

High Energy of Blind Melon at The Palace

By Richard Cromelin

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Shannon Hoon is a man of the people--the stage-diving people, to be exact. On Monday at the Palace, where his band Blind Melon headlined its biggest L.A. show to date, the singer not only encouraged fans to breach the security line and hurl themselves back into the crowd from the stage, but also offered a dollar each to the first 12 to do so.

With his beard and long hair, Hoon looks like a Christ-model hippie, and there was something of the Spin Doctors' tribal communality in the air at the Palace, though to a very different musical tune and at a much higher energy level.

"Are we all still young and beautiful?" Hoon said early in the show, by way of setting the L.A.-based quintet's celebratory agenda. Loosely energetic and with an underpinning of childlike innocence, Hoon pulled it all off without going too heavy on the attitude.

Unfortunately, the music is a little too prosaic to make all this as powerfully celestial as it wants to be. Jane's Addiction meets Lynyrd Skynyrd, with Hoon's raspy wail burrowing into the chopping guitar textures. In its best moments it mutates into a distinctive metal-grunge-psychedelic hybrid, but to get beyond functional, the group needs some songs with more dimension and a more focused attack.