





The brown cardboard sign in the window read simply: "It's here."

It was late fall 1969. The album had just arrived at our neighborhood record store. A group of serious music fans were clustered by the counter, poring over the first copies of this hotly anticipated record. Even over the tiny speakers that spilled out into the arcade outside, "Whole Lotta Love" sounded like a message from the future of rock. It was. The album felt like contraband, with a textured cover, and a title that needed to say no more than what it was. *Led Zepplin II*. The Beatles' *Abbey Road* and *Crosby, Still and Nash* had both been recently released, but their popularity felt more public. To be a Led Zepplin fan—now *that* was an exclusive club.

The group itself—Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, John Paul Jones, and John Bonham—had just arrived in America for an unprecedented fourth tour in little more than a year. Their forward motion was already at a pitch that would not let up for many more touring and recording seasons. What kept them going, and what still keeps their popularity at the level of legend, was something that wasn't even yet captured on record. The songs, as any ardent fan knew even then, were just



the jumping-off point. The real attraction was a non-nightly event in the band's life, and the X factor of their incredible success. The live show.

"Every show we did was different," says Jimmy Page today. "You never knew when you went onstage what you might do by the end of it." He laughs at the still-fresh memories of the band's concerts. "Once a song was recorded, and it went into the set, it began to mutate. The whole improvisational aspect, the riffs coming out of the other . . . it was a magical vehicle collectively soaring into the stratosphere. And as more albums came out, the set got longer and longer . . ."

It was obvious that Led Zeppelin's live performance needed to be filmed. The first attempt was the group's 1970 appearance at London's Royal Albert Hall. "It was still early on, with the second album coming out," recalls Page, "and we're doing the Albert Hall—at the time the largest and most prestigious gig in London. So there was only one thing to do: reflect the synergy between the four of us and perform an unforgettable concert."

The footage, finally released in 2003 as part of the *Led Zeppelin* DVD, captured the early rawness and the magic of the triumphant hometown evening. "We played differently in England, in Europe, and definitely in Japan . . . we always went for it," he says. "But in America we were totally uninhibited. Touring America was the *crème de la crème* at the time. It was like a full-on party."



By 1973 the band had taken another large step. The set had indeed expanded to include the stand-out songs from the first four albums and the just-released *House Of The Holy*. The group and their manager, Peter Grant, had planned to film the show again. A decision was set into motion to capture the last three nights of the American tour, a trio of sold-out shows at Madison Square Garden. More and more, it had become their accepted status—

### “The Biggest Band In The World.”

Even the originally skeptical mainstream press had come onboard. Everyone was listening.

Asked recently to describe that watershed year, Robert Plant answers immediately. “Momentum,” he says. The mood of the 1973 tour is still palpable to him. “The kind of speed we were moving at, the creative juices in the air, the whole thing was just an absolute mixture of adrenaline, chemical, euphoria . . . and there were no brakes. We couldn’t stop what was happening. We had no idea what it even was. But we just kept trying, pushing forward, every show. And I was still trying to dig back into the place where it all started, never wanting to lose a grip on that . . . because at the speed we were moving, it was almost unsafe. The shapes were changing all the time, and we were trying to stay connected to a natural sort of spell to hold it all in place. With Led Zeppelin in those days, with the four of us, and Peter Grant’s steering ability, we were



able to bring the whole thing home and make it about the music. The people who lived it, craved it, and needed it. People like us."

Director Joe Massot arrived early and filmed some sequences in The Baltimore Civic Center and in Pittsburgh, at Three Rivers Stadium. Three days later the goal was at hand. It was time to capture the lighting in a bottle quality of the band's three concerts in New York. He was mostly successful. "It was the end of the tour," recalls Hunt. "There was an urgency."

There was even unexpected drama. Just before taking the stage for the third night, Peter Grant informed the band that a robbery had occurred at the Drake Hotel. A hefty chunk of the group's touring pay—almost \$200,000—was missing from a hotel safe. It remains a mystery to this day, and Page notes, "I'm still asked if the robbery was staged to add drama to the film. It wasn't. It was quite something to hear about just before stepping onstage. And then there's the audience heaving, and you're bursting out of your skin playing. And then, afterwards, the sobering moment at the end of the show when [we realized] it wasn't a joke."

