

Something for the Weekend

NEW MUSIC
By JIM GELLATLY

DIVIDES
WHO: Tasha Cowie (vocals), Colin Horn (guitar), David Lennon (guitar), Andy Cook (bass), Dave Maxwell (drums)
WHERE: Glasgow
FOR FANS OF: Twin Atlantic, Paramore, Biffy Clyro
JIM SAYS: Scotland has a rich heritage of rock music, and a thriving underground scene, so there are bands for all tastes out there.
Some of the more leftfield acts will never be household names, but I don't suppose that is their intention. Divides though are born to play the major stages. As soon as I heard the debut single, I knew it was special.
Not All Those Who Wander Are Lost is a hook-laden pop rock masterpiece.
Take away the heavy guitars and it wouldn't sound out of place on a Katy Perry album. It's a perfect introduction to a band that only played their first gig in April.
Colin said: "We decided that before we played any shows it'd be best if we got into the studio, then get a video out once we had a song that was 100 per cent right. We thought this would give more of a chance for people to hear us rather than coming along to a gig not knowing what to expect."
It's a strategy that's paid off, with Divides getting attention some bands struggle for years to achieve. They've already been picked up by



Radio 1, and been a constant on my own radio playlists.
Colin added: "We think the route we have gone down has helped a lot. With so many radio stations such as XFM and online blogs supporting smaller bands and independent music, it's knowing what your best options are before throwing your music out there."
"We were in bands before where it was burning our own CDs and printing covers. With online streaming and downloads it's completely changed."
One spanner in the works is that Andy leaves for the United States tomorrow, but they have that covered.
Andy explained "I'm away to Michigan for three months, teaching guitar at summer camp. I'm happy for the guys to get a session player in while I'm away, but I've got a contract that says I'm guaranteed to get back in as the bassist when I get back."
"The guy we have lined up is a great bassist and friend, so the band will do great."
"We've got a massive UK tour in September, so I can jump back in and hit the road."
Colin joked: "We're just hoping he gets us booked on next year's US Vans Warped Tour when over in America!"
MORE: facebook.com/dividesofficial
● Jim presents Drivetime on XFM Scotland, Monday to Friday 4-7pm. See xfm.co.uk and jimgellatly.com

Sun Listen to the band at: thescottishsun.co.uk

Expanded LED ZEPPELIN III editions

By SIMON COSYNS

WILL he? Won't he? These are questions that follow Robert Plant wherever he goes.

Of course I'm talking about the mercurial singer's desire to take part in a Led Zeppelin reunion... or lack of it.

I believe he's given me an answer as definitive as he can and it won't be any time soon.

He says: "I can't really go too far into it without creating... (eyes roll heavenwards, leaving a word like 'mischief' unsaid), but I do say, 'Have we got any new material?'"

"If anyone (from Led Zeppelin) wanted to move on with me, I would hear from them."

The clue here is "move on". When it comes to music, Plant's a restless soul who can't abide the thought of his beloved Led Zep simply trading in past glories like so many revival acts.

"What's the point?" argues the successful solo artist. "I'm making f***ing great records with my guys."

"I'm singing in Fulani, West African s***, and I've got Welsh poets – these beautiful women singing about Glyndwr and bringing back bodies of the dead shot in battle."

Plant, 65, has just put the finishing touches to his tenth solo album, due out in September. As one of the first to hear it, I can report that it's varied and daring with some songs even packing powerful Led Zep-strength riffs.

But he sees the work of the band he formed with Jimmy Page, John Bonham and John Paul Jones in 1968 as a precious moment in time, something "quite wonderful, an exercise in imagination and vigour, the work of young men."

'Jimmy was boss in the beginning'

"We were very lucky. For a period of time, we were made for each other."

"Jimmy was obviously the boss in the beginning. He and Jonsen bankrolled the whole thing when we started playing."

"They were the luminaries as far as it was concerned but Bonzo (drummer John Bonham) and I carried a lot of excitement and raw crap from the Midlands which stayed with it all the way through."

