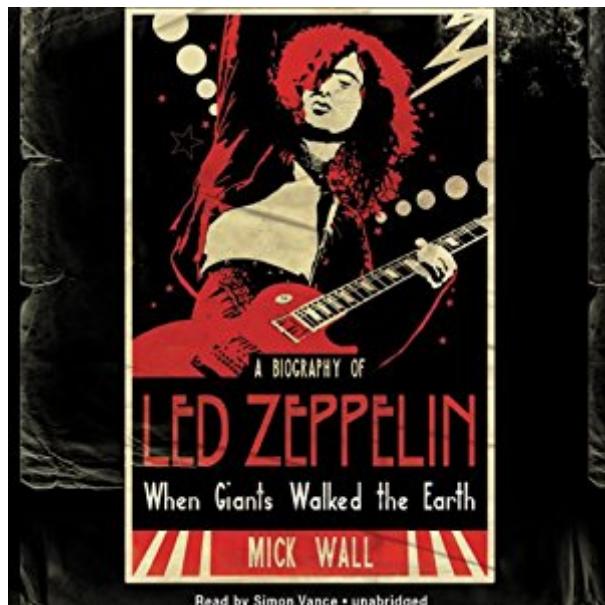


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When Giants Walked The Earth: A Biography Of Led Zeppelin



Synopsis

Veteran rock journalist Mick Wall unflinchingly tells the story of the band that pushed the envelope on both creativity and excess, even by rock n roll standards. Led Zeppelin was the last great band of the 1960s and the first great band of the 1970s and *When Giants Walked the Earth* is the full, enthralling story of Zep from the inside, written by a former associate of both Jimmy Page and Robert Plant. Rich and revealing, it bores into not only the disaster, addiction and death that haunted the band but also into the real relationship between Page and Plant, including how it was influenced by Page's interest in the occult. Comprehensive and yet intimately detailed, *When Giants Walked the Earth* literally gets into the principals heads to bring to life both an unforgettable band and an unrepeatable slice of rock history. --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

To say that "When Giants Walked the Earth" is the best available biography of Led Zeppelin actually is not saying much. The book's only real competition, not including lavish illustration-based books, is Stephen Davis' "Hammer of the Gods," and that book, though well written, is flawed by its obsession with the band's violent excesses during tours and its overreliance on oral testimony from people like Richard Cole and aggrieved groupies and journalists, who were all too willing to feed that obsession. In many instances, "Giants" beats "Hammer" in terms of detail and breadth of research (the number of people interviewed is very impressive). In other instances, "Hammer" is the winner.

For instance, if you want to get a traditional narrative sense of the build-up of the band from Page and Jones' time as session musicians, Page's Yardbird days, and Plant and Bonham's days in Birmingham-based bands, "Hammer" is the book that provides it. "Giants" author Mick Wall, on the other hand, decided to intersperse most of this history throughout the book in the form of italicized "flashback" sequences written directly to the protagonists in the second person ("It all changed for you the night you went out after a Bo Diddley show in Newcastle..."). I found these passages not only boring to read, but irritating because they interrupted the flow of the book, and often you have to read through half a page of one before figuring out which person is being referred to. Be warned that nearly all of the pre-Zeppelin history of the band members is imparted in these "flashback" passages, so that if you want to learn about the protagonists' childhoods, teenaged years, and early bands, the only way to do so is to force your way through them. I tried at first, but decided it wasn't worth it and gave up.

"When Giants Walked The Earth" is without question the best-researched and "insiders" biography of Led Zeppelin. Author Nick Wall traces the band's history chronologically, with the use of italic second person (author talking to the band member within the text) narrative text to flesh out historical and personal information. This device is interesting at first, but does become tiresome. Unlike "Hammer of the Gods" and Richard Cole's book, author Nick Wall does not glamorize the (at times) gross excess of the band's offstage behavior. He also doesn't sweep it under the table. Instead, he places it in the proper context: hugely successful bands in the late 60s and early 70s, including the Beatles, Stones, and The Who, indulged in horrendous excess, but it doesn't erase the amazing music they made. Wall has spent considerable time interviewing Jimmy Page, and he addresses Page's interest in Crowley and "the occult" in an objective way. Page studied and had an interest in these matters, but was not sacrificing children or virgins and was far less "evil" in his exploits than the drunken, depraved antics and brutality that John Bonham and Richard Cole participated in when homesick or bored. Wall now depicts Page as a straight, lucid, exceedingly talented, and gentle man who would like to have the grand body of work he masterminded in the 1970s stay alive. Wall depicts Plant in a similarly objective manner. Bonham and Plant were not the industry insider London musicians that Page and Jones were. However, their talents were undeniable, and one is impressed with how quickly all four of these musicians were making true magic together.

When Mick Wall's "When Giants Walked the Earth" was published in a hardcover edition last year

for the U.K. market, it contained some timely commentary about their highly successful one-night show staged at the end of 2007. The author notes that Plant, who had been interested enough in the making of a re-released *The Song Remains the Same* movie and soundtrack that year to actually sit in, thought the Led Zeppelin reunion show ought to be a proper farewell from the band. Wall says Plant had a bigger say in what songs would and would not be included; gone were songs that were "too heavy metal," and he would do "Stairway to Heaven" but only buried in the middle of their two-hour set, not as a finale or an encore. Of course, the others had learned by then to cater to his wishes; after all, the last time a Zeppelin reunion had been seriously considered with Plant going along with it had been back about 16 years earlier. He even cites a remark made in 1993 by Peter Grant to Dave Lewis: "You've got to realize Robert always wanted to be the boss of the band anyway. He finally got his own way." This appears to be Wall's thesis, that the band was, in essence, hijacked over the course of time by Robert Plant, stolen from the reins of founder Jimmy Page. To illustrate this concept, Wall starts by going to the very beginning of the story: Page as a child learning from the earliest rock 'n' roll in existence and wanting to be a part of it, and eventually wanting to do certain things with a band of his own. Wall, leaving no part of the story unturned, lists it all. "When Giants Walked the Earth," now available in paperback and hardcover editions in the United States, is quite perhaps the most detailed a book has been in attempting to uncover the mindsets of the men behind Led Zeppelin.

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