

## **JSBX BIO**

On stage and in the studio, Jon Spencer has destroyed and rebuilt American roots music with such ferocity and wild abandon that it's hard to believe there is anything left. The trail of musical destruction Spencer created with his legendary group Pussy Galore still smolders in the avant punk blues and nasty garage grind of The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, whose incredible, innovative output remains an indelible totem to his enormous mojo spirit and red-hot power of deliverance.

It's been twenty years since The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion first pressed 'record', twenty years since Spencer and his A-Team of sonic terrorists (Judah Bauer, guitar, and Russell Simins, drums) tore up the indie-rock landscape with fever and a visceral, untouchable vision of rock'n'roll that did for a new wave of blues-punk primitivists what Helen of Troy's face did for the armada.

But make no mistake: Jon Spencer was there first. He is the original. It was his sanctified outbursts and blues-bending riffs that began the new-fangled roots rock revolution and spawned countless imitators. With Pussy Galore he gargled with the Stones and Stooges and wrestled with industrial noise and fuzzed-out fucked-up sixties garage crud... with Blues Explosion he drove furiously into the future with incendiary spirit built from courage, audacity, and revolt. Nothing has been the same since.

## **DIRTY SHIRT ROCK'N'ROLL**

In the history of rock 'n' roll, plenty of people made good records, but there are only a handful of innovators. No one works in a vacuum, and the avatars of the art form have always been the ones to choose their ingredients carefully before distilling their own brand of white lightning. The Blues Explosion was starting to blend low-brow sleaze and newfound studio sophistication with seamless alacrity. They were connecting the dots between Detroit, Memphis, Compton, New Orleans, Nashville, the Mississippi Delta and the Bronx, and the results were enough to make you drive your car, Lemmy Caution-style, off the road and straight into the future.

## **YEAR ONE**

The Blues Explosion were never of their time, any more than an earthquake is. They were unexpected and devastating. These recordings were the raw starting point. From this vantage, it is almost unfathomable how they got from this art-damaged mess of rawkus punk rock 'n' roll and good-time brain wallop — whose main production impetus was to press "record" — to the soaring new-fi wizardry of Acme, six records later, the same way it is hard to make the evolutionary leap from, say, a fish to a college professor without the benefit of 600 million years.

## **EXTRA WIDTH**

Even if you had been tuned in to the Blues Explosion's first jagged, high-energy outings (captured in this series on the Year One CD), there was nothing that could have prepared you for Extra Width.... "Afro" was the beginning of the revolution, the first truly indelible song by the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, and anyone looking for meaning in the lyrics is just asking for a sonic cock-tease of Deep Throat meets Raw Power proportions.... This is rock'n'roll so primal that it obviates the need for literate touchstones.

## **ORANGE**

Anger was moving towards jubilation without losing its molten core, and the whole mess came out of the Cuisinart as a major-league revelation. They had mastered the art of being flashy without being gaudy — by the time Orange dropped, they were bluesmen for real. Somewhere there would always be the shrill protests from the Byzantine and the bored about what this really meant, but in answer to the question can white boys play the blues, the answer was coming back resoundingly in the positive, it just sounded different. Van Morrison, Eric Burden, and the Rolling Stones were pretty good at it, but their formula was to cook the blues on a spit, roast 'em over fire. The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion took to that old time religion with a high-powered microwave and cooked it from the inside out, radiating that shit until you had to clean it off the walls.

## **WORRY**

Confrontation has always been part of the message, and *Worry* packs plenty of it, though less than might have been perceived upon its initial release, when the yardstick by which it was measured was a record immediately hailed as a masterpiece. Kind of like following *Fargo* with *The Big Lebowski* — given the long shadow of *Orange*, it is no wonder that it took a moment for *Worry* to find its way into the canon, no matter that it is a massive achievement in its own right. These days it rates as many fans' favorite Blues Explosion record, putting into sharp relief the two sides of *The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion* — the immediacy of their show, the fireball-throwing soul revue that helped make them the most feared band on the scene — and Spencer the meticulous artist who pays attention to every detail in crafting astonishingly complex and (though it is not always immediately apparent) very personal records.

## **NEGRO**

*Controversial Negro* is no ordinary live record. Lester Bangs once said that *The Stooges' Metallic KO* was the only record where you could hear "hurled beer bottles breaking against guitar strings." *Controversial Negro* is the only record where you can hear the women in the audience dripping 40-weight on the floor.

## **ACME**

*Acme* followed in the tradition of previous Blues Explosion records, but it was a new kind of kick, their first record that didn't start in fifth gear, barreling out of the hi-fi at 100 mph. It took six years, five records, and over 1000 gigs to get this good. This is a music that is dangerous and difficult to master — when they got it cranking, they could fill the air with blistering drum patterns and murderous guitar, and when they laid back, they were no less dangerous. Even the open space between beats breathed of evil funk and anticipation. They stopped being the bulls who ran down the hill to fuck one of them there cows. Now they were taking their time and fucking them all.