

Heading to Australia for the first time is the bastard cousin to Jon Spencer's genre-demolishing Blues Explosion, Heavy Trash. Featuring Jon Spencer (not a stranger to these shores - pictured left), with Matt Verta-Ray, guitar brawler and producer extraordinaire, in a project that drinks down the best of roots, R&B and rockabilly.

Shakin' their snake-hips and playing songs from their back catalogue which includes their self-titled debut album (2005), "Going Way Out with Heavy Trash" (2008), and their soon to be released "Midnight Soul Serenade" CD, these kings of buzz saw guitars and late night incantations, will be appearing at the sold-out Meredith Festival in Victoria (December 11-13), as well as selected side shows.

Jon Spencer is well known for his deconstructions of American roots music in the likes of Pussy Galore and the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion. Matt Verta-Ray comes to the Heavy Trash party via Madder Rose and Speedball Baby.

The I-94 Bar's [EARL O'NEILL](#) was blown away by "Going Way Out With Heavy Trash" - so much so that we sooled him onto Matt Verta-Ray by email. Here's the result.

I dug 'Going Way Out With Heavy Trash' it inspired the [best record review I've written](#). It's a great fun album, a lot of roots influences filtered thru trash R&B, psychobilly, garage, punk and Heavy Trash. Do you consciously think of making a 'great record' or is it more a case of having fun yourselves and putting it out there for folks to dance and have fun to?

Thanks for the kind words about our new record, Earl. Also, I laughed when I read your review of the last HT record. Nice one! I had not seen it before.

Oh gosh, we definitely don't think about the outcome as we're doing it. That would be like mentioning to a pitcher on the way to a perfect game that he (or she) only has to strike out three more runners. Very bad form. Have you read Billy Phelans' Greatest Game by William Kennedy? Deals with the subject of jinxing pretty well.

That being said, we are always trying to make transcendent art. Why not? Might as well leave something behind that means something right? I remember there was some wrangling over our first record cover art. We wanted some printing detail that was going to be expensive and really cut down on the money we would make selling the record. The record company was reluctant to do this but Jon, to his credit, cheered everyone on to make the sacrifice so the thing could be its absolute best self. "Let's make History!" he said. I was pretty impressed by that and I'd say that is the overall tone when we are making a record.

And why? Has that always been there or is it an evolutionary idea? It's kinda post-modern, roots music filtered thru a lot of what's come since.

Well our post-modernism comes honestly, I think. Jon and I both went to art school and were bathed in our share of arty high-concept pretensions. But twenty years down the line you've got to be doing what comes naturally to you. It's time to be synthesizing and spitting out your own flavor! Aren't you cooked yet? Doesn't need more salt. It's ready! So our best chance as artists is to be vessels for those songs that are floating around up there a few feet above our heads. When one comes down, that's great. Of course you see everything that occurs to you through the lens of your influences. But trying on other peoples' outfits for size is an early-career game. The way things come out of us now well, it's just the way we do it...

Take, say, blues, punk and abstract noise, would you rank on ahead of another as an influence, or would one influence the music, another the attitude?

For me, the most attractive punk songs were always pop songs in disguise, Lou Reed, the Ramones, Pistols. On the surface they're meant to be aggressive, revolutionary, harsh. But the songs you remember all have good hooks anyway, just like any good Shirelles or Nat King Cole song.

But I do have a high tolerance for abstract noise. I'm always the last person to object when a radio station is going out of range. I like to listen to the static, especially AM. But punk attitude is always a guiding principle for us. One caution though: there are a lot of (very different) lessons people have taken from the punk rock movement, some not so hot. The ones I like to hold close to my heart have to do with DIY ethic, exploding the notion of the genius, expertness and marketability. A lot of limited stuff snuck in under that punk umbrella.

The ranking: Blues= influence. Punk=work habits. Noise= subconscious appeal

Along that track, what do you listen to for fun these days and what do you find inspiration in?

Right now I am listening to a Sun Ra record (*Norton* label) where the band is doing doo wop type stuff. It's pretty goofy but good music. Last record before that was Duane Eddy, then Serge Gainsbourg then Stewart Lupton (from Jonathon Fire*Eater), before that, King Khan and BBQ Show.

Henry Elvis Mandorla's 12-years-old (my girlfriend's son, only been living with me for a month, doesn't know much music – yet!), he heard "Heavy Trash" and asked: "Is this Elvis?" Not bad for a kid born 43 years after the Sun Sessions. Would that reflect Elvis/rockabilly tastes or common influences?

Aww, that's a nice story. Both. We love Elvis, no doubt about that. Also the things that were going on in that same environment and the things that influenced all those people. Charlie Feathers is a big one for us. I've always been a big Buddy Holly fan. Chuck and Bo, John Lee Hooker, Jimmie Rogers, Hank Williams, Pat Hare and James Cotton, Muddy and Wolf. Speedy West, Jimmy Bryant, Lightnin' Hopkins. These were all things that were in the zeitgeist at the time Elvis sprang up. His thing didn't come out of nowhere. His peers, antecedents and Sam Phillips had a lot to do with it!

You've been doing this for a long time. Ever get tired of it? Why not? (Or why, as the case may be)

I still love it. Maybe even more now than I did before picking up a few practical tricks for keeping it together on the road. You know that long walk Ringo takes in "A Hard Day's Night"? Gotta take a lot of those. Good for the head.

I love R&B, soul, gospel, most black American music pre-drum machine. Why the fuck did they abandon the human rhythm section?

Dunno. It was probably cheaper than paying some talented prima donna drummer to do a session. Great drummers are like truly beautiful women in a way. Magic happens around them, because of them. They are rare and everybody feels enriched to be close to them. But they can be delicate and watch out if they know how valuable they are! So they needed a machine that came close. How many movies are there about sexy robot women?