

Kansas - Song For America [1975/2009]

Written by bluesever

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1. *Down The Road* (3:43) 2. *Song For America* (9:59) 3. *Lamplight Symphony* (8:11) 4. *Lonely Street* (5:43) 5. *The Devil Game* (5:03) 6. *Incomudro - Hymn To The Atman* (12:12)
Bonus tracks on Legacy/Sony remaster(2004):

7. *Song For America (single edit)* 8. *Down The Road (live/ previously unreleased)*
- Phil Ehart - drums - Dave Hope - bass, backing vocals - Kerry Livgren - guitars, keyboards, backing vocals - Robbie Steinhardt - lead vocals, violin - Steve Walsh - lead vocals, keyboards
- Rich Williams - lead guitar

KANSAS was a band often not the most respected by rock critics, rock fans, and prog rock fans. Some accuse them of pandering to the AOR of the time (judging them only from their FM hits). Others thought they were simply rednecks pretending to be prog rockers. Others didn't like them because they stood for all that's wrong with prog rock, and the list goes on. But despite their overplayed hits, they had a lot to offer. The band played in the Midwest in redneck bars and clubs whose patrons were obviously not appreciative of the music they were playing. Not to mention a lot of this area of the country tended to be conservative (politically and socially) so there was a lot going against this band (specifically the generally non-appreciative audience they played to in their early days). But the band was signed to Don Kirshner's label, Kirshner (Don Kirshner was the guy responsible for such "manufactured" and "make believe" groups as The ARCHIES and The MONKEES, so KANSAS was different in the manner they were a real band and were to be taken seriously) and got to business first by releasing their debut in 1974, and following it with this, "Song For America".

The music is truly a fascinating blend of prog rock and bar band rock. The album starts off with a rather straightforward rocker, "Down the Road", which has more in common with Southern Rock, but then the band gets in to prog rock epic proportions like on the title track and "Hymn to the Atman". The music tends to be quite lengthy and extended full of great violin, guitar, and Mini Moog solos. I also like the use of string synths they added on some of the pieces. I also like the hard rocking "The Devil Game", another one of the more redneck-y "bar band" type

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pieces, but it works really well. For the longest time I avoided Kansas, thinking they were another AOR act like BOSTON, JOURNEY, STYX, FOREIGNER, etc., not to mention "Carry On Wayward Son" being overplayed on the radio (which I always thought was filled with AOR clichés, I'm glad now that I don't judge this band by their hits - and you shouldn't either).

Certainly "Leftoverture" and "Point of Know Return" might be their best known and best selling albums, but they had three albums prior worth checking in to, and this is the pre- "Leftoverture" album you should try first. ---Proghead, progarchives.com

Probably the most prog of Kansas' albums, this one spotlights long, orchestrated songs and unusual time signatures. There is an extended nine/eight instrumental break in the middle of the title track. "Lamplight Symphony" offers long, orchestrated passages. When the energy is there, it is intense energy, such as "Down the Road" and "The Devil Game." The longer songs unfortunately can lose a passive listener. But all in all, this is a good (if not adolescent) recording for a group of this genre. ---Mark Allender, allmusic.com

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