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Gore blimey! The axe murderers are back!

STONE TEMPLE PILOTS

HENRY ROLLINS

BEASTIE BOYS

BLIND MELON

METALLICA

HELMET



What's
that
smell?
It's L7



FULL
DONINGTON
REPORT

UPFRONT • UPFRONT •

GUN, who have just released a fiery cover of the Cameo classic 'Word Up' (frequently a live favourite for the band) and made a storming return to the live arena with an excellent low-profile set at London's Borderline, release their third album, 'Swagger', through A&M Records on August 1.

A lot of the new material, in keeping with the feeling of 'Word Up', reveals a harsher side to the band.

"Let's hope that people from the rock magazines that have maybe doubted Gun in the past will hear this and see that it's hard rock," declares newly shorn, peroxided singer Mark Rankin.

"I still think there's a huge element of the rock punter in Britain who doesn't get Gun. Bands like the Almighty, and Thunder and Skin, they're to me typical British rock bands, and the fan sees the long hair and the heavier guitar style and thinks that's heavy rock. Gun have been heavy, but we've never looked like any of those bands or played that game. I hope people will come and see us this time and get it."

Despite touring with Def Leppard and the Rolling Stones, and hitting the Top 40 on more than one occasion with singles from both 'Taking On The World' and 'Gallus', the departure of drummer Scott Shields (to ex-Gun guitarist Baby Stafford's band) and guitarist Alex Dickson (to Bruce Dickinson's band) has given the impression that Gun were facing something of an uphill struggle (something both 'Swagger' and their live set have since disproved).

"A lot of things have changed in the last two years, and people are looking at Gun to move to

BLIND MELON are set to release a new eight-track EP, 'Your Highness', in time for their support shows with the Rolling Stones in America later this year.

"We recorded the material in our hotel rooms while we were out on the road with Lenny," reveals guitarist Rogers Stevens. "We'd just wheel in the equipment after the show, set it up and go."

"It was just like one big party. Sometimes we'd only get four chords down and the hotel security would be banging on the door, sometimes we'd play all day."

Although stressing that it's not a hugely radical departure from the sound of the band's debut album, Stevens does indicate that fans may find it a little different.

"Well we really like records with a shitty sound, and this one's gonna have weird bangs and pops all over the

Melon boys: "It was just like one big party," they claim



MELON HIT KRAVITZ GROOVE!

Blind Melon record new EP with Lenny Kravitz and get set for second LP

place," he declares. "We just recorded straight, so you've got people laughing in the background, kicking beer over, screaming from cigarette burns... Everything."

"It's still very much us," he continues. "Although every one of my friends I've played it to has said: 'Wow, that's nothing like the first album!'"

The EP is to be mixed by Lenny Kravitz in Stevens's home town of New Orleans.

Following their stint with the Stones, Blind Melon will begin work on their second studio album, with Beastie Boys producer Mario Caldato Jr.

(JE)

another level," concedes Rankin. "At the end of '92, the last shows we did were with Maiden, Megadeth and Pantera in Spain. After that

we set out with the idea of writing a band album, but Baby asked Scott to join his

to move to London. We got into what we were doing in Scotland and Alex got an offer from Bruce's band. They were the right things to do and there's no malice involved on any side. People in the band just wanted to do different things."

With the band now comprising Rankin, brothers Joolz (guitar) and Dante (bass) Gizzi and new drummer Mark Kerr, 'Swagger' was recorded at Rockfield and Ridge Farm studios and produced by Chris Sheldon (Therapy?, Almighty). The full tracklisting is: 'Stand In Line'/'Find My Way'/'Word Up'/'Don't Say It's Over'/'The Only One'/'Something Worthwhile'/'Seems Like I'm Losing You'/'Crying Over

SWAGGER ATTACK

Scots rockers Gun storm back

band and he accepted, and at the same time Alex decided

You'/'One Reason'/'Vicious Rumour'.

"This is the best album we've made to date," enthuses Rankin, "and it's one that we're prepared to stand or fall by."

