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RIPE & READY
**BLIND
MELON**



DUFF MCKAGAN • GEORGE CLINTON •



**KNEE-DEEP IN THE
HOOPLA** FROM CUB SCOUTS
TO BEE GIRLS, WITH SOME
RAW DEALS & ROUGH LIVING
IN BETWEEN. **BLIND
MELON** HAS TAKEN
THE LONG, HARD ROAD TO
THE TOP BY **KIM NEELY**

BRAD SMITH, GLEN GRAHAM,
SHANNON HOON, ROGERS STEVENS & CHRISTOPHER THORN (FROM LEFT)

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK SELIGER

allowed to lose. It makes me cry when I think back about how hard it must have been on him to be pushed into those things. I honestly believe that the things he did, he did for us. His heart wasn't really in it, and that may have been the reason he just totally exploded after he got out of high school."

Hoon doesn't argue with that. "By the time I was 17," he says, "I freaked out because I didn't have an identity of my own. I realized I'd wasted years trying to be what my parents wanted me to be."

Guided by his own preferences, the singer gravitated toward the local stoners. He'd begun to play guitar and write songs, and his new circle of friends encouraged him on that front. "Singing made me feel good," he says. "And finally I was around people who thought it was all right to sing."

Once he had abandoned jockdom for the more creative slacker lifestyle, Hoon had a sense of his own identity. But he'd also gotten heavily into drugs and alcohol and begun to develop a police record.

"Nothing major," he says. "Just fighting or maybe hanging out with kids who had burglarized a place and not telling on my friends. But in a small town, they'll bust you five or six times for fighting, and next thing you know, you're up for a habitual-criminal charge."

Nel Hoon, who had split with her husband by that time, describes her son's last four years at home as a nightmare. She was bailing him out of jail so often, she says, that at one point she had four separate bond receipts in her wallet. And his drug use was a constant source of worry.

"I'd hear an ambulance," she says, "and if Shannon wasn't home, I'd get sick to my stomach. I always expected the worst. When he got into drugs, I just gave up hope. He just turned 26, and there were times I didn't think he'd live that long. It was to the point where the police wanted him so badly that they'd put a finger on him when he hadn't even done anything. They just wanted him out of the way."

"I'd basically backed myself into such a corner at home that I wasn't going to lose anything by leaving," says Hoon.

In March of 1990, the singer got on a Greyhound bus bound for Los Angeles; his mother says she was sure that when he returned to Lafayette "he would either come back in a body bag, or he would come back signed."

Before he'd been in Los Angeles a month, Hoon met Stevens and Smith at a party. The three began jamming and discovered they had something in common: None of them wanted to have anything to do with the city's metal circuit.

"We hated the whole L.A. glam scene," says Smith. "It was just disgusting. And we rebelled against that so heavily that we had something really unique."

When the trio decided to add a second guitarist, Smith looked up Thorn, a folkie he'd met while auditioning for another band.

Thorn, a native of Dover, Pa., had been weaned on Woody Guthrie songs played to him by his mother, but he discovered Eddie Van Halen and Randy Rhoads at 15, and by the time he was in high school, he'd joined a thrash-metal band called R.O.T. ("You

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know, ROT!" he says, laughing. "Sounds heavy, doesn't it?"). The band kept Thorn's interest for a few years, but at the end of his first year of college, he decided he'd had enough.

"That sort of heavy stuff wasn't in me," Thorn says. "I had a nice, wonderful, little pleasant life — I was never that angry. I mean, I went through that whole depression thing in 10th grade. You know, when you feel like a geek, and the 12th-graders are getting all the girls. But I was just never that pissed off about anything."

The guitarist's life was so comfortable and picture perfect, Thorn says, that he began to worry about the mundane existence that awaited him if he stayed in Dover. He'd already moved into an apartment in York with his girlfriend in preparation for his second year of college, but just before the semester was to start, he panicked, decided to move to Los Angeles, quit school and packed up a U-Haul.

"I remember being so excited," Thorn says of the day he left Pennsylvania. "Me and my girlfriend pull away, and our parents are all crying and waving, and

we drive like 50 feet, and we're screaming: 'Whoaaa, yeah! Fuck Dover, we're outta here!' And it hit me around Arizona — 'Wow, what the fuck am I gonna do when I get there?' I was really fortunate to hook up with these guys. I could still be back there selling clothes on Melrose."

