

Alvin Lee – In Flight (1974)

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 27 October 2009 15:52 - Last Updated Friday, 14 August 2020 08:20

Alvin Lee – In Flight (1974/1998)



Disc: 1

1. *Got To Keep Moving*
2. *Going Through The Door*
3. *Don't Be Cruel*
4. *Money Honey*
5. *I'm Writing You A Letter*
6. *You Need Love Love Love*
7. *Freedom For The Stallion*
8. *Every Blues You've Ever Heard*
9. *All Life's Trials*

Disc: 2

1. *Intro*
2. *Let's Get Back*
3. *Ride My Train*
4. *There's A Feeling*
5. *Running Round*
6. *Mystery Train*
7. *Slow Down*
8. *Keep a Knockin'*
9. *How Many Times*
10. *I've Got Eyes For You Baby*
11. *I'm Writing You A Letter*
12. *Somebody Callin' Me [Live]*
13. *Put It In A Box*

Personnel Alvin Lee - Guitar, vocals Tim Hinkley – Keyboards Neil Hubbard - Guitar
 Alan Spenner - Bass guitar Ian Wallace - Drums Mel Collins – saxophone

'In Flight' is a two-disc live recording made by Alvin Lee in 1974 at the Rainbow Theatre in London. It was the follow-up to 1973's 'On the Road to Freedom', Lee's first album without his

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Ten Years After colleagues. He arrived with a cargo hold ('In Flight' analogy...) of new tunes and a supersized backing band, including horn man Mel Collins and a trio of backing singers.

It's a lively, high-energy set, sure to please someone, but probably not the old Ten Years After crowd. Until the second half of the second disc, Alvin's trademark lead guitar excursions are in short supply, instead being supplanted primarily by Collins' up-front and center presence. The texture of the music has changed as well. While Ten Years After segued effortlessly from blues-rock to psychedelia to folk and country-rock, this new Alvin Lee is pounding out something perhaps best described as boogie-rock.

The compositions unquestionably announce Alvin Lee as a matured writing talent. There is a wealth of new, well-turned tunes that Lee pulls out of his back pocket here, beginning with the "chug-along blues" (as Lee describes it in his personally scripted liner notes) opener, 'Got To Keep Moving'. Other highlights include the funky 'You Need Love Love Love' which possesses a great vocal hook, the sweet boogie of 'Let's Get Back', and the most Ten Years After-sounding number, 'Ride My Train'.

As you move deep into the second disc, Alvin moves his lead guitar heroics to the front burner, displaying his fiery skills on tracks such as 'Keep a Knocking', and a Chuck Berry sound-alike 'Johnny B. Goode' rave-up on 'I've Got Eyes For You Baby'.

There are several other covers that deserve mention here. Alvin's version of 'Slow Down' may best represent how his solo work differ from Ten Years After. While you might expect him to go bonkers with his guitar and vocals on this potentially scintillating track, it comes across as a much more smooth and polished piece. The mid-70s did that to a lot of psychedelic and blues-rockers from the 60s, and Alvin seems infected. The same can be said for his covers of Elvis Presley's 'Don't Be Cruel' and 'Mystery Train' as well as 'Money Honey'. Each of these songs relies heavily on Mel Collins' sax and backing vocals rather than Lee's astounding guitar virtuosity.

There are also two bonus tracks: 'Somebody Callin' Me' is live boogie-rock from an unidentified venue. The recording is of good quality, but Lee's vocals, in particular, feel buried compared to the stunning vibrancy of the original album. The other, "Put it in a Box" is a studio recording. It launches into a sweet funk-groove from the first strains, and features a fat, fuzzy guitar foundation, setting up Lee's exquisite leads. Back vocals strike a nice balance with the other key elements of the performance.

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Given the right audience, 'In Flight' could certainly bring hours of listening pleasure. --- Don Schmittiel, amazon.com

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