

YEARS

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the 25th anniversary of London's Marquee Club. That Summer also saw them play a handful of European festivals – at the request of an enthusiastic fan/promoter – and subsequently tour Germany.

WITH THEIR hunger rekindled, they decided to return to the recording studio, enlisting, for the first time, the services of a producer (Terry Manning – ZZ Top, George Thorogood & The Destroyers), and emerged from a studio in Memphis with 'About Time'.

Far from being a cash-in on the '20-years-since-Woodstock' or '70s-bands-reformation' bandwagons, 'About Time' is a legitimate TYA album, blending old TYA values and trademarks with a modern, at times ZZ

Top-tinged production. Neither disappointingly retro- nor a too radical, uncharacteristically new direction, they are understandably pleased with the results. Pleased enough to decide that, yes, after 15 years, Ten Years After are back in business.

For TYA, the critical reaction to the new album must be heartwarming, having for the most part been the sort of response (five 'K's in *Kerrang!* for example) that was probably beyond what they could reasonably have expected.

"It's been a good reaction, actually," enthused Alvin. "We put out 'Let's Shake It Up' over here as the introductory single, and it got a particularly good reaction.

"People were ringing up saying they'd heard the record and asking who it was. People have picked up on exactly what I'd hoped, which is that we've got a modern sounding album but which hasn't completely lost the roots of what we started off doing.

"There was a danger that we could have gone in and made an 'ultra modern' album, which

is really what we're fighting against. I think it's generally accepted that we've come up with a modern sounding album that's true to its roots."

THAT'S CERTAINLY true.

There's also a certain irony that after years of touring interspersed with putting out albums that failed to effectively capture the live essence of Ten Years After, 'About Time' – recorded after a lengthy spell of band inactivity – is probably the closest they've ever come to succeeding. As for the reason, Alvin reckons you need look no further than producer Terry Manning.

"He had a picture in his head of the sound before we ever did. We had the songs – about 50, and we had the general style. We gave him a whole bunch of demos and said, 'Here, pick 10 out of that, mate! And he was very good at that.'"

"He was quite a tough producer," recalls Chick. "He knew what he wanted us *not* to play, which is very important. He guided us, made us play simpler than we would do onstage..."

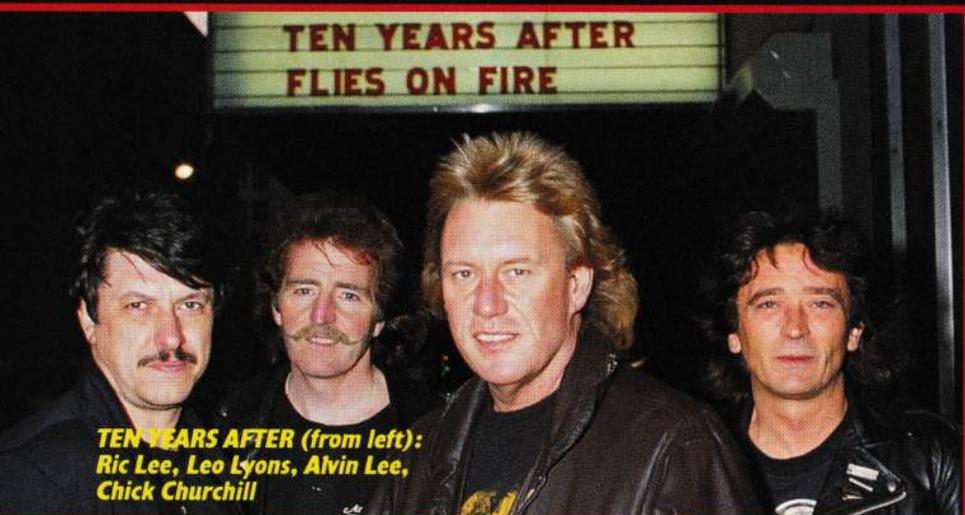
"I learned a lot from it, and I know Alvin did, as did Ric and Leo. He made us make a *record*, and not try to emulate a live performance.

"I think we'd got lost before, and having such a long sabbatical gave us a lot of time to think about what to do. I think we're much more into rock music now than we were in those days, when we were probably more blues and jazz influenced. That has been watered down a bit and we've become more rock musicians".

Ric: "If you listen to the other 10 albums..."

Alvin: "You'll go mad!"

Ric: "...and then listen to this one, the difference on it is almost that we've come of age. Someone pointed out to us that



TEN YEARS AFTER (from left): Ric Lee, Leo Lyons, Alvin Lee, Chick Churchill

Pix Dave Willis

RIC LEE: "On this tour we're not making money. We're doing it because we're enjoying it and to build a solid foundation for the future"

