

# RTX

## Biography

Barely tethered to this green earth, Royal Trux were a rock anomaly through out the '90s. Lead by Neil Hagerty (formerly of Pussy Galore) and Jennifer Herrema, the group swept up particles of mystic space rock, Stonesy twang, and cracked, guttural utterings across 10 static-deluged recordings. Broken blues riffs and delusional vocals slipped right off the rails or flared up and burned out with the lifespan of lighter flames. Royal Trux were a self-contained plane of droning scuz rock; the flickering pilot lights of Hagerty's jarring guitar psychosis and Herrema's craggy calls navigating listeners through endlessly meandering melodies. Most Trux recordings sounded like a gang of rural meth-lab musicians detoxing on peyote and recording the rustic happenings with cult-obsessive results.

Unfortunately, the Trux chapter in rock history closed right after the turn of the new century. Once bonded in both music and holy matrimony, Herrema and Hagerty are now charting individual, unconventional courses. That leaves Herrema with RTX, her second band in her 32 years, and *Transmaniacon*, the group's cosmic maiden recording voyage. Speaking from her California home, Herrema says of RTX's debut, "It felt really linear as far as thinking about the sound and pushing it through to the end. With Neil, what made [Royal Trux] was the different sensibilities that we brought, and it was never entirely linear. RTX, from start to finish, is about getting it out in the way you see it in your head without having to pull off to the side."

Herrema draws out her answers like the surfer babe she is. But she's less the hang-loose beach bum than, as one writer put it, a Harmony Korine heshier (accented by the platinum eyebrows and hair), with a low purring delivery. And on *Transmaniacon*, her throaty crackle snakes through a labyrinth of scrap rock and salvaged arena metal, a combination that's nearly as confounding and contradictory as any Trux output. Her vocals are vocodorized and amplified, punctuating steroid-pumped instrumentation yet balancing those fist-waving experiments against a rough core that keeps Herrema more woman than machine. Even the murkiest sludge has a shine to its surface here, but there's still something basement-floor dirty and low-grade psychedelic inherent to the vibe — due to song titles

like "Low Ass Mountain Song" and "Joint Chief" and Herrema's style of spitting out lyrics like she's loosening phlegm. Most importantly, in Herrema's permanently art-damaged world, "linear" is never going to mean straight lines.

Herrema created *Transmaniacon* — named, as she ambiguously explains, because "the alliteration of it sounded like the sound I wanted in the record" — with producer Nadav Eisenman and multi-instrumentalist Jaimo Welch, twenty-something music outsiders she met through a photo shoot. "They didn't come from any musical scene or band," she explains. "There was just a real beauty and honesty and that's basically what enabled a whole new direct line of communication. Most musicians consciously or subconsciously have boundaries already formulated in their heads."

Over two years and three recording studios, the RTX trio created unusual methods of musical expression. "I wanted it to be a new communication," Herrema explains. "So basically [recording involved] a lot of nonmusical adjectives and drawings and physical gesturing to [cull] what I needed. I don't think [the record] would've been half as cool without it."

More recently invited to that insular conversation are Brian McKinley, and Kurt Midness, musicians Herrema says are permanent players in the RTX vision. And for the off hours, there's also Herrema's ongoing visual artwork (part of Royal Trux' past aesthetic), which she seems to approach with the same methodology she applies to her music: "I just have big poster paper pinned to the wall and I can add to it incidentally," she explains. "You don't look at it every day, but after a while it takes on a life of its own."

There's no mistaking RTX's Jennifer Herrema. One hundred percent rock n roll outlaw, all bubblegum pout with a ferocious ball-busting glare that'd make the L.A. chapter of the Hells Angels quiver with fear. She's a true legend. She's been there, done that, jumped on the devil's back, held onto his horns and rodeo-drove him back to serenity.

— Taken from *RTXarchive.com*





# RTX

## WESTERN XTERMINATOR

DC331 ▶▶ CD

Songs:

WESTERN XTERMINATOR

BALLS TO PASS

BLACK BANANAS

DUDE LOVE

KNIGHTMARE & MANE

WO-WO DIN

MONEY WILL ROLL RIGHT IN

RESTORATION SLEEP

LAST RIDE

RAT WILL KILL

Lights flicker and bells chime. The far-out sound of thunder draws nearer. **Jennifer Herrema** and her horsemen are returned and **WESTERN XTERMINATOR** is the recollection of their long journey. The mission statement reads like this:

The **WESTERN XTERMINATOR** travels long miles leading an ever-increasing horde of rats in a train behind. Lured by the high definition frequencies put out by the **Xterminator**, the rats have no choice but to follow. They dig it, really – it's a gas. Their last mile will be their best, the **WESTERN XTERMINATOR** has the tools to guarantee it.

