Led Zeppelin

Group 1: Katie Daly, Gabe Mezzenga, Ryan Kerber, Victoria Zaiger, Maggie Nitti
The Journey - From the Yardbirds to Led Zeppelin

- Starting out, Relf and Samwell-Smith were in a band called the Metropolitan Blues Quartet.

- Chris Dreja, Jim McCarty, and Topham joined and they became the Yardbirds.

- The guys were from the southwestern suburbs of London.

- They were primarily influenced by the sounds of R&B.

- In October of 1963, after a few gigs at The Crawdaddy Club, the lead guitarist (Top Topham) was replaced by Eric Clapton.

- In February of 1964 the Yardbirds signed with EMI’s Columbia Label under their manager and first record producer- Giorgio Gomelsky.

- Their first album was recorded live.

- In May of 1965, Eric Clapton left the group but he recommended Jimmy Page as a replacement. Page was not yet ready to give up his studio work, and also had some health concerns. Page in turn suggested his friend Jeff Beck who would then replace Clapton.

In June of 1966, Samwell-Smith decided to leave the group to get involved with the producing aspect of music. Jimmy Page then stepped in to play bass until Dreja learned this part.

Beck was fired in October of 1966 for missing too many shows due to illness. So, Jimmy Page became the lead guitarist and the Yardbirds remained a quartet for the rest of their career.

All of the band members except for Jimmy Page wanted to leave and go in different directions. They did one last American tour in 1968. On July 7\textsuperscript{th}, 1968, the Yardbirds performed their final show at Luton College of Technology in England.
The New Yardbirds to Led Zeppelin

- When Page was left with the remains of the Yardbirds and no one to carry on the band with him, John Paul Jones said if the Yardbirds fell apart he would love to help raise a new band from the ashes. So When Dreja left, Jones was his replacement.

- To replace Relf as lead vocalist, Page intended to bring on Terry Reid. However, Reid had obligations with Procol Harum, and instead referred his buddy Robert Plant, who had been singing with a group called Hobbsweedly.

- For a drummer, Plant suggested a former drummer who used to play with him- John Bonham.

- This new group began playing gigs that had been previously booked for the “original” Yardbirds; and they called themselves the New Yardbirds.

- About a month after the culmination of this group- the New Yardbirds Keith Moon of The Who suggested a name that a fellow Who member had wanted for a back-up band. This name was Led Zeppelin.
And Thus a Legend is Born

- Once a band who had started strong with R&B influences, the Yardbirds became rock’s first true heavy metal band under the name Led Zeppelin.

- Led Zeppelin signed with Atlantic Records in the U.S. and began recording their debut album that was to be released in 1969.

- Led Zeppelin proved to be a huge success! With the release of their second album entitled “Zeppelin II” in October of 1969, they ended up passing the Rolling Stones’ piece “Let it Bleed” and took the number one spot away from the Beatles, two months after the album’s release.

- The band toured through the 1970’s, gaining popularity.
The Days of Led Zeppelin

- There were no new releases in 1974- but this was the year that they created their own record label called “Swan Song”.

- In 1975 Plant and his wife were in a bad car accident and it took a year for Plant to recuperate.

- Zeppelin’s 1977 tour had to be cancelled as tragedy struck yet again on the Plant family when their six-year-old son passed away from an infection.

- Finally, when the band was once again releasing a new album in 1979 and planning to go on tour, (they were getting ready to come to America) Bonham was found dead in his apartment after a drinking binge. The band knew that they could not go on with any great success without him and disbanded. They have since gotten together for a few events like Live Aid. They did go on to solo careers, while Plant and Page performed a duo international tour in 1995.
The Concept of AOR

- Album-oriented rock, or AOR, was an effort made by radio producers in the early 1970's to standardize radio playlists.

- AOR used the same rotation style of playing songs as many other radio stations did, but it focused on entire albums, not just the hit songs.

- Generally, the songs picked to play on the playlists were the songs preferred by the artists, not necessarily the listening audience.

- AOR was designed to promote sales of albums as opposed to singles.

- This was the preferred concept used by Led Zeppelin.
Zeppelin’s Early Music

- Many early songs were based on, or were covers of old blues classic songs.

- However, there were also some songs that had a distinctly heavy sound, similar to the heavy metal music of today.

- The first album, which was self-titled, was the most blues-based.

- The first album was also recorded and mixed in just 36 hours.

- This opened the doors for all types of musical experimentation.
Early Music Continued

- The second album, Led Zeppelin II, had a similar style to the first.
- This album reiterated ideas they had presented on the first album.
- It was mostly recorded while the band was on the road in North America.
- It is suggested that this album provided a "blueprint" of sorts for heavy metal bands of the future.
The third album, Led Zeppelin III, was written by Robert Plant and Jimmy Page at a remote cottage in Wales.

