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Shuffle & Play - July 14, 2007: Lez Zeppelin—Emanation Records

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It was bound to happen sooner or later given the 21st century status of females in general and musicians in particular. Four world-wise and gifted musicians from the distaff side reveal their gutsy bravado as old- and new-school rockers by "interpreting" (covering) selected classics from a band still regarded as the sentinel and seminal European rock gods. The musicians include Queen of Wands Sarah McClellan, vocalist; Queen of Cups Helen Destroy, drums; Queen of Swords Steph Paynes, electric and acoustic guitars; and Queen of Pentacles Lisa Brigantino, bass, mandolin and keys. As stand-alone musicians, each contributor has her moments, but guitarist and drummer Paynes and Destroy dominate with searing and mournful fretwork and a bashing bonanza of bottom-end beats.

Artistically accurate to the point of distraction on songs such as "Whole Lotta' Love," "Communication Breakdown" and "Kashmir," the channeling gets tougher on vocalist McClellan, but stalwart axe slayer Paynes holds the magic of near-Zep licks. And she is devoted to the kings of rock as a student would be to a mentor such as Jimmy Page. "Zeppelin had a unity of the highest calling, a near telepathic understanding of one another; they were in touch with their music and one another. To really tap Zeppelin, you need to reach for that synergistic magic," Paynes said in a Boston Globe interview. The only difficulty this reviewer foresees for Lez Zep is they will not be taken seriously enough as a "cover" band. I have a hunch, though, that after the dust settles on this debut, audiences will want to hear more from this talented group.

Led is out, Lez is in when it come to Zeppelins these days. Best Laid Plans (Gone Wrong)—Adam Freedman—Independent Adam Freedman—international research biologist, Ph.D. candidate at UCLA, world traveler and singer/songwriter.

That's one heck of a combination of potential inspirational sources above and beyond the usual terrain of one's relationships with others. But Freedman covers that vast wasteland as well in his 10-song debut CD, "Best Laid Plans." With titles such as "Truly Blind," "Official Explanation," "Lottery," "50 Affirmations" and "Summer Lightning," Freedman is left to fill-in the blank spaces with artful, intelligent lyrics, lovely melodic soundscapes of violins and violas and enticing musical structuring. "Do Good By You" begins with a lonely piano intro as percussion and bass are roused to join the unfolding acoustic ballad. "Summer Lightning" offers acoustic structures mindful of Bruce Cockburn, Gordon Lightfoot, a light touch of Elvis Costello and other global balladeers.

"Connecticut" presents an up-tempo acoustic base of operations as Freedman emphasizes his lyrical and vocal skills in a reminiscent ditty of earlier days and the passage of time. "At the Mall" is a snapshot of guy meeting a date at the mall as she waits attired in trendy chic clothing along with a Molly Hatchett tee and a feathered roach clip attached to her hat. Sound familiar? That's just one character

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July, 2007

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29						

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making an appearance at the mall in Anytown, USA—"it's always a sure thing at the mall," Fredman declares musically. The closing number, "50 Affirmations," sees Freedman delve into contemporary, fresh indie pop with a bouncy, light-hearted feel.

Freedman demonstrates he has learned almost as much about music as he has biology and African heat on "Best Laid Plans (Gone Wrong)." Only thing is, I can't figure out what went wrong. Sounds first-rate to me. Pick it up and see for yourself. By [ANTHONY DAVIS](#)
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