

## Windborne's "Music of Led Zeppelin" to visit Blossom Festival on August 20

by Mike Telin



When guitarist Jimmy Page, singer Robert Plant, bassist and keyboardist John Paul Jones, and drummer John Bonham formed the band Led Zeppelin in 1968, little did they know that their guitar-driven sound and music rooted in blues, psychedelia, and folk music would lead them to become one of the most successful rock groups in history.

On Saturday, August 20 at 8:00 pm at Blossom Music Center, conductor and arranger Brent Havens will lead the Blossom Festival Orchestra in Windborne Productions' "Music of Led Zeppelin."

The evening will feature classic Zeppelin tunes, including *Good Times Bad Times*, *Black Dog*, *All My Love*, *Kashmir*, and of course, *Stairway to Heaven*.

"Some people think it's a muzak version of me singing Led Zeppelin songs," vocalist Randy Jackson said during a recent telephone conversation. "But no, it's the real thing. There'll be a great band with bassist Dan Clemens, drummer Powell Randolph, guitarist George Cinton, and electric violinist Renee Izzi. When you add an awesome light show and the orchestra, anybody who's a Zeppelin fan will not go away disappointed."

Since the project's first performance with the Virginia Symphony in 1996, Windborne's very first classic rock symphony has toured regularly across North America. Jackson, who has been part of the show from the beginning, said that adding a full orchestra to Led Zeppelin's music was a no-brainer. "Jimmy Page and Robert Plant did that during their own tours back in the 1990s. A lot of Led Zeppelin's music is highly orchestrated already, and with its lush harmonies and a lot of dynamics, it lends itself to being performed with symphony orchestra. I think that's a big reason their music is so successful."

What is it about the music of Zeppelin that has led to its longevity? “It’s a combination of things,” Jackson said. “First of all it was the band members themselves — they could take a song and make it their own, no matter who wrote it. Each of them had their own individuality with their instrument, whether it was Robert Plant with his voice or John Bonham with his drums.”

Jackson also noted that the band was leading the way when it came to recordings. “They wrote some incredibly exciting music. They were great arrangers, and because the recordings were done so well, you can listen to them and almost tell the year they came out because of the production values. Zeppelin was way ahead on the production side, and I think their longevity owes itself a lot to that.”

After twenty years of touring with the show, Jackson said that he still gets excited performing Zeppelin’s iconic songs. “I think I was a junior in high school when *Stairway to Heaven* came out. Like anybody, the music you grew up with is a big part of your life, and Zeppelin is still one of my favorites.”

Growing up in New Orleans, rock music was a part of Jackson’s life from an early age. “My parents took me to see The Beatles when I was nine years old, and that had a big influence on me,” he recalled. In 1975, just after finishing high school, Jackson became one of the founding members of the band Zebra. The group’s self-titled recording became the fastest-selling debut album in the history of Atlantic Records on its way to going Gold. “For 40 years our fans have stuck with us. They love our music so we’re really fortunate in that respect. And we’ve never had a personnel change.”

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