- The album has a very acoustic and folk-like sound, different from their first two.
- One can hear the folk and Celtic influences in the songs.
- Many listeners were surprised to hear the band moving away from the primarily electric compositions of the first two albums.
Diving In Head First

- The group soon released an untitled fourth album which appeared in 1971. This album was one of their most important pieces in defining their work.

- The album was a full hybrid between the folk and hard-rock directions they’d been pursuing.

- The most significant song, “Stairway to Heaven”, came from this album. It is an eight-minute long epic that still today is radio’s most requested song.
The Rockin’ Goes On

- Zeppelin came out with *Houses of the Holy*, their fifth album which had lots of artwork and the music was adventuresome.
- This album was much more dynamic and groove-oriented.
- Led also played numerous sold out concerts, tours, and became the face of the new high-energy rock and roll scene.
The Band on the Big Screen

- After producing multiple albums, Led Zeppelin produced a documentary and soundtrack that played to their powerful appeal at the height of their popularity.

- The documentary was named *The Song Remains the Same*

- After a number of different tragedies, the group and its music saw a decline.
The Decline of a Legend

- Three years passed between the release of *Presence* (1976) and their final studio album, *In Through the Out Door* (1979).

- After the death of drummer John Bonham the group disbanded, unable to continue without him.

- Some members continued on with solo careers and others to different bands.

- Led Zeppelin’s sales were second only to *The Beatles*, and *Led Zeppelin IV* was the fourth best selling album.

Zeppelin was a leading group in the 1970’s in the style of Heavy Metal, along with groups such as Black Sabbath and Deep Purple.

The 1970’s was a time of great variation in different sounds, rock styles, experimentations, and groups gaining popularity throughout the decade.

Other groups that were popular at the time consisted of Jimi Hendrix, The Who, Eric Clapton, The Jackson 5, and James Brown.

Musical Influences

- One of the Groups that had an influence on Zeppelin was the Yardbirds, mainly because Jimmy Page was a member of that band before Zeppelin.

- Another major influence was Robert Johnson, who was considered to be the founder of the blues, and since Rock and Roll is a heavily R&B based genre, he was inevitably an influence the group.

- Each member of Led Zeppelin brought their own influences and preferred style of music, which led to a very unique sound.

Robert Johnson

http://www.guitarnotes.com/rmmga/legends/robert_johnson/robert_johnson.html
Social Events of Zeppelin’s Time

- One of the major social events of the 1970s was the music festival at Woodstock, even though Zeppelin did not perform there.

- Artists who did perform there were those such as The Who, Jimi Hendrix, The Grateful Dead, and many other who were popular during the 70’s along with Zeppelin.

- The 70’s was also a time of great tragedy; from the Beatles breaking up to the death of Elvis Presley, who were both leading groups in the creation of the rock and roll genre.

One of the leading political events was the continuation of the Vietnam War, even after so many protests.

Another event was the negotiations between the U.S and the Soviet Union that were happening to lower nuclear arms.

Richard Nixon also resigned as president and Gerald Ford took over the presidency.

Vietnam War Protest

A Different Unrest..The British Invasion

- Jimmy Page was right at the heart of the British Invasion.
- After his success with the Yardbirds, he continued to influence fans and artists alike.
- When Page formed Led Zeppelin, it gave other British artists and artists from all over the initiative to perform overseas.
- Along with the Beatles, Led Zeppelin played a key role in the British Invasion.
An International Influence

- Another band that is considered one of the best Rock bands of all time is AC/DC.

- AC/DC is from Australia, and when they saw what Led Zeppelin did in the British Invasion they also desperately wanted to become international superstars.

- AC/DC was influenced by the primal wailing, heavy riffs, and long hair that Led Zeppelin showed the world.

- The band believes that Led Zeppelin taught them to take ordinary rock music and kick it up a notch.
Most Influential of All Time?

- Many make the argument that Led Zeppelin could very well be the most influential band of all time.

- Two of the main songwriters for Guns N' Roses were Axl Rose and Izzy Stradlin, both of whom said drew influence from Led Zeppelin.

- Axl Rose said that he was denied by bands when trying to become a lead singer for trying too hard to sound like Robert Plant.

- Bands like the Black Crowes also discussed being influenced greatly by Led Zeppelin.
Still Influencing Today

- Led Zeppelin's songs were so influential due to the fact that they were a blend of so many different styles.

- They incorporated blues, pop, folk, reggae, and more styles into their music.

- They have influenced artists of today like Sheryl Crow, Creed, and Bon Jovi.

- Led Zeppelin's many incorporated styles led them to influencing pop and R&B artists as well.

- This band has been influential for many years, and will continue to be in the years to come.

Bon Jovi
“Stairway To Heaven” and Its Influences

- In the beginning of the song, the lack of drums used was similar to a C&W song. One can see the influences of both C&W and pop music in the rhythm of the song, due to its obvious simplicity.

