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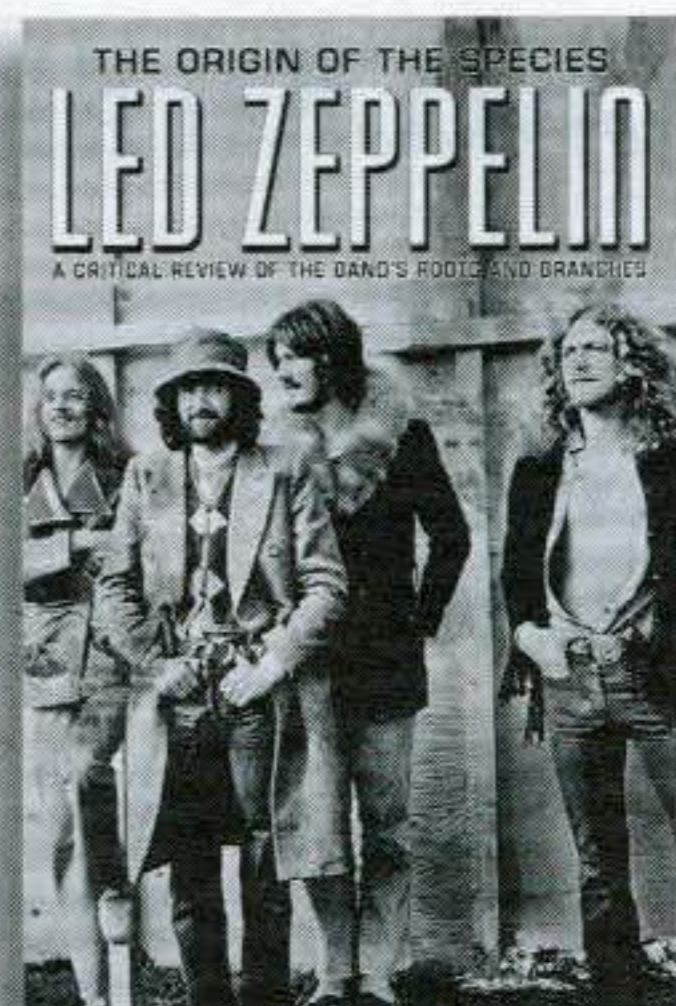
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# DVDs



## Led Zeppelin

*The Origin of the Species*  
Music Video Distributors

# ROOTS OF LED

*The Origin of the Species* traces the formative years of Led Zeppelin, from 1958 (you can see a 15-year-old Jimmy Page playing "skiffle" music on a UK television show), through the release of *Led Zeppelin II* in the fall of 1969. Frankly, I was dubious of this DVD at first, as it's an unauthorized "critical" review of Zep's early years, mostly featuring interviews with music journalists. The only noted musicians appearing are Yardbirds bassist/guitarist Chris Dreja and '60s Brit popster Chris Farlowe. But this DVD grew on me.

Dreja — who was originally offered the bass spot in Zeppelin, but turned it down — turns out to be a fine

commentator on mid-'60s pop. He offers several insightful anecdotes on Page's evolution from hot London session man (he played on dozens of hits from 1963-'66) to ambitious Yardbird to the veritable father of heavy metal. We also learn about Robert Plant's gigs with pre-Zep bands like Band of Joy and Hobstweedle, a period when he was being shaped by record execs into a "white soul" singer à la Stevie Winwood. (Apparently, Plant was also a huge fan of the Small Faces' Steve Marriott, who — along with Janis Joplin — would greatly influence the Zep singer's patented caterwaul.) We also hear about the early projects of drummer John Bonham and bassist/

keyboardist John Paul Jones, the latter of whom was, like Page, a busy session musician in swinging London.

The most fascinating — and controversial — part of this DVD focuses on the songwriting credits that appeared on the first two Zep albums, largely because the word "plagiarism" is mentioned rather bluntly. Clearly, Jimmy Page was already a seasoned and, dare I say, wily musician and knew how to take existing music and twist it into something else. As a result, these early Zeppelin records are littered with blues, R&B and old rock songs that the band either rearranged or, sometimes, even took full credits on.

The adaptations are all

over the place. You can hear the roots of "Communication Breakdown" in the chugging guitar riff to Eddie Cochran's "Nervous Breakdown." Page also took the old English folk song "Black Waterside" (recorded previously by UK folk singers like Bert Jansch and Anne Briggs) and morphed it into the guitar instrumental "Black Mountain Side." And "Dazed and Confused" is a direct lift from a folk-rock song by the largely unknown Jake Holmes. How the song ultimately became credited to Jimmy Page is unfortunately not explained here.

All this, and of course the numerous blues hooks, riffs, and lyrics that Zeppelin plundered for classic tracks like "How Many More Times" (fueled by Howlin' Wolf's "How Many More Years") and "Whole Lotta Love," a track that songwriter Willie Dixon successfully sued the band over.

In all, *The Origin of the Species* becomes a fascinating look at how these influences, musicians, and snippets of borrowed music all spun together to form the biggest, baddest hard rock group of all time. — **Pete Prown**



## Muddy Waters

Classic Concerts

As far as anyone knows, there is unfortunately no footage of any of the first generation of Chicago blues masters (Muddy, Wolf, Sonny Boy) in their element during their peak years — in a club setting — other than silent home movies. All we have is them playing

of "Mean Mistreater" with the great Jimmy Rushing, of Count Basie fame, joining for a few verses of his hit "Going To Chicago Blues."

Conversely, there are songs from the LP that were either not filmed or not preserved, and the ones that were