



★ 1/2

SOUP

Blind Melon

Capitol

EVER NOTICE THAT SHANNON Hoon sings like Jon Anderson of Yes at his most mewling? In a few years, Hoon's band, Blind Melon, will be about as relevant as Anderson's, too. But there's a difference between Blind Melon and the empty riffs and cosmic slop of Yes. On *Soup*, the follow-up to the band's eponymous multiplatinum debut, Blind Melon don't have any riffs.

Well, there is a drunken brass band at the CD's beginning and end, and the guitars occasionally give up dabs of moldy '60s decoration like phase shifting. But in service of what? The blissful vibe of hippie positivity that colored "No Rain" is replaced here by disarray. At best, the sketchy songs float by in a surreal swirl of chords ("Galaxie"). At worst, they fall into a mellow, folk-rocking rut ("St. Andrew's Fall"). Whether Blind Melon are worshiping the Dead on the semiacoustic stroll "Walk" or employing strings, banjo and Hoon's voice in pursuit of a Middle Eastern melody on "Car Seat (God's Presents)," nothing they do coheres.

The main trouble with *Soup* lies with the lyrics. On "2x4," Hoon sings that he's talking to himself more. Maybe that's why his stream-of-consciousness writing on *Soup* is incomprehensible. Provocative images like Hoon looking Jesus Christ in the eye in "St. Andrew's Fall" are thrown about but never developed. Without the weight of narrative or some emotional resonance, there's no glue to keep random phrases and hyperbole like "I'm not at home in the galaxy" from becoming disconnected space flotsam. Better-crafted vocal

melodies would help, yet Hoon's phrasing — especially his habit of pushing high notes to an out-of-his-range yowl — hardly varies from song to song.

With such slight fare to offer — and no kid in a bee suit — *Soup* puts Blind Melon in hot water. — TED DROZDOWSKI