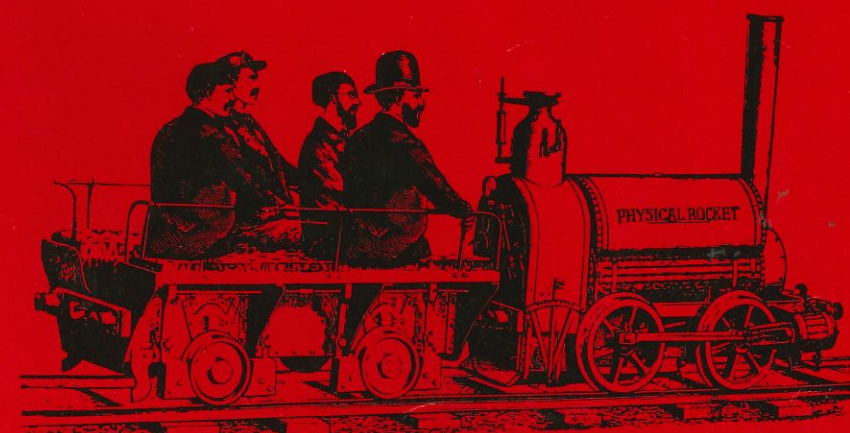





MEL BUSH in association with PETER GRANT
presents

LED ZEPPELIN

EARL'S COURT 75



OFFICIAL PROGRAMME



LED ZEPPELIN

inside info...

