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# Now Hear This

by Ric Damm

## BLIND MELON

*Blind Melon*

Capitol

★★★★★

For a band that's only been in existence for two years and has only one album, released this September, Blind Melon has created quite a bit of hoopla. Much of the media attention has been generated by lead singer Shannon Hoon's vocal help on Guns n' Roses' song "Don't Cry" and his appearance in the video for it. That, however, was just a side show.

Blind Melon have earned themselves a reputation as a killer road band with a striking live sound. Their first tour was an opening gig with Seattle monsters Soundgarden, followed up by a spot on MTV's "120 Minutes" Tour; all before the band had even released an album.

Now Blind Melon have that album, simply titled *Blind Melon*. It is an album drenched in classic blues-rock and seasoned with modern progressive style. Critics attempting desperately to pin down Blind Melon's sound have cited everyone from Jane's Addiction to the Allman Brothers. Blind Melon themselves reveal influences as drastically differing as Jim Croce and the Misfits.

Blind Melon's label evading sound stems partly from Hoon's chameleon voice, adaptable from one song to the next. At one moment Hoon evokes the tender side of Janis Joplin and in the next he comes across edgy and raw

like Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder.

The comparison to Pearl Jam is not unaccountable. Blind Melon enlisted Rick Parasher to fulfill producing and mixing needs. Parasher, who produced both Pearl Jam's hit *Ten* and Temple of the Dog, brings his grunge sensibilities into Melon's long list of influences. Parasher helps create a sound most noticeable on songs like "Soak the Sin," "Deserted" and "Seed to a Tree."

Also lending to Blind Melon's description-defying sound are guitarists Roger Stevens and Christopher Thorn. The two accompany one another magnificently, weaving crystal clear acoustics with dirt and dust distortions as on the bluesy "Drive," a song borrowing a lick from Hendrix's "The Wind Cries Mary."

Stevens and Thorn carry their axes tastefully, never resorting to speed or wail what can be done with finesse and style, and never stealing the show. The guitar sound is always contemporary yet distinctively blues.

Drummer Glen Graham sets the tempo effortlessly; maintaining a strong beat without pounding the shit out of the skins. Graham, on songs like "Dear Ol' Dad," evokes a pure high-hat style not unlike Stewart Copeland's days with The Police. Brad Smith compliments Graham with his at-times funky ("Tones of Home") but most-the-time behind-the-scenes bass stylings.

*Blind Melon* is a refreshingly loose and jamming album with a sound that cannot be contained in any one descriptive word. It is gritty rock and laid-back blues; today yet built firmly on yesterday.

The highlight of *Blind Melon* is, to me, the soulful, bluesy, acoustic jam "Change," in which Hoon declares, "I know we can't all stay here forever/so I want to write my words on the face of today." The words have been written and they read beautifully.

1. Soak the Sin
2. Tones of Home
3. I Wonder
4. Paper Scratcher
5. Dear Ol' Dad
6. Change

7. No Rain
8. Deserted
9. Sleepyhouse
10. Holyman
11. Seed to a Tree
12. Drive
13. Time