

it's usually the other way round – that you start simple and then find that you can develop your chops and play all sorts of things.

"In a sense, it's taken us this long to 'calm down' as it were, and make what I think is our best album, our most listenable album, put it that way. The reviews have been very good."

STILL, THERE ARE bound to be those who will view TYA's return as an attempt to cash-in on the '70s revival movement. They are aware that such accusations are occasionally going to come their way and, understandably, they don't like it. Although for now they reject such claims in measured tones, my impression is that anyone making them to their face in the future had better be prepared for a more vitriolic response.

Alvin: "After we did those festivals in Germany, we got offered a 'Woodstock reunion' tour, and a lot of offers like that, and the money offered was pretty good. But what would we do after that? Count it?! We decided it was best to make a new album and try to move into the '90s rather than just be a nostalgia band."

Leo Lyons, for one, would not have been interested in doing anything without recording a new album: "I fought against re-forming the band again. I didn't want to do it."

"Every other year or so since '75, some manager would call up and say, 'How much will you take to do a Ten Years After tour?' I'd just say I didn't want to do it."

"In '83, when we did four dates, I wanted to do them because I wanted to enjoy them... but I really didn't want it

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ALVIN LEE

to become Ten Years After again.

"The reason it's happened this time is that it hit me at a period in my life where I so desperately missed playing live. In actual fact, just before those '83 dates, I put my own band together just to try and do that."

SITTING HERE in New York, swilling beers and chatting about the previous night's show – with tour personnel, journalists and photographers milling around – I couldn't help but wonder how they were adapting to touring again. Apart from that fact that, now, they have a vast wealth of experience on which to draw in order to avoid the pitfalls, might it also be fair to assume that there's less pressure this time?

Alvin slowly shook his head: "I don't think there was ever any pressure really. It's good fun playing live. It's like the old days when we started – all stuck together in the van and you make your own entertainment. It keeps a sort of camaraderie going."

"I love touring and I love going by tourbus. You can't rely on airlines anymore if you've got connections to make."

Leo: "The gigs are great. Playing is fantastic. For me personally though, I sometimes find the travelling a bit boring...

and there are less parties!

"I think when you talk to musicians now – I'm not talking about us in particular, more the younger guys – you find that they're out there doing the radio stations, the in-stores, the promotion, the interviews, the soundchecks... When we were touring in the late '60s and early '70s we didn't do any of that."

"You reached your audiences by going out and doing the gig – bugged the press! That really was the attitude. Radio stations then would play a whole side of your album – so we'd do the radio, do the gig, then we'd party. There isn't as much partying anymore."

WHAT I personally get out of it now, as always, is going onstage and performing to the audience that's there.

"I'm prepared to do the rest – the promotion, the videos, etc – just to be able to do that. And I'm very appreciative of a fan who goes out and buys an album. If someone walked in to the hotel and said, 'Will you sign my album?' I'd say, 'Thanks for buying it.'"

Ric: "It's good to go to a gig and never be quite sure what's going to happen, because the band never knows quite what's going to take place. They're doing the numbers, but they're never quite the same every

night. That's certainly what interests me with this band, and what I'm sure a lot of people can see."

"I mean, I don't imagine someone like Bon Jovi does 'jam' things. Everyone's organised, and if you catch their show in Ohio it's probably exactly the same as the one they did in Los Angeles."

Alvin: "For years and years, we tried to make a record that sounded like the live gigs, which is the opposite way round – most bands are trying to make their gigs sound like the record. But we're basically a live band – adrenalin, energy, interplay... what happens onstage naturally."

Ric: "I think the primary aim is for us to enjoy it. Certainly 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."

Leo: "I think there are three things that are going to make it work: you have to enjoy it, you have to be successful, and you have to earn a living out of it. Without any of those it won't work – not for us, anyway."

Alvin: "I actually now realise that I enjoyed struggling towards making it more than I enjoyed making it. When we'd so-called 'made it', and were an established band, I didn't like that much at all, because the kind of 'challenge' had gone."

"We're not struggling to make it now, we're just struggling to turn people on to the music."

A bit, I suggest, like fancying a girl, going after her, and then when you finally 'get' her, you lose interest?

"Yeah. Right now we're enjoying the chase. In some ways we just have to make sure we don't get what we're going for!"

23 YEARS OF TEN YEARS AFTER

WHILST PLAYING in Hamburg in the early '60s, Alvin Lee and Leo Lyons meet Ric Lee and form the Jaybirds. Chick Churchill later brings the band to a four-piece.

The band build a considerable grassroots following in and around Nottingham (Alvin Lee's home town) and change their name to Ten Years After in 1967.

TYA emerge nationally as one of the top bands of the second wave British blues boom, alongside contemporaries such as Chickenshack and Fleetwood Mac.

TYA's eponymous first album is released in 1967, and shortly afterwards the band make the first of many visits to the US.

They appear at the 1969 Woodstock Festival; their 11-minute epic workout of 'I'm Going Home' is one of the most popular segments of the subsequent 'Woodstock' movie and elevates Alvin Lee to superstar status.

Following '72's 'Rock And Roll Music To The World', they go off to pursue solo projects. During this period of TYA inactivity, 'Recorded Live' is released, culled from previous concerts in Europe.

On March 22 '74, a month prior to a series of TYA dates that includes London's Rainbow Theatre, Alvin Lee plays a hurriedly-arranged concert there with a nine-piece support band assembled only 10 days earlier, and the set is recorded for the 'Alvin Lee & Co In Flight' double live album. TYA's Rainbow show is their last UK appearance... for quite some time!

After '74's 'Positive Vibrations', Alvin Lee announces plans for a worldwide 'solo' tour.

A TYA split is denied, but in May '75 Alvin Lee declares the band defunct.

In 1989 Ten Years After go into a studio in Nashville with producer Terry Manning (the first time in their career that they

have used a producer), and emerge with 'About Time', their first new album for 15 years, and undertake their 29th US tour.

In 1990, after 29 US tours in a 23-year career, Ten Years After have their first ever feature in Kerrang!

TEN YEARS AFTER DISCOGRAPHY (compilations excluded):

'Ten Years After' (1967)
'Undead' (1968)
'Stonedhenge' (1969)
'Sessh' (1969)
'Cricklewood Green' (1970)
'Watt' (1970)
'A Space In Time' (1972)
'Rock And Roll Music To The World' (1972)
'Recorded Live' (1973)

TEN YEARS AFTER more than 10 years previous

'Positive Vibrations' (1974)
'About Time' (1989)

SOLO WORKS ETC ALVIN LEE:

'Alvin Lee & Mylon LeFevre – 'On The Road To Freedom' (1973)
'Alvin Lee & Co In Flight' (1974)
'Pump Iron' (1975)
'Let It Rock' (1978)
'Free Fall' (1980)
'RX5' (1981)
'Detroit Diesel' (1986)

TEN YEARS LATER (featuring Alvin Lee)

'Rocket Fuel' (1978)
'Ride On' (1979)

CHICK CHURCHILL:

'You And Me' (1973)

