

TYA PLAN 33 SPEED ON 7MIN

SINGLE

says **RICHARD GREEN**

HEATED arguments are constantly revolving around and developing out of my contention and, indeed argument, that Ten Years After are one of the country's biggest progressive groups. "Yeah? What about Jethro and Fleetwood?" That's all I hear. But then, I try to reason that those groups issue singles all the time, TYA don't

Now we learn that Jethro Tull aren't to release any more 45s, as they have done in the past with great success. Ten Years After seem to have an anti-single thing going and Ric Lee, their drummer and one of the mildest of men, once told me: "There's really not a lot you can do in three minutes. We feel it's far better to do an album."

A couple of years ago, a TYA single more or less "escaped" from Decca before the group had had the chance to work on it and there has been nothing since, though on the Continent singles have been put out. Now, to a certain extent, the group's attitude is changing, but only for an ulterior motive.

Alvin Lee met me in his manager's office in London's West End and said: "We've asked Decca to do something revolutionary." Having whetted my appetite, he stopped, and I had to ask him to expand.

"In America, they've put out a three-minute version of 'Love Like A Man' (this is a track from the new album) but they only use singles for plugging albums on AM stations," he went on. "In America you can release an album track as a single, but here people feel cheated if they buy the album and find the single on it. In America it's the other way round — they feel cheated if they buy the album and don't find the single on it."

Novelty

So what is this extraordinary thing that TYA want done? And what has it to do with America?

"We want to have a three-minute version of the number on the 'A' side, and the 'live' version we recorded at the Fillmore at thirty-three-and-a-third on the 'B' side, lasting about seven minutes," Alvin revealed.

It is technically possible to do this, he added, it just remains to be seen whether the company are prepared to co-operate.

If they do, it can act as a trailer for "Cricklewood Green" (it's a closely guarded secret why the album was given that title) and may, at the same time, get my earlier point over to the disbelievers — that if TYA bothered to make singles they would do just as well as other groups in their category.

We went across the road to a pancake emporium and Alvin ordered something called an Apple Surprise Waffle With Ice Cream Extra, whatever that may be. While we waited for the dish to arrive, I asked about the album and whether he was entirely satisfied with it.

"I'm reasonably satisfied, as far as it goes," he replied. "I think it's valid as an album, so it's okay from that point. There are a few subtle things I'd like to change, but the listener probably wouldn't notice."

"Musically I like all the tracks but progressively I'm very pleased with 'Circles' and 'As The Sun Still Burns' — that was an experiment. I'll be interested to see what people think of them."

Having withstood five American tours, TYA are pretty established in the New World and Alvin put it this way: "We're definitely there, we've reached the point where we can't be ignored as far as the industry goes — which is nice. Audiences have changed, I've noticed that. The kind of gigs we've been doing in England have been a little more Americanised — we've promoted our own tours and the halls we've booked and the



TEN YEARS AFTER (l-r) ALVIN LEE, RIC LEE, CHIC CHURCHILL and LEO LYONS.

sound systems have been bigger and better.

"It's interesting to note that audiences have reacted very similarly to those in the States. Basically we have three hundred watts but we use twelve hundred, that's got a lot to do with sound dispersion. We're probably playing to a new generation. Three years ago we had the eighteen to twenty-four age bracket and they're still there but we're obviously playing to their younger brothers and sisters as well."

The question has been raised that some people "buy 'heavy' or 'progressive' or 'underground' music because it's the thing to do, rather than buy it purely because they enjoy it. While Alvin finished off his tea and tapped his clogs on the hard floor. I asked him how he felt on the subject. And did he agree that younger people were buying his type of music.

"I don't know if thirteen-year-olds get anything out of listening to us and people like us or whether they just buy the records, but it's nice if they do. It's a question of social awareness. I don't like to use the word 'underground' because it's become mis-used but if we have to then underground is basically good music that is valid and I don't think a lot of people can knock that."

"It's developed into an art form. It fills a definite gap. It should be minority music, the industry itself has created a lot of the demand for it."

"It's getting to the stage where if a band forms and wants to make some bread and make their bid for fame, it's progressive rock with long hair and dirty T-shirts. Three years ago, if we wanted to play music we did just that, it was probably silly, but we did. Today it seems to be the done thing."

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