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**WHITE
ZOMBIE'S
DEADLY
KISS**



**INSIDE
LOLLAPALOOZA '93**

DUFF McKAGAN GUN SOLO

**DANZIG
KREATOR
MEGADETH
SCORPIONS
POISON
W.A.S.P.
GRUNTRUCK
MINDFUNK
BLIND MELON**

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BLIND



Jeff Tisman

"At last we're off the cock-rock tour and back playing in a real environment!" crows Blind Melon vocalist Shannon Hoon from the stage of London's Marquee club.

Several hundred fans respond with loud applause. During the next hour Blind Melon—Hoon, guitarists Thomas Rogers Stevens and Christopher Thorn, bassist

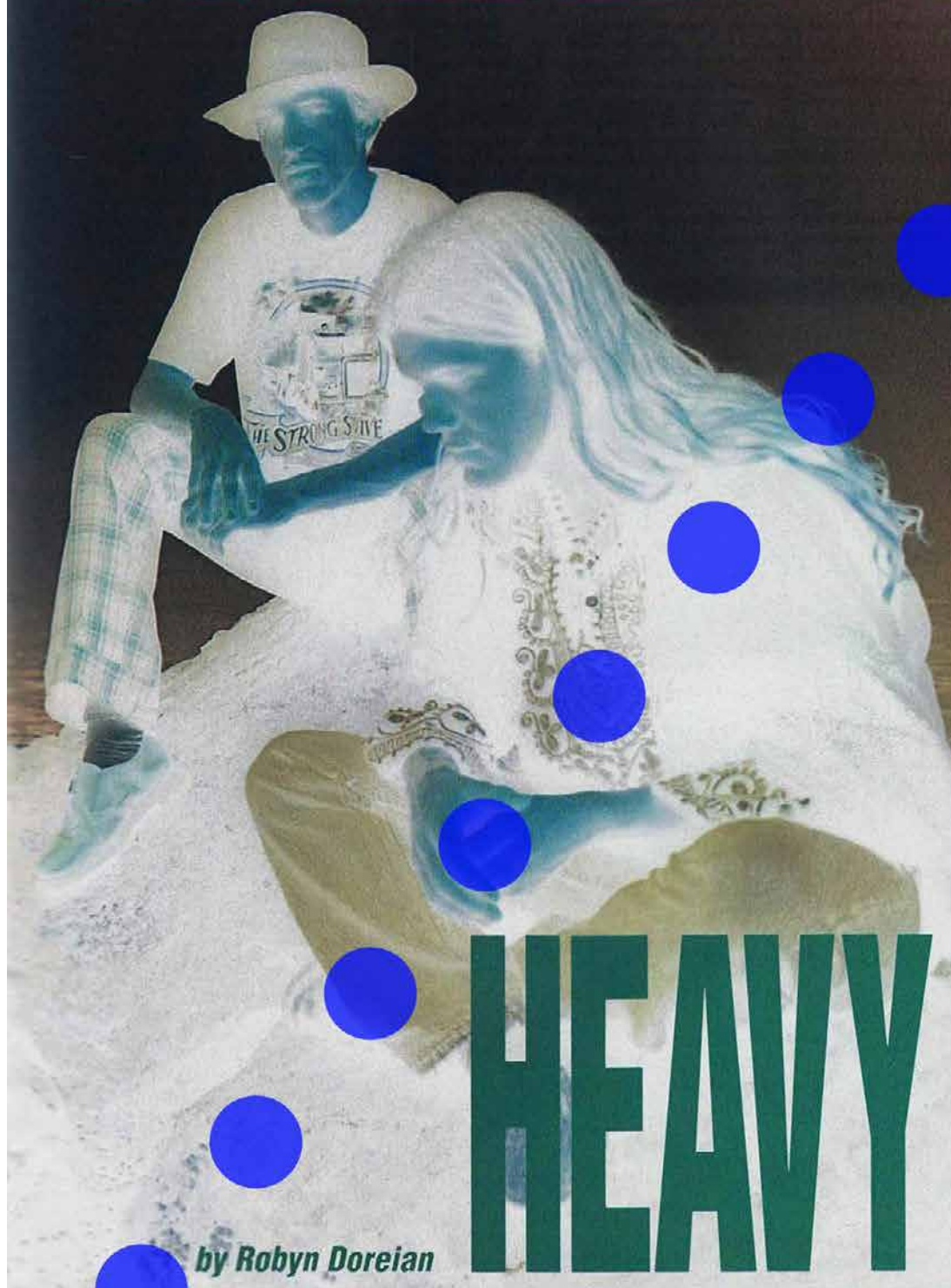
Brad Smith and drummer Glen Graham—hypnotizes the tight-knit audience with their unique hybrid of bluesy, folky, Southern-tinged rock. Looking like a thrift-shop reject, the barefooted Hoon treats the crowd like newfound friends. Extending his hands and soul to the audience, the frontman transforms the stark venue into

