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RAYGUN.

*perry farrell
nine inch nails*

*joan jett
rev. horton heat*

*on the road
the cramps*

again

gun



(top left)

music and artists.

Ray



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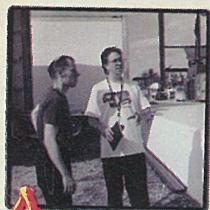


THE REVEREND HORTON HEAT

The Man Who Killed With Suave

BY AMY TALKINGTON

PHOTOGRAPHED BY BARRY ANDERSON



A bus means a lot to a band that toured for four years in a shell of a Chevy van. A tour bus is hard-earned. It means sleep and success. It means you have a place to get away from the crowd to have a drink in private. It means you are big enough to need that place.

The Reverend Horton Heat's tour bus is air brushed like a cheap painting you'd buy at a San Antonio flea market. A billowing Texas flag. A map of Texas with all the typical landmarks. A fat Gibson guitar.

Riding in the bus through Houston, I feel we're on a float puttering down Main Street in an old Texas town. People in their yards stop watering the hedges to admire us. They wave hello.



T A Z

THE REVEREND HEAT

"Texas is about shaking your boots before you put them on in the morning because there might be a scorpion or tarantula inside. Texas is about rattlesnakes, water moccasins and mesquite trees. It's a beautiful place where gentlemen do deals on a handshakes, but it's also a wild place. Outlaws moved here 150 years ago...and all those outlaws had kids." **•Jim Heath, The Rev**

"Once this guy who owned a seafood restaurant asked us to play there. We said all right, but our van broke down so he had to come get us. Well, he showed up in a fish truck—a refrigerated truck that said 'Fish' on the side. I got to sit up front, but Jim and Jimbo had to ride on the frozen fish filets for an hour and a half. So Jim's sitting in the back telling Jimbo 'I bet we're gonna pull up and there's gonna be a patio full of people eating dinner who are gonna see us unload outta this fish truck' Well, sure 'nough, we pull up and there's a patio." **•Taz**

"That was pretty degrading having to show up in a fish truck wearing a nice Western shirt and all. It's a lot more impressive to show up in a tour bus, but really, it does not matter how you show up as long as you get there." **•Jim**

I have been sent to Texas to chronicle three days on the road with a few Texas outlaw children. **The Reverend Horton Heat** and their touring entourage. I'll see Houston, Austin, San Antonio and all the space in between.

Jim arrives an hour before the gig. "Three words move the earth on this bus," he tells me in his distinct Southern voice, "gin and tonic." He cracks a smile showing the teeth of a Camel unfiltered smoker. A genuine smile. With his hair perfectly greased back, Jim's hairline makes an awesome widow's peak. Jim's face is neither old nor young. It's the face of a legend.

"Jim Heath looks like what he sounds like—handsome and greasy." **•Paul Leary of the Butthole Surfers**

"The Rev is a very soft-spoken, friendly kind of guy. On stage he appears like a wildman, but really he's very gentleman-like." **•Frank Black**

The Reverend Horton Heat play the most ferocious rock 'n' roll. Authentic and raunchy. Lusty and swifty. Punkabilly. Country and Western. A dash of rippling surf and some piece of Tex-Mex. Jim sings homages to women and wastedness, love and longhorn steaks. Marijuana".

Far into the set, the Rev places his glowing, hollow-bodied Gretsch up against his amplifier and strokes it with his crotch. Jimbo opens his mouth in exasperated delight, as if he's surprised that he hits every note he plucks on that upright bass. Taz pounds every ounce of his hulking six-foot-six body into each drum stroke.

After the show, fans squirm for some relic—Jim's guitar pick, one of Taz's drumsticks, a handshake.

"We played at Cabaret Metro in Chicago and some guy came backstage after the show. He got down on his knees and started kissing our boots." **•Jimbo**

"We just thought he was another 'Heat Head,' but he said he was in Ministry and he wanted to produce our album. I said, 'Oh, yeah. I heard that Al Jorgensen likes our music,' and he said, 'I am Al Jorgensen.'" **•Jim**

A bar down the street opens after hours for the band and the owner gives us all free drinks. We leave for Austin at 5:00 AM. Blair drives unflinchingly. Sitting in the front lounge, drinking cocktails with Jim and Dennis, I look out the front windshield and all I can see are bright yellow stripes streaking beneath the short-nosed bus.

