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No irony, no statements, Lez Zeppelin just rocks

Women of Lez Zeppelin accurately carry the Led

Thursday, June 29, 2006

I saw the poster for Lez Zeppelin's show at the Dragonfly on my walk to work about a month ago, and I had two initial thoughts. One: That is a really clever name. Two: I bet they are awesome.

And they totally are.

Lez Zeppelin (www.lezzeppelin.com) is an all-girl Led Zeppelin tribute band and, while you might be skeptical about how well these ladies can get the Led out, I assure you they can.

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They dig into those classic riffs with as much zest as the boys do. According to Lez Zeppelin guitarist and founder Steph Payne (the Jimmy Page of the band), the fact that they were women never came into question when forming the band.

"Of course it would be all girls," Payne said. "I knew I had to do it that way. It was never an issue."

Forming an all-girl Led Zeppelin tribute band is a pretty brave choice, considering Led Zeppelin's mega male following. The ladies of Lez Zeppelin

laugh in the face of that notion.

"We're walking into skepticism right off the bat, just because we're girls," Payne said. "That just gives us more reason to do it right. We owe it to the female gender."

They definitely do it right. The instrumentation is authentic to the point that after listening to the intro of Lez Zeppelin's version of "Good Times Bad Times" I half-expected Robert Plant's voice to come in, waxing poetic about how in the days of his youth he was told what it means to be a man. Instead it was Lez Zeppelin vocalist Sarah McLellan, who can wail with the best of them.

And while it is ironic hearing lyrics about being a man sung in a woman's voice, Lez Zeppelin is not about being ironic. All its members want to do is sing Led Zeppelin, and sing it right.

"We're not trying to make any kind of statement," Payne said. "Some of [Led] Zeppelin's repertoire is aggressively male in tone, but there were definitely feminine influences in the band. They had great respect for artists like Joni Mitchell, for example. I guess we're honoring the feminine influences."

Let rock ring! Celebrate our freedom to rock out this Fourth of July at Freedom Fest 2006 in Lancaster.

This year marks Freedom Fest's fourth anniversary and will be headlined by The X's, featuring former Fuel frontman Brett Scallions.

In addition to The X's, the lineup includes Cicada Pot Pie, The April Skies, Kheris, The Suburban Sound, Fear and Invention, Pistola Amore, The Jellybricks, Altercana, The Parallax Project, Stephen Reso Band and The Metrosexuals.

You can hear all of them for just \$6.

Speaking of dollars, all proceeds from Freedom Fest will benefit Music for Everyone, a nonprofit organization that grants money to music programs. In its eight months of existence, it has already awarded more than \$11,000 in grant money to scholastic music programs.

There will be tons of other cool stuff to do at Freedom Fest other than music. 105.7 The X will be broadcasting live, and food and beverages will be made available by the Marion Courtroom restaurant.

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