

SEX

PHOTOGRAPHY JAKOB AXELMAN
Styling Allison Miller
Production Arnel San Pedro



Southpaw Pawe.wa Top



DRUGS AND JEN HERRREMA

TALKING TO JENNIFER HERREMA, YOU GET THE FEELING THAT SHE'S LIVED SEVERAL LIVES. NOT BAD FOR A 35-YEAR-OLD. HER VOICE IS RASPY WITH YEARS OF SMOKING AND EXPERIENCE. HER INTIMIDATING AND OFT-WRITTEN ABOUT HISTORY IS COUNTERED BY AN EASY-GOING ATTITUDE, A CASUAL OPENNESS. SHE'S TALL, ALMOST SIX FEET, AND GORGEOUS, IN A DISQUIETING SORT OF WAY. HER WHITE BLONDE HAIR AND EYEBROWS ARE AS EYE-CATCHING AS HER SNAKESKIN BOOTS. HER INTENSITY ON STAGE IS PALPABLE.



Henry Duarte Jeans(on Jennifer)



"WORKING FROM A DARK PLACE, INSPIRATION COMES OUT OF THAT TOO BUT IT'S MORE SUSTAINABLE TO BE IN THE HEALTHIEST PLACE YOU CAN BE, DRAWING FROM THE SHIT YOU'VE EXPERIENCED."

As a musician she was half of Royal Trux, the seminal trash-rock duo that burned bright and prolifically throughout the 90s. The other half was her lover, guitarist Neil Hagerty. Play a White Stripes album or see The Kills live and you'll witness the influence of the sound they ignited. The two met in DC when Herrema was sixteen and became a creative force to be reckoned with, putting out nine full-length records and a handful of EPs that generated sounds from pared-down junkie blues to acid rock and experimental noise. There was constant touring, a major label fall-out, drug addiction and the inevitable implosion of an intense creative bond. In 2000, Herrema returned to Virginia mid-tour to take care of her father who'd been diagnosed with terminal cancer and Royal Trux was history.

Sex, drugs, rock n roll. Check. Most people stop there. But Herrema started over. A few years of downtime and she was right back in the game fronting new band RTX with her seductive snarl and throaty vocals. "I don't like to do shit just to do shit," Herrema says of the four years it took for RTX to come together. But when Herrema met musician and engineer Nadav Eisenman and guitarist Jaimo Welch, the three clicked.

"It was the juxtaposition I liked," Herrema says. "We have pretty different sensibilities across the board and I like to work with somebody I challenge and that challenges me." The three recorded the gritty, guitar-heavy *Transmaniacon*, and dedicated it to the memory of Herrema's father. It's an impressive

rock album, especially considering RTX is Eisenman and Welch's first band. The trio has since added guitarist Brian McKinley and bassist Kurt Midness of New York's Bad Wizard, who also happens to be Herrema's boyfriend.

Herrema may be the catalyst for RTX but she's quick to say it's a collaborative effort. "They've got strong egos so I don't steamroll over anything. It's a communication thing," she says. "It's exciting, it's also kind of exhausting. If it were too easy then it would just be too easy to put anything out whenever. It's much more rewarding at the end of the day to have gone through a lot to get there." The reward is a new album, *Western Exterminator*, set to be released in August by Chicago's Drag City.

Herrema's sense of style has been as much a part of her legend as her distinct vocals and on stage antics. She's modeled for Calvin Klein and most recently did a jeans campaign for Henry Duarte, but always on her own terms. "The first modeling job I got was because of me being myself," she says. "That's why I'm not some in-demand model. When people connect the dots, and figure out I'm the right person than it works. I don't have to pretend I'm something I'm not."

She's also been touted as the originator of heroin chic, a title she doesn't quite know what to do with. "At the time it became a thing," she says of her androgynous style, slender with a sexy, dark edge that coined the phrase. "I had a long drug history, as pop culture does, it co-opts things for different reasons - stimulation, money and such. It's not gonna

not go on." She views her style as an extension of her personality. "I think they're inextricably linked, for better or for worse," she says. "It just morphs with time, I only notice it if I look at photographs over a period of time. I suppose I would like to be more conscious of the way things change with me, but if I tried to take note I'd probably go insane."

Herrema lives on the coast of Southern California now, the band records in an Orange County studio. She doesn't put up with unhappiness as she doesn't need it to make music. "I think that it's part of living. You know things happen and you can be taken to a really dark place, a really low place. All that does is provide context for the depth of your life, to draw on when you are being creative," she says. "I'm more energized and inspired when I feel healthy and can think about things clearly. Working from a dark place, inspiration comes out of that too but it's more sustainable to be in the healthiest place you can be, drawing from the shit you've experienced."

Herrema has certainly experienced her share of shit. But she's got a new home, a new man and a new album. "Darkness and shit, there's a cost to staying in that kind of place." A cost she's known and has left behind. When asked her idea of beauty, Herrema says it's "when you can tell someone feels good in their own skin, has an acceptance of where they are." There's no better way to describe her.

Lisa Butterworth
RTX latest album out September
www.truxrox.com

