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“WE DISMEMBER



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Slacker mentality is kind of
a label. Our generation isn’t
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areas as the generations
that came before us. Maybe
we seem directionless.”
ROGERS STEVENS

ERED THE BEE GIRL!"

Don't worry, though. The RAW Readers' Poll Best New Band of 1993 BLIND MELON haven't sacrificed the stripey cutie to the Black Metal gods; they just did it as a joke in a photo session! With two imminent UK shows, and a new EP out this summer, guitarist ROGERS STEVENS slacks off with MICK WALL ...

MOST BANDS, slackers or not, the last thing they want to do at the end of a long tour is sit down together in some hotel room and make even more music.

Guitarist Rogers Stevens chuckles darkly and acknowledges the point. "Well, you do have to sort of kick yourselves in the ass to make yourselves do it, because on the road the conditions deteriorate very quickly to the point where everyone is sitting around slack-jawed with a blank look in their eyes."

And yet 'making music in some hotel room' is exactly what his band Blind Melon have done, recording eight new tracks over the period of a few days during the last weeks of the band's most recent US tour.

"You have to motivate yourself at times," the guitarist reasons. "Sometimes you would get to a hotel at four in the morning, so it's kind of a pain in the ass to roll the stuff out."

"But when we were in St. Louis, we rented out the basement of this hotel and did all of the drums and guitars and bass live, all in one day. And then did the singing and the overdubs or whatever needed to be done in several rooms along the way."

Work would begin around midnight.

"You'd have your amp in the closet,"

Rogers continues, "with pillows around it, and after about 15 minutes the hotel's security would knock on the door, or whatever. It was sort of hit and miss sometimes as to whether you were going to get anything done."

Rogers says you can actually hear the doors slamming on some tracks. "You do! There's all the talking - it's noisy all the way through. It sounds like it was all recorded in hotel bathrooms, which basically it was."

"I mean, it's not pristine recordings. It sounds sort of trashy. I like things that sound shitty anyway, because of character. I don't like pristine flawless recordings with all the sparkle and sheen in all the right spots. I would rather hear something that sounds like someone was standing on the edge of f**king up, you know what I mean?"

"The first album, for whatever reason, our fault as much as anyone's, didn't come out exactly how we would have liked. But on this EP (due out this summer - see panel), we tried to hone down and sort of cut out all the extraneous bullshit parts - there's no masturbatory guitar solos or anything. Just very concise songs, which is the direction we're moving in."

WE MOVE on to other subjects. Trawling through their press cuttings, I was surprised how associated the band had become with the whole 'Slacker' vibe.

Rogers sighs. "I don't know about the whole Slacker mentality. I don't feel like I'm slacking in any way. I don't feel like my time is standing beside me laughing at me because I'm not doing anything with it."

But the vibe, the vibe ... the kids don't see the shit, they just see the shots of you naked on the cover of *Rolling Stone*, or the stoned-focus pictures of you all hanging around in a field together. It was what made the band different and interesting in the first place. The whole anti-LA band with an attitude vibe ...

"I think probably the Slacker mentality is kind of a label," says Rogers, chuffing on his cigarette. "Our generation isn't motivated in the same areas as the generations that came before us. Maybe we seem directionless. But in fact we do have a direction - as much as anyone can really have a clear-cut direction these days, you know?"

But isn't 'Slacker' just a '90s term for 'hippy' or 'beatnik' or whatever - just someone who would rather not embark on the 'normal' nine-to-five treadmill? A typical Blind Melon fan, for instance?

Rogers is not convinced. "Sure, but ... I just read this wonderful biography of (the writer) William Burroughs, who was identified as the Godfather or whatever of the Beatnik movement in the '50s. But he walked around in a suit and tie! I mean, sometimes I almost feel like that, because I don't want to be seen as a person who didn't ever get anything done, you know?"

But if you're gonna have your picture naked on the cover of *Rolling Stone* looking like ...

"... an idiot," he cuts in, chortling.

Well, what do you expect?

"That photograph, I thought, was kind of ridiculous. We took lots of types of different pictures, and they didn't tell us which one was gonna be on the cover. And that one, when I got the magazine in the mail, I thought, wow, they picked the most, you know, uninteresting photo they could have picked."

It certainly got them talked about, though. "Yeah, but what we did that would have made much greater impact, but they wouldn't print it, was some shots we did where we dismembered the Bee Girl!"



LISA JOHNSON

The Bee Girl: Cute, sweet, neat and chopped up into little pieces!

