

Led zeppelin: the band that changed an era

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Complex, beautiful, dangerous, these rock giants strode the world for ten years and are critically acclaimed to be the best band of all time. Selling more than 300 million albums worldwide, Rolling Stone Magazine also called them “ unquestionably one of the most enduring bands in rock history”.

They were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1995; the museum’s biography of the band states that they were “ as influential in that decade (1970’s) as the Beatles were in the prior one”. If you have ever listened to any of their performances it is no question why Led Zeppelin is so praised. Led Zeppelin consisted of Jimmy Page on lead guitar, Robert Plant on vocals, John Bonham on drums, and John Paul Jones on the bass. John Paul Jones was a true musician, working with bands such as the Rolling Stones, Donovan, Jeff Beck and Dusty Springfield. During a studio session he had met Jimmy Page who was looking to form a super group after the breakup of the Yardbirds.

Robert Plant and John Bonham had played together in the Band of Joy. Eventually the four met and decided to form a band called The New Yardbirds. They then changed their name to lead zeppelin, their manager then suggested to drop the “ a” in “ lead” so it would be easier to pronounce correctly worldwide. A few sessions later the band changed their name to Led Zeppelin and signed a deal with Atlantic Records that gave them a majority of the creative freedom. The band began their first tour of the UK on 4 October 1968, still named as the New Yardbirds, and played their first show as Led Zeppelin at the University of Surrey in Battersea on 25 October 1968.

Their debut album, Led Zeppelin, was released in the US during the tour on 12 January 1969, and peaked at number 10 on the Billboard chart; it was released in the UK, where it peaked at number 6, on 31 March 1969. Fans caught on very quickly but critics were skeptical. Rolling Stone Magazine called Jimmy Page's performance on the album "a very limited producer and a writer of weak, unimaginative songs." This made Page so angry that he refused to talk to Rolling Stone Magazine for years. Although critics didn't like the band, the fans loved them.

The same year that Led Zeppelin's debut album released they had also completed four US and four UK concert tours, and also released their second album, Led Zeppelin II. Recorded almost entirely on the road at various North American studios, it was an even greater commercial success than their first album, and reached the number one chart position in the US and the UK. Following the release of their second album Led Zeppelin completed several more US tours and had concerts that would go up to four hours long. They had enjoyed their success and kept their energy after their shows. It is said that Led Zeppelin started the "rock star lifestyle", they trashed their hotel rooms, consumed excessive amounts of alcohol and used different drugs.

Led Zeppelin lived a very "rated R" life. The way they lived affected their careers in ways such as canceling tours because places like Australia and Singapore were fed up with the way they lived. No matter how they lived the fans still loved their music and they were getting increasingly more popular. By 1970 the band reached new heights, they started going place to place in a private jet nicknamed "The Starship", and started wearing much more

flamboyant clothing during their shows. Even though it didn't seem possible more and more fans were appearing at their concerts.

By 1975 the band had released six studio albums and started their own record label, Swan Song where they didn't have to be held down by executives and producers. After their success Led Zeppelin decided to take a break, they then planned a new tour in the autumn of 1975. Although in August tragedy stroke for the band, as singer Robert Plant and his wife Maureen were involved in a serious car crash during a vacation in Greece. Plant came out with a broken ankle although his wife was badly injured. Unable to tour Plant was recuperating with Bonham and Page where much of their next album Presence was written. All turned out well and a blood transfusion saved Maureen's life.

In March of 1976 Presence was released with mixed reaction. Although it was platinum seller it had a different sound than their previous albums. This album was written around the time that Page started using heroin which might have affected the bands performance. By this time the band had been number one and outsold most bands at the time such as The Rolling Stones. Though the band could not tour with the album because of Page's injuries they did complete their concert film " This song remains the same".

This received mediocre reaction from both critics and fans. The band toured again in 1977 where they had set attendance records by playing for over 75,000 fans. Shows sold out and that caused riots at the stadiums they played in, fans would throw bottles through the glass just to get access into stadiums. Another show was cut short because of a thunderstorm, despite

tickets saying “ rain or shine”, this show caused a riot and multiple arrests and injuries. 30 July 1977, the band had checked into a hotel preparing for their show as usual. It was in this hotel the singer Robert Plant received news that his five-year-old son, Karac, had died from a stomach virus.

The rest of the tour was immediately cancelled, causing much speculation about the band’s future. November 1978, the group had released their final album together, *In Through Out The Door*, which again had a mixed reaction but sold very well. The band toured and pleased fans all over the world. On 24 September 1980 the band had started their first North American tour since 1977. It was on this day when drummer John Bonham had went out for breakfast and drank four quadruple shots of vodka along with a ham roll. The band went back to Pages house for rehearsals and then fell asleep.

1: 45 PM the next day, bassist John Paul Jones and tour manager Benji LeFevre found John Bonham dead. He had died from asphyxiation from vomit, an autopsy found no drugs in his system. Bonham was cremated on 10 October 1980, and his ashes buried at Rushock parish church in Droitwich, Worcestershire. The rest of the tour was cancelled and despite rumors that someone would replace Bonham to continue, it never happened, and the remaining members decided to break up the band. On 4 December 1980 a press statement stated that, “ We wish it to be known that the loss of our dear friend, and the deep sense of undivided harmony felt by ourselves and our manager, have led us to decide that we could not continue as we were”, and was simply signed “ Led Zeppelin”. After the break up, many different live albums and box sets were released and Jimmy Page toured with Robert Plant for a while preforming different Led Zeppelin songs.

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A few rumors of a reunion had taken place, and the most notably one came to fruition on 10 December 2007. Arguably their most successful reunion, John Bonham's son, Jason Bonham took the seat as drummer for his late father. The show received a massive audience and sold out very quickly. Rumors of a 2014 tour with Jason Bonham are being hinted at by different members of the band and guitarist Jimmy Page has revealed he will be remastering the bands full discography set for a 2013 release. Led Zeppelin had left behind a legacy and had influenced music for many different bands such as Deep Purple, Black Sabbath, Rush, Queen, and Megadeth.

In 1988 John Kalodner, then-A&R executive of Geffen Records, remarked that " In my opinion, next to the Beatles they're the most influential band in history. They influence the way music is on records, AOR radio, concerts. They set the standards for the AOR-radio format with ' Stairway to Heaven,' having AOR hits without necessarily having Top 40 hits. They're the ones who did the first real big arena concert shows, consistently selling out and playing stadiums without support. People can do as well as them, but nobody surpasses them". They have been honored by US President Barack Obama by receiving the Kennedy Center Honor in 2012.

Led Zeppelin was a band like no other and shook the world of music, and those vibrations can still be felt today.