

= Kings and Queens (Thirty Seconds to Mars song) =

" Kings and Queens " is a song by American rock band Thirty Seconds to Mars , featured on their third studio album This Is War (2009) . Written by lead vocalist Jared Leto across the United States and South Africa , the track was produced by Flood , Steve Lillywhite and Thirty Seconds to Mars . According to Leto , the lyrics of " Kings and Queens " explore the triumphant feeling of human possibilities . The melody of the song contains several qualities similar to that of 1980s adult contemporary musical works and is imbued with elements of progressive rock . The song was released as the lead single from This Is War on October 13 , 2009 .

" Kings and Queens " received critical acclaim , with critics deeming it as an album highlight . Much of the praise went to the song 's lyrics and the musical production ; reviewers also complimented Leto 's vocals . The song became the band 's second number one single on the US Alternative Songs and attained success in international markets . The accompanying music video , directed by Jared Leto , features Thirty Seconds to Mars and a group of followers on a critical mass movement through Los Angeles at night . Critics lauded the simplicity of the video , which was nominated for numerous accolades , including four awards at the 2010 MTV Video Music Awards .

Thirty Seconds to Mars performed the song on The Tonight Show with Conan O'Brien featuring the Street Drum Corps , and included it on the setlist of the Into the Wild Tour . The song was also performed on the band 's Love , Lust , Faith and Dreams Tour , as well as the Carnivores Tour .

= = Background = =

" Kings and Queens " was written by Jared Leto and produced by Flood , Steve Lillywhite and Thirty Seconds to Mars . The song was recorded by Ryan Williams and Matt Radosevich at The International Centre for the Advancement of the Arts and Sciences of Sound in Los Angeles , California . It premiered on Kevin and Bean 's radio show of KROQ in Los Angeles on October 6 , 2009 . Leto constructed the lyrics of " Kings and Queens " across two different continents ; the idea was conceived on a flight from the United States and realised upon touchdown in South Africa . He further elaborated on the writing process in an interview with MusicRadar :

In early 2009 , Leto told Billboard that he was excited by the song as soon as he wrote it . He said , " I had written a verse right as we were going to the airport ? I literally almost missed the flight because I picked up the guitar and this song came out . You have that moment of discovery that 's exciting . "

= = Composition = =

" Kings and Queens " is an alternative rock song with influences and elements from progressive rock and arena rock . It opens with a wild hawk scream recorded live over the band 's work space , then transitioning into an ambient introduction . The song includes a heavy contribution from the band 's fans , captured singing a chorus created from layers of the band 's Summit recordings . According to the sheet music published at Musicnotes.com by Universal Music Publishing Group , " Kings and Queens " is written in the time signature of common time , with a moderate metronome of 82 beats per minute . It is composed in the key of E ? major and the melody spans the tonal range of B ? 3 to B ? 5 .

Jared Leto explained that the title and theme of the track were inspired by a book found at the band 's South African work space , but that it " ended up being a good metaphor " for world events from the past year . He further said that the lyrics feature " a triumphant feeling of the possibilities that we all have . " Kelly Staskel of Billboard felt that " stately drums and dramatic strings " are paired with lyrics that take on a " stark , apocalyptic tone " , referring to the last verse of the song , which says " The age of man is over / A darkness comes and all / These lessons that we learned here / Have only just begun " . Ryan Jones of Alternative Addiction noticed the 1980s influences that resonated throughout the track and compared its melody to the sound of U2 .

Alex Useman of The Husky Herald described the song saying , " ' Kings and Queens ' starts out

with a soft piano melody and instantly picks up as the drum kicks in . The intensity of the song subsides as Jared Leto 's voice enters sings the verse and once the chorus hits , the entire band explodes into a beautiful assortment of instrumentation , choric background vocals , and Leto 's soaring voice . When the bridge begins , the storm of the song seems to subside and what is left is Leto 's voice ringing out " The age of man is over [...] Have only just begun " and through the bridge , there is an intense build up which leads into the final chorus . "

= = Critical reception = =

" Kings and Queens " was met with general acclaim from music critics . Kelly Staskel from Billboard commented , " Grounded by Leto 's convincing vocals , ' Kings and Queens ' is epic rock at its most affecting . " She praised the song saying , " a chorus chants behind singer Jared Leto 's smooth , powerful voice , evoking the collective thrill of a live show . " Victoria Durham from Rock Sound acknowledged the influences of U2 and called the song " epic and euphoric " . Andrew Ellis from Melodic magazine felt that the song features all the elements of the band 's previous single " From Yesterday " mixed with higher vocal patterns and a " great sing along chorus " . Stephen Thomas Erlewine from AllMusic praised the track as one of the album 's highlights . Tim Grierson from About.com was impressed with the song and opined that Thirty Seconds to Mars wants to inspire the listener with " arena @-@ ready anthems " like " Kings and Queens " , which he called a " grand sing @-@ along song " that has a " populist feel " .

