the latter stages of the band's career (e.g. "Stairway to Heaven") might end up looking for something with more detail on the band and its deep and significant history.

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