(JE)



At The Gates

'TERMINAL SPIRIT DISEASE



SPREADING YOUR WAY SOON....

“WELL, if we're supporting them then we must be the second greatest rock'n'roll band in the world!”

Blind Melon guitarist Rogers Stevens doubles up with laughter. It's just been pointed out that he and his band are set to trek the US for a handful of dates with the Rolling Stones, generally perceived by the masses, rightly or wrongly, as the world's greatest rock'n'roll band. Not to be phased, Rogers casually brushes aside the daunting possibility with a nonchalant shrug and a wry, smiling assertion. Nothing, it seems, gets under this guy's skin.

Over the past year Stevens has seen himself and his chums who make up the phenomenon that is Blind Melon (vocalist Shannon Hoon, drummer Glen Graham, bassist Brad Smith and fellow guitarist Christopher Thorn) shift over five million copies of their 'Blind Melon' debut album, send their supremely catchy 'No Rain' single to the top of the US charts (aided and abetted, no doubt, by the accompanying video), and lay waste to US audiences in such esteemed company as Guns N' Roses, Neil Young and Lenny Kravitz. The UK's got quite fond of them too, and at the time of writing they're just about to hit Britain at the end of June for an appearance at Glastonbury and some headline shows of their own.

It's the sort of thing that should have your head spinning wildly as you tried to take it all in. Not so Stevens, currently relaxing in his New Orleans home (“I moved here to get away from all the LA bullshit”), writing, making music and toying with his beloved film camera. All this and he's even got time to go out drinking with his dad too. “I slept

all day yesterday,” he reveals. “My dad came into New Orleans for the weekend so we did some pretty heavy drinking. But basically I'm just relaxing, writing, taking a break.”

In place of Shannon Hoon's wildly cavorting extrovert frontman character, Stevens remains diligently down-to-earth; quietly reflective; level headed.

“Yeah, I guess it has been,” he'll muse when pushed on how successful a year Blind Melon have had. “I don't really take too much notice of all that sort of thing. Really, I'm just into playing the music. That's what I do.”

“I guess the money and stuff's okay, but I haven't been out buying anything flash. I just got some musical equipment for my apartment (still a one bedroom, he points out), and some film gear.”

Surely some of the pressures of fame must have gotten through to the man?

“Well...” he thinks for a while, “Japan was pretty weird. We had people chasing us and hiding in bushes to try and get to us. That was pretty weird.”

And yet if the pressure of fame – which has been known to send some people off the deep end (“That sort of thing doesn't seem very bright to me,” intimates Stevens) – floats blithely around the guitarist's head, surely some of the misconceptions concerning Blind Melon's music that have appeared throughout the press have wrangled the guy?

From day one they were part of the slacker/grunge movement. Then, when ‘No Rain’ hit the top spot and MTV decided they were hip enough to have the bee-girl video shown all day, they turned into some new young hippy machine and then an MTV-styled one-hit wonder.

Rarely was there a mention of the richness of the music contained therein – their loose, blues-based hard rock work outs evoking memories of the Allman

Brothers, Janis Joplin and even Led Zeppelin was all too frequently glossed over.

“Yeah, well I guess that's just people's nature,” he shrugs. “When Shannon was doing some stuff with Axl, because they were friends, we were gonna sound like Guns N' Roses if you'd have believed the press. Then when we toured with Soundgarden, and had Rick Parashar produce our record, we were gonna be the next Pearl Jam. Then we had the hit with ‘No Rain’ and MTV was playing the video all the time and we went from this grunge/slacker type band to this nouveau hippie act, kinda like the new Grateful Dead. Now I gotta tell you I don't own one Grateful Dead album, and I couldn't even name three of their songs!”

“I guess we'll always be remembered as another Pearl Jam or for the bee-girl! I really don't want to dwell on it too long, but lots of people do seem to generalise. It's just the way it is. The media have to sell their magazines or whatever. It just seems like it's really easy to push something in a direction without really thinking about it. I know I make off-handed criticisms about people without thinking about them. It's only human nature.”

