

Metallica! KMFDM! Sepultura! Presidents of the USA!

Shannon Hoon
unpublished interview
& photos

THE LOUDEST MAGAZINE IN THE WORLD

RIP

JANUARY 1996

\$3.99 USA/CANADA £2.75 U.K.

FOC 53490

Stone Temple Pilots'
Weiland

comes
clean

DISPLAY UNTIL JANUARY 29, 1996



Special 9th anniversary issue!

Blind Melon's Shannon Hoon

Meditative Musings

by karen sidlow

Shannon Hoon was one of those rare individuals who had the opportunity to touch many people's lives through his music. And anyone he came in contact with—from writers at this magazine to other musicians to fans—had nothing but raves for the singer, both personally and professionally.

When the 28-year-old Hoon died from an accidental overdose in New Orleans on October 21, it was a devastating shock to many, especially Shannon's family and the members of Blind Melon.

The following interview was conducted by Karen Sidlow in 1992, just prior to the release of their self-titled debut, and has never been published. It's not without sad irony, but ultimately the conversation sheds more light on the thoughtful, humanistic individual who was Richard Shannon Hoon.

Per Shannon's family, anyone wanting to make a donation can do so to the educational fund that has been set up for his baby daughter, Nico Blue. Send your donation to: Nico Blue Hoon, c/o Shapiro & Co., 9299 Sunset Blvd., Suite 607, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

—Ed.

RIP: I was just talking with some people about Andrew Wood's [Mother Love Bone vocalist] death because another Seattleite, Stefanie from 7 Year Bitch, just died from an O.D. as well.

SH: I knew the girl who sang for them. I met her right before we left [Seattle, where they were recording]. God, man, people never seem to learn. I just hate it, man. I think it's just real...

RIP: You don't use any substances?

SH: Um... Well, some people do some things... and some people do other things. I think if you have control of what you do, that's the question. It just touches me when someone young dies. [Their life] is just cut short. It just seems like there's a lot of people who tend to make the drugs part and parcel with the music, and I don't know why. You think, *If this person would have worked at Thrifty, would they be doing heroin?* It's just a shame. The girl who sang for 7 Year Bitch... she was really cool. I had a long, long conversation with her. And I never did catch her name. Death... is pretty dark. I just saw one of those bus benches that have the advertisements that said, *DON'T SMOKE DEATH CIGARETTES*. I don't know if that's an ad... There really is a [product] called Death cigarettes. They're in a black carton and they have a black skull and crossbones on them.

RIP: Well, I don't smoke. I guess I wouldn't know.

SH: You know, I've never smoked a cigarette in my life. But anyway... I drink a lot of tea. I quit drinking

alcohol about a year ago. It was bad for me. I come from a family of alcoholics, and we're all coping. I've been coping for a year now.

RIP: Do you feel any better or different?

SH: I don't have to call and apologize for the night before so often now. [Laughs] It kind of makes it a little better. It's nice to know what's going on around you. There's certain things for certain people, and alcohol is something that I couldn't deal with and neither could anybody around me, and neither should they have to deal with it... But you just grow out of that. It was just a phase that I went through, and I'm glad it's behind me. I think of how much happier my life would have been if I would have known what was going on.

RIP: Within your band, you all seem especially close.

SH: The way I look at bands now... there's a lot more to a band. I don't believe in an image. I think an image is so superficial. I have to see a band offstage. How they treat people offstage. How they act offstage. I don't see how a band can go onstage and play a show and play to people and be a unit onstage if they aren't a unit offstage. I don't understand it at all. The guys that are in [Blind Melon], we are the best of friends. It freaks people out. Like the people we work with, they don't get it. "Wow, that's so strange you guys are all friends." No, it isn't strange.

There's nothing strange about it. If it wasn't like that, we wouldn't be in a band together. I wouldn't be in a band with someone if we weren't friends. It's so easy to come up with an idea that you know the other four guys are going to take and like, because you know them because you're friends with them. It's just like you know what to say to people you work with, because you work with them every day and you've developed a relationship with one another. And every day would be work...

RIP: It's hard to find a job you like that you can make a living at. What else do you care about?

SH: Being happy. I care about the big picture.

RIP: Seeing the big picture or vision is a wonderful gift.

SH: Yeah, I love watching people. One thing my grandfather used to do is he used to sit in the local mall, and every weekend he would go there and sit in the middle of the mall by the fountains and just watch people. When I was growing up I was kind of embarrassed, I used to think he was perverted... And I was like, *Why does my grandfather do that?* I was kind of embarrassed to tell my friends that that was my grandfather, but at like 15 years old, when you can kind of communicate with your grandparents—that's a barrier to break down for some people—when I finally understood why it's so interesting to sit and watch people. Like when we

came in and [the hostess] wanted to know where we wanted to sit. And then you catch her in the in-between stage when she doesn't think anybody is looking at her. You just can tell if she enjoys what she does or not. You can tell if it's a chore. It's just so interesting that now I can enjoy sitting and just watching people. I walk around a lot. I just go for walks, just to take off walking and not really have a place you're going. Just kind of watch people and see how they deal with the day.

RIP: Are you happy the record is done?

SH: Yeah. But I don't like having time on my hands. I'm doing good with it right now. I don't like to be stagnant. I don't like mediums. I don't like to have time. I'm not a clock-watcher. Well, at school I was! [Laughs] A 9-to-5 day for the people we work with would be a relief for them. A lot of the people we work with like what they are doing enough that there really isn't a time schedule. Because if you enjoy what you're doing... I would enjoy doing what you're doing. Just do it for yourself, and if people like it... I never really think about what other people are going to think, because then I feel like you're living your life for someone else. Society is so screwed up, I don't think it really matters.

