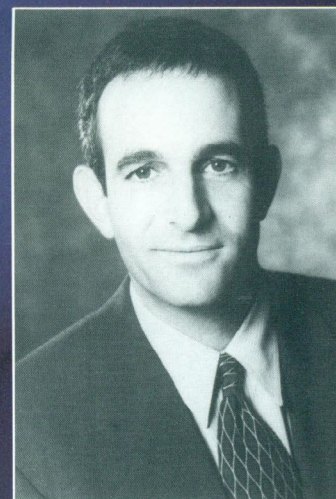


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CASH BOX

THE ENTERTAINMENT TRADE MAGAZINE



Gary Gersh:
Sharpening Capitol For
The Cutting Edge

Blind Melon
Brews Up *Soup*



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NUMBER ONES

POP SINGLE

You Are Not Alone
Michael Jackson
(MJJ/Epic)

URBAN SINGLE

You Are Not Alone
Michael Jackson
(MJJ/Epic)

RAP SINGLE

Player's Anthem
Junior M.A.F.I.A.
(Undeas)

COUNTRY SINGLE

She Ain't Your Ordinary Girl
Alabama
(RCA)

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Hootie & The Blowfish
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R&B ALBUM

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Bone Thugs N Harmony
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MEXICAN REGIONAL

Una Mujer Como Tu
M.A. Solios & Los Burkis
(Fonovisa)

Cover Story

Blind Melon Brews Up *Soup*

It's been three years since Capitol recording act Blind Melon has released an album, although the band hasn't been resting on the success of its platinum plus, self-titled debut album. Constant touring has expanded the band's fan base, and also made the second album's release a marketplace event. The album debuts this week at #13 on *Cash Box* pop album list. Karen Sidlow talked with band member Rogers Stevens about the new album, and also chatted with Capitol executives about the marketing and promotion of *Soup*.

—see page 5

The Re-invention of Capitol Records

Capitol Records chief Gary Gersh is in the third year of his mission to take the company boldly back to where it has been before—on the cutting edge of music and consistent chart success. The label honcho talked with *Cash Box* pop editor Steve Baltin about the philosophy that has been launched to return the label to its previous stature in the industry, and also about some of the acts that could propel it there.

—see page 5

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Blind Melon's *Soup*: A Sip of Sophomore Success

By Karen Sidlow



Blind Melon

SOPHOMORE JINX? Maybe not. Capitol recording act Blind Melon seems poised to top its previous success. It's been almost three years since the world was introduced to five guys from Smalltowns, USA who somehow found common ground in Los Angeles, CA. Recognizing that the City of Angels wasn't so serene, they still made the sojourn to this music mecca to seek fortune, fame or just to experience the creative chaos of a new environment.

In the early 90's the fivesome, made up of vocalist Shannon Hoon, guitar players Rogers Stevens and Christopher Thorn, bassist Brad Smith and drummer Glen Graham, headed to North Carolina to write some tunes. Next they ventured to Seattle, WA's London Bridge studio to record what was to be their inspiring multi-platinum self-titled debut album then, for the last three years, major tour stops at clubs, theaters, arenas, and an appearance at Woodstock '94.

The fact that the band's first release sold well and most likely was heard by millions of people with several million more experiencing them live, there's little doubt a lot of folks are anxious to imbibe the sounds they offer on their second effort, *Soup*, which debuts this week at #13 on the *Cash Box* pop album chart.

And what exactly has changed over the past few years? To start with, the obvious thing would be that all five members actually have a few dollars in their pockets. Add to the list the visual changes, noticeable when a few members received pretty severe haircuts and obtained several more tattoos. But even more personally, two of them got married (Thorn and Graham),

Blind Melon (Continued from page 5)

to square one, meaning super-serving the college and alternative markets well before moving into the pop arena. To that end, we have shipped a 10-inch, 4 song vinyl EP, featuring 'Galaxie' as well as several demo tracks from the new album, exclusively to college radio, prior to the commercial alternative single release."

Even though the label is pushing full-speed ahead with "Galaxie," there are many other tracks on the record that are memorable and that touch upon a variety of subjects.

Some may recall the song "2x4," which was featured in their Woodstock set. Then there are some personal pieces that delve into the f-word, *Family*. "Vernie," the third tune on the record was written about frontman, Shannon Hoon's grandmother, and the birth of Hoon's child inspired him to pen "New Life."

There's even a song that didn't make it to the debut but found its way onto this release. Rogers explains how "Walk" got new legs. "'Walk' was a song that was sort of an in-between song that fell down a very large crevice and we ended up falling down in that crevice ourselves and we brought it back up."

Rogers also mentioned that the brief tune was produced by bassist and 'hair man extraordinaire,' Brad Smith.

