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HOBBY

SHOP

BY ANNE LEIGHTON

Blind Melon's Shannon Hoon was really stoked when he was told that he was going to be in this month's *Hobby Shop*. The charismatic vocalist really enjoys his hobby, so we won't waste any more of your time here... we'll get right to it.

BLIND MELON'S SHANNON HOON

Blind Melon's lead singer Shannon Hoon has a yin/yang kind of personality. He loves people but also craves his moments of solitude. Recently he called us to talk about his hobby—people—meeting them, leaving them and—believe it or not—making them

Shannon Hoon: Boy, this is a gonna be a good *Hobby Shop*. I like to make little people out of clay. I give myself half an hour to come up with a guy or a girl or a figure, then put it away. I like Fimo, a clay that people make little necklace beads out of. You can buy it at an arts and crafts store. You cook it in your oven and it gets hard. Brad's (Smith, Blind Melon guitarist) girlfriend, Kim used to sculpt all the time. My girlfriend, her and Brad always got together and made picture frames, and it got me into making little people. You can manipulate them really well. You can make and break all these people that you might like to do in real life with clay.

Hit Parader: Do you make people on the tourbus?

SH: No oven on the bus. But the weather's hot, so you can probably set 'em outside.

HP: Are you discovering new hobbies on the bus?

SH: Well, we're still in the van. So, I'm not finding anything new to do on the bus. So on the bus, my hobby is catching breaths in between Brad going, "Hey man, listen to this," and he hands me his headphones.

HP: Are you at a hotel now?

SH: Yeah.

HP: What things are there to do in the hotel?

SH: I usually watch the news 'cause it's easy to watch the world go by and not really know what's going on around you. In a

band you can easily be deluded as a human being. You have to keep your defenses up from being turned into a prima donna or an egomaniac. Be aware of all the things you might be taking for granted because you think you're a rock star. I try to keep those things an arm's length away. And I don't let a lot of things that don't matter to the big picture affect me. To me family, friends and respect for people matter. I weed out what does and doesn't matter.

HP: Did you always pay attention to the news?

SH: Yeah, 'cause that was my only way to see what the world was about when I was in Indiana. It was the only way you really knew there was some place else. You really knew what the people were bitchin' about—the reason for all the violence. You got the gist that maybe where you were living wasn't so bad after all.

HP: This past summer did the Mississippi River floods affect your bandmates' families?

SH: The only way it's a common thread is they're from Mississippi and it's the Mississippi River that's flooding over. We're playing some benefits with John Cougar for the people. It's a terrible thing for people to lose their homes. Farmland and working class communities are completely destroyed. Those are the hardest working Americans. The farming community are the unspoken heroes. A lot of pride runs there. There's a lot of strength to pick themselves back up. They can either adapt and overcome or just fall in there. Everybody will pull together and things will work out in time.

HP: Since the settlers moved out west in the 1800s, they always had that survival instinct—that pioneering spirit.

SH: It's what helped them get to where they're at. They've learned how to deal with being a supplier that's never really appreciated. And a lot of people take for

granted that these people feed you and your kids. Now it's time for everybody to lend a helping hand.

HP: You're from Indiana; is anyone in your family a farmer?

SH: I grew up in a farming community. We didn't have a farm. My grandfather had a farm. We lived in the city for a while and then moved out into the country. I worked with lots of farmers helping to bail hay and a lot of things like that. They're hard working people and they're people who would help you out. A lot of people just never care to recognize it. And now it seems like the only time you hear about them is when tragedy strikes. Now's the time to give it back.

HP: What else do you do on the road?

SH: The best thing is meeting people. That's something I've naturally enjoyed—meeting different people from different walks of life and not being some self-righteous rock dude who thinks his opinion is the only one that matters. I respect everyone's point of view and like to hear people speak on what they're into and they're dealing with. I feed off that, learn from that and grow from that. And it'll knock me back a few steps and helps me realize if I'm guilty of taking people or my situation for granted.

HP: Do you get a chance to read on the road?

SH: I'm reading the Albert Goldman book on John Lennon. It doesn't paint a pretty picture about him. Obviously I don't believe this guy was right there when it happened. He's using his own way of interpreting the stories. You can see the big picture and you have to read between the lines. You ever read any Aleister Crowley?

HP: No, are you reading that?

SH: A little. He's interesting to read. He's got a legitimately twisted point of view.

HP: Doesn't he write about the devil?

SH: I'm reading *Diary of a Drug Fiend*. I guess it does deal with the devil in a sense, but it's really good. I'm at a stagnant point in the book and switched over to the Lennon book.

HP: Do you ever concern yourself about how Blind Melon is being perceived by people?

SH: If you do then you constantly find yourself catering to this other identity that you've invented. And that's a waste of time and energy to defend that identity. It would be fun for a while but when you find a majority of your time spent catering to the other identity that you had everybody see you as, it doesn't leave you a lot of time. The backbone of our band is a lack of direction—sporadically moving in all directions.

HP: Tell us about someone on the road that influenced you as a person.

SH: There was a time we were playing Detroit. It happened a long time ago but it has its scars. We had a bad monitor mix and were saying, "That sucks—no one could hear each other. Blah! Blah! Blah!" We were in our dressing room looking out

the window and the police had the street blocked off. There was a crowd of people gathering. There was a girl 24 floors up on the ledge of a building getting ready to jump. You could hear people yelling at this poor girl, "Jump, you chicken." We got really nervous watching this and then she jumped. And that sadistic part of your mind makes you watch the whole thing because you're gonna learn from it. So your eyes watched the whole thing. And it seemed like it took an hour from the time she jumped until she hit the street. Your mind's flipping like a high speed camera—freeze-framing everything. And man, it made you sick to your stomach about so many things. I realized there are so many things I congest my head with that really don't matter in the big picture. It helped me realize the things that do matter to me. It makes you realize how irrelevant a monitor mix really is—a lot of things that make me worry really aren't going to matter tomorrow. And if they matter tomorrow they're not gonna matter next week—probably not.

HP: What really matters to you?

SH: Circles of friends, family. Communication. With all those things you can go far. Circles of friends have helped me adapt and overcome a lot of sorrowful situations. Just to be able to know you have someone you can talk to and communicate with, you have gold.

HP: Just from doing a simple *Hobby Shop*, are we correct in assuming that people are the most important thing in your life?

SH: Yeah, I remove myself from people when I'm touring. I don't talk to anybody. I sit and reflect on the people I just met in the last few months. There isn't a lot of time alone to really soak it all in because you meet a lot of people at such a rapid pace that at times you need a black room to sit and mentally file it all. And that's when you realize the effects that some people had on you that you didn't realize at the time when you were talking to them. They did have a mental affect on you and the only way to do that is mentally remove myself from everybody and everything.

Shannon Hoon: "Boy, is this gonna be a good *Hobby Shop*."



PHOTO: ANNAMARIA DISANTO