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Led Zeppelin

The Origin of the Species [DVD]

(Chrome Dreams)

US release date: 6 August 2006

UK release date: 31 July 2006

by **Roger Holland**

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Doing pretty much exactly what it says on the tin, *Led Zeppelin - The Origin Of The Species* is an informative and entertaining documentary that focuses on the roots and early days of the world's greatest ever rock band. Taking us all the way from Jimmy Page's school days right up until the release of the Brown Bomber, *Led Zeppelin II*, *Origin Of The Species* also manages to present a quite parallel history: that of the true majestic pomp of British music journalism.

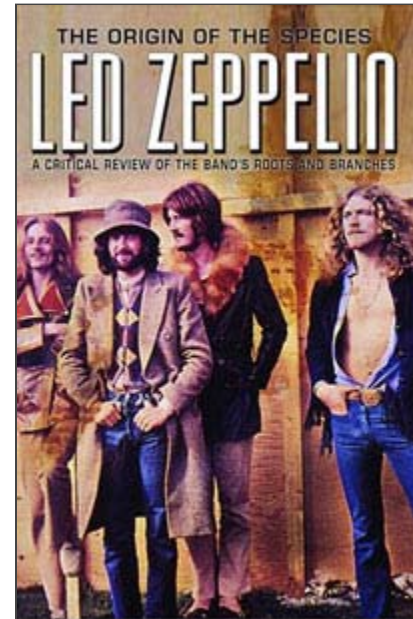
So feel free to admire the likes of Barney Hoskyns (*NME*) and Phil Sutcliffe (*Sounds*) as they provide an informed critical perspective on the nature of the beast. To marvel that Keith Altham looks and sounds more like a '50s sitcom bank manager run to seed than a former editor of the *NME* who really has lived Thee Rock 'n' Roll Life. To mock the perpetually self-important Paolo Hewitt. And to confuse that fabulous writer Chris Welch (*Melody Maker*) with the perennially awful British agony aunt, Claire Rayner.

Of course, Zeppelin fans will know much of this material already. But I once wrote a book about this band (not a very good one, admittedly), and there are things here that I never knew. My favourite is an extract from the BBC's '50s children's TV show, *All Your Own*, in which the 14-year-old Jimmy Page explains to presenter Huw Wheldon that although he was quite a good guitarist, he didn't plan to become a musician but rather, a biological researcher. Wheldon, rather surprisingly, went on to become the Managing Director of BBC Television. While Page, who was modest enough to admit that he didn't have the brains to become a doctor, was somehow sadly lost to scientific research.

Robert Plant, it transpires, was very nearly an accountant.

And John Bonham was such a loud drummer that his bands were frequently paid off halfway through a show for fear that he would bring the venue crashing down around the promoter's ears.

As usual, there's little here about John Paul Jones; and nothing *from* any of the band themselves. But nonetheless with lengthy contributions from Chris



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Dreja who played with Page in the Yardbirds and came close to filling Jones' role in Led Zeppelin and other '60s musicians such as Chris Farlowe, Dave Berry, and Clem Cattini, *Led Zeppelin - The Origin of the Species* is a documentary that all Zeppelin fans will want to see. If not own.

RATING: 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10

— 29 August 2006

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