

**THE
JOHN BONHAM
STORY**

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BY CHRIS WELCH

WITH
ANDY DOERSCHUK
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PREFACE A SLOW NIGHT AT THE MARQUEE

As a Melody Maker reporter during the 1960s, I vividly remember the moment when a review copy of Led Zeppelin's eponymous debut album arrived at the office. My colleague and fellow scribe Tony Wilson had secured the precious black vinyl LP and dropped it onto the turntable, awaiting my reaction. We were immediately transfixed by the brash, bold sounds that fought their way out of the lo-fi speakers – Robert Plant's screaming vocals, the eerie Hammond organ sounds of John Paul Jones, and Jimmy Page's supreme guitar mastery. But amid the kaleidoscope of impressions, the drums were the primary element that set pulses racing. We marveled at the sheer audacity, the sense of authority, the spatial awareness present on every track. Within moments, John Bonham's cataclysmic bass drum triplets and roaring snare rolls had signaled a new era of rock drumming.

The first time I saw Bonham up close was in December 1968, at The Marquee Club on Soho's Wardour Street. While The Marquee has long held a mythical status in the rich history of the London rock scene – hosting early appearances by such legendary bands as The Who and The Rolling Stones – it was actually a dark and rather cramped facility with a tiny stage that fronted an even stuffier dressing room.

The venue wasn't full on the night of the Zeppelin show, so we could wander around and chat to other club goers. While Page and Plant dominated the stage, we edged over to the side to check out the drummer. Among those watching with me was Mark Ashton, curly haired stickman with the group Rare Bird. "He's so fucking heavy!" Ashton shouted in my ear. We stared in disbelief at the aggressive, beefy guy who seemed intent on breaking the heads on his toms.



PHOTO BY NEAL PRESTON

CHAPTER I BIRTH OF BONZO

John Henry Bonham was born in Redditch, Worcestershire, on May 31, 1948. He started drumming at the age of five by playing around on a bath salts container fitted with strands of wire on the bottom, which gave the effect of a snare drum as he hammered out rhythms with knives and forks. After he added pots, pans, and a coffee tin to his armory, his mother reclaimed the kitchenware and bought her ten-year-old son a real snare drum. Five years later, when it became clear that drumming wasn't simply a passing phase, his father purchased a complete kit. "It was almost prehistoric," Bonzo recalled. "Most of it was rust, but I was determined to be a drummer as soon as I left school. I was so keen I would have played for nothing – in fact, I did for a long time, but my parents stuck by me."

Robert Plant and John Bonham met as teenagers. "We were from the same area," the singer says. "We grew up around the same things and dated the same women. He was very colorful to be around, John. We were both proud owners of unbelievably huge egos. I was going to be the great singer in the area where I lived, and he was definitely going to be the best drummer. The two of us in the room often made it impossible for anybody else to get in because of our egos, and our personalities, and our gregarious, aggressive natures. It was very hard for anybody else to stomach us."

Family patriarch Jack Bonham ran a building company, and employed both of his sons, John and Michael. But even as he worked as a builder, John Bonham developed a parallel career as a drummer playing with local bands. It was the age of Ringo Starr and The Beatles, but Bonham had already developed a taste for jazz

drummers such as Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, and Joe Morello. "Our parents were more into big band dance music – Benny Goodman, Gene Krupa, that sort of thing," remembers his sister, Deborah Bonham. "And John really got into drumming by listening to the likes of Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich. He really loved Krupa's style."

John Bonham began taking lessons to master his rudiments, but quickly developed his own hard-hitting sound. Impatient, but a fast learner, he often practiced licks during gigs, to the frustration of bandleaders when he got things wrong. "Drumming was the only thing I was any good at, and so I stuck at it," said Bonham. "I always worked hard all the time. When I was 16, I went into full-time music. But I'd have to go back to the building sites to earn money to live. If there were no gigs, there was no money." As he gained confidence he'd go up to a bandleader and say, "Your

drummer is not much good, is he? Let me have a go and I'll show you." Whereupon he'd climb behind the hapless drummer's kit, pound it to bits, and take over his gig.

One of his first professional opportunities was a stint with Terry Webb & The Spiders, a rock and roll band he joined at the age of 16. A year later, in 1965, he married his girlfriend, Pat Phillips. Money was tight, and the family lived in a trailer owned by Bonham's father. "We really didn't have much," recalls Jason Bonham, John's now 41-year-old son – himself a successful and talented professional drummer. "He would say he was going to work, off in the local factory. But really he was taking a train to Manchester where he'd hang out in a drum shop and play demonstrations for a few pounds. Then he'd take the train back home and rub dirt on his face to look like he'd been at the factory all day."

The Bonhams moved into a high-rise flat in Dudley (where they still lived when the first Led Zeppelin album was re-released). John joined A Way Of Life the same year and made some demo recordings in a Birmingham studio. He played so loudly he was told he was "unrecordable" and that there was no future in playing so loudly. Some years later he sent the studio manager a Led Zeppelin gold disc with a note that read, "Thanks for your advice."

Out on the road he'd try to improve his playing, often at the expense of some luckless group that had booked him for the night. A friend, former Warhorse drummer Mac Poole, remembers Bonham desperately trying out a new lick – a half-time triplet on a slow blues. "He threw it in and went all around the kit but it didn't come off. He hadn't quite mastered this pattern and kept trying to get it right. The band was completely pissed off by the time they'd finished the set. I said to John, 'You've got a few problems with the band, right?' He said, 'Oh, fuck them!'"

In 1965 he joined Plant in The Crawling King Snakes, but left after a few months to rejoin A Way Of Life. Plant and Bonham would reunite in Plant's hippie-era Band Of Joy in January 1967, where the two would receive much-deserved recognition. "We were getting offers to go off with other people," Plant says. "John was getting invitations to play with the top bands, and I was trying to stop him." Bonham quit again in May 1968, when he backed Tim Rose on a U.K. tour, performing "Morning Dew" and "Hey Joe," and earning £50 a week.



PHOTO BY JØRGEN ANGEL. NEXT PAGE PHOTO BY DICK BARNATT/REDFERNS



CHAPTER II ZEPPELIN EMERGES

Meanwhile, Jimmy Page and his manager, Peter Grant, were putting together Led Zeppelin in London. Bassist John Paul Jones saw an ad in a London music paper, recruiting musicians for a new band that was being organized by Page, whose reputation as an ace session guitarist was already legendary. “I called him up on the prompting of my wife, actually,” Jones recalls, “and he said he was going up to Birmingham to see a singer, and the singer knew a drummer.”

“I was looking for a powerhouse drummer,” Page recalls, “and John certainly was that style.” Jones continues: “Jimmy called me when he got back to London and said, ‘They’re *both* great. And the drummer is just fantastic. You’ve got to hear him.’ So we set up a date to play together.”

They recruited Robert Plant, who in turn recommended Bonham for the gig. The drummer took some convincing, but after a flurry of telegrams from Grant he joined the other three musicians in a Soho rehearsal studio. “It was in this tiny little room,” Jones continues. “I got there and it was wall-to-wall amplifiers and a green drum kit.”

The new band proved a magical combination, although Bonham at first played too busily and ignored warnings from Page to keep it simple. Grant strode over to the drummer and said, “Do you like your job in this band?” Bonham nodded. “Well, do as this man says. Behave yourself, Bonham, or you’ll disappear – through different doors.” The four players tried “Train Kept A Rolling” – a hit by Page’s former band, The Yardbirds. (The fledgling band would be called The New Yardbirds for its first few gigs, in order to fulfill lingering contractual agreements from The Yardbirds.)

“Jimmy showed me how the riff went briefly,” Jones says, “and we just kicked off. The whole thing was unbelievable. And that was the first time I heard John play. He was a very tight drummer. I immediately fell in love as a bass player.” Feelings were mutual among the four musicians, as Page describes: “At the end of the first rehearsal, there was a bit of silence, and we



looked at each other and started laughing because we knew it was so good.”

