

# GLASS EYE

# FREE!

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**Collide**

**Chris Mars**

**Blind Melon**

**Inner Thought**

**Glass Eye's pix of 96**





# Blind Melon

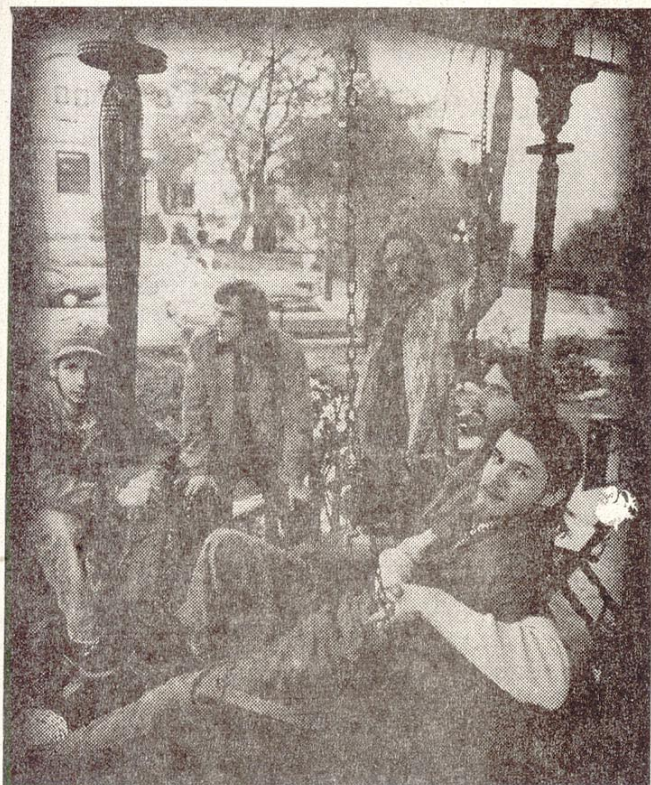
interview by Cathi Hartley



Last year we bid a sad farewell to Blind Melon's Shannon Hoon when he died of an accidental cocaine overdose. The remaining members of Blind Melon recently released *Nico*, a Hoon-sung, thirteen-track album of previously unreleased material. For the band, this not only marks the end of their friendship with a talented singer and songwriter, but also the end of their five-year voyage together as Blind Melon.

Blind Melon had a really huge hit once. In 1992, "No Rain" single-handedly catapulted their self-titled debut into triple-platinum status. Things were going deservedly well for the band, with a *Rolling Stone* cover story, performances on David Letterman and *Saturday Night Live*, and an invite to play Woodstock '94 to prove it. Upon the release of their second album, *Soup*, though, it became evident that no one (aside from the true Blind Melon faithful) was paying attention anymore; the album was an unexpected failure. This weighed heavily on the band, especially their frontman.





Richard Shannon Hoon was born on September 26, 1967, to parents Dick and Nel. Shannon was a very hyperactive child, as his mother explained in a recent interview in *Details*. "I never wanted him to take any drugs, so instead of putting him on Ritalin, I enrolled him in karate at five or six. By nine, he was a black belt."

"He had a very precocious personality — high energy, high metabolism, everything," guitarist Rogers Stevens describes to me from his New York home. "He was a very restless person." Too restless for the small town of Lafayette, Indiana, Hoon found himself getting into trouble, and into a lot of drugs. Afraid his situation might worsen, he moved to L.A. In 1989, guitarist Rogers Stevens and bassist Brad Smith also moved to Los Angeles, from West Point, Mississippi. They were looking for a singer when a friend told them about someone he'd met at a party. "We went over to this guy's garage and met Shannon there," reflects Stevens. "I remember he played 'Change' and a couple other tunes; I was pretty struck by his voice right away." That night he came pretty close to being physically struck by Hoon, as well.

"We went out drinking that night and ended up almost getting in a fight," Stevens laughs. "He started screaming at me because I was laughing at him because he said something stupid. He said he was gonna get in a cab and go back to Indiana — we were in L.A. — and he was

very serious about it."

What could've otherwise ended all relations between the two, ended up being the beginning of an invincible bond formed among the bandmates. Joined by drummer Glen Graham and guitarist Christopher Thorn, Blind Melon lived together for a couple of months in a quiet town in North Carolina, in a place they called "The Sleepyhouse," immortalized in a song on the first album.

"It was a very strange existence," Stevens remembers, "sitting around the kitchen table, looking at everybody, blurry-eyed, at 4 a.m., night after night after night, with a red light bulb on in the house, and that's it. Shannon had tin-foiled all the windows; there was really no light coming in. We played a lot. It was a good bonding experience," Stevens sadly adds.

When I inquired if Shannon had become his best friend, he replied "everybody in the band is really close. We all had our ups and downs. Yeah, he was my best friend. I mean..." he pauses for thought, "somebody like Shannon takes up a huge portion of your life; [it was a] very high-maintenance situation. You're not gonna [be able to] have serious involvement with this guy once you get to know him and play in a band with him, because he demands so much attention."

Dealing with a mind cluttered with bad childhood memories, worsened by an ever-present, drug-induced cloud hovering over his brain, Hoon was always a troubled man. "Shannon talked often about his problems," says Stevens. "He had a tough childhood, there's no doubt about that. That would offend a lot of people that were in his childhood, I'm sure, but you gotta call it how you see it. I don't wanna point fingers to people in his past, his family, whatever; I can't do that. They're not defending themselves, and he's not here anymore to defend anyone."

With a new record failing miserably, and the pressure to be a responsible father weighing heavily upon him, Shannon went on one

of his familiar drug binges at one of their tour stops. Afterwards, he returned to their tour bus and fell into a deep sleep, from which he never awoke.

But the music does not stop there. A few weeks ago, *Nico* was released, an interactive CD dedicated to Hoon's baby girl, Nico Blue. Included on this CD are songs that were never released, some that Hoon had previously recorded alone, that the band went in and dubbed over. "We decided this is the way Shannon would've wanted it to be," says Stevens. "It was a very sensitive thing, to go in and record on something when Shannon wasn't there, but we wanted to make sure that this is a record that he would like, and we think we got that."

Simultaneously released with *Nico* is the video *Letters From a Porcupine*, a behind-the-scenes look at the band and the man that made it happen. Along with interviews, there's live concert footage, and scenes taken from the time they spent together at "The Sleepyhouse." The viewer gets a rare chance to really see and feel the unity Blind Melon shared as a band; something quite hard to come by.

Over a year has passed since the death of Shannon Hoon. The band that was once Blind Melon is still looking for someone to replace their former frontman; a new record and video released brings back good memories for the band, but can do little else. They plan not to perform any of the songs from Blind Melon again, but to start all over again. After thousands of responses to an ad for a new singer, Rogers Stevens just now has started working with someone in New York.

"But," he concludes, "we're still looking."





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## Blind Melon Interview by Cathi Hartley

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