The Zepppelin momentum rolled forward into the mid-'70s, with the concert film an ongoing project. An early screening of the footage determined that there were missed opportunities, and some songs remained incomplete. Peter Clifton came on as codirector, and the decision was made to expand the film's original concert format to include separate "fantasy sequences."



from each member. Additional filming was also done at Shepperton Studios, where the band convened in 1974 to re-create the show on a soundstage. Meanwhile, Led Zeppelin had already roared into a new phase, starting their own record label, Swan Song, and recording their landmark double-album, *Physical Graffiti*, before returning to America again in 1975.

The "dream sequences" had been an enjoyable filming endeavor for the band. Page particularly notes Bonham's delight. "You can tell in the film John Bonham had a whale of a time doing his," says Page. There were even discussions of additional concert filming in 1975. These plans, and more, were all scuttled by the harrowing event of Robert Plant's car accident in the late summer of that year while Plant was on vacation with his wife in Rhodes, Greece. Plant's car careened off a cliff, leaving a broken ankle and more. The accident would add a deep hue to the group's colorful history. "For the first time," says Plant, "we stopped and looked around and said, 'What the fuck happened?'"

While he was confined to a wheelchair for seven months, Plant and the group responded with typical adrenaline zeal. Even their "recovery" period was fruitful. A new album, *Presence*, was recorded in a powerful 18-day burst, and the concert film and soundtrack, now finished and titled *The Song Remains The Same* was released in the fall of 1976. The band attended premiere events in New York and in Los





Angeles, with a then-radically innovative surround sound system installed for the occasion. The film became a midnight-cinema cult favorite, the snapshot of an era, and over the years its importance grew.

By the time Led Zeppelin had broken up in 1980, there were precious few artifacts of the live show in their archives. The end had come quickly, capped by a somber announcement made ten weeks after John Bonham's tragic death by alcohol poisoning. It was a noble conclusion, predicted immediately by fans who'd known the group's loyal and delicate balance between members. Led Zeppelin was all about those four very particular men, and at the mighty center was the sensitive and volatile soul of the group's sonic thunder. "Everybody was essential. Everybody had an integral part; it was quite detailed," Plant says. "We were hanging out with each other quite often, all of us contributing equally, glued together, with color swatches of dynamics and arrogance."

As band dynamics go, there are few foundations as storied as Bonham's. Fittingly, it's Bonham's speaking voice you hear at the beginning of this recording. "Alright," he shouts to his bandmates against the cheering din of Madison Square Garden. It's the first of the three nights, and he clearly feels it. "Let's go!"

"He would either count it in on the high-hat or the classic snare drum intro," Plant recalls, detailing the moments before their consistent show opener on the







1973 tour, "Rock And Roll." "So everybody would have to be in position, and it would be silly if we all weren't ready. It was Bonzo's call to arms. And from then on there was a lot of knitting, weaving, darning, laughing, and . . ." Plant indeed laughs, the oxygenated memories last a moment or two before he shrugs off the sentimentality. "Then it was the end. And that probably lasted 11 years . . ."

The era they had defined would no longer be the same. One wonders if the savage business ethic of today would have allowed such a thing. But this was then, and more importantly, this was Led Zeppelin. This was a band that treated, to themselves as much as their fans. In the years following the group's breakup, Page had promised to return to the best-recorded document of their heady middle period peak in 1973, those kinetic summer nights at Madison Square Garden. In 2003 Jimmy assembled the highly successful *Led Zeppelin* live compilation DVD with engineer Kevin Shirley, while the band began to circle the recordings and their filmic record, *The Song Remains The Same*. Legalities prevented any re-editing of the film itself. The quest began to refurbish the picture's soundscape.

"We wanted it to sound as it did, as strong as it was, a bit rocky and precocious," says Plant of the process. "With 5.1 [sound], we knew we had a chance. We trolled through, dug into it, and there it was.