Bonham later told astonished mates back in Birmingham that he had just earned his first advance of £3,000. “[The family still lived in] an apartment that was basically government-issued,” Jason remembers. “But outside that meager apartment was parked dad’s Jaguar. He bought it with the first paycheck he got after the first Led Zeppelin rehearsal.”

Bonham played his first gig with The New Yardbirds in Copenhagen, on September 14, 1968. A quick five months later saw the release of the band’s debut album, *Led Zeppelin*. Listeners far and wide began scrambling to record stores the moment they heard the opening guitar riff from “Good Times Bad

Times” on FM radio. Zeppelin began touring to support the record, opening for bands like Vanilla Fudge. “We’d watch Carmine [Appice],” Plant says. “Carmine used to hit the bass drum and crash cymbal at the same time, and then kill it with his arm. Bonham picked that up from there.”

Appice was one of the first drummers to use huge drum sizes. “In those days,” Appice remembers, “there was no such thing as a really good P.A., so volume was an important factor. I ran into a Leedy/Ludwig 26” bass drum at a pawnshop, and re-covered it in red sparkle and played it on stage. When I went to England, all the drummers like Mitch Mitchell, Keith Moon, and Jim Capaldi flipped out. It sounded great because it was so loud.”

When Zeppelin opened for Vanilla Fudge on the band’s first U.S. tour in late 1968 and early ’69, Bonham was bowled over by the appearance and resonance of Appice’s kit. “At that time I had the big blonde Ludwig kit with the 26” double bass drums and the big toms,” explains Appice. “When John saw that kit he kind of flipped out. He said he would love to get a Ludwig endorsement and get a kit like that.”

“I ended up calling Ludwig and told them that ‘Zeppelin was going to be big and this kid John Bonham, you’re going to want to endorse him because he’s really good, and he wants a kit just like mine.’ I sent them the record and they liked it and they gave him the same kit I had – two bass drums and everything. We had the two heads on the drums and they were loud!”

It was the beginning of an important relationship between Bonham and the Ludwig Drum Company. The grandson of the company’s founder, Bill Ludwig III, says, “Carmine tipped us off to John and that was that. He was one of the easiest and nicest guys to work with. Whenever Led Zeppelin would go out on tour, the management would send in a list of things they needed and it would take them through the whole tour. We’d rarely hear from them again once they started.

“I know the drums went out absolutely stock, except for the bass drum, which would have been a special order. The catalog went up to a 24” bass drum, but I think he ordered a marching drum made with regular [drum kit] hardware. From what I understand, he would take them out from the box, tune them a little bit, and play them as is. He played them with no muffling, just wide open.”

“The John Bonham who people watched up on stage every night needed alcohol to have that kind of bravado” – Jason Bonham



CHAPTER III ONE DAY IN NYC

I first met John Bonham and Robert Plant in a taxicab that took us from Euston Station in London to Heathrow Airport. We were due to fly to New York, where Led Zeppelin was scheduled to play at Carnegie Hall. It was October 1969, and the new *Led Zeppelin II* album was eagerly awaited, although as Plant told me en route, its release had been delayed due to problems with the artwork. At the airport we met Page, Jones, and Grant, and boarded the TWA Boeing 707, the fastest means of travel in the '60s. Among our fellow passengers was Graham Nash, who was eager to chat, but Led Zeppelin remained calm and quiet throughout the seven-hour trip across the Atlantic and into the sunset, as we sipped champagne and dined on caviar.

We stayed at the Hilton Hotel and I retired to my room to watch TV and fall asleep. The following morning I received a telephone call. "Had the night ... gone well?" My blank reaction drew clear disappointment. It transpired that the group had kindly sent two hookers armed with porno films and whips to my room, but they had been spotted en route by the hotel detective and arrested.

Then next day, October 17, 1969, somewhat dazed by jet lag, skyscrapers, and Manhattan hubbub, I headed to Carnegie Hall – only to find all the tickets had been sold and

there were no seats left. Instead I would have to join the group on stage during the sound check and the night's show. What a hardship. So there I was, standing next to Bonzo on the hallowed boards where Benny Goodman's "Sing, Sing, Sing" was recorded live back in 1938. "This is it, lads," said Bonham, adjusting his cymbal stands, as the audience began to file in early and take their seats. "Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich – they've all played here. So I'd better be good tonight!"

Dr. John joined me in the wings along with Chris Wood of Traffic and, somewhat bizarrely, Screaming Lord Sutch. We three

cemented a strange bond known only to Zeppelin fans as we stood in awe while the group exploded on stage. They played for two hours and the young New York audience leapt out of their seats to shake Page's hand and scream their approval. Bonzo wore a leather hat as he crouched over his Ludwig kit and delivered the battering snare drum intro to "Communication Breakdown" with such force it made me blink. When it came to his full-scale workout, Bonham made good on his promise to be in top form. He summoned a demonic drum solo and flew around the kit with a speed and brute strength that was astounding. I saw Bonham play many more solos over the years but never with quite the same sustained attack.

The band continued its U.S. tour following the historic Carnegie Hall show, and I went back to London not quite sure if the whole experience hadn't been a dream. But it was also a dream come true for Bonzo, as Zeppelin was now earning millions of dollars from live shows and royalties from the first two albums. Soon he would leave his flat behind, and by 1970 he had invested in a large house near Stourbridge, Worcestershire.



CHAPTER IV ROAD DOGS

British fans may have felt that Zeppelin had decamped to America, but it wasn't long before the group was back with an appearance at England's famed Bath Festival, a massive event in the West Country, where the band played to 200,000 fans. By then they were tackling three-hour sets and Bonham had to deliver an even longer version of his solo, now dubbed "Moby Dick." Not long after the festival, I was invited to go on tour with the band around Germany. We spent five days on the road, traveling by car, train, and plane. Zeppelin played to audiences of up to 10,000 a night at stadiums where the police had to fend off the rioting crowds with clubs and dogs.

We flew from London to Düsseldorf through heavy cloud layers. It was a turbulent flight, and almost immediately after takeoff Bonham, who hated flying even under the best conditions, left his seat and lurched to the toilet to be violently sick. It was moments like these where I saw a different side of Bonzo, the tough hell-raiser. Most of his bravado and drinking stemmed from nerves, worry, or boredom. "People assumed he was the man they saw on stage, but actually he was very shy and reserved, very introspective," says Jason. "The John Bonham who people watched up on stage every night needed alcohol to have that kind of bravado."

On our arrival, Bonham stomped around Germany looking somewhat menacing in his black moustache and black leather hat. Yet when we got to the Düssel-

"Once it came to the point of working on numbers, John's input was so substantial"

—Jimmy Page

dorf Sportshalle he was clearly nervous, as was the rest of the group. This was surprising. Zeppelin was so big, powerful, and popular. And yet Bonham sat silent and edgy, as if waiting for the boxing bell to ring for round one of the big fight. You could hear the fans yelling aggressively in the distance, and then came the signal. The band filed toward the stage in the dark, cavernous hall more like condemned men than cocky rock stars. But as soon as the first notes of "Immigrant Song" blasted, they knew the P.A. was working, the fans were happy, and they might even be attentive enough to listen to the acoustic set.

The next night's concert in Essen proved much noisier, and Page gave up trying to play "Black Mountain Side." "You load of noisy buggers!" scolded a furious Bonham. Once again I was able to watch his solos from a variety of angles – from behind, in front, even above the stage, and right beside him – in those happy days before laminates and security teams. In truth, the only security you needed with Led Zeppelin was Peter Grant and tour manager Richard Cole.

