

Just A Drummer

BLIND MELON story
by STUART COUPE

AAAH, don't you love drummers? I do and you should too. Aside from their amazing ability to hit things they can always be relied on. Take the case of Blind Melon. The band's been on the road all day driving to London. By the time they get to the hotel it's real late and no-one wants to get up early the next morning to talk to an Australian journalist.

I'D been scheduled to talk to guitarist Rogers Stevens who obviously couldn't wrap his brain cell around the concept of being woken at 8am — but he still had enough smarts to bang on the door of drummer Glen Graham before passing out. I imagine the conversation went like this: "Mate, you're the drummer. Everyone assumes you're an idiot. No-one ever wants to talk to you about hitting things. But mate, here's your chance to be real famous in Australia. I mean, the mag's called *Drum Media*."

GRAHAM probably thought about it for a full 10 minutes. Then the penny dropped. "Yep," he says. "You're right. I'll do it. It'd be great to talk about hitting things first thing in the morning. Gee, I've always wanted to do that. Thanks Rogers, you're a real mate. *Drum Media*, eh? Cool name."

SO, here we are. First thing in the morning. Graham's still yawning — but hey, this is his moment and he's gonna give it his best shot.

BLIND Melon are in London for the start of a bout of touring to promote 'the difficult second album', a rather excellent outing called *Soup*. Graham reckons the next two years will be spent pretty seriously on the road.

AS for *Soup* being a vastly superior album to Blind Melon's ultra successful debut, Graham reckons that's

the result of the band becoming far more comfortable with what they're doing.

"WE hadn't really been a band very long when we recorded the first record, and we hadn't played at all," he says. "Now we've done over 300 shows between the first and second records. It makes a difference."

SOUP was recorded at Ultrasonic and Kingsway Studios in New Orleans during December of last year and January of '95. The decision to make the album in one of America's most wonderful cities was for more practical reasons than most bands have for gravitating there. Unlike dozens of bands who consider a few weeks in New Orleans a rather pleasant way to make an album, three fifths of Blind Melon call the city home.



BLIND Melon took full advantage of the city's musical heritage, recruiting the renowned Kermit Ruffin with the Little Rascals Brass Band to add a second-line flavour to a couple of tracks on *Soup*.

"KERMIT Ruffin is sort of the reigning king of the brass bands," Graham explains. "He was in a thing called The ReBirth Brass Band and they tour in Europe. There's so many brass bands in New Orleans that there's someone playing pretty much every day of the year."

"ROGERS wrote a song called *Lemonade* and thought it'd be nice to have a brass band do parts for an intro and an outro on the record. He just walked up and asked them if they wanted to play on the record. They asked how much money they'd get paid

and something was worked out. He got together a group of people that was basically a hybrid of several groups but more people from a band called the Little Rascals Brass Band so that's what we called it. Kermit has his own group, a trio called the Barbecue Swingers and they do '40s swing stuff which is really nice and very good."

ELSEWHERE on *Soup* there's tracks like *Skinned* which is an attempt to dissect the mentality of serial killer Ed Gein, *St Andrew's Fall*, a song written by vocalist and chief songwriter Shannon Hoon after he witnessed a young woman fall to her death from a Detroit building, and *Car Seat (God's Presents)* which was sparked by his horror at the South Carolina incident where a mother drowned her two children in their car seats.

"SHANNON'S definitely into that sort of thing," Graham says of this apparent fascination with serial killers, violence and psychotic maniacs.

"HE has this encyclopedia of serial killers. He's just fascinated with people who are that freaked out that they feel the need to kill people. Especially the Ed Gein thing. That was bizarre."

"HE'S interested in these kinds of people — who are they, what happens to them to make them want to do these things? It's one thing to kill someone, I guess, and it's quite a deal different to do something like that to them, to make furniture out of their body parts. That's unbelievable."

"THE Susan Smith thing is entirely different again. That was right about the time he and his girlfriend were getting ready to have a kid and I think that really hit him pretty hard. The very idea that the mother, the person who gave birth to these kids, would put them in a car and then drive them into a lake. That's unbelievable."

AFTER discussing violence and serial killers it's kinda strange when Graham breaks the thread, wanting to know if Bon Jovi are really huge in Australia. I tell him about the level of tour that's been mounted later this year.

"THAT'S interesting, don't you think," he says. "Because he's not big in the States. He's dead. He died long ago."

I GENTLY ask why there's such a fascination with Bon Jovi's profile in Australia.

"WE'VE been asked to do that tour and we're trying to decide whether or not to do it," he says. "We don't particularly care for Bon Jovi at all — surprise, surprise — but it was sort of pitched to us that he was playing stadiums which we couldn't really believe. We wouldn't tour with him in the United States."

BLIND Melon's album *Soup* is available now through EMI.