

Music • Film • Technology

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months! Two tantalizingly brief excerpts from these recordings can be found on *Morocco: Crossroads of Time* from Ellipsis Arts. One features Abdelkrim Rais, an internationally famous proponent of the ancient Andalusian influence in North African music; the other is a rare glimpse of religious music from the Moroccan Jewish community, which has largely relocated to Israel and the West in the intervening years. The rest of *Crossroads of Time* consists of more recent recordings compiled by Randall Barnwell and Bill Lawrence, which range from the West African influenced sounds of the Ganawi tradition to the improvisational storytelling songs of the Berbers and the religiously inspired music of the Jilala brotherhood, which is believed by some to cure disease. More than a CD, *Crossroads of Time* is a lavishly produced 64-page booklet packed with photos, essays and a recipe for the delicious Moroccan stew known as Harira.

Finally, there is the underground of Moroccan music, exemplified

by innovative groups like Aisha Kandisha's Jarring Effects and Ahlam (both on the Swiss-based Barbarity label). The latest Ahlam release, *Acting Salam*, merges jeel, a traditional music whose lyrics emphasize social and political issues, with traces of trance, dub and hip-hop to

create an infectious hybrid that has won them accolades on both sides of the Atlantic. The ubiquitous Bill Laswell contributes bass and production services to several tracks, most notably on the searing intro to "Irfiq," a song about the strains on friendship in Moroccan society. Other songs plead for peace between Jews and Arabs and the rights of the poor, radical positions which oblige them to conceal their identities when they perform in public. *Acting Salam* bears a label that reads "Warning: Contains


Messages From Arabs." For those willing to listen, the message of Ahlam demonstrates that Morocco, like the rest of the Islamic world, is a widely varied culture that refuses to conform to Western stereotypes and misconceptions. 



Photo courtesy Barbarity Records

## Ahlam: A new voice from the Moroccan underground scene.

## Blind Melon

by Alison Rosen

"Do you smoke?" Blind Melon drummer Glen Graham whispers in my ear, with a furtive glance toward an unknowing publicist. His eyes widen and a smile flits across his lips. "Follow me," he tempts in hushed tones.

Yes! Bong-hits with America's favorite hippie band! Tales from the road! Carefree guitar noodling! Ancient tribal hippie band rituals! Maybe the Bee-Girl will even drop by!

But instead of being led to some incense-flavored, bean-bag covered hippie den, we wind up on the butt-freezing roof of Capitol Records. Graham fishes around his pocket, smiles and produces—a pack of cigarettes.

There has been a grave misunderstanding.

But Blind Melon are used to misunderstandings.

Hailed as the carefree feel-good summer tune of '93, Blind Melon's "No Rain" shook the booties of chino-wearin' topsider-shufflin' frat kids everywhere. What the fickle fans never realized is that while they were slappin' fives and slurpin' Keystone, they were singing along to the tragic tale of bassist Brad Smith's ex-girlfriend, whose depression led to a cycle of drug use and codependency.

And if the public didn't understand Blind Melon (rounded out by vocalist Shannon Hoon and guitarists Rogers Stevens and Christopher Thorn) the first time around, they stand to be forever baffled by *Soup*, the band's latest offering produced by Andy Wallace and recorded in New Orleans.

"I think this is more of a music lovers' album," suggests Smith. "It's not automatic... but if you love music and appreciate all styles of music you'll like this record. But if you're searching for that smash chart topping single, I don't know if it's there."

If Blind Melon's 1992 debut was a hippie-dippie, toked-up journey by way of laconic grooves and grinding riffs, *Soup* is a fuckin' freaked out bad acid trip. Fragmented and claustrophobic, tossing out bits and pieces without consenting to reveal itself, *Soup* shows us just how narrow our definition of album really is. But Graham claims some method to the madness. "It's a complete album," he insists. "On the surface it might appear to be just a collection of songs, but it's a complete album with a beginning that takes you on a ride and a resolution at the end."