Our next stop was Frankfurt, where Zeppelin played to 11,000 fans at the Festhalle, and I was invited to join in on timbales during "Whole Lotta Love." I hammered the drums with a pair of Bonzo's spare sticks and wondered if anybody could actually hear me. We went on to Berlin, where barbed wire and The Wall were still in place. By now the tour was taking its toll with Page ill and Bonham a nervous wreck. Even so, the last show at the Deutschlandhalle was tremendously exciting and the whole band hit a peak. After the show I went with John to a Berlin cabaret full of people who could have been men, women, or both. It was hard to tell. "There's some weird-looking people about," he observed sagely. "There's nowhere for a decent bloke to have a pint of beer!"

That night my sleep at the Berlin Hilton was disturbed by hideous howls, which I feared might have been Bonzo wreaking havoc on the floor below. It turned out to be a tiger in the Berlin Zoo, conveniently placed next door, no doubt protesting about the noise from the dance band in the hotel ballroom. I found just five days on the road with Zeppelin thrilling and exhausting, and I'd played on only one number. The early '70s were a blur of events for most rock bands, but especially for Led Zeppelin.

CHAPTER V THAT HUGE DRUM SOUND

Bonham's trademark sound – two generous scoops of Neanderthal, with a dash of R&B – became as immediately recognizable as Plant's piercing wail and Page's power riffs. "Once it came to the point of working on numbers, John's input was so substantial," Page says. "He was constantly working on new things. For instance, when we were doing *Presence*, he had this fill that he wanted to fit into 'Achilles Last Stand.' He asked us to give him a second between takes, and he started working on it, and working on it. Finally he said, 'Let's go,' and he fit it in, and it was absolute magic.

"One of the numbers that we did, 'Four Sticks' from the fourth album, was extremely abstract. We tried to record it normally, so to speak, and it hadn't really happened. So we said, 'We'll do it another night.' And John came in the next day, and said, 'I've got an idea for this.' He picked up four sticks, and away he went. It was done in two takes because it was so exhausting. It couldn't be done in any more. That's the way he would attack something."

Led Zeppelin's albums sound lush, even though their studio techniques were surprisingly primitive by today's standards. At the time, the band would set up much as they would on stage, with acoustic baffles separating the instruments. John Paul Jones explains, "We could all walk around and stand around the drums. Nobody really cared how much leakage there was on anything, as long as it sounded good. That was part of the sound."

Engineer/producer Eddie Kramer's work with Led Zeppelin spanned five albums, starting with *Led Zeppelin II* and including *Houses Of The Holy*, *Physical Graffiti*, and *The Song Remains The Same*. Kramer took a simple approach to Bonham's drums. "The least amount of mikes you introduced to him, the better, I thought. You listen to the drums, listen to the way they sound in the room, and mike accordingly. And you don't need that many mikes – or at least we didn't in those days."

Kramer wanted quality, not quantity, and chose a selection of mikes to capture Bonham's explosive sound, including at various times Shure SM57s, Neumann U67s and U87s, AKG C12s, and ElectroVoice RE20s. Kramer developed an open drum sound while recording Bonham, forgoing compression and reverb to let the drums speak for themselves, even though you can't escape the natural tape compression from the massive signal slamming the tape.

One of Kramer's best memories is recording Bonzo at Stargroves, Mick Jagger's Eng-

lish estate, in 1972. "We cut a bunch of tracks for *Houses Of The Holy* and *Physical Graffiti* there," he remembers. "The room had a particularly nice ambience – and Bonham was very happy. He would come in and listen, and he'd go, 'All right, Eddie, got a good drum sound there.' He trusted me – he knew that I would give him something he would feel proud of. He was a very proud chap, you know. He really loved his work."

"Oh God, he was funny. He was a funny man with one heck of a sense of humor. There was always a lot of laughter in our home." –Deborah Bonham

"We did use different techniques when we used to record in large country houses in the later years," remembers Jones. "Sometimes the live room was a little too much to take drums and other instruments, in which case we would put John out in the hall or something like that. In fact, 'When The Levée Breaks' was recorded with John in a grand stairwell of this two-story building. There was a microphone about ten feet above him and one about one foot above him, no bass drum mike. I think 'Rock And Roll' was done the same way."

It's almost hard to believe, considering the gigantic drum sounds Bonham captured on tape throughout his career. However, all three of his former bandmates attest to his exacting ear for tuning, and to his then-unfashionable (now commonplace) tuning philosophies. Page says, "One of the most important things to remember about John is that he really knew how to tune his drums and get the most tone out of them. This is something that I appreciated, having worked in the studio where drummers

would sound on the playback like they were hitting a piece of cardboard or something."

"He liked to hear his drums sound like drums," Jones agrees, "rather than to dampen everything down, which was the common practice of those days. That was the sound he liked, and that was the sound that immediately worked. He couldn't see the point of buying a good quality drum kit, and then plastering it down so that it had no resonance and no sonic quality whatsoever. He always thought it sounded like you might as well play the cases."

At the dawn of the '70s, Bonham mothballed his natural maple drums in favor of a Ludwig Sparkle Green (catalog #2004), which he used on stage for a couple of years and in the studio as late as 1975. He was introduced to Paiste cymbals through Ludwig, which was the American distributor of the Swiss cymbal brand at the time.

Appice remembers, "In those days, when you got a Ludwig endorsement, the cymbal endorsement came with it."

Swiss drummer Fredy Studer worked in Paiste drummer services in 1970 and remembers when Bonham made a surprise visit to the company's factory in Nottwil, Switzerland. "That was when he signed the agreement as an endorsee," he says. "We went through the factory and checked some cymbals. It had to sound big to him. He was looking for a big sound that was pitched and would blend with his drum sound. The main thing was that they were cutting through, but not in a sharp way."

After the visit, Bonham walked away with a set of Paiste's recently developed Giant Beat cymbals. "The company tried out different alloys because the music changed," says Studer. "When rock music came out, Paiste developed Giant Beat because they were looking for a sound that could cut through the amplified guitars more."

In 1973, Ludwig shipped some Vistalite drums to Bonham as part of a push to pro-



mote its new product line. Acrylic drums were a fairly big gamble for Ludwig. “Fibes was making clear plastic drums,” Bill Ludwig III recalls. “We saw that and thought we should look into it. The supplier said he could get us other colors and we knew that would separate us in the market.”

Bonham, who was at the time enamored with the playing of Billy Cobham and his clear Fibes drums, saw the showy potential of the kit, which also had the benefit of being much louder than the wood-shell drums he had previously played. As a result, with the release of the movie *The Song Remains The Same*, thousands of would-be drummers saw Bonham’s amber-colored Vistalites (catalog #302) with Bonham’s three-ring insignia on the bass drumhead. This eventually became the archetypal Zeppelin drum set.

When Paiste introduced the 2002 line in 1973, Bonham shifted back and forth between the Giant Beats and the 2002s for a little while. As with his drums, he chose to play cymbals that were larger than conventional sizes, including 15” Sound Edge hi-hats, a 24” ride, and a 38” symphonic gong that was known to catch fire in later years. He also used an 18” or 20” medium ride as his right-side crash cymbal, and a 16” or sometimes 18” crash on his left.

Bonham played the Vistalites until around 1975, when he returned to wood-shell drums with a Ludwig Sparkle Silver kit (catalog #2003). He eventually replaced those with a Ludwig Stainless Steel kit (catalog #900) around 1977, which is the setup he played at the 1979 Knebworth Festival, on the Led Zeppelin DVD, and throughout the final European tour in 1980.

Over the years, Bonham tinkered with his setup. For his very last kit – the stainless steel model – a 15” x 12” tom replaced his 14” x 10” (although other tom sizes occasionally made their way into his setup over the years). The high tom on his first Ludwig kit was originally mounted on a snare stand, but he later mounted it on the bass drum using a Rogers Swiv-O-Matic tom mount (every subsequent kit featured a Ludwig mount). An historical footnote: for some unknown reason, he used both a snare stand and tom mount on the excellent Royal Albert Hall performance from the Led Zeppelin DVD. For a while he kept a pair of congas to his left, which were replaced in 1970 by a pair of Ludwig timpani. He was known to throw a Ching-Ring on his hi-hat, mount a cowbell on his bass drum, or switch up crash sizes, depending on his mood.

