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 Coldplay - *Viva la Vida*  
 Judas Priest - *Nostradamus*  
 Tilly and the Wall - *O*

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Posted by Mike Zilm on June 17, 2008

*(Note this interview took place before Bonnaroo this past weekend.)*

They are not **Led Zeppelin**. They are: Steph Paynes (guitar), Helen Destroy (drums), Lisa Brigantino (bass, mandolin, keyboards), and Sarah McLellan (lead vocals). They are the four talented musicians of **Lez Zeppelin**. After a blistering show at the Stephen Talkhouse, in Ammaganset, Long Island, I spoke with the ladies about the challenges of *interpreting* such a revered catalog. As far as I could tell, these ladies ain't in no 'cover band.'

**MZ:** So you get to play the music you love, you've toured the world, made an album, and are about to play Bonnaroo. Is this what you envisioned when you came together a few short years ago?

(With legs crossed in a folding chair, Steph swept the hair from her face and smiled. Her slight build betrayed the strength behind her guitar playing. She didn't seem like the kind of woman who suffered fools easily. I was cautious.)

**Steph:** When I put this band together I thought we'd do a gig every month, be able to work from home, maybe make fifty bucks and get some free drinks. It was all for fun. But before I knew it, I thought.... "This is incredible, this is really working."

**MZ:** We now live in a culture of 'American Idols' and the 'thirty-second sound bite.' It seems you get one shot, and then you're dropped for something new. Do you feel like the established audience for Zepp's music has given you the time to stay together and develop as a band?

(Lisa has a degree in music theory and a masters in composition. She plays ukulele, piano, violin, mandolin, and bass. And if you put strings on a frying pan, she could probably play that too. She looked at the ceiling for a moment while pondering a response.)

**Lisa:** Zepp's music gave us the opportunity to get out there, but if we didn't develop as a band, if we didn't deliver, we would have been eaten alive! This thing would have been over in a month! Believe me.

**MZ:** Do you feel a responsibility to the Zeppelin fans?

**Lisa:** We feel a variety of responsibilities (laughs...). We decided if we were to play this music we needed to do it right for the fans that loved Zeppelin originally, and the new audiences that are just getting to know their music. We're providing an opportunity to hear these songs played live that's hard to get anywhere else. So whether we play for fifty people or twenty thousand people we give the same 'all-out' show.

**Steph:** We feel a huge responsibility to the fans, but also to the music. We understand that this is a 'sacred' catalog, and if you do it, you should be prepared to do it, to get past the kitsch or the gimmick. We owe it to ourselves and to the audience to play as deeply as we can.

**MZ:** How does the audience at a live show affect your



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