

PROBLEMS WITH THE GREENWAYS: PAGE 6

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Nov. 21 - 25, 1996
VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 37

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BLIND MELON
&
SHANNON
HOON

INSIDE

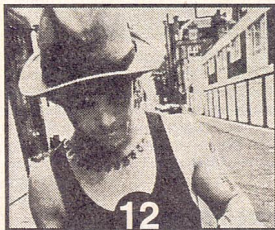
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PROBLEMS WITH THE GREENWAYS

Mayor Goldsmith's Greenway-Gang grab continues.
By HARRISON J. ULLMANN



REMEMBERING BLIND MELON AND SHANNON HOON

An in-depth look at the rock singer from Lafayette, Indiana.
By STEVE HAMMER AND JEFF NAPIER

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EDITORIAL POLICY NUVO is a weekly newspaper covering the news, public issues, the arts and entertainment. In our pages appear views from across the political and social spectra. They do not necessarily represent the views of the publisher.

MANUSCRIPTS NUVO welcomes manuscripts. We assume no responsibility for returning manuscripts not accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

DISTRIBUTION The current issue of NUVO is free. Past issues, electronically or at the NUVO office, are \$3. NUVO is available every Thursday at 1,000 locations in the metropolitan area. Limit one copy per customer.

SUBSCRIPTIONS NUVO Newsweekly is published weekly for \$5 a year by NUVO Inc., 811 E. Westfield Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46220. Second-class postage paid at Indianapolis, IN, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NUVO Newsweekly, 811 E.

Westfield Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46220.

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the search for shannon hoon

"All I Can Say is That
My Life is Pretty Plain
I Like Watching the
Puddles Gather Rain
And All I Can Do is
Just Pour Some Tea
for Two
And Speak my
Point of View
But It's Not Sane,
It's Not Sane"
—Shannon Hoon,
"No Rain"

photo: danny clint

The highways of Indiana are a lonely place sometimes, but especially in the autumn. Empty cornfields, barren soybean fields and truck stops with nobody in them. But it's a good place to do some thinking, especially if you're in the passenger seat.

The highway between Indianapolis and Lafayette is one which Shannon Hoon must have traveled many times in his short life, a life which took him from McCutcheon High School to Los Angeles to the heights of MTV generation stardom to New Orleans, where he died of a drug overdose in October 1995.

There have been thousands of words written about Shannon Hoon and Blind Melon, from adoring profiles in fanzines and on the Internet to sordid tales of drug abuse which appeared in print after Hoon's death.

A year after his death, it's still hard to get a handle on the enigma, to separate the hype from the reality, to get at the real Shannon Hoon. In Lafayette, where they knew him best, he's remembered as a fun-loving, ambitious student with a love of pranks and a talent for athletics. To his fellow members of Blind Melon, he was a front man with a voice of gold. He was a hard worker whose mind never fully left music. To his fans, he was generous with his time and his words, fully appreciative of the stardom they had given him.

Which was the real Shannon Hoon? Like the lonely highways which separate Lafayette from the rest of the world, there are as many different twists and turns to the story of Shannon Hoon's life as there are exits and diversions on I-65 North. Here's a few samples of opinion about the late singer.

A bright kid

"What do you think they would say
If I stood up and I walked away
Nobody here really understand me
and so I'll wave goodbye"
— Shannon Hoon, "Tones of Home"

"He was an ornery, rambunctious kid," says Jake Burton, the athletic director at McCutcheon High, where Hoon was one of the more popular students. "He wasn't afraid of anybody or anything, even though he was of small stature. He was a tough type of kid from the standpoint that he had an inner drive within himself that told him there wasn't any task he couldn't accomplish. He drove himself to accomplish everything he went after." Burton knew him from middle school on, and guided Hoon through a high school athletic career which included winning nine letters. He won three letters in track — pole vault being his specialty — and three in football, including playing on a state championship runner-up team.

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But at that time, there was no inkling of the tragedy which was to come in Hoon's life. "We knew that he had been involved in some things that he probably should not have been involved in, but in no way did we know what was going to happen to him. We never even thought that death would occur from that."

"We were not shocked, exactly, when he died. I guess we were surprised that he would allow himself to get into that position. He was always a carefree kid who lived on the edge, so to speak, and we knew he had had some difficulties with the law or whatever, but he'd moved on with his life. Not everything he did was stuff that made us proud, as with no kid that goes through school. There were a lot of things he achieved in his short life which we were proud of. He didn't hide anything from us. That's how he chose to live his life and that's what took his life."