PHOTO BY NEAL PRESTON

JOHN BONHAM'S DRUM SETS 1969-'80

From Blonde To Steel

John Bonham played only a few drum sets during his celebrated tenure with Led Zeppelin. Since his death, these kits have taken on a mythical quality – and why not? To this very day, drummers ask recording engineers to help them achieve a “Bonham sound” in the studio. As a result, these kits have become some of the most sought-after prizes in the collectible vintage market. Here’s a quick glance at the makeup of each.



CIRCA 1969-'70

Ludwig Drums In Natural Maple (Blonde) Finish
 26" x 14" Bass Drum
 14" x 12" or 14" x 10" Tom either mounted on snare stand or Rogers Swiv-O-Matic tom mount (or both)
 16" x 16" Floor Tom
 18" x 16" Floor Tom
 14" x 6.5" Supraphonic 402 Alloy Snare Drum

Paiste Giant Beat Cymbals
 15" Sound Edge Hi-Hats
 16" Medium Crash on left
 18" or 20" Ride (on right, used as a crash)
 24" Ride mounted on bass drum cymbal arm
 38" Symphonic Gong

Bonham also mounted a cowbell on the bass drum hoop, used a Ludwig Speed King pedal, Ludwig heads, and in 1970, added two conga drums to the left of his hi-hat.

CIRCA 1975

Ludwig Drums In Sparkle Silver Finish
 26" x 14" Bass Drum
 15" x 12" Tom
 16" x 16" Floor Tom
 18" x 16" Floor Tom
 14" x 6.5" Supraphonic 402 Alloy Snare Drum

Paiste 2002 Cymbals
 15" Sound Edge Hi-Hats
 16" Medium Crash on left
 18" Ride on right (used as a crash)
 24" Ride mounted on bass drum cymbal arm
 38" Symphonic Gong

Bonham's timpani, pedals, and head choices remained identical to the '73 Vistalite kit.



CIRCA 1970-'73

Ludwig Drums In Sparkle Green Finish
 26" x 14" Bass Drum
 14" x 10" Tom
 16" x 16" Floor Tom
 18" x 16" Floor Tom
 14" x 6.5" Supraphonic 402 Alloy Snare Drum

Paiste Giant Beat Cymbals
 15" Sound Edge Hi-Hats
 16" Medium Crash on left
 18" Ride on right (used as a crash)
 24" Ride mounted on bass drum cymbal arm
 38" Symphonic Gong

At this stage Bonham also added a pair of Ludwig timpani and began combining Ludwig and Remo drumheads.

CIRCA 1977

Ludwig Drums In Stainless Steel Finish
 26" x 14" Bass Drum
 15" x 12" Tom
 16" x 16" Floor Tom
 18" x 16" Floor Tom
 14" x 6.5" Supraphonic 402 Alloy Snare Drum

Paiste 2002 Cymbals
 15" Sound Edge Hi-Hats
 16" Medium Crash on left
 18" Ride on right (used as a crash)
 24" Ride mounted on bass drum cymbal arm
 38" Symphonic Gong

Once again, Bonham kept the same timpani, pedals, and head choices that he used with the '73 Vistalite kit.



CIRCA 1973

Ludwig Amber Vistalite Drums
 26" x 14" Bass Drum
 14" x 10" Tom
 16" x 16" Floor Tom
 18" x 16" Floor Tom
 14" x 6.5" Supraphonic 402 Alloy Snare Drum

Paiste Giant Beat And 2002 Cymbals
 15" Sound Edge Hi-Hats
 16" Medium Crash on left
 18" Ride on right (used as a crash)
 24" Ride mounted on bass drum cymbal arm
 38" Symphonic Gong

Bonham continued to use the timpani and Speed King pedal, and began to experiment with a Ching-Ring on his hi-hat. He also further refined his head choices to Ludwig Clear Silver Dot or Remo Clear CS Batter heads.



CHAPTER VI JUST A FAMILY MAN

The Old Hyde farm – the family property that John Bonham purchased in 1972 and helped restore to a working cattle ranch with his father and younger brother, Michael – nestles quietly among the lush, rolling pastures of England’s unassuming Midlands. On a breezeless, damp evening the property seems frozen in time, motionless against its backdrop of green solitude. Then, cutting the silence like a chainsaw at dawn, the ferocious thunder of a careening Lamborghini echoes up the long drive, through the valleys beyond, turning the head of every heifer and steer as a rooster tail of leaves and gravel marks the wake of its explosive horsepower. And as the engine’s sprawling roar reaches the Old Hyde and its neighboring farms, one by one each member of this quiet country town knows one unmistakable thing: John Bonham is home.

But once this latest exotic sports car finds the garage and its ignition settles to a warm silence, John Bonham himself also warms quickly to his surprisingly quiet home life. Known first for his incredible, expansive talents on his instrument and second for his often-excessive “Bonzo” lifestyle, Bonham at home is a much different man than his fans witnessed every night on stage. John Paul Jones remembers Bonham being “a lot of laughs” on the road, but adds, “I don’t know if he was altogether happy touring all the time. He was a bit of a homebody.”

Jason Bonham recalls, “It was always very quiet when he’d be home during breaks. People generally think it was all private jets and wild parties and people staggering drunk all over the place, but it wasn’t like that. If anyone was at the house, it was usually family.”

“John was just a regular guy with an immense talent, an incredible God-given talent,” explains his younger sister Deborah, another established musician. “He bred his own Hereford cattle and he was just thrilled when one of his calves from his bull Bruno won best prize at a show. He

would be there with his farmer’s coat on, posing *not* to be a rock star. He liked his life like that. His home life must’ve been a million miles away from the lifestyle that surrounded Led Zeppelin on tour.”

“He was very supportive of all sorts of local events and charities,” Plant says. “You know, he comes from Worcestershire, the countryside. It created a different mentality, so that one’s reaction to one’s own things was a lot different than if you were living in New York, London, or San Francisco. You go back to a country town – which goes through its depressions, materially and stuff – riding high, landing in a starship at the local airport. It’s coming straight from America with Led Zeppelin painted on the side of your jet, and you have to be ready to handle people. John did his utmost to make people feel okay around him. Powerful guy.”

Bonham kept his work and home lives so detached that he never even set up a drum kit at the Old Hyde. Apparently it was a rare occasion when he played any drums at all during a break in Zeppelin’s schedule. “My drums were the only drums set up at the house,” says Jason. “Dad never played drums at home, really. If he did, it was because there was a party and he was drinking and people would coax him into playing mine. But that was rather rare.”

Deborah carries vivid memories of John’s extensive music collection and its impact on the household. “The house was always full of music: James Brown, The Everly Brothers, a lot of Motown. John’s record collection had *everything*. And it was all great music: Little Feat, The Police, Kansas, Hendrix.”

“What breaks in Led Zeppelin’s schedule meant to me,” recalls Jason, “was that Dad would be coming along to my motocross events that weekend, which was always exciting, and my earliest musical memory with my dad was driving with him to those

events. He had a terrific 8-track system in his car and he absolutely blared Fleetwood Mac’s *Rumours* ... the entire way ... on repeat ... for three hours ... each way. And to this day that album is so ingrained in my head.

“One time at the end of one of Zeppelin’s tours Jimmy Page called the house and asked for John. My mom was confused and said, ‘He’s not back from the tour yet. How are *you* home?’ And before Jimmy could answer, we all heard the roar of a sports car engine and sure enough, here comes Dad. He had gone straight from the airport to the dealership and picked up a Lamborghini.”

“Oh God, he was funny,” laughs Deborah. “He was a funny man with one heck of a sense of humor. There was always a lot of laughter in our home, a lot of silly joking.”