Manager

Peter Grant

Tour co-ordinator

Richard Cole

Production Manager

Ian Knight

Led Zeppelin

Technical Crew

Benjamin Lefevre

Mick Hinton

Brian Condliffe

Raymond Thomas

Record Company

Swan Song

Sound System

Showco, Dallas, Texas

Lighting

Showco, Dallas, Texas

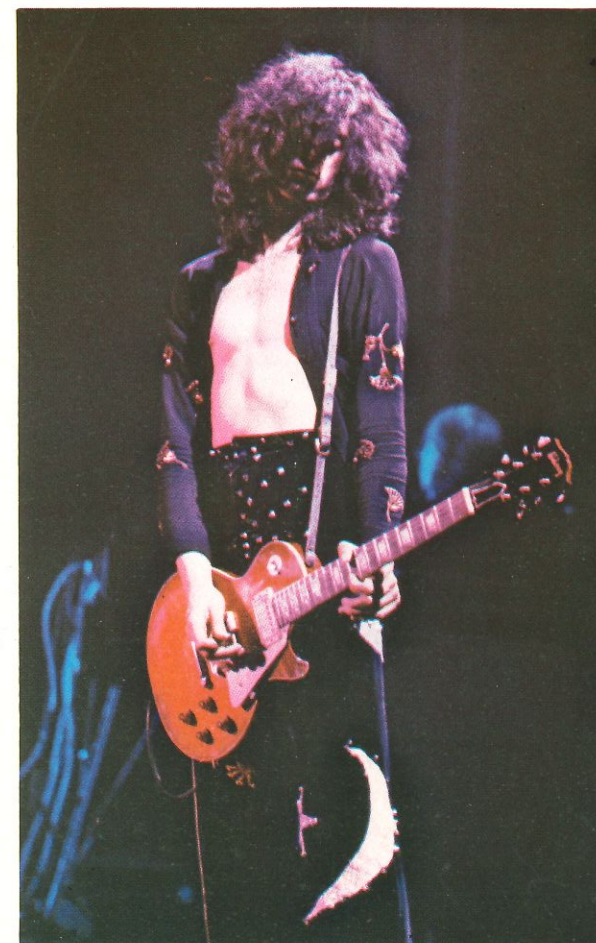


The LED ZEPPELIN story

Led Zeppelin's music, stylistically, is a tour de force, borrowing from Bo Diddley, The Stones, Cream, Burt Bacharach and Kool and the Gang; a fusion of jazz, rock, blues and flamenco. It is persuasive and snarling, whether acoustic or electric. It is deceptively facile, yet almost never overblown. It relies heavily on the blues for its emotional strength, yet has expanded the electric vocabulary of that ill-used idiom while remaining firmly locked within it. Some maintain that, like the best or worst of rock, Page and his troupe have been schooled in the art of excess. They are too loud and too long. Yet the evidence dumbfounds such a view. A song like "Stairway to Heaven" is characteristic. It begins quietly with acoustic guitar playing an aching melody. The singer stutters out the most simple of themes. Gradually, but inevitably, the sound develops over the minutes into a massive climax, the bass and drums providing an elemental roar from which the guitar (now electric) and singer tear a raging, hurting melody. Not all Zeppelin's songs are based on this pattern, but a sufficient number to recognise this as the group's signature. Again it is the multiplicity of cross references which makes the music arresting; almost as if the band were summing up rock 'n' roll today and yet re-fashioning many of its conflicting elements into a new sound which has the possibility, thereby, of extended development. One hears snatches of Beatles chord progression, the miasmic, tortured blues lines of Leadbelly, the rhythmic brutality of Pete Townshend. Yet the whole is different from the parts. It is the hardest sound you are likely to find on disc, never distorted but always relentless. What is more, it is beautifully fashioned.

And so one turns back to Page, the group's composer and producer. Of all those working in the pop milieu today, he is the master craftsman. With groups like Cream, pop (or rock or whatever cliché you chose) discovered that it was possessed of considerable instrumental capabilities. The question remained what to do with those capabilities — clearly the 8 or 16 bar song beloved of the balladeers could no longer contain this rampaging ambition. Concertos for Rock Group and Orchestra emerged, song-cycles, cantatas, 3 hour improvisations, the lot — all attempts to discover a form within which this burgeoning musicianship might find expression. Rock as Theatre with such as Alice Cooper or Genesis seemed to provide a way forward, and might do so still. But Page recognised that pop contained within itself the possibility of development. The answer was pure and simple — craftsmanship. There is no difference, essentially, between a Led Zeppelin song like "In my time of dying", with its moaning guitar, extended and improvised vocal line, all lasting for over 12 minutes, and an early Chuck Berry or Presley number such as "Baby let's play house." Except for one thing. The Zeppelin song is better constructed, better played and better recorded. "You only get as much out of rock 'n' roll," he told me, "as you put into it. There's nobody who can teach you. You're on your own. That's why you're tapping a source, a source that is probably in all of us if only we realised it."

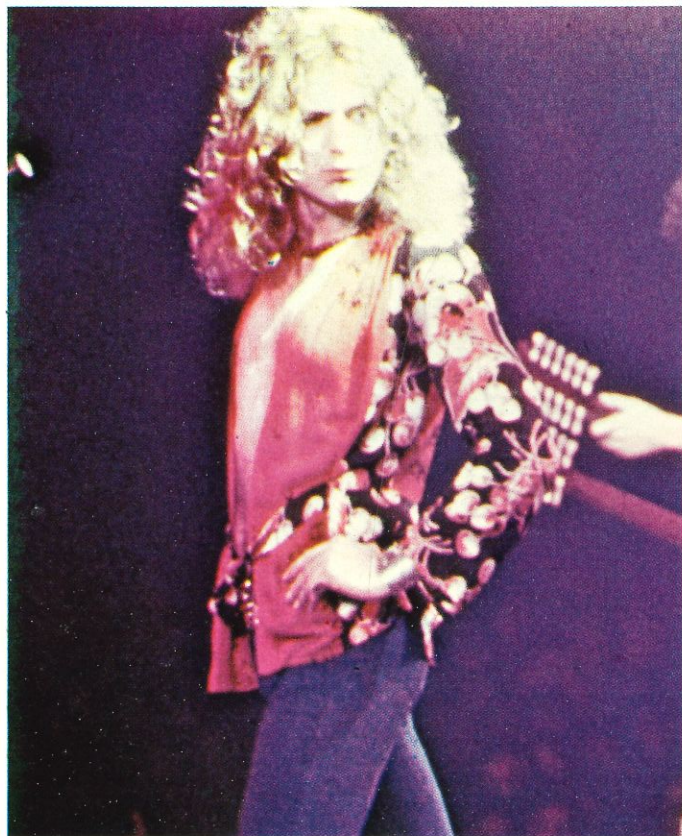
Page also understood the importance of ensemble playing. That may sound a little obvious, but for years the self-indulgent egocentricity of pop stars prevented them from hearing one another — group after group split up "because they could no longer get it together". Often, they simply hadn't tried or listened. Page, in choosing Jones, Bonham and Plant, was lucky enough to discover three musicians of comparable self-awareness. On stage, after a particularly successful improvisation, all three stand and grin at each other, ignoring the audience while secretly acknowledging their shared musical experience. At moments like that, one feels, the millions of dollars, the adulation of thousands, the absurdity of the milieu they have challenged, is irrelevant. Their collective musicianship has been enough. There are bands whose sound is less crude, more tasteful. There is no band, however, whose constant ability to produce harmonies and counterpoint on which to hand their improvisations is so sophisticated. It makes them impossible to copy, as many have discovered.