"Put him in any other situation, he would be one who was driven to achieve success in anything he did. The unfortunate thing about this, the abuse of his system came from the job he had. There's a lot of it in the entertainment world, of course."

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"The mistakes that I've made
No they don't seem to bother me
I sure as hell don't feel like
I missed any kind of train"
— Shannon Hoon, "Sleepyhouse"

Another side of Hoon comes from the fans who adored him. One story comes from an Internet user named Ben. "I did meet Shannon once outside of Memorial Hall in Kansas City. He was a true joy. Shannon came skipping out from around a corner with his girlfriend and an orange T-shirt that he had acquired from a fan at a previous show. I stopped him by calling out his name. It was weird — he stopped. My friends and I handed him a pen and asked him to sign our stuff, but he took the pen, looked at it, and gave it back. He ran into the bus and returned about a minute later with a permanent marker and explained himself with, 'This will last longer.' It certainly has."

"And oh as I fade away, they'll all
look at me and say, Hey look at
him and where he is these days.
When life is hard, you have to change."
— Shannon Hoon, "Change"

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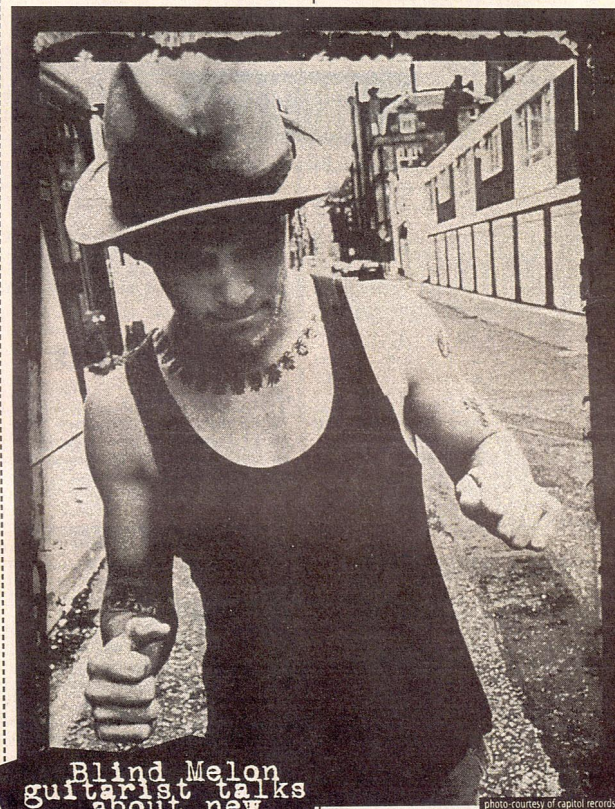
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— Steve Hammer

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Blind Melon
guitarist talks
about new
album...

photo: courtesy of capitol records

Of all the people who knew Shannon Hoon, guitarist Rogers Stevens knew him as well as anyone. A co-founding member of Blind Melon, Stevens was there alongside Hoon as the band went from obscurity to superstardom in a matter of months.

A few weeks ago, Stevens talked to NUVO about Hoon's life and *Nico*, the new album.

Overall, what's your take on the new album? Are you happy with it?

It's surprising that it came out as good as it did. I guess because we really didn't work as hard on it, or we weren't able to work as hard on it, or go back and scrutinize it as much, it came out better.

We went into the studio thinking that we may or may not have a record there. We ended up getting this thing together and it was surprising how well everything seemed

Why did you guys do the John Lennon song, "John Sinclair," on the album?

We were in the studio in New York, recording the Schoolhouse Rock tribute song we did, and it came up that Capitol Records was going to do a John Lennon tribute record. Another one. We decided that that would be the track for us and we learned it and cut it in a few hours. It was easy to do.

Did putting together the album bring back any poignant memories for you?

There's some lyrics on this album that really hit you in the face. I like the song "Hell" a lot and when I hear the song "The Pusher," I remember recording that. Shannon and Christopher and I were snowboarding in Mammoth, California. Christopher's uncle had a little place up there and we recorded it on the porch. So that's a really good memory for me.

Talk to me about the day you met Shannon Hoon.

Brad and I were in L.A. writing songs, looking to put an album together. And a friend called and he said he'd met Shannon and Shannon was coming over to his house. And I remember we walked into this guy's garage, just hanging out, and we met Shannon. I remember he played "Change" at that point, with just a guitar. He sang and I was immediately struck by his voice. It was very innocent and simple, you know, "Hey, let's be a band." There was no difficulty putting it together.

What was the highlight of being in the band? Was it playing at Woodstock?

