

The King's Last Song

By Geoff Ryman

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"[Ryman] has not so much created as revealed a world in which the promise of redemption takes seed even in horror."—*The Boston Globe*

“Sweeping and beautiful. . . . The complex story tears the veil from a hidden world.”—*The Sunday Times*

“Inordinately readable . . . extraordinary in its detail, color and brutality.”—*The Independent*

"Ryman has crafted a solid historical novel with an authentic feel for both ancient and modern Cambodia."
—*Washington DC City Paper*

“Another masterpiece by one of the greatest fiction writers of our time.”—Kim Stanley Robinson

"Ryman's knack for depicting characters; his ability to tell multiple, interrelated stories; and his knowledge of Cambodian history create a rich narrative that looks at Cambodia's "killing fields" both recent and ancient and Buddhist belief with its desire for transcendence. Recommended for all literary fiction collections."
—*Library Journal*

Archeologist Luc Andrade discovers an ancient Cambodian manuscript inscribed on gold leaves but is kidnapped—and the manuscript stolen—by a faction still loyal to the ideals of the brutal Pol Pot regime. Andrade’s friends, an ex-Khmer Rouge agent and a young motoboy, embark on a trek across Cambodia to rescue him. Meanwhile, Andrade, bargaining for his life, translates the lost manuscript for his captors. The result is a glimpse into the tremendous and heart-wrenching story of King Jayavarman VII: his childhood, rise to power, marriage, interest in Buddhism, and the initiation of Cambodia’s golden age. As Andrade and Jayavarman’s stories interweave, the question becomes whether the tale of ancient wisdom can bring hope to a nation still suffering from the violent legacy of the last century.

Geoff Ryman is the author of the novels *Air* (winner of Arthur C Clarke and James Tiptree awards) and *The Unconquered Country* (a World Fantasy Award winner). Canadian by birth, he has lived in Cambodia and Brazil and now teaches creative writing at the University of Manchester in England.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
After thriving in science fiction (the Arthur C. Clarke Award–winning *Air*), Ryman takes on the political history of Cambodia in this unsettling if overlong novel. In 2004, U.N. archeologist Luc Andrade discovers a 12th-century memoir written by Jayavarman Seven, one of the first Buddhist kings of a predominantly Hindu kingdom. While transporting the book to safety, Luc is kidnapped by a disgruntled Cambodian army lieutenant-colonel who believes the book should be returned to the people. As Luc fights to stay alive, his Cambodian friends—Map, a former Khmer Rouge murderer who now makes money hustling tourists, and William, a motorcycle taxi driver whose parents were killed during Pol Pot's regime—search for Luc and the ancient treasure. Ryman mixes his contemporary storyline with a less compelling narrative of Jayavarman, a precocious young prince turned exiled warrior king. While Luc's life story and current predicament are particularly well done, Ryman's take on Jayavarman and the development of his battle strategies can be plodding. In the end, it's the vibrant emotional lives of Luc and his friends that capture the tragic beauty of Cambodia. *(Sept.)*
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From Booklist
Starred Review Ryman’s reputation as a leading speculative fiction author has been forged with novels that push the envelope of literary innovation with often-disquieting results. His dark, surreal exploration of the Oz mythos, Was (1993), envisioned Baum’s real-life inspiration for Dorothy as a sexually abused teenager living in squalor. Now Ryman steps outside the sf genre for a sweeping mainstream novel that recaptures a slice of Cambodia’s cultural history. When French archaeologist Luc Andrade unearths an ancient Cambodian manuscript, he’s taken prisoner by a political faction still loyal to the defunct Pol Pot regime. During a search-and-rescue attempt by Andrade’s friends, an ex-Khmer Rouge agent and a young tourist guide, Andrade translates the manuscript in full for his captors. The narrative alternates between Andrade’s plight and the story of twelfth-century King Jayavarman VII, including his childhood, eventual rise to power, and conversion of the populace to Buddhism, which spurred construction of the famous Angkor Wat temples. Ryman draws on his extensive knowledge of Indo-Chinese history and his masterful descriptive powers to paint an unforgettably vivid portrait of Cambodian culture past and present. His focus on the power of a peaceful philosophy to assuage pain and guilt brings a message of hope to a country still haunted by its war-torn past. --Carl Hays

Review
'Geoff Ryman has the true novelist's gift -- he takes the reader inside other lives and other cultures, and makes them live with the utmost vividness. In this case we experience Cambodia in all its beauty and conflict, both past and present. Another masterpiece by one of the greatest fiction writers of our time.' Kim Stanley Robinson 'A fascinating panorama of Cambodian life, past and present. The original subject-matter, broad scope and elegant style make for an exceptionally enlightening read.' Michael Arditti Praise for 253: 'Has more emotional depth than a festival of tear-jerkers' INDEPENDENT 'A stylistically dazzling box of fireworks' GLASGOW HERALD 'Astonishingly vibrant! lyrical and totally engaging' LA TIMES

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Felix Talarico:

Information is provisions for anyone to get better life, information nowadays can get by anyone with everywhere. The information can be a information or any news even an issue. What people must be consider if those information which is inside the former life are challenging be find than now's taking seriously which one is suitable to believe or which one typically the resource are convinced. If you get the unstable resource then you obtain it as your main information you will see huge disadvantage for you. All of those possibilities will not happen inside you if you take The King's Last Song as the daily resource information.

Roxanne Harrelson:

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