

Title:

Led Zeppelin is the #1 Rock and Roll Band of All Time

Word Count:

1702

Summary:

There will never be another rock and roll band that is capable of approaching the stratospheric musical heights that Led Zeppelin reached. The young people of today are discovering Led Zeppelin in droves because they are coming of age sexually and they recognize and connect with the most powerful rock and roll music ever recorded.

Keywords:

Led Zeppelin, Jimi Page, John Bonham, Robert Plant, John Paul Jones, rock and roll, classic rock, heavy metal

Article Body:

I've been in rock and roll all my life and I'm well aware that The Rolling Stones have been called the best rock and roll band. Don't get me wrong because I love Mick and the Stones, and the Beatles were my major musical influence, but here's why I think that Led Zeppelin is the best rock and roll band of all time:

1. BEST PLAYERS

First of all, John Bonham was the best rock and roll drummer ever to walk the face of this planet, and that's an informed opinion coming from a former professional drummer. John played drums unlike anyone else ever did, still does, or ever will, and that fact is continually demonstrated in the astounding breadth and depth of his recorded work. He had complete independence in all four limbs, he slammed his drums harder than anyone else, and he did it with speed and total precision, never once dropping the beat. His beats were were innovative and creative, and John was never stuck in simple grooves. His fills were innovative, creative, complex, and technically brilliant, he knew when to keep it relatively simple (i.e. Kashmir), but he was always in the stratosphere of drumming. And to top that all off, John created a giant drum sound which is unique. It inspired a host of imitators who were able to imitate the sound of his snare drum, but only with a simple backbeat. At the time that Led Zep was formed, Jimmy Page could have gotten any drummer in the world to play with him, and he chose John. There's not one single drummer alive or dead who can begin to touch John's power, creativity, speed, precision, and technical brilliance. I've

heard that Jimmy still feels the same way about John as I do.

Secondly, Jimmy Page has always been one of the best rock guitarists ever, right from his earliest days as a session player and the beginning of his real public stardom in the Yardbirds. I believe that Jimmy is the most brilliantly prolific of all the great rock and roll guitarists. I suspect that Jimmy would agree with me that Jimi Hendrix was the one true genius of guitar because he came from another galaxy in terms of his sound and his use of feedback. But unfortunately, Jimi died and we will never know how much further he would have progressed. When I listen to Jimmy's solos using the violin bow, I get the urge to put him on the same pedestal as Hendrix and wonder which galaxy they both came from. As a songwriter, Jimmy used his superior ability to play lead guitar to create actual song structure. Led Zep's songs use not one or two of Jimmy's incredibly powerful, complicated and unbelievably SEXY riffs in each song, but there are four, five or more riffs in some songs. Jimmy's riffs differ from each other within each song, and also from song to song. His lead guitar playing can be HARD and sexy, he can be sensitive and beautiful, and he can be technically brilliant, all in the very same song.

Thirdly, John Paul Jones is a bass player who attained a level of brilliance comparable to Paul McCartney. Just like McCartney, John could play beautiful "melodic" bass (i.e. "Ramble On"), he could play as fast as it gets, but he also knew when to keep it simple and just hold down the bottom although I think he was incapable of doing that without utter sophistication. No one at all can touch those two on bass, and John also played consistently brilliant keyboards - piano, organ and synthesizer. The intricate way in which he wove his bass guitar playing into, through, and underneath Jimmy's guitar playing is nothing short of perfection itself.

And last but not at all least, Robert Plant had an incredibly high vocal range, emotionally as well as in terms of octaves. Just like Dylan was for his own music, Robert's voice was perfect for Led Zep's music and there's no other singer who could possibly have fit in. As a professional singer, I'm knocked out by Robert's vocals on both a technical and an emotional level. Robert understood the concept of using his voice like a musical instrument, creating fascinating sounds without using lyrics. And Robert co-wrote with Jimmy too. A lot of the time you can't understand his lyrics and I've heard that was Robert's intent because just like Mick Jagger, all he cared about at that time was that you connect with the emotion and the energy in the totality of the music. But when you can get the lyrics (like in Stairway to Heaven, their tribute to Janis Joplin), you find a great piece of poetry. And on top of all that, Robert had the best "oooh yeahs" in the business!

