

BLACK-DOG

The free online Led Zeppelin fanzine



Issue 1, August 2021



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Please note that Issue 1 of the "Black Dog" Led Zeppelin fanzine is presently envisaged as a one-off project but the editor may consider producing another issue at a later date, if there is further fan interest and a further submission of articles in the future. Please also remember to double-check any performance dates shown in this fanzine with the appropriate band's website, as gigs are occasionally cancelled.

Disclaimer: This fanzine is a non-professional and non-official publication produced free of charge by music fans, for other music fans who share the same interests. No commercial copyright infringement is intended.



Alison Krauss and Robert Plant

Recent Led Zeppelin News Headlines

"Robert Plant has big plans for his solo project Saving Grace"

"Led Zeppelin have the tapes: Ross Halfin explained Led Zeppelin's archive of live shows"

"The second Robert Plant and Alison Krauss album will be released in November"

"Led Zeppelin's official documentary film is 137 minutes long"

News updates at: <http://ledzepnews.com/> and <http://www.tightbutloose.co.uk/>

SAVING GRACE



A Retrospective Summary of the recent Saving Grace 2021 UK tour, using Internet Sources

Saving Grace are a co-operative band featuring Robert Plant (vocals), Suzi Dian (vocals), Oli Jefferson (percussion), Tony Kelsey (mandolin, baritone and acoustic guitars) and Matt Worley (banjo, acoustic and baritone guitars, and cuatro). "These five musicians work in glorious harmony from start to finish reworking a selection of diverse cover versions that have been collected from various places creating a musical journey in its truest form. Furthermore, this odyssey has been undertaken in the spirit of appreciation, musicianship, and exultation: they truly are a band of joy!"

The band's debut performance occurred on the 25th January 2019, at the "SpArC Theatre" in Shropshire. The band then performed at other venues throughout that year, playing a musical repertoire which was described as being "inspired by the dreamscape of the Welsh Marches". The band commenced their first USA tour in March 2020, but that had to be suddenly postponed, along with several other intended UK dates, due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. When the band announced those cancellations, they also revealed a live excerpt of their version of Low's "Everybody's Song". Robert Plant, the former lead singer of Led Zeppelin, has yet to record an album with Saving Grace. His most recent studio album, the 2017 "Carry Fire", is the second album recorded with the backing band "The Sensational Space Shifters"/

On the 13th May 2021, a brief Saving Grace concert tour of the UK was announced.

https://ultimateclassicrock.com/robert-plant-saving-grace-2021-tour/?utm_source=tsmclip&utm_medium=referral

That same article also quoted Robert Plant speaking during an earlier interview:

"In the days when I first starting performing around the Black Country, it was very evident that each area was its' own community/little town ... and each community had its own venue: Dudley Town Hall, Stourbridge Town Hall, Regis Hall, Brierley Hill Civic, Old Hill Plaza, Tipton Baths, Queen Mary Ballroom. I played them all, mostly as a kid opening for the likes of the Hollies, Jean Vincent, Screaming Lord Such, the Fourmost ... and others. So, with our band, Saving Grace, it's for me a bit of a reminiscence to play the various communities from where we all hail".

The originally-intended concert dates were:

- 22nd June - Tenbury Wells "The Regal"
- 24th June - Exmouth "Exmouth Pavillion"
- 25th June - Poole "Lighthouse"
- 27th June - Royal Tunbridge Wells "Black Deer Festival"
- 29th June - Shrewsbury "Severn Theatre"
- 26th July - Dudley "Dudley Town Hall"
- 31st July - Cawthorne "Underneath the Stars Festival"

Although Robert Plant had thus originally been scheduled to tour the UK with his band Saving Grace from the 22nd June until the 31st July, several of the intended earlier concert dates were destined to be either cancelled or postponed, after Boris Johnson (the UK Prime Minister) announced that the planned 21st June date for lifting Coronavirus Pandemic precautions in the country had been delayed until the 19th July.

(Continued on the Next Page)

(Continued): The intended 22nd June concert at Tenbury Wells was thus deleted from the band's tour schedule, very shortly after it was first announced but it was later rescheduled and performed on the 27th July. The intended 24th June concert in Exmouth was also cancelled and that venue said that Robert Plant had to "cancel his sold-out show because of the social distancing requirements, and can't reschedule as he has to be back in the USA for remaining 2021/22 commitments". On the website "Led Zep News", there was therefore speculation regarding Robert Plant's other commitments; an upcoming new album with Alison Kraus, a second "Band of Joy" album or another Saving Grace USA tour?

The intended Saving Grace concert on 25th June in Poole was cancelled and was not rescheduled. The intended 27th June performance at the "Black Deer Festival" (Kent) was also cancelled, as was the entire festival; the festival organisers announced that they were planning a 2022 festival instead. The intended 29th June concert in Shrewsbury was cancelled and the intended 16th July concert at Bexhill-on-Sea was rescheduled to occur on the 20th July.

The rescheduled and later-added concert dates thus eventually consisted of:

- 19th July – Worthing, "Worthing Theatres"
- 20th July - Bexhill-on-Sea "De La Warr Pavillion".
- 22nd July – Malvern "Malvern, Theatres"
- 24th July – Brierley "Civic Hall"
- 27th July - Tenbury Wells "The Regal"
- 29th July – Buxton "Opera House"
- 2nd August – Birmingham "Birmingham Town Hall"

Robert Plant thus performed his first post-pandemic concert, his first concert since 2019, at Worthing "Worthing Theatres" on Monday 19th July 2021. Claire Shaffer (on the "Rolling Stone" website) reported that "Robert Plant appeared onstage for his first post-pandemic show on Monday night in Worthing, England, performing with his band Saving Grace for the first time since 2019. Originally scheduled to tour the U.S. in March 2020, Saving Grace's plans fell through with the pandemic, and Plant and company are now finishing up the remainder of their United Kingdom shows that were postponed due to Covid". Claire also noted that onstage, the former Led Zeppelin lead singer was joined by vocalist Suzy Dian, mandolinist and guitar player Tony Kelsey, banjo and guitar player Matt Worley, and percussionist Oli Jefferson for a set that included traditional folk songs and a mix of modern covers, including a rendition of Donovan's "Season of the Witch".



Above: Robert Plant at Bexhill "De La Warr Pavillion", Tuesday 20th July 2021 © Richie Nice

"Rolling Stone" reference:

<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/robert-plant-first-post-pandemic-concert-saving-grace-1199499/>

A Worthing concert setlist appeared on "setlist.fm".

<https://www.setlist.fm/setlist/saving-grace/2021/worthing-pier-pavilion-worthing-england-5b8fd350.html>

Perhaps the best and most extensive concert review of the tour appeared on the internet (on the "Brighton and Hove News" website) in regards to the second concert of the tour which occurred on Tuesday 20th July at "De La Warr Pavillion", Bexhill-on-Sea.

Journalist Richie Nice wrote the review and noted the concert set list, while Sara-Louise Bowrey produced the accompanying photographs; which can all be seen here:

<https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2021/07/21/its-been-a-long-time-but-full-capacity-is-back-with-robert-plants-saving-grace/>

(Continued on the Next Page)

(Continued): In regards to the concert which occurred on Thursday 22nd July at "Malvern Theatres", the following five Youtube videos were posted on the internet by audience member "dle1877".

"Jesus on the Mainline"

https://youtu.be/Lf8Buk5T5_g

"As I Roved Out"

<https://youtu.be/wLDto0RYW24>

"Please Read the Letter"

<https://youtu.be/DQIYSal03fU>

"Season of the Witch"

<https://youtu.be/cCPR9jVL0dw>

"Angel Dance"

<https://youtu.be/oKKiQQ0YiMg>

In regards to the concert which occurred on Saturday 24th July at "Brierley Civic Hall", a Youtube video of "Everybody's Song" was posted on the internet by audience member "m-gig-vids".

<https://youtu.be/l6Vcq7QteLo>

A Brierley concert setlist appeared on "setlist.fm".

<https://www.setlist.fm/setlist/saving-grace/2021/brierley-hill-civic-hall-brierley-hill-england-b8f3d2e.html>



Above: Saving Grace at "Buxton Opera House", Thursday 29th July 2021 © Kieran Cody

The concert which occurred on Monday 26th July at "Dudley Town Hall", was reviewed on "The Midlands Rocks" website by Paul Quinton:

<https://www.themidlandsrocks.com/saving-grace-featuring-robert-plant-and-suzi-dian-scott-matthews-dudley-town-hall-monday-july-26th-2021/>

An audio recording of the "Dudley Town Hall" concert was posted on Youtube by GräZon:

https://youtu.be/BHxRB7oul_k

The concert setlist for the Dudley performance was noted by Gary Foy and appears on the "Tight But Loose" website: <http://www.tightbutloose.co.uk/>

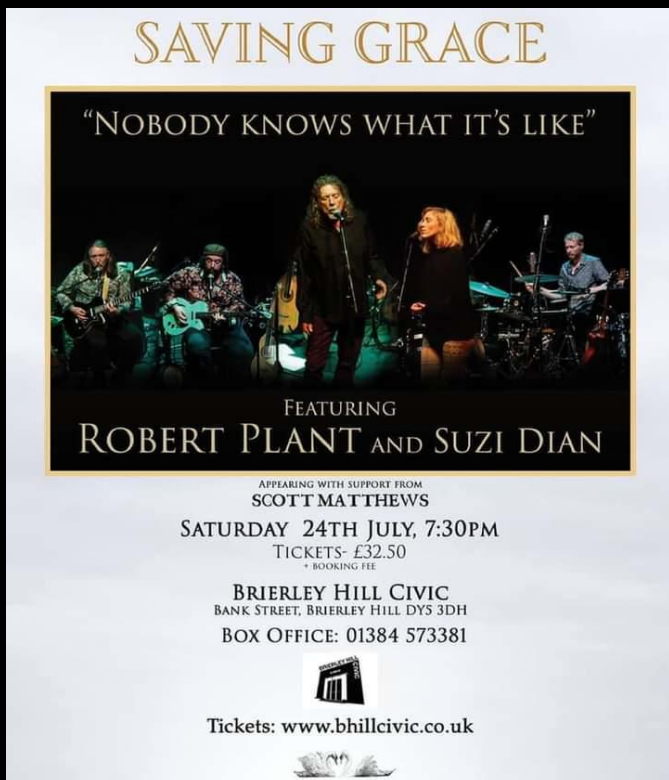
"As I Roved Out" (Sam Amidon cover)
"Cuckoo" (Clarence Ashley cover)
"Gospel Plow" (traditional)
"Move Along Train" (Levon Helm cover)
"I Don't Wanna Hear It"
"Satan Your Kingdom Must Come Down" (traditional)
"Everybody's Song" (Low cover)
"House Of Cards" (Richard & Linda Thompson cover)
"It's A Beautiful Day Today" (Moby Grape cover)
"Too Far From You" (Sarah Siskind cover)
"Two Coats" (traditional/Ralph Stanley)
"Chevrolet" (Donovan cover)
"Season Of The Witch" (Donovan cover)
"Ohio" (Patty Griffin cover)

encores:

"Cindy I'll Marry You Someday" (traditional)
"Angel Dance" (Los Lobos cover)

In regards to the concert which occurred on Tuesday 27th July at Tenbury Wells "The Regal", there are presently few details reported on the Internet.

(Continued on the Next Page)



Above: A poster advertising the Saving Grace concert at "Brierley Civic Hall", Saturday 24th July 2021



Above: A photo of Saving Grace on stage at "Buxton Opera House", Thursday 29th July 2021 © Kieran Cody

(Continued): In regards to the concert which occurred on Thursday 29th July at "Buxton Opera House", several fans posted photos on the Internet (including Kieran Cody from Lincoln). Some excellent Youtube film footage was posted by audience members Robert Mellor and Craig Paterson and a concert setlist also appeared on the "setlist.fm" website.

<https://www.setlist.fm/setlist/saving-grace/2021/buxton-opera-house-buxton-england-7b8f1af0.html>

"House of Cards" (Version 1)
<https://youtu.be/el9incAUwKY>

"Chevrolet" (version 1)
<https://youtu.be/Hvwj4cdSlfA>

"Ohio" (Version 1)
https://youtu.be/jcdOd6JF_E

"Angel Dance" (Version 1)
<https://youtu.be/gNDskf3TnCY>

"I Don't Wanna Hear It"
<https://youtu.be/fjNxlhp1Bus>

"Satan Your Kingdom Must Come Down"
<https://youtu.be/DBjip9LLtY4>

"Cindy I'll Marry You Someday"
<https://youtu.be/qdHz-p2-od8>

"House of Cards" (Version 2)
<https://youtu.be/P2o0FIaoymg>

"Chevrolet" (Version 2)
<https://youtu.be/JgLa8TFDJ6g>

"Ohio" (Version 2)
<https://youtu.be/0EyaSUdrSiQ>

"Angel Dance" (Version 2)
<https://youtu.be/ZsPLAxtQOcQ>

The final concert which was intended to be performed on Monday 2nd August 2021 at "Birmingham Town Hall" was postponed due to the current pandemic situation. A statement on the venue's website said: "A member of the touring party for Saving Grace featuring Robert Plant and Suzi Dian has been contacted by NHS Track & Trace and is now having to self-isolate. This unfortunately means that the performance due to take place at Town Hall, Birmingham on Monday 2 August 2021 will no longer be possible. We are working with the artists to find an alternative date. We ask audiences to please wait to be contacted by B:Music's Box Office for further details. Thanks in advance for your understanding and our apologies for any inconvenience that may have been caused".

Mike Garrett

ROBERT PLANT



The Official Robert Plant Website
<https://www.robertplant.com>

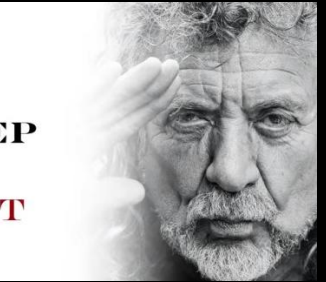
The Official Robert Plant Facebook Page
<https://m.facebook.com/robertplant>

LED-ZEPPELIN

The Official Led Zepplin Website
<https://www.ledzeppelin.com>

The Official Led Zepplin Facebook Page
<https://m.facebook.com/ledzeppelin>

DIGGING DEEP THE ROBERT PLANT PODCAST



<https://lnk.to/RPDiggingDeepPodcast>

SCOTT MATTHEWS



Website: <https://www.scottmatthews.uk>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ScottMatthewsUK>

SUZI DIAN



Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/SuziDianMusic>



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Website:

<http://www.tightbutloose.co.uk/>





SAVING GRACE



Saving Grace & Scott Matthews at the De La Warr Pavillion, Bexhill, 20th July 2021

As frontman of rock legends Led Zeppelin, Robert Plant has an indisputable place in the pantheon of all-time vocal greats, and a varied and successful solo career spanning the subsequent decades. The most recent of his many projects is an acoustic band, Saving Grace, playing an eclectic selection of folk, blues, country and gospel covers, and the occasional Plant original. For someone who could be filling a stadium, this is a relatively low-key operation, touring smaller venues in less obvious locations. The inclusion of the iconic "De La Warr Pavillion" in Bexhill-on-Sea caused a considerable flurry of excitement in the area, and the event sold out quickly. It's the second day since the removal of pandemic restrictions, so gathering in a crowd for a full capacity event is something of a novelty.

The venue is well organised, with plenty of helpful staff to assist the free flow of patrons. Most people are voluntarily wearing face coverings whilst moving around inside and there's a spacious bar area out on the terrace to enjoy the sunshine of a warm July evening.

First up in the hall tonight is indie-folk singer-songwriter Scott Matthews, one man with an extensive rack of guitars. His debut album, "Passing Stranger" won critical acclaim back in 2006 with lead single "Elusive" picking up an Ivor Novello songwriting award. Originating from Wolverhampton, he has been championed by Robert Plant (famously from the Black Country himself) who contributed vocals to a track on the follow up "Elsewhere" in 2009. With six further albums released, there is a considerable back catalogue to draw on.