Steeped in smoke, belching flame, couched in a rainbow of fuzz, **RTX** loosen limbs once again for another trip into the wild. Evolved from the dust like myth from mystery, **WESTERN XTERMINATOR** plunges from a flute-driven prelude into what brought you here today: solid rock – flanged and wacked to give the rock corps of **RTX** their jollies, of course. And if they're happy, you're happy.

**Jennifer's** wide-angle lens has captured a universe of images over the course of the **Royal Trux** and **RTX** discographies and the universe just gets bigger with the arrival of **WESTERN XTERMINATOR**. The contemporary life flashes in and out with fantasy visions, folk epics. Runes are a part of the enigma, something the Vikings left for us to use. There's still mystic power there, you just gotta know how to use it.

The west wasn't rolled over without a few ritual sacrifices down the road. Our survival still depends on it and in the sun-drenched new frontier, **RTX** have your back. **WESTERN XTERMINATOR** runs the rock up the flagpole and rolls it around in strong winds.

Sounds heavy, right? A listen to this and you'll be convinced as we are it's even heavier. But no amount of meaning is going to stop the rock and roll. Put it this way if you don't know what **RTX** stands for, it's "Rad Times Xpress." So get on board!

PREVIOUS  
RELEASES  
from  
RTX



"SPEED TO ROAM"  
DC286 CD single



TRANSMANICON  
DC271 LP/CD



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FIRST SEEN  
OCTOBER 1999

## JENNIFER CONVERTIBLE

AT ONE TIME, JENNIFER HERREMA WAS HALF OF ROYAL TRUX, THE COOLEST BAND OF THE '90s. (PAPER followed their deep-fried, psychedelic rock releases closely.) Neil Hagerty, her boyfriend whom she met around 1984 in Washington, D.C., was the other half. Like most bands of sweethearts, Royal Trux began when Jennifer and Neil started going steady and fizzled out when they broke up soon after the new millennium. They emerged from punk's comedown, had a meltdown with a major label and outlived Nirvana, but their wayward behavior stopped them short of becoming MTV darlings. Although the '90s aren't too distant, Royal Trux already seems like something from a bygone era, their legend made up of stories about fights, drugs and snarling teen antics. Now Jennifer is back with RTX and *Transmaniacon* (Drag City), sans Neil.

"It's like I got a whole new dialogue going on," says the 35-year-old about her new band, which includes drummer Nadav Eisenman and guitarist Jaimo Welch. "You know, I was 15 when I met Neil, and we just needed to be apart for a while. I was in a situation that became very static. And whenever I get bored I need to shake up the table, as they say." She finally moved out of the house in Virginia she bought with Neil in 2001 and moved to Sunset Beach. These days she keeps it mellow and drives a forest-green '99 Saab that her dad picked out for her. That's a far cry from her old ride, a burgundy '76 Chevy Monte Carlo, which she totaled on the VA 211 freeway. "That was a killer car," reminisces Herrema, quickly switching gears to the present. "I've been surfing a lot and painting. I just made a denim wet suit for Sanrio—you know, the company that does Hello Kitty. Oh, and I modeled for Henry Duarte jeans." She hasn't played a show in more than two years, but we haven't forgotten about her. ★ CAROL LEE • PHOTOGRAPH BY TOM JOHNSON



## SOUND GARDEN

Ex-Royal Trux jennifer Herrema *didn't* disappear off the face of the earth. She was in Virginia, planting the seeds for one hell of a comeback album. By April Long. Photographed by Sasha Eisenman

Jennifeer Herrema sings like she's gargling nails, and talks like a cartoon stone: "Um, dude, it's like [tremendous pause]...what was I saying?" Her favorite subjects are "rebirth" and "resurrection," which makes sense, considering her history: For the last 15 years, she's been half (with ex-boyfriend Neil Hagerty) of Royal Trux—one of the messiest, skuzziest, hardest-living rock 'n' roll duos ever. She's also been a model (for Calvin Klein), a fashion stylist and jewelry designer, and a repeat-offender drug addict.