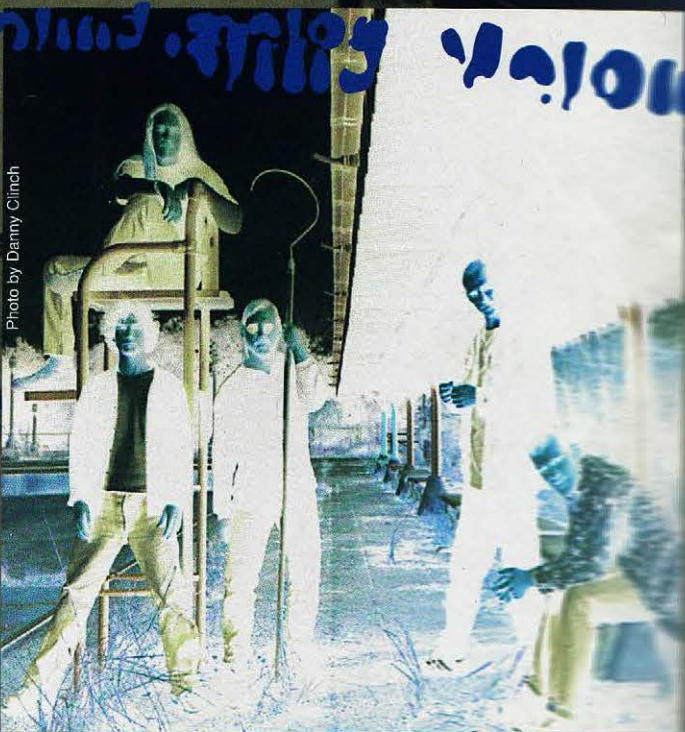


Photo by Danny Clinch



## ANTS IN MY HEART

A tale by Paw's Mark Hennessey

The birds go through the sunlight. They are the hard metal places on the cylinder of a music box making a sound where their bodies block the light. The dark rays and the hard light play over my body. I found batteries outside her window. The kind of batteries that only fit into a camera. I found them outside her bedroom window. From where I stand I can see the dead flies on the sill. They look as if they were covered in wax and it is growing dark outside. I would go back for his family but I know it is too late. I make him drive picturing you making love to me, a strange device tattooed between your breasts; as I say your name you lean back and I feel sick. The lady in front of me at the grocery store is at least sixty. She is bent by her age as we drive past the young retarded girl with red hair and huge body. The woman in front of me buys a single red rose. She asks for change. As I exit the building I hear her on the phone asking for an address. She gets into a station wagon with out-of-state plates. I feel the huge wave underneath me suck and then break all around me above me everywhere pining me to the pylon of the pier. The birds are flying through the dying sunlight. I feel both the dark and the white places where the light they interrupt and free reach me. I reach down and put the batteries inside of my pocket. I feel the ants moving inside of my heart. They have no words for I or me but sixty for us. On the TV screen you circle your mouth with your finger you say look at me. You say look at my mouth. It is dark outside and the sound they once made is gone and only the huge rushing beat of their wings in the darkness remains. The pulse that fills my heart with the insect the dark a thing alive that fills her room covering her piano books her diary her music box. A bird outside for each of the hard metal places that play her song.

Artwork by Mark Hennessey

Instead of earning points for refusing to record fourteen new versions of "No Rain," Blind Melon are facing bland reviews and insufferable journalistic plays on the album title. (As in "Thin Broth.") But after three years of bleeding themselves dry touring in support of their debut album (which soared up the charts a stale nine months after its release thanks to "No Rain"), Blind Melon has grown accustomed to the whims and changing tides of the music industry. One wonders whether they ever really were hippies, because today, freshly shorn and neatly groomed, they act like savvy young musicians aware and at ease with all aspects of being a big band on a big label. Even the process of recording the new album was approached with a wizened edge.

"The first record was getting in a room, jamming together and coming up with songs that way," explains Graham. "This one was basically people bringing in almost whole songs and then fiddling with them together. But I think everybody's more relaxed. We've got three years of experience under our belts so we're a bit more positively adjusted to the whole thing...."

"When we first started we thought it was about going into the studio and going on the road and being cool on stage, but there's a lot of other things that are involved," Smith agrees.

"It's like sitting down and playing a card game, or really any game, and you don't know the rules yet, so it's not fun for you... but the fact is that it's just fucking entertaining. I've learned how to play the game and be entertained by it more than anything... but you still do what you want to do. You always walk away from the game and go home and write your own music and do your own thing in your little private bubble and just be happy that way."

OVERSTREET'S  
**FAN**

an enthusiastic  
admirer or supporter.

(originally short for fanatic)