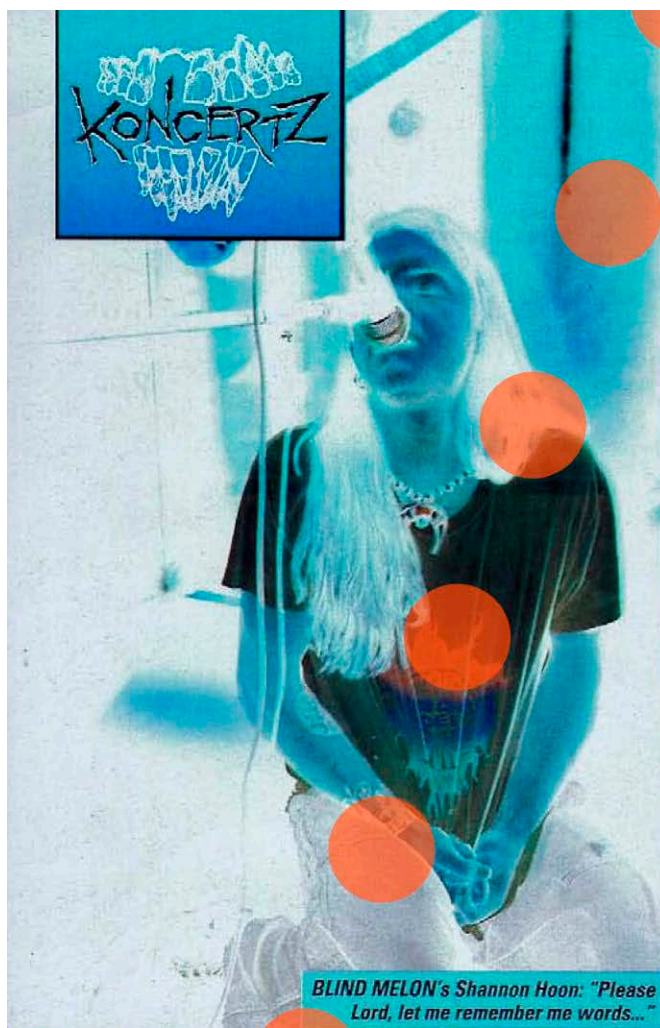


KONCERTZ



BLIND MELON's Shannon Hoon: "Please Lord, let me remember me words..."

pic Paul Hanley

A BLINDER!

BLIND MELON



Camden Underworld, London
Sunday, May 23

AXL'S SPECIAL new friends. It's not what you know, but who you know. Blind Melon are just a bunch of small-town kids hand-picked as the new Pearl Jam by A&R men only looking to reconstruct what has gone before.

These are just a few of the reservations harboured by nasty, cynical types at present, but neither band nor audience acknowledge them tonight in any way whatsoever. Blind Melon may be brow-furrowingly popular all of a sudden, but the catch is that – just like Pearl Jam – their wares justify the attention. That GN'R connection has obviously given the five-piece a healthy leg-up, but their powerfully mellow '70s tunes would also appear to be doing them proud.

Pearl Jam comparisons aren't entirely dumb, and Shannon Hoon is definitely another Eddie Vedder waiting to happen. He appears to be a stage natural, coming out with some new mannerisms, and not once resorting to the "This next song's called..." school of Rock raps. He's also becomes genuinely bright-eyed when the crowd sing the words to 'Change' for him, and not solely because the microphone was "shockin' the f**k out of my lips!"

From gentle crash-out music on CD, to simply crashing music in the raw, the album material undergoes quite a transformation.

'Holyman' rams home a point made by Hoon early in the set. "Is everyone loving God on this Sunday? Doing everything your parents told you not to do?!"

They close with a joyous 'Soak The Sin'. Everyone loves them and wants to hold Hoon's sweaty paw for at least a second or two. It seems that Axl's new friends really are quite special. **JASON ARNOPP**