Jon Bye , writing for Gigwise , felt that the track is " full on epic space rock , almost certainly designed with stadium in mind " . He called it " highly affirming and uplifting " , while pointing out the influences of U2 . Alex Lai from Contactmusic gave the song a positive review , noticing that it opens up with a " tidal wave of ' woah ' vocals , galloping strings " and features a chorus to " shake the foundations of the arenas " . He also felt that Jared Leto is as " impassioned " in his vocal delivery as ever . At the end of 2009 , Rock Sound listed " Kings and Queens " as the best song of the year . AOL Radio placed the track at number one on the Top Alternative Songs of 2010 , with critic Sara Anderson saying , " if ever there were an arena @-@ ready song , this would be it . " Furthermore , Alternative Addiction ranked the song at number 30 on its list of the 50 Best Songs of 2009 .

= = Music video = =

= = = Development = = =

The music video for " Kings and Queens " was directed by Jared Leto under the pseudonym of Bartholomew Cubbins . It was shot the weekend of October 11 ? 13 , 2009 in Los Angeles over the course of several nights , filming some of the city 's most iconic landmarks . Leto explained , " I think this city is a beautiful place at night , and we have these empty streets , and it 's kind of a haunting , forgotten landscape ... very serene . " The crew recruited scores of extras and all manner of surrealist street performers to appear in the video . On October 11 , 2009 , Thirty Seconds to Mars shut down Santa Monica Pier and filmed a segment of the short film along with a group of cyclists . Leto got the inspiration behind the video after some of his friends did Critical Mass and Crank Mob , " groups of riders that get together and kind of reclaim public spaces and take over the streets in several cities around America , " and he thought that it would be the perfect backdrop for the music video of " Kings and Queens " .

During the shooting , the crew had some problems in filming some scenes . Leto told MTV News , " It 's been an incredible adventure , but it 's also been really difficult , because there are so many people , and we 're shutting down streets of Los Angeles . " He further said that they were really worried about a scene regarding a lone horse running down a Los Angeles street : " We only had three takes that we had time to do . The first take it went sideways , second take it went the other way . Third take ? Perfect . " Leto described the experience of filming the music video saying , " It 's a lyrical and slightly metaphorical surreal journey through the city of Angels , from downtown Los

Angeles to Santa Monica Pier . We like to create an adventure and this has been an adventure . [...] This is what we were supposed to do . And I doubted the idea up until the very last minute , but the process has been phenomenal . " The music video premiered on November 9 , 2009 at the Montalban Theater in Los Angeles .

= = = Concept = = =

The music video features a critical mass crank mob movement , founded with forward @-@ thinking and eco @-@ conscious intentions , on a night time journey from downtown Los Angeles to Santa Monica Pier . A different theme of the video simply features the band playing on a cliff edge in Griffith Park overlooking the city . These two themes alternate between each other during the course of the video . " Kings and Queens " begins with a framed silhouette shot of dozens of cyclists moving in slow motion , backed by a sunset . From the scenic view of the city 's skyline , the cast , crew and other members wrapped up and headed to downtown Los Angeles for scenes involving a horse and a fire thrower , among others .

" Kings and Queens " is filled with references to other art forms . Some of the cyclists are dressed as the Baseball Furies gang from the 1979 film The Warriors , and at one point a frame meticulously recreates underground artist Banksy 's Flower Chucker graffiti . In the video also appears a horse running down a deserted city street in slow motion , which was described as a surreal and fantastic vision of downtown Los Angeles . As " Kings and Queens " comes to a close , the group of cyclists make their way onto Santa Monica Pier as the sun rises . The band 's song " Stranger in a Strange Land " is played during the credits for the full music video .