"We had a style in the middle of all our madness that was definitely Zeppelin. You feel it and hear it. Self-expression was never prevented. There was always a free passage to take an idea to the extreme."

My illuminating chat with Plant forms the second part of SFTW's Zep spectacular to celebrate the expanded reissues of the first three albums.

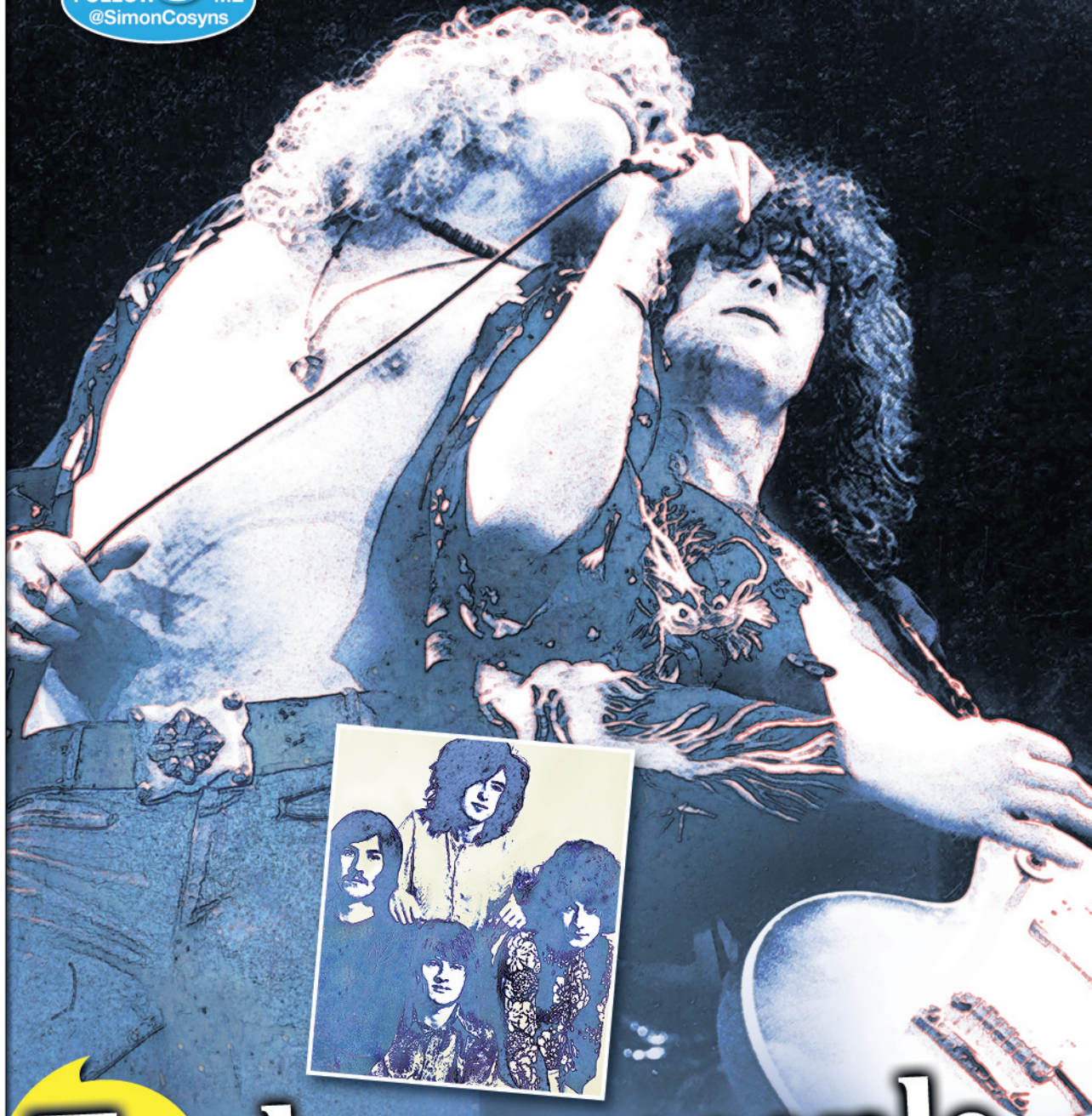
I talked to Page in a discreet boutique hotel near London's Royal Albert Hall and less than two hours later, I found myself in the upstairs room of a Primrose Hill pub (scrubbed pine tables) face-to-face with Plant.