a place of warmth and camaraderie with his honest simplicity. It's the same vibe exuded on the band's self-titled debut LP.

The cock-rock tour Shannon was referring to was Blind Melon's stint as openers for Guns N' Roses across Europe. It was good exposure for a group little

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MELON



by Robyn Doreian

HEAVY

known to their native America, but arena tours, by nature, are somewhat constraining.

"I think the big rock shows are for certain people, but not for us," Hoon says. "It was a good tour, and we got to play to a lot of people, but as far as what kind of entertainment we feel comfortable in and what kind of vibe

MELLOW

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we create, it's definitely realized better in a smaller, sweatier, stinkier place than a 60,000-seat venue that's sold out. I'm not saying 'cock rock' tour to put it down, but we're more at home in clubs.

"We'd never been through Europe before," he continues, "and to tour in this kind of situation for the first time, we were playing to a lot of people who didn't want to hear anything but Guns N' Roses. When you have an army of security guards between you and the audience, it makes you feel like there's some sort of separation there. We prefer to play clubs where there's no division at all."

All questions concerning Hoon's relationship with his Lafayette, Indiana, homeboy Axl Rose are met with disdain. He acknowledges that it helped get them on the bill and that he felt more comfortable touring with someone he knew as opposed to going out cold with an arranged headline act, but that's about it. The extent

of his comment on the megastar is, "We trade smiles just like anyone else."

Not all British critics were as kind to Blind Melon as their fans. One magazine described the reaction to their appearance at Milton Keynes Bowl with Guns, the Cult and Soul Asylum this way: "The air of apathy that greeted their set was so underwhelming, it could have been described as 'almost intangible.'" An audience member leaving the Marquee referred to them as a B-grade Pearl Jam.

"That's not our fault, and it's not their fault, either, as no one here had ever really heard of us," explains Thomas Rogers Stevens. "If I was in the crowd and a band came on I'd never heard before, I'd be open to hearing them, but I wouldn't go berserk! We've had people accuse us of sucking dicks to get a record deal. People, for whatever reasons, try to make it personal, but I don't have a problem with that. At least a B's not too bad. We pass."

Honesty is something that comes easily to this bunch. Unfazed by criticism, disinterested in record sales and ignoring the industry hype surrounding them, all Blind Melon wants is to be left alone to play their music.

The day after the Marquee show Hoon sits at a table wearing something resembling a woolen tea cozy on his head, unselfconsciously just being himself while Stevens expresses his disbelief in Christianity, his views on the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, and his admiration for Henry Rollins. On a lighter note, he recalls with amusement his high-school years as a rock fan.

"When I was 13 years old, I spent a lot of time reading comic books, and I transferred my infatuation with superheroes to those metal guys running around in tight pants. I remember listening to bands like Mötley Crüe. It's taken me years to recover from the damage that did to my sexuality!" he chuckles.