For months, the four scoured Hollywood for a drummer, to no avail — they were looking for someone with finesse, and, at the time, bombast was the order of the day. Finally, Stevens and Smith thought of Glen Graham, a fellow Mississippian they'd met on the club circuit back home.

The son of an attorney, Graham grew up in Columbus, Miss., in what he calls "the epitome of the American sitcom family." The drummer's family was so normal, he says, that "anything abnormal, which was most everything on the outside world, just sort of freaked me out."

Like countless others, Graham was lured into rock & roll by Kiss; within a few years after seeing them on television, he'd acquired a makeshift drum kit (it was covered with linoleum, and he had to prop the rack toms up with J.C. Penney catalogs) and begun playing Judas Priest and Deep Purple covers with older kids from high school. His fledgling music career, however, was marred by bouts with depression, and in the 10th grade, during a bus trip to Washington with his swim team, he suffered a nervous breakdown. He's still not sure what caused it, but he suspects he may have been dosed with acid by one of his classmates.

"I hallucinated for weeks," he says. "Total landscape-change hallucinations. Needless to say, I don't remember much of the trip. When I got back, I hadn't eaten or had anything to drink all week, nor had I bathed. I don't even remember coming back. Next thing I knew, I was in a mental hospital."

The drummer remained hospitalized for 10 weeks. "Once I got out," he says, "I was fine. The psychiatrist said, 'Whatever you do, just don't take acid.' It was a long time before I did. And when I did, I thought, 'Oh, my God, this is what it was.' I think I was destined for

a nervous breakdown, with or without a dose."

Whatever caused the episode, Graham says he never had any problems after it abated. He resumed his pursuit of music in high school and played gigs around the South with various bands throughout his first and second years of college at Mississippi State University. The band he was in had just lost its guitarist on the day he got the recruitment call from Stevens, so Graham took the timing as an omen. He quit school and set out for California with \$25 in his pocket and a minimalist jazz kit that the other band members took great delight in scoring.

"The bass drum looked like it was made out of a coffee can," snickers Hoon.

"They just thought that was hilarious," says Graham. "They'd never seen a real kit before."

With Graham in place, the quintet began rehearsing, settling on the moniker Blind Melon, a phrase Smith's father had used to describe his least-likely-to-succeed next-door neighbors. The band's first break, it turned out, came a little too soon. A demo it had recorded after



THEY KNEW HER BACK WHEN she was just a regular bee. ■ They were in Columbus, Miss., at the time, having just finished a pleasant dinner at drummer Glen Graham's family home. As images go, it seemed harmless enough — just an old snapshot of Graham's sister Georgia taken before some long-ago school play. ■ "We were all sitting around in the living room," recalls Shannon Hoon, Blind Melon's vocalist, "and that picture just jumped out at us. Someone jokingly said, 'That would make a great album cover.'" ■ It seemed like a good idea at the time. She was cute and

and perky — charming even. She knew her place. Didn't try to hog the spotlight. Didn't go around flipping her tutu at every Tom, Dick and Harry. For a while, she served Blind Melon well.

But that was before the band brought her to life in the video for its second single, "No Rain." In mid-June, when MTV put the sunny, happy-go-lucky clip directed by Sam Bayer (Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit") into Buzz Bin rotation, the Bee Girl became a star. She also became a colossal pain in the ass.

Thanks in no small part to Heather DeLoach, the 10-year-old actress who portrayed her in the video and has since parlayed the role into an extended world tour, the Bee Girl has developed an alarming cult following. She's also been packing a serious 'tude — flitting around with an entourage, signing autographs and hobnobbing with the heavy hitters. ("I heard she was hanging out with Madonna at the MTV Awards," reports Hoon.)

Of course, Blind Melon haven't made out too shabbily in all of this. Their debut album, *Blind Melon*, had been in stores for nine months when MTV began airing the "No Rain" video; after its release in September 1992, the album had hovered for a time on *Billboard's* Heatseekers chart but failed to gather further steam. When "No Rain" began getting MTV play, however, *Blind Melon* exploded, re-entering the charts at No. 16 and pole-vaulting to No. 3 in only seven weeks. At the time of this writing, the album is selling 109,000 copies weekly. Numbers like that would take the sting out of most any unpleasant issue, and so, despite the pleasure the band takes in ragging on the Bee Girl, most of its barbs are good-natured.

