

# canteen

THE STATE OF CREATION  
ISSUE THREE

\$10



POROCHISTA KHAKPOUR  
LEE KLEIN  
DANA GOODYEAR  
MARTIJN VAN DE GRIENDT  
BENJAMIN KUNKEL  
ARNOLD LEHMAN  
SAM WILSON  
TAIZO YAMAMOTO  
SEAN FINNEY  
MATTHEW PORTER  
SHELLIE ZACHARIA

PORTER 86 SOUL TYPECAST

**Band History**  
Pussy Galore  
(1985–1990)  
Bos Hog  
(1989–2001)  
The Jon Spencer  
Blues Explosion  
(1990–present)  
Heavy Trash  
(2005–present)

Jon Spencer: I studied film while I was a student at Brown. I was interested in making films, and I did do that for a couple of years. But at the same time, I was also listening to music and buying records and playing in bands. I found that I just liked playing music a lot more, and it was a lot more satisfying and immediate. With music, you can do something creative and connect with an audience like that [snaps].... The kinds of films I was making were sort of performance-based,

**Matthew Porter:** In the beginning, your primary interest was film, wasn't it? Because you thought that making movies was the best way to reach an audience.

*JON SPENCER'S CONTRADICTIONS start with his polite but defiant countenance. When he speaks, his voice is unexpectedly high and seems to come through his nose, unlike his throaty, Elvis-style singing. During high school in New Hampshire, Spencer learned about punk and New Wave with the help of a music column in Heavy Metal Magazine. New Hampshire is not exactly synonymous with punk rock, but an exception may be made for this son of a Dartmouth professor who later flirted with seismics at Brown (although Spencer will tell you his short-lived Ivy League education was just a way to gain access to the school's film equipment). His style and discography are loaded with influences—from New York City downtown New Wavers like Nick Zedd and Richard Kern to the expired generation of Mississippi Delta blues musicians like R.L. Burnside—but Spencer has paid his debts and owes nothing. He always gives a hell of a show, and it's different every time.*

and I was in love with music, and felt it was a quicker fix.

**Was the music ever secondary to the performance? Now you seem to take so much pleasure in being onstage, in driving an audience toward a frenzied state.**

No. I think the showmanship, if you want to use that word, grew over the years. Early on, there was none of that. What initially inspired me, and maybe not as a musical form, was hardcore. Hardcore music wasn't really my favorite, but it definitely opened my mind to think, "OK, I could do this." That was really the beauty and power of it, the do-it-yourself aesthetic...that was the lesson for me, that everything could be presented really raw.... The showmanship didn't really enter into it until years later. If anything, I was making music back then that was antiperformance, antagonistic.

**That need to antagonize softened later with the creation of the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, and especially with Heavy Trash!**

Well, that happens with age, and with developing or changing musical interests and tastes. As I became interested in older music, like early rock 'n' roll, country, blues, and soul music, I spent a lot of time reading about the history of those forms and trying to see if I could get those influences to come out.

**Did you have access to live footage of bands like the Rolling Stones? Were you able to see the way that kind of music was performed?**



# canteen

THE STATE OF CREATION  
ISSUE THREE

\$10



POROCHISTA KHAKPOUR  
LEE KLEIN  
DANA GOODYEAR  
MARTIJN VAN DE GRIENDT  
BENJAMIN KUNKEL  
ARNOLD LEHMAN  
SAM WILSON  
TAIZO YAMAMOTO  
SEAN FINNEY  
MATTHEW PORTER  
SHELLIE ZACHARIA

PORTER 88 SOUL TYPECAST



I spent a lot of time in the first few years of Pussy Galore watching videotapes. You could trade tapes with people. You might find someone with a cool collection while on tour, stay at someone's house and find a great compilation tape of Sonnes' TV appearances from the mid-'60s. We also watched vintage fashions and the visual iconography. But it wasn't just stuff like that—we also watched exploitation films, horror films, general trash films. I spent a lot of time watching movies, and it was a big influence. For lack of a better term, it was chaotic.

After Pussy Galore and before Boss Hog and the Blues Explosion, you lent your talents to a lot of other bands. One particular standout is the Gibson Bros., because they're so blues-oriented, and it seems to be the first time that you really experimented with another genre besides punk or hardcore.

They were very significant, and Christina, my wife, played with them as well. I learned a lot from the two guys who led that band—Jeff Evans and Don Howard—and in particular, I learned a lot about the blues and rockabilly.

Some of the early Pussy Galore recordings, you can hear barking orders. It seems clear from them that you were a band leader.

Boss Hog predates the Blues Explosion, and in the beginning really outmatches it in terms of production value. I'm wondering if you originally intended to concentrate more on that band, even though it's the latter that you really became known for.

Some of the early Pussy Galore recordings, you can hear barking orders. It seems clear from them that you were a band leader.

The credit for that production value should really go to Steve Albini. He was the guy who engineered Drinkin' Luchos' & Lynn. Boss Hog did start first, and for a while, I just hopped back and forth between the two bands. But whichever band I was working on, that's the band I would write for. I wouldn't write by myself and think, "Well, which band should this be for?..." The time I did write by myself was Pussy Galore. For the most part, the first few years of Pussy Galore was just me writing and change here. Usually, I wouldn't say it out

the leader of the group, I was pushing that by doing. I was also the manager of the band, and I was responsible for the presentation and the product. It was my baby, but Russell was doing the drums, and Judah did his thing with the guitar. With very few exceptions, I don't write on my own with that band. The three of us would get together and it would happen, but it was the guy who was saying OK, we have to go and change here. Usually, I wouldn't say it out