

# The songs remain the same...

>> **But Lez Zeppelin tantalize dykes and dudes with their gender switcheroo**

by **LORRAINE CARPENTER**

"The ancient prophecy foretold in the 'runes' has been fulfilled. This all-female Lez Zeppelin... restores balance to the universe as it presents... the original Zep's idyllic fantasy vision. It's an awesome spectacle to witness such beautiful creatures emit the most powerful and heavy of sounds."



FOR THE LOVE OF LED: Lez Zeppelin

So wrote a swooning male fan on Lez Zeppelin's Web site, a mere sample of the lotta love that has been heaped on Brooke Gengras (vocals), Steph Payne (guitars, Theremin), Lisa Brigantino (bass, mandolin, keys) and Wendy Kidd (drums) since their first show in December, 2003. The New York-based band (who, by the way, have a "don't ask, don't tell" policy on sexuality) were recently profiled in Spin alongside fellow all-female tribute bands AC/DShe and Cheap Chick, and while the piece over-politicized the bands' intent, Payne told the Mirror they just wanna rock.

**Mirror:** What do you love about Led Zeppelin?

**Steph Payne:** Wow, how long do you have? There are so many things that make them, to me, the ultimate rock band. The canon they've written and performed is so diverse and so powerful. I never get sick of listening to the music, and it doesn't get boring to play. It definitely requires chops because it's so challenging, but there's room for all of us to express ourselves musically. That's what Led Zeppelin did live. They didn't just hack out the songs over and over, it was always different, and that's much more fun to do. They also had a mythology that means a lot to a lot of people. They come to our gigs and they ask if we're into magic or Lord of the Rings or this or that, and that really

makes it richer. It's a bigger package than your typical rock band.

**M:** Do people sometimes assume you're being ironic?

**SP:** They make a lot of assumptions. That's one of them, but the big assumption is that we can't play—that's why it's so much fun to watch their faces when we start playing. I don't really mind whatever they think, but when they come and see the show they realize it's for real.

**M:** What are your fans like?

**SP:** Our fanbase is completely diverse, it's amazing to us. Traditionally, Led Zeppelin is said to appeal to guys between the ages of 14 and 25, so the fact that we're women playing something that's seen as heavily male does a really interesting psychological turn on people, and they love it.

**M:** The Spin article categorized the music that you and the other bands play as "cock rock."

**SP:** That's actually a really bad term, and it's completely inaccurate. Led Zeppelin were not cock rock. They wrote really dynamic music. A lot of it was Celtic-folk-based. They idolized Joni Mitchell. If anything, you'd think it was girly music. There are actually many feminine things about Led Zeppelin. They were skinny pretty boys with long hair. I really believe that a lot of guys picked up on that girlishness and found it extremely sexy in an unconscious way. We've had people admit that to us to our faces, in writing, in e-mails. They're like, "Finally, I can be attracted to Led Zeppelin!"

**With guests at Club Soda on Thursday,  
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