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No Rain on Stage The Return of Blind Melon



Above: Brad Smith, Travis Warren, Rogers Stevens and Glen Graham on stage at Slowdown bar in Omaha, Neb., on March 22, 2008. Below: A Blind Melon *Classic Masters* CD signed by Glen Graham, Brad Smith, Travis Warren, Rogers Stevens and Christopher Thorn.



By Robert Moore

OMAHA WAS UNDER THE SPELL OF NCAA March Madness, but there was another madness developing in town on March 22 at the Slowdown rock club and bar, where the popular '90s rock band Blind Melon was performing to an eager packed house. It's been more than 12 years since Blind Melon has performed together on the same stage and Omaha was about to get a taste of the newly revived group.

Blind Melon rocketed to prominence in 1993 with their smash hit song "No Rain," an MTV and rock radio staple that led the band to international fame. With newfound recognition and accolades, the band landed on the cover of November 1993's *Rolling Stone* and opened shows for Neil Young, Soundgarden and the Rolling Stones throughout 1993 and 1994.

Blind Melon's media interest dipped after their second release, but they still moved respectable amounts of CDs and played to packed crowds of feverish fans.

Then tragedy struck. Twenty-eight-year-old lead singer and front man Shannon Hoon passed away on October 21, 1995 from an accidental drug overdose while the band was touring in New Orleans to promote its latest album, *Soup*. In late 1996 Blind Melon released its final album featuring Hoon, *Nico*, and broke up.

After more than a decade of performing solo or in various other acts, the four remaining members reunited with new lead singer, Travis Warren. Their new album, *For My Friends* was released on April 22, 2008 and the reunited group embarked on a nationwide tour on February 28.

Fans and autograph collectors were very excited to have Blind Melon in Omaha for a show. Former members of Blind Melon have visited Omaha before, but this is the first time since 1993 that they have graced the stage together to perform as Blind Melon.

The show brought back the same energy the band had when they first brought their sound to the music scene. They performed songs from their new release, old hits and a word-for-word sing along of "No Rain" toward the end of the evening. The band seemed happy to be there per-

Brad Smith, Christopher Thorn, Travis Warren and Glen Graham in concert. Inset: A 3x5 index card signed by the entire band—Glen Graham, Brad Smith, Travis Warren, Rogers Stevens and Christopher Thorn.



*The show brought back the same energy
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their sound to the music scene*

forming, and all the smiling faces exiting the club suggested the fans felt the same way.

After the show fans waited behind the spacious venue for the band to come out. Bassist Brad Smith was the first member to appear, about half an hour later, and happily talked with fans and signed autographs. I spoke with Smith about his time with the group Unified Theory and the making of his solo album *Mercy*. He signed a *Classic Masters: Blind Melon* CD, an *Abandon Jalopy Mercy* CD and a 3x5 index card for me. He told me that it was nice to see the *Mercy* CD that I had brought and said that he was having a great time so far on the tour. Smith

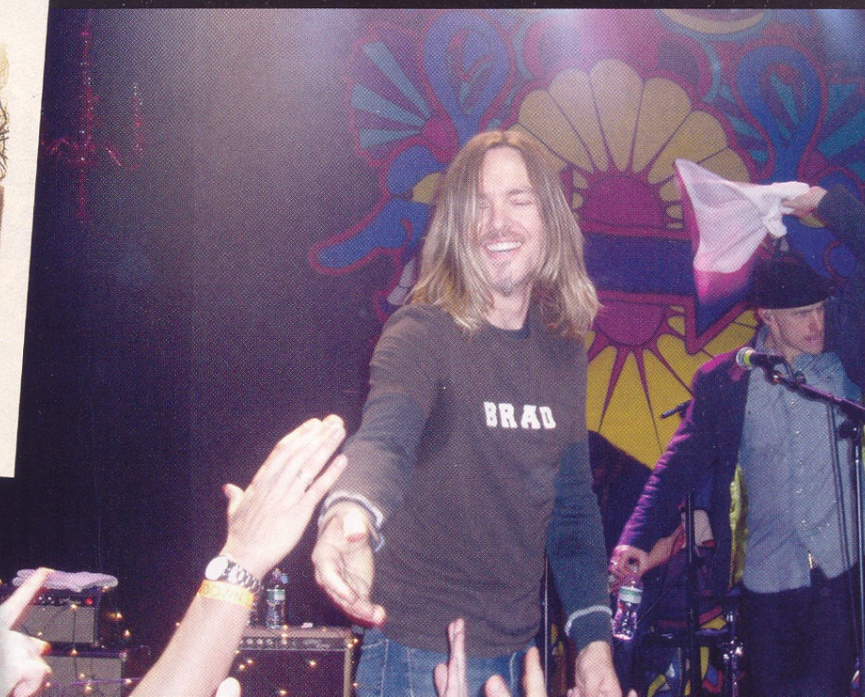
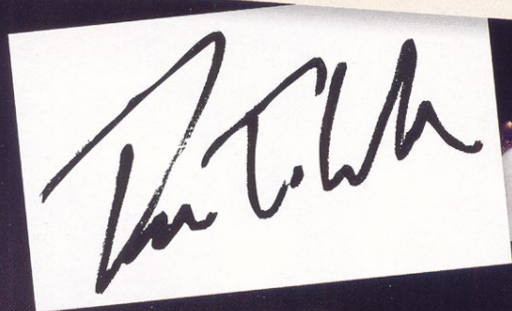
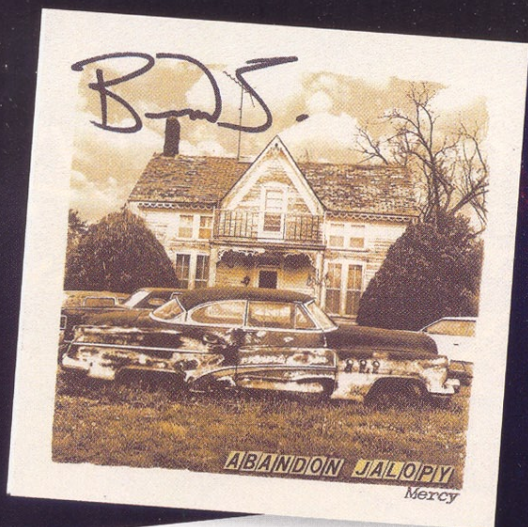
graciously signed anything put in front of him and made sure everyone had a chance to interact with him.

