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Whole lotta 'lez'

All-girl Led Zeppelin tribute inspires groupies

By LARRY GETLEN

Last Updated: 8:11 AM, July 10, 2011

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Led Zeppelin virtually defined rock-god excess with drugs, groupies and one notorious shark. While Zep's wild ride is long over, the band's imitators occasionally manage to inspire debauchery themselves.

"There was a trapeze artist who made it onto our tour bus once," says Steph Paynes, guitarist for the all-female Zep cover band Lez Zeppelin, which plays the Circle Line Music Cruise on Friday night. "She set up a trapeze in the back and did a little act for us. It was very nice."

While Paynes is as coy about dirty details as Zep's Jimmy Page was in his heyday — she also won't reveal whether her band's name is to be taken literally — she does describe how Lez Zeppelin has become an object of worship for Zeppelin die-hards.



Barry Brecheisen/WireImage

"There used to be a guy at our gigs named Zeppelin John," says Paynes, a former backup singer and guitarist for Ronnie Spector. "He would show up in custom-made suits covered from head to foot in symbols and Zeppelin imagery. I think he lived in the basement of his mother's house."

Another zealous fan was known as "the Hermit" for his uncanny resemblance to the mysterious figure holding a lantern on the Led Zeppelin IV album.

"He used to show up at our gigs," says Paynes, "and he'd be there in the audience with his flute and his beard, looking very mystical. And you'd look into the audience and go, 'The Hermit!'"

Since Led Zeppelin's live days are officially over, Lez Zeppelin — founded in 2004 — is happy to fill any void it can for the band's fervent devotees.

"We have people at various levels of obsessiveness who tend to think we really are Led Zep," she says. "I've had people assume I'm everything those guys are — that I'm into black magic."

And while Paynes and her cohorts leave the occult to the pros, focusing instead on giving fans a taste of the Zeppelin legacy, obscene acts with sharks have

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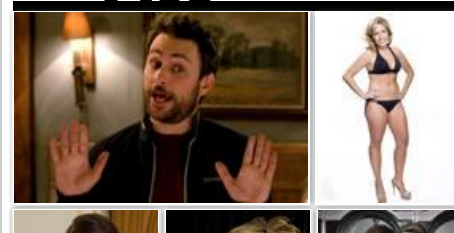
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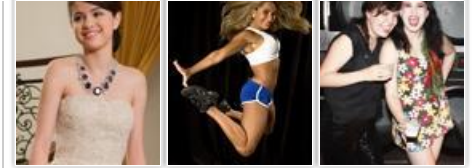
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been totally off-limits — so far, at least.

“We’ve gotten as far as goldfish,” Paynes says. “But we’re working our way up.”



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A lot of people just throw their hands up and get excited, but no

The more LMFAO shuffled, the more they were reminded of the

Charleston is almost the same tempo as this song — it's around 130, 140

where there was no more walking, but everybody was shuffling. So we

keep gasoline on the fire. He's really good at knowing what's important."

BY LARRY GETLEN

LED ZEPPELIN VIRTUALLY defined rock-god excess with drugs, groupies and one notorious shark. While Zep's wild ride is long over, the band's imitators occasionally manage to inspire debauchery themselves.

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Barry Brecheisen/WireImage



Laurance Ratnes/WireImage



Lez Zeppelin's Shannon Conley (above left) and Steph Paynes make like their idols (inset).