

DOG SOLDIER

Dog Soldier's sole, self-titled album had strong connections to the Keef Hartley Band, with Hartley on drums; longtime Hartley band singer and guitarist Miller Anderson; and Derek Griffiths, who'd played alongside Hartley in the mid-'60s in the Artwoods, on guitar and vocals as well. The record isn't as blues-rock-oriented as most of Hartley's past work, perhaps because, according to the liner notes to the 2011 CD reissue, "the story goes that the band were placed under a certain amount of pressure to pursue a radio-friendly American AOR feel, much against their will." Despite the group's impressive credentials, the record is indeed an unsatisfying, unimpressive mid-'70s AOR effort, and not solely because the bandmembers seem uncertain of their direction. There's some undistinguished histrionic hard rock of the kind you'd expect from an album whose cover boasts a ludicrous painting of a Native American warrior astride a rocket ship. This is leavened by touches of art rock, usually via Mel Simpson's sometimes spacy keyboards, as well as some nagging if unmemorable hard rock riffs and a dose of the pop harmonies you'd expect from a band pressured to get American airplay. The CD reissue on Esoteric adds historical liner notes and a lengthier version (identified as "first version") of the most interesting track, the 11-minute closer, "Looks Like Rain," which has the record's most extended and faintly psychedelic instrumental progressive rock passage.