"You've done Jim Bob? Laugh a minute?" he quips about his old band mate. Their personalities are **SO** different yet so crucial to that elusive chemistry.

Even the initial playback of eight unheard Zep recordings to assembled European music media drew very different responses from the pair.

It was attended with due diligence by Page, who answered all sorts of questions but averted Wolves fan Plant confessions: "I couldn't make it because we had Colchester at home!"

"I even used to skive off Zep-



Early on, people said I should try a career in accountancy!



EXCLUSIVE ROBERT PLANT INTERVIEW



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pelin rehearsals to see them. I really need diversions. I need to go into someone else's glory."

Our focus, however, centres on the power and the glory of a band that conquered the world.

I seek Plant's thoughts on something I'd already asked Page. Did the newly released tracks from the vaults peel away a layer of Led Zep mystique?

"No, I think they add to it," he replies. "Because it reminds me of the fact that I f***ed up a lot. I listen to this thing and go, 'Good job we didn't use that take'."

"For me this project is all about the vinyl. Do you really want to hear a compact disc playing Immigrant Song when you can hear it on vinyl? I'm really pleased that there are vinyl releases of these albums."

On stage, Page was all about guitar heroics, both searing and delicate, and Plant was marked out for carrying off his lead singer role with irresistible swagger.

The golden mane, the bare chest, the tight jeans, the big buckle, the graceful movement, the voice that could raise the dead. They were all part of package.

So how did Plant feel in 1968 as a 20-year-old member of the newly-formed Led Zeppelin?

"From my angle, I was really aware that my dream had arrived," he says. "I'd been in lots of bands and people had suggested that a career in accountancy wasn't over. 'You can still go back and have another pop at it,' they said."

"So when this chemical and anatomical combination got together, it was like, 'Wow!' This is what it was all coming to."

Plant smiles at his contribution to the Paris show from autumn 1969 which has surfaced on the companion disc to the debut Led Zeppelin album.

"I over-sing everywhere on the live thing," he admits. "I'm gibbering like an ape and there's nothing wrong with a good ape. I never thought I'd ever hear it again. So exciting for me."

"The fluency between the three other guys is something I recognise and it's so endearing. Obviously I've got hundreds of bootlegs and I hear the way it goes because it always changed. I suppose that initial Olympia recording was really at the very beginning of all the expressive moves that were coming."

Plant believes his white-knuckle delivery was partly inspired by Steve Marriott, the raw, soulful singer with the Small Faces and, later, Humble Pie.

But he adds: "It also came from Howlin' Wolf, from Tarmac lane in the Black Country. It came from every misty mountain and every silly castle on the Welsh borders."

"It came from me going, 'I really love what I do and I'm going to over-cook it baby, come on!'"

"I'd play some crazy Little Johnny Taylor track where he's 'baby, babying' like mad. There were so many 'baby, babies' everywhere. There's not one 'baby baby' on my new album. We cut them out."

Though superstardom beckoned, the early Led Zep days still held a degree of normality for Plant. "I used to go home to Maureen. We were married then and we're really good mates now."

"Her family used to sit round the record player and go, 'F***ing hell! That's you!' And I'd go, 'Yeah, I'll make the tea'. It was brilliant to come back home with Bonzo living nearby. We used to have so much fun going."

The thing I always come back to with Led Zeppelin, something that all four members were great at, was their willingness to embrace different styles – blues, rock, soul, folk – yet come up with a unique sound of their own.