= = = Reception = = =

Upon its release , the video received universal acclaim from contemporary music critics . James Montgomery from MTV felt that the video " is most definitely a massive thing , but it 's a spiritual endeavor , too : a celebration of a band , their fans and an unyielding sense of purpose " . He further commented , " the message , it seems , is clear : There is might in masses , a freedom in unity and strength in conviction . And all it takes to harness any of it is will . " Montgomery also noticed that although the band 's previous videos were more elaborate , " Kings and Queens " was " no less of an epic undertaking " . Joe Bosso of MusicRadar was impressed by the video and felt that " the beautifully shot clip " is a " reverent nod " to directors Akira Kurosawa and Walter Hill . He noted that its production values " haven 't been seen in music videos for quite some time " . August Brown from the Los Angeles Times opined that with " raging wildfires and white stallion " that joins them , Thirty Seconds to Mars " hasn 't lost its taste for the epic " . Tim Grierson from About.com felt that Los Angeles is featured in all its glory in the music video for " Kings and Queens " . Kyle Anderson from MTV believed that although the premise and approach of the music video is " relatively simple " and does not feature special effects , it is " actually an incredibly cinematic , wholly satisfying experience " . In 2013 , Kerrang ! magazine included " Kings and Queens " among the best music videos by Thirty Seconds to Mars , noting that " the band never shy away from a challenge , making full use of frontman Jared Leto 's Hollywood experience and delivering huge , concept @-@ based short films . "

In December 2009 , " Kings and Queens " was voted the best video of the year by readers of Rock Sound . On August 3 , 2010 , the video received four nominations at the 2010 MTV Video Music Awards in the categories of Best Art Direction , Best Direction , Best Rock Video , and Video of the Year . It went on to win Best Rock Video . At the 2010 MTV Europe Music Awards , it was nominated for Best Video . It also received nominations at the Fuse Awards and the Kerrang ! Awards , winning Best Video at the 2009 Rock on Request Awards .

= = Live performances = =

On December 10 , 2009 , Thirty Seconds to Mars performed " Kings and Queens " on The Tonight

Show with Conan O'Brien featuring the Street Drum Corps , a string quartet and ten @-@ person choir . " Kings and Queens " was performed as the last song of band 's Into the Wild Tour . Throughout the tour , Jared Leto used to choose audience members to join Thirty Seconds to Mars on stage for the song . " Kings and Queens " was played during the Tribus Centum Numerarae , the 300th show of the tour , which garnered the band the Guinness World Record for most live shows during a single album cycle . The show took place on December 7 , 2011 at the Hammerstein Ballroom in New York City and was broadcast worldwide on the internet . At the 2012 O Music Awards in June , it was awarded Best Online Concert Experience .

On May 13 , 2011 , Thirty Seconds to Mars recorded a performance for the television program MTV Unplugged during which they played an acoustic version of " Kings and Queens " featuring musicians from the Vitamin String Quartet . The song was included on the set list of the band 's Love , Lust , Faith and Dreams Tour and was performed both in the original and acoustic version . It was also performed on the Carnivores Tour , a tour on which Thirty Seconds to Mars co @-@ headlined with Linkin Park .

= = Cover versions and media usage = =

The Tufts Beelzebubs covered an a cappella version of " Kings and Queens " during their Spring Show on March 5 , 2010 , which was later released on their 2011 album , Battle . At the 2012 Contemporary A Cappella Recording Awards on April 5 , the cover version won Best Male Collegiate Song and received a nomination for Best Male Collegiate Arrangement for Alexander Koutzoukis . " Kings and Queens " was featured in films such as Skyline (2010) , Two Rabbits (2012) and John Carter (2012) . It can also be heard in the trailers for Legend of the Guardians : The Owls of Ga'Hoole , Hugo and How to Train Your Dragon 2 . In 2013 , the song was used in the episode " The Savage Edge " of the television series North America . " Kings and Queens " is available as downloadable content for the music video game series Guitar Hero and Rock Band . On June 24 , 2014 , the London Philharmonic Orchestra premiered a cover version of the song on Vimeo . In March 2015 , British band You Me at Six covered " Kings and Queens " for Rock Sound magazine . The cover version appeared on the compilation Worship and Tributes (2015) , released for the 200th issue of the magazine .

= = Track listing = =

= = Credits and personnel = =

Performed by Thirty Seconds to Mars

Written by Jared Leto

Produced by Flood , Steve Lillywhite , and Thirty Seconds to Mars

Recorded by Ryan Williams and Matt Radosevich at The International Centre for the Advancement of the Arts and Sciences of Sound , Los Angeles , California

Audio engineering by Ryan Williams

Additional engineering by Tom Biller , Rob Kirwan , Jamie Schefman , and Sonny Diperri

Mixed by Ryan Williams at Pulse Recording Studios , Los Angeles , California

Additional strings orchestrated and recorded by Michael Einziger at Harvard University , Cambridge , Massachusetts

Mastered by Stephen Marcussen at Marcussen Mastering , Hollywood , California

Credits adapted from This Is War album liner notes .

= = Charts and certifications = =