In 2002, Herrema split up with Hagerty, who went on to make solo albums. Herrema, on the other hand, summarily dropped off the radar. Rumors abounded that she had once again succumbed to narcotics, but Herrema was instead sequestered in her rural Virginia home, sitting by the side of her dying father, and plotting her comeback. With musician friends Nadav Eisenman and Jaimo Welch, she formed RTX, and completed a thundering beast of an album,

*Transmaniacon*, that picks up where Royal Trux's swan song *Pound for Pound* left off.

"This record was a nautral progression for me," she says from somewhere behind a face-obscuring curtain of blonde hair. "It was exactly where I was headed in Royal Trux, but Neil was going somewhere else. I had this sound in my head, this idea of something that sounds really big but doesn't take up huge amounts of space. It tool a lot of fucking around in the studio to find it."

RTX chose the name *Transmaniacon* before they even started recording. "Because," Herrema explains, "when you say the word, it sounds like the music." (It's also the title of a 1972 Blue Oyster Cult song and a 1979 science fiction novel.) Although she boasts that the album "Fucking kicks ass, and everyone should own a copy," her hopes for it are more humble: "I'd just like people to listen to it and dig it," she shrugs. "They can get blown away, or they can go to sleep, whatever. Just as long as they dig it."

It's difficult to imagine anyone nodding off while *Transmaniacon* is playing. Crackly and sinister, it bursts at the seam with stiff, chunky beats, furiously distorted guitar riffs, and, of course, Herrema's gravelly, snarling vocals. Treading a fine line between being disorientingly bizarre and surprisingly accessible ("Totally analogous to my life, dude," Herrema remarks), the songs are catchy, and sometimes downright melodic—like a collision between Queens of the Stone Age, Led Zeppelin, and Courtney Love. It's clear that Herrema had fun making it.

"Yeah," she nods, "I loved it. That's part of turning over the applecart with Neil and I. My philosophy is, you've got to mix it up, keep things moving, keep growing. You can't stay in the same place, with the same people, forever, and not start feeling squirrely. Royal Trux was a true collaboration—mixing my blue and Neil's yellow together to make green. That was awesome, but it was time for me to go full-on primary color"

# Rolling Stone

September 2004

## **RTX** *Transmaniacon* (Drag City)

Neil Michael Hagerty and Jennifer Herrema of the stoney underground rock act Royal Trux's went separate ways in summer 2000, but Herrema's kept the name — albeit in abbreviated form. RTX's debut finds Herrema fronting a cock-rocking, power trio with new faces Nadav Eisenman and Jaimo Welch. For anyone familiar with the roughly ten albums in Trux's oeuvre, *Transmaniacon* is a startlingly focused record without Hagerty's exploratory soloing and the duo's interesting and experimental, but ultimately meandering dead-end tracks. RTX's sound is both more grandiose and immediate than Trux's. Heremma and cohorts recreate heavy metal's golden era on tunes like "Joint Chief" and "Stoked." More surprising is how Herrema opts for a stylized, layered studio sheen, where chugging Sunset Strip guitars and vox get hot-wired with spooky digital effects. Ballad "PB+J" is catchier than virtually anything on rock radio, despite Herrema's efforts at drowning her vocals in delicious vocoder, and the Donnas wish they had written "Pulling Out Now." This machine's overloaded at points and not quite street-legal, but, damn, it cooks. (JOHN DUGAN)

# HARP

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2004

## RTX / ROYAL TRUX

### *Transmaniacon*

(DRAG CITY)

**K**id Rock got it wrong: Jennifer J. Herrema, reigning "First Lady of Lo-Fi" and O.G. American(a) Badass, is the "Pimp of the Nation." She is also Kidd Funkadelic, as tracks "Resurrect" and "Heavy Gator" demonstrate. Following hi-heeled bootsteps of "ancestors" Betty Davis and Nicks, Herrema rises from ashes of personal and professional woe with a new lease on patented sonic territory. *Transmaniacon* departs from the dizzying masterworks *Sweet Sixteen* and "Inside Game" to display a relatively accessible sound. While "Pulling Our Now" (akin to MTV "SoCal punk" and 80s nostalgia) falters, "Limozine" is an instant classic. The only thing missing is a duet between Herrema and Arthur Lee. Propelled by newcomers Jaimo Welch (guitar, bass) and Nadav Eisenman (vox), RTX continues to employ rock's diverse subgenres to make the 21st century "bow that azz down." If *Transmaniacon* is the sound of not just disorder but de(con)struction, I love it.

KANDIA CRAZY HORSE