Inevitably, Bonzo/John/Brother/Dad would eventually have to pack his bags and leave his beloved family farm for another whirlwind adventure aboard the chaotic Zeppelin rocket ship. It’s said that he, understandably, despised leaving Old Hyde to go on tour, and many speculate that the pain of homesickness led him to empty so many bottles on so many nights.

“It’s well publicized that he found touring very difficult, but I think everybody does,” admits Deborah. “It’s a very lonely time going out on the road. And I’ve heard a lot of stories about John that simply aren’t true. One time it was reported that he was arrested for beating somebody up in an airport in America, but we were together in the South of France at the time. Some of the books on John are *complete* nonsense.”

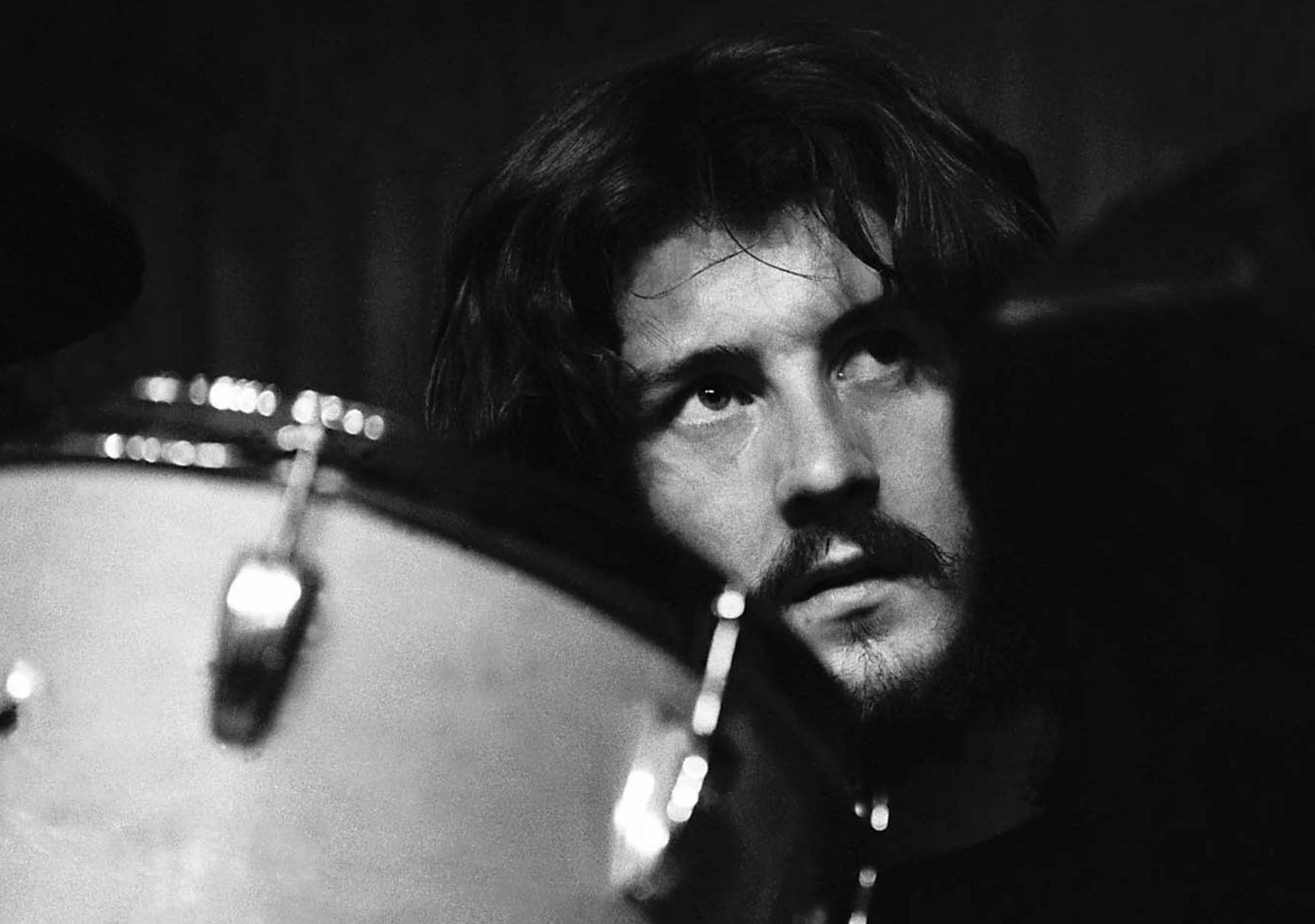
One aspect of John Bonham’s life that *has* been accurately documented is his supreme reign as the greatest rock drummer of all time. “I think it’s just now that I’m beginning to realize [how important and influential] John was as a drummer,” reflects Deborah. “When he was alive I thought my big brother was the best thing ever anyway. But now I listen to his music and hear things in his drumming that were so subtle but so fantastic. A lot of it was from those big band influences. Brilliant stuff.”

Similarly, John’s cultural significance arrived later in the eyes of his son Jason. “It didn’t occur to me how big Led Zeppelin was and how famous my dad was until after he passed and I came to America,” he remembers. “It’s different in America. Zeppelin was big in England, but not ‘household name’ big. In America, *everyone* knows Led Zeppelin.”

A family portrait (left to right): brother Michael, sister Deborah, father John II, and Bonzo share a drink



PHOTO BY DEBORAH BONHAM



CHAPTER VII OUR FINAL INTERVIEW

In October 1970 *Led Zeppelin III* was released and the band took time off the road to record the next album, the fabled untitled work that became known as *Four Symbols*. In March 1971, the band set off on the road again for an exciting trip to Ireland, where they played two concerts in Belfast and Dublin. Here Zeppelin unveiled a remarkable new song that seemed to epitomize all that was best about the band. “What was that new number called?” I asked Plant as we boarded a plane back to London.

“Did you like it?” he asked. “It’s called ‘Stairway To Heaven.’”

Away from Zeppelin, Bonham would return to normality, looking after his wife Pat, son Jason, and daughter Zoë. In fact, Zoë was born the night before I visited John at his country abode in June 1975, not long after the band had played a series of superb concerts at London’s Earls Court venue following the release of *Physical Graffiti*. I didn’t realize it at the time, but this would be our last interview before a series of catastrophic events conspired to alter the course of Zeppelin’s history.

I drove from London to Bonham’s

Worcestershire farmhouse, where – as someone who preferred bricklaying, decorating, and gardening to the itinerant life of a rock star – Bonham busied himself running the farm and breeding cattle in the peace of the countryside. “I was never into farming at all,” he would later tell me. “I wasn’t even looking for a farm, just a house with some land. But when I saw this place, something clicked, and I bought it in 1972.”

We sat in his lounge in front of a big jukebox loaded with his favorite Supertramp tracks, and Bonham confided that he was

suffering from panic attacks before every concert. “I’ve got worse. I have terribly bad nerves all the time. Once we start into ‘Rock And Roll,’ I’m fine. I just can’t stand sitting around, and I worry about playing badly. It’s worse at festivals. You might have to sit around for a whole day and you daren’t drink because you’ll get tired and blow the gig. So you sit drinking tea in a trailer with everybody saying, ‘Far out, man.’”

Bonham gave a great guffaw that could probably be heard halfway around the 100 acres of pasture that surrounded the house. We set off for a walk through the fields and ended up inside one of the cattle barns that had been converted into a garage. “This is the hot car shop,” he said with a chuckle, leading the way toward a trio of highly improbable vehicles. One was an elaborately painted taxicab, mounted on wheels a yard wide. This was, he explained, “A show car. I bought her in L.A. She can do 150 mph. And that one is a ’67 Corvette with a seven-liter engine. This one is a 1954 two-door Ford

with an eight-liter engine. You get guys coming past in a sports car who think it's an old banger, until I put my foot down. It's an amazing car – look at all the chrome inside. She'd only done 10,000 miles when I bought her."