Blind Melon are gratified by their 11th-hour breakthrough — "It feels valid to us, like we've worked for it," says guitarist Rogers Stevens — but they also seem a little disillusioned to have learned how much power MTV had over their careers.

"It's really weird how the momentum picked up because of one video," says bassist Brad Smith. "The music hasn't changed — it's been on the CD forever. What we do has not changed. The video and the politics behind everything are what's changed. Success has a lot less to do with music than I thought it did."

There's been another slight damper on all the celebration. Success in the music industry isn't just about making a good video — it's also about milking a winning streak for all it's worth. Which means that the members of Blind Melon, who were eager to get off the road and start writing their second album, will now have to postpone that until Capitol is satisfied that they've wrung every penny possible from their debut.

"This record's been out a year," says Hoon, "and people are coming up and going, 'Oh, the new album's great.' And we're like, 'If you only knew.' You have to go back to the starting point with a lot of people. But I guess it just keeps your feet on the ground."

"What's happening to us is great," says Smith. "But

right now, we're in our early, mid-20s. You want to be able to produce as much music as you can at this age, you know? And I'm out of practice. I haven't done it in a year."

"I believe in the record that we made, and I wouldn't want to just walk away from it," says guitarist Christopher Thorn. "But I didn't realize how much shit goes along with just being a musician. You don't think about that stuff when you're 16. You think about what you see in a magazine, these glamorous pictures of these guys hanging out with babes and stuff. It's not like that at all — not even close. I just wanted to play my guitar and get paid for it, you know?"

BY THE TIME THEY reached adolescence, Brad Smith and Rogers Stevens, friends since their days in the Cub Scouts, had begun to suspect that there was more to life than what West Point, Miss. — population 8,000 — had to offer.

Stevens, a comic-book freak who'd spent his childhood plotting a career as a superhero, transferred his fixation to music at the age of 13, after his first Van Halen concert. "I saw David Lee Roth up there jumping around, and Eddie playing the guitar, and all the women screaming," he says, "and I thought, 'Well, I guess I'm not ever gonna get any superpowers or anything — maybe this is a more realistic thing to be.'"

By the time he was 14, he had discovered hooliganism as an antidote to boredom; he and his friends passed the time orchestrating shoplifting junkets at the local Wal-Mart, terrorizing the neighbors with M-80s, playing mailbox baseball and other small-town favorites.

Enter Smith, a self-described gearhead who'd grown up on Top 40 radio and recently begun trying his own hand at songwriting. While Stevens and his friends were perfecting their images as the town hell raisers, Smith had been immersing himself in all things musical. He'd played baritone sax in junior high and then worked his way into snare-drumming, entering a series of school-sponsored competitions and at one point coming out

third in the state. With the help of the Roy Clark Big Note Songbook, he'd taught himself guitar by the time he was 13 and promptly decided that "playing other people's songs was kind of annoying — it was easier if you made up your own."

Before long, Smith had taught Stevens how to play guitar as well (according to Stevens, the first song Smith taught him was the Scorpions' "Rock You Like a Hurricane"); by the time the two graduated from high school, they had formed a number of cover bands together. By 1989, Smith was fed up with college, and Stevens was sick of small-town life in general. The two piled their belongings into Smith's Honda Civic and headed for Los Angeles.

Hoon, meanwhile, was living in Lafayette, Ind., inching toward a getaway.



HOON ABANDONED JOCKDOM FOR THE SLACKER LIFESTYLE.

The youngest of three, Hoon had been a hyperactive child; his mother, Nel, says she put him in karate classes at age 6 to keep from giving him pills. Before long, however, he was channeling the excess energy into sports. His father was an athlete, and from an early age, Shannon was groomed to follow in his dad's footsteps. By the time he reached high school, he was so heavily involved in wrestling, pole vaulting and football that he had little time for anything else.

"All he was really required to do in high school was stay on top of things in sports," Nel says. "When he would lose at any sport, his dad had a hard time with that, and it would end up being a family fight. He really wasn't

it had only been together for a week got into circulation, and record labels came running almost immediately.

"We only had four or five songs," Stevens said at the time. "Next thing we know, we're having dinners with 10 different record companies, and we're lying to all of them. We're like, 'Yeah, we got 20 songs, we've been together for a year.'" On several occasions, label execs interested in signing the band would come to watch rehearsals; the band members would rip through their five songs and then announce that they "didn't feel like playing any more."

