



Vodka-fueled oompah swing ska punk

# VulgarGrad

Sometimes good men do bad things.....

**VulgarGrad** bring you **the old songs of the Russian thieves** (called *blatnie pesny* or **blatnyak**), along with punk classics of the Perestroika era and a strong dose of contemporary St. Petersburg swearing ska.

VulgarGrad arose in Melbourne in late 2004 out of a collaboration between some of Australia's best musicians in underground ethnic styles and the incredible vocal talents of one Australia's most formidable stage and screen actors, Jacek Koman. Since that time they have caused a sensation on Australia's live music and festival scene, proving that what Australian audiences really seem to need is a wild night of old-fashioned Russian criminality. After all, if Russia and Australia have anything in common, it's convicts.

Throughout the twentieth century, criminal culture always played a strong, if unofficial part in Russian cultural life, and this was never more highly developed than in the **thieves' songs**, or *blatnye pesni* – performed by, for, and about criminals in the **prisons, gulags and seedy bars of Soviet and post-Soviet Russia**. Famous exponents of the genre include **Leonid Utesov** in the 1920s and 30s, **Arkady Severny** and the great **Vladimir Vysotsky** in the 60s and 70s, while more recently, groups such as **Leningrad** and **La-Minor** have incorporated the *blatnyak* style and lyrical content (prison, Mama, drinking, and stealing) into their contemporary acoustic punk and ska sound. VulgarGrad combine the best of these traditions with a dash of **perestroika punk** and their own inimitable brand of **gulag swing** to produce something that transcends the language barrier by aiming straight for your convict heritage and your dancing feet.

The band delivers this music with style, raucous menace, stripy shirts and a smattering of grim smiles (very important).

Legend of stage and screen, **Jacek Koman** (*Children of Men*, *Moulin Rouge*, *Romulus My Father*, *Australia*) is the genial but vengeful front man who roars with the voice of a man betrayed, and he is backed by a gang of Australia's most illustrious ex-cons drawn from bands such as The Blue Grassy Knoll, Zulya and the Children of the Underground, Croque Monsieur, Bombay Royale, and The Puta Madre Brothers. The Line-up is guitar, drums, trombone, trumpet, accordion, and watch out for the largest, most triangular instrument of them all, **the mighty contrabass balalaika**.

With songs the likes of *Alkoholik* – ("I'm an alcoholic, and a f\*\*king d\*\*khead!"), "Anarchy is Our Mother" & "A Piss-Up Begins With a Bottle?", this is vodka-fuelled oompah swing ska punk - gulag-style.

**VulgarGrad are:** Jacek Koman: vocals; Andrew Tanner: contrabass balalaika; Renato VaCirca: drums; Ros Jones: trombone; Adam Pierzchalski: trumpet; Nara Demasson: guitar; Phil McLeod: piano accordion

**Jacek Koman** has had an extensive career across film, television and theatre since arriving in Australia from Poland in 1983, and is well known for playing the narcoleptic Argentinean in Baz Luhrmann's film *Moulin Rouge*.

During Jacek's distinguished theatre career, he has enjoyed roles with Australia's premier companies including Melbourne Theatre Company (MTC), Sydney Theatre Company (STC) and Company B with directors such as Benedict Andrews, Neil Armfield, Michael Kantor, Barry Kosky, Jim Sharman and Julian Meyrick.

Jacek was the recipient of the Age Performing Arts Award for Best Dramatic Performance for his role as Roy Cohen in *Angels in America* for MTC; a role which also won him a Green Room Award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role.

Other film credits include *Defiance*, *Australia*, *Romulus My Father*, *Children of Men*, *Floodhouse*, *Horseplay*, *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and *Thank God He Met Lizzie* and the 2009 Polish blockbuster, *Kochaj i tancz*.

Jacek is noted for numerous roles on many of Australia's most recognised and long running television series including *Stingers*, *MDA*, *The Secret Life of Us* and *Wildside*. His other television credits include the mini-series' *Mary Bryant* and *Simone de Beauvoir's Babies* for the ABC.

Apart from singing "Tango Roxanne" as the narcoleptic Argentinean in *Moulin Rouge* and performing regularly with VulgarGrad, Jacek sang extensively in his roles as Peachum in *Threepenny Opera* and Azdac in *Caucasian Chalk Circle* (both Company B Belvoir St). He has also appeared on *Theatre Songs* (2003), a CD of works for theatre by Alan John, and on Polish act Blue Café's *Demi Sec* CD (2003).

