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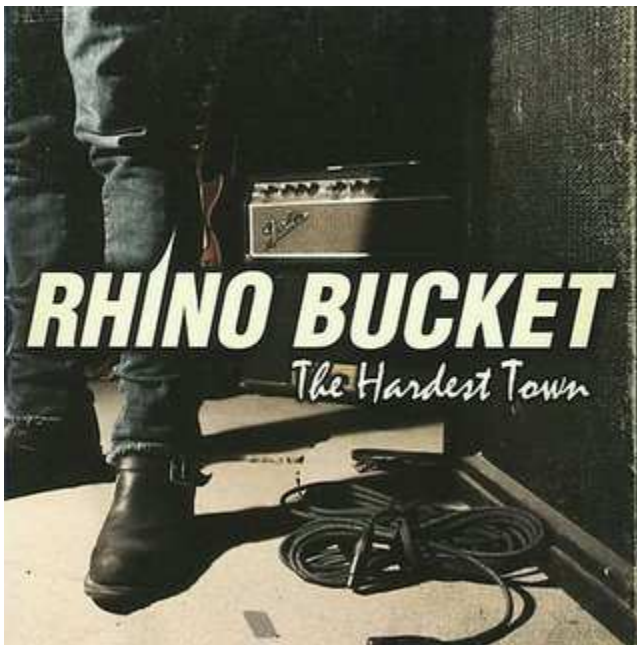
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[CD Review: Rhino Bucket - The Hardest Town](#)

Rhino Bucket - *The Hardest Town*

2009 Acetate Records

Ray Van Horn, Jr.



The only reason Rhino Bucket gets away with what they do is they make no pretensions about their business. Addicted to the Bon Scott era of AC/DC to the point they have a former AC/DC stool sitter in the form of Simon Wright fanning flames to their retro candling, Rhino Bucket are heroes to some in the underground, namely those who've played *Powerage*, *High Voltage*, *Let There Be Rock* and *Highway to Hell* with such fervor they still believe Bon Scott is rejoining us one day from the afterlife.

This is no uncommon phenomenon, particularly amongst a cult of young bands nurturing themselves on AC/DC's formative (and assuredly best) years. In some ways one has to think of Bon Scott as heavy metal's Elvis Presley from the standpoint there are so many

wannabes and copycats looking to duplicate Scott's unique whiskey-soaked swagger to the point we're bound to have a bunch of ape-draped, snaggletoothed, ball-busting jeans-clad impersonators in our midst.

Granted, Scott and AC/DC didn't alter the course of music in the way Presley did from bestowment of the Delta bluesmen and honky tonk cats before him, yet Scott's regime in AC/DC is pivotal for modern rock's evolution despite its three-chord simplicity. It's no wonder so many groups over rock's history from the eighties Sunset Strip glammers to later-period garage dwellers to Rhino Bucket have made their bread and butter using someone else's shtick.

Finnish guitarist/vocalist Georg Dolivo has always made a reasonable Scott carbon copy for Rhino Bucket over the course of five albums, but fortunately he's never tried to usurp his sovereign's mantle, even though Dolivo went all-guns-blazing on Rhino Bucket's smoking self-titled debut album from 1990. At this point in the band's career with a natural age progression to factor, Dolivo sounds more his own man with a haunted Scott swill about him, which is perhaps the greatest irony of all; had Scott lived, would his own voice have altered dramatically? Perhaps his irresponsible death was decreed from the rock hall of the afterlife, so we would always have that voice the way it was meant to sound.

Though Rhino Bucket has watched one drummer, Liam Jason, roll out to become an entirely new person and return for an album as Jackie Enx, as well as having original lead guitarist Greg Fields drift away, they come back for more in 2009, this time with Kix guitarist Brian Forsythe joining the team. Considering Kix were AC/DC purists at-heart before striking gold in the hairball sweepstakes of the late eighties (even "Get it While it's Hot" is undeniably early AC/DC in its basic compost), the addition of Forsythe is logical, assuming Rhino Bucket wants to stay to their script, which isn't much of one beyond the obvious.

The Hardest Town is exactly what you're expecting, even with only two original members Dolivo and bassist Reeve Downes holding court. Still, the star firepower of Wright and Forsythe is enough to make you at least *pay attention* to Rhino Bucket's existence.

If you're perfectly settled with what Rhino Bucket has to offer, by all means grab a hold of *The Hardest Town*. It stays snug in its *Powerage* and *High Voltage* blanket, sticking its toes out every so often to dabble as on the British alt sway of "You're Gone," the country-blues yank of "Take Me Down" and even the bonus track "Slip Away" yields a very slight differentiation in guitar chord selections beyond its prototype AC/DC shamble.

Otherwise, *The Hardest Town* taps along loosely as if culminated by a group of afternoon drinkers only on the third round and barely a hint of a buzz going. "Justified," "Dog Don't Bite," "No One Here" and the title track bob along at mid tempo with little deviation from each other, while "Know My Name," "Street to Street" and "She's With Me" pick up the pace to just below that of AC/DC's "Bad Boy Boogie," the latter of which should be

considered biblical litany to Rhino Bucket's (and many other groups) Young-Scott-genuflections. Furthermore, it's hard not to cry "Night Prowler" at Rhino Bucket's replicant, "To Be Mine."

All this being said, AC/DC even at their best hijacked everything they ever did from the same Leadbelly-Johnson-Wolf veins bleeding into the Mississippi river as did Elvis, Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly and a large contingency of the British Invasion. What AC/DC did was no different, just with a lot more jizz. In this respect, Rhino Bucket is merely borrowing from borrowers.

Brian Forsythe does his job well and Simon Wright is always a reliable pounder, but at the end of the day, *The Hardest Town* is what it is: *Powerage* 2.9. If you were expecting much else, you might want to head on over to Rose Tattoo. At least Rose Tattoo brings the amps to back up their plunder. Rhino Bucket is more a low-key members-only party in homage to a gifted vocalist who sadly found his personal worth at the bottom of a perpetually-unfinished bottle.

Rating: ***

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