The bus slows to a halt. Everyone rises from the dead of their bunks and floods into the neon-lit truck stop, sifting through the campy cassette tapes, hillbilly bumper stickers and "jackalope" postcards. This is called knickknacking.

"Knickknacking is when we stop at a truck stop, preferably in the middle of the night, just to get gas, but everybody has to go into the store and look at all the stuff. Jimbo always comes out with about ten items. He gets barbecue equipment, but he does not even have a front porch. He buys tire readers, but he does not have a truck. He buys stuff for cars, he does not drive. It is just the way he is." **•David Dude**

When I wake up, we are in Austin. It is April Fool's day. The dust whips around the bus and every few minutes the light changes dramatically as the thick clouds pass beneath the sun. The venue is a new outdoor post—basically just an open field. Walking around backstage, I stumble across red shotgun shells and broken-up cow patties. The Smashing Pumpkins have lunch under the catering tent. They're going to play after The Reverend Horton Heat.

"I like The Reverend Horton Heat's music for its purism." **•Billy Corgan of Smashing Pumpkins**

Jim's cousin, a golf instructor in Denton, Texas, reclines in a swivel chair with an iced-down gin and tonic and rubs his fingers along the smooth Formica bar. He is clearly in awe of Jim's swank pad. A bus with two TVs, two VCRs playing some old Betty Page tapes, a killer stereo, a bathroom and a microwave. "I'm proud of you, man," he says, shaking his head. "This is a far cry from the old days."

"In Dallas in the mid-Eighties, Russell Hobbs had a club called the Theater Gallery and a bar called the Prophet Bar across the street. We all lived in the Theater Gallery and worked for him to pay the rent. Jim did sound for punk rock bands that came though. Butthole Surfers, Flaming Lips, Loco Gringos. Russell's the one who named Jim's solo act 'The Reverend Horton Heat' and gave him his first show at the Prophet Bar. A few years later, Russell went down to Mexico and came back a born again Christian and that was the end of that era." **•Dennis**

"Jim had just finished going through a divorce, and he was having a hard time: He would just sit up in his room at the Theater Gallery in 120 degrees heat and play music. I'd go up there and listen, and I just fell in love with the heart in his music. He always writes the best songs when he is having a hard time...or else when he is in love." **•David Dude**

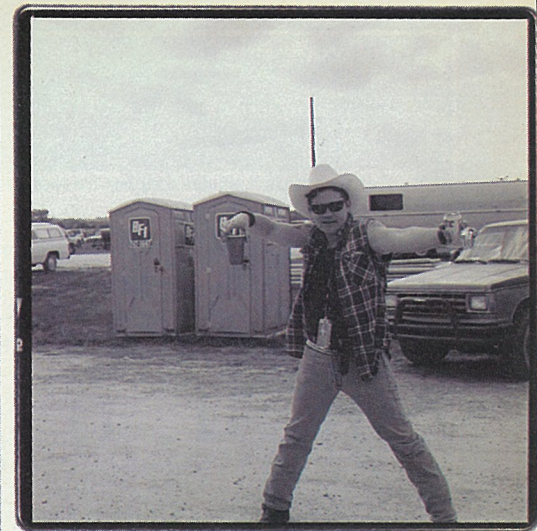
"You give up some things by not being in one place. For one, it is pretty hard for me to keep a girlfriend. I've been through a bunch, but I'm in love right now. I'm a romantic guy. I like to swing dance. I like to send flowers. I like to open and close doors and be a gentlemen. I'm feeling so romantic right now I'm even trying monogamy!" **•Jim (giggling and slapping his knee)**



DAVID DUDE (Merchandising)



DENNIS (Stage Manager)



JIMBO

The Reverend Horton Heat play a show in front of nearly 20,000 people. The sun sets behind them. From the moshing pit below, the band is three tall Texas silhouettes.

"If you can't get up for a Reverend Horton Heat show, then you're a fuckin' corpse."

•Al Jourgensen

Wandering around Austin's La Quinta parking lot at 6:00 AM, I find Jim, Dave Dude and a girl they know from Dallas at the La Quinta adjoining I Hop. Jim finishes some chocolate chip pancakes and fries. We all go back to Jim's room, where he kindly offers me his bed to spare me from another night on the bus.