(Continued on the Next Page)



Above: Scott Matthews at "De La Warr Pavillion", Bexhill-on-Sea, 20th July 2021 © Sara-Louise Bowrey

Scott Matthews set list: "Virginia", "As The Day Passes", "Sunlight", "Something Real", "City Headache", "Intruders On Earth" and "Passing Stranger".

The terrace bar is doing a brisk trade during the interval, and there's a palpable buzz of excitement in anticipation of seeing a genuine legend perform. Back in the hall the stage is set, with a large backdrop with a bison motif, and as the lights dim and the intro music starts up, it's time for Saving Grace.

The instrumentalists take their places to loud applause, and launch an exotic sounding groove with banjo, percussion and mandolin. Robert Plant and Suzi Dian enter from house left and right respectively to rapturous cheers from the ecstatic crowd and we're into the first number, a cover of Clarence Ashley's "Cuckoo". The dual vocals mesh superbly, and an effervescent banjo line dances over skittering percussion and a thudding kick drum. It's clear we're in for a special treat tonight. The mesmeric dual vocal continues through a version of "Gospel Plow".

"Live music!" Scott exclaims, flinging his arms open to the audience, who respond with a loud cheer. A tall figure in a blue shirt and black jeans, he sports a clean-cut look with his hair cut short. Strapping on a Guild semi-acoustic with a gorgeous dark wood finish, he launches into opening number "Virginia". The sound is ambient and vibey, with a minimal backing of electronic drone, presumably supplied via a pedal. Vocal and guitar are both drenched in a massive reverb. "Give me something I can dream about", the lyric implores, and it feels like a dream to be sitting watching a performance in the company of a large crowd.

"Just another night", quips Mr Plant, who is clearly delighted to be back gigging after a nineteen-month enforced hiatus. There's a change of mood for "Move Along Train", led by an insistent snare drum rhythm by Oli Jefferson, house right behind a black kit. Two players are seated at the back of the stage, both with an array of instruments set ready to use, including acoustics and long-necked electric baritone guitars. Tony Kelsey, who started the set on mandolin, sits hunched over in a dark t-shirt, long hair cascading from beneath a baseball cap.

(Continued on the Next Page)

There seem to be guitar changes for every song: an amped acoustic, a twangy 12-string and some alternative tunings. I'm pleased to see the hard-working guitar tech Ady Johnson get thanked and introduced to the crowd.

The standout tracks for me span both ends of Scott's discography. "Intruders On Earth", from current album "New Skin" is soaringly atmospheric with Spanish guitar arpeggios and a melody reminiscent of the vocal style of Thom Yorke from Radiohead. "Passing Stranger", from the debut album, is a beautifully written song with a lovely progression, its bluesy style reminding me of Ben Ottewill of Gomez. The lyric is a cracker too: "The coffee you poured me is cold, the paper I'm reading is old, and that smile is not your own". It has been a very impressive start to the evening".



Above (and previous page): Saving Grace at "De La Warr Pavillion", Bexhill-on-Sea, 20th July 2021 © Sara-Louise Bowrey



Above: The members of Saving Grace at "De La Warr Pavillion", Bexhill-on-Sea, 20th July 2021 © Sara-Louise Bowrey

(Continued): Bearded banjo player Matt Worley, his black vest revealing extensive tattoos, takes the lead in a call and response vocal section. In this instance the response is provided by Robert Plant, looking fine and dandy in a blue satin shirt, his trademark curly mane tied back, and Suzi Dian, with flowing blonde hair and a floaty black dress.

"Welcome to the Black Country". The great man is in a jovial mood. "We're Saving Grace, and we come from the land of the ice and snow", a Zep reference that raises a chuckle. The numerous fans in the audience prick their ears up as a monumentally awesome rendition of "Satan Your Kingdom Must Come Down" segues into Blind Willie Johnson's "In My Time Of Dying", famously covered on the 1975 Led Zeppelin album "Physical Graffiti". The twin baritone guitars sound sublimely massive.

Every number is an absolute winner, performed by musicians at the very top of their game. The introduction to a Moby Grape number brings some fond reminiscences of the 1960s music scene. Suzi takes the lead for "Too Far From You", with Robert standing behind the two guitarists, together providing a formidable wall of backing vocals.

There's an eastern feel to Low's "Everybody's Song" with the effects on Matt Worley's cuatro producing a sitar-like sound, and "Two Coats" is especially vibey, with Suzi adding a low drone on an accordion. There's plenty of amiable chat between songs, often providing background on their origins, which is a musical education in itself.

Great numbers just keep on coming. "Cindy I'll Marry You Someday" has another beautiful dual vocal driven along by a thumping floor tom. Given how good they sound, I'm surprised baritone guitars aren't more widely used. The longer necks enable them to be tuned lower than standard. Both players are using them for Donovan's "Season Of The Witch". Suzi takes the lead vocal while Robert gets busy with some maracas. Oli adds rim shots and big tom hits, and Tony turns in another blistering solo.

"Here's a song I wrote with...somebody else", introduces the final number of the set, "Please Read The Letter", from Page and Plant's 1998 album "Walking Into Clarksdale", famously reprised with Alison Krauss on "Raising Sand" in 2007. It's a beautiful song, and this rendition is simply magnificent. The comically drawn out ending raises a laugh and huge applause.

(Continued on the Next Page)



Above: Saving Grace at “De La Warr Pavillion”, Bexhill-on-Sea, 20th July 2021 © Sara-Louise Bowrey

It’s been a long time, as they say, since we’ve had full capacity live music events, and what a way to get back into it. Tonight, it felt like an absolute treat to be witnessing a superlative performance by a band of top-quality players, featuring a bona fide musical legend.

Saving Grace

Robert Plant and Suzi Dian – vocals
 Oli Jefferson – percussion
 Tony Kelsey – mandolin, baritone and acoustic guitars and vocals
 Matt Worley – banjo, cuatro, acoustic and baritone guitars and vocals

Saving Grace setlist:

- “Cuckoo” (Clarence Ashley cover)
- “Gospel Plow” (traditional)
- “Move Along Train” (Levon Helm cover)
- “Satan Your Kingdom Must Come Down” (traditional)
- “House Of Cards” (Richard & Linda Thompson cover)
- “It’s A Beautiful Day Today” (Moby Grape cover)
- “Too Far From You” (Sarah Siskind cover)
- “Everybody’s Song” (Low cover)
- “Two Coats” (traditional/Ralph Stanley)
- “Can I Do It For You” (Memphis Minnie cover)
- “Cindy I’ll Marry You Someday” (traditional)
- “Season Of The Witch” (Donovan cover)
- “Please Read The Letter” (Paige and Plant)

encores:

- “As I Roved Out” (Sam Amidon cover)
- “Angel Dance” (Los Lobos cover)

(Continued): “I didn’t know King Offa had left the West Midlands”, quips Robert as he bids us goodbye. The singer has a noted interest in the Welsh Marches, and has clearly spotted that the Mercian king (responsible for ‘Offa’s Dyke’) crops up in street and school names in Bexhill. King Offa conquered the South Saxons in 771 AD and subsequently named Bexhill (Bixlea) in a charter he granted. Tonight, a different kind of Midlands royalty has peacefully won over the people of Sussex, and they are loving it. An insistent and surprisingly in-time handclap brooks no argument in calling for an encore.

The band returns with Robert looking relaxed, glass of wine in hand, and we are treated to a superb version of Sam Amidon’s “As I Roved Out”, with banjo and baritone guitar conjuring a vibe reminiscent of “Kashmir”. “We like to go places we’ve never been before... like here!” is the final quip. “You’ll never leave!” retorts some wag in the audience, League Of Gentlemen style, and the evening concludes with a cover of “Angel Dance” by Los Lobos.

Richie Nice (Review and Setlist)
Sara-Louise Bowrey (Photographs)



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 Richie Nice

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Hear the “Fires of Beltane” single at:
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SARA-LOUISE BOWREY PHOTOGRAPHY



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 Over 20 year's experience

Website:
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<https://www.facebook.com/sarabowreyphotos/>

CODA - A TRIBUTE TO LED ZEPPELIN



CODA - a Tribute to Led Zeppelin are Europe's most authentic and exciting Led Zeppelin tribute band, replicating the sounds and sights of a typical Led Zep show like no other Zeppelin tribute band in the UK.

Website:

<https://www.codaledzeppelintributeband.co.uk>

Facebook

<https://m.facebook.com/CODALedZeppelinTributeBand/>

September 4th, 2021 – Winchester, "Railway Inn"
September 10th, 2021 – Morpeth, "Riverside Lodge"
September 11th, 2021 – Whitehaven, "Milling's Motorcycles"
September 18th, 2021 – Ashford, "Revelation"
September 25th, 2021 – Redditch, "Palace Theatre"
October 2nd, 2021 – Leigh on Sea, "Leigh Community Centre"
October 23rd, 2021 – Eastbourne, "College Theatre"
October 24th, 2021 – London, "Millfield Theatre"
December 11th, 2021 – Gravesend, "Leo's Red Lion"
December 17th, 2021 – Aberdare, "Jac's Music Venue"
January 29th, 2022 – Hastings, "White Rock Theatre"
February 4th, 2022 – Kummel, "The Flying Dutchman"
February 5th, 2022 – Tenterden, "Sinden Theatre"
February 19th, 2022 – Bedford, "Esquires"
March 5th, 2022 – Carlisle, "The Sands Centre"
March 12th, 2022 – Stirling, "The Tolbooth"
March 13th, 2022 – Inverness, "Eden Court"
May 21st, 2022 – Ilfracombe, "Ilfracombe Holiday Park"
July 23rd, 2022 – Brighton, "Komedia"

JOHN BONHAM A CELEBRATION II

Saturday 25th September 2021

10.30am - 10.30pm

Redditch Town Centre Locations



HEADLINE ACTS AT PALACE THEATRE, REDDITCH

JOHN COGHLAN 'S QUO - STRAY - CODA : A TRIBUTE TO
LED ZEPPELIN - KEN PUSTELNIK 'S GROUNDHOGS -

VAMBO - MICHAEL MacCOURT

& MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED.

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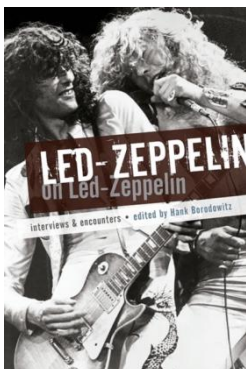
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A permanent bronze memorial of world-renowned drummer John Bonham of Led Zeppelin, erected in Redditch Town centre on May 31st 2018 to commemorate the Redditch-born musician's 70th birthday

Website: <https://www.johnbonhamac.com/>

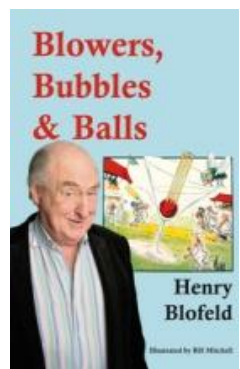


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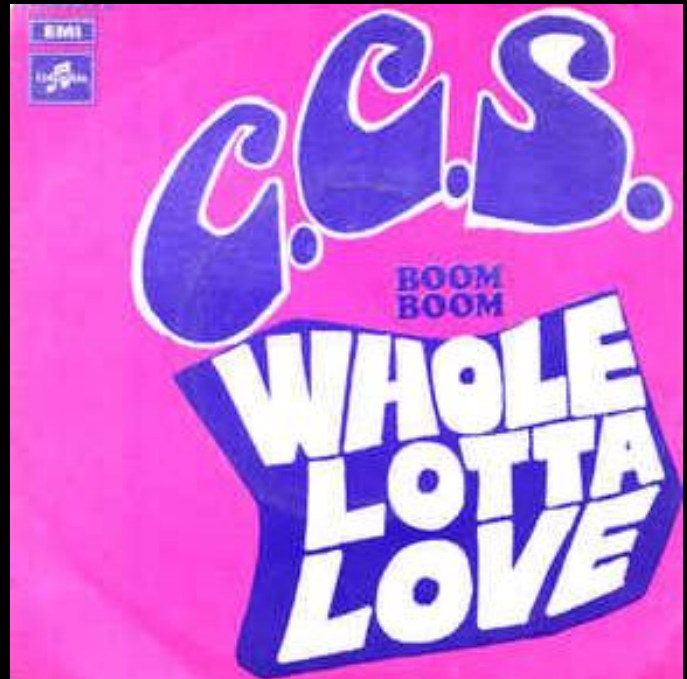
“You know where you can stick your Led Zeppelin!”

Remembering some aspects of my early record-collecting days: 1974-1993

Although the legendary rock band Led Zeppelin were active during the period 1968-1980, I was born in 1964 and as a consequence of that, it was not until around 1979 that I personally first became familiar with their music, as a schoolkid, growing up in Grimsby. It was not until I began junior school (Grange Middle School, Grimsby) in 1974, that I began to seriously take regular notice of so-called Pop Music, probably better referred to today (August, 2021) as Chart Music. That mid-1970s period, was arguably the musical heyday of Pop artists such as: The Osmonds, The Bay City Rollers, The Jackson Five, Mud, Showaddywaddy, Wizard, ABBA, The Sweet, The Electric Light Orchestra, Elton John, Suzi Quatro, Slade and many more.

My first-ever vinyl records were two 7” vinyl singles, purchased with my tenth-birthday money (in 1974); “Long Tall Glasses (I Can Dance)” by Leo Sayer and “Jukebox Jive” by The Rubettes. My first-ever 12” vinyl LPs were 1975 Christmas presents; ABBA “Greatest Hits” and Bay City Rollers “Bay City Rollers”. From my perspective at that time, vinyl records were very expensive items, things which were only acquired as Birthday or Christmas presents. After becoming a fan of the BBC One “Top of the Pops” TV show, the only way I could “collect” the vast majority of the songs which appeared in their Hit Chart, was to put a blank cassette into a radio-cassette player, each Sunday evening, in order to record the songs from (what was then) Radio One’s “Top Twenty” show. A little after that, when my cousins and myself had taken an interest in vinyl albums, we would again record an album for each other, by putting a blank (TDK) cassette into the front of the record-player.

I remember that on some occasions, I visited my cousins, Steve Cullum and Edward Andrew Cullum, in order to play vinyl LPs on their bedroom record player. Two of Andrew's albums that I especially remember were Elton John *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* and Electric Light Orchestra *Out of the Blue*; it was my older cousin Steve who was later to impress me with his Rock albums by bands such as: Deep Purple, Rainbow, Black Sabbath, Kiss and Rory Gallagher. On a more humorous note, I remember that Edward Andrew Cullum used to experiment with homemade radio broadcasting, although the furthest-away that we ever detected the signals from his bedroom, was while stood on the opposite side of the road (the far-side of the dual carriageway).



Above: The 1970 C. C. S. “Whole Lotta Love” single

Although I was not, at the age of ten (in 1974), familiar with Led Zeppelin's 1969 song “Whole Lotta Love”, I did inadvertently know that tune because a very modified short instrumental version of it was being used by the BBC as the theme tune for their weekly “Top of the Pops” TV show. It was the band “C. C. S.” (Collective Consciousness Society) who first devised an instrumental version of the song and released it as a chart single in 1970.

Led by blues guitarist Alexis Korner, the “C. C. S.” band were formed in 1970 by musical director John Cameron and record producer Mickie Most; the majority of the “C. C. S.” band personnel were session musicians. In reality, the “Top of the Pops” instrumental theme was not the actual “C. C. S.” recording but was instead a shorter version of it, recorded by the “Top of the Pops” orchestra one morning before the day's rehearsals began. John Cameron was both the founder of the “C. C. S.” band and the conductor of the “Top of the Pops” orchestra; some of the orchestra musicians were also members of the “C. C. S.” band.