Inspired by the dippy picture on the 'Blind Melon' album sleeve of drummer Glen Graham's kid sister dressed up as a bumble bee, brought to life in the 'No Rain' video to such stunning effect that these days bee girls seem to follow the band everywhere they go.

"That issue of the *Stone* was coincidentally coming out on Hallowe'en," continues Rogers. "So we thought, 'Wow, this is perfect', but they're so middle-of-the-road they wouldn't print it!"

ROGERS AND Blind Melon return to the UK this month for two shows - one on the bill at this year's Glastonbury festival (main stage, Friday night) and a date in their own right at London's Forum, on June 21.

"Glastonbury sounds really interesting. I can't wait to check it out."

It's hippyville, I tease him. You should like it in your roles as nouveau-hippy Slackers.

But he's too sussed to take the bait. "Not to say that I don't smoke pot, but I'm not a chronic stoner or even a hippy. Not that I shun what those people are about; it's their own thing, but I don't know. I feel like I'm not living in the past and it seems to me like that's something that's already happened."

He pauses. "I don't know, for me to be saying that is almost hypocritical because if you listen to our records, people say, 'Oh my God, they sound just like the Allman Brothers or Traffic', or whatever."

People miss the sense of humour sometimes, he says, like people always do.

"We definitely appreciate our own ridiculousness. We're not taking ourselves too seriously at all. We have some things to say or whatever and they get said in the music. But I don't think we believe we're doing any sort of highbrow super-valid art that some day will be hanging in the Smithsonian, you know?"

So does he think Blind Melon have turned into Rock stars yet?

"Not at all. That sort of mentality is not what we're all about. I'm not even capable of that mentality. I have too much in my own head to think about things like that."

AFTER THESE handful of dates in the UK and Europe, Rogers says the plan is to go to, "congregate under one roof together somewhere and start working on the next album," which they will be recording this autumn, with a view to putting it out in, "the early part of next year, like February or March."

Speaking from his new home in New Orleans, where he was taking a three-week break from touring, he says it was strange at first, being home for the first time in two years.

"But I went out and bought a Super-8 camera, so I've been making little movies. And I've been writing a lot and just playing, and lots of things."

"I'm really doing the same things I ever did. I'm just trying to, you know, at the end of the day show something of worth every day. And that's what I've always been doing."

We end on a brazenly philosophical note, Rogers brandishing a fresh-lit ciggy. He inhales, exhales, the words hovering in the fogs.

"The liberals want to shove the conservatives down and the conservatives want to shove the liberals down," he says.

"But they're all in the same boat, as far as I'm concerned - they're all just sitting around pointing fingers at everyone else who's not thinking like them."

"Me, I slipped out the back door a long time ago, and I'm just standing out in my backyard smoking a cigarette right now. That's the way I see it."

STRANGE FRUIT!

MICK WALL chews over the details of the brand new eight-track **BLIND MELON EP, 'Your Highness' ...**

THE NEW Blind Melon EP, 'Your Highness', will be released "sometime in August or September, I think," according to Melon guitarist Rogers Stevens. It will be their first new release since their September '92 self-titled debut album. "You'll have to see the cover artwork to find out what the title actually means, but there's about 50 different ways of looking at it, you know?"

he chuckles.

The eight songs included on the EP were all recorded while the band was halfway through their latest US tour.

"We were sitting around on the bus one day and we were talking about how we needed to put something out, because it's been two years now since our album came out. 'So I said, 'Why don't we just get this room in St. Louis and do it?', because I felt like we were kinda sitting around on our hands. But we got the room and did all the tracking. Musically, a lot of it was already written and Shannon (Hoon - vocalist) had a few ideas for vocals, but we'd only really arranged them in a half-ass way."

"Five of the songs are loud guitar and drum songs. Three of them are more acoustic-orientated. We recorded in hotel rooms, using portable recording gear - the technology is such nowadays that you can roll it into a hotel room and get good quality stuff."

"The record company didn't even know we were doing it until it was done. We figured the worst we were gonna get out of it was demos for the next album - except we don't really like to do demos."

Don't get the wrong idea, though. This is no 'unplugged' pussy-out. This is eight brand new amped-up Blind Melon tunes we're squawking about here. So new, indeed, that Rogers can only remember the names of five of them: 'Wilt', '2 By 4', 'To Go Pink', 'Walk', 'Skin'.

"We got eight songs down and we're getting them mixed now. But they're very short songs, so I think the total length of the music is probably about 35 minutes for eight songs."

Rogers Stevens: Appreciating his own ridiculousness ...

TONY MOTTAM