Page told me of one occasion some years back, when, as the group entered, the entire audience of some twenty five thousand lit matches or candles or lighters and stood in silent recognition of a sound, an achievement, which spoke eloquently for them and their longings and their agonies. The sight of those flickering beacons, says Page, stopped him dead in his tracks. It was, he recalls, a moment of true magic.

I think we talked for around three to four hours, his hands fluttering bird-like in darkness. Time, he told me, ceased when they performed on stage. They had tried frequently to cut down their performance to around two hours or so, but it always crept back to well over three. As he drew me further and further into his world, time slipped away with equal grace. I often think of him now, perched high up in his Hollywood hotel, curtains shut, film projector standing idle, records stacked untidily on the floor, guitar in his hands, waiting — as he says — for something to come through. Occasionally the silence is interrupted by the need to move on to the next city for the next concert. Food is brought in; the armed guard ever watchful; the telephone more or less permanently off the hook; the television blank. That he is worth a fortune is clearly meaningless to him, except in so far as it pays for his privacy. He has the isolation and knowledge of a monk. By remaining calm at the centre of a disintegrating culture, he is providing an example for its future development. If we need heroes, then rather Jimmy Page than political buffoons or licensed jesters or sporting apes; rather the shy, nervous, steely youth whose songs are inspiring a generation.

Robert Plant



For such a titanic performer on stage, Robert Plant is ludicrously polite off. He lives for the day, he told me; "as long as it is functioning."

Interviewing him can be difficult. He insists on doing handstands and generally prancing about while talking. He is apt to trot out the clichéd reply to what was, most probably, a clichéd question. "I want to slap apathy in the face before it becomes too big a wart." Ah. "It's important to see the change of seasons in England - that's why I much prefer to be at home than on the road. Yes, it's important to keep a context of time in fair Albion." Ah. "I'm proud of what we've done, of what we represent. We are a diversion, which I believe to be artistically valid, from the normal way of life. So let's all go to the revolution, but who knows the way?" Ah, indeed. Plant also lives on a farm, like Bonham, between Worcestershire and Shropshire, a working mountain sheep farm which he "maintains with finesse". After six years at King Edward VI's grammar school in Stourbridge, he got £2 a week "making tea for a seedy old man who was supposed to be teaching me chartered accountancy". "It was a far cry from Leonardo da Vinci" he recalls. He hated it and left. He had already played in the backs of Stourbridge pubs while studying for his G.C.E. "O" levels (he got 6 passes), so found little difficulty in forming various small bands such as The Crawling King Snakes, The Black Snake Moan and later The Band of Joy (where he met Bonzo), all named after old blues tunes. But his music found little acceptance in Birmingham where he became known as the wild man of blues from the Black Country. He moved south, to Middle Earth in fact, the now defunct cellar club in Covent Garden where much of what subsequently became known as underground rock was developing. There Plant discovered the heaving swagger of his voice, by turns melifluous and shrill, accusatory, pleading and sweet, a devastating instrument, his by chance and not by suffering, arguably the first white voice that had the measure of the blues at a time when the tradition of blues shouting was dying. "It's not a voice you can practice with," he told me. "I need the charge of the other three. I need the mass of an audience to speak to, to love them as much as I hope they will love me. As long as I mean every breath of it, I'm O.K."