The Led Zeppelin song “Whole Lotta Love” was the first Led Zeppelin song that I ever heard. One day, during the morning break time at school, three lads walked into the classroom of Courtauld house-block and put the album *Led Zeppelin II* on the record player; immediately, the “Whole Lotta Love” riff could be heard.

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(Continued): I did not know two of those three lads but the third one (who was nicknamed "Big Ted") was from our own Courtauld house and he quickly made it clear that the "Top of the Pops" TV show had ripped-off Led Zeppelin in order to get a theme tune.

I do remember that a few weeks later, those same three lads reappeared with the *Led Zeppelin III* album and its opening track "The Immigrant Song" proved very popular but even more than the music, it was the cardboard gatefold album cover of *Led Zeppelin III* that seemed to fascinate most of the kids present, during that break time? The front cover had deliberately-cut holes in it and a rotating cardboard disc was incorporated into the rear of that same front cover. When that cardboard disc was rotated, it caused the photographs of the band members printed on it to become visible through the holes in the front cover. I remember rotating that cardboard disc myself and I also remember other schoolkids each waiting to have their turn to rotate it.

In regards to determining precisely when we were listening to those two particular Led Zeppelin albums; that is difficult to say. When I started at Hereford Comprehensive School (Grimsby) in September 1977, I was not aware of any of the eight house-blocks having record players (although the Sixth Form block probably did). When each of the eight house-blocks began to receive record players, it was done gradually. I remember that the adjacent Montgomery house-block received its record player a little while before we in Courtauld house-block received ours.



Above: The 1970 "Led Zeppelin III" album cover



Above: The 1969 "Led Zeppelin II" album cover

On our house-block record player, I remember the Sex Pistols "Great Rock n' Roll Swindle" and Pink Floyd "Another Brick in The Wall" being played while they were in the Charts, so that would imply that we either received our record player in 1979, or a little earlier, when the new study-year commenced in September 1978. It was during the start of that particular study-year ((September 1978), that I was destined to meet two new pupils from that year's new intake, who were to become great friends and fellow record collectors. The first was Mark Allenby, who was like me, a member of Courtauld house-block; the other was John Ashbrook, who was a member of the adjacent Harwood house-block. Both Mark and John had extensive record collections and both of them eventually had a vinyl copy of the Led Zeppelin album *The Song Remains the Same*; I heard that album played at both of their homes, for the first time, possibly during late-1981 or sometime during 1982.

I had gradually become less drawn to Pop Music and more drawn towards Rock music, during 1979 and 1980; during those two years, my only new Pop Music acquisitions was the single "Rockabilly Rebel" by Matchbox and the album *Super Trouper* by ABBA. I had started to listen to bands such as Status Quo, Slade and Meatloaf more often during those two years and then in November 1980 I bought the AC/DC single "Rock n' Roll Ain't Noise Pollution" (which was in the charts at that time). On the B-side of that single was "Hells Bells" and that proved to be the track which fully converted me into liking what was then called Heavy Rock music.

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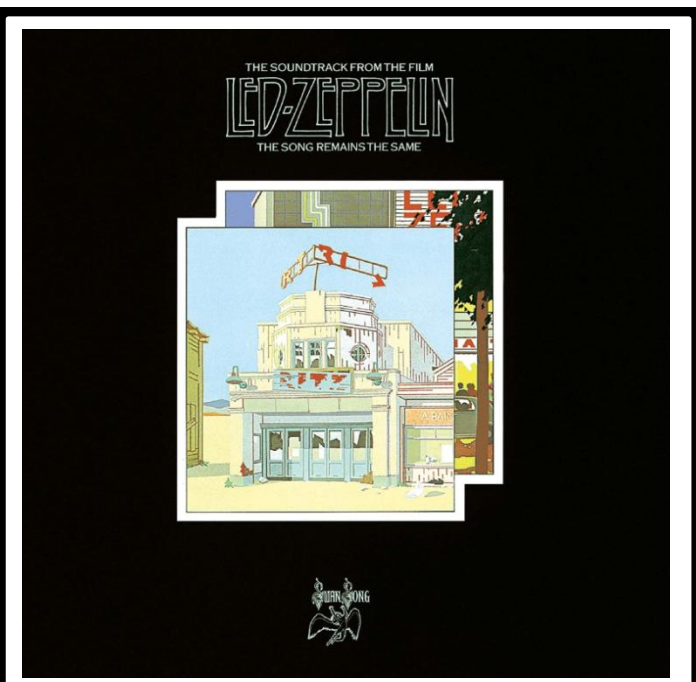
(Continued): A short while after buying that vinyl single, I remember walking into Courtauld house-block at school and hearing the live AC/DC album *If You Want Blood* being played at full volume.

That album had been brought in by a girl called Mary Gill and I remember shouting at her "Wow! What is this?" As a consequence of that day, I requested a copy of *If You Want Blood* for my 1980 Christmas present from my parents, who were very shocked when they heard it playing; my mother described it as "a waste of money". During 1981 and 1982, I acquired a few more singles such as Whitesnake "Don't Break My Heart Again", Rainbow "I Surrender", Gillan "New Orleans, Saxon "And the Bands Played On", Meatloaf "Dead Ringer for Love" and AC/DC "Let's Get it Up". By the end of 1982 however, I had decided that generally I would no longer collect singles because I always afterwards bought the album which the single had been taken from and I was therefore paying twice for the same musical tracks. At that time, I was literally putting-aside just fifty pence per week (although not every week) to save as my ongoing record-collecting fund.

Mark Allenby, who has now sadly passed away, used to occasionally drum for a couple of teenage bands ("Countdown" and "Route 66"), which performed 1950s and 1960s Rock n' Roll covers, either at our school or in nearby local pubs. I was Mark's unofficial drum-roadie at some of those gigs and the pair of us thus had an on-going friendly debate regarding who was the World's greatest drummer of all time.



Above: Led Zeppelin's legendary drummer, John Bonham



Above: "The Song Remains The Same" 1976 album cover

On some occasions, we would listen to Ian Paice drumming during "The Mule" (Deep Purple, *Made in Japan*) but even more often, we would then listen to John Bonham drumming during "Moby Dick" (Led Zeppelin, *The Song Remains the Same*).

Mark was also a huge fan of drummers Cozy Powell and Buddy Rich; and because Mark was an aspiring drummer himself, he occasionally studied their performances on records and on videos, in order to work out the drumming techniques they were using. At Mark Allenby's home, I can only recollect regularly listening to the tracks "Moby Dick" and "Stairway to Heaven", from *The Song Remains the Same* album, but at John Ashbrook's home I recollect listening to all of *The Song Remains the Same* album more often and also seeing the video-version there, for the first time.

I first heard (gradually) the tracks from the *Led Zeppelin IV* album on BBC Radio One's *The Friday Rock Show*, although I didn't initially realise that those tracks were from that album. Presented by Tommy Vance, *The Friday Rock Show* was a BBC Radio One show which was broadcasted across the United Kingdom each Friday night, between 10pm and Midnight (from the 17th November 1978, to the 2nd April 1993). During the time that I regularly listened to that radio show, 1981-1985, it was the only nationally available radio-outlet for the Heavy Rock music genre.

The theme tune of *The Friday Rock Show* was the instrumental track "Take It From The Top" by the Dixie Dregs.

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Above: Radio broadcaster Tommy Vance (1940-2005), the presenter of "The Friday Rock Show"

(Continued): Various excerpts from other music tracks were also played as incidental music, over which, Tommy would make his announcements, before then playing another full song. I do remember that for a while, an excerpt from Led Zeppelin's "Four Sticks" was used as background incidental music.

Once a year, on the show's Anniversary, the entire evening was devoted to playing the songs which the listeners had voted as being their all-time favourites; that list usually included songs such as: Rainbow "Stargazer", Yes "Awaken", Genesis "Supper's Ready", Deep Purple "Child in Time", Lynyrd Skynyrd "Freebird", Rush "2112" and culminated in the listeners' most-voted-for track, which was always Led Zeppelin "Stairway to Heaven".

It was sometime during 1982 that I actually bought my first Led Zeppelin vinyl albums; it happened during one of those visits to my cousins' home. My older cousin Steve Cullum told me that there was a lad who lived around the corner who was selling the Led Zeppelin albums *Volume I* and *Volume IV* at a cheap secondhand price.

I thus literally walked around the corner, from Laceby Road into The Ridgeway, in order to visit the lad and I then discovered that those Led Zeppelin albums were in mint condition, so I bought both of them from him. To this day, *Led Zeppelin IV* remains my favourite Led Zeppelin album (but I also think that *Presence* is the band's much underrated album).

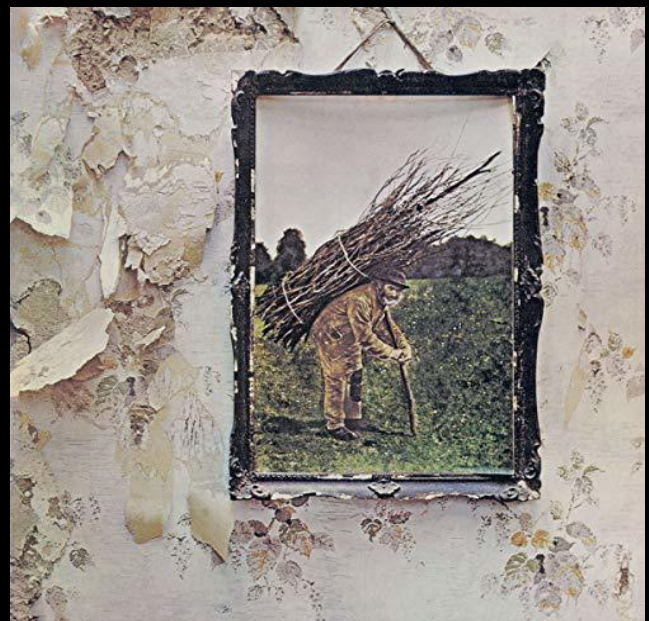
While I was visiting that lad, I also mentioned that I was also a fan of the rock band Deep Purple, so he also succeeded in selling me a mint copy of the compilation album *24 Carat Purple*. I remember that lad appeared very "honest" because he did mention that the first Led Zeppelin album was more of a Blues album, rather than a Rock album, so I might not like it.

I told him that when I bought my first-ever issue of "Kerrang" magazine (January, 1982), it contained a retrospective review of the first Led Zeppelin album, so I knew what to expect. Quite a while later, I was to "feel sorry" for that same lad, as he became one of the regular "drinkers" who sat on a bench near St James church, easily recognised due to his distinctive grey sports jacket which had black oval PVC elbow patches.

Certainly, by the end of 1982, I also had a vinyl copy of the Led Zeppelin *Coda* album. My memory of how I bought it remains divided, as I could have also bought it from that lad in The Ridgeway or alternatively, I could have bought it from the record department of Woolworths, as I distinctly remember seeing copies of *Coda* in their Freeman Street branch (Grimsby) and I remember an issue of "Kerrang" magazine reviewing it, at the time of its release (November, 1982).

It should be emphasised that I became aware of *The Song Remains the Same* double-vinyl album first, then I learned about the video-version a little later; and then finally in the first half of 1983 I actually got to see the full cinema-version, at the ABC Cinema (Freeman Street, Grimsby).

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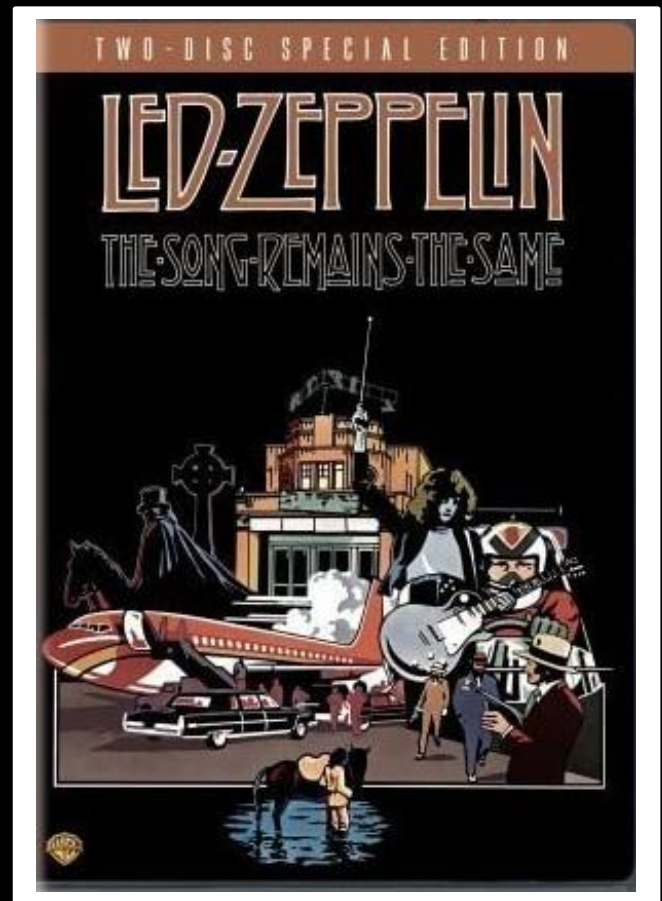


Above: The 1971 "Led Zeppelin IV" album cover

(Continued): The concert film and soundtrack which both became known as *The Song Remains the Same* were recorded during three consecutive concert nights (27–29th July, 1973) at Madison Square Garden, New York; the resulting vinyl double-album was released on 28th September 1976, by Swan Song Records; the film-version first premiered on 20th October 1976 at "Cinema 1", New York.

The vinyl double-album, known correctly as *The Soundtrack from the film The Song Remains the Same* featured the following songs: "Rock and Roll", "Celebration Day", "The Song Remains the Same", "Rain Song", "Dazed and Confused", "No Quarter", "Stairway to Heaven", "Moby Dick" and "Whole Lotta Love". The film-version featured the same songs, apart from the fact that it lacked "Celebration Day" but instead also had "Black Dog" and "Since I've Been Loving You".

Unbeknown to the fans at that time, both the record-version and the film-version of the 1976 release were not representing the entire filmed concert. The full song set-list for each of those three nights filmed was: "Rock and Roll", "Celebration Day", "Black Dog", "Over the Hills and Far Away", "Misty Mountain Hop", "Since I've Been Loving You", "No Quarter", "The Song Remains the Same", "Rain Song", "Dazed and Confused", "Stairway to Heaven", "Moby Dick", "Heartbreaker", "Whole Lotta Love" and "The Ocean". Those tracks which were omitted from the 1976 film and album versions all finally appeared on the 2007 digitally re-mastered version of *The Song Remains the Same* DVD and also appeared again on the 2018 digitally re-mastered version of *The Song Remains the Same* audio CD set.



Above: "The Song Remains the Same" 2007 digitally-remastered two-DVD set

Those songs which did appear on the 1976 film and vinyl versions of *The Song Remains the Same* were also edited in a variety of ways, to different extents, according to the circumstances of each song. From the fans' point of view, the most-extensive study of the editing involved with each song associated with *The Song Remains the Same* appears on Eddie Edward's phenomenal website which is called "The Garden Tapes". <http://www.thegardentapes.co.uk>

During the first half of 1983, I was working as a Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) trainee. On one occasion, I was working with the auto-electrician and we had to go to a garage in Cleethorpes in order to install some radio cassette players in several cars. We drove southeast along Alexandra Road (the seafront) and then turned off, into a side street. Once we were in that side street, the song "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You", from the first Led Zeppelin album, could be heard playing at maximum volume from the garage. On the opposite (southern) side of the road was a block of flats which was being used as a Pensioners care home and I realised that they could easily hear every note and every word of the song; regardless of whether they wanted to, or not.



Above: "The Song Remains the Same" 2018 digitally-remastered two-CD set

<https://www.ledzeppelin.com/?frontpage=true>

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(Continued): The cars which required the radio cassette players were pointed out to us by "Roger" who owned the garage. He would only ever allow Led Zeppelin music to be played in the garage, so he gave the auto-electrician another Led Zeppelin cassette and told him to play that, in order to test the new radio cassette players as they were being installed. While he was carrying out the installations, the auto-electrician whispered to me "Roger is a good mate, and he gives me plenty of extra work ... but his taste in music is shite!" I of course did not agree, so I just laughed.