A few songs on the record speak of death in a diverse, astonishing set of events. "Skinned" is an attempt to dissect the mentality of serial killer Ed Grein and "Car Seat (God's Present)" was sparked by Hoon's reaction to the horror of Susan Smith, the South Carolina woman who drowned her two children.

Rogers speaks about another morbid occurrence—this time, suicide—that inspired the scribbling of "St. Andrews Fall." "It must have been about 1993 and it was in Detroit, and it was right outside of the St. Andrews Hall, which is a venue in downtown Detroit. I think it was kind of a younger girl and she stood up there for a long time. It was really sick because all these people we're standing around yelling 'jump.' It was pathetic."

But the entire album does not deal with the moribund. There are also uplifting, playful songs on the release. One of them is "Mouthful of Cavities," which feature the vocals of Hoon along with Jena Kraus. Rogers said, "I met Jena actually in New York and we became friends and she started hanging out

though not to each other, and one of them became a loving father (Hoon).

But the question burning in everyone's mind has to be: Is the world ready for a second helping, this time a hearty slurp of *Soup*, from the sweet small town boys that call themselves Blind Melon?

Guitarist, Stevens took some time to illuminate for *Cash Box*, in a lighthearted amusing way, his take on where the band plans to go from here. Surely the most frequent inquiry would be how he anticipates *Soup* will be received. He freely commented, "What am I supposed to be thinking? [jokingly] Am I supposed to be thinking I'm a 'rockstar' or something? [laughs] Well, anticipation is a very strange thing because you can sit around and speculate, and I'm sure there are many business speculators in their offices riding around in agony wondering what this (record) is going to do. It's out of my control now. We made a record that we're happy with and we think is really good and there's nothing else we can do about it."

Reminded that the quintet's debut was an overwhelming success, Rogers explained how he feels about the new set of songs compared to their 1992 release. "That's what was going on then, and this is what is going on now. I think, placing them side by side, this one stacks up a bit higher for me."

During a recent conversation, Denise Skinner, Capitol's vp of marketing operations, goes a bit further in discussing ideas about the new release: "The marketing strategy is a lot easier (than their debut, because of the built in fan base) and the band has delivered a brilliant record. What a marketing dream! The ideas are limitless as far as what we can do with this. Because of more recognition, there's more things we can do that (will) get people excited."

The first single from *Soup* is the opening track, "Galaxie." Rogers talks about the video and it's director. "It's basically your average heavy metal band driving around in a car video with really cool visuals going on all around us."

Skinner then elaborates on the label's plan for exposure of the new video. "Jake Scott shot it and Timothy Leary is in it. It's a very cool video. MTV seems to be very excited about it, they (gave) us a world premiere."

Then there's the radio end of the campaign. Tim Devine, vp of A&R at Capitol, laid the cards on the table. "The plan with this album is to go back

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with the band and then she said 'I can sing' and that's what she did."

And if the 14 songs on the record aren't enough to tide the public over, the band is talking about doing some recording at various outlets while on the road with the possibility of using them as B-sides. Tracks may include new original material or selected cover songs.

Speaking of recording, the band called upon Rick Parasher to shape their debut at London Bridge studio in Seattle. This time they arranged for the infamous Andy Wallace to produce their second effort which took form a Daniel Lanois' New Orleans-based Kingsway Studio. Rogers talks about their wise production decisions. "We wanted to change, we wanted to use someone else. (Andy) came to New Orleans (and we had) never met him before. I held up a sign that said 'Andy Walrus' and he walks off the plane and looked me in the eye and said, 'I am the walrus.' And I thought, 'Okay, that's good.' He's like the headmaster of rock and we've heard lots of (the) records (he's produced) and they all have certain qualities about them."

With their new record just available in stores, what lies ahead for Blind Melon? "We're gearing up to do more of the same, to tour and burn ourselves out as we did before." Rogers honestly puts his career into perspective. Skinner gets a little more detailed about the band's schedule. "They are going to be doing some European festivals in late August and then they will be back (in the United States). We're looking to do the (David) Letterman Show either on the 21st or 28th of September. They're either going to start the tour right before the Letterman date or right after it. It will probably be a six week tour (of) small theaters."

There's also talk of a Blind Melon home video in the future. The audio and visual offering could feature some of the not-as-well-known clips that coincide with tracks from the first release. Also various snippets of footage of behind-the-scenes footage of the band could be marketed to the public.

Considering the success of the band's initial effort and positive response to hundreds of live shows, it's hard to believe that the line-up has remained the same. "We've tried to fire everyone, but no one would leave." Rogers says sarcastically, making us think that these five guys were just meant to be together.