Like Page, Plant can't praise the contribution of his old mucker, the late John Bonham, high enough: "He listened to really great black drummers. Whereas a lot of drummers at the time were right on top of the beat, Bonzo was always a little behind it. It was a very sexy way of playing."

"And he used to shout in the middle of playing, 'Cannons!' And I'd shout back, 'F*** off!' And he would say, 'Well you know you're not a very good singer but just go out and look good.'"

Listen to the newly heard early version of Whole Lotta Love and you'll get a fascinating insight of Plant's development into a very, very good singer.

But he says: "I think we got the right take vocally. It's of the time and I was 21 years old. With today's records, people say, 'He's only 27.' I had two kids and five albums done by then."

Plant believes Whole Lotta Love, with its incendiary riff and weird middle section, was crucial to Led Zeppelin's development.

"The song's rhythm was the vehicle that allowed this opening up, its flourishing. Ramble On, a combination of styles from acoustic to electric, also had great importance, the beginning of something that would become Stairway To Heaven or The Rain Song."

Surprising at the time maybe, but accepted as a key component of Led Zeppelin, was the large amount of acoustic-based material on Led Zeppelin III.

Plant says: "I don't know about the other two but Jimmy and I were into Bert Jansch, Davey Graham, The Incredible String Band and early Fairport Convention stuff when it was quite trippy."

The band's willingness to incorporate various influences didn't go down so well on the other side of the Atlantic, however.

"A lot of the American journalists wanted us out of the way," he recalls. "We did plagiarise every music form we could get near. We were carrion-feeding gloriously and joyously and using our own creative power as well."

I believe he makes a very fair point. Where would The Beatles and Stones have been when they started without rock 'n' roll or Bob Dylan without Woody Guthrie or even the Sex Pistols without the New York Dolls?

Ultimately, Led Zeppelin should be remembered as one of Britain's most brilliant and thrilling musical exports, creators of a sound distinctively and emphatically theirs.

"I'll leave the final word to the forward-thinking Robert Plant, a man also very much aware of his past and the legacy of the inimitable Zep."

"I hate the term 'chemistry' but we had it. We were a fantastic and fortuitous accident."



Edited by NATASHA HARDING

BOOKS

Nesbo shows a Hole new side



LIKE Jekyll and Hyde, there are two very different sides to best-selling author Jo Nesbo. The 54-year-old Norwegian is best known for his violent Harry Hole crime thrillers.

But he has also created the fun, crazy, lighthearted Doctor Proctor's Fart Powder series, aimed at seven-year-olds. With the fourth in the kids' series, Doctor Proctor's Fart Powder: The End Of The World. Maybe, out now, Jo tells SFTW about his schizophrenic writing styles.

Tell us about Doctor Proctor.
He is an eccentric scientist who dreams of becoming a famous inventor. His young friends, Nilly and Lisa, help him on various crazy adventures.

What made you decide to write for children?

My daughter Selma was constantly asking me to tell her stories.

So one summer I told her one about a crazy professor and his two friends. I thought

it was a good idea and there was a book there, so that's where it all started.

These books are very different to your usual style. Did you enjoy the different writing process?

Yes, definitely. In many ways it is more enjoyable to write a children's book than the Harry Hole series.

The Harry Hole series is a dark place to be while Doctor Proctor is definitely more fun.

Do you feel under pressure to match your previous success?

No. I feel less pressure as I'm already making a living writing books. You feel the pressure when you know a series needs to do well commercially because you are trying to make it as a writer.

You've done lots of different jobs – journalist, stockbroker, musician. What's your favourite?

Being a writer is my favourite. I'm also in a band (Di Derre) so once I've finished writing for the day I enjoy playing a gig with friends.

So what's next?
I'm rewriting a story I did under the pen-name Tom Johansen. It's a series of three – the first is Blood On Snow. **NATASHA HARDING**

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