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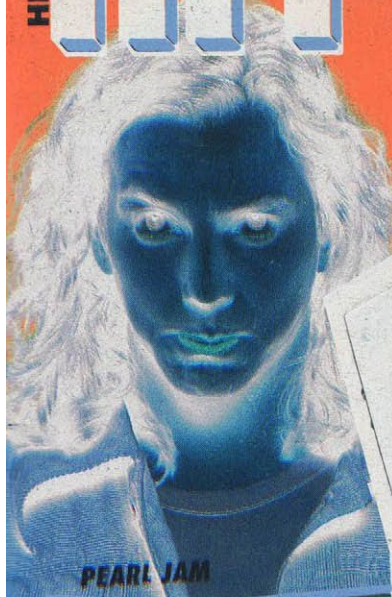
HIT PARADER

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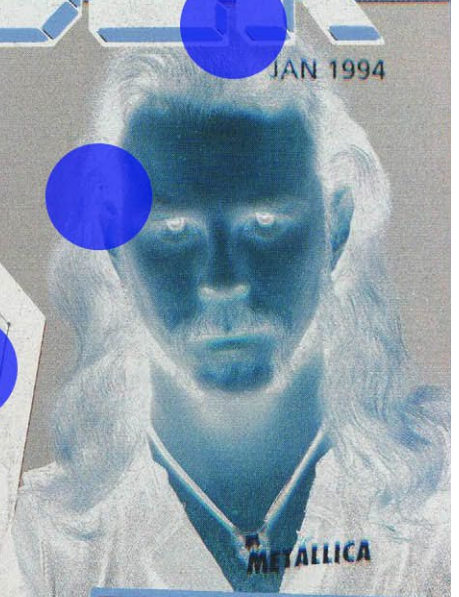
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JAN 1994

ALICE  
IN  
CHAINS



PEARL JAM



METALLICA

## THE YEAR IN METAL 1993



VINCE NEIL



GUNS N' ROSES



STONE TEMPLE PILOTS



BLACK SABBATH



COVERDALE/PAGE



ROBERT PLANT



AEROSMITH



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**T**heir record company knew they'd stumbled onto something juicy when they signed Blind Melon. The group was a bunch of unknown rockers from various villages in the south and Midwest. And a year before their self-titled debut album was released, vocalist Shannon Hoon had shown up singing backup in Guns N' Roses' *Don't Cry* video.

"I met Axl at a party in Indiana I don't know how many years ago," recalls Shannon. "It was raining and it was winter, and Axl, a guy named Dave Lank and I went for a walk. There were people who were just getting messed up at this party and I didn't want to be around them, and I don't think they did, either. That was the first time I really rapped with him."

They never met before, because Axl had a few years on Shannon, meaning he ran with an older crowd. "Axl was friends with my big sister when I was young. When I ran into him, he was like 'Oh, you're Anna's brother,'" reminisces Shannon. "My sister was a cheerleader and Axl was the rowdy kid who played drums with his pencils. They were from two totally different circles of friends, but they got along. They met when Axl caught the teacher looking up my sister's cheerleading skirt. He was like, 'Hey, Anna, Mr. So-and-So is looking up your skirt.'"

There's that old cliché about how it doesn't matter what you know, but who you know. You've got to give him credit; Axl is kind enough to remember and reward people who knew him before everybody wanted to know him. He helped his friend Shannon create a buzz on Blind Melon. The word was out on them long before Shannon, guitarists Rogers Stevens and Christopher Thorn, bassist Brad Smith and drummer Glen Graham released their now platinum album. And when their self-titled debut album was released, the scene was set. Poignant, innovative tunes like *Soak the Skin*, and *Dear Ol' Dad* slowly—make that very slowly—elevated Blind Melon from the mire of new releases into the heights of accepted popularity.

