

# Rolling Stone

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HOT  
1992

—Starring—

SHARON  
STONE



—with—  
TEENAGE  
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# PERFORMANCE



Public Image's Lydon

## BIG AUDIO DYNAMITE II PUBLIC IMAGE LTD. LIVE BLIND MELON

*Astroarena  
Houston, Texas  
March 21st, 1992*

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN A TOUR combining the energies of Johnny Rotten and Mick Jones might have set the world on fire. That time was fifteen years ago, before many in the Houston audience for MTV's *120 Minutes* tour were born. Presented as a mini-Lollapalooza, corporate style, the bill matched Jones's Big Audio Dynamite II and John "Rotten" Lydon's Public Image Ltd. —

through which the punk incendiaries of the Seventies have become the middle-aged musical careerists of the Nineties — with Live and Blind Melon, two emerging American acts that the video network has adopted.

If "Anarchy!" was the rallying cry of '77, "Party!" has become the byword of '92. In the headlining set, B.A.D. II did

Blind Melon's Hoon (left) and Rogers Stevens



its best to turn the vast expanse of the Astroarena (a third filled at best) into a non-stop dance rave, with a turntable DJ providing beats between songs while a chatty Jones offered running commentary on the proceedings ("This is called 'City Lights.' It's for all the young ladies in the audience, and it goes like this"). Since the band was simply one of the sound sources — amid the samples, tapes and whatever else was contributing to the aural barrage — it was sometimes difficult to tell whether the DJ was augmenting the band or the band was accompanying the turntables.

Although the opening numbers seemed flat, with the turntable beats sounding livelier than live drummer Chris Kavanaugh on a turgid "Can't Wait," Jones eventually took command with a climactic segue from "Contact" into "Rush." Stripped of the arrangement indulgences of the recorded version, the latter

John McEnroe or Jimmy Connors, recognizing the ridiculousness of the bad-boy persona that he can never quite outgrow.

No longer a threat, Lydon was a tease, simulating masturbation while jerking the



B.A.D.'s Nick Hawkins (left) and Mick Jones

audience off. His performance has become as good-natured as it is pointless and as predictable as the role-playing of Spinal Tap. Mooning the hall and spreading his cheeks, using dollar bills as toilet paper and then offering them to the crowd, he distracted the audience from the fact that P.I.L. no longer has much of musical interest to offer. The journeyman postpunk guitar of John McGeoch (*Magazine*, *Siouxsie & the Banshees*) was as competent as all the competency the Pistols reviled.

Though both Live and Blind Melon were spawned by the video generation, each depends more on audio intensity than visual flair. It's hard to imagine a more serious band than Pennsylvania's Live, whose moral earnestness makes early U2 sound frat-band frivolous. "The world is not my problem; I am the world, and you are the world," intoned the incantatory Edward Kowalczyk, bearing the world's weight on his twenty-year-old shoulders, raising his hands as if to part the Red Sea. Maybe as the tour progresses, Jones and Lydon can convince this guy to lighten up.

Blind Melon's major claim to fame is that frontman Shannon Hoon is a Hoosier homeboy buddy of Axl Rose's (and appears as guest vocalist in Guns n' Roses' video "Don't Cry"). Formed in Los Angeles but now based in North Carolina, the band combined Southern-fried riffing with harder rock dynamics. Though its debut album won't be released until late summer, video exposure is already positioning Melon as the next Guns n' Crowes. Or is that Black Roses? Whichever, the twenty-two-dollar Blind Melon T-shirt was selling briskly at the Astroarena.

— DON MCLEESE



Live's Edward Kowalczyk

confirmed that Jones retains the knack for an anthem with a killer hook. What he needs is a strong foil, like Joe Strummer in the Clash or Don Letts in the original B.A.D., who could help him distinguish inspiration from self-indulgence.

Where Jones can be credited with prescience for combining dance technology with rock dynamics (at a time when Clash-style purists considered hip-hop anathema), John Lydon's major achievement has been survival. The fact that he still commands an audience fifteen years after his fifteen minutes of fame is more noteworthy than most of the music he has made (at least since 1979's *Metal Box*). In his white shorts and tour T-shirt, he seemed like the rock equivalent of