Woodstock was very definitely over the top. But I think that going to Hawaii, right before Woodstock, that was really fun. There were shows where — we didn't have a great show at Woodstock. It wasn't one of our best performances. There were shows in clubs that were better than that, which I enjoyed more. I suppose touring with the Stones and Neil Young was pretty cool too.

There were a lot of dark times in the band. But at the point where Shannon died, he wasn't doing too bad. He wasn't as bad as he had been before he got into rehab and stuff. It was a total accident for him. It wasn't as if he had been bingeing for weeks and weeks. It was a one-night deal.

What did you mean earlier when you said the band had been treated unfairly by the press?

I think that when our second record came out, it was pretty universally abused in the press and I didn't think that was fair. I think maybe because of the song we had that was a hit, people had us labeled as being that. But that was an odd song for us, even. We're happy that we had any success at all, but my perception is that people felt like they were fooled. They ended up criticizing the album very heavily. I knew it wasn't that bad. Maybe the record wasn't good, but it wasn't that bad.

It sucked. But you know, we were ready to move on. We were ready to make the third record.

I think that we were in a period of pretty rapid development on the last tour. We were playing a lot better. We're putting out this home movie, and I think it's obvious that our last performances are so much better as opposed to the ones in the beginning, which were very bad. We were getting a lot better.

Where do you think the band would have ended up musically if Shannon had lived?

We were taking steps in a bunch of different directions on the *Soup* record, and we would have been able to fully realize that and keep going forward. We never stood in one place for too long because everybody would get very bored really quickly doing the same thing.

Was there a lot of pressure on Shannon after the *Soup* album was panned?

In hindsight, it looks as if there was a lot of pressure. He would always say that it wasn't bothering him or whatever. It's hard to say, because he never talked about it. It was frustrating to go from being really popular to being really not. That's just a natural way to feel. I think that the way things are nowadays, it's hard to maintain any kind of success.

— Steve Hammer



blind melon's past - a life glimpsed in albums



"...And when will I realize this skin I'm in, hey, it isn't mine. And when will the thrill be too much meat for me to find ... anymore."

— Blind Melon, "Skinned"

Shannon Hoon really got a raw deal. Not that his death was excusable or anything, but the way he died wasn't a fitting way to die in this day and age. Heck, Kurt Cobain pulled his own trigger, he was driven to death by pain, man.

Hoon died from snorting and shooting as many drugs as he possibly could. It probably went down like this: half-way through a tour, after weeks of cheap podunk dope, Hoon gets to New Orleans, where Blind Melon recorded its last album. He hooks up with his dealer, gets some pure stuff and goes hog wild. He wakes up dead. Yawn. Been there. Done that. Hell, at least Mama Cass had the novelty of a ham sandwich.

But Hoon really left behind a nice lot of music that deserved better than what Capitol Records gave it. This is where Hoon's raw deal came in. From day one, Capitol tried every thing in the book to break Blind Melon. From cigarette papers to videos, Capitol sunk a lot of booty into promoting the band.

Tunes like "Tones Of Home" and "Dear Ol' Dad" were good songs, and Blind Melon were quickly establishing themselves as a killer live act that filled a part of the void left behind by Jane's Addiction.

But it was the year after grunge broke, and Blind Melon had a hard time fitting into the Seattle craze. A year and a bee-girl video later, Blind Melon finally broke. The big time came pouring in. Letterman, Leno, MTV Beach House, the whole nine yards. Unfortunately, the song, the dip-shit hippie tune "No Rain," and the video which portrayed the band as dip-shit hippies frolicking in a posy field, gave America's Wal-mart shoppers the wrong idea.

A couple years and a ruined bee-girl career later (wanna bet that some Hollywood weasel actually wrote a movie for the bee-girl?), just when every used CD store had at least 30 copies of *Blind Melon* on sale for \$1.99, the band came out with one of the best albums of the year ending 1995. Every music critic in the world (except yours truly and some guy in Sri Lanka) decried *Soup* as the worse album to come out since *The Starland Vocal Band's X-Mas Album*. Nobody bought the album, and Capitol, having just broke even on the band and all fat and happy

from the "No Rain" windfall, just rolled over on its back and concentrated on

no-brainers like making even more money off The Beatles.

But taken as an album unto its own, *Soup* is a fantastically crafted record that brought all Blind Melon's strengths to the fore. Whimsy-written songs, powerful guitar attacks and Hoon's polecat yee-owl converged on a car wreck of pop, chicken grease and New Orleans horn bands marching in a wake.

