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BLIND MELON

Blind Melon/Live 6 Track

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BLIND MELON'S slacker success holds a perfect mirror up against the frenzy surrounding Woodstock's 25th anniversary celebrations. The band's noodle-doodle mish-mash of Country-tinged meander and grass-inspired power Rock is as bizarre a plateau for success as was the idea of 500,000 hippies sitting in a field back in 1969! Sometimes the underdog bites harder than you might expect!

The Melon have over-achieved to the point where the debut album is now re-issued in a flashy, fold-out, digipak thing with a six-track live CD tacked on for good measure. It looks nice and the debut's music, whether you know it or not, would have fitted perfectly into the Woodstock vibe. There's not a lot of 'getting on with getting on', but the way 'Soak The Sin', 'Tones Of Home' and the biggie, 'No Rain', have explored the more eclectic side of Rock shows that journeys can be fun when you've the time to spare!

The danger is that the Melon tread dangerously close to the sign marked 'Disappearing Up Our Own Backside'! The six live tracks, recorded last March and featuring one new mignette titled 'Wooh G.O.D.', shows the band stretching out and fooling with the muse. It works brilliantly on a chilled version of 'No Rain', but poorly on 'Time',

Blind Melon: 'Grass-inspired Power Rock'!



where the clearly demented Shannon Hoon hoots like an owl for no particular reason!

Blind Melon's future is as unpredictable as Hoon, who has now become so tediously publicity shy that he disappears off one on the new pix that

adorns this package. For now, though, I can dig the extended guitar workouts and the need to play 1,000 notes where one would suffice. When the 20-minute drum solo turns up, that'll be another matter! ***1/2

HOWARD JOHNSON



LIVES!

BLIND MELON TRIPPING DAISY

The Forum, London

VERDICT: Bearing fruit!

A CONSPIRACY prevented me from witnessing more than a passing splash of new Island Records hopefuls Tripping Daisy, but RAW's man on the spot reported faithfully that their Rock Tinged With Art was a lot less hideous than such a tag would have you believe. The punters loved it and greeted them with warmth bordering on fervour. One to watch more closely when God allows!

Blind Melon, in case you've blinked over the last 12 months, are on their way to becoming stratospherically massive in a manner which hardly befits their music! Their winsome ditties, seemingly crafted in some backwater barn miles from any music biz bullshit, should by rights be languishing in the 'Where Are They Now?' file, undiscovered classics for trainspotters. As it is, their debut is multi-platinum and the London audience is nothing short of delirious when the house lights go down and the band stroll lazily onto the stage. A walk in the park? Were it not for the apeshit appreciation, you could think that nothing fundamental had changed in the

Melon's world. Shannon Hoon, newly shorn to what RAW's resident follicular expert Mel Bradman calls 'a cute bob' and somehow even more demented-looking, ain't the world's greatest communicator, but the sheer energy of his performance means that the audience is eating out of his scraggy hand.

His band (and make no mistake, that's certainly what it looks like!) look ever more incongruous.

Rogers Stevens geeks his way around the stage proving that bald ain't necessarily beautiful, while his guitar-swinging buddy Christopher Thorn couldn't help but remind me of that sad Doctor Who, Sylvester McCoy! Only bassist Brad Smith looks like a Melonhead of old, but whatever the visuals, the soul still remains Grade A retro-twang!

When Blind Melon hit the groove, they can put you flat on your ass with some of the coolest chill-factor Rock that's emerged during the last 20 years. The retro stomp of 'Soak The Sin', which closes this sweat-box set, gets the whole Forum jumping like a bunch of rednecks whacked out on moonshine, and 'Tones Of Home' has the kind of down-home, brow-beaten vibe that Janis Joplin captured so effortlessly.

If your idea of bliss is imagining that Punk never happened, then you'll dig the shit out of the Melon. Which is not always a bad thing, except that Blind Melon have a tendency to take a few blind alleys during the course of an evening stroll. There's nothing wrong with wanting to let the music breathe, but the Melon lurch too perilously close to self-indulgent guitar wank for comfort.

