

Ash Grunwald – Gargantua (2013)

Written by bluesever

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1 *The Last Stand* 3:22 2 *Breakout* 3:51 3 *Acting Cool* 4:24 4 *Walking* 2:58 5 *Crazy* 3:43 6 *Black And Blue* 4:16 7 *Raw* 3:34 8 *Skywriter* 3:25 9 *Mojo* 3:24 10 *Smokestack Lightning* 4:38 Ash Grunwald – guitar, vocals Scott Owen – double bass Andy Strachan – drums

So the story goes, Ash Grunwald spent just six days in a studio with Scott Owen and Andy Strachan of The Living End, and out popped *Gargantua*. An album like this makes you wonder why any stripped-down rock could ever take much longer. When music is this simple, *Gargantua* is a great example of how a fast, rough approach can add so much.

Acting Cool, one of only two originals on offer, is a real standout. Pinched harmonics and even a hint of double kick drum from Strachan let you know no member of this trio is interested in half-arsing it. *Black And Blue* is another cracker, with dirty, overblown guitar giving a new spin to this impassioned call and response while losing none of its chain gang grit. This isn't a hippie with an acoustic guitar stomping out his own beat; this is a blues disciple turning things up to 11 and recruiting what is possibly the most successful rhythm section working in Australian music today. You can hear Owen and Strachan grab onto everything Grunwald throws at them and wring out every last drop.

A couple of originals, a few rearranged self covers and a song left off the soundtrack to a Schwarzenegger movie might not sound like the ingredients for a good album, but *Gargantua* is all about a rock attitude that doesn't care about any of that. It only cares about delivering the real deal. Grunwald's vocals aren't always quite up to the growl he attempts, but the passion is real, and that's what matters. ---Pete Laurie, themusic.com.au

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