"Galactic" slams into a meaty crunch, and *Soup* gets funkier and weirder as it progresses. From the bare bones beauty of "Skinned" to the hyperkinetic funky shuffle of "Toes Across The Floor" to the oddly enchanting "Wilt," *Soup* offers up a vital document of an American band hitting their prime. Too bad nobody heard it.

Well, of course, Capitol had to clean house (i.e., suck every dime), and probably had the wheels in motion before even MTV had to time to organize a bee-girl marathon. Maybe sooner. But, the end result, *Nico*, is anything but a record company recouper, along the lines of The Door's *Full Circle* or Nirvana *Unplugged*. Indeed, *Nico* is a lovingly put-together record that pays tribute to Hoon in the best way possible. Through his music. Even the version of "No Rain," an acoustic version used as a prelude to the song in concert, shows a side of Hoon's soul rarely glimpsed. On "Soul One," you can literally hear Hoon reach his peak. A super funky cover of Lennon's "John Sinclair" and a reworking of Steppenwolf's classic "The Pusher" are fun, invigorating turns, and the outtakes from the *Soup* sessions ("Soup," "Swallowed," "Pull" and a demo of "St. Andrew's Hall") add new perspective to *Soup*.

"Hell" and "Glitch" were recorded at former metal-band buddy Mike Kelsey's playground in Lafayette. While "Hell" is pretty pedestrian, "Glitch" is an edgy middle-eastern flavored rant that's probably the most narcotic song Hoon and Co. ever got on record. Even when the songs are on-the-road demos ("All That I Need" and "Life Ain't So Shitty"), a charm still manages to ooze from Hoon's voice. The last tune on *Nico*, "Letters From A Porcupine," is a chilling tune Hoon left on band-mate Christopher Thorn's answering machine. The abrupt ending is most appropriate.

Feed *Nico* into a computer and this disc becomes a virtual scrapbook. Probably the best enhanced CD made thus far, there are more features and neat little movies and even entire videos than most CD-ROM titles selling for 40 bucks or more. Not only can you read arguably the best article ever written on the band that Details ran shortly after the death, but you can see Hoon in a bugged out film with his head completely covered in aluminum foil, and listen to all the songs while reading the lyrics and other info. Not only is *Nico* a smart and vital tribute to a fallen brother, it also inspires you to take another look at the band's career and shows off what could very well be the way we'll all be listening to music in the near future. That's gotta be a first.

Nico is named for the young daughter Hoon left behind. There is an education fund set up for her. If you want to contribute, write to Nico Blue Hoon Education Fund, c/o Shapiro & Co., 9229 Sunset Blvd., Suite 607, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Blind Melon plans to get a new lead singer and come back out under a new name.

— Jeff Napier



photo courtesy of capitol records



photo-danny clinch

REMEMBERING BLIND MELON & SHANNON HOON

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The search for Shannon Hoon, his life story, even today, is an enigma. . .

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more on next page

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I think that when our second record came out, it was pretty universally abused in the press and I didn't think that was fair. I think maybe because of the song we had that was a hit, people had labeled us as being that. But that was an odd song for us, even. We're happy that we had any

success at all, but my perception is that people felt like they were fooled. They ended up criticizing the album very heavily. I knew it wasn't that bad.

It sucked. But you know, we were ready to move on. We were ready to make a third record.

I think that we were in a period of pretty rapid development on the last tour. We were playing a lot better. We're putting out this home movie, and I think it's obvious that our last performances are so much better as opposed to the ones in the beginning, which were very bad. We were getting a lot better.

Where do you think the band would have ended up musically if Shannon had lived?

We were taking steps in a bunch of different directions on the Soup record, and we would have been able to fully realize that and keep going forward. We never stood in one place for too long because everybody would get bored really quickly doing the same thing.

Was there a lot of pressure on Shannon after the Soup album was panned?

In hindsight, it looks as if there was a lot of pressure. He would always say that it wasn't bothering him or whatever. It's hard to say, because he never talked about it. It was frustrating to go from being really popular to being really not. That's just a natural way to feel. I think that the way things are nowadays, it's hard to maintain any kind of success.

-Steve Hammer

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Blind Melon's past – a life glimpsed in albums

Shannon Hoon really got a raw deal. Not that his death was excusable or anything, but the way he died wasn't a fitting way to die in this day and age. Heck, Kurt Cobain pulled his own trigger, he was driven to death by pain, man.

Hoon died from snorting and shooting as many drugs as he possibly could. It probably went down like this: half-way through a tour, after weeks of cheap Podunk dope, Hoon gets to New Orleans, where Blind Melon recorded its last album. He hooks up with his dealer, gets some pure stuff and goes hog wild. He wakes up dead. Yawn. Been there. Done that. Hell, at least Mama Cass had the novelty of a ham sandwich.