"You listen to all of those kinds of bands and grow into a state of mind where you realize that music can be very therapeutic to you," Shannon adds. "Listening to music that's about drinking booze and chasing girls on a Saturday night is kind of irrelevant to the big picture. Music, for me, promoted escape and ways to deal with real life in a very abstract way. Any music that would bring on an emotion was important to me. I didn't realize that until I was 16 or 17, when I was into the rebellion thing and would listen to the Circle Jerks and the Misfits to amuse my aggression."

"That sort of music is strictly for pubescent boys and some grown men who never advance mentally beyond that stage," concludes Stevens.

Their shared passion for Rollins stems from his brutal intensity during performances and his confrontational commitment to truth.

"Most people struggle to find their identity and what they're about," Hoon philosophizes. "Rollins seems like he's found a way to deal with the cards he's been dealt. That's pretty much what life is all about—finding your identity and what's sacred to you. I'm still searching for that, and one of these days I'll find it."


"You're always going to have people in the middle. It's important that you have people pushing the boundaries in either direction for society to progress," adds Stevens. "I think Rollins has found a way of existing, but he's not necessarily at peace with himself. I don't think a guy like Rollins ever will be, because his brain is on fire. People like that tend to think themselves into an asylum."

Like Rollins, Shannon has acquired several tattoos along the way. He points to a tribal design near his wrist and explains its significance: "Moving to L.A. from Indiana, I was thrown into a different reality and realized I'd been living a long way from that—not because of my parents, but because of my surroundings and community. When I arrived in L.A., I was thrown into an environment where there were lots of different cultures and violence, which didn't exist where I came from. It helped me grow as a human being. In the last two years, through the traveling and the people I've met, I feel that I've learned more than I could have learned from any college education."

Hoon points to another tat further up his arm.

"My family was broken up when I was like 16 years old, and at that age it seemed really hard on me," he continues. "I'd been accustomed to holidays spent together as a family, and all of a sudden it wasn't there anymore. I found it really hard for me to deal with and understand. I was also torn between two parents, being put in the position of having to choose which one I wanted to live with and, in turn, risking losing the other one's love. A couple years later we got together and had a Christmas dinner. That was after it had been taken away for a couple of years, and for me it was a growing moment. That tattoo symbolizes that moment."

I ask if being in a rock band is the single most important thing in his life.



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"I'm very simple when it comes to what's important to me. It costs nothing to be nice, and I don't have a hard time understanding other human beings."

"It used to be, but through it I have realized that there is a lot more to the big picture than being in a band," Hoon replies. "I've learned things about myself that I wouldn't have discovered if it hadn't been for this experience. I enjoy what we do, and I enjoy making other people happy with our music and making them feel good about themselves. One of the best things has been the opportunity to communicate with people from different walks of life and learning to respect someone else's point of view other than your own. I really want to have a family! I want to have children. That's my main goal: to have a family and be happy with it. I want to have children soon. I'm 25 years old, and I want to be able to relate to my kids when I'm 45. I remember when I turned 21. My dad was around 50, and I thought it was so cool that I could still relate to him. Smoking my first joint and having my parents understand it meant something to me. This is what I've been thinking about a lot lately."

"What matters to me are things that could very well be achieved with or without being in a rock band that made it big and made a lot of money," he continues. "I'm very simple when it comes to what's important to me. It costs nothing to be nice, and I don't have a hard time understanding other human beings. I grow from meeting people from other walks of life and grow from not being prejudiced in any part of life. Out of everything that happens that seems bad, there's something to be learned. I always try to think of that and stay positive."

I wonder if he and the band had a chance to see anything of London during their visit.

"The first day we were here I went for a walk in Regents Park and found the zoo and ended up having a great time, as I love animals," Shannon says. "I went on my own, and it was the best afternoon I had. Seeing wives and their husbands and their kids, and how the kids were tickled by some little animal—I almost found myself watching that more than the actual animals at the zoo. It was so nice."

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