

Beat: Miscellaneous

Tommy Ramone, last original member of the Ramones, dead at 65

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USPA News - Tommy Ramone, the last surviving founding member of the influential punk rock band the Ramones, which revitalized rock and roll at one of its lowest ebbs, died in New York City on Friday after a battle with cancer, his friends said on Saturday. He was 65. Ramone, who was originally from Hungary, died at his home in the New York City borough of Queens at about 12:15 p.m. local time on Friday.

He had been receiving hospice care following treatment for bile duct cancer, said Andy Schwartz, the former editor of New York Rocker magazine. "My pal Tommy Ramone, I will truly miss you," said Linda Ramone, the widow of Johnny Ramone, another founding member of the band. Tommy Ramone was the first drummer of the Ramones, which was founded in Queens in 1974. They quickly became a major influence on the punk rock movement in both the United States and Britain, releasing three albums in just 18 months. By 1978, their place in rock `n` roll history was already assured and their music would continue to influence a generation of rockers. "It wasn't just music in The Ramones: it was an idea. It was bringing back a whole feel that was missing in rock music - it was a whole push outwards to say something new and different," Tommy Ramone said in 1978. "Originally it was just an artistic type of thing; finally I felt it was something that was good enough for everybody." The band, which performed a total of 3,263 concerts, was also prolific, releasing 21 studio and live albums between 1976 and 1996. In the years prior to his death, Tommy Ramone and his long-time partner, Claudia Tienan, performed and recorded as the acoustic duo "Uncle Monk," playing old-time country and bluegrass music. "As he has been my friend since I was 10, it's a deeply sad and personal loss for me, as it is for all the people he held close who loved him, and an entire culture as well," said Mickey Leigh, the brother of the late original band member Joey Ramone. "The man who coined the chant 'Hey Ho, Let's Go' went on his way. He keeps going, in our hearts. Move forward, old friend." Laura Levine, a friend of Tommy Ramone and Claudia Tienan, also paid tribute. "They are like family to me and this loss is unimaginable, on a personal level but also for his importance to music and popular culture," she said. "He and Claudia - as the wonderful bluegrass duo 'Uncle Monk' - performed on my porch, wrote and recorded a Mystery Ditty, came to my art openings, and were loyal to their friends to the end."

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