Label interest intensified nonetheless, and eventually, the band inked a deal with Capitol and holed up in a Los Angeles rehearsal studio to begin writing its debut.

That setup proved short-lived. The Los Angeles scene was too distracting — "We were basically goofing off and not getting anything done," says Stevens — and Hoon, unintentionally, was about to complicate matters. At the time, Guns n' Roses were working on their *Use Your Illusion* albums, and Hoon, who'd known Axl Rose back in Indiana, had been hanging out in the studio with them. He ended up contributing backing vocals to several tracks, and Rose subsequently asked him to appear in Guns n' Roses' video for "Don't Cry."

Hoon's appearance in the "Don't Cry" clip undoubtedly gave Blind Melon a leg up in terms of publicity, but it also had some drawbacks. First of all, because it linked Blind Melon and Guns n' Roses in the minds of reporters, it nearly guaranteed that all of Blind Melon's interviews would be marred by G n' R gossip mining — a problem that persists to this day. Secondly, the media interest fueled by Hoon's appearance in the video — something any label worth its salt would want to take advantage of — resulted in Capitol's putting additional pressure on Blind Melon to finish their debut.

Reluctant to slap their first album together in a haphazard manner, the Melons temporarily abandoned

ious elements that shaped them.

Seventies AOR radio clearly made its mark on the band as did the Southern rock three-fifths of Blind Melon grew up on. Recorded almost entirely live, the album is loose and relaxed, a jammy melting pot that finds them lovingly retooling their '60s and '70s influences into a sound familiar enough to be immediately infectious, yet new enough to be all their own. *Blind*

well as had been expected. Blind Melon continued to slug it out on the road, but after the initial energy dissipated, they seemed to be fighting a losing battle. It wasn't a very pleasant winter.

Spring started out rather nicely, though. In June, MTV picked up the "No Rain" video. And the arrival of fall was a real corker. By September, a year after its release, *Blind Melon* had gone platinum.

PERFORMING ON MTV'S 120 MINUTES TOUR, JANUARY 1992, AUSTIN, TEXAS



IF THE MUSIC CONVEYS THE BAND MEMBERS' FONDNESS FOR THEIR SMALL-TOWN UPBRINGINGS, THE LYRICS REPRESENT A REBELLION AGAINST THE CONSERVATISM OF MIDDLE AMERICA.

their songwriting and hit the road, playing a brief club tour and opening a series of dates for Soundgarden. When they returned to Los Angeles after the tour, the muse was still snoozing. Unable to concentrate and fed up with nagging phone calls, they decided a change of scenery was in order and moved to Durham, N.C.

"At first," says Thorn, "it was like, 'God, my girlfriend's in Los Angeles, and I'm here.' But then it got really cool. Now, when I look back on that time period, I think that was the coolest time, being in that house and jamming from midnight until 4 or 5 in the morning."

In February 1992, Blind Melon flew to Seattle and entered London Bridge Studios with producer Rick Parashar to begin recording their debut. Midway through the sessions, they were offered a slot on MTV's 120 Minutes Tour, opening for P!nk and Big Audio Dynamite II. During that high-profile jaunt, word-of-mouth on Blind Melon escalated. By June, when they finished recording *Blind Melon*, it appeared there would be no stopping them.

What emerged from the sessions was a remarkable debut — and one that more than lived up to the hype. *Blind Melon* is the sound of five different people simultaneously railing against and paying tribute to the var-

Melon is mood music at its finest, encompassing hypnotic, almost psychedelic meditations ("I Wonder"), raw, gritty fare ("Paper Scratcher," "Dear Ol' Dad"), lazy, meandering acoustic numbers ("Sleepyhouse," "Change") and Allmanesque barn burners ("Holyman," "Soak the Sin"). Most of the songs employ unexpected stylistic change-ups, and Hoon, veering from a throaty blues wail to a plaintive, sandpapery croon, rides the hairpin turns expertly.

If the music conveys the band members' fond nostalgia for their small-town upbringings, the lyrics represent the other side of the coin — their rebellion against the stifling conservatism and entrenched small-mindedness of middle America. Particularly on tracks like "Tones of Home" and "Change," the lyrics are contemplative and wistful, imbued with a distinct *carpe diem* vibe, a sense of emotional chains being broken, of years of spirit-sapping demons being exorcised. All told, the finished album had all the earmarks of a winner.