"I probably definitely won't try anything," he tells me. He doesn't. He lies still in the bed next to me and tells a bedtime story about a bunny named Harold that got run over by a Mack truck.

In his sleep, Jim's breath hums like a mosquito that hangs close to my ear. David Dude snores like a monster. I can't sleep at all. At 8:30 AM I go to the lobby of the La Quinta to write. Sleazy fathers stuff the free continental breakfast muffins into their leisure suit pockets.

Bus call. We depart for San Antonio and Gene Vincent plays on the stereo. Along the highway, bluebonnets paint the roadside, some pink buttercups, some fiery Indian paintbrushes. David Dude notices the flowers and asks if they are planted by the state.

"Yup." Jeff Dog quickly answers while taking in a swift lungful of pot. "Lady Bird Johnson started that."

"She did a lot for Texas highways," Jim adds. Jim often talks about things he wants to do. His dreams. Swing dancing. Jazz lessons. Making a TV show, either "Fishing with Horton" or "The Man Who Killed With Suave."

"The Rev is the definition of cool—he does not even have to try. Like James Bond." •Scott Kleber of Surgery

The guys are just talking, looking at the new edition of Rod & Custom Magazine and filling up their Zippos. Of course, when driving, they are always on the look for a good car.

"Look at the shoebox!" Jim hollers. They all lurch towards the window to catch a glimpse of the hotrod before it disappears down the highway.

Cars, Johnny Cash and speed made lasting impressions on the young Jim Heath.

"I had a cousin that was in Vietnam, a big burly guy. Once he was home on leave and took all of his money and bought a brand new Cadillac with a silver and black paint job. That was the first year they had a spoiler on the back. We had an eight-track stereo that was loud as hell, and he played me the live version of Johnny Cash's 'Folsom Prison Blues' while driving that car 80 miles per hour on the back streets of our little neighborhood. I thought that was the coolest time ever..." •Jim

Refineries and granaries. We pass a snake farm. Highway ramps that were started in the oil boom but never finished. RV parks. Caverns. A shabby billboard advertises Miniature Horses and Goats. Rusty grain funnels. A smokehouse barbecue joint. Billboard: "Micro surgical Vasectomy Reversal" A pecan candy stand. Justin Boots outlet. Finally an open Mexican flea market indicates that we are approaching San Antonio.

"In Texas, everything is big. All the women here are beautiful and just massive. I love it. I love diving in at five in the morning after a long tour and the sun is coming up. You do not get a prettier sky. Texas is the sunset, beer and women." •Taz

"Texas is home, friends, family, the Alamo, drinking while driving, hedge driving, Dr. Pepper, BBQs, porches, beer, dice, tree houses and rope swings. Texas is speeding, filing up while smoking and popping wheelies." •David Dude

In San Antonio, we stop for Mexican food. It is real good food. The beans are refried in lard—a Texan tradition. Two big girls who are still wearing their admission bands from the night before approach Jim and ask him for an autograph. He obliges. He loves his fans and he is good to them.

The Reverend Horton Heat plays another raucous show at the Sunken Garden outdoor arena in San Antonio. Afterwards, a group of kids cluster around the bus. Cute and cool. Gawky and geeky. They just want to see the Rev. He stands outside and patiently answers their questions.

"Where are you from?" one asks. "Oh, me. I'm from the body of Christ, better known as Corpus Christi, Texas."

Their eyes light up. They are from Corpus Christi. Life is suddenly worth living. Dreams are possible. A legend has come from Corpus Christi.

Who's Who

(a reference chart)

Jim Heath: "The Rev." "The Reverend Horton Heat." "Horton." Adopted, raised in San Antonio and Corpus Christi. Guitar virtuoso and vocalist. King of the road.

"Jimbo" Wallace: Upright bass player. Knickknacker. Learned to play on a bass stolen from his Houston-area high school. It now hangs in a Dallas bar.

Patrick "Taz" Bentley: "Tasmanian Devil." A massive drum pounder. Beer drinker. Mr. straight-faced humor. Born and raised in Dallas.

Dennis: Stage manager. Womanizer. Hard-working, blue-eyed rockabilly cat.

David Dude: Merchandising master. "We've got hats, doorstops, back-scratchers, never in the history of rock 'n' roll has a band had so much stuff."

Blair: Bus driver and engineer. Fondly called "Pit Bull" because he "does not take an inch of shit."

Jeff Dog: King of trivia.