- Jimmy Page's guitar solo in the middle of the song shows the R&B influences in the song. Most of the solo was not written following a set pattern; rather it was based on Page's own improvisation, which many early R&B artists did as well.

- The tempo in the beginning of the song reflects an early pop composition, because it is set at a very slow speed. The contours of the melody in the beginning of the song are also similar to a pop song, because the notes either rise or descend gradually from note to note.

- The lyrics are probably most similar to an R&B song, because they are not bouncy and cute or strictly about love like pop and C&W mainly were at that time.
The Stairway To Heaven
Instrumentation in “Stairway To Heaven”

- The song "Stairway to Heaven", because of its length, provides for a lot of great instrumentation.

- The song begins with a finger-picked guitar accompanied by wooden-based recorders.

- After the folk sounding beginning section, the drums come in and join the slow electric middle section.

- There is also an electric piano used in the middle portion.

- After the slow electric section comes Jimmy Page's long and rocking electric guitar solo.

- The vocals come back in at the end of the solo, along with everything else, to provide for a great hard rock finish.

- This song has a very cool instrument scheme divided into different parts, giving the listener a taste of everything.
Lyrics of “Stairway to Heaven”

- One of the most obvious influences on this song’s lyrics involves that of the Folk Music trend.

- This song brings into light the idea of writing lyrics that have a serious nature, don’t deal with simple boy-girl crushes and love, and instead contain more about national issues.

- The lyrics of this song seem to deal with the idea of spirituality and the afterlife. Especially the idea that the singer says that there are two paths you can go on, but the path can be changed as time goes on. Then there is also the main character of the song, the lady who is buying the stairway. This seems to have something to do with the idea of her thinking she can buy her way into heaven, similar to that of the Catholic Indulgences, that by buying indulgences one can get into heaven faster.
Musical Texture of “Stairway To Heaven”

- This nearly 8 minute, yet beautifully constructed song is all over the place in terms of texture.

- We have divided the song into eight parts (each a minute long except the last one is just under that).

- We have described the texture and explained why it is that texture (side note- when referring to the guitar it is assumed it is the electric guitar).
Texture – Part One

- This section starts off as a monophonic texture with just the guitar playing softly.

- About 20 seconds into the song a flute joins in with a different musical line. The guitar line and the flute line alternate as being the main melody and accompaniment for each other, creating a melody- and- accompaniment homophonic texture.
Texture – Part Two

- Then we hear the vocal line enter at nearly a minute into the song. The texture remains homophonic melody- and- accompaniment. Then ten seconds into this part the flute chimes in and out as a line of equal importance to the lead vocals, this time creating a polyphonic texture alternating with a homophonic texture, and the guitar remains accompaniment.
Texture – Part Three

- This entire section remains homophonic melody-and-accompaniment, but the intricacy lies in the fact that the musical line of importance passes off from one to another.

- First we have the flute and guitar, with guitar as accompaniment, then the voice turns into accompaniment for the guitar and the flute is not there anymore.

- Following this the vocals take back the importance and the guitar switches to accompaniment again.
This section is again homophonic melody- and-accompaniment. In the first half of this minute long section, the guitar carries the importance. In the second half the vocals carry the importance.

The first 15 seconds of this song, the guitar plays a monophonic texture and the voice joins in as accompaniment, again creating that texture of homophonic melody- and-accompaniment. Then a new instrument is introduced to the song: the drums. The song remains homophonic as the vocals take lead of importance and the drums and guitar act as accompaniment.

The last 10-15 seconds of this section is still homophonic but the guitar takes the important line and the drums and the vocals act as accompaniment.
Texture – Part 6

• The first part of this section is again the homophonic texture, alternating the drums, guitar, and vocals for importance. At times, this competition between the three may bump the texture to polyphonic. Most of the remainder of the section is a monophonic guitar solo.

• The last few seconds adds the drums as accompaniment, creating the homophonic texture yet again.
Texture – Parts 7 and 8

- This section primarily consists of a guitar solo with drums as accompaniment so we have a homophonic texture. The last ten seconds brings back in the lead role of the vocals, maintaining a homophonic texture.

- Part eight: The intensity of all three parts, the vocals, drums, and guitar, suggests a polyphonic texture that dwindles down to a monophonic texture with the vocals, and that is how the song ends.
What Makes This Song Special

- The song *Stairway to Heaven* is different from a lot of the popular songs of the time due mainly to its length, ending after about eight minutes.

- Although there were improvisations by other artists and instrumental versions that lasted sometimes twenty minutes at a time, *Stairway to Heaven* was and is one of the most popular songs and one of the most requested, even though it was so long.

- The acoustic intro of this song was actually borrowed from the song “Taurus” by the band Spirit, who toured with Led Zeppelin when they first played in the US.

- [http://m.songfacts.com/detail.php?id=328](http://m.songfacts.com/detail.php?id=328)
Works Cited