Music fans are an impatient lot, however, and during the three months between the album's completion and its release, the buzz surrounding Blind Melon seemed to fizzle. When *Blind Melon* finally hit the stores, it was selling a few thousand copies a week but not nearly as

THIS IS ONE OF THE HEAVIER SCHMOOZES WE'VE witnessed," says Stevens, taking in the mob that is packed, sardinelike, into Blind Melon's dressing room. It's mid-September, and the band is currently winding up a stint opening for Neil Young. (After these shows, they'll hook up with the Lenny Kravitz tour.) Tonight's show, at the Los Angeles Sports Arena, is something of a big deal. The Capitol brass are out in full force, and there's a party scheduled after the show to present Blind Melon with gold- and platinum-record awards. At the moment, all of the band members seem a little keyed up. They aren't much for pressing the flesh, and this evening promises to be one long, flesh-pressing orgy.

There are five distinct personalities in Blind Melon, and it's interesting to put them in a room together and observe the contrast. Graham, an introvert, tends to keep his thoughts to himself, and Thorn is the happy-go-lucky type. Hoon is positive almost to a fault, which often puts him at opposite poles with Smith, who is something of a cynic. Stevens, the band's resident stand-up comedian, falls somewhere between Hoon and Smith, depending on what mood he's in.

When they talk about the changes success has wrought in their day-to-day lives, it's clear that they're all feeling the impact in different ways. Just about the only thing they seem to have reached a general consensus on is the importance — now more than ever — of keeping their feet on the ground.

"Sure there's a lot going on right now," says Hoon. "But as quickly as it is to come by, it can be gone that quickly, too. A lot of this is just a little too goddamn serious. It's something that you have to keep at arm's length. You can't let it affect you, because it's [Cont. on 82]

MELON

[Cont. from 46] just a time frame."

Ego inflation isn't the only potential side effect of sudden fame, and the band members seem to have a firm grasp on the other pitfalls that could await them.

"What we're doing has to change you in some ways," says Stevens, "but I think we've managed to keep our heads about us."

"Talk to me in a year," says Smith, "and maybe I'll be reduced to babes in the tour bus and getting drunk every night and who knows what else. You can feel that rock & roll force drawing you down the demonic tunnel. But as far as the rock & roll lifestyle goes, I don't think we're a big wine, whiskey and women band. I think we're a little more sophisticated than that."

Sophistication notwithstanding, it seems only fair that five guys who spent their teenage years reading about rock & roll clichés perpetrated by others should be allowed to indulge in at least a few of their own. And judging from the events of the next few hours, the members of Blind Melon have clearly decided that tonight is the night.

Hoon starts the ball rolling during the Capitol Records shindig, announcing to the gathered execs that "there's a lot of people here I'd like to tell to fuck off" and closing his thank-you speech with a chipper "Let's just eat, drink and vomit on all the right people." Later, he rips the receiver from the restaurant's pay phone and breaks it in two. (The last time he ate here, he got word on the same phone that his dog had passed on.)

Stevens spends most of the party dragging people into the men's room to view an original Henry Miller drawing on display there. Hoon, touched by the guitarist's enthusiasm, promptly steals the drawing and smuggles it onto the band's tour bus.

When the band returns to the hotel, it can't seem to find a spot to celebrate in peace. Things are comfortable in the lobby, but security ousts everyone at 2:30 after Stevens and a crew member have a wrestling match by the front desk. Next, they climb over a chain-link fence to get into the hotel's closed swimming pool; they enjoy about an hour of loud, uninterrupted horseplay before the ever-present security guard shows up at poolside.

Finally, at 4 in the morning, they move to the hotel's sun deck. Still dripping from the pool, they're in full-out male-bonding mode, having formed a soggy huddle around their manager, Chris Jones. Most everyone present is roaring drunk, and things are getting fairly sappy. ("Chris, you're the besht manager in the world," a bleary-eyed Hoon is overheard cooing to Jones.)

After the huddle breaks up, a contented hush settles over the group, and the party seems to be hit- [Cont. on 84]

MELON

[Cont. from 82] ting something of a lull. Stevens, who is wearing only plaid boxer shorts and a porkpie hat, decides to take matters into his own hands.

By the time anyone notices what he's up to, it's too late: The guitarist is looming somewhat unsteadily over one of the plate-glass patio tables, holding an empty champagne magnum high in the air and wearing the crafty "what if" smile of a curtain-climbing 3-year-old.

