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Led Zeppelin: The Origin of the Species

Posted by [Nahteboy](#) on 09/18/2006, 10:05 PM



A great doc with some really cool historical looks at Zep's roots



There have been many documentaries on what some may consider the world's most famous rock band since the Beatles. Once again someone has produced a program on Robert Plant, Jimmy Page, John Paul Jones and John Bonham - collectively known as Led Zeppelin. In this case it's "a critical review of the band's roots and branches" called *The Origin of the Species*. It's only 77 minutes long, but by the time it's done you may be wishing it had been 144 minutes. This documentary not only rocks but is an interesting look with interesting interviews at what the band's background was and how that came into play with what would eventually become the first 2 albums.

It begins by focusing on a young Jimmy Page being interviewed and performing on a TV program in his local hometown area. It shows his involvement as a studio musician and his eventual joining of The Yardbirds before forming Led Zeppelin. The Page section as well as the other portions of the DVD feature music by a variety of American blues singers and guitarists as well as some English and American folk musicians. There are relevant claims to how some of the Zep songs were maybe a traditional song or someone else's song that they rearranged and made their own. The various rock journalists, biographers and musicians that appear discuss all of this and even how Zep didn't necessarily plagiarize but should've given a little better credit on their albums as to where some songs originated from. Regardless, some of this old footage and links to their roots is very intriguing.

The doc moves on to Plant. One of the cool songs on here is with a band he performed with that had one album. They did a version of "You Better Run" (later made a top 10 hit by Pat Benatar) that makes its way to the DVD and is pretty cool. There is a lot of live performance footage with Zep as well and we see Plant much more sober than he was in the movie *The Song Remains The Same*.

The last band Plant was in before joining with Page also featured Bonham on Drums. It's amazing watching him drum on a basic "Ringo Starr" kit and performing part of "Moby Dick." The volume he could get and the speed at which he used a single bass pedal was amazing.

Jones was the last part of puzzle. He replaced Chris Drega who had followed Page over from The Yardbirds. Drega is interviewed quite extensively on this doc and explains that he wasn't really looking to be in Zep so his leaving to go on to do photography didn't bother him. As a matter of fact his photo of the band is used on the back of the first Zep album. Jones knew Page due to their working studio sessions together on occasion. Seeing all of the albums and singles these two played on before they were "famous" is mind-blowing. They were on some relatively big hits throughout the early '60s.

The DVD goes on to showcase select songs and their origins from *Led Zeppelin* and *Led Zeppelin II* before coming to a close. Once again, I wish there were more, but since there is a companion book that is supposed to be released with this DVD maybe they are planning on a sequel.

There is a lengthy interview with Chris Drega in the extras section discussing The Yardbirds history. Why is this important? For those of you too young to remember, The Yardbirds became famous while a young Eric Clapton was playing with them. He left the band and was replaced (as suggested by Jimmy Page) by Jeff Beck. Their bassist left and Page offered to join as a bass player, eventually moving to guitar while Drega took over bass chores. This group was the career launching pad for 3 of the most well known guitarists in rock history.

There is also a group of written biographies for each of the people interviewed for the doc. There are no interviews with any members of Led Zeppelin but these scholars know their stuff so it works well and gives it a different direction than if the band had been involved.

Finally there is "The Hardest Led Zeppelin Quiz In The World Ever." It's 25 multiple choice questions. I don't know if it could be considered the hardest but let's suffice it to say that I did better than 50% but I didn't make an "A" my first time around.

The disc is in widescreen, comes in a slipcase, plays in all regions and is in stereo. There are no subtitles and everything is in English, of course. The old footage is even in pretty decent shape and relatively clear. *The Origin of the Species* is a must for any Zep fan.

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