

Practitioner's Statement

Jimmy Page

Mykaela Podgorski

For my first work, I chose to create a large-scale portrait of Led Zeppelin guitarist, Jimmy Page. Upon hearing Jimmy Page's guitar playing when I was 10, I decided to begin learning the guitar. Eight years later, and I am only two months away from heading off to the United States to pursue a career as a guitarist. Whilst I have diverged immensely from his style of playing, Jimmy Page will always remain to be the primary reason that I began pursuing music. So, through this practical, I have decided to pay tribute to the man that inspired me. I have displayed Page on a large-scale canvas, in order to present him as a greater than human, thus demonstrating his importance and power, as well as the huge effect he has had on not only me, but also on the music industry.

I have been greatly influenced by both realistic and hyperrealistic portraiture, and hence intended to create this image of Jimmy Page in a realistic style. I studied a variety of realistic portraiture artists including Harding Meyer, Mark Powell, Ray Coffey and Paul Cadden. The main inspiration for this work, however, came from American artist, Kehinde Wiley (1977-present), who creates large-scale paintings of African American men in front of Victorian backgrounds, as a political statement. Like Wiley, I chose to use a large-scale canvas, and present the subject in front of an ornate, vibrant background. Inspiration for the use of the stippling effect came from Miguel Endara, who uses a stippling technique to create hyperrealistic portraits. I chose to use this technique with black felt tip pen as the medium in order to replicate the grainy texture of 1970's photography – the area in which Led Zeppelin produced their greatest hits – and also replicated the grainy, pixel-like nature of their self-titled album cover.

Whilst creating the background, I took inspiration again from Kehinde Wiley's regal Victorian backgrounds, as well as inspiration from William Morris (1834-1896), whose 19th century, intricate textile designs strongly influenced Wiley. Upon analysis of Led Zeppelin's most famous album, Mothership, I developed a colour scheme of red, black and light yellow, which I then used when designing the background. I wished for the background to be vibrant, and so decided to use the bright red as the base for the background, with a textile pattern over the top, in black and light yellow. As Led Zeppelin was obviously a huge part of Page's life, I chose to symbolically represent the band in the background pattern, and thus added the symbol of each band member, as shown in the inner sleeve of the album, Led Zeppelin IV, in the design.

The final composition consisted of a realistic, stippling drawing of Page, surrounded by a vibrant gouache background. As it would have taken far too long to create Page's hair using the stippling technique, I opted to use black watercolour instead; a process that was relatively quick and also allowed the hair to retain a flowing effect.

Jimmy Page has had an immense effect on the music industry, as well as having inspired thousands of young guitarists, myself included. Through my work, I hope that I have been able to successfully demonstrate the importance of Jimmy Page, and I hope for viewers to be confronted with similar feelings of respect and admiration for Jimmy Page as I myself.