Once he was a Mod and went to Margate beaches with other Mods to fight the rockers. Then he was a rocker, and then a beatnik. As such, he read Sartre, Camus and Kafka. Then he became a rock superstar of a steel constitution and "curved smile". Now 26, he still wears the same boots he wore at Zeppelin's earliest concerts - at the time of their first recording he had rarely worn headphones, standard issue in all recording studios. He has been described as the very model of a modern matinee idol, and dangles himself with Brazilian quartz and Navajo jewellery. He considers Joni Mitchell a major influence on contemporary music, loves Sandy Denny, the Fairport Convention and liebfraumilch. Ray Charles and Bobby Parker peer over his shoulder. The Incredible String Band are for him an example and a sign. Like other rock superstars, he wastes thousands on silly cars. He bought a candy, apple and red 1959 Crown Imperial drophead and then lavished \$10,000 on chromium fin-tails to make it "the silliest car in the world". Yet his command of an audience is uncanny. I have seen him rouse a docile mob of 20,000 to a thundering, quivering mass. "We're laying it on the line," he says, "and the audience knows it."

We are trying to communicate a fulfilled ideal. Doesn't anyone remember laughter?" At the end of one concert, he told me, his tiny daughter ran on stage to greet her daddy. He held her high in his hands while the audience waved their approval and he came close to tears.

Jimmy Page



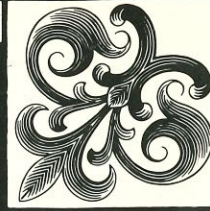
His technique may lack the effortless charm of Clapton; may lack the brutal wizardry of one of his heroes, the late Jimi Hendrix. His songs may not equal the agonised self-pity of Dylan, his compositions the formal brilliance of Benjamin Britten. But his grasp, both of the limitations and possibilities of his music, is formidable. When he was first voted Number One guitarist by various rock magazines, he was genuinely surprised. "I'm not much of a guitarist, am I?" he asked me once, more to my surprise than his. Recently, he wandered around India listening to every street sitarist he could unearth; just men in the street playing their instruments. "I felt very humbled by the quality of their musicianship," he told me "in fact, I felt embarrassed to be playing at all". Gone was the flashing majesty of his appearance on stage, fast as a cat. Instead, a thin, almost inaudible, ghost of a man, like a choirboy, dog tired but smiling. He had been awake non-stop since the last concert - 48 hours ago. "I thought something was coming through", he said, waving his hands towards his guitar sunk into a chair. "But, well, I suppose there have been too many interruptions." He wanders about his darkened room, disconsolate, exhausted, alone.

"I've compared notes with other writers and artists," he says defensively, "to see what time of day is most productive. Writers seem to thrive on schedules. Poets, or composers like me, just go at it. I've lost all concept of time long ago . . . I hate my music being described as rock 'n' roll. Pop as a name is also ridiculous. They're both a long way from the truth. Anyway, I distrust all labels. And formal training - I survived just three hours - can shackle you for life. What we play is street music, folk music, and that's why we refuse to get involved with the media. If what we are saying has any truth, then people in the street will know. It won't need me or you to spell it out. What I do cannot be explained in an interview, or an article, or in any light entertainment cliché."

In the past I got annoyed that contemporary music was abused by the press and television. But now I see that as an advantage. To be spurned by the media, to be ignored at school, is the greatest boon we could have. It is our best chance of survival."

He didn't start playing until he was 15 - he is only 31 now. An only child, the son of a personnel manager, he grew up in Felton next to London's Heathrow airport. He remembers distinctly the event that changed his life. He heard Chuck Berry singing "No money down" and knew (correctly) that in its own primitive and naive manner it touched a profound social nerve. No money down, live now and pay later, the whole gaudy never-had-it-so-good I'm alright Jack trashy post-war materialism was caught in that one song. And when his guitar was confiscated at grammar school, he knew how his life was to be. The energy of Little Richard startled him into action. He played anywhere and everywhere, and by the time he was 20 had become the youngest - and also the best - session guitarist in London. He worked with P. J. Proby, Dave Berry, The Kinks, The Who, Them and The Rolling Stones; he played at the Marquee and on Eel Pie Island. He did a stint of one night gigs round the country until he collapsed with fatigue. He cut a solo single called "She just satisfies" on which he sang and played all the instruments except the drums. It was rubbish. So was his work as a session player. At the end he had no idea what he was doing or why. Eventually, he joined The Yardbirds as a replacement bass player and the rest we know.

