

Andy Fraser

Andrew McLan "Andy" Fraser (3 July 1952 – 16 March 2015) was an English songwriter and bass guitarist whose career lasted over forty years, and includes two spells as a member of the rock band Free, which he helped found in 1968, aged 15.

Peak years (1960s and 1970s)

Fraser was born in the Paddington area of Central London and started playing the piano at the age of five. He was trained classically until twelve, when he switched to guitar. By thirteen he was playing in East End, West Indian clubs and after being expelled from school in 1968 at the age of 15, enrolled at Hammersmith College of Further Education. There, another student, Sappho Korner, introduced him to her father, pioneering blues musician and radio broadcaster Alexis Korner, who became a father figure to him. Shortly thereafter, upon receiving a telephone call from John Mayall who was looking for a bass player, Korner suggested Fraser; still only 15, he was now in a professional band and earning £50 a week, although it ultimately turned out to be a brief tenure.

Korner was also instrumental in Fraser's next move, to the influential band Free, which consisted of Paul Rodgers (vocals), Paul Kossoff (guitar) and Simon Kirke (drums). Fraser produced and co-wrote the song "All Right Now" with Rodgers, a No. 1 hit in over 20 territories and recognised by ASCAP in 1990 for garnering over 1,000,000 radio plays in the United States by late 1989. In October 2006, a BMI London Million-Air Award was given to Rodgers and Fraser to mark over 3 million radio and television plays of "All Right Now". Simon Kirke later recalled: "'All Right Now' was created after a bad gig in Durham. We finished our show and walked off the stage to the sound of our own footsteps. The applause had died before I had even left the drum riser. It was obvious that we needed a rocker to close our shows. All of a sudden the inspiration struck Fraser and he started bopping around singing 'All Right Now'. He sat down and wrote it right there in the dressing room. It couldn't have taken more than ten minutes."

Fraser also co-wrote two other hit singles for Free, "My Brother Jake" and "The Stealer" Free initially split in 1971, and Fraser formed a trio, Toby, with guitarist Adrian Fisher (later with Sparks), and drummer Stan Speake. Material was recorded but not released, and Fraser re-joined Free in December 1971. He left for the second time in June 1972.

After leaving Free, Fraser formed Sharks with vocalist Snips (later Baker Gurvitz Army), guitarist Chris Spedding and drummer Marty Simon. Despite being well received by the critics, especially for Spedding's tasteful guitar work (*Crawdaddy Lead Review*, Bruce Malamut Vol. 27, 1973), Fraser left after their debut album, *First Water* (1973).

He then formed the Andy Fraser Band, a trio with Kim Turner on drums and Nick Judd on keyboards. They released two albums, *Andy Fraser Band* and *In Your Eyes*, both in 1975, before that also folded. Attempts to form a band with Frankie Miller came to nothing, and Fraser relocated to California to concentrate on songwriting. He crafted hits for Robert Palmer, Joe Cocker, Chaka Khan, Rod Stewart and Paul Young.

Fraser's most famous compositions remain "All Right Now" and "Every Kinda People", which Robert Palmer recorded in 1978 for his *Double Fun* album.

Later period (post–1970s)

In 1984, Fraser released another album of his own. *Fine, Fine Line* featured ex-Back Street Crawler drummer Tony Braunagel, Bob Marlette (keyboards), Michael Thompson (guitar) and David Faragher (bass), with Fraser contributing vocals.

Having been diagnosed with HIV, he was later diagnosed with Kaposi's sarcoma, a form of cancer that had been very rare until the onset of the AIDS epidemic. This time-line was called into question by Fraser's subsequent revelation that he was homosexual. He played bass with former Free colleague Paul Rodgers at Woodstock '94, but otherwise kept a low profile until 2005, when a new release, *Naked and Finally Free*, appeared. At the time of the new album's release, Fraser was interviewed by Dmitry M. Epstein for the DME website and revealed: "To be quite honest, I never thought of myself as a bass-player. I actually only used the bass-guitar because the other kids in our school-band wanted to be the singer, or drummer, or guitarist. I have always thought of myself as doing whatever was necessary to make the whole thing work. I'm happy adding piano, or tambourine, or anything that helped".

In early 2006, writing for *Vintage Guitar* magazine, Tom Guerra conducted a comprehensive interview with Fraser, covering his career, influences and instruments and, in April, Fraser responded to the revival of interest in his music by announcing two rare live shows at Southern California's Temecula Community Arts Theatre on 4 May. The shows, accompanied by an eight-piece band, were his first live performances since the 1994 Woodstock reunion.

In 2008, he wrote and sang the song "Obama (Yes We Can)", to support the campaign to elect Barack Obama as president of the United States.

Founded by Fraser, Mctrax International was incorporated as Mctrax International Corporation in California in 2005. Headquartered in southern California, Mctrax International and its subsidiaries MctraxMedia, MctraxMotion and MctraxStudios were originally created as an outlet for his prolific songwriting.

In May 2010, Fraser was interviewed for BBC Two's documentary series titled *Rock 'n' Roll*. The project includes a five-part documentary, narrated by British music show anchor-man Mark Radcliffe plus online and radio content. "The documentary aims to explain the success of some of the greatest bands of the past 50 years, including the Who, the Police, the Doors, Bon Jovi and the Foo Fighters".

In mid-2013, Fraser played a supporting role as bassist in the band of protege Tobi Earnshaw for a short series of UK dates. Accompanying Tobi Earnshaw and Fraser was a veteran ally, guitarist Chris Spedding. Fraser produced and mentored Earnshaw on a number of album releases.

Death

Fraser died on 16 March 2015 at his home in California of a heart attack caused by Atherosclerosis. Fraser is survived by his daughters Hannah and Jasmine Fraser.