

Lee Clayton – Bio

Lee Clayton was born on 29th October 1942 in Russellville, Alabama but his family soon moved across the state line and he grew up in the major industrial centre of Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Lee's father worked for the Union Carbide Corporation, who were heavily involved in research work, Oak Ridge also being a research centre for the American Atomic Energy Commission. Lee grew up in a musical household, family favourites being Jimmie Rodgers and Red Foley, while Saturday nights were spent by the radio listening to the *Opry*. Lee's father took him to the Opry when he was aged six. In an interview Clayton once told me *"To this day, I remember entertainers signing autographs in the alley at the stage door."* Lee's father was a self-taught piano and harmonica player, and at the age of nine Lee picked up his first guitar - a Hawaiian steel. After eighteen months the youngster balked at the strictures of music lessons and gave up playing for a time but not before, aged ten, he made his radio debut on "The Little Adams Club" performing Leon McAuliffe's "Steel Guitar Rag."

During his teen years Clayton's interest developed in numerous musical genres, and the major heroes of each - Hank Williams, B.B. King and Elvis Presley. In time he synthesised this mix of country, blues and rock n' roll into a unique writing and performing style. Having developed an interest in the fairer sex, his father confiscated the steel guitar when Lee was aged twelve. Aged sixteen, as folk music became popular Stateside Lee purchased an acoustic guitar. Following high school Lee enrolled at the University of Tennessee and also married his sweetheart, a mathematics major. For a time he traded his interest in music for '9 to 5' job. When a friend joined the Naval Air Arm, Lee grew restless and as a result his marriage crumbled. Clayton enlisted in the U.S.A.F. during the mid sixties, qualified as a fighter pilot, but was discharged toward the close of the decade. Lee composed his first song while in the service, and post his discharge settled in Nashville.

In 1972, the late Waylon Jennings [d. 2002] recorded Lee's "Ladies Love Outlaws" and the song became the title of an album released by RCA Victor that year. It peaked at # 11 on the Country Album Chart – **and in time sparked a 'new movement' in country music.** A couple of months later Lee appeared at the first of Willie Nelson's 4th of July Picnics, in Dripping Springs, Texas. Willie apart, the bill featured Waylon, Roy Acuff, Tex Ritter and another emerging songwriter, Billy Joe Shaver. Shaver and Clayton gained significant exposure in a subsequent *Rolling Stone* magazine article, and doubtless that influenced MCA Records to offer Lee a solo recording deal. Issued the following year, his self-titled debut album failed to generate significant sales. The French division of MCA reissued the disc during the early eighties.

Released from his MCA contract during the ensuing four years Lee honed his songwriting skills and then signed with Capitol Records. He went on to record three classic country rock albums for the imprint - **"Border Affair," "Naked Child" and "The Dream Goes On."** "Old Number Nine" on Lee's Capitol debut, recalled his days flying Widowmakers, while "Industry" from the third release, found Clayton lyrically rage at his memories of growing up in the industrial wasteland of Oak Ridge. Regarding the latter song, Clayton was *green* long before it became *popular coffee table* philosophy. Neil Wilburn produced the first two Capitol albums, but for **"The Dream Goes On"** Lee recalled Chip Young producer of his MCA debut. Conway Twitty took Lee's "Saturday Night Special" to # 9 on the Country Singles Chart during the early fall of 1988. In addition Clayton has had songs covered by Jerry Jeff Walker ["Won't You Give Me One More Chance"] and Willie Nelson ["If You Can Touch Her At All"].

Eight years elapsed before the, then, fledgling Dutch label Provogue released the next Lee Clayton recording. The eight-song, live album **"Another Night"** only featured one previously unrecorded Clayton composition "Money." During May 1988 Lee performed a solo concert in Oslo, Norway. Following the show, Lee was introduced to Tore Elgaroy [lead guitar] and Bjorn Juliusson [drums] who would go on to play on **"Another Night."** Later that year Lee and a four-piece band undertook a twenty-date Norway tour, and on 8th September 1988 the live album was recorded at the Cruise Cafe in Oslo. The band subsequently took the name *His True Loves*, and in the Fall of the next year to promote the live album Clayton undertook an extensive European tour with them. In late 1990 Messrs Nelson, Cash, Kristofferson and Jennings covered Lee's "Silver Stallion." When culled as a single from the **"Highwayman II"** album, it reached # 25 on the Country Singles Chart. When Clayton and His True Loves undertook their second European tour during October 1990, Provogue released a four-track CD single headlined by the album cut "Tequila Is Addictive" supported by the previously unreleased 'live' tracks "Whatcha Gonna Do," "Saturday Night Special" and "10,000 Years/Sexual Moon." Four years later

Provogue label released **“Spirit Of The Twilight,”** so far, Lee’s most recent studio outing. It was recorded in Limerick, Ireland and co-produced by Lee and Phillip Donnelly. Donnelly having served as Lee’s lead guitarist during the Capitol years.

Clayton’s MCA and Capitol albums have been reissued on CD on numerous occasions during the last two decades, although, in early 2008, the Evangeline label was the first to release the Capitol trio in their entirety on 2CD’s as **“The Capitol Years.”**

Discography : **“Lee Clayton”** [1973] ; **“Border Affair”** [1978] ; **“Naked Child”** [1979] ; **“The Dream Goes On”** [1981] ; **“Another Night”** [1989] ; **“Spirit Of The Twilight”** [1994] ; **“The Capitol Years”** [2008] :

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