Well, not quite. He would like to fill his houses with pre-Raphaelite paintings but says he can't afford them; he owns Aleister Crowley's old house on Loch Ness and an old moated mansion near Lewes in Sussex. He pays 98% tax on his song-writing royalties and, although he keeps meeting people in the States who can't afford to come back to England, hopes to stick it out here "until a compromise comes along". He laughs. "I think I must be a masochist," he says. He is the only Zeppelin not married. "I once told a friend: 'I'm just looking for an angel with a broken wing - one who couldn't fly away'." Obscene letters sent to him by fans and others distress him inordinately. Death threats are frequent. He worries about the whole pace of being on the road, of constantly having to live up to his image, whatever that is. When he returns home, he can't eat or sleep or in any way relax for days, often weeks. He longs to tour in an open wagon, stopping when and where the mood takes him. He lives only for his music. The rest is meaningless.



John Paul Jones



He's been playing the piano since he was six — his father, who had vamped for silent movies, was an accomplished Rachmaninov pianist. Jones Junior prefers Debussy Preludes Book II and Ravel. After boarding school and a spell at Christ's College, Blackheath, he joined his parents on the road as part of a musical comedy trio. With his Dad on piano and himself on bass, Jones toured the Hunt balls, barmitzvahs, belly-dance parlours, U.S. bases, and a residency at the Isle of Wight yacht club. Eventually, he graduated into the London Sessions circuit, primarily as an arranger. His most notable work, perhaps, was for The Rolling Stones' album "Their Satanic Majesties' Request," although he arranged also for Lulu and Hermans Hermits. He even thought of applying for the job as choirmaster at Westminster Cathedral.

He met Page while playing on Donovan's "Hurdy Gurdy Man" album and some years later read in "Melody Maker" that Jimmy was forming a group. His wife urged him to telephone, which he did. "I was the last to join but I must say it's a very pleasant way of making money, all this rock 'n' roll stuff," he told me with a chuckle. "The trouble is you finish up not being able to afford your expenses. Still, I can't imagine anyone else I'd rather play with. A superstar? No, I've no idea what that is. I'll tell you one thing, though. When we first came together in 1969, we were each of us determined that, whatever happened musically, we were not going to blow it because of bad management. Management of ourselves, that is, and how we conducted our life. Success? Oh well, I suppose I view that with some curiosity. But I'd much rather be at home with my wife and children (he has three — 8, 7 and 3). I've been married for 9 years; my wife is my best friend. I get hell for going on tour. When we're all back in England, the group, that is, we hardly ever meet except to make collective decisions about where we should tour next or what we should record. I suppose we must be the original group. Once I had all the time in the world and no money. Now I have the money but no time . . ."

The room is littered with photos of his children; records strewn about the floor, a practice guitar lying on the sofa. "I had a Rolls" he went on, "but I sold it. Too ostentatious". He wanders around in a loose fitting shift, complaining about the phones which ring constantly. "Yes, we were all determined to try and get it right this time. We were committed to our first tour and first recording date before we even knew we existed. We just played and recorded anything we could remember or fancied. Funny how things have turned out, isn't it? Yes, you could say I'm a very luck fellow."

John Bonham



When the group had assembled for their first concert, scheduled for Boxing Day 1968 in Copenhagen, Bonham had never travelled on an aeroplane. He is now 30 and owns twelve dozen pedigree cows, eighty sheep and actively farms a hundred acres in Worcestershire. His ambition is to win a rosette for his bulls. His father was a carpenter. His headmaster remembers him quite well. "He was only an average boy . . ." He has been ill all day — his wife calls him "asbestos guts". His friends call him the car dealer — he once collected 21 cars in twelve months, including 4 Rolls, 3 Bentleys, a Masarati, and assorted Aston Martins. Plant had told Page about him; said he was not popular because he played too loud. Grant had to send forty telegrams — Bonham was not on the phone — before the recalcitrant drummer replied. He wasn't interested, he said. He was getting £40 a week, steady. He didn't want to risk it. Recently, he spent \$25,000 buying and then transporting a red Corvette which had taken his fancy in Florida. He had the car brought over to Los Angeles on a trailer, thus causing endless dramas — no-one except Bonham was allowed to drive the car, not even down to the local tax office to get it insured. As a result, it has never been insured and Bonham has never driven it.

