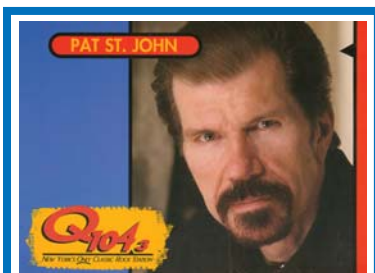


Pat St.John



## Blues

Alvin Lee *Alvin Lee In Tennessee*  
Rainman Records RM04012



**Pat St. John** plays tracks from this album on his national Blues Show on Sirius Satellite Radio (Sirius Blues 29) from 7:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. (ET) and plays Ten Years After on his local radio program on New York City's Classic Rock Station WAXQ, "Q-104.3". Visit him on [www.Sirius.com](http://www.Sirius.com), [www.Q1043.com](http://www.Q1043.com), and [www.PatStJohn.com](http://www.PatStJohn.com).

IT'S ONE OF THOSE RARE and wonderful moments when you put a new CD in your machine, and within 15 seconds, you know you're going to love the whole disc. Funny, when you do experience that prediction, you're somehow usually right. Such was the case for me when I loaded *Alvin Lee in Tennessee*, the master guitarist's 25<sup>th</sup> album. The first song is titled "Let's Boogie," and it sets the tone for what is sort of a return-to-his-roots record for a guy who is mainly remembered for his blistering guitar work and performance at Woodstock in 1969. For most of us, that was the first time we'd ever heard the leader of the band Ten Years After.

Born in Nottingham, England, Lee fell in love with American rock-'n'-roll, and number one on the list was the music of Elvis Presley, primarily because of the guitarist on those sides, Scotty Moore, who quickly became Lee's main inspiration to pick up an axe himself. Alvin couldn't have imagined at the time that one day Scotty Moore would be backing *him* up on one of *his* albums. What a thrill for Alvin. But why stop there? Get The King of Rock'n'Roll's drummer D.J. Fontana to pound the skins for the session as well! Then, *record* it at Scotty's home studio in Nashville! You know, just as he was beginning his career in 1967, Alvin told a local

newspaper that his favorite guitar player to listen to was Scotty Moore. Not only "wow!" but this gets better. Recorded mostly live in the studio, this is an album of blues & boogie-woogie that rocks! I can't tell you that the album builds and builds because it just starts so strongly with that opening track, but this is a collection of mostly original songs written expressly for this project that capture the "feel" of the good old R&R of the '50s. Scotty and Alvin crafted this album together and the whole band plays with their hearts as well as their instruments. His guitar work here is as masterful as ever, though not as intricate, as for this album, it doesn't need to be. I don't think I've ever heard Alvin sing like he's had this much fun before, even though he has given' it his "all" before, like when he got to yelling on "I'm Going Home" at that legendary Woodstock performance that blew everyone away. By the way, that's the song here that closes *Alvin Lee in Tennessee*, but done in a way that harkens back to a time when rockabilly was just loose, and made you want to get up off your

seat & shake (not that this CD isn't "tight")! My guess is they put this tune on the album as the closer just for a final grin.

Now that I've told you about the first and last track, let's get to the middle of this great, "drop-the-top-and fly" 55-minute ride. Sure it

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**Nothing fancy about *Alvin Lee In Tennessee*, just a truly great guitarist playing with his heroes.**

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slows down to the in-town speed limit once in a while, but like any great pleasure cruise, it picks right up again, time after time. When you add the rollicking piano work of Willie Rainsford, and Pete Pritchard's wonderful bass to the mix, man this record's got it! Imagine your favorite Chuck Berry, Carl Perkins, and Jerry Lee Lewis tunes and the feeling you got listening to them. Now picture (through today's recording technology) that you can hear each note of every instrument so clearly, it's like you're there! Fontana's snare *is* really there! It's amazing that these songs

can sound so raw, and are done with such passion, yet at the same time sound so crisp and clean, while still getting "down and dirty."

While the album maintains what they set out to accomplish, it's consistent, yet varied enough to hold your interest from start to finish.

Sure, if you look at the titles, "Why Did You Do It?", followed two songs later by "How Do You Do It?", you might think this is just going to be the same thing over and over, but it's not. "Let's Get It On" (not Marvin's)

is just blues that makes you feel good, which is what great blues does.

There is nothing fancy about this album, no studio tricks, just a great singer/guitarist (who's airplay these days pretty much consists of TYA's "I'd Love To Change The World" and that original "I'm Going Home" by a guy who is a hero to many himself) playing with *his* heroes, to create one of my favorite albums of 2004. If you want authentic rock, bop, blues and a whole lot of fun just jumping out of your speakers, all you have to do is join *Alvin Lee in Tennessee*!