

**Friday, October 28, 2005**

### **Lez Zeppelin at Pearl Street Saturday**

For the past two years the ladies of [Lez Zeppelin](#) have been performing the music of Led Zeppelin, defying a stereotype that still lingers in some parts: that girls just don't know how to rock like the boys do. Recently, after reading a well-played [piece](#) (PDF) in SPIN Magazine about the phenomenon of all-female tribute bands, I pitched a few questions to LZ band leader Steph Paynes.

NOTE: the band has "a strict Clintonian 'don't ask, don't tell policy' regarding the issue" of their sexuality, according to Payne. Read the SPIN article if you are at all curious, though.



If you like what you hear from the audio links (at the end of the blog entry), check out the band [Saturday night at Pearl Street](#) in Northampton (\$12.50 in advance, \$15 at the door).

*What percentage of what you do is political? Are you conscious that you are making a statement about women in rock? If so, what's the statement?*

**Steph:** Our "intention" as a band is purely and ecstatically musical – not political in any preconceived way. We came together because we love the music of Led Zeppelin and thought, as rock musicians, that their musical canon would be exciting, challenging and obscenely fun to play. However, having said that, I do think that the moment we step onstage, as women, with the name we've got, to play this particular music, which has become a tour de force – almost a synonym, if you will -- for male-identified rock, it somehow becomes larger than just "fun" in terms of it's impact on the audience. After all, when have you ever seen a group of all women playing with the appropriate intensity and ability music such as this? We should have seen it by now, but we haven't. And, when a woman begins to sing some of the cheekier lyrics inviting another woman to "squeeze my lemon" and "watch the juice run down my leg, and what not, the effect on both guys and girls is extremely, uh, potent. Is it political? I dunno. But, it's definitely powerful.

*From reading a recent Spin article, it sounds like there is a big creep factor to many of your live gigs. What's the fan contingent generally like for you?*

**Steph:** Ha! Are you calling Lez Zep fans creeps?! Actually, our audience is incredibly diverse. Surprisingly so. A lot of the kids who come see us are really young and obviously got Zep from their parents. Then, there is a strong contingent, too, of those who actually saw Led Zeppelin twenty times during the seventies. Our audience is male and female, young and old, gay and straight and probably everything in between. Some of them even claim to have switched sides by the time the night is over.

*Has the fan to band dynamic changed over the years as more people find out about you and start coming to your shows?*

**Steph:** I'd say that the only thing that's changed is that our audiences have gotten larger and more excitable, probably. It's still wonderfully diverse.

*Does performing the same repertoire night after night ever get boring?*

**Steph:** Well, you have to understand that this band is barely two years old, so nothing's boring yet. However, I don't expect it will ever become boring. The music is too brilliant, too rich. And, as long as we keep the musical interplay and spontaneity alive onstage, it will always be a new adventure.

*You recently acquired a new drummer. Why the switch?*

**Steph:** Our new drummer, Helen Destroy, is simply the "she-incarnation" of John Bonham! She plays more like Bonham with his heaviness/lightness and incredible agility than any drummer with which I've ever have the pleasure of playing. She was simply born to be in this band. So much of the magic of Led Zeppelin had to do with the musicians in the band having an amazing, inexplicable chemistry, as well as the ability to talk musically to one another. Helen is on this wavelength and brings the whole dynamic to yet another level.