His school report had read: "He will either be a millionaire, or a dustman."



LED ZEPPELIN

Swan Song and Peter Grant...

There was nothing in the rock business Grant had not done nor could not do. He knew and understood every crooked hole. He had managed several failures including the New Vaudeville Band. He had been agent for The Animals, done deals for Chuck Berry and John Lee Hooker, been road manager for Wee Willie Harris and fixed endless Sunday tours for the Noel Gay Organisation. He never does anything for money, so he says, and has never quarrelled about cash with Zeppelin. He never advises the group what to do with its money, nor interferes with their private lives. He decided long ago to stay away from the press. "We didn't get their help when we started, so we don't need them now. And we certainly don't let them have the best seats in the house," he told me patiently as he padded round his hotel suite, curtains drawn, table littered with records and roses. He is clumsy yet gracious. No detail escapes him. Some days after I interviewed him first, he took me aside and corrected some minor detail he had told me. For the second interview I was four minutes late arriving. He remembered. His own sense of timing is immaculate. He will keep the group off the road for as long as eighteen months until he judges the moment is exactly right for a spectacular return. He schedules the release of a new record months before it is written. The date is always right, of course, always absolutely right, just when no other major group or its records are around.

The culmination of his business career came this time last year when he established the group's own record label, Swan Song, and entrusted its management to a sophisticated, intelligent yet equally unlikely Jewish New Yorker, Danny Goldberg. A one-time P.R. from a firm whose clients included Streisand and Sinatra, Goldberg dresses as shabbily as the rest, more like a Jew from the ghetto than vice-president of a multi-million dollar enterprise, while Steve Weiss runs the legal side of the label. With his mouse-hair tied back in a pony tail, Goldberg has ensured that the record label has scored 5 hits out of 5 so far. It only has four groups on its books. Apart from Zeppelin, there are two other English bands — Bad Company and The Pretty Things — and singer Maggie Bell. It is the only record label ever established by an individual group which has had major successes with other groups. Apple, the Beatles' label, was successful only and as long as it put out Beatle L.P.'s. Swan Song's first release with Bad Company was a gold disc within weeks. Goldberg and wife and their staff of eight are justifiably proud of their achievement.

They are also refreshingly honest and straightforward. There is no pop mumbo-jumbo, no illusions that they are changing the artistic face of the globe, no pot-soaked soft talk, no promotional vulgarity. As with Grant, however, you sense that Goldberg would kill rather than have his artists ill-used or taken advantage of. One day he arrived at the hotel looking uncharacteristically flustered. One of his assistants had been ill. Every five minutes he telephones her; "Is there anything I can do to make you happy?" he inquired. Just so Peter Grant. If he leaves the hotel without telling the group, they panic. Their alter ego has slipped away into the night and, like children, they feel defenceless.

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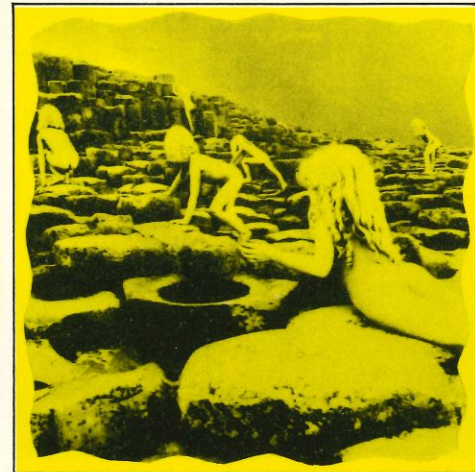
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LED ZEPPELIN



Recording Artists



LED ZEPPELIN
BAD COMPANY
PRETTY THINGS
MAGGIE BELL