The bottle glitters threateningly in the moonlight for an instant, just long enough for Jones to stammer, "Uh, Rog, ..." and then Stevens lets out a whoop and — C R A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A S H — slams the bottle down hard onto the inch-thick tabletop, sending a heavy shower of glass shards onto the concrete below. The silence after the air-rending crash is so profound that for a moment all anybody can do is gape down at the heavy carpet of glass by Stevens' feet. Then, in a brilliant display of yellow-bellied choreography, seven chairs are scraped back at once, and the band and crew members, all wearing the same stricken "uh-oh, time to go" facial expression, shuffle quickly toward the elevator.

Stevens, however, isn't quite finished. When the rest of the group reaches the elevator bank, they look back to see the guitarist, bottle still in hand, stomping menacingly toward another table.

"Rogers, NO!" someone shouts.

"Hey buddy, that's enough," says Jones. "Come on, dude, security's gonna ... C R A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A S H."

Several of Stevens' band mates run back to the sun deck to pull him away from the second mound of broken glass. After proudly surveying his handiwork, the guitarist draws himself up to his full height and plunges both fists into the air in a prizefighter's show of victory.

"I can afford it," he says cheerfully.

"OH, MAN, I CAN'T AFFORD THAT," GRUMBLES Stevens some eight hours later.

Daylight can be lethal for a man who was in Stevens' condition the night before, and now, slumped over a table at Denny's, the guitarist looks like he's barely hanging on. His hair is sticking up in weird tufts, his face is chalky, and when he woke up this morning, he discovered that his eyelids were covered with dozens of tiny, unidentified spots. ("It could be broken blood vessels," he says glumly. "Maybe it was all the screaming.")

Worse, the band's road manager, Paul Cummings, has just taken rather sadistic delight in informing Stevens that the table-smashing spree will cost him \$500.

Hoon is looking a little wane this afternoon, too; he hasn't yet slept, having spent the pre-dawn hours working himself into a paranoid frenzy over the possible ramifications of the Stolen Artwork Caper. At

7 a.m., certain that the police were going to break down his door any minute, he was placing panicky phone calls to friends, trying to find someone who would hide the Miller drawing for him. (Tomorrow, Jones will persuade the singer to return the sketch, but Hoon will do so only reluctantly. "Henry Miller deserves better than the bathroom of an eating establishment with a \$21.95 entree," he will say grumpily. "It really did offend me that it was in the bathroom. And I can't apologize for it — I absolutely can't.")

The band moans and groans its way through breakfast, not exactly looking forward to the day ahead of it. There's a long drive to San Diego, where tonight's show is. Tomorrow, there won't be any time to slack off, either. There is a video shoot to be done and quite an important one at that.

Tomorrow, the Bee Girl is going to be forced into an early retirement.

Capitol is re-releasing the band's "Tones of Home" single, and the band has hatched a plan to put its omnipresent mascot out of commission in the accompanying video. Nothing messy — it's rather humane, actually.

"She's just going to grow old really fast," says Hoon. "We're putting her life in fast-forward."

The singer says he has no qualms about putting little Heather DeLoach in the unemployment line, either. "She's probably going to live happily ever after in Malibu," he says, laughing.

As relieved as the band will be to see the Bee Girl trade her tap shoes for orthopedics, it's easy to see why so many were charmed by her role in the "No Rain" video — that of a free spirit, unappreciated by the majority, who searches for and eventually finds a group of kindred spirits who accept her as she is. In fact, the Bee Girl's ultimate victory parallels the lives of the band members themselves. All of them felt hampered by small-town life; all of them fled their hometowns in order to find a niche, and all of them are now in the decidedly envious position of being able to say, "I told you so" to the doubting Thomases who warned them that the odds of finding success on their own terms were virtually nil.

"I was raised in an environment where if you were far left in any manner, you were pretty much condemned," says Hoon. "You know, I go back home now and look at pictures, and I'm this sharp-dressed, shorthaired jock. I can see the *denial* in my eyes in those pictures, man. I will never forget all the time I lost trying to get along with people who really, deep down inside, weren't important to me."

"In this society, you're almost programmed to go to college, get married, have a kid, stay in the same town, and that's it — that's your life," says Thorn. "I knew that I didn't want that. I thought, 'Holy shit, I need to leave before I get stuck.' And I've made it out alive. And here I am, in a rock band, shooting a big rock video." The guitarist lets fly with a bemused giggle. "Isn't that goofy?" ■