Bonham once purchased a white Rolls Royce, but thugs in Birmingham attacked it when he drove the car to a wedding reception. "When I came out it looked like a bomb had hit it. All these skinheads had jumped on it. They kicked in the wind-screen, smashed everything. If it had been any other car, they would have left it alone."

Back in the house we talked about his early days and the start of his drumming career. "I never had many drum lessons. I just played the way I wanted and got blacklisted in Birmingham. 'You're too loud!' they used to say. 'There's no future in it.' But nowadays you can't play loud enough. I just wish there was a way of wiring a drum kit to get the natural sound through the P.A. I've tried

come one of the biggest things we've ever done. When Jimmy plays the first chord, it's instant bedlam, until Robert comes in with the first line. And we always play 'Whole Lotta Love' because people want to hear it, and I still get a great kick out of 'Dazed And Confused.' I always enjoy the number because we never play it the same.

"With the other stuff, we'll put one in or take one out. On the last night at Earls Court we played 'Heartbreaker,' 'Black Dog,' and a bit from 'Out On The Tiles.' With the songs from *Physical Graffiti* we've got such a wide range of material. It wasn't done on purpose. It's just that we went through a stage where we were very conscious of everything we played. We felt it had to be a certain kind of thing for Zeppelin.

"In the States they play 'Trampled Under Foot' on the radio all day. When we first ran through it, John Paul and Jimmy started off the riff, but then we thought it was a bit soulful for us. We changed it around a bit.

the tension rods. I try to play something different every night on the solo, but the basic plan is the same, from sticks to hands and then the timps, and the final buildup.

"It would be really boring to play straight kit all the time. On our last States tour I was really chuffed when I had some good reviews from people who don't even like drum solos. I usually play for 20 minutes, and the longest I've ever done was under 30. It's a long time, but when I'm playing it seems to fly by. Sometimes you come up against a brick wall and you think, 'How am I going to get out of this one?' Or sometimes you go into a fill and you know halfway through it's going to be disastrous. There have been times when I've blundered and got the dreaded look from the lads. But that's a good sign. It shows you're attempting something you've not tried before."

Was there any danger of Bonham losing power after so many years on the road? "I'm not losing strength. I'm less tired after a solo than I used to get in the early days. Of course we didn't have a break for the acoustic numbers then. But it was so cold at Earls Court, we had to have an electric fire in the dressing room. The unions wouldn't let us use blow heaters. I had a run-through on the Friday night before the first show, and I was playing in an overcoat."

After a trip to John's local, The Chequers, where most of the patrons seemed to think that he owned the pub, we returned to the farmhouse to sample brandy and the delights of a quad sound system that threatened to stampee the sleeping herd of cattle. "I wish there were some more live bands around here I could have a blow with," he sighed, tossing back a brandy. "There's nowhere for them to play, now it's all discos. God, I hate those places – all those flashing lights. It's all right if you're out for a night on the tiles. But I like to hear a good live group. You've got to remember – they're the backbone of the business."

As if to prove his faith in live music, John had set up nine-year-old Jason's junior drum kit in the lounge, where he pounded away to Gary Glitter hits. Then Jason clad in his Boy Scouts uniform suddenly appeared in the lounge, and glared at us somewhat suspiciously as he inspected his drum kit to see if we had been mucking about with it. "You can't teach him anything," warned John. "He's got a terrible temper."

"I never had many drum lessons. I just played the way I wanted and got blacklisted in Birmingham." –John Bonham

so many different ways, but when you're playing with a band like ours you get so many problems with sound. With Jimmy and John Paul on either side playing lead, they can leak into the drum mikes, and if you have too many monitors you start to get feedback. I never get it the way I want."

And yet Bonham's drum sound was fantastic at the Earls Court shows not long before our interview. "I enjoyed those concerts," he said. "I thought they were the best shows that we've ever put on in England. I always get tense before a show, and we were expecting trouble with such a huge audience. But everything went really well. Did we rehearse? Nah, just three days. Mind you, it was only a few weeks after we got back from the States. We just needed a bit of rust remover.

"We like to change the show each year. There's nothing worse than playing the old numbers over and over again. You've got to keep in some of the old songs, of course. I don't know what would happen if we didn't play 'Stairway To Heaven,' because it's be-

It's a great rhythm for a drummer. It's just the right pace and you can do a lot of fills. But compare that to 'Dazed And Confused.' The speed of the thing! While we're playing, I think 'Christ, if I drop one [beat] – that's it.' You've got to be fit to play 'Trampled Under Foot,' and if I don't feel too good, it's very hard. We keep tapes of every show, and it's very useful afterwards, especially for my drum solo, because then I can hear what works best."

Bonham's solo during the Earls Court concerts featured some sort of special effects during the timpani segment. I wondered if he had been using a synthesizer. "No, it was just phasing on the pedal timps. I was using them in '73. It's just a different sound. Not everybody likes or understands a drum solo, so I like to bring in effects and sounds to keep their interest.

"I've been doing the hand-drum solo for a long time – before I joined Zeppelin. I remember playing a solo on 'Caravan' when I was 16. Sometimes I take a chunk out of my knuckles on the hi-hat or catch my hand on

THE ZEPPELIN CORE CATALOG

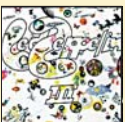
Rleased in January of 1969, *Led Zeppelin* was a lesson to the rock set in blending power with subtlety and sophistication. Even the hardest songs contained a level of emotional punch beyond anything that had come before. From the opening few bars of "Good Times Bad Times," the world was introduced to the fluttering agility of Bonham's now-infamous right foot, while the operatic drama of "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You" set up what would become a dominant Zeppelin aesthetic: delicate, bluesy acoustic segments – punctuated by Plant's hypnotic, tortured wailing – suddenly rocketed to dizzying heights by massive, electrified choruses. And while the '60s psychedelia-inspired "Dazed And Confused" seemed to nod in the direction of Cream and Hendrix, the straight-ahead, blistering energy of "Communication Breakdown" made it clear Zeppelin intended to take this style into a new and heavier direction.



Riding the crest of the wave the debut created, the band set off on extended American tours, recording a follow-up album along the way and releasing it as quickly as possible. The touring mind-set is obvious here, with songs like "Whole Lotta Love" and "Heartbreaker" serving as hard-charging examples of the live sound, complete with extended solos. The most significant of these is the four-and-a-half minute version of "Moby Dick," a simple blues/rock number that in time would evolve into a concert staple and a showcase for Bonham's 20- to 30-minute drum solos. On "Ramble On" Robert Plant's long-running preoccupation with themes of mysticism and the occult surfaces for the first time in lyrics that include *Lord Of The Rings* references. But with its clear tributes to American blues masters (including a couple of songs that drew lawsuits from Sonny Boy Williamson and Willie Dixon over artistic infringements), *Led Zeppelin II* remains the most strictly bluesy of all the band's offerings.



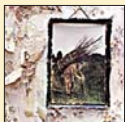
If *II* is the soundtrack of a band grinding out nonstop rock on a busy touring schedule, then *Led Zeppelin III* is the sound of a band in repose. Recorded at an estate cottage in Wales known as Bron-Yr-Aur, *III* saw the band balancing heavier tendencies with earthier, contemplative sounds pulled from the pastoral surroundings of Bron-Yr-Aur. Even the album artwork is more playful, more whimsical. Gone is the flaming Hindenburg motif that graced the other two albums. In its place, a colorful butterfly theme. The estate's namesake anthem, the Celtic and bluegrass-



inspired "Bron-Yr-Aur Stomp," is actually a remake of Bert Jansch's "The Waggoner's Lad." But this, as well as the mandolin-driven "Gallows Pole," showcases Bonham's ability to adapt his heavy-hitting technique to different styles. The dynamic snare rolls and bouncing, four-on-the-floor kick patterns in these two songs still come across as intensely powerful, while the drumming in the elegant "Tangerine," though commanding, melts into the melody until it's more felt than heard.