For all of this, however, Blind Melon have been able to hobnob with the upper echelons of the rock world, something that has Stevens remembering fondly, if not in expectedly animated fashion.

“When we toured with Neil Young, I'd always considered the guy a legend,” he drawls. “When we met him I was looking at him for about five minutes as this legend, but gradually I realised he was just a person, and a very gifted artist. It's kind of

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"Well, I should backtrack a bit," he concedes. "I would be lying if I said I didn't enjoy whatever fringe benefits we get from this, but it's not where our priorities are. Yes, I do appreciate that side of things – coming into close proximity to people I have admired and respected. I figure that when we tour with the Stones, if I get within 300 yards of him (Keith Richards), which is closer than I've ever been before, I wouldn't know what to say. You could put me next to a cardboard cut out of him and I'd probably say as much to that as I would to the real Keith Richards."

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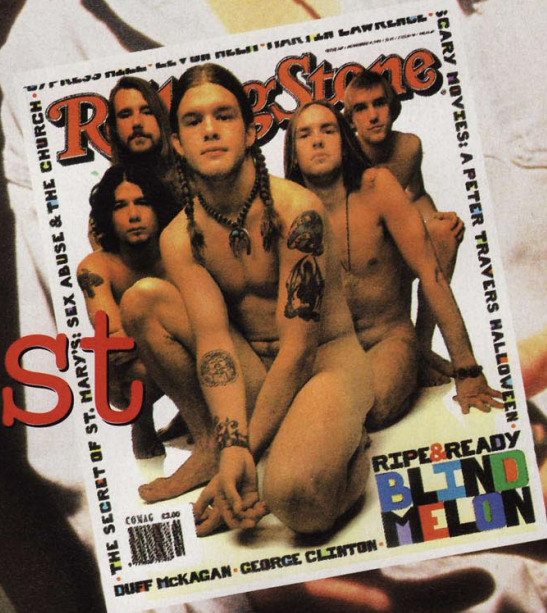
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"Maybe not," he chuckles.

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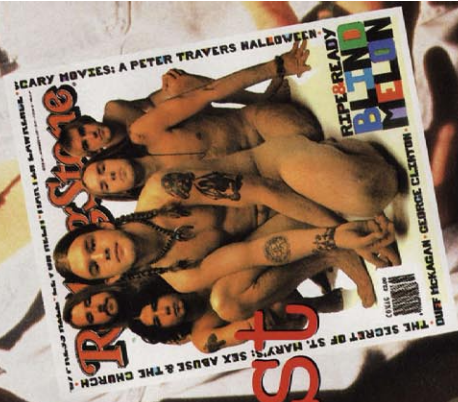
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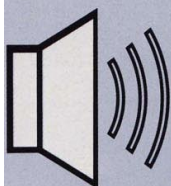
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SOUND • BITES!

THE LATEST SINGLES AND EPS FALL UNDER THE HAMMER OF JERRY EWING

THE ALMIGHTY Jesus Loves You

(Polydor)

FEAR not, Ricky Warwick and co haven't gone all godly on us; although it must be said that this song does represent the softer, more reflective side of the band, eventually melding perfectly with the more crash, bang, wallop side of their nature. The closing chapter in the



The Almighty in 1993 when 'Jesus...' was born

first half of their career (it's taken from a 'Best Of...' their old record company are releasing), it could be seen as a two-fingered gesture to those who claim the band don't write classy songs. 'Jesus loves you, but I don't,' croons a scornful Warwick. Don't worry though kids, he doesn't really mean it!

BABY STAFFORD Paper Love Maker EP

(EMI)

THE debut offering from the ex-Gun guitarist, the title track is all full-chested bravura, swirling guitars and cynical lyrics. And although it may not have the instant appeal to lodge it in the charts, the extra tracks, particularly 'This Little Lifetime' and 'Then' hint at future success. Baby's voice, not unlike that of ex-compadre Mark Rankin, lends this a Gun-ish feel, but overall Baby and his cronies seem to be on the right path.