**VulgarGrad have performed at leading venues and festivals around Australia**, including The Famous Spiegeltent, ACMI (The Tim Burton exhibition), The Corner Hotel, The Toff in Town, The Northcote Social Club, The Spanish Club, The East Brunswick Club, The Tote, The Gershwin Room at the Espy, the **Melbourne International Arts Festival**, **Port Fairy Folk Festival**, **The Queenscliff Music Festival**, the **St. Kilda Festival**, **Karavan! International Gypsy Music Festival**, and **Rainbow Serpent** (all Vic), **WOMADelaide**, **The Adelaide Fringe Festival**, **The Adelaide Cabaret Festival** (SA), **The Woodford Folk Festival**, the **Brisbane Cabaret Festival**, the **Queensland Music Festival**, The Tivoli (Qld), **The Northbridge Festival** (WA), **The Sydney Opera House Studio**, **The Sydney Festival**, The Gaelic Club, the **Mullumbimby Music Festival** and **The Great Escape Festival**, **Bellingen Global Carnival** (NSW). VulgarGrad have supported well-known international acts such as **Besh o Drom** (Hungary), **Gipsy.Cz** (Czech Republic) and **Orkestra Del Sol** (UK). They also accidentally performed to a large group of Russian policemen during the World Police and Fire Games in Adelaide, 2007, narrowly managing to escape being arrested. VulgarGrad were featured in the soundtrack for the Channel 9 drama series, **Underbelly** in 2008. They also appeared on ABC TV's **Spicks and Specks** in August 2008, performing during the end credits and in the "Look what they did to my song, ma" section. VulgarGrad performed on the first episode of ABC TV's *Arts Nation* (Feb, 2010) Their first CD, **Popular Street Songs of the Russian Underclass** was released in 2005, and their latest CD, **King of Crooks** (2009), is out now through Inertia.

More infos, music, videos @ [www.vulgargrad.com](http://www.vulgargrad.com)

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**Infamous Band of Russian Criminals release new seven-inch single, "Limonchiki"**

# VULGAR GRAD

- that mysterious band of Russian criminals, are **touring Europe in January and February, 2012** to promote their new single, "**Limonchiki**", a seven-inch released on **Off Label Records** (Germany). Fronted by Polish-born strongman and rough diamond of stage and screen, **Jacek Koman**, with a voice that resembles a jetplane scraping along the runway, VulgarGrad play **music by, for, and about Russian thieves**: raucous drunken songs, inebriated waltzes, manic stomps and hot swing from the Cold War. Be prepared for a night of gun-slinging, vodka-swilling, foul-mouthed disorder, and watch out for the biggest, most triangular instrument you will ever see, the contrabass balalaika. Wear a striped top and learn to swear in Russian, and you will dance or the trumpeter will shoot you.

Supposedly based in Melbourne, Australia, VulgarGrad are one of the only bands outside the Russian world specialising in Russian criminal song. They come to Europe on their first ever trip to promote and spread the release of their new seven-inch single, "**Limonchiki**" on Off Label Records (Germany). "**Limonchiki**" (meaning "little lemons" in Russian) is an old Jewish gangster song from the Black Sea port of Odessa. Like all the best songs, it's about stealing, drinking, and loving your mother.

Singer **Jacek Koman** is well-known in Australia and Poland for his many TV and film roles, but he is known all over the world for his parts in films such as Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* (as Ivan, the Russian barman) and *Moulin Rouge* - where he performed the unforgettable tango version of the Police song "Roxanne".

"Gleefully sleazy" - RTR FM

"Graphic, nasty, heartfelt and sweaty - something like a Soviet Edith Piaf with a flick-knife." - Beat

"These guys are enough to make you sell your dog to get a ticket." - The Age (Melbourne)

"Filthy Russian criminals haven't been this hot since Boney M sang about Rasputin in 1978." - The Age (Melbourne)

"Like a travelling, vodka-soaked festival dipped in a vat of vintage 100 proof Tom Waits" - Adelaide Advertiser

"Being at a VulgarGrad gig is like being receiving a jolt from some other universe, and just barely getting a grasp of it before it disappears again." - Yelling About Music

"More fun than sharing a bottle of vodka with a beautiful courtesan." - Drum Media

[www.vulgargrad.com](http://www.vulgargrad.com)

[www.myspace.com/vulgargrad](http://www.myspace.com/vulgargrad)

[www.youtube.com/vulgargrad](http://www.youtube.com/vulgargrad)

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