Despite leading off the fourth album with "Black Dog" and "Rock & Roll," which promise a return to *II*'s straightforward, blues-rock roots, *Led Zeppelin IV* was another attempt at image rejuvenation. Zeppelin released the album untitled and unattributed, reportedly in response to a media intent on labeling the band as "over-hyped," even though the Zeppelin sound by this time was so recognizable that the album's credits were never in question. Commonly referred to as *Four Symbols*, *Zoso*, or simply *Led Zeppelin IV*, the album sees the expansion of Robert Plant's dark mystical bent in the sweeping "Battle For Evermore," the strongest acoustic contribution yet with "Going To California," and the instant classic "Stairway To Heaven," which, despite its debut on this "stealth" album, becomes arguably the most recognizable song in the Zeppelin repertoire. *IV* has since become one of the top four best-selling albums in U.S. history.

Having pumped out four wildly successful albums in just under three years, the band took some time recording *Houses Of The Holy*,



finally releasing it in 1973. The album makes it clear Zeppelin was both maturing as a band, and reflecting elements of the changing musical landscape, with "D'Yer Mak'er" and "Over The Hills And Far Away" hinting at a funkier, more swing-oriented feel. The album was also referential for the band down the road. "The Song Remains The Same," would pop up three years later to become the title track on the psychedelic film of the same name, while "The Ocean" features a guitar riff in the middle that's a clear precursor to the weirder and more completely realized "Kashmir," which shows up on the next album.



After a two-year break – an eternity for fans – the band released a generous two-disc compilation in 1975 titled *Physical Graffiti*. In retrospect, the album stands as a perfect stylistic bridge at the center of the band's career, referencing earlier offerings, as on the acoustic folk ballad "Bron-Yr-Aur" and the aforementioned "Kashmir," while throwing out some evocative experimental pieces like "In The Light," with its long, haunting intro, and the epic "In My Time Of Dying" that require a certain amount of patience from the listener. But Zeppelin had earned listeners' trust, and with the nearly 90 minutes of music on *Physical Graffiti*, fans had enough to be thankful for.



1976's *Presence* sees the band returning to a straight-ahead rock sensibility, albeit with a looser, almost funkier feel, as exemplified by "Royal Orleans" and "Hots On For

Nowhere." A slew of interesting drum breaks in "Nobody's Fault But Mine" establishes Bonham's evolving musicianship, even as the rest of the bandmembers appear to be settling back into what they know best. All told, *Presence* lacks the creative focus of the other albums, and the result is that it's arguably the least memorable offering in the Zeppelin catalog. The only song that made a real impact from the standpoint of posterity is the epic opener, "Achilles Last Stand," a reference to the broken ankle Plant suffered in a car accident and nursed throughout the album's recording.



The final installment before Bonham's tragic death in September 1980 was 1979's *In Through The Out Door*. The album is not without its strong points, most notably the "Kashmir"-esque "All My Love," and the brilliantly funky "Fool In The Rain." But as much as any album could, it signaled the end of an era, both for Bonham and for the organic '70s rock sound that Zeppelin had pioneered. Ironically, this is the only album on which Bonham received no writing credits, as he was unhappy with the band's softer, more pop-oriented direction. Indeed, "In The Evening" feels like a precursor to the early '80s contributions of David Bowie or The Cars, while the jarring synthesizer experiment in "Carouselambra" suggests what might have been had Zeppelin been forced to weather the soul-sucking transition into the '80s that embarrassed so many other great bands.



By DAVE CONSTANTIN

CHAPTER VIII WHEN THE TIDE TURNS

A

fter the mid '70s, Led Zeppelin moved abroad to become tax exiles, followed by a series of mishaps that dogged the group and further undermined Bonham's confidence. His former boisterous good humor gave way to dark brooding and fits of anger. He became involved in an assault on an American security guard backstage at the Oakland Coliseum in California in July 1977. Grant, Richard Cole, and Bonham were arrested after beating the hapless guard, who had offended Grant. It led to fines and suspended sentences. Zeppelin never returned to America.

It was all turning sour. Following the death of Robert Plant's son in England, it seemed the group was close to breaking up. Bonham was left with more time on his hands and his behavior became unpredictable. Said his friend, drummer Bev Bevan of ELO: "He was an extrovert character, a friendly, huggable bloke. But unfortunately the drink just got too much for him. He overdid it and could become quite aggressive. He was similar to Keith Moon. They felt they had to live up to their reputations."

Robert Plant elaborates, "He was a big, warm softy who often got swamped by the absolute remoteness inside the goldfish bowl. Often that was very sad for all of us, but I think he felt it most of all, which kind of accented his vulnerability. He loathed touring in America. He loathed the whole rock and roll circus. The thing he loved most of all was just [to] get on those drums and show everybody how it should be done. Drumming is what he could do best of all, and that's what you hear on 'When The Levee Breaks,' 'Black

Dog,' and 'Rock And Roll,' where his fills are very sparing. The essence of Bonham is what he didn't play rather than what he did play - what he left out."

The last time I saw John drumming with Led Zeppelin was at the outdoor concerts at Knebworth, England, in 1979. John was well enough on the two U.K. shows, but showed signs of fatigue on a subsequent German tour. After three numbers in Nuremberg he was taken ill and appeared unwell for the rest of the tour.

Rehearsals for a North American tour took place at Jimmy Page's home in Windsor in September 1980. Bonham started drinking at lunchtime and carried on until midnight. On the way in a car with Robert Plant on the morning of the 24th, John

"I don't think any of us have ever really dealt with his loss"

— Deborah Bonham

suddenly said: "I've had it with playing drums. Everybody plays better than me. I'll tell you what, when we get to the rehearsal, you play the drums and I'll sing."

After falling asleep on a sofa, he was put to bed by an assistant and laid on pillows for support. The following morning John Paul Jones and road manager Benje LeFevre found him unconscious. After trying to wake him they realized he was dead, at the age of 32, from asphyxiation of vomit. John Bonham's funeral took place at Rushock Parish Church in Worcestershire on October 10, 1980, attended by crowds of mourners that included family, friends, and his bandmates. Tributes came from Paul McCartney, Phil Collins, Cozy Powell, and Carl Palmer.

"I do very much remember that day, and I don't think any of us have ever really dealt with his loss," says Deborah, who still easily becomes upset with the sad memory. "I think we just live with it. We were a close family and when something like that happens, you try to make some sense of it but you just can't. What else can you do other than just live with it? So that's what we do." □