Hardly anybody has ever covered Led Zep songs for very good reasons. Their song structure is based on their vastly superior playing abilities and there's no one who can actually play what they played. I'm talking about songs that are not based on simple chords like all other rock and roll is. Jimmy and Robert based their songs on Jimmy's riffs and on his chordal tonalities that to this day stand alone as being unique. I'm also talking about length of songs that maintain a constant and intense high, up to 11 minutes in length without resorting to an overly repetitive chorus. I know from Robert's solo work after Led Zep that he also uses unusual tonalities in his writing, but even without actually knowing this I would have to assume that due to Jimmy Page being an erupting fountain of brilliant guitar work, the majority of the non-vocal music creation came from Jimmy. The Beatles certainly deserve abject worship for John and Paul's creative songwriting ability, no question about that. Certainly Mick and Keith wrote a slew of classic, historic and truly memorable rock songs, but the very nature of their comparatively simple rock and roll structure and basic similarity to each other in terms of using major and minor chord progressions, simple and basic rock and roll rhythms, and verse/chorus/bridge approach defines them as being less innovative when compared to Robert and Jimmy.

3. SUM TOTAL OF BRILLIANT WORK

Here they outdistance The Stones because most of the Stones' albums have "fillers", which are songs that do not hit the same intense high that got slammed in all their best ones. However, I'd like to say that I don't think either Mick or Robert is capable of recording anything short of a brilliant vocal. The Beatles actually exceed Led Zep in terms of numbers of great albums that constitute a greater body of brilliant and uniquely innovative work that literally broke new musical ground with every single song they recorded. The Beatles were simply The Beatles, and they were the most creative rock and roll band ever, from being the best singers and songwriters ever right down to their individual charm and charisma. But without denigrating their gorgeous, sensitive and original style of playing, what they recorded is not the heavy type of rock and roll that either the Stones or Led Zep played. George, Paul and John were all brilliant and creative guitarists, but because they did not improvise on stage, they were not really master guitarists. I love and respect Ringo as both a person and as a very creative drummer who mastered the art of drum sounds. He has his own unmistakable Ringo style for both, but he's not really a master drummer in the sense of being able to play with great speed and dexterity. I'm talking about 9 Led Zep albums chock full of brilliant and intensely high songs - I don't know how many hours of great rock and roll listening that is. There's not a single weak track among all that work, and there's simply no question that they consistently broke new ground musically. Their debut album is still the

best one of all time (including Cream's), and Coda, their "swan song" is equally perfect.

4. STAGE PRESENCE

Led Zep was there when the concept of "rock and roll star" was still evolving. I will grant that the Stones at least deserve honorable mention as the best rock and roll band but it's mostly because of their impressive touring record and Mick's superstar stage presence with his ability to put on a great show every single time he appears. And he's still doing it at age 60 for goodness sake! My point isn't that Led Zep necessarily had the best stage presence, just that they did have a true rock star sexual aura.

I could go on about Jimmy Page's abilities as a producer, and there are other aspects to their greatness like the length of time they were together without a change of band members. And the life they actually led as archtypical wild rock and roll bad boys equals the life led by the Rolling Stones in intensity, if not length. Both bands are perfect examples on an artistic level of what I call FORM = CONTENT, which in this case means that these two rock and roll bands personified the rock and roll life.

In conclusion, the above four categories do enough to fully qualify Led Zeppelin for my not-so-humble award. There will never be another rock and roll band to approach the stratospheric musical heights that Led Zep reached. The Recording Industry Association of America, who has the correct statistics, lists Led Zeppelin as the third best selling musical act/artist in history. The Beatles are first, with 166.5 million albums sold in the USA alone, Elvis is second with 117.5 million, and Led Zep is third with 106 million. I think it's very significant that those statistics are becoming geometrically times greater than the number of albums that they sold during their performance lifetimes. What has happened and is happening is that the young people of today are discovering them in droves because they are coming of age sexually and they recognize and connect with the most powerful musical example of that sexual power. They are buying their CD's, shirts, posters and other memorabilia. And frankly, I'm thrilled.