The auto-electrician was not the only person present, who did not like Led Zeppelin; there was a young lad in the garage who was also a Youth Opportunity Programme trainee. It was a Thursday and "Roger" said to him "It is your last day tomorrow but make sure you still turn up". The young lad replied "I am not coming in tomorrow; you can stick your job and you know where you can stick your Led Zeppelin!". Immediately, "Roger" signaled to another mechanic and the pair of them then threw the young lad into the engine compartment of a car being worked on; they closed the bonnet on top of the young lad; then the pair of them sat on top of the bonnet.

Despite the cruelty of the situation, the auto-electrician and I were laughing as we could see the young lad's arms and legs thrashing about, and we could hear his screams coming from under the bonnet. The young lad was soon saved however, as a "hippy woman" arrived and told "Roger" to stop. The auto-electrician laughed again and told me that she was the wife of "Roger" and those two had three sons (John, Robert and Jimmy) who were named after the members of Led Zeppelin.



Above: The "Led Zeppelin I" 1968 album cover



Above: Grimsby's "ABC Cinema", Freeman Street, 1979

After that, the young lad soon left the premises and I managed to have a conversation with "Roger", regarding the fact that the nearby local ABC Cinema (Freeman Street, Grimsby) was planning to present a late-night showing of the Led Zeppelin film *The Song Remains the Same*. I do not recall if "Roger" already knew about it but he said he would see me there.

Although I had previously seen *The Song Remains the Same* on video, I had never seen the film on a large cinema screen, so I turned up at the ABC cinema with a sense of excited expectation. There were about seventy-five people at the most, forming a line outside, waiting to be let inside; at least half of them were teenagers, wearing denim jackets on which were sewn patches that depicted various band names or band album covers.

In that line, I recognised three young lads who I knew were still attending my former school, because they were members of my own former Courtauld house-block (Hereford School, Grimsby). The blonde-haired lad turned to the smallest and asked "Are you looking forward to attending your first gig?" and then everyone who heard that question, burst into laughter.

That comment indeed summed up the bizarre atmosphere which seemed to be associated with that venue, during that particular evening; it was as if the audience was expecting to see a real "live" band, not a band shown only on a cinema screen

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(Continued): The venue's security arrangements for that evening also seemed to be excessive; every male employee that could be summoned (be they a security guard, a ticket-seller, a cleaner or a handyman) was on duty that night; those staff initially supervised the door but later they stood in the downstairs area of the cinema, near to our seats; they also guarded the central aisle and the front of the stage (where the large cinema screen was hung) and warned us "Don't try to rush the stage, stay in your seats!" I was quite amused by that instruction because if we had all successfully rushed towards the stage's screen, what could we possibly have done next?

When the film began, the venue staff again shouted "Stay in your seats!" although it was not until the first song "Rock and Roll" began, that the audience actually became lively. I remember that a couple of young lads ran into the central aisle and started head-banging; they were immediately chased back into their seats by the cinema staff and everybody else laughed. When the song "Black Dog" began, I suddenly realised that both the audience on the film and the audience in the cinema were subconsciously singing-along to every word (and I was also singing-along).

I do remember seeing "Roger" in that cinema; I deliberately looked around for him and when I looked over my left shoulder, he was there in the row of seats behind me. Although many of the audience were wearing either denim jackets or scuffed leather biker jackets, "Roger" was distinctive because he was wearing a very smart leather jacket, buttoned at the front by a vertical row of circular buttons. I glanced at him a couple of times during the performance to see if he, like the others, had become over-excited and was singing along to every word. In total contrast to my expectation, he instead sat there in total silence, intently studying the film (while stroking his beard), noting every detail and occasionally nodding to perhaps indicate that he agreed with how the film was representing something that he had personally remembered about the band, previously.



Above: An excerpt from the Robert Plant fantasy scene in "The Song Remains the Same" film

The concert-film footage also had fantasy scenes incorporated into it. During the song "The Song Remains the Same", one could still hear the song being performed on stage but one was seeing Robert Plant being depicted as a Welsh warrior-knight, rescuing a princess from a castle. Similarly, during "No Quarter", John Paul Jones was depicted as one of the horse riders mentioned in the song lyrics.

During the extended guitar instrumental sequence in "Dazed and Confused", the Jimmy Page fantasy scene depicted the scene found in the *Led Zeppelin IV* album gatefold; the climbing of the mountain in order to reach The Hermit tarot character at its summit. The John Bonham fantasy scene, shown during his long drum solo in "Moby Dick", was really an autobiography scene, as it showed John enjoying himself either at home, at the snooker club or while driving his amazing cars. As for the band manager Peter Grant, depicting him as a gangster boss at the very beginning of the film, perhaps helped to further the "tough ruthless hard man" image he liked to have?



Above: An excerpt from the Jimmy Page fantasy scene in "The Song Remains the Same" film

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(Continued): Some critics have condemned the inclusion of the fantasy scenes within *The Song Remains the Same* film but I assume that it was realised during the editing stage that the cinema audience might get bored while watching “just” the concert film footage, during the extended instrumental sections, so the inclusion of those fantasy scenes was advocated in order to vary what the audience would then be actually looking at?

I have to confess, that I did like those fantasy scenes but during that particular night at the cinema, it was during the John Bonham drum solo that I briefly left my seat to go to the toilet, before returning. Perhaps there is a joke to be made generally, about audience members who either go to the toilet or go to buy more drinks, during a performance’s extended instrumentals or solos?

When the film ended, the audience began to leave the cinema. The three lads from my school’s Courtauld house-block left together and the blonde-haired lad said to the smallest “Did you enjoy your first gig?” I did also manage to see “Roger” on the way out and we agreed that the concert-film was fantastic but after that I never saw him again.

The only time that I ever “saw” Page, Plant and Jones re-united on stage together, was while watching their Live Aid ’85 performance on television; that was on Saturday 13th July, 1985; at John F. Kennedy Stadium, Philadelphia. I remember that I watched both the Wembley and the Philadelphia television concerts in the home of John Ashbrook, in Grimsby. John’s mother, Maureen Ashbrook, kindly provided food and drinks throughout the day (as she always did) and her favourite joke was to appear during the gap between two songs and say “Has the song finished or have I gone deaf?” She was also a huge fan of the band Queen so she must have joined us to at least see the grand finale of the Wembley concert.

The full band line-up for the Philadelphia performance was: Robert Plant (vocals), Jimmy Page (guitar), John Paul Jones (bass/keyboards), Phil Collins (drums), Tony Thompson (drums) and Paul Martinez (bass). During their allowed twenty minutes performance slot, the band performed three songs: “Rock and Roll”, “Whole Lotta Love” and “Stairway to Heaven”. During the subsequent years, there has been much criticism of that performance, which included the lack of rehearsal time, Jimmy Page being handed an un-tuned guitar, Robert Plant’s voice being hoarse due to performing three consecutive concerts shortly before the Live Aid performance and there being no co-operation between the two drummers (much to the frustration of Phil Collins, noted in his autobiography).

With such published “hindsight” now being available, one can perhaps re-look at the film footage and spot those faults, but on the day that John and I were watching that performance in 1985, I wasn’t looking to spot faults; I was simply overjoyed at seeing a re-united Led Zeppelin (in one form or another) on stage and it was that particular performance which thus prompted me to make a donation to the Live Aid appeal.

It was sometime after Live Aid ’85 that I obtained copies of the Led Zeppelin albums *Physical Graffiti* and *Presence*. I finally got to see Robert Plant perform live in concert, on Tuesday 29th March 1988, at Liverpool Royal Court Theatre. It was during either late-1989 or early-1990 that I finally managed to get my own video-copy of *The Song Remains the Same*.

After working in several places in the UK, I moved to Lincoln in 1992. There, I finally managed to get a mint vinyl copy of *The Song Remains the Same*, the following year. One of my house-share mates, who was moving out that day, sold to me, mint-condition vinyl album copies of Pink Floyd *The Wall*, Pink Floyd *Dark Side of the Moon*, Led Zeppelin *The Song Remains the Same* and Led Zeppelin *In Through the Out Door* (still in its brown envelope).

I eventually bought my first CD player in 1996 and a DVD player a little while after that. As a gradual consequence of that, I have today (August 2021) a box filled with CDs, a box filled with DVDs, another box filled with very old Cassettes and several full Record-Cases. Ironically, I keep them due to an overwhelming sense of nostalgia but I never actually play any of them because if I wanted for example to see my 2007 re-mastered *The Song Remains the Same* DVDs or hear my *Mothership* compilation CD, it is simpler to just press a few buttons on my mobile phone. The Internet and the mobile phone are two inventions which I could never have imagined when I bought my first-ever vinyl record in 1974.

Mike Garrett



Above: A scene from “*The Song Remains the Same*”

JIMMY PAGE



The Official Jimmy Page Website

<https://www.jimmypage.com/>

The Official Jimmy Page Facebook Page

<https://m.facebook.com/jimmypage>

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September 4th, 2021 – Wimborne, “Tivoli Theatre”
September 11th, 2021 – Great Yarmouth, “Gorleston Pavillion”
September 18th, 2021 – Totton, “Hanger Farm Arts Centre”
September 24th, 2021 – Buxton, “Opera House”
September 25th, 2021 – Cheltenham, “Bacon Theatre”
October 2nd, 2021 – Clacton on Sea, “West Cliff Theatre”
October 9th, 2021 – Herne Bay, “Kings Hall”
October 15th, 2021 – East Sussex, “Trading Boundaries”
October 23rd, 2021 – Coalville, “Century Theatre”
October 30th, 2021 – Fleet, “The Harlington”
October 30th, 2021 – Fleet, “The Harlington”
November 6th, 2021 – Bordon, “Phoenix Theatre”
November 20th, 2021 – Felixstowe, “Spa Pavillion Theatre”
November 27th, 2021 – Tamworth, “Assembly Rooms”
January 22nd, 2022 – Cranleigh, “Arts Centre”
January 28th, 2022 – Abingdon, “The North Court”

February 5th, 2022 – Romsey, “Plaza Theatre”
February 12th, 2022 – Sudbury, “Quay Theatre”
February 19th, 2022 – Epsom, “Epsom Playhouse”
February 26th, 2022 – Chelmsford, “Cramphorn Theatre”
March 4th, 2022 – Canterbury, “The Penny Theatre”
March 11th, 2022 – Rickmansworth, “Watersmeet Theatre”
March 19th, 2022 – Melksham, “Assembly Hall”
May 7th, 2022 – Hastings, “White Rock Theatre”
May 14th, 2022 – Barking, “Broadway Theatre”
May 20th, 2022 – Wellingborough, “Castle Theatre”
May 21st, 2022 – Aylesbury, “Limelight Theatre”
June 4th, 2022 – Andover, “The Lights”
June 11th, 2022 – Maidstone, “Hazlitt Theatre”
June 25th, 2022 – Camberley, “Camberley Theatre”
July 2nd, 2022 – Hereford, “Courtyard Theatre”

Presence and Absence in “The Song Remains The Same”

“Okay, let’s go!” Those three words - bellowed by Bonzo (John Bonham) and picked-up by his drum-kit’s ambient mic - introduce the album *The Song Remains the Same* and therefore, introduced me to a life-long love of Led Zeppelin. The sad irony is that John Bonham did, indeed, “go” - he was already dead by the time I first heard those words.

1: Been a long time

Cast your mind back, if you can, to 1980. Judas Priest was having chart success with “Breaking the Law” and “Living After Midnight”, while Motörhead were playing a winning hand with “Ace of Spades”; Pink Floyd had even had the Christmas number one with “Another Brick in the Wall” - a fact which boggles the mind, 40 years on.

I was 14 in 1980; the year I discovered rock. My parents’ musical taste was very much embedded in the 50s and early 60s. Nothing wrong with that, but it just didn’t sing to me; it wasn’t “my” music.

The real breakthrough came when I discovered *The Friday Rock Show*; I only heard this because it was that rare beast - a Radio 1 show broadcast on FM. It began in November ’78 and I discovered it round about a year later. I still remember hearing that first anniversary show - when listeners voted for their favourite ever rock tracks.



Above: Robert Plant and Jimmy Page at Madison Square Garden, New York 1973

In one two hour session - listening on headphones lest ‘the racket’ wake my parents - I was exposed to “Shine On You Crazy Diamond” by Pink Floyd, “Starship Trooper” by Yes, “Supper’s Ready” by Genesis, “Stargazer” by Rainbow, “Xanadu” by Rush, “Child in Time” by Deep Purple and, in the number one spot - a position it would retain for many years – Led Zeppelin’s “Stairway to Heaven”; it’s fair to say that I never recovered from that two-hour epiphany.

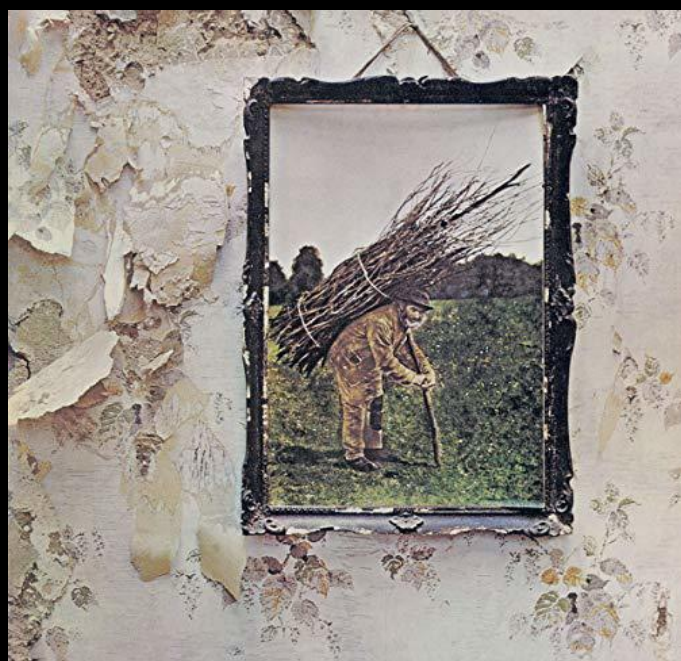
As an aside, I am able to relive that experience thanks to the *Friday Night Rock Show Wiki*, which meticulously rescues and redistributes home recorded episodes of the show. Check it out for yourself. Click the tab top left and choose a year, then an episode from the drop-down menus: https://fridayrockshow.fandom.com/wiki/Friday_Rock_Show_Wiki

I’ve had countless happy hours parked in that particular lay-by along Memory Lane. So, “Stairway to Heaven”, then...

2: Everything that’s small has to grow

It’s fair to say that “Stairway to Heaven” had already achieved legendary status by 1980. A friend at school - also called John (too many of us were, back then) brought in their father’s copy of the album and passed it around, as though sharing a glimpse at a religious icon.

We ruminated over the record’s absence of a clear name - maybe it was called *Four Symbols*, or maybe *Zoso*. We discussed, in hushed tones, the possible meanings of those four symbols.



Above: The 1971 “Led Zeppelin IV” album cover

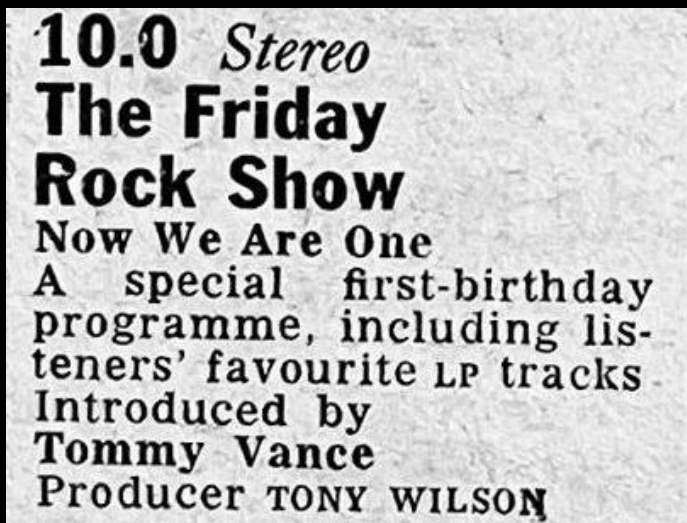
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(Continued): "Stairway to Heaven" became a focus for particular discussion because - at nearly 8 minutes - it had awe-inspiring substance but, also, its lyrics were on the inner sleeve - giving the track a significance way beyond any of the others.