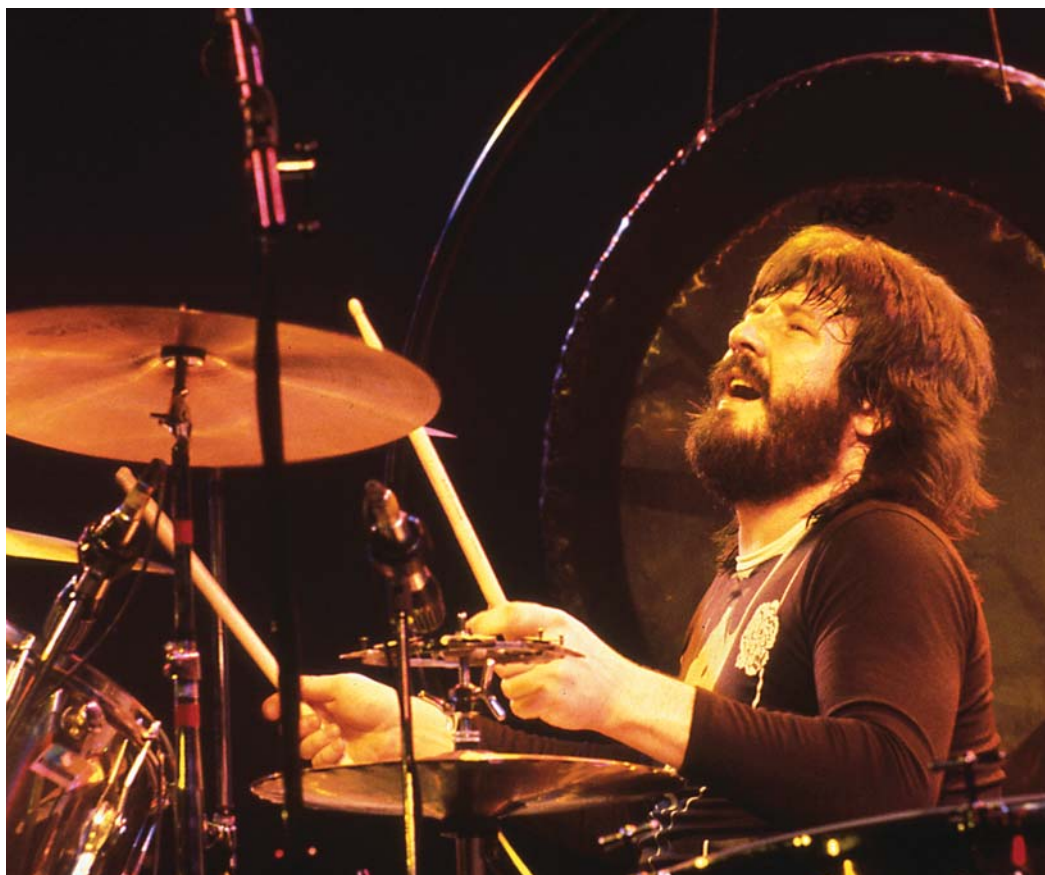


PHOTO BY NEAL PRESTON

BONHAMISMS

Hard rock drumming with blues roots, an undeniably deep pocket, and a gargantuan sound. These are all unmistakable John Bonham trademarks that, sadly, don't easily translate onto the printed page. Our advice is to spend time with the Led Zeppelin catalog to digest the subtleties of Bonham's feel and sound, but here we will study the nuts and bolts Bonham used to construct his masterpieces.

BASS DRUM DOUBLES. Bonham had a powerful right foot, which he used to not only drive his massive bass drums but also to play rapid multiple strokes. One of his most famous examples of this comes in "Good Times Bad Times," the first tune off Led Zeppelin's debut album. In measure 10 of the accompanying transcription you'll see quick bass drum double strokes played as sixteenth-note triplets. This subsequently became a staple for many rock drummers, often preceding a backbeat, which makes for a much grander statement. As you can see in the following transcriptions, Bonham often employed this device, including measure 5 of "Out On The Tiles," measures 4, 9, 24, and 28 in "Black Dog," and measure 10 in "The Ocean."

THE VALUE OF THREE. Slightly slower but no less impressive, Bonham's busy right foot was also known for laying down triple strokes. Check out measures 6–8 in "Good Times Bad Times." Here his triple strokes drive the groove forward under his cowbell ride pattern, which is another Bonham signature. Other three-stroke bass drum groupings can be found in measures 9, 11, and 13 of "Communication Breakdown."

SIXTEENTH KICKS. Bonham often used sixteenth-note double strokes on the bass drum as a seasoning. Notable examples appear throughout his driving beat on "Immigrant Song," as well as on the odd-metered funk of "The Crunge." A casual scan through all of these transcriptions will reveal plenty of other examples.

HAND PATTERNS. Bonham also had some favored moves around the top of the kit. Check out the last measure of this transcription of "Stairway To Heaven" – the "big fill" from the middle of the tune. Beat 4 contains a sextuplet comprised of two three-note phrases of right hand, left hand, right foot. While this three-note pattern is not a Bonham original, he certainly knew how to use it, and made it a powerful component of his soloing arsenal. However, the first three beats contain one of his signature licks: a phrase that consists of the first four notes repeated four times. The result is a polyrhythm of *four over three*, or four evenly spaced accents over the space of three beats. You'll also find a slight variation of the same four-note concept in measure 31 of "Black Dog."

SLOW BLUES. Bonham's ability to groove was indisputable, especially when he was playing a slow 12/8 blues. He had some favorite licks in that time signature, such as the sixteenth-note fill in measure three of "Dazed And Confused," which shows up often in his drumming vocabulary. Scan ahead to measures 10, 11, and 13 to find it again. It even crops up in measure 10 of "I Can't Quit You."

By **WALLY SCHNALLE**

Good Times Bad Times (At :00)

$\text{♩} = 91$

Dazed And Confused (At :32)

$\text{♩} = 55$

BONHAMISMS

Communication Breakdown (At :00)

♩ = 180

Musical notation for the drum part of "Communication Breakdown" (At :00). The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 180 BPM. The notation is written on a single staff with a double bar line on the left. It consists of three lines of music. The first line starts with a whole rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The second line starts with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The third line starts with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and accents.

I Can't Quit You (At :10)

♩ = 54

Musical notation for the drum part of "I Can't Quit You" (At :10). The piece is in 12/8 time with a tempo of 54 BPM. The notation is written on a single staff with a double bar line on the left. It consists of six lines of music. The first line starts with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The second line starts with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The third line starts with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The fourth line starts with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The fifth line starts with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The sixth line starts with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and accents, with many notes marked with an 'x' to indicate specific drum sounds.

Whole Lotta Love (At :31)

♩ = 88

Musical notation for the drum part of "Whole Lotta Love" (At :31). The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 88 BPM. The notation is written on a single staff with a double bar line on the left. It consists of three lines of music. The first line starts with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The second line starts with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The third line starts with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and accents, with many notes marked with an 'x' to indicate specific drum sounds.

Stairway To Heaven (At 5:56)

♩ = 104

Musical score for 'Stairway To Heaven' (At 5:56) in 4/4 time, tempo 104. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The second staff is marked with a '4' above it. The third staff is marked with a '7' above it. The fourth staff is marked with a '10' above it and includes accents (>) and a sixteenth-note figure (6) in the final measure.

Out On The Tiles (At :00)

♩ = 90

Musical score for 'Out On The Tiles' (At :00) in 4/4 time, tempo 90. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The second staff is marked with a '4' above it and includes a sixteenth-note figure (6) in the second measure. The third staff is marked with a '7' above it. The fourth staff is marked with a '9' above it and includes a 2/4 time signature change in the second measure.

Moby Dick (At :00)

♩ = 96

Musical score for 'Moby Dick' (At :00) in 4/4 time, tempo 96. The score consists of two staves of music. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The second staff is marked with a '3' above it and includes a 3/4 time signature change in the second measure.

Immigrant Song (At :00)

♩ = 110

Musical notation for the first four measures of 'Immigrant Song'. The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 110 beats per minute. The notation consists of two staves. The first staff contains measures 1 through 3, and the second staff contains measure 4. The music features a driving, repetitive eighth-note pattern with a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes.

The Crunge (At :00)

♩ = 225

Musical notation for the first twelve measures of 'The Crunge'. The piece is in 9/8 time with a tempo of 225 beats per minute. The notation consists of two staves. The first staff contains measures 1 through 7, and the second staff contains measures 8 through 12. The music is characterized by a very fast, repetitive eighth-note pattern.

The Ocean (At :00)

♩ = 88

Musical notation for the first eleven measures of 'The Ocean'. The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 88 beats per minute. The notation consists of two staves. The first staff contains measures 1 through 5, and the second staff contains measures 6 through 11. The music features a driving eighth-note pattern with some rests and a triplet in measure 9.

Black Dog (At:00)

♩ = 82

The musical score for 'Black Dog' is presented in two staves: guitar (top) and bass (bottom). The piece begins in 4/4 time and transitions through 5/4 and back to 4/4. The guitar part features a complex, syncopated rhythm with frequent use of the 'x' symbol to indicate muted notes. The bass part provides a steady, driving accompaniment. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 5, 9, 13, 17, 19, 21, 25, 29, and 33 marked at the beginning of their respective lines. A tempo marking of ♩ = 82 is provided at the start. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the 33rd measure.