

When it comes to Led Zeppelin, there is no beating the real thing Tribute album lacks star power it deserves

By David Winder
THE BATTALION

Encomium: A Tribute to Led Zeppelin
Various Artists
Atlantic Records
*** (out of five)

Singers have been copying the vocal style of Robert Plant since Led Zeppelin formed. Guitarists in every style of music have been influenced by Jimmy Page.

So it's hard to understand why a tribute album to one of the most important bands in the history of rock'n'roll would feature such a weak line-up.

The groups included on *Encomium* range from a one-hit wonder that is no longer together (4 Non Blondes), to a group that peaked in the mid-80s (Duran Duran), to a group that has yet to record an album (Never the Bride).

It's as if all the talented bands backed out at the last minute and sent the producers scrambling to find something.

Performances by Hootie and the Blowfish, Stone Temple Pilots, Sheryl Crow and Tori Amos are the only thing that saves the album from being a total waste.

Blowfish vocalist Darius Rucker's baritone voice fits nicely with

the style of "Hey Hey What Can I Do." STP easily has the best track on the album with their soulful cover of "Dancing Days." Sheryl Crow shines with "Dyer Mak'er," putting more sexuality into the lyrics than Plant probably thought possible.

Plant also turns up on the album, doing a duet with Amos on "Down by the Seaside."

It's too bad he didn't sing on some of the other group's covers. At least part of them would have been worth listening to.

The 4 Non Blondes make "Misty Mountain Hop" sound like a pathetic sequel to their only hit "What's Going On." The female duet Never the Bride goes as far to change the lyrics of "Going to California" so that they can sing about a man instead of a woman. I wonder what their version of "The Lemon Song" would sound like.



Hootie and the Blowfish

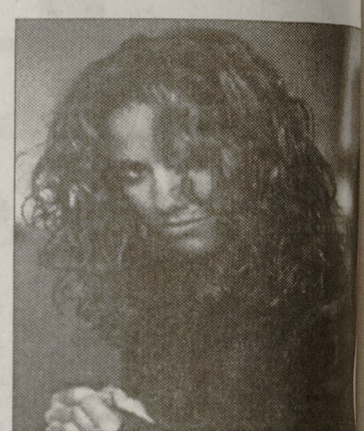
The worst cover since Ugly Kid Joe did "Cats in the Cradle" has to go to Duran Duran doing "Thank You." The music quality is nowhere close to the original and Simon LeBon sounds as if he is crying while he sings.

He must have figured out that you actually have to have talent to make songs with depth sound good.

Cracker ("Good Times Bad Times"), Blind Melon ("Out On The Tiles"), Helmet with David Yow ("Custard Pie") and Rollins Band ("Four Sticks") do decent covers but nothing to get excited about.

The biggest surprise was that no one attempted to do Zep classics "Stairway to Heaven," "Kashmir." Hard rockers such as "Whole Lotta Love," "Heartbreaker" and "Black Dog" were not covered either.

It's probably for the best that they weren't redone since the bands that could do them justice aren't on the album anyway.



Sheryl Crow

U-ACT

Retreat offers unique insight into cultural differences on campus

"The thing that men and women need to do is stick together. Progressions can't be made if we're separate forever"
— A Tribe Called Quest



ROB CLARK
AGGIELIFE EDITOR

In my few years here at Texas A&M, one statement comes to mind concerning race relations — we've got a messed-up campus.

It's amazing that in a place where we are supposed to learn about each other to prepare us for a professional life, we spend most of our time ignoring each other and bickering about our differences instead of learning about them.

I had lost all hope in the improvement of cultural conflict on campus, until this past weekend.

I attended University Awareness for Cultural Togetherness. U-ACT is a student retreat with the goal of improving multicultural and diversity awareness on campus. For three weekends this semester, A&M students have traveled to the cultural metropolis of Snook to learn about other cultures, and in turn, about themselves.

I was a bit skeptical going into the retreat. Having never been to Fish Camp, I figured it would be just another big yell practice with a few words about diversity. I

was pleasantly surprised to find out I was wrong. I found myself actually having fun. The activities were done in a way that everyone could relate to and enjoy. I was more open to talk to people so that they could understand where I was coming from.

We examined common stereotypes used for different ethnic groups. This discussion was incredibly enlightening, as some shared their own personal experiences with discrimination and ignorance.

"Should white people feel guilty about slavery?" "What is correct — black or African American?" "Is the word 'nigga' in rap music offensive?"

These were just a few of the many topics we explored. It was refreshing to see how open everyone was in relating their personal experiences. I began to understand how other races feel about all these things I had wondered about.

There were no tense situations, no accusations and no finger pointing. We just talked to each other. It's amazing what can be accomplished by just talking to each other.

And while U-ACT provides the forum for learning, it also provides the forum for fun. I was dreading playing third-grade type "get to know each other" games. But there I was, laughing along with everyone else. I didn't care if I looked childish or foolish. I was there for a reason — to learn — and I wanted that knowledge no matter what the process.

I went from not knowing most of the people there to knowing I had made several friends. By the time I left, we were laughing, thanking each other and even planning reunions.

Perhaps the most important observation I made was when I stopped talking, listening and being a part of the group. I stepped back for just a moment, and in that moment I saw things I had never seen before at Texas A&M — people of all different backgrounds, races and sexual orientations sitting together and talking, joking, laughing and having a great time. Together.

For that moment, A&M was where I wanted to be. It



was what A&M should be. Maybe it is what A&M

is. No sooner than I had started feeling that some sort of progress was possible here at A&M, I witnessed yet another example of ignorance and stupidity. I attended Saturday's screening of *Pulp Fiction* at Rudder Auditorium and was horrified by some of the audience members. When the word "wetback," and when derogatory statements about Jewish people were mentioned in the movie, a few isolated "whoops" were heard from the crowd. "So disgusting," I thought.

Then I remembered where I was. But I also remembered what I had gained from U-ACT. And for those students who attended U-ACT this weekend, I think we all saw a small glimmer of hope. Sure, there are still going to be those ignorant, racist people on this campus, and everywhere else for that matter. But with programs like U-ACT, it shows that there is potential here.

U-ACT is not going to save the A&M campus. But at least it provides an opportunity for people of all different cultures to come together and learn about each other and learn about ourselves.

Rob Clark is a senior journalism major.

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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

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If you have any questions regarding your billing cycle, please contact a parking counselor at 862-PARK. PTTS hours are Monday - Thursday 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m., and Friday 7:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

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