"Stairway to Heaven" was my only real experience of Led Zeppelin up to that point. Then, in 1980, they became a significant presence in my life, just as they became an absence in the rock world. On September the 26th, Tommy Vance announced the death of John Bonham on the *Friday Rock Show*, in a very matter-of-fact way: "I guess, as everybody has heard, John Bonham, the drummer with Led Zeppelin, was found dead yesterday; a terrible shame".

This was a time when musicians were not deified as they are now, when rock music was barely more than ten years old, so we had not had their music in our entire lives, as we now have. Back then, celebrities died theatrical deaths in plane and car-crashes, or they were stolen away by narcotics and self-indulgence, not by old age, cancer and depression, as now. It was a time when displays of genuine emotion on air were considered vulgar and unprofessional. Therefore, Tommy Vance's seemingly casual reporting of an event of such seismic significance is entirely in-keeping with the times and his cursory obituary was then followed by an hour-long BBC archive recording of Led Zeppelin live in the Paris Theatre, London, recorded on April 1st, 1971.

Interestingly, the concert features "Stairway to Heaven", even though the untitled fourth album which bore it wouldn't be released for another seven months; consequently, Robert Plant introduces it: "This is a thing off the fourth album", and it receives barely so much as a ripple of applause from the crowd who were, presumably, hearing it for the first time.



Above: A newspaper advert for "The Friday Rock Show"



Above: Radio broadcaster Tommy Vance (1940-2005), the presenter of "The Friday Rock Show"

What it must have been to be a Led Zeppelin fan and yet to not have "Stairway to Heaven" in your life; but I, on the other hand, only had "Stairway to Heaven" up until listening to this concert, since Led Zeppelin didn't release singles in this country (the United Kingdom) and I hadn't yet evolved into the album-loving animal I would soon become.

3: To be a rock and not to roll

The credit for that evolutionary steps lies with the presence of two random elements in my life - my school-friend, John, whose father had such excellent taste in albums - and the fact that our school common room had a record player in it, on which students were allowed to play their music at lunchtime.

So it was I first heard Rainbow's *Rainbow Rising*, Deep Purple's *In Rock* and, of course Pink Floyd's *The Wall*; at school, in a room still sweaty with the aroma of boiled cabbage. I very quickly began to appreciate the cumulative effect of listening to six, seven or eight tracks by the same band.

Also, for album artists, freed of the shackles of the three-minute single, it was extraordinary the flights of musical fantasy on which a band could embark when they had six, seven or eight minutes to play with.

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(Continued): They would build the drama, lifting you up at the end of side one, so you were keen to scramble across the room, flip the disc and dive into side two which, itself, would build to a dramatic crescendo which would leave you wanting more, so you flipped the disc back over and started again.

A good album is like a concert - it has a beginning, has a middle and it has an end. When you hear the end of one track, your mind jumps in eager anticipation to the opening bars of the next. Time spent with a well-loved album is time spent with an old friend; and no single track should be more important than the whole experience.

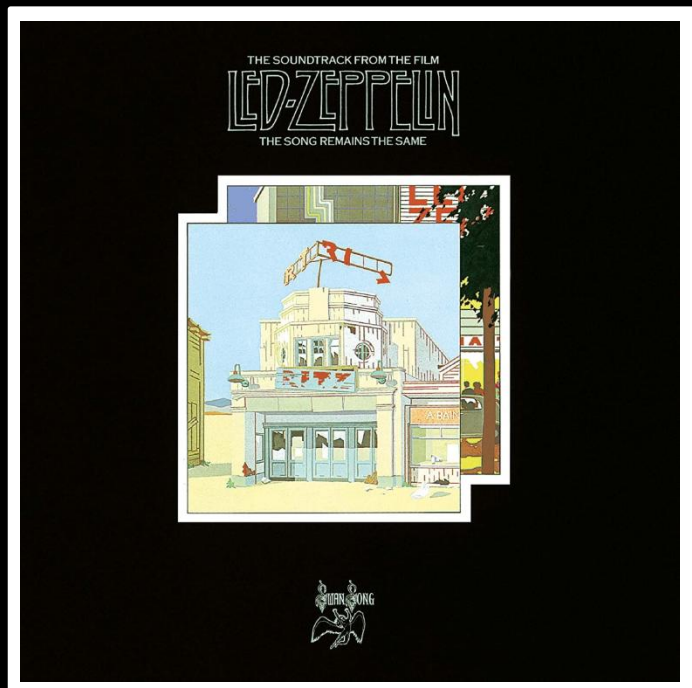
Having heard that BBC concert from 1971, I wanted to know more about Led Zeppelin but I had no idea where to start; I couldn't afford to start with album one and work my way through to "Stairway to Heaven" in album four; I only had pocket money to spend, after all - but, if I started with *four*, that would be like starting to read a book from half-way in.

In such a circumstance, I decided that the best place to start would be the live album (this was a technique I employed again with considerable success in 1981 with *Exit... Stage Left* by Rush and in '82, with Blue Öyster Cult's *Extraterrestrial Live*).

A live album is a great sampler of a band's output, featuring the hits and headlines of the story so far. A great live album successfully allows those who were absent to feel present; it also allowed a neophyte (such as myself) to feel part of that enthusiastic and knowing crowd.



Above: Singer Robert Plant in the 1976 film "The Song Remains The Same"



Above: "The Song Remains The Same" 1976 album cover

4: Lord, how they hypnotise

I ordered *The Song Remains The Same* from WH Smiths, as I preferred their record department to that of Woolworths. I ordered the album because, back in those days, stocks in shops were limited and having to wait for your gratification was commonplace (something which streaming, downloads and Amazon have relegated to a dimly-remembered past); the album, when it arrived, was a swirling, epic, unearthly, occult, ethereal, hypnotic experience.

It begins energetically, with Bonzo's battle cry and then the thunderous "Rock and Roll". This number came from the untitled fourth album and was typically a curtain-raiser for the band, as it got the blood pumping and the head nodding; it had been a single in the US (but not in the UK, of course) and was built around John Bonham's jamming along to Little Richard's "Keep A-Knockin".

This song slides seamlessly into "Celebration Day" which originated on *Led Zeppelin III*. This song carries through the percussive energy of "Rock and Roll" and, at a trim 3.50, this opening salvo barely clocks in at eight minutes; merely an appetiser for what is to come.

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(Continued): Plant, then, speaks directly to the crowd for the first time and stumbles his way through a barely coherent introduction: "This is something we decided was an apt title for a thing that was called - The Song Remains the Same" (It turns out that this uncharacteristically clumsy phrasing is a product of poor editing - the intro is quite different on the expanded version of the album I'll be discussing later).

Once again, this song kicks off with Bonzo's steam-hammer drumming but, two minutes in, Bonham leans back, takes a breather, and the song takes on a more leisurely, bluesy tempo. This song does not remain the same, it has peaks and troughs. But, it isn't long before Bonham attacks the skins again and Page launches into one of his blistering guitar solos. How someone with only ten fingers can play that many notes remains a mystery to me.

This song changes again, as it seamlessly, slides into "Rain Song"; a sultry, soulful ballad during which Bonham takes a back seat and John Paul Jones takes to the keyboard to provide a soaring synthesised orchestral accompaniment.

It is those synthetic strings which drew me in; I'd never heard music with such energy and yet such sophistication. These songs are a perfect duo; the range of emotions, of musical adventure and experimentation explored in these two tracks is awe-inspiring. To this day, I can't listen to the one without the other. They also follow each other to form the opening salvo on the *Houses of the Holy* album, and so it must always be.

The third track from the *Houses of the Holy* is the incomparable "No Quarter" but, before we get to that, we have to find our way through almost 27 minutes of "Dazed and Confused".



Above: John Paul Jones in the 1976 film "The Song Remains The Same"



Above: Drummer John Bonham in the 1976 film "The Song Remains The Same"

To have a track run to that length and to include such seismic bass and scintillating top-notes was really stretching vinyl technology in 1976. Freed of that limitation, the version on the recent remastered CD reissue is even longer.

This side-filling epic begins with John Paul Jones' bass down in the basement and Plant's typically panting, pleading vocals way up in the loft. And so it continues, in enjoyable but relatively unremarkable form, until about four minutes in, when Jimmy Page and Bonzo start to race each other.

From here, the song begins to evolve, with Plant dropping in a chorus of John Phillips and Scott McKenzie's hippy anthem, "San Francisco".

After which he uses his voice as an instrument, adding non-verbal sounds way back in the mix; and it is here that everyone else backs off and leaves Page to solo, making sounds unlike any I'd ever heard before.

Listening to this movement of the song on headphones, in the dark, back in 1980, was an experience verging on the religious. What spirits was Page channelling to make those pained, howling noises? How much was he hurting that guitar? Was it even a guitar? I had no way of knowing. It reminded me of the Theremin effects I'd heard in 50s horror films and it stirred up all those ghosts.

Absent of the visuals, I had no way of knowing how he made those miraculous sounds. I now know Page was playing his guitar with a violin bow - something that he had done in Zeppelin's live shows since day one - something he'd even done on this track back in his Yardbirds days - but, for me, those sounds were unprecedented, unworldly; literally awe-inspiring.

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(Continued): Knowing, as I now do, of Page's dabbling with the occult, I can't help but wonder if this extended ten-minute performance is not intended to be some kind of ceremony, an invocation to the gods and demons with whom he was so fascinated.

When the rest of the band race back into the mix, the tempo builds like an out-of-control steam train, hurtling downhill, with Plant's wails either the cry of the terrified passengers, or the driver yanking in desperation on the whistle.

Then we level out; a brief pause, accompanied by Plant's urging "Do it" and we're back into something we recognise as a more conventional blues riff; but, Page isn't done with us yet, oh, no. We slow right down ... like that train is working back uphill on the other side of the valley; then, he and Page match notes, as though talking to each other, encouraging each other, testing each other; and the race is on once more. We are, once again, hurtling through the magical countryside of Page's mind, his fingers a blur, Bonham beating out the pendulum beat, Jones pre-empting their tempo-changes and key changes.

And so, almost twenty minutes after we escalated away from it, we return (briefly) to the pedestrian opening and Plant's plaintive lyrics ... before scampering off into improvisation once more. Jones keeping the melody in check, so Bonzo and Paige can compete with each other to see who can get furthest from it, fastest. Then Plant draws everyone back to the centre and they coalesce for an epic, shuddering drum-led sign-off. How do you follow that?

With the track which, in my enduring opinion, is Zeppelin's masterpiece: the soulful, magical "No Quarter"; one of the things that makes this number so special is the absence of bass. John Paul Jones has put that down and draws us onto this journey with an introductory solo on his Hohner electrapiano (processed through an EMS VCS3 synthesizer) to create a thick, muted sound, like a half-forgotten memory of a piano. Like Page's violin bow guitar solo before it, this is a sound unlike any I'd previously heard; it is beautiful and seductive and - forming the song's base line and heart - it continues throughout, as the others drop in and out, improvising fills around the piano.

In later performances, John Paul Jones would expand the piano parts of this song, drawing on classical inspirations like Rachmaninov, until the number would run to thirty minutes or more.

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Above: Drummer John Bonham in the 1976 film "The Song Remains The Same"

(Continued): But, after the exhausting pyrotechnics of "Dazed and Confused", a leisurely, languid 12 minutes is much more in order, here. The loose, easy pace of this song remains relaxed, even with Page's pacey, bluesy accompaniment and Bonham largely on the cymbals. That low, sonorous piano remains the core of the song.

Then, as with "Dazed and Confused", Bonham, Page and Plant come back together to bring the song to a deeply, profoundly satisfying conclusion, after which, Robert Plant gives John Paul Jones a name check, conflating the man with the: "John Paul Jones, the piano".

For me, this four-song sequence, "The Song Remains The Same!", "Rain Song", "Dazed & Confused" and "No Quarter" is the heart and soul of this album. I had never been taken on a musical journey like it. Truly, during this particular live performance, Led Zeppelin chose a path where no-one goes and they held no quarter.

These four horsemen are, more than anything else, what drew me forever in the direction of the more esoteric, experimental, progressive end of rock music. To this day, I'd rather listen to an hour of Rush than three minutes of AC/DC.

The ambition and the sheer virtuosity of this performance won me over, heart and soul; there was no going back for me after that, I would spend the rest of my life looking for sounds which transported as fully and as far as those four tracks did. I would, eventually, find that with Pink Floyd, but that's a story for another time.

5: Our shadows taller than our souls

After those four songs which changed me forever, the now familiar strains of "Stairway to Heaven" felt, ironically, like a return to earth. The eight-minute original has been expanded to twelve-minutes, but this hardly feels significant after the extraordinary diversions taken in "Dazed and Confused" and "No Quarter".

That is not something that can be said of Bonham's cascading, cacophonous extended drum solo, "Moby Dick". Throughout the gig and, let's be honest, throughout most of his recording career, Bonzo's playing was about volume, about striking those drums harder and making a sound that was vastly louder than any living soul ever had before. While Page and Jones had had their extended moments to display their skill, this was Bonham's moment and he doesn't let it pass. The interplay between his feet and hands leads to a speed of playing few had previously attempted, fewer still had matched. But, there is far more than just volume and velocity; Bonham is channelling the spirits of the big band greats like Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa, with complex fills and machine-gun melodies.

Then the piece evolves (as all great Led Zeppelin tracks do) as Bonham foregoes the sticks and plays with his bare hands. This, once again, provides a unique, surprising, unprecedented sound - and there is something primal being channelled by him, here, as he beats his hands bloody. You can hear the beast being released in his animal roar, at one point. As you do at many points in this album, you feel as though you are in the presence of genius.

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(Continued): And, so, we come to “Whole Lotta Love”. It’s the culmination of the album and restates much of what we have heard in the run-up to it. There’s is the legendary riff, the chugging blues tempo, Plant’s sky-high exhortations and the swirling passages with the effects pedals. Then everyone else backs off as Percy gets down and dirty with his fantasy confessional about being a young man who had to break away to become a musician – “he kept on boogieing, and on and on boogieing, oh Lord have mercy”. It’s probably worth remembering that Plant was all of 25 when he was remembering those bygone times of his long lost youth.

As Bonham had betrayed the influence the big band drummers had on him in his solo, Page’s “boogie” betrays more than a touch of the great blues guitarists like BB King or Muddy Waters. Led Zeppelin were nothing if not a gateway that swings both ways to the great artists who came before them (even if they were reluctant to credit or pay those artists ... but that’s an issue for another issue).

6: Mellow is the man who knows what he’s been missing

One of the things I used to love about vinyl was the packaging. The wonder of exploring a gatefold sleeve is something that I’ll never recapture. This one was a particularly spectacular beast to my uncultured eyes, because of the booklet it contained, all designed with an eye for the delightfully art-deco by Storm Thorgerson’s “Hipgnosis” team, hinting at the faded wonders of days gone by. I absorbed the ecstatic liner-notes of Cameron Crowe and gazed in non-comprehension at the photos of wizards with light sabres and backlit crucifixes ... and cows.

At that time, I hadn’t the first-inkling who Thorgerson or Crowe were and I was oblivious to the concert film. Yes, the sleeve said this was a soundtrack album, but it was a soundtrack to a film I hadn’t seen and wasn’t likely to see.