BBM City Of Gold

(Virgin)

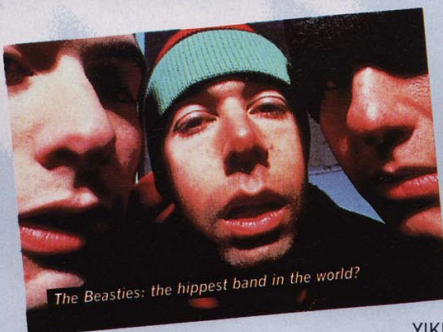
JUST like the opening track from

their album 'Around The Next Dream' is a dead ringer for Cream's 'White Room', so 'City Of Gold' comes on like a dusted down version of 'Crossroads'. That may be no bad thing in itself, but surely in such cynical times this will not help the cause of these ragged rockers (that's a polite way of saying they're all old men). Whatever. As anything vaguely approaching a Cream re-formation they may not have set the world on fire, but this earthy, bluesy hard rock sounds fine to these ears. (And I managed not to mention Clapton once. Shit!)

BEASTIE BOYS Get It Together/ Sabotage

(Capitol)

ARE they not the hippest band in the world at the moment? Winwood'll tell you they've always been so, but he's scared of girls, so the lilting



The Beasties: the hippest band in the world?

refrain of 'Get It Together' will probably go down well with big girl's blouses the world over. 'Sabotage' may have nothing to do with the Black Sabbath song of the same name, but its harsher groove is more in keeping with *Hammer*. However, neither are stunning enough to warrant major chart placings.

BIOHAZARD Tales From The Hard Side

(Warner Bros)

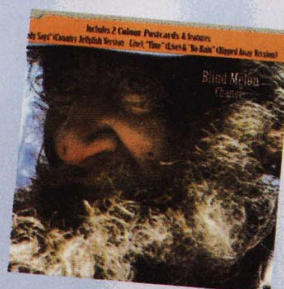
YEAH, they may be flavour of the month but this overblown macho rhetoric moves me not one jot. But if Pantera's full-blown bluster can raise heat amongst the masses, then Biohazard could ride in on

the back of their success. Still, there's no accounting for taste...

BLIND MELON Change

(Capitol)

SURPRISINGLY low-key affair from a band that are far more natural than cynics would have you



believe. Personally, 'Change' leaves me cold, unlike much of their rootsy American rock – particularly a live version of 'Candy Says', a country-ish workout that oozes natural charm. Not so a live rendition of 'Time'; and one suspects that the Ripped Away mix of 'No Rain' is included to curry favour with the teen market. A bit of a mish-mash, but you do get some nice free postcards with it!

BOSTON I Need Your Love

(MCA)

YIKES, Boston are back, run for the hills. Time stands still in Tom Scholz's life, quite clearly. A ballad, of sorts, with the usual chiming guitars and multi-layered vocals that you'd expect from such AOR maestros. But not quite in tune with the scheme of things, methinks.

ALICE COOPER It's Me

(Epic)

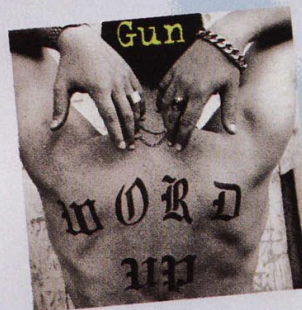
ARE you sure, Alice? Then why does this sound incredibly lame, limping along like a three-legged dog? Just when you thought the Coop (as we like to call him in these parts) had

returned to peak form, he blows his cool with something that sounds vaguely like a second-hand version of 'Only Women Bleed'. Not good.

GUN Word Up

(A&M)

ROCK and fuckin' roll! This is awesome stuff. To some (not me), Gun have yet to realise their true potential. If so, then this storming version of the Cameo classic is the one to silence the critics. They



may have had their backs to the wall of late, but what a brilliant return. Equally stunning are the three Gun originals here from the new LP, taking in all facets of the band's music. Brilliant, brilliant, brilliant. Single of the month etc...



Alice, what's the matter?