RIP: You mean we can't save the world?

SH: What's left of it... There's been some breakdowns in humanity lately. The thing that I get a kick out of the most is when you go from place to place... you realize how different a lot of places really are. People who come from different parts of the country and their beliefs. The one thing that I'm so happy I can do is to at least get along with everybody and evaluate it later. And realize who I like to surround myself with. There are so many people that I couldn't care less to be in the presence of, and I can't be around those who are

If you would be telling me that you hated your job, you shouldn't be telling me, you should be telling yourself. Then [you ask], "Why do I hate my job?" Then you come up with all five, ten, 15 reasons why you hate your job. Then start dealing with them one by one. Then, after 15 minutes or 15 days or 15 years... or however long it takes, you'll take care of all those reasons and then you'll like your job and you'll be happy. It's so easy if you'd just ask yourself. It's like stealing. Who are you really stealing from? You're not stealing from the guy across the street, you're stealing from yourself.

RIP: You seem to think before you speak.

SH: I didn't used to, and it took me so long of banging my head against the wall before I realized that it hurt. And finally I got to establish... I had a hard time dealing with my family and friends from Indiana. I moved out here [to Los Angeles] and was attacked by all these different sides of life that are out here, and I learned to deal with a lot of things. Where I come from, a lot of people can't deal with people who are gay, and when you're brought up around a society that doesn't accept people for what they are, regardless of whether they're gay or black or whatever... if you're brought up in a society like that, it's hard to not become that way. When I moved out here, I was so happy that I could be friends with people who are gay, I could push all the stereotypical ideas that I was subjected to growing up aside. The only people that can't deal with it are small-minded people who are really unhappy with themselves, and they take it out on other people who are happy about the way they are.

I found myself being that kind of person at one time in my life. It really makes you feel good when you can think about the day you used to be like that, and then

was just thinking about all these problems I had encountered through my life that I never really dealt with that I swept under this mental rug in my head. I thought about how I wanted to get where I'm at now and how happy I would be. How much I wanted to do music enough to leave my home and go out and try to find a group of guys who had the same views as I did, and I thought about this feeling I would have when I got to a certain point. When I got to that point, I wasn't happy. That feeling that I thought I was going to have all those years wasn't there, and I didn't know why. Then all of a sudden my true self wasn't going to let me feel that feeling of happiness because there were so many things in my past that I hadn't dealt with, that I just wanted to sweep under the rug and not deal with. By not dealing with that, that's what kept me from having that self-satisfying feeling of being. Then all of a sudden for 48 hours I'm just going back through my life, and I'm thinking about all these things I did wrong and how I could have dealt with them, and then it almost takes you back to the frame of mind that you were in before...

RIP: It's a lot of work.

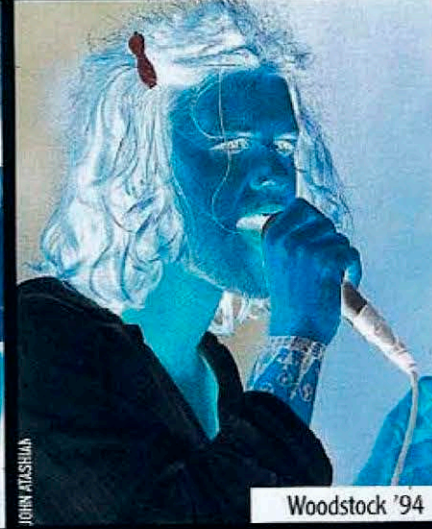
SH: Yeah, and it's so draining. You cram 20 years of living in a matter of 48 hours, 'cause once you figure it out, you have to do it all now. Your mind won't let you sleep. I was so overwhelmed. My head was spinning around like in *The Exorcist*. Then I kinda felt good; I felt that good feeling kind of come on. And now I'm a lot happier. Now I love time by myself. I can be alone and be totally happy. I have a good group of friends. I have enough friends that make me happy; I don't want to overload myself. I'm very content now, which is something I'm happy with. A lot of people can't feel that way, and I feel very fortunate to be able to feel that way. It makes it easier in all parts of my



1992, acoustic-style



JOE EIDON



JOHN ATASHIMA

Woodstock '94

unhappy, because the total reason they are unhappy is because of themselves. I don't like to be around negative people at all. If you told me you didn't like what you are doing, I'd get up and walk away. I don't want to sit here and waste my time, like you don't want to sit here and waste your time. There are so many people that are looking for something. They are so pissed off at the world and they are so unhappy, if they would just talk to themselves, if they would ask themselves the question why they are unhappy, then they would know instead of trying to ask this person.

think about the way you are now... how you've grown up. It's really scary. It's taken me 24 years where I'm at now, mentally and physically, and if I waited until I was 50 before I realized it, at least [I] realized it. And you can always go back through your life and think about how you dealt with things. For me, I had such a mental high. You have this self-realization thing and you think of all the problems you had through your life, and it's so easy—I couldn't sleep, I was higher than any drug has ever gotten me, and I couldn't sleep for like a day and a half or two days because I

life now. In everything. If I just think about it, I can deal with it. Anything. People say if you put your mind to it, you can really do it, and that's so true.

RIP: The mind has amazing powers. You can do anything.

SH: You really can.

RIP: Men can't have babies yet, but I think everything else is possible.

SH: If men could have babies, I'd have a whole crew of them. I love kids. I think kids are great. Plus, I'm the last person in my family. I'm the last Hoon. •