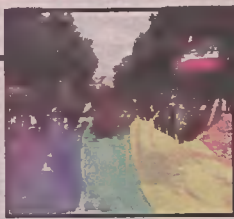
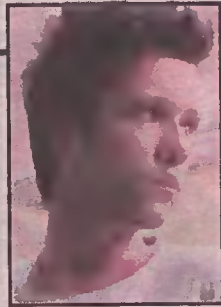


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# Q Notes

Noted . Notable . Noteworthy . LGBT News & Views

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## Coming to a town near you: Lez Zeppelin

All-girl Led Zeppelin cover band  
taking America by storm

by David Moore . Q-Notes staff

It's true — that's their name. Really. They are called Lez Zeppelin. And quite probably for all the reasons you'd think: they're all women, they perform a hard thrashing, rockin' reinterpretation of the classic metal-rock band Led Zeppelin and they may or may not be lesbians. Maybe some of them are. Maybe some of them are not. Who knows?

"Definitely. Probably. Maybe," says Steph Paynes, the lead guitarist and founder of the group.



Tearin' up the town: grrrl group Lez Zeppelin plays Charlotte, Carrboro, Charleston, Winston-Salem and Greenville.

Photo: Michael Goldberg

"Would you say that all the members of your band span the spectrum of society?" I ask innocently.

"You're very clever," Paynes chuckles. "I like the way you're trying to dance around the issue — but it's just not something we talk about. It's not important. It's about the music."

"But you know," I continue, "that with a name like that you will forever be asked that question, right?"

"Yeah, I know," Paynes offers. "But it was a no-brainer. When we came up with the idea we were like, 'It's perfect!'"

"Did you come up with the name?"

"I did. Guilty on all counts."

According to Paynes, Most Lez Zeppelin audiences are kids between 14 and 23 who are utterly into Zeppelin and love the music. "This sound touches a big swatch, that crosses age, gender barriers and sexual orientation," Paynes confirms.

The band boasts four members: Paynes

who plays guitar, Helen Destroy on drums, Lisa Brigantino, who performs bass guitar, mandolin and keyboards, and Sarah McLellan is the vocalist.

Paynes is talking with Q-Notes via phone from a cafe in New York. Within a few days of our conversation, she and other members of the band are headed for Germany and a gig in Hamburg.

"We've been to Europe once before," Paynes explains, "earlier this year in the winter. Now we're headed back to do a couple of gigs and a bunch of festivals."

"How did the European crowd react to women performing Led Zeppelin?" I ask.

"They loved it! They ran screaming over the border (laughs). The audience was very enthusiastic. It was primarily hardcore older Zep fans. At first they were stunned — I think it took a while for them to get their head around it — but they turned out to be very supportive."

Paynes initially formed Lez Zeppelin in 2004. Prior to the formation of the group, none of the women knew each other.

"I just put the word of mouth out. I told every one I knew and they had recommendations. It was surprising, because it was easier to get the group together than I thought."

Cover bands exist en masse. There are numerous groups that make a tidy sum off performing the music of other musicians and bands and remain in relative obscurity — but Lez Zeppelin is something different.

For the uninitiated, Led Zeppelin was an all-male, English rock band who formed in 1968. With their heavy, guitar-driven sound, the group is regarded as one of the first heavy metal bands. Their rock-infused interpretation of the blues also incorporated rockabilly, reggae, soul, funk, jazz, classical, Celtic, Indian, Arabic, folk, pop, Latin and country.

Lez Zeppelin's re-channeling of their classic hits with a rocker grrrl sensibility is a win-win combination: the music is hot and so are the performers.

"Do you have a big gay and lesbian following?" I ask.

"The name of the band draws interest from the gay community," says Paynes. "In some places where there is a larger gay and

lesbian community there is a following. But our audiences are predominantly a mix, really. We're always happy to see the gay community come out, of course."

Paynes confirms that Lez Zeppelin has played the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival — Mishfest — and were surprised by the response.

"I was curious to see how the band would go over," says Payne. "Over 50 percent of the audience was lesbian and a lot of the performers were acoustic. It was the kind of event where the Indigo Girls would go over like gangbusters."

"We're definitely not acoustic, but we were blown away. People were absolutely crazy. Being women and playing this music is very powerful — it's very heavy. It's something the world hasn't had. Having women pull it off in the way we play it and to have people love it like they did, is stunning."

In May, Lez Zeppelin moved past being just a cover band and released their first CD. Their self-titled debut was produced by Eddie Kramer, who had previously worked with Led Zeppelin.

"He was absolutely amazing," says Payne.

see hard on 5

## Gay youth murdered in Greenville, S.C.

Twenty-year-old attacked outside  
nightclub on 'teen night'

by Donald Miller

GREENVILLE, S.C. — Openly gay

University of South Carolina student Sean Kennedy was attacked outside Brew's Pub May 16 following an altercation that had occurred inside the business just a short time before. According to friends that were with Kennedy at Brew's, 18-year-old Stephen Andrew Moller had confronted the group about Kennedy's sexual



Sean Kennedy died following a homophobic attack outside Brew's Pub in Greenville.

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## Anti-bullying bill in N.C. Senate, marriage amendment stalled

Success for School Violence  
Prevention Act expected in Senate,  
marriage amendment outlook  
unclear

by Donald Miller

RALEIGH — Thanks to the extensive lobbying efforts by EqualityNC, the anti-bul-



Action on the hill: two bills affecting the LGBT community were at the fore in late May.

lying bill, the School Violence Prevention Act, passed its third and final reading in the House 72-47 on May 24, marking the very first time in N.C. state history that a pro-equality bill has passed either chamber in the General Assembly.

The bill, which will direct local school boards to adopt policies to protect public school students from bullying and harassment, will now go to the Senate where it is expected to pass.

"We believe that it will pass," says EqualityNC Director Ian Palmquist, "though we have some work to do to get it through. Then it would go to the governor for him to sign, and it would become law."

Palmquist is upbeat that N.C. Gov. Mike Easley, a Democrat, would sign the legislation.

Another bill drawing a firestorm of attention during this legislative session is the North Carolina marriage amendment (H.B. 493-Defense of Marriage).

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