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"GIVE ME RELIEF/SQUASH ALL BEEP"

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■ THE BOSS

# OASIS

MORNING GLORY OR MORNING AFTER?





In happier times (from left): Shannon Hoon, Rogers Stevens, Brad Smith, Chris Thorn and Glen Graham.

# BLIND MELON

It could have been a gumbo time...

The death of singer Shannon Hoon from a drug overdose has thrown Blind Melon into quite a spin. But before the tragic incident on Oct 21, Blind Melon appeared to be riding high - they've released a crack debut album with a rather interesting follow-up. As a band, they have mystified pigeonholers with their stellar blend of rock, roots, rhythm and rebellion. When their debut self-titled album was released in 1992, it was greeted with critical - and much later, commercial, success with singles like Tones Of Home and breakthrough hit, No Rain, all thanks to their hit MTV video featuring the now-famous Bee Girl. Almost overnight, they had international magazines like Rolling Stone hailing them as a "refreshingly genuine" wind to hit the modern rock circuit.

Their sophomore album, Soup, however, has resulted in a

flavour decidedly different from its acclaimed predecessor. Still, it seems that the quintet of Rogers Stevens (guitar), Brad Smith (bass), Christopher Thorn (guitar), Glen Graham (drums) and Shanon Hoon (vocals) have scored a decisive victory in their quest for heartfelt simplicity by just playing good old fashioned rock 'n' roll. In the following interview, conducted before Hoon died, Graham still felt hopeful about life after No Rain and even talked about the redeeming power of good music. Interview by Zulkifli Othman.

**ZULKIFLI OTHMAN:** *How do Blind Melon cope with all the attention and good press as a result of the debut record and what are your views of the band being perceived as an "overnight success?"*

**GLEN GRAHAM:** Oh, I can tell you we definitely are an overnight success! *(laughs)* You can work for 20 years at something in the entertainment business and have your moment of fame where everybody all of a sudden knows you. The "overnight success" part is people all of a sudden knowing who you are. Everybody is an "overnight success" once, you know? *(laughs)* The idea is you try to maintain that. It's obviously not going to be you selling millions of records over and over again. I don't think so, but who knows? We're just trying to maintain what we're doing. As far as the press is concerned, in the States, it has been interesting.

Everybody seemed to *luurve* the first record. I hated it personally. This new record I really like a lot but the really big magazines like Spin and Rolling Stone absolutely hate it. They thought it was awful, which is funny. All this just means that no one knows anything about nothing. We have received good press for the record, that's true but the really big magazines have slammed this record pretty hard and we think it's funny. That is if we only sold 10 copies worldwide, we'll still be touring and recording newer albums because that's what we do. And hopefully for a long time, too.

**ZUL:** *Despite the messages in the music, I just can't help but notice the "feel good" vibes all over Soup. Do Blind Melon believe in the power of good music?*

**GLEN:** I think that the power of music is undeniable, whether it's good or bad. It's really a subjective thing. But the vibe of Blind Melon is one that is very positive. I maybe kind of back-handed or whatever, but in the end, it surfaces as something really upbeat. When you see us live, it makes perfect sense. We're just sort of ridiculous on stage. We're kind of over the top, making fun of the whole thing... I hope we don't make music that alienates people. We're pretty much average people. We don't play the rock star angle at all.

**ZUL:** *Is there any particular reason Galaxie was chosen as the lead-off single?*

**GLEN:** Basically, we thought it was fairly concise. And at least in America, we thought it would go over well here. It's an easy first track - it's quick and it's powerful. When viewed on the video, it has this added sense of humour. Actually, it's hard to pick singles because when it's your stuff, you like them all. *(laughs)* We consciously made a decision that we didn't want to come up with something as acoustic as No Rain. we wanted to state the fact that we were a rock band, or whatever you wanted to call us. Not a bunch of hippies standing out in the fields (as in the No Rain video). We wanted to show to the hundreds of thousands of people who bought the previous record and liked No Rain that there was something else they could check out.

**ZUL:** *The lyrics on the new album seem to more introspective, brooding even. (On hindsight, perhaps they ever foreshadowed Hoon's death.)*

**GLEN:** Think of it this way. The first record was done with no real band experience. Now, we've gone out, we've toured a lot of places in the world now - we've been all over the place.

Being confined with four other people, it gets to you after a while. *(laughs)* Not to say that, by any stretch of the imagination, doing this on this level is hard on us and not fun anymore. It just gets kind of weird every once in a while and you have to step back and realise, "Okay, I'm in a band playing places, playing in front of people, making money." It's not like you're playing in your hometown or in the vicinity you're familiar with. This is a full-time job and it takes a while to make the transition emotionally. Your time is really taken up.

Eight to 10 months in the year you're on the road. That basically life amounting to tour bus, hotel, show and something to eat after that. That's your life on the road, that's what you do. It takes a while to get into that and adjust to it. I think the lyrics reflect on that. None of us are to say that it's terrible being in that position. It's anything but that.

**ZUL:** *What's the story behind the title, Soup?*

**GLEN:** Lack of a better title, really. *(laughs)* We don't have any real or grand message. We didn't have enough foresight to come up with encapsulating some grand idea or anything like that. We were recording the new album in New Orleans and we talked about "gumbo" and all that stuff. We wanted to call it Gumbo but that was too New Orleans. Soup sounded more appropriate because if you look at the new album, it is a mash of our influences and that's what you get. *(laughs)*

**ZUL:** *Speaking of influences, Soup has a sound that is very late '60s-early '70s. But what I found interesting is that there are definitely contemporary sounds in the mix.*

**GLEN:** You think so? I think that's true because we all listen to bands from that era. We also are into stuff that is current, anything from jazz - bebop era to late '60s jazz. Obviously, we dig rock stuff from the Beatles to Led Zep, Buffalo Springfield, Neil Young - all those people. Some of us also dig Jane's Addiction and the Smashing Pumpkins, so there's that kind of modern rock thing. Some of us also listen to classical, country and gospel. You've got all sorts of things going. So, there's no telling which direction the next album will be heading.

**ZUL:** *Another interesting thing about Soup is that it seems to cast out the lingering shadows of No Rain. There's a certain rocking consistency - albeit a little mellower - which is not found on the debut. Overall, the songs sound stronger.*

**GLEN:** Well, as far as the No Rain angle, I would say that none of us were consciously trying to do anything one way or another about this Bee Girl and the video. I think we've grown as a band. When we signed because of our The Goodfoot Workshop demo in 1991, No Rain was one of the four tracks. We wrote all the other songs a couple of months after we got signed. We had another record and we hadn't really played it all together, you know. We played the song only about 10 times. Since then and now, we've played 350 shows and we've written probably 30 or 40 songs. We're much more developed as a band now and I think that, musically speaking, we've matured.

*Note: Blind Melon's Soup (Capitol) is available at all good music stores.*