According to Shannon, Blind Melon's being is, in spirit, inspired by Axl. "The success of Guns N' Roses pulled a lot of kids off the street and put them into the rehearsal halls and into the garages, it helped a lot of kids who were punks," notes Shannon. "They realized you could come from here and really do something. Guns N' Roses nourished kids mentally and let them know you can find something at the end of the rainbow. You can write a song and sign it and let the whole world hear it, the possibilities are there."

True, Guns N' Roses have influenced young rockers everywhere, but they've also inspired a nation of young Americans, giving them hope, encouraging them to pursue their passions and make their dreams come true.

"All of us are from very small towns," notes Glen. "When we all met in L.A., that's one thing we had in common. We all came from small towns, and we definitely appreciate it now."

"I never appreciated Indiana until I lived in L.A.," adds Shannon. "I love L.A. but it's hazardous to my health."

Even the name Blind Melon depicts their rural roots. "It's a term that my father used to use a long time ago, for the people who lived next door in Mississippi. They were a group of kids who just lived life the way that they wanted to live it," remembers Brad. "My father used to poke fun and called them blind melons—stupid heads—because they had no direction."

Blind Melon is an amalgam of five individuals. The music incorporates all their influences, everything from the Sex Pistols to Neil Young to Traffic. It's a different blend; it's not metal, but it's not easy listening either. Tunes like *Tones of Home* aren't easy to categorize. Melon music has a psychedelic quality that makes it mellow and easily palatable, if not downright addictive.

"Blind Melon has a lot more soul than any band I've ever been in," observes Shannon. "When you find the right combination, the music seems really real. We don't write about fictional things, about doing drugs on a Saturday night and being with a hundred women. That's not what we're about. The things we write are real issues that have arisen to one of us over the course of the last two years."

So many of today's influential bands, be they Metallica, Stone Temple Pilots or Pearl Jam, take their lyrical inspiration from the news. Blind Melon is the new "breakthrough" band to fall into that group.

"I like to watch the news and just try and put myself into the shoes of the victim, or my feet into shoes of the instigator," reveals Shannon.

They write about real life issues, things that are of concern to youngsters. Among other themes that are pervasive on Blind Melon is that of hopelessness. Take the lyrics from the tune *Paper Scratcher* which goes:

"He don't believe in God and a world as one. So he rambles through the weeds and he will sleep beneath the trees."

"I wrote it through the eyes of a homeless person I met while living in Hollywood. He used to walk around and scratch the private parts out of the pictures in newspapers," reveals Shannon. "I picked up one of the papers after he threw it down on the sidewalk and he had scratched out the

face, the breasts and between the legs of a lady who was photographed in the newspapers."

Shannon realized that a high percentage of hopelessness is because of mental illness, so he tried to give his homeless neighbor some base in reality to keep him sane. "When he asked me for money, I told him

"My name was Shannon, and every time he sees me on the street, if he could remember my name, I would give him a dollar, just so he would have something to remember. It would be something for his mind to hold on to.

He didn't remember my name."

But the study made for an intense piece of music. "I like to experience things like that and then write about them, rather than make something up and write a superficial song," declares Shannon.

Blind Melon's music is about passion. Their sonic poems are like children. They create them and nurture them, creating a mature product. And they do it well. Blind Melon has already accomplished some of the goals they've set out for themselves. The band has no great designs for mega-success. They don't watch MTV, and they don't read about themselves in magazines. Blind Melon merely write and play music because they want to.

"Our goal is to be content," insists Shannon. "To me, being content is keeping this band going the way we're doing now. We're not in a hurry to do anything we don't want to do. We're just writing songs and making music, and that's what makes us happy. There's a lot of unity in our band. We split everything; everyone has their hand in a circle, that's what makes us happy. If one guy is poor, we're all poor. We're friends on and off the stage."

# BLIND MELON

## PAYTON OF PAYS OFF

BY JODI SUMMERS

**"WE DON'T WRITE ABOUT FICTIONAL THINGS, ABOUT DOING DRUGS AND BEING WITH A HUNDRED WOMEN."**



**SHANNON  
HOON**

**HIT PARADER**