Above: The drawing “Evening (The Fall of Day)” by William Rimmer, which can be seen, today, in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (USA)

Back in 1980, the only way one got to see a film was if it were re-released at provincial cinemas, or if it turned-up on TV. There was not (quite) yet a home video market for budding “cinéastes” like me to catch up on everything that had come before.

So, while the music was now a shattering presence in my life, the film it came from was an absence. When I eventually got to see the film, the limitations of the technology for the time somehow reduced the magic of the music. The dream-like imagery which had swirled and mutated in my mind was transformed into four blokes on a poorly-lit stage, playing their instruments (albeit magnificently) and intercut with cheap and amateurishly-filmed fantasy sequences.

Absent these limiting images, the music still soars. Anchored to them, it is diminished. I feel, if I had been present at the gig, I would have closed my eyes and just listened.

Still thinking about the material object of the album, even the label was a thing of wonder. The “Swan Song” logo has its own magical mystery. It features Icarus, but cast as an angel, with his wings a natural appendage rather than a mechanical addition. He has reached perihelion, the moment when his flight reaches its closest point to the sun - and so he is overcome, moments away from plunging back to earth. Classical and dramatic and loaded with arcane hidden meaning, just like the greatest Led Zeppelin songs.

Even though the figure is forever associated with Led Zeppelin, it is, actually, the logo of their record label. It is based on the 1870 drawing “Evening (The Fall of Day)” by William Rimmer, which can be seen, today, in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (USA) or can be downloaded from their website, here: <https://collections.mfa.org/download/30905>



Above: “The Song Remains The Same” booklet photo

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(Continued): Another absence from the original '70s vinyl release is the rest of the gig. Because of the limitations of vinyl manufacture, they had only been able to release nine songs - totalling 99 minutes. In 2007, Page remastered and remixed all the Zeppelin albums for CD. The re-release of this album now includes the six additional songs which had to be culled from the original release, 30 years earlier.

And so, we have "Black Dog", "Over the Hills and Far Away", "Misty Mountain Hop", "Since I've Been Loving You", "The Ocean" and "Heartbreaker"; all reinstated in their proper place in the running order and extending the running time by an extra 26 minutes. Page's remix has actually extended the length of "Dazed and Confused" to bring it to 29.18 (presumably those vinyl limitations had always annoyed him). However, in a mystifying decision, he has also shortened "Moby Dick", "Whole Lotta Love" and, my favourite, "No Quarter".

Further, freed of the need to pack his tracks into roughly 25 minute segments, to fit on the sides of an LP, he has also moved "No Quarter" back to where it actually featured in the gig - before "The Song Remains the Same". It has to be said, the quality of the audio in this presentation is far superior to the previous pressings; you feel Jones' bass and Bonham's kick drum in your solar plexus; the tones are richer, thicker; more luxurious. Those "new" songs are like an archaeological discovery ... Something thought long lost and valuable beyond measure.



Above: The 1973 "Puttin' on the Style" album cover

But, this new presentation isn't the same album. It may be a truer representation of the gig, captured in all its glory for the benefit of those who were present and those who were absent, both; but, for me, it lacks the ethereal majesty of the original release, however compromised and truncated that may have been.

That was the album I fell in love with; that was the album that opened my world to the presence of Led Zeppelin; that's the album I'll return to again and again and listen to every note, from Bonzo's initial battle-cry to Percy's fond farewell - "New York ... Good night!"

7: These are the seasons of emotion

As I discovered rock music, so did my mother (Maureen Ashbrook); there had been no rock in our house, as I'd grown up, but there had been rock 'n' roll; that had been the music my mam had danced to in the 50s, the albums she'd bought. When we got our first family record player in the early 70s, there were rock 'n' roll compilation albums - such as MFP's *Puttin' on the Style*.

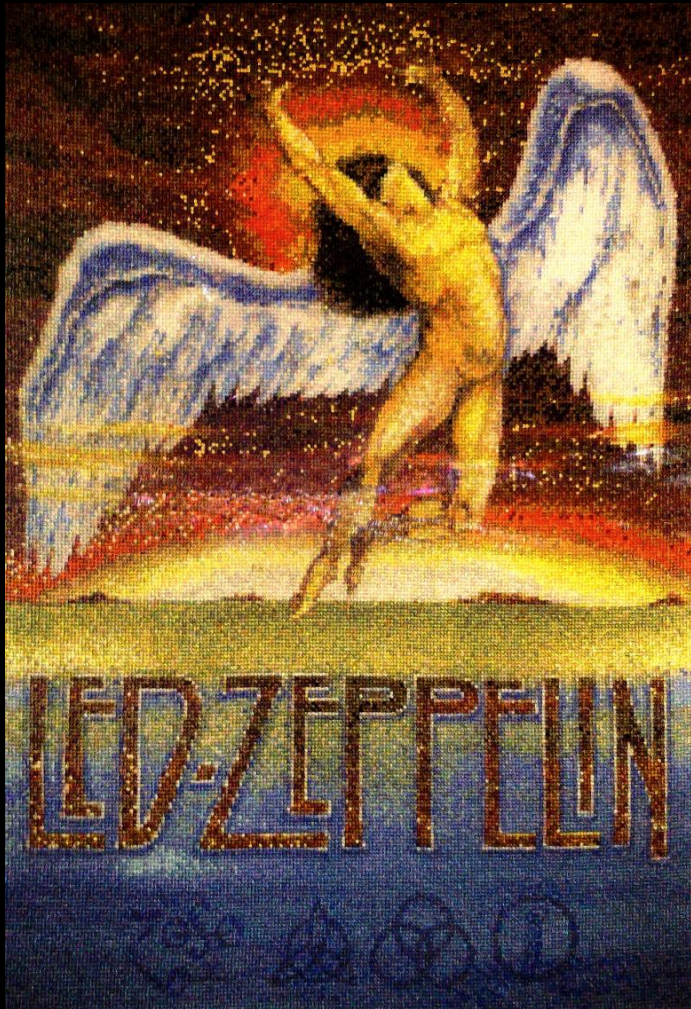
But, as I discovered the raucous rafter-rattling magnitude of rock music - my mam came along for the ride. Clearly, she recognised, at some level, the influence the one style had on the other.

She bought me *Queen's Greatest Hits* for Christmas '81. I retaliated by buying her Meatloaf's *Bat Out of Hell* - which remained her favourite record for the rest of her life.

(Continued on the next page)



Above: The 1977 "Bat out of Hell" album cover



Above: The Swan Song logo which Maureen Ashbrook made as an embroidery for her son John in the late 90s

When she slipped away, I was with her and *The Song Remains the Same* was playing in the background. This isn't a morbid memory for me, nor even a sad one - quite the reverse - it's a moment of celebration of the life that went before; a moment when we were sharing the music that had been so important to us both for so long. As my mam went sliding through to whatever is next, she was at peace, in the home she made; accompanied by the music she loved.

And so, the final lesson my mother taught me was about the changing states of presence and absence; things change, everything that's small has to grow. People come and people go, throughout a long life. Situations change. Our bodies change, our opinions change. Our musical tastes change. That's how it should be; only the song remains the same.

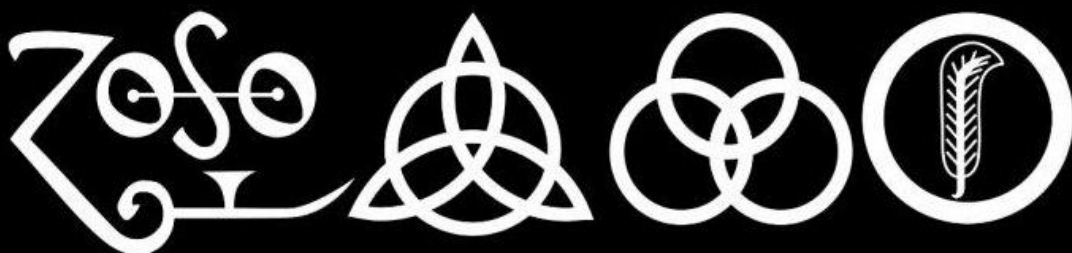
John W. Ashbrook



Above: Maureen Ashbrook 1938-2018

(Continued): Decades later, when my mam was in her 70s, I bought her a DAB radio so she could tune in to the digital-only radio stations, *Absolute Classic Rock* and *Planet Rock*. They were her constant companions as she was baking or sewing or pottering round the garden; we should all grow old so wonderfully disgracefully.

The reason I mention all this, is because rock music in general, and Led Zeppelin music in particular, is inextricably woven into our story. At the end, my mam had been terribly ill for a (thankfully short) while and all the doctors told us it was only a matter of time. So, we kept her comfortable and I played her favourite music to her.



WHOLE LOTTA LED



Website: <http://www.wholelottaled.co.uk/>

Facebook: <https://m.facebook.com/WholeLottaLedUk>

October 15th, 2021 – Brighton, "Concorde 2"
October 16th, 2021 – Hastings, "St Mary in the Castle"
November 4th, 2021 – Penzance, "Acorn Theatre"
November 5th, 2021 – Newquay, "Lane Theatre"
November 6th, 2021 – Tavistock, "The Wharf"
November 11th, 2021 – Bath, "Komedia"
November 12th, 2021 – Cardiff, "The Globe"
November 13th, 2021 – Narberth, "The Queens Hall"
November 19th, 2021 – Portsmouth, "Wedgewood Rooms"
November 20th, 2021 – Wimborne, "Tivoli Theatre"
December 4th, 2021 – Gloucester, "Guildhall"
January 21st, 2022 – Bristol, "The Fleece"
January 22nd, 2022 – Tetbury, "The Goods Shed"
February 3rd, 2022 – Bridgewater, "Macmillan Theatre"
February 26th, 2022 – Maidstone, "Hazlitt Theatre"
March 4th, 2022 – Radlett, "Radlett Centre"
March 25th, 2022 – Leicester, "The Y Theatre"
April 9th, 2022 – Worcester, "The Swan Theatre"
May 7th, 2022 – Dorchester, "Arts Centre"
May 14th, 2022 – Southampton, "The Brook"
June 18th, 2022 – Bury, "The Met"
July 8th, 2022 – Redditch, "Palace Theatre"

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Facebook:

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September 18th, 2021 – Halifax, "Arden Road SC"
October 1st, 2021 – Oldham, "Legends Live Lounge"
October 9th, 2021 – Swindon, "The Victoria"
November 20th, 2021 – Morecombe, "Alhambra Live"
November 26th, 2021 – Preston, "The Vinyl Tap"
December 16th, 2021 – Chester, "Alexanders Live"
December 29th, 2021 – Ashton-under-Lyme, "Witchwood"
February 4th, 2022 – Kinross, "Backstage at the Green"
February 5th, 2022 – Kinross, "Backstage at the Green"
February 17th, 2022 – London, "The Beaverwood"
February 18th, 2022 – Darlington, "Forum Music Centre"
February 26th, 2022 – Grimsby, "Old Clee Social Club"
June 5th, 2022 – Hartlepool, "Hartlepool Supporters Club"

Tribute to the Mighty LED ZEPPELIN FRED ZEPPELIN THE SONGS REMAIN THE SAME

Website:

<http://www.fred-zepelin.com/>

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September 5th, 2021 – Birmingham, "Blue Monkey Club"
September 18th, 2021 – Cirencester, "Sundial Theatre"
September 24th, 2021 – Cannock, "The Station"
October 1st, 2021 – Stourport, "Stourport Workmens Club"
October 8th, 2021 – Birmingham, "The Dark Horse"
October 15th, 2021 – Stoke-on-Trent, "Eleven Bar"
October 22nd, 2021 – Derby, "The Flowerpot"
October 29th, 2021 – Worcester, "The Marris Bar"
November 6th, 2021 – Lichfield, "Guildhall"
November 26th, 2021 – Bromsgrove, "Stoke Prior Social Club"
December 3rd, 2021 – Rowley Regis, "Springfield Social Club"
December 10th, 2021 – Birmingham, "The Billesley"
December 17th, 2021 – Tamworth, "The Belgrave Club"
December 20th, 2021 – Wolverhampton, "The Robin 2"
January 7th, 2022 – Redditch, "Rocklands Club"
January 14th, 2022 – Netherstowe, "Lichfield Club"
February 11th, 2022 – Coventry, "Arches Music Venue"
October 14th, 2022 – Leicester, "The Musician"

Listening again to **OUTRIDER**

Jimmy Page's *Outrider* is yet another one of those albums that, in my opinion, deserves far more appreciation and recommendation than some of the critics gave it, when it was first released.

Outrider was (and presently remains) the only solo album recorded by the former Led Zeppelin guitarist. Released by Geffen Records on the 19th of June, 1988, *Outrider* consists of nine tracks, one being a cover of Leon Russell's song "Hummingbird", while the other eight are original compositions.

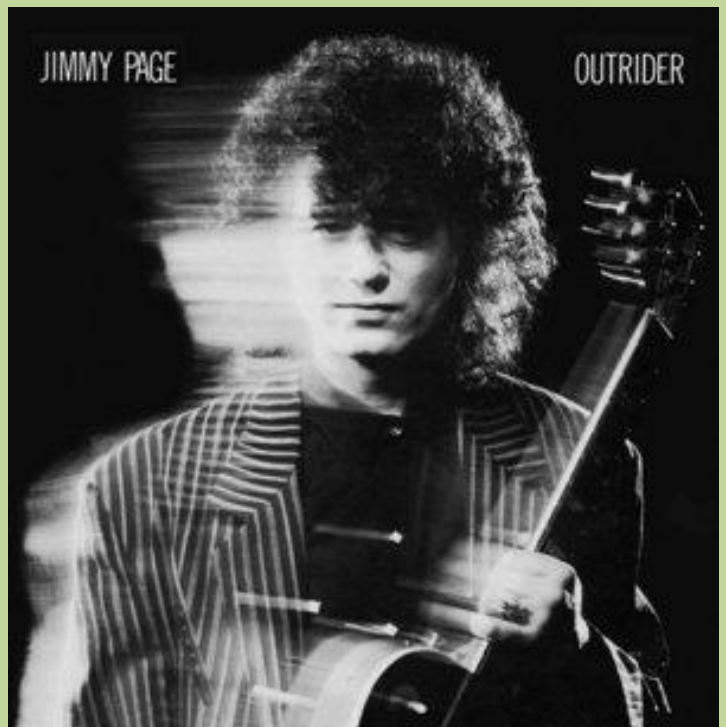
The album's full running order is: "Wasting My Time", "Wanna Make Love", "Writes of Winter", "The Only One", "Liquid Mercury", "Humming Bird", "Emerald Eyes", "Prison Blues" and "Blue Anthem (If I Cannot Have Your Love)".

John Miles sings "Wasting My Time" and "Wanna Make Love". Chris Farlow provides the vocals on "Hummingbird", "Prison Blues" and "Blue Anthem (If I Cannot Have Your Love)". Then, while this is not recognised as any sort of Zeppelin reunion project, Robert Plant sings "The Only One" while Jason Bonham (the son of the late John Bonham) plays drums on most tracks, surrendering the sticks only to Barriemore Barlow for the instrumental numbers "Liquid Mercury" and "Emerald Eyes".

Felix Krish is the bass player on "The Only One", "Liquid Mercury", "Emerald Eyes", "Prison Blues" and "Blue Anthem (If I Cannot Have Your Love)". Tony Franklin plays bass on "Wasting My Time", while Durban Laverde takes over for "Wanna Make Love", "Writes of Winter" and "Hummingbird".

Outrider was recorded in (what was then) Jimmy Page's own record studio, "The Sol", located in the countryside, near Cookham (Berkshire). The studio and control room were part of a complex of buildings, which also included an old watermill and a residential wheelhouse.

Prior to the release of *Outrider*, Jimmy Page had collaborated with former Bad Company vocalist Paul Rogers, in the band known as The Firm, which released *The Firm* album in 1985 and the follow-up *Mean Business* album in 1986.



