

BLIND MELON



**Kentish Town Forum, London
Tuesday, June 21**

AFTER SPENDING the best part of two years on the road, Blind Melon are suffering. Tonight, despite the near-ecstatic reception they receive, the quintet look like a burnt-out shell.

The most noticeable near-casualty is Shannon Hoon. Over the course of 20 months, Hoon has caught the tortured frontman's disease; all balled-up gestures and mumbled introductions. There are still moments where he's the absolute centre of attention – throwing himself around in an apparent daze, holding onto that rasping voice like a lifeline – but there are also times when he makes for a bored, weary, confused figure.

Blind Melon's set is similarly fractured. Some of the songs – notably 'Tones Of Home' and 'Dear Ol' Dad' – are now sounding old and stale, their jagged edges blunted by over-exposure. They try to crawl into others to dig out something fresh, only to emerge, more often than not, bloated with self-indulgent stodge. 'Deserted' stumbles along like a cripple, where once it rode the tightest of grooves. 'I Wonder' is withered and worn. The only time they do strike gold, wringing something stark and haunted out of 'No Rain', their guts dry up and they fall back on the easiest of options, playing the song straight to calm the strained silence that greeted its twisted start.

There are, of course, traces of the *real* Blind Melon amongst the wreckage. 'Change' is as warm as a coal fire, while 'Paper Scratcher' is Melon in microcosm; the mellow vibe splintered by Hoon's semi-conscious ravings. And, of the three or four new songs they play, 'Alone' is both the most relaxed and insistent, the heart of the tune slowly unravelling from Rogers Stevens' and Christopher Thorn's snaking guitars.

By the time they're loosely working their way around the Velvet Underground's 'Lisa Says' and John Lennon's 'Working Class Hero' for an encore, though, Shannon Hoon's smile is more one of relief than pleasure. He and his band need a break.

PAUL REES

BLIND MELON
(Shannon Hoon):
burnt out?



BLIND HOPE?

Pic Larry Baker