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It all has to do with emotion, communication, and the heart.

Every one of our lives are touched by the same things—love, hate, pain, fear, courage, beauty, hope, failure, dreams fulfilled and dreams fallen still and dead. Plus some other assorted attractions like fast cars, sex, the seductively limitless depths of a lover's eyes, and death. It's a complex world.

Those who are driven to communicate with the rest of humanity look upon this vale of tears and do their best to pass along their observations. Some emotions, and some moments, are so sharp and vital that the only way to make sense of them is to bring it right up in peoples faces. Music is the key to that. Bang, there it is, right up against the gaddamn mike and into those fuckers' ears! Slam that jam, Sam. Fake with your acoustic and knock 'em on their asses with the electric. Nothing up my sleeve, but watch out for the rocket in my pocket.

Even if you're a lyric-slinging poet, a main attraction with megaaction, and people are lining up around the block to drop their dollar and hear you holler, if your soul is really on fire and the flames keep climbing, you've got to find another way to get those emotions and that pain and love and all that out into the light. So you get tattooed.

Tattoos are the billboard of the soul, the scoreboard of the heart. It's your life right there on your hide, for everybody to see, and in a lot of ways, a patch of tattooed skin is about as nude as a human can get. Wearing your heart on your sleeve is a joke when you can just go ahead and wear your heart on your goddamn arm.

Music and tattoos are as natural together as the sea and sand.

Each one feeds the other, compliments the other, amplifies the other. It's a beautiful thing, and we can't get enough of it.

Sex, Tattoos and Rock 'N' Roll is, we think, a great contribution to the natural union of musicians and tattooing. Two of the world's most expressive art mediums together, in one place, at last.

—Chris Pfouts & Jef Hickey















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By Jef Hickey Photos by Eric Stickler

Picture yourself on a warm summer afternoon, hanging out with your friends on a wide open field. Above is the crystal blue sky, underfoot is a healthy pastel green grass. There is plenty of food and the drink flows freely. Laughter fills the air. There's not even a hint of negativity—just lots of love and companionship. All you would need to complete this beautiful day are righteous tunes. But who would compose the soundtrack for this wonderful scenario? Blind Melon would, my friend.

Even though Blind Melon is on the cusp of stardom and there are no signs of tapering off, Shannon Hoon, vocalist and master of friendly smiles, is as humble as can be when talking about life, his music, and his tattoos—humble but guarded. "I got these tattoos during different phases of my life," he said. "They have more meaning for me than I can tell you. You would get a diluted version. It's more inside than outside.

"My family split up when I was seventeen," Hoon said. "Before, we were what I thought was a strong unit as a family. I then had to become accustomed to not having that. I got a tattoo after four or five years of having to go to Christmas dinners just to be with my immediate family. We all got together for Christmas, so I had to mark that occasion."

The artists who have helped Shannon and the rest of Blind Melon memorialize events that have shaped and molded the young lads include Rockwood Rick from Sunset Tattoo, Rick at Purple Panther and their homeboy from Lafayette, Indiana, Dave Sucer. Dave is currently working on Shannon's not-yet-ready-for-prime-time-viewing back piece—a school of fish. Hoon also longs for a piece called "The Healer," after a painting by Betty LeDuke.

No matter how depressing the condition of the world or how bad the newspaper news, Blind Melon tries to live always in summer days under clear skies. They strive for carefree, unconditional love with the tolerance of individuality, both in the music they play and in the day-to-day living that inspires art and song. Happy days are here again.

Peace.