There are times when I don't even know which song they're struggling to keep together (could be 'I Wonder', could be 'Deserted') and to the uninitiated it must just seem like so much musical junk. Which it ain't. Not when there are gems like 'No Rain' waiting to be upturned in splendid fashion, or when newie 'Soup' creeps up and bites you on the back of the neck. Not when there are so many people who just dig this band so much. Not when people hang on Shannon's every twisted movement, every gummy little 'kid without lollipop' stomp with adoring eyes. They even seem enraptured by the boy's comments regarding the unbearably indecent US/UK exchange rate. Social commentary among the weed-smoking? Well, not exactly, but it's as close as you're gonna get!

Blind Melon are twisted, make no mistake. They can shine so bright that they can blind, but they can also make you glance at your watch a lot more frequently than is healthy for either them or us! I think they've got it in droves and provided that they don't whack out on the sheer ludicrous nature of their position, provided they can rein in those self-indulgent tendencies, then they're gonna be OK. When a band can provoke a reaction as strong as tonight's, things are teed up nicely!

HOWARD JOHNSON



Melon backdrop... Mmm, trippy, man!

2X4
TONES
SEED
DAD (NO INTRO)
WONDER (NO INTRO)
TIME
WILT
NO RAIN
SOUP
DESERTED
ST ANDREWS
PAPER
CANDY
CHANGE
SOAK

SLAC TO

PIK: TONY MOTTRAM



Tripping Daisy's Tim De
Laughter: 'One to watch'.

Shannon Hoon: Twisted, make no mistake!

BLIND FAITH!

They came from all corners of the Universe with an open mind and an open heart! HOWARD JOHNSON asks the MELON devotees how deep is their love!

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RAW QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Peter Ryan
AGE: 18
WHERE DO YOU LIVE?: Clwyd N. Wales
OCCUPATION: CHEF
HOW DID YOU FIRST HEAR OF BLIND MELON?: FRIENDS 'MTV'
HOW DO YOU RATE THEM? SONGS 7-10 PERFORMANCE 5-10
NAME THREE OTHER BANDS YOU REALLY LIKE: RED, AC/DC, CHILLA DEBBERS
DO YOU THINK BLIND MELON WILL STILL BE AROUND IN FIVE YEARS? NO, NOT ORIGINAL, TO SEATTLE, LIVE NIVRA, PER JAM, etc, TO MANY UP COMING BANDS

NAME: Peter Ryan

AGE: 18

FROM: Clwyd, Wales

OCCUPATION: Chef

PETER ADMITS that he's kinda here for the ride, but that hasn't stopped him from enjoying the vibes. As he fills his questionnaire in he says that he has his doubts about the Melon's longevity, but reckons he's enjoyed them all the same. Judging by his sweaty T-shirt, we can only agree!

NAME: James Forsyth

AGE: 17

FROM: North Wales

OCCUPATION: Chef and part-time band member
JAMES FREELY admits that he's a little the worse for alcoholic wear, but that hasn't impaired his enjoyment of the gig any, nor his liking for RAW, which he reads religiously!

"I first heard of Blind Melon when I saw the 'Dear Ol' Dad' video on an MTV Guns N' Roses weekend years ago! I think they're f**kin' brilliant, exceptionally original! I think they'll be around for years to come because they don't give a shit about anything except enjoying themselves and entertaining the crowd. They don't care about the pressure and that's what's cool about them. They are a real fans' band!"

NAME: Robert Plant

AGE: 46

FROM: Birmingham

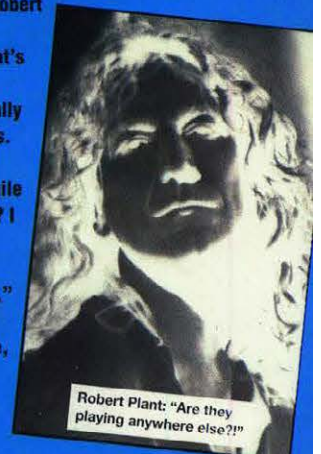
OCCUPATION: Worldwide singing megastar
ROBERT IS highly excited about Da Melon!

"Absolutely brilliant! I've never seen them before, but they're just amazing. They take the music off into uncharted places."

When I suggest that their twiddling can lose the plot a little, Robert is dismissive:

"Nonsense. That's what makes it so exciting. They really have what it takes. Are they playing anywhere else while they're over here? I think they're so good I have to catch them again."

And with a shake of his mane, the world's greatest Rock God departs!



Robert Plant: "Are they playing anywhere else?"

CK BASICS!