

Kansas – The Prophets Have Spoken (2011)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 11 July 2011 08:23 - Last Updated Saturday, 26 May 2018 11:59

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CD 1 01. *Howling At The Moon* 02. *Musicatto* 03. *Belexes* 04. *Point Of Know Return* 05. *Song For America* 06. *Billy Speaks* 07. *On The Other Side* 08. *Hold On* 09. *Dust In The Wind*

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CD 2 01. *Billy Speaks* 02. *The Wall* 03. *Cheyenne Anthem* 04. *Icarus* 05. *Miracles Out Of Nowhere* 06. *Portrait (He Knew)* 07. *Crowd Cheering* 08. *Fight Fire With Fire*

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09. *Carry On Wayward Son*

Line-up: Steve Walsh – vocals, keyboards Billy Greer – bass, vocals, acoustic guitar Rich Williams – guitars David Ragsdale – violin, backing vocals, electric guitar Phil Ehart – drums

Kansas was a classic rock music band from Topeka, Kansas whose commercial heyday was from 1976-1986. They were formed from the ashes of several Topeka-area bands of the early 1970s. Featuring the songwriting of keyboardist Kerry Livgren and vocalist Steve Walsh, the other members of the original lineup were bassist Dave Hope, violinist Robbie Steinhardt, drummer Phil Ehart, and guitarist Rich Williams. Kansas gained a record contract with Kirshner Records, a CBS subsidiary. Three early 1970s albums charted on the lower reaches of the album charts, but it was with their 1976 hit "Carry On Wayward Son" that the band hit the big time. That was from their album *Leftoverture*. The follow-up album, *Point of Know Return* from late 1977 was even more popular with the hits "Dust in the Wind" and the title track.

On their 1979 tour while touring for the *Monolith* album, Kerry Livgren accepted Jesus Christ as his personal savior. This was followed by Dave Hope also becoming a Christian on their 1980 tour. As a result Kansas' three early 1980s albums, *Audio-Visions*, *Vinyl Confessions*, and *Drastic Measures*, all had strong Christian themes in the lyrics. Steve Walsh left in 1981 over lyrical and artistic differences during this time of change for the band, followed by the departure of Robbie Steinhardt the next year. Walsh's replacement on vocals was John Elefante, also a Christian, who sung on the *Vinyl Confessions* and *Drastic Measures* albums. The band continued to chart with hit singles such as "Play the Game Tonight" in 1982.

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Kerry Livgren co-authored a book with Christian writer Kenneth Boa during this time, *Seeds of Change*. In the book he told the history of the band Kansas, explained the meanings of the lyrics he had written for the band's early albums (many of which dealt with a striving search for the meaning of life), and how the search led to him becoming a Christian. *Seeds of Change* was also the title of a 1980 solo album by Kerry Livgren.

Tiring of dealing with record company pressure to tone down their Christian lyrics and churn out commercial pop hits (which Livgren addressed with the biting commentary in the song "Mainstream"), Kansas broke up at the end of 1983 after playing a final New Year's Eve concert. Kerry Livgren and Dave Hope started the Christian Rock band "A.D.", while John Elefante pursued a solo career in contemporary Christian music and, with his brother Dino Elefante, as a Christian music producer.

The remaining members regrouped with Steve Walsh back on vocals and with Steve Morse, formerly of the Dixie Dregs, also joining the band. This resulted in their 1986 album *Power*, which included Kansas' last Top 20 hit single, "All I Wanted". This lineup released one more album, *In the Spirit of Things*, in 1988, a concept album about a historic flood that hit a small Kansas town during World War II. It is interesting that despite the departure of the three Christian members from the band, both of these albums have some Christian themes, especially the latter which had backing vocals from Rev. James Cleveland & The Southern California Community Choir. *In the Spirit of Things* was a commercial flop, however.

The band has since regrouped several times under different lineups. Two of the resulting studio albums, *Freaks of Nature* and *Somewhere to Elsewhere*, both featured Kerry Livgren returning to write new material for the band. The latter, released in 2000, was written entirely by Kerry Livgren with Christian themes. Today, Livgren and Elefante are both still active in contemporary Christian music, while Rev. Dave Hope is an ordained minister in a Continuing Anglican parish in Florida.

In 2002, Kansas II (the lineup prior to the recording and release of Kansas' first album) released an album under the group name Proto-Kaw, featuring demos and live material recorded from 1971 to 1973. This led to a new studio album, *Before Became After* (2004), with most of the Kansas II members participating. Proto-Kaw released a third album, *The Wait of Glory*, in 2006.

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Kansas has continued to tour every year. The 2006 tour was delayed for a few weeks due to Steinhardt's second departure, and Ragsdale subsequently returned to the lineup. In 2008, the Kansas website announced that four of the five current members (Ehart, Ragsdale, Williams and Greer) had formed a recording group called Native Window, and they released their self-titled debut album in June 2009.

In February 2009, Kansas recorded a concert in Topeka, Kansas featuring a full symphony orchestra, with Larry Baird conducting. Morse and Livgren appeared as special guests on several songs. The performance was released on CD, DVD and Blu-ray and the DVD hit #5 on Billboard's Music Video Chart the week after its release. As of July 13, 2010, Kansas had recently completed a 30-day "United We Rock" tour with fellow classic rock legends Styx and Foreigner.

Kansas was touring September 2010 to January 2011. They will be performing with Symphonies of various colleges around the U.S. in an effort to raise money for the individual schools' music programs. The final show of the series, on January 28, 2011, is to be performed at McCain Auditorium on the campus of Kansas State University to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the state of Kansas being granted statehood. The concert will be filmed by PBS to be used in a future broadcast special in the region. Kansas will perform live on stage at the Glasgow, Kentucky Kentucky Plaza Theater on Friday May 13, 2011.

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