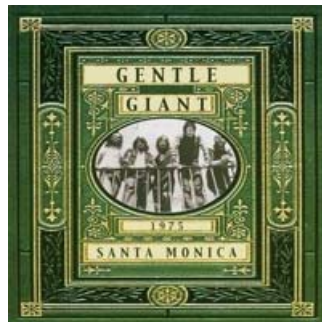


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## Live In Santa Monica 1975

### Gentle Giant



We listeners and lovers of classic rock are a faithful breed, often derided by 'other' music fans for our love of 'the old stuff'. If you happen to be into progressive classic rock, you find yourself surrounded by even smaller group of supporters. Then, in the 'prog rock' field if you happen to live for the music of bands like Nektar, Starcastle and Gentle Giant over the biggies like Pink Floyd or Yes, you find yourself in an even smaller circle. Being a Gentle Giant fan you are truly in a minority, a fan of a true 'cult' band, a lover of a luminary collective of great musical mavens who never 'broke' big like their more popular contemporaries Genesis or even ELP. Lucky for you there is the live CD from Gentle Giant, **Live In Santa Monica 1975**.

Released by Glasshouse Records, **Live In Santa Monica 1975** features the band at just about midway in their career (the last two songs "For Nobody #1" and "For Nobody #2" were recorded in Dallas in 1977). As the liner note booklet attests, GG often enjoyed more popularity "on the continent" and in America where they supported acts like Jethro Tull and Black Sabbath, than they ever did in their home turf of England. This CD does illustrate they were an acquired 'taste,' but there is no denying the band's prodigious talents. Helmed by front man Derek Shulman, these seven songs feature recorders, vibes, various keys, violin, plus the usual array of rock, bass and drums of any other 'regular' rock band. With a solid amount of personal changes (at the beginning Gentle Giant supported Shulman and his two brothers, Roy and Phil), and running through three different drummers (sounds like Spinal Tap!) GG lumbered on through eleven amazing studio albums, such as "Octopus" and "Giant for a Day" from 1970 until 1980. **Live In Santa Monica 1975** is a great live account of what GG was all about on those studio recordings.

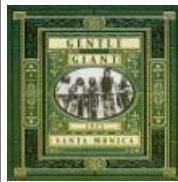
Songs like "Proclamation"-which I feel is probably the best track here-features some great guitar playing, radical hair-raising changes, vibes and violin playing. There is the requisite drum solo on "So Sincere" and just as you think it might be stretching on a little too long, in comes a nice vibes interlude. The "Advent of Panurge" has what has got to be one of the few times I ever have heard a recorder duet on record, with a snippet of "Old McDonald" thrown in for good measure!

But be forewarned — **Live Santa Monica 1975** is lacking in sound quality. The bass distorts on almost every song, we get snippets of pieces (the first song "Cogs in Cogs" just begins mid song) and the vocals, never a GG strong point, sound a bit shrill. Doing some research on Glasshouse and all things Gentle Giant, it seems that the record company is trying to present cleaned-up, professional packages of albums that were long available only on bootleg and for this I applaud them, but unless you are truly a Gentle Giant fan, **Live Santa Monica 1975**, might be a tough sell.


From time to time there has been talk of a Gentle Giant reunion, some members have even played with each other in various incarnations (even recording some new material), but none of the surviving giants (drummer Martin Smith died in 1997) seem to want to get together for a full "GG" reunion. Derek Shulman left the band in 1980 and became vice-president at PolyGram, signing Bon Jovi, Cinderella and Tears For Fears, among others. Currently, Shulman is the president of his own label and with the other guys scattering to the UK and America, it seems releases like **Live Santa Monica 1975** will truly be the only chance any of us have of hearing Gentle Giant, albeit maybe not from the best recording source, but at least these many years later.

~ Ralph Greco, Jr.

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