

Robert Plant, 1985 and inset, in Led Zeppelin days.

ROBERT PLANT BRANCHING OUT

For someone who never did interviews when Led Zeppelin strode Colossus-like over 70s hard rock, Robert Plant is certainly proving himself a master of the medium in the 80s.

On the eve of his current world tour, Plant is once more beating his bronzed breast, this time in support of his third solo album, *Shaken 'n' Stirred*. He takes on his interrogators with graceful ease, answering all queries eloquently and wittily. A journalist's dream in fact, but, like any sweet dream, a touch too good to be true.

When his record company publicist later passes on Plant's compliments on the questioning, this pen-pusher can't fight the nagging feeling that he probably says that about everyone.

Robert Plant can laugh at his image as, in his own words, "The King Of Cock-Rock," but he then proceeds to turn on his patented charm for anything in a skirt, while dropping broad hints as to his continued virility.

We're not primarily here, however, to discuss whether the Incredible Hunk can still get it up after 20 years of life in the fast lane. We're here to talk about life after Led Zeppelin, and right now the gods are smiling on the oft ill-fated Mr Plant. Conceived as an enjoyable diversion, his Honeydrippers project became a chart-topping, million dollar baby, one guaranteeing both *Shaken 'n' Stirred* and his new tour substantial support.

The new LP is undeniably a brave try at continuing the experimental feel of the earlier *Principle of Moments* and *Pictures At Eleven*, but whether it is the convincingly innovative merger of rock roots and 80s technology the lion-maned one believes is a matter of conjecture.

Enough of the editorialising. Welcome to the Plant Meets the Press Performance:



On doing interviews:

"All those years ago I never said a word to anybody. Now it is a part-and-parcel of things. I talk now because I'm proud of what I do. My music isn't as immediately accesible as most pop/AOR stuff, so it takes more pushing. Back in the 70s, with Led Zeppelin, I wasn't media conscious; now it's a totally different ball game."

On the Zeppelin mystique:

"Back then, the less said to the press the more magic there was. In consequence, a kind of legend was born, and it grew without my having to take part in the peripheral bits and pieces. That was okay then, but now it is time people realised I don't stand on top of a mountain with sparks coming out of my hands!"

"In the olden days, we were all made heroes, no harm could befall us. It was such patronising journalism. If you believed what you read, the mere fact that I sang in front of three guys who were very good musicians made me into some kind of demi-god. You had to laugh at it, now I grimace at it!"

On being called a dinosaur:

"Yes, there is that kind of attitude from some of the British music press that says if you've been around for more than four years with any kind of success, you're obviously far too old to be doing this. So they'll herald new heroes, then there'll be a change of editor or policy and the annihilation process begins anew.

"It's just a game. They want to appeal to the student and the angry young man. What they can't deny is that the music is good. They can knock me for being 36 and having the cheek to sing, but what is that all about? Howlin' Wolf was doing it until three years ago. It's just a British fixation. They'll all end up Yuppies in the end! My music is far too good to be back in fashion for those louts!"

On diversity — from the Honeydrippers to solo work:

"I think it is all natural. The one thing that is a definite move on my part is to avoid my past in every shape and form every time I can. My capabilities vocally cannot change that much, but if I present it in different circumstances each time, it is the most stimulating way for me. I've reached a point where, after making records for 19 years, I now do it because I like to — no other reason."

On the Honeydrippers:

"It was like a hobby, a weekend thing, to play with very accomplished musicians who have got to grips with that form of music. For it to become successful across the board was something I hadn't bargained for, but it was a pleasant, flattering experience.

"I wanted 'Good Rockin' At Midnight' to be heard on the radio alongside Journey and all that

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