Finally, there was the warmth and the feel of the room [Madison Square Garden], and it sounded good. It's of its time, so confident. It was the '70s . . . it was 'Let's have a go at this!' Twenty-three minutes of 'Dazed And Confused?' Nobody but the *Grateful Dead* were doing something like that! Nowadays, you're never transported; it's all video assists and 27 cameras, and it's a YouTube clip that'll appear tomorrow."

The soul of the live show had begun to emerge with a soaring urgency. For immediate reference, go directly to "Whole Lotta Love," which has now been rightfully restored to its psychedelic wig-out perfection. It's not just a song, it's a sign. Also finally included are the missing recordings featured in the film, "Black Dog" (featuring "Bring It On Home"), a white-hot "Since I've Been Loving You," "Heartbreaker," and never-before-released versions of "Misty Mountain Hop," "The Ocean," and a gorgeously loose "Over The Hills And Far Away."

Page's one-man guitar orchestra, swooping and careening, taking no prisoners, Jones and Bonham holding the brilliant center, and the high-stakes passion of Plant, coaxing magic at every turn . . . it's a breathtaking statement of ownership. All the elements are present, and most of all . . . the joy. "The humor is the ingredient that I remember," says Plant. "The moment where you look at each other and just laugh. Bonzo and Jimmy breaking into James Brown's 'Cold



Sweat,' and us knowing, 'We'll get it even better tomorrow.' But there was no tomorrow, because we'd already moved on...'

This is the sound of four players, masterful musicians, friends and cohorts, who got together in a dingy basement in London in 1968, played "Train Kept A-Rollin'," and never looked back. "It's always a challenge," Page said simply at the time, "to do it with just the three instruments. There's so much that can be done . . . and will be done. I don't think we've ever let anybody down who ever came to see us. That's the one thing. We've got a track record for really delivering when we went out there. We always did our best."

The imagery, the lunt, the majesty, and the mystery of Led Zeppelin remain tattooed across the hearts of fans everywhere. To anyone who shared that room, or the members who stood onstage as Led Zeppelin, this recording is more than a historical document. This is *also* New York. The groove. The heart. The soul. The journey. The music.

It's here.

—Cameron Crowe  
August 2007



DISC ONE

1. **ROCK AND ROLL**  
(Jimmy Page/Robert Plant/John Paul Jones)
2. **CELEBRATION DAY**  
(Jimmy Page/Robert Plant/John Paul Jones)
3. **BLACK DOG**  
(Jimmy Page/Robert Plant/John Paul Jones)
4. **OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY**  
(Jimmy Page/Robert Plant)
5. **MISTY MOUNTAIN HOP**  
(Jimmy Page/Robert Plant/John Paul Jones)
6. **SINCE I'VE BEEN LOVING YOU**  
(Jimmy Page/Robert Plant/John Paul Jones)
7. **NO QUARTER**  
(Jimmy Page/Robert Plant/John Paul Jones)
8. **THE SONG REMAINS THE SAME**  
(Jimmy Page/Robert Plant)
9. **THE RAIN SONG**  
(Jimmy Page/Robert Plant)
10. **THE OCEAN**  
(Jimmy Page/Robert Plant/John Paul Jones/John Bonham)



DISC TWO

1. **DAZED AND CONFUSED**  
(Jimmy Page)
2. **STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN**  
(Jimmy Page/Robert Plant)
3. **MORY DICK**  
(John Bonham/John Paul Jones/Jimmy Page)
4. **HEARTBREAKER**  
(Jimmy Page/Robert Plant/John Paul Jones/John Bonham)
5. **WHOLE LOTTA LOVE**  
(Jimmy Page/Robert Plant/John Paul Jones/John Bonham/Wille Dixon)





Produced by Jimmy Page  
Executive Producer: Peter Grant  
Recorded live at Madison Square Garden by  
Eddie Kramer  
Mixed at Metropolis Studios, London, by  
Kevin Shirley  
Mastered by Bob Ludwig,  
Gateway Mastering, Portland, ME  
Sleeve by Hippnosis/Hardie  
Reissue Design by Peter Hahn

Original soundtrack from the film  
"The Song Remains The Same"  
A Swan Song Inc. Production  
A Warner Bros. Inc., Motion Picture

