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## The Pulse

Thursday, March 15, 2007

# It's a man's world, but Lez Zep has the answer

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All girls, all Zep back at the Opera House Tuesday

By Suzanne Cheavens

It can be supposed that countless basement guitarists, drummers, bassists and keyboardists sat around after band practice and cranked their favorite albums. Any respectable rock and roller is in possession of all Led Zeppelin recordings and so, it can be further supposed that songs like "Black Dog," "Sick Again," "Immigrant Song" or "Ramble On" were in heavy rotation. Picture four shaggy heads lolling in the throes of hard rock ecstasy, the "Oh wows," crescendoing and the "We could do this, man," putting an utter halt to the moment. See, with Led Zeppelin, not just anyone can do it. Many have tried and failed.

Until guitarist Steph Paynes, relaxing on her couch and listening to what many consider the best hard rock/blues rock band ever, thought, "I can do this." Hey hey, mama, what's the matter here? No one has ever tackled the Led Zeppelin opus and convinced anyone it was but a pale jab at songs seared into the minds and hearts of millions of rock fans.

But Paynes, an accomplished guitarist, assembled a group of like-minded women and got to work learning some of the most intricate compositions the genre has ever produced. Yes, women. Without apology and with passion, precision and all the heavy metal, regal pomp that Zep

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Russ 2000	783.61	7.93 ▲
AMEX	2082.76	19.39 ▲
NYSE	9005.25	46.64 ▲
30 YR BOND	46.93	-0.01 ▼

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demands, Lez Zeppelin forged into the holiest of male rock bastions and called it their own.



The heavy metal thunder will be heard at the Sheridan Opera House on Tuesday, March 6 at 8 p.m. for a general admission, seats-out rocker.

When you think about it, it makes perfect sense that four talented, female musicians can embrace the Zep myth and burnish it with their own deft touches. Robert Plant, Jimmy Page, John Paul Jones and John Bonham flaunted an often-androgynous sexuality to complement their primal music. Long hair, tunics made of lush fabric, revealing trousers, exotic jewelry trickling like rivulets of sweat down bare chests all served to incite crowds into delirium at their infamous live shows to ecstatic heights. Otherworldly playing - Page's searing guitar work, Plant's leonine prowling and howling, Jones' textural underpinnings on bass and keys, and "Bonzo" Bonham's possessed drumming - served to underscore the band's undeniable, ferocious sexual energy.

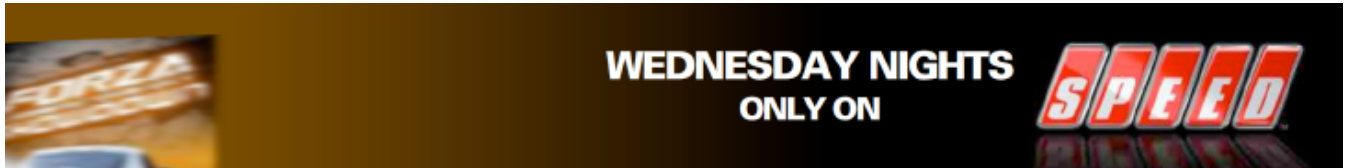
When Paynes, lead singer Sarah McClellan, Lisa Brigantino on bass, keys and mandolin, and the powerful drummer Helen Destroy calmly and without fanfare take the stage, there is little to indicate the mayhem about to ensue. Lez Zep prefers to let the music talk.

Just home from a trip across Europe, the women of LZ made waves with their astounding show. A visit to the band's guestbook on their excellent Web site reveals how many in attendance entered skeptically and left true believers. "We are surprised to find a band who plays the great Zep songs - we are surprised about the power of a girl band," wrote one Swiss couple. "It wasn't only a perfect Led Zep cover band, it was something more to it - you people," said a German fan.

They wowed `em in Europe and they wowed `em in Telluride. Paynes has Telluride connections through her good friend Janice Gerona (a Sparky Productions board member) and cohorts from her past work with the Telluride Repertory Theatre Company, but the band was an unknown before they blew the rafters off the Sheridan Opera House stage last winter. McClellan's fiery vocals and feline rock star swagger had the boys (and probably a few women, too) drooling. Paynes made local teen guitar slingers reach out to touch her dragon-clad leg after she bowed her axe during "Dazed and Confused." And Destroy did something no one thought possible - with her

thunderous footwork and rapid-fire triplet fills, she conjured Bonzo himself. Brigantino, like her Led Zep counterpart Jones, works more quietly, but also like Jones, is indispensable to the group's sound. She is the glue.

The Lez Zeppelin show is a benefit for Sparky Productions, a local nonprofit that brings cultural enrichment to the area through video, theater and the written word. Sparky recently brought writer Clay McLeod Chapman to town for a workshop and presentation, and will host the Telluride Playwright's Festival featuring Nicholas Day of the Royal Shakespeare Company in June. Tickets for Lez Zeppelin are \$28 at Wizard Entertainment and will also be for sale at the door, barring a sell-out.



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