

Josh Teskey & Ash Grunwald – Push The Blues Away (2020)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)

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A1 Low Down Dog 3:39 A2 Hungry Heart 3:21 A3 Thinking 'Bout Myself 3:41 A4 Push The Blues Away 3:30 B1 It Rained 4:55 B2 Something With Feel 3:07 B3 Preachin' Blues 3:21 B4 The Sky Is Crying 4:03 Performers: Josh Teskey & Ash Grunwald

The formidable musical pairing of Josh Teskey and Ash Grunwald makes for an exciting release day today. In the past year, both artists have kept busy: Ash Grunwald released his critically acclaimed new album 'MOJO', along with his first book, "Surf By Day, Jam By Night", while The Teskey Brothers followed up their ARIA Award-winning and Grammy nominated second album 'Run Home Slow' with the 2020 release of 'Live At Forum', which earned them their first ARIA chart #1.

Luxuriating in the simple pleasures of the classic blues sound, this album starts off with Low Down Dog, a tantalisingly soulful track. Feisty harmonica and an insistent, slow paced guitar riff accompany the whole song. Aching raw vocals from Grunwald spell out a difficult relationship – "I ain't gonna apologise / But I'm sorry just the same". The burning intensity of the music continues right to the last line, Teskey and Grunwald joining to sing "I gave you my all / Though I never knew your name", then finishing with scatting over scorching guitar.

Hungry Heart, penned by Teskey as a love letter and 'Part Two' to his song Push the Blues Away, is, as Teskey explains it, "the happy ending, the moment I stopped running away and found and accepted love". It feels like a song you could sing with family around a campfire, capturing the warmth and comfort of finally coming to love. As Teskey takes the lead on vocals for this track, we get the chance to hear his lyrics shine as he sings, unpretentiously and sincerely, "Searching to feed this heart of mine / But it's you I was searchin' for".

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You may have caught their debut performance of the first single from the album, Thinking 'Bout Myself on ABC's 'The Sound'. A track that is filled with bluesy angst, it is complemented by the slight distortion in Grunwald's guitar. Thinking 'Bout Myself is driven along by back-to-basics percussive clapping and electrifying harmonica. With Teskey and Grunwald sharing the vocals and alternating lines, it feels like each builds something on the line before. The contrast between Teskey's husky tones and Grunwald's deep, soul-shattering vibrato adds to the bubbling turmoil of the lyrics.

Push the Blues Away is another stellar track on the album, a gentler song, but by no means less impassioned. There is something very magical about listening to the album, recorded live, capturing the untouched musicality of Teskey and Grunwald's songs. Push the Blues Away, the second track written by Teskey, features softly-picked guitar that diverges from the intensity of some of Grunwald's tracks. The song feels like a sigh of relief at the end of a long day, as Teskey sings "Hey now baby, can you see I know I went wrong? / There's a river in me, it's pulling me away / It's trying to float me away / But there's nothing in the water gonna wash these blues away". Grunwald says "a lot of the stuff I bring to the table is very much in a minor key and sad blues, but the two tracks Josh has brought bring the folkier lighter flavours".

The two artists work together so well because of the massive mutual respect and appreciation they have for each other. Grunwald says that "Josh Teskey is the most exciting voice in blues and soul I've heard in, well, forever," and likewise, Teskey says of his collaborator, "Ash has a wealth of knowledge of obscure old Blues artists and we spent a bunch of time listening to these records and getting a feel for some of this stuff". The influence of classic American blues is clear in Grunwald's track It Rained. It fills the air with southern humidity in the first bar of music, with 'oh's in the vocals, sparsely-included guitar strums and harmonica chiming in at the end of each bar. This desperately slow tempo carries you through the song, like a river making its way through the city.

Something with Feel might be the highlight of the album for me, incorporating all the best bits of blues – infectiously catchy riffs, cheeky lyrics, and vivid vocals filling the song with colour. The guitars simmer under the harmonica as it explores a new dimension of soul. They sing, "I'm tired of reacting, I need something that's real / If you want my dimension, give me something with feel". The next track, Preachin' Blues, is a cover of the classic blues tune by Son House, and boy, do Teskey and Grunwald do gospel well. There is something spiritual about the way they play, fully devoted to every lyric they utter and note they play.

The final song is the song that kickstarted the whole project, a cover of The Sky is Crying. While the Teskey Brothers were featuring in a video clip for Grunwald's song Ain't My Problem, they

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had a jam to the old Elmore James tune in between takes. “Somebody filmed our little jam,” Grunwald says, “and it became the seed of a great idea: Why don’t we do an acoustic blues album? No bells and whistles, something from the heart.”. And so, the idea for the album was born. The song is absolutely thrilling on the album, so it doesn’t take much to understand why they decided they needed a whole album when they first played it. Teskey and Grunwald breathe new life into the soul of the song. It feels like a conversation between the two, as first Teskey, then Grunwald, sing that “I saw my baby as she was walking down the street / Oh same thing happened to me, I woke up early one morning, and I saw my baby walking down the street”.

‘Push the Blues Away’ is an electric collaboration between two fantastic Australian blues artists. Drawing on the tradition of the many artists to come before them, they have infused their music with gutsy guitar and plenty of soul. As Ash explains, “This album was made how any good blues album should be in my opinion. Spontaneously and instinctively.” ---Kate Lockyer, gclive.me

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