But Hoon really left behind a nice lot of music that deserved better than what Capitol Records gave it. This is where Hoon's raw deal came in. From day one, Capitol tried everything in the book to break Blind Melon. From cigarette papers to videos, Capitol sunk a lot of booty into promoting the band.

Tunes like "Tones of Home" and "Dear Ol' Dad" were good songs, and Blind Melon were quickly establishing themselves as a killer live act that filled a part of the void left behind by Jane's Addiction.

But it was the year after grunge broke, and Blind Melon had a hard time fitting into the Seattle craze. A year and a bee-girl video later, Blind Melon finally broke. The big time came pouring in. Letterman, Leno, MTV Beach House, the whole nine yards. Unfortunately, the song, the dip-shit hippy tune "No Rain," and the video which portrayed the band as dip-shit hippies frolicking in a posy field, gave America's Wal-mart shoppers the wrong idea.

A couple years and a ruined bee-girl career later (wanna bet that same Hollywood weasel actually wrote a movie for the bee-girl?), just when every used CD store had at least 30 copies of Blind Melon on sale for \$1.99, the band came out with one of the best albums of the year ending 1995. Every music critic in the world (except yours truly and some guy in Sri Lanka) decried *Soup* as the worst album to come out since *The Starland Vocal Band's X-Mas Album*. Nobody bought the album, and Capitol, having just broke even on the band and all fat and happy from the "No Rain" windfall, just rolled over on its back and concentrated on no-brainers like making even more money off the Beatles.

But taken as an album unto its own, *Soup* is a fantastically crafted record that brought all of Blind Melon's strengths to the fore. Whimsy-written songs, powerful guitar attacks and Hoon's polecat yee-owl converged on a car-wreck of pop, chicken grease and New Orleans horn bands marching in a wake.

"Galaxie" slams into a meaty crunch, and *Soup* gets funkier and weirder as it progresses. From the bare bones beauty of "Skinned" to the hyperkinetic funky shuffle of "Toes Across the Floor" to the oddly enchanting "Wilt," *Soup* offers up a vital document of an American band hitting their prime. Too bad nobody heard it.

Well, of course, Capitol had to clean house (i.e. suck every dime), and probably had the wheels in motion before MTV even had time to organize a bee-girl marathon. Maybe sooner. But the end result, *Nico*, is anything but a record company recouper, along the lines of The Door's *Full Circle* or *Nirvana Unplugged*. Indeed, *Nico* is a lovingly put-together record that pays tribute to Hoon in the best way possible. Through his music. Even the version of "No Rain," an acoustic version used as a prelude to the song in concert, shows a side of Hoon's soul rarely glimpsed. On "Soul One," you can literally hear Hoon reach his peak. A super funkified version of Lennon's "John Sinclair" and a reworking of Steppenwolf's classic "The Pusher" are fun, invigorating turns, and the outtakes from the *Soup* sessions ("Soup," "Swallowed," "Pull" and a demo of "St. Andrew's Hall") add new perspective to *Soup*.

"Hell" and "Glitch" were recorded at former metal-band buddy Mike Kelsey's playground in Lafayette. While "Hell" is pretty pedestrian, "Glitch" is an edgy middle-eastern flavored rant that's probably the most narcotic song Hoon and Co. ever got on record. Even when the songs are on-the-road demos ("All That I Need" and "Life Ain't So Shitty"), a charm still manages to ooze from Hoon's voice. The last tune on *Nico*, "Letters From a Porcupine," is a chilling tune Hoon left on band-mate Christopher Thorn's answering machine. The abrupt ending is most appropriate.

Feed *Nico* into a computer and this disc becomes a virtual scrapbook. Probably the best Enhanced CD made thus far, there are more features and neat little movies and even entire videos than most

CD-ROM titles selling for 40 bucks or more. Not only can you read arguably the best article ever written on the band that *Details* ran shortly after his death, but you can see Hoon in a bugged out film with his head completely covered in aluminum foil, and listen to all the songs while reading the lyrics and other info. Not only is *Nico* a smart and vital tribute to a fallen brother, it also inspires you to take another look at the band's career and shows off what could very well be the way we'll all be listening to music in the near future. That's gotta be a first.

Nico is named for the young daughter Hoon left behind. There is an education fund set up for her. If you want to contribute, write to Nico Blue Hoon Education Fund, c/o Shapiro & Co., 9229 Sunset Blvd., Suite 607, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Blind Melon plans to get a new lead singer and come back out under a new name.

- Jeff Napier