Above: The "Outrider" album cover © Geffen Records, 1988

After the release of *Outrider*, Jimmy Page worked again with Robert Plant, in 1994, on something that definitely was a Led Zeppelin reunion: An album of reimagined Zeppelin acoustic covers called *No Quarter*. They obviously enjoyed the collaboration because, in 1998, they were together again to record a set of new tracks under the band-name Page and Plant and thus was released *Walking into Clarksdale*, featuring the hit single "Most High".

Perhaps, because it was preceded by *The Firm* and followed by the Page and Plant, the *Outrider* album was thus musically overshadowed, in the eyes of some professional critics. At the time of the album's release, some of the critics condemned the album for the "hodgepodge" diversity of musical styles on it, while other critics claimed the tracks had only a "demo" quality. Those particular critics had, perhaps, not appreciated the effort that had been made to deliberately bring in different guest musicians and vocalists, for the different types of songs.

It didn't help matters that Page had to record part of the album twice. In Brad Tolinski's book "*Light and Shade: Conversations with Jimmy Page*" he explained: "I remember looking around for some demos and sort of wondering where all my tapes were ... There was so much going on around my house and in my life at that time, I just figured they'd turn up somewhere. Well, they did turn up, as bootlegs! Someone who was pretending to be a friend stole the tapes".

(Continued on the Next Page)

(Continued): That incident put a completely different perspective on the recording. Jimmy said “I was shaping *Outrider* as I went along; I put more work into it than any other album I’ve ever worked on”. In regards to the rumour that he had originally intended to record a double-album, he said “I didn’t fancy doing a double; it would have been a masochistic task”.

Fans of the *Outrider* album will know that rock-orientated tracks form the first half of the album and blues-orientated tracks form the second half. “Wasting My Time” is a great up-tempo rock number to open the album with, which is then followed by the slow-paced “Wanna Make Love” which thus provides a superb contrast. The third track “Writes of Winter” (an instrumental), is one of my personal favourites; as is the fourth track “The Only One”. With Robert Plant on guest vocals, the song “The Only One” reminds me very much of the Led Zeppelin album *Coda*. The heavy-sounding instrumental track “Liquid Mercury” then compliments, appropriately, the four album tracks which have preceded it.

I personally feel, that the inclusion of three instrumental tracks on the album (“Writes of Winter”, “Liquid Mercury” and the acoustic “Emerald Eyes”) help to vary the album’s deliberately-planned diversity, even more, thus allowing Jimmy Page to present the best range of musical styles within his guitar-playing repertoire.

The deliberate inclusion of the Blues tracks “Humming Bird”, “Prison Blues” and “Blues Anthem (If I Cannot Have Your Love)” in the latter half of the album is also totally in keeping with the strong Blues-influenced style of playing which Jimmy Page has demonstrated throughout his career. The song “Blues Anthem (If I Cannot Have Your Love)” is a highly suitable sentimental track, for the album’s closing song.

Mike Garrett

1988 EPK *Outrider* interview: <https://youtu.be/MKSIQMEh5UU>

Nassau Coliseum (NY) '88: <https://youtu.be/yet-Y0npEN4>



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Jimmy Page
online.com
<https://www.jimmypageonline.com>

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Page & Plant

Manchester Evening News Arena
Tuesday 3rd November, 1998

As I begin to try to recollect attending the Page and Plant *Walking into Clarksdale* tour concert at the Manchester Evening News Arena (3rd November, 1998), I also realise that it is now the best part of 23 years ago, since it actually occurred, so that would explain why my memories of that evening are somewhat vague.

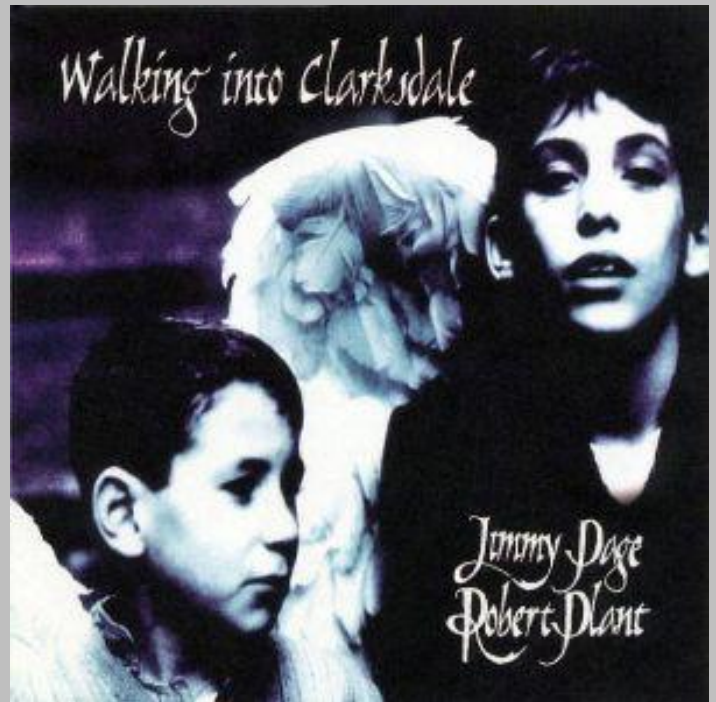
I remember that I was off-work that week and the weather was really bad. I will always remember that the concert occurred on the Tuesday because during that same week, "The Exorcist" film was re-released and I saw that at the cinema on the Thursday.

Long before I attended that particular Manchester concert, I had bought the Page and Plant *No Quarter* live acoustic album (1994) and then the Page and Plant *Walking into Clarksdale* album (1998).

I have to confess that if I had to write reviews of those two albums, at the time that I bought them, I would not rate them highly. On the *Walking into Clarksdale* album, the only track which I really liked a lot was "Most High". If I were re-listening to those two albums today (August 2021), I would probably more-appreciate the music on them but back then, in 1998, although I may have been a more-avid Led Zeppelin fan, I only bought those two particular albums in order to keep my collection of Zeppelin-related material complete.

My main motive for attending that 1998 concert was the fact that I knew it would be the closest thing that I was ever going to get, to being at an actual Led Zeppelin concert.

The support act for the evening was Transglobal Underground; an electro-world music group, specialising in the fusion of Western, Asian and African music. Perhaps it was Robert Plant who nominated them to be included on the tour but personally, I would rate them as the worst support band I have ever seen and their lead singer was the worst I have ever heard.



Above: The 1998 "Page and Plant" album cover

It was only after the support band had left the stage, that it became noticeable that arena seats were being rapidly filled-up by the arriving audience.

In regards to the songs performed by Page and Plant during the concert, I have "jogged my memory" by consulting the published set list on the "setlist.fm" website.

"The Wanton Song", "Heartbreaker", "Ramble On", "Walking into Clarksdale", "When the World was Young", "Going to California", "Heart in your Hand", "Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You", "If I Were a Carpenter", "How Many More Times", "That's The Way", "Most High", "Whole Lotta Love" (Encore: "Thank You", "Rock n' Roll").

I can certainly remember "Ramble On", "No Quarter" and "Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You" being performed and I also specifically remember Jimmy Page moving his hand near the antenna of his theremin (aetherphone) during "Whole Lotta Love".

When the band were playing Led Zeppelin songs, they had all of the audiences' attention (as one would predict) but when they performed songs from the *Walking into Clarksdale* album, those were the moments when some audience members chose to leave their seats in order to buy another drink from the bar or go to the toilet.

(Continued on the next Page)

(Continued): I have to confess, that there are sometimes moments in any concert, when I become bored with one of the songs being performed, so I look around the outer edges of the venue and count the number of Fire Exit signs that I can visibly see, from my concert seat; I did that when Page and Plant were performing *Walking into Clarksdale* songs, and on a completely separate occasion, I also counted the signs while watching Iron Maiden perform the entire *A Matter of Life or Death* album during one of their concerts.

I would like to especially mention that the drummer in the Page and Plant band at that time was Michael Lee; he was quite young but performed incredibly well. He had previously been in bands such as Little Angels, The Cult and Echo & The Bunnymen which thus perhaps gave him the confidence and experience to then go on to play with Page and Plant, on both the *No Quarter* and the *Walking into Clarksdale* tours. Sadly, Michael Lee passed away in 2008.

I must have enjoyed the concert because at the end of it, I bought the tour programme, the tour tee-shirt and a mug. I wanted to buy those particular mementos, as much as I wanted to attend that concert because in regards to Jimmy Page and Robert Plant, I felt that "I may not see them again" and to this day (August 2021), I have not.

My final memory of that evening is driving home in the heavy rain and (by chance) driving passed Bernard Manning's "Embassy" night club but that particular venue has absolutely nothing to do with the musical-theme of this story!

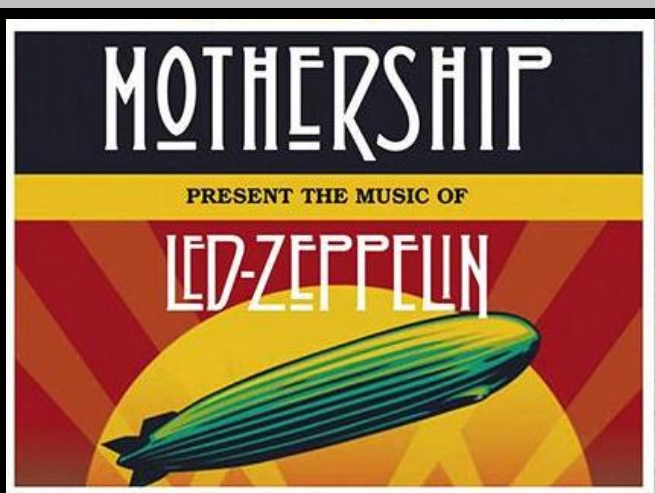
Set List:

<https://www.setlist.fm/setlist/jimmy-page-and-robert-plant/1998/manchester-evening-news-arena-manchester-england-3bd44050.html>

Youtube audio recording of the Concert:

<https://youtu.be/jKX6NGisHVQ>

Lee Ferris



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October 9th, 2021 – Wigan, "The Old Courts"



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September 9th, 2022 – Blackburn, "Empire Theatre"

Robert Plant

Liverpool Royal Court Theatre,
Tuesday 29th March 1988

When it was decided that Robert Plant and his band would appear at Liverpool Royal Court Theatre in early 1988, as part of the *Non Stop Go* tour (promoting the new album *Now And Zen*), that certainly proved to be a shrewd choice because the city at that time had a very thriving Rock music scene generally, with a very loyal and enthusiastic fan base. In the late-1980s, apart from the Liverpool Royal Court Theatre and the "Liverpool Empire" theatre, the main concentration of smaller Rock music venues in Liverpool could be found close to each other, on Wood Street. On that narrow street, sloping down (northwest) to its junction with Hanover Street, could be found firstly "The Swan" pub, then "Freewheelers" nightclub, then the "Sloanes" nightclub and then finally "Wilson's Bar".

The pub known as "The Swan" served customers in both its ground floor bar and its upstairs bar; but the upstairs bar was very crammed at the weekends. The pub's detractors referred to it as a "Hippy Pub" but I generally found its atmosphere laid-back and the jukebox music included (perhaps predictably) T-Rex, Free, Cream, Bad Company, Boston etc.

The "Freewheelers" bar was next, further down that street and it may have been part of the same renovated old warehouse complex that the "Sloanes" nightclub club was in. It was always very dark in "Freewheelers" and never more than two-thirds full. The venue DJ encouraged "requests" and what he actually then played, was one whole side of a vinyl LP; I usually asked for Led Zeppelin *Volume IV*, Black Sabbath *Heaven and Hell*, Rainbow *Long Live Rock n' Roll* and Thin Lizzy *Live and Dangerous*. It was in "Freewheelers", on one occasion, that I once (jokingly) told a group of local Rock fans that a Scouse accent sounded like "Someone with a blocked-up nose and half a brain" but they fortunately thought that was funny and invited me to go with them, to see Wasp in concert, at the nearby "Royal Court Theatre".

The "Sloanes" nightclub was later renamed "Powerhouse"; and much later on it was renamed again to thus become "Krazyhouse". The door supervisors (bouncers) at "Sloanes" would only let someone enter, if they were wearing at least one item of either denim or leather clothing.



Above: The 1988 "Now and Zen" album cover.

The given reason for that was "The other nightclubs don't let our regular customers into their premises if they don't conform to a certain dress code, so we in turn will do likewise".

In contrast to "Freewheelers", which tended to play the older (1970s) Rock music, the "Sloanes" venue concentrated on playing whatever were the latest musical hits in the Heavy Metal music charts; on some occasions their DJ might play music from bands such as Whitesnake, Def Leppard, Motley Crue, Guns n' Roses or Warrant, but on other occasions, when there were requests for the latest-craze Thrash Metal tracks, that same DJ would play music from bands such as Metallica, Anthrax, Slayer, Nuclear Assault or Testament. The "Sloanes" venue also occasionally had bands playing live on its premises.

Near to the very bottom of Wood Street could be found "Wilson's Bar". It was sometimes described as a Thrash Metal bar but perhaps more aptly it should be remembered as a small Biker's Pool bar. The Heavy Metal jukebox was located close to the pool table and a row of motorbikes were usually seen stood outside, each Saturday night. For a short time, there was some sort of rivalry between the regulars in "Wilson's Bar" and the Goths in nearby "Planet X". On one occasion, it was said that a Goth had pushed-over one of the motorbikes and he was then chased all the way back to "Planet X" by the irate Bikers: I never witnessed that incident myself, so the story must "live only in legend", as the saying goes.

(Continued on the Next Page)

(Continued): Inside the St John Shopping Centre, close to the base of the famous St John Tower, was another small Rock music bar called "Milo's". That venue also had a Heavy Metal jukebox and I remember a local amateur rock band called "Larrikin" which used to play there; that same band also used to play at "Sloanes". The lead singer, with his long blonde hair perhaps modelled himself on either Robert Plant or David Coverdale but what was most memorable about him, was that one of his own songs dealt with the subject of sexually-transmitted diseases and was called "Poisoned Passion".

Further away, in Cumberland Street, could be found "The Cumberland Tavern", which had a reputation for being a great live music venue (when it wasn't being raided by the Police drug squad). That venue had several house bands, each of which played on a different evening, each week. I would often go to see the excellent covers band "Candystore Rock", which played at that venue. Their musical repertoire included a lot of Led Zeppelin songs; they often began their show with the song "I Can't Quit You Babe" and they interspersed the Led Zeppelin songs with other well-known past hits such as "Brown Sugar" by the Rolling Stones or "Rain" by The Cult, so as to stay within the general "Rock n' Blues" theme of the venue for that evening. While compiling this narrative (August, 2021) and doing the necessary retrospective research, I was amazed to suddenly see two pieces of YouTube video footage of the "Candystore Rock" band and venue appear, filmed during the venue's Christmas party, just seven months after I had (unknowingly) made my last visit to that venue: <https://youtu.be/gjnp-5itB6k>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0s1yJOAwi4>

Those two pieces of film footage depict precisely how I still remember those performances, although it doesn't show the permanent "haze" in the venue each evening, caused by the smoking of tobacco and "wacky-backy". I do actually remember that one of the venue's regular customers did have a Camcorder, so if he had filmed just seven months earlier and turned the camera to his left, he may possibly have filmed my friends and I, sat in our usual seats, against the venue's basement wall. On one occasion, guitarist Paul Kappa had just launched into an improvised cover of Led Zeppelin's "Achilles Last Stand", when all of a sudden, the venue was stormed by a Police drugs raid. We all had to leave the basement venue and go up the stairs, onto the pavement of Cumberland Street.

There, the drummer and bass player confessed that at least the police raid had prevented something from rapidly becoming apparent; those two musicians had no idea of how to correctly play "Achilles Last Stand", they were just doing an improvised jam!

