

I'm Going Home – Alvin Lee in Memoriam

Written by bluesever

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British rock guitarist Alvin Lee, founder of the band Ten Years After who burst to stardom with a memorable Woodstock performance, has died 6 march 2013. He was 68. A statement posted on Lee's official website said he died Wednesday unexpectedly from complications following a routine surgical procedure. Lee's manager, Ron Rainey, said the guitarist died in Spain.

Alvin Lee

Alvin Lee (born Graham Alvin Barnes, 19 December 1944) was an English rock guitarist and singer. Born in Nottingham, he began playing guitar at the age of 13, and with Leo Lyons formed the core of the band Ten Years After in 1960. Influenced by his parents' collection of jazz and blues records, it was the advent of rock and roll that sparked his interest, and guitarists such as Chuck Berry and Scotty Moore provided his inspiration.



Alvin Lee

The Jaybirds, as Lee's early band was called, were popular locally and had success in

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Hamburg, Germany, following the Beatles there in 1962. But it wasn't until the band moved to London in 1966 and changed its name to **Ten Years After** that international success beckoned. The band secured a residency at the legendary Marquee Club, and an invitation to the famous Windsor Jazz & Blues Festival in 1967 led to their first recording contract.



The Jaybirds, Hamburg 1962

At the peak of his musical career in the 1960s and 1970s, Alvin Lee was hailed as the "Fastest Guitar Alive." A hard-edged rock and blues guitarist with the fretboard speed of a jazz player, he brought fresh excitement to the second wave of the fabled 1960s British Invasion. After a slow start in his native country with Ten Years After, Lee got the drop on every other guitarist with his stunning display of guitar pyrotechnics at the 1969 Woodstock festival. Once his fame spread, he left Ten Years After to explore a solo career.



Ten Years After

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Ten Years After had success, releasing ten albums together, but by 1973, Lee was feeling limited by the band's style. Moving to Columbia Records had resulted in a radio hit song, *"I'd Love To Change the World,"* but Lee preferred blues-rock to the pop to which the label steered them. *"I have tended to play a lot of styles through the years,"* he told *Brutarian Quarterly*.



Ten Years After

Without keyboardist Chick Churchill to provide atmospheric counterpoint, Lee's later groups, including **Alvin Lee & Company** and **Ten Years Later**, lacked the nuance of his earlier recordings. The *Rolling Stone Album Guide* summed up his solo years: *"Basically a strong instrumentalist and an undependable songwriter, Lee remains a talent who haphazardly dazzles, but more often parlays his only expertise."*



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Lee's overall musical output includes more than 20 albums, including 1985's *Detroit Diesel* and the back to back 90s collections of *Zoom* and 1994 (

I Hear You Rocking

). Guest artists on both albums include George Harrison, whose brilliant slide guitar perfectly complements Lee's lead. Their duet on 1994's *The Bluest Blues* led one reviewer to call it "*the most perfect blues song ever recorded.*"



Alvin Lee

In Tennessee, recorded with Scotty Moore and D. J. Fontana, was released in 2004. Lee's most recent album, *Still on the Road to Freedom*, was released in September 2012.