

Alvin Lee

Alvin Lee (born Graham Anthony Barnes; 19 December 1944 – 6 March 2013) was an English singer and guitarist, best known as the lead vocalist and lead guitarist of the blues rock band Ten Years After.

He began playing guitar at the age of 13. In 1960, Lee along with Leo Lyons formed the core of the band Ten Years After. He was influenced by his parents' collection of jazz and blues records, but it was the advent of rock and roll that sparked his interest.

Lee's performance at the Woodstock Festival was captured on film in the documentary of the event, and his 'lightning-fast' playing helped catapult him to stardom. Soon the band was playing arenas and stadiums around the globe. The film brought Lee's music to a worldwide audience, although he later lamented that he missed the lost freedom and spiritual dedication with his earlier public.

Lee was named "the Fastest guitarist in the West", and considered a precursor to shred-style playing that would develop in the 1980s.

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. He left the group after their second Columbia LP. With American Christian rock pioneer Mylon LeFevre, along with guests George Harrison, Steve Winwood, Ronnie Wood and Mick Fleetwood, he recorded and released *On the Road to Freedom*, an acclaimed album that was at the forefront of country rock. Also in 1973 he sat in on the Jerry Lee Lewis double album *The Session...Recorded in London with Great Artists recorded in London* featuring many other guest stars including Albert Lee, Peter Frampton and Rory Gallagher. A year later, in response to a dare, Lee formed Alvin Lee & Company to play a show at the Rainbow in London and released it as a double live album, *In Flight*. Various members of the band continued on with Lee for his next two albums, *Pump Iron!* and *Let It Rock*. In late 1975, he played guitar for a couple of tracks on Bo Diddley's *The 20th Anniversary of Rock 'n' Roll* all-star album. He finished out the 1970s with an outfit called "Ten Years Later", with Tom Compton on drums and Mick Hawkworth on bass, which released two albums, *Rocket Fuel* (1978) and *Ride On* (1979), and toured extensively throughout Europe and the United States.

The 1980s brought another change in Lee's direction, with two albums that were collaborations with Rare Bird's Steve Gould, and a tour with the former John Mayall and Rolling Stones' guitarist Mick Taylor joining his band.

Lee's overall musical output includes more than twenty albums, including 1987's *Detroit Diesel*, 1989's *About Time*, recorded in Memphis with producer Terry Manning, and the back to back 1990s collections of *Zoom* and *Nineteen Ninety-Four* (US title *I Hear You Rockin'*). Guest artists on both albums included George Harrison.

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

Death

Lee died on 6 March 2013 in Spain. According to his website, he died from "unforeseen complications following a routine surgical procedure". He was 68. His former bandmates lamented his death. Leo Lyons called him "the closest thing I had to a brother", while Ric Lee (no relation) said "I don't think it's even sunk in yet as to the reality of his passing". Billboard highlighted such landmark performances as "I'm Going Home" from the Woodstock festival and his 1971 hit single "I'd Love to Change the World".