In regards to the actual night of the Robert Plant concert at "Liverpool Royal Court Theatre" (Tuesday 29th March, 1988), I remember waiting for the bus on Smithdown Road, opposite "The Brook House" pub. When that double-decker bus arrived, there was no one sat upstairs, so I decided to sit up there alone, looking through the upper front window. As the bus drove along Princes Road (through Toxteth), I noticed a file of three cars in front of the bus. When the traffic lights turned to red, the three cars and the bus had to temporarily halt. While waiting for the traffic lights to change their colour, the leading car was suddenly attacked by two black lads and one white lad; all three wore hoodies and baseball caps; they were trying to open the doors of the stationary car, in order to rob it. Luckily, the driver had the car doors locked; all three car drivers (and the bus driver) then sounded their vehicle horns in protest and all three lads then ran away.

In the city centre, a large group of bus stops, known locally as "The Gyrotory", were situated almost opposite "Liverpool Royal Court Theatre". When I got off the bus and saw the music fans waiting in a line to get in, I noticed that two local "Scousers" had each brought their young toddler son with them; one was telling everybody else, that he had thought of the idea first, then his best friend (who was also a Led Zeppelin music fanatic) had decided to also bring his young son. The one who had first thought of the idea said "I want my son to be able to say that he has actually seen Robert Plant".



Above: Liverpool Royal Court Theatre with the St John's Tower in view, behind it.

(Continued on the Next Page)

(Continued): When I went into the venue, I was in the downstairs "standing" area, very close to the stage. Those people who were slightly further away in the upper circle, had seats. I had in fact, gone to the concert alone but, since I knew a lot of the locals around me, from the nearby Rock pub and bar venues, it made no difference; and ultimately, once any concert begins on a stage, the people are paying attention to that, not to each other.

It Bites were the support band for the evening. I was very puzzled by that choice of band; they were famous at that time for their chart-single "Calling All The Heroes" (which I did like) but I wondered why a Pop band was especially favoured by Robert Plant?

I was soon surprised a lot further, when It Bites came on stage and turned out to be a very impressive heavy-sounding Indie band. As I watched their stage performance, I also noticed a small group of dedicated It Bites fans at the front, stood to my right; those fans were distinctive because they were not wearing denim or leather clothing. When It Bites ended their performance with "Calling All The Heroes", that particular group of fans looked especially happy, because ultimately, that was what they had paid their money to hear.

After an interval, it was time for Robert Plant to begin his performance. The song set list for the evening turned out to be: "Helen of Troy", "Other Arms", "Heaven Knows", "In the Evening", "I'm in the Mood", "Black Country Woman", "Big Log", "Dimples", "Trampled Under Foot", "Billy's Revenge", "Misty Mountain Hop" (Encores: "Break on Through to the Other Side", "Tall Cool One").

As the concert began, the stage was initially covered in mist, with Robert Plant being momentarily silhouetted within it; that was sufficient to over-excite some of the audience members who then began screaming. Emerging from the mist, Robert then began to sing the first song, "Helen of Troy". A huge roar of applause erupted from the audience at the end of that first song and various members of the audience then immediately began to shout "Rock n' Roll". Despite the calls for that famous Led Zeppelin song, Robert had to pretend he could not hear them and continue with the concert he had already planned.

I cannot remember much about the next two songs, "Other Arms" and "Heaven Knows", apart from the fact that I had the *Now and Zen* album and I thus recognised "Heaven Knows" from that album.



Above: A photo of Robert Plant taken during the Atlantic Records 40th anniversary concert (New York, 14th May, 1988)

(Continued on the Next Page)

(Continued): Repeated calls for "Rock n' Roll" were made during the gaps between songs but the first Led Zeppelin song that Robert actually performed was "In the Evening" (from the album *In Through The Out Door*). Predictably, the audience, including myself, went wild with excitement.

The two locals with young sons were stood together, right in front of the stage; they became so over-excited that they each held their small sons above their own heads, at arm's length, so that the two young lads could see Robert Plant. From my viewpoint, I could see that Robert Plant had noticed those two young lads but he was perhaps, like me, a bit worried for their safety. In regards to those two tiny young lads, did they actually realise that they were staring at the legendary Robert Plant or (as it appeared to me) were they totally confused by the loud noises and crowds around them? I guess I will never know, and today (August, 2021), those two young lads must now both be aged in their mid-30s.

When it came to the Acoustic Guitar part of the show, the crowd recognised the introduction to Led Zeppelin's "Black Country Woman" (from the album *Physical Graffiti*) and began screaming again. That song was followed by the 1983 chart hit "Big Log" (from *The Principles of Moments* album); that song to this day, remains my favourite Robert Plant solo album song and I remember everyone at the concert singing along.



Above: A 1988 Robert Plant "Non Stop Go" tour tee-shirt
Search for them on: <https://www.etsy.com/>

The next Led Zeppelin song to be performed was "Trampled Under Foot" (from the album *Physical Graffiti*). I can still remember "in my mind's eye", also seeing Robert Plant finishing the main show (before encores) with the Led Zeppelin song "Misty Mountain Hop". Choosing a track from the well-known *Led Zeppelin volume IV* album was a clever decision and I especially remember Robert leaning over the edge of the stage with his microphone, to pick up the sound of the audience's "Oohs" as they sang-along with the choruses.

When the band returned to the stage to perform the first of two encores, I was surprised to firstly hear a cover version of "Break on Through to the Other Side", by The Doors but it was well done and it thus served to further musically vary the show.

Perhaps the audience was expecting one more Led Zeppelin song to end the concert? There were still calls for "Rock n' Roll", which remained ignored but what the band did actually perform as the final song, was the new track "Tall Cool One" (from the *Now and Zen* album), which on the album version contains brief sampled-excerpts of the Led Zeppelin tracks "Custard Pie", "Whole Lotta Love", "The Ocean" and "When the Levee Breaks".

That song also incorporated a lyrical-chant, sung by keyboard-player Phil Johnstone; "You Stroll, you Jump; you're hot and you tease; 'cause I'm the Tall Cool One and I'm built to please". When he sung that at the Liverpool concert, Phil knew that Kylie Minogue was also in the charts at that time, so as a joke, he also chanted "I should be so lucky - lucky, lucky, lucky". The audience immediately both laughed and jeered, some defiantly stuck two fingers in the air and Robert Plant himself could be seen to be laughing, as that incident had obviously not been rehearsed, although it did provide a memorable ending to a great concert!

I would like to conclude this article by first thanking Liverpool guitarist Paul Kappa for reading (and thus double-checking) the initial draft of this text; his Amazing Kappa Band is one of the resident bands at Liverpool's "Cavern Club".

<https://www.facebook.com/amazingkappa/>

Finally, I would like to respectfully dedicate this article to the memory of my friend, the late Andrew Hammersley, who was sadly killed in a road accident in the summer of 1989, while on his motorbike. I will always remember that Andrew's favourite song was "When The Levee Breaks" by Led Zeppelin.

Mike Garrett

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- OCT 20 **LOS ANGELES, CA**
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- OCT 22 **LAUGHLIN, NV**
Harris's Laughlin Rio Vista Amphitheater
- OCT 23 **INDIO, CA**
Fantasy Casino
- OCT 24 **SAN DIEGO, CA**
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- OCT 26 **TUCSON, AZ**
TCO Music Hall
- OCT 28 **DENVER, CO**
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- NOV 1 **JOLIET, IL**
Rialto Square Theatre
- NOV 2 **DAVENPORT, IA**
Adler Theatre
- NOV 3 **WAUKEGAN, IL**
Geneva Theatre
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- NOV 6 **CINCINNATI, OH**
The Andrew J Brady ICON Music Center
- NOV 7 **DETROIT, MI**
The Fillmore
- NOV 9 **NASHVILLE, IN**
Brown County Music Center
- NOV 11 **MONTCLAIR, NJ**
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- NOV 12 **WESTBURY, NY**
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- NOV 15 **RIDGEFIELD, CT**
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The Capitol Theatre
- NOV 19 **ATLANTIC CITY, NJ**
Sound Waves at Hard Rock
- NOV 20 **WASHINGTON, DC**
Warner Theatre
- NOV 21 **ASHEVILLE, NC**
Thomas Wolfe Auditorium
- NOV 23 **ATLANTA, GA**
Coca Cola Roxy
- NOV 24 **ORLANDO, FL**
Walt Disney Theater
- NOV 26 **HOLLYWOOD, FL**
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MMXXI

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Presence

Was the seventh Led Zeppelin studio album very much underrated?

The Led Zeppelin album *Presence* was the seventh Led Zeppelin studio album, released on the band's own Swan Song Records label on 31st March, 1976 but although it was initially a commercial success, reaching the top of both the UK and American album charts and also achieving a triple-platinum certification in the United States, it received mixed (arguably unfair) reviews from the critics at the time of its release and perhaps as a consequence, it ultimately became the lowest-selling studio album produced by Led Zeppelin while they were active (1968-1980).

The album was written and recorded in the last months of 1975 and was musically the inadvertent product of a very difficult situation. After first releasing the album *Physical Graffiti* on 24th February 1975 and then beginning to tour to promote it, Led Zeppelin took a short break from touring that summer, with the intention to reconvene for a major tour of the USA, beginning on the 23rd August 1975. That planned tour had to be cancelled however, after singer Robert Plant sustained serious injuries due to being involved in a car accident on the 4th August, while on holiday on the Greek island of Rhodes.

Due to the fact that the band were "tax exiles" at that time, Robert Plant was forced to recuperate abroad; initially on the island of Jersey (in the Channel Islands) and then in Malibu (California, USA), where he was joined by guitarist Jimmy Page. Robert Plant wrote several sets of lyrics which were inspired by the thoughts and the emotions he was experiencing at that time, so in collaboration with Jimmy Page, the pair thus produced enough new song material to present to the other two band members. John Bonham (drums) and John Paul Jones (bass) later joined Page and Plant at SIR Studio (Hollywood, USA) in October 1975, where they then rehearsed the new songs for the rest of that month.

The album was then actually recorded and mixed at Musicland Studios (Munich, West Germany), because Jimmy Page felt that Musicland Studios had the state-of-the-art recording facilities which the band required. Robert Plant was still recuperating from his car accident and therefore sang his vocals in the recording studio while sat in a wheelchair.



Above: The cover of the 1976 "Presence" album

In association with engineer Keith Harwood, Jimmy Page ensured that the entire album was recorded and mixed in just eighteen days, with the final mixes being finished on 27th November 1975; that was the quickest recording turnaround time achieved by the band, since their debut album in 1968, although Harwood and Page (who each worked around 18 hours per day) were under pressure to complete their work within that time limit, as the Rolling Stones were scheduled to use the recording studio, immediately afterwards, in order to begin recording their own *Black and Blue* album.

The *Presence* album title was inspired by "the strong presence" which the band felt as they worked together. The album sleeve's artwork, produced by "Hipgnosis", consisted of a series of photographs which each featured a small mysterious black obelisk, known as "The Object". After waiting for the completion of the album sleeve's artwork, the album was eventually released on 31st March 1976. Unlike other Led Zeppelin albums, the *Presence* album featured no keyboards and very little acoustic guitar. Immediately after the album's release, Robert Plant was still recuperating, so the band could not tour to capitalise on the album release.

The *Presence* album's full track list was: "Achilles Last Stand", "For Your Life", "Royal Orleans", "Nobody's Fault But Mine", "Candy Store Rock", "Hots On for Nowhere" and "Tea for One".

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Above: The first "Presence" inner gatefold sleeve

(Continued): Due to being predominantly composed in Malibu, the *Presence* album therefore consisted almost exclusively of those particular Page and Plant compositions, with only the track "Royal Orleans" being credited to all four members of the band.

The *Presence* album included two great epic tracks, "Achilles Last Stand" and "Nobody's Fault but Mine", which are arguably typical of the later Led Zeppelin musical era, on a par with other epic tracks such as the earlier "Kashmir" (on the *Physical Graffiti* album) or the later "In the Evening" and "Carouselambra" (on the *In Through the Out Door* album).

The tracks "Achilles Last Stand" and "Nobody's Fault but Mine" were also destined to be the only *Presence* album tracks which were performed live by Led Zeppelin before they split in 1980. The song "Tea for One" was performed live on the "Page and Plant" 1996 tour of Japan (where they were backed by an orchestra) <https://youtu.be/JylchnnO02A> and the song "For Your Life" was performed only once, when Led Zeppelin performed at the "Entegun Tribute Concert" (London O2 Arena - 10th December 2007). <https://youtu.be/zuXUhOQzprA>

The album's opening track, the ten-minute "Achilles Last Stand" is arguably one of the greatest epic rock music tracks of all time, with some critics saying that it represents one of John Bonham's greatest drumming achievements, while others point out that Jimmy Page skilfully added six guitar parts during the associated phenomenal overdubbing session.

In total contrast to the album's epic fast-paced opening track, the second track on the album, "For Your Life", is a slow-paced heavy blues song allegedly about one of Robert Plant's friends who was suffering from drug addiction and Jimmy Page played his 1962 Fender Stratocaster for the first time, on this track.

Although the song "Nobody's Fault but Mine" was credited to Page and Plant on the album, it was in fact a cover of Blind Willie Johnson's "It's Nobody's Fault but Mine", which was first recorded in 1928 and later covered (for the first time) by Nina Simone in 1969. The guitar, melody and lyrics were inspired by the original Blind Willie Johnson version but they were then greatly transformed by Jimmy Page; which included triple-tracking the introduction.

The song "Candy Store Rock" was musically-influenced by the music of the 1950s; it had a distinctive echo-heavy rock-meets-rockabilly style and was composed partly as a tribute to the singer Ral Donner; it took the band just one hour to write, while they were in Musicland Studios. Robert Plant said that "Candy Store Rock" was one of his favourite tracks from the album but when it was subsequently released as a single in the USA (18th June, 1976), it did not do very well in the Singles Chart, reaching only Number 50.

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Above: The second "Presence" inner gatefold sleeve



Above: The 1976 "Candy Store Rock" USA single

(Continued): "Candy Store Rock" was never performed live by Led Zeppelin apart from one brief riff at Riverfront Coliseum (Cincinnati, Ohio - 20th April 1977) but "Page and Plant" performed it as a one-minute improvisation, as an introduction to "Black Dog" at Wembley Arena (26th July 1995); they later played it live once, in its entirety, at Montreux (7th July 2001). <https://youtu.be/DnsB8QjmJfg>

The music of "Hots On for Nowhere" perhaps has a slight rock-meets-swing style about it? The lyrics are a perhaps a subtle jibe at Jimmy Page and band manager Peter Grant, for their failure to understand all of the frustrations which Robert Plant was feeling at that time, in regards to his recuperation from the car accident

The track "Royal Orleans" is the only album track credited to all four members of the band, arguably played in a slightly bluesy rock-funk style. The Royal Orleans was a hotel in New Orleans, where the band liked to stay and Robert Plant's lyrics are inspired by certain over-the-top events which supposedly occurred there.

The album's closing track "Tea for One" is a total contrast to the other tracks on the *Presence* album, as it is a slow melancholy blues number, similar in some ways to the much earlier Led Zeppelin song "Since I've Been Loving You". Robert Plant's lyrics are inspired by the fact that he is missing the wife and children he loves, while he recuperates from his car accident, and the musical result of that, is thus arguably one of the best blues songs which Led Zeppelin ever recorded?

It is perhaps ironic to note, that although the *Presence* album was released on 31st March 1976, the much-awaited vinyl double-album of *The Song Remains The Same* was released on 28th September 1976, by Swan Song Records and the film-version of *The Song Remains The Same* first premiered on 20th October 1976 at "Cinema I", New York; those two events thus in effect musically overshadowed the *Presence* album? Since that time, firstly the 1994 remaster and then the subsequent 2015 release of the deluxe-remaster with its bonus CD of reference mixes, including the instrumental "Ribs & All / Carrot Pod Pod (Pod)" track has at least helped to rekindle the debate regarding the *Presence* album; an album which in early 1976 should have been recognised as the album which "pulled Led Zeppelin back from the brink of a crisis".

Mike Garrett

rd, 2021 - Leamington Spa, "Rockdown Festival"', and 'December 4th, 2021 - St Albans, "The Horn"'."/>