Guitarist Rogers Stevens was the next Melon to appear and was every bit as nice as Smith. Stevens is a tall, soft-spoken man who seems a bit shy, but his shyness didn't stop him from meeting and greeting the fans braving the chilly March night. He spent a long time talking to fans that had driven from Hoon's home town of Lafayette, Indiana, to catch a few shows in the Midwest. He seemed shocked and thrilled that they would spend so much time and effort to see the band perform.

Guitarist Christopher Thorn was next

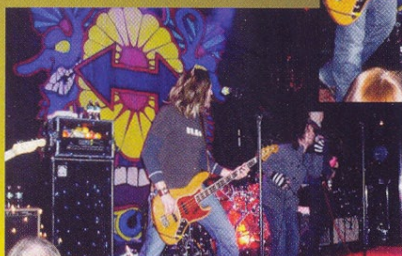
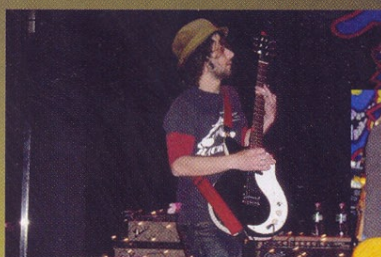
to exit and did not disappoint. He went out of his way to make sure everyone got an autograph or picture. He looked like he hadn't aged a day since Blind Melon's peak of fame. As each band member came out, I could sense the fans' excitement and joy. Everyone was chatting about their favorite songs they heard that night and how great the experience was to interact with the group.

Smith mentioned while he was signing that the new singer, Travis Warren, was already in bed and probably asleep. A short time later a familiar face stuck his head out of the tour bus window, waved and smiled. Travis! He quickly began to take items on board to sign and



Blind Melon lived up to their reputation as being a carefree fun and happy band not only on stage but also when it comes to interacting with fans and collectors

Clockwise from top left: Brad Smith signed his 2002 solo album *Abandon Jalopy Mercy* CD; Bassist Brad Smith reaches out to a fan; Blind Melon in concert; A signed 3x5 index card by new Blind Melon singer Travis Warren.



agreed to come out for photos. Overwhelmed and humbled by all the attention, he told the crowd that he was happy to be a part of the group and that he always admired and looked up to Shannon Hoon's talent. Warren courteously signed all my items and a 3x5 index card.

The crowd was thinning out, but I was determined to

wait until drummer Glen Graham came out. After about an hour passed, I entered the club to see if I could find him. Sure enough, he was standing next to the bar surrounded

by fans, drinking and talking with them like long-lost friends. I waited till he paused and asked if he had a second to sign a few things. He was very pleasant and took his time to speak with me for a few moments about the tour and signed everything. He said he had a wonderful time that night and thanked me for asking for his autograph.

I walked out the door very satisfied with the show and autograph experience. Blind Melon lived up to their reputation as a care-free, fun and happy band, on stage and with fans and collectors. **A**

ROBERT MOORE is a freelance marketing consultant who has been collecting sports, music, politics, history and military autographs for more than 15 years.