

Led Zeppelin: The Origin of the Species ★★1/2

Sexy Intellectual Productions/MVD Visual. Not rated.

When Led Zeppelin emerged from its netherworld back in the late 1960s, the knee-jerk critical reaction to its over-the-top style of blues-rock overwhelmingly dismissed the band as unoriginal hacks with no future.

They were wrong - the continued influence of Led Zeppelin is second only to that of The Beatles - but critical debate rages on, most recently in the British documentary *Led Zeppelin: The Origin of the Species*.

The point of this unauthorized documentary, beyond milking Zeppelin's popularity for profit, is to expose the band as artistic thieves who liberally poached ideas from others while taking credit themselves.

That Led Zeppelin "borrowed" from other performers is now common knowledge. This documentary, lorded over by a panel of sniffing British critics, goes to grandiose lengths to expose what is seen as a breach of musical decorum. And there is no getting around the fact that such Zeppelin staples as "Dazed & Confused" and "Black Mountain Side" were based wholesale on other songs - to erase any doubt, the source songs are played and squirmingly compared to the Zeppelin songs.

The debate, and heart of the documentary, stems from whether the songs were nicked, or merely served as sources of inspiration, not unlike the evolution of songs within the folk tradition.

It makes for some lively debate, with good points raised, and the early footage of the band - and that of the four band members' formative bands - is great fun.

There's not much new information, but the old clips make it worth watching at least once.

- Ed Bumgardner