

All pix Ross Halfin

"I can't actually
remember
making
this record!"

SHANNON
HOON

WHO THE HELL IS SHANNON HOON?!

BORN: Yes!

PREVIOUS BANDS: None of note – but Shannon guested on Guns N' Roses' 'Don't Cry' single and video.

BLIND MELON FORMED: Los Angeles, 1990.

BLIND MELON ALBUM DISCOGRAPHY: 'Blind Melon' (1992), 'Soup' (1995).

KURRENTLY: Warming up to play the Reading Festival on August 27.

THE KERRANG! INTERVIEW

SOUP-ER UNKNOWN!

What the devil is BLIND MELON's new LP 'Soup' all about? Have America's trippiest band taken too many drugs this time around? Why have they written songs about murder, serial killers and suicide? STEVE BEEBEE quizzes frontman SHANNON HOON!

THE CAPITOL Records Tower on North Vine Street, Los Angeles, is an imposing structure if you happen to be a new band seeking a deal. Right now, a hopeful R'n'B act is arguing with security in the lobby. They want to go to the A&R department with their demo, but as the perspiring guard vigorously informs them, you don't go nowhere without a pass.

On the top floor, Blind Melon are posing for photographs. After suffering nervous exhaustion on their last tour, the band are back in good shape and feeling good about the future. Their new album, 'Soup', is an eclectic, progressive set of songs which could take them to an even higher level than their multi-million selling, self-titled debut. A much heavier outing, 'Soup' is a concoction of clever songwriting and a myriad of influences.

Diminutive frontman Shannon Hoon is an easy going, talkative fellow who squirms uncontrollably in his seat. Before too long, he is precariously balanced with his feet up against the wall and his head dipping towards the carpet. He is, however, as honest and enthusiastic a character as you could

wish to meet.

This time around there's a lot to talk about. So let's get started.

Kerrang! Blind Melon are seen as a 'feelgood' band, so what do you make of the 'culture of despair' tag that's given to most '90s bands?

Shannon Hoon: "Actually, I believe it has a scarring effect on young people. I think Nine Inch Nails are brilliant, but unfortunately, young people often base their lives around the music they listen to. It's like letting MTV brainwash you. You have to realise it's an individual's frustration that causes these artists to write in the way they do - they're not saying 'copy me, be like me', but kids like to have role models. I use music to heal myself."

K! Trent Reznor would probably say the same thing!

Shannon: "Exactly. It's just that I deal with things differently. I'm capable of seeing the ironic or comic side of most things. Anyone between the age of 21-35 has grown up in a pretty shitty world and, sadly, kids in their teens are faced with the depressing music of their elders. I don't want to instill that kind of torture into my child's life. That 'tortured artist' shit really irks me."

K! Has this attitude affected your long friendship with Axl Rose?

Shannon: "I dunno. He's become a recluse. I'm still friends with him, but at the same time he's become a more

difficult person to communicate with. It's difficult... he's so unpredictable.

"Axl was the guy who introduced us to the people that now manage us, because he didn't want us to get screwed over. We're fortunate enough to have management that honestly care about us as people, and that's really priceless. We were just wide-eyed smalltown kids, so Axl really helped. He had his own ways of dealing with his problems, but I'm not sure they were the right ways."

K! Coming back to this so-called age of the 'tortured artists', do you think 1995 is a good time to be in a band?

Shannon: "Oh, sure. There's a lot of authentic bands out there. I think it's an exciting time to be in a band. But the '80s, man... they killed. Bon Jovi and Motley Crue corrupted people and led the youth astray!"

"At 15 years old I listened to the Crue and thought they were the

coolest. Then I suddenly realised that nothing they had to say had any relevance to reality. It took the '80s to make the '90s to pay attention. Right now I'm listening to Foo Fighters, who are great. It's not just entertaining, it's therapeutic also!"

K! Don't you even admire the longevity of a band like Bon Jovi?

Shannon (laughing): "Well, I care about the longevity of Joe Cocker and of Neil Young, but I really can't say that I care about the longevity of Bon Jovi! When a band has been around so long and still doesn't have a clue about reality, how can you possibly admire them?"

"Don't look at me like that, man!"

Only this morning I saw an advertisement board for the new Bon Jovi album outside Tower Records on Sunset, and Jon's head is about as big as a f**kin' car! That sucks!"

K! Changing the subject, would you agree that 'Soup' is a tough album to get into?

Shannon: "Yeah, but that's what I like most about it. We're fortunate to have five band members who all contribute equally as songwriters - that leads to some pretty diverse material. Our drummer Glen Graham, for example, wrote all the music to 'Car Seat', which is my favourite song on the album. It'd be terrible to be in a band where one guy does all the work and the rest are just like hired hands."

"Recording in New Orleans was an incredible experience. It's far >

"That 'tortured artist' shit really irks me!"

SHANNON
HOON



SOUP-ER UNKNOWN!

more eccentric than LA. Drugs are no less illegal than they are everywhere else, but they are more readily available anyway. It led to some erratic behaviour on our part. There was so much going on that it alleviated any pressure we might have felt. I sit and think of New Orleans, and I can't actually remember making this record!"

K!: Is it fair to say that Blind Melon wouldn't have been capable of making an album like 'Soup' three years ago?

Shannon: "I think that's a pretty safe bet. There's no way we could have made this record before now. It was the information overload we experienced together on tour that led to our having the intensity to create this record."

"Three years ago, we were too young to really know what direction we wanted to pursue. We were still getting to know each other as people, and this record is a confirmation of how our friendship has grown. We've come to terms with how to use the friction in the band in a productive manner. You don't have to be getting along like best buddies to write a great song."

K!: Some bands, like Faith No More, have lost key members through not getting along...

Shannon: "It's too easy to just walk away. We enjoy our working relationship, including the little bits of friction we experience. After a long tour, though, it's very important to get away from each other for a few months. At times when we're not involved in being creative, the presence of one another can be intolerable!"

K!: There are some interesting though quite disturbing lyrics on the album. 'St Andrew Fall' is about a suicide, and 'Skinned' is about serial killer Ed Gein. What's the story behind 'Car Seat'?

Shannon: "There's a story that's very big in the news right now about a woman who drowned her two kids in the back seat of her car, so she could go live with a new man. I believe that children are God's gift, so I think this is a story everyone should hear."

"Parents killing their children, supposedly in the name of love, is incomprehensible to me. The case stirred up a lot of ill feeling, particularly as she initially claimed her kids were taken by two black guys. There was a racist element to it as well."

"Motley Crue corrupted people and led the youth astray!"

SHANNON
HOON

"'Skinned', though, is a happy, skippy kinda song which my Mom loves. This guy, Ed Gein, used to make full-bodied suits from women's skin, which he'd dance around in. He'd also make lampshades and coffee tables from their remains."

K!: The same thing happened to Jewish prisoners at concentration camps like Buchenwald during World War Two. Is it really a suitable subject for humour?

Shannon: "Well, obviously I don't condone this sort of behaviour. It's disgusting, but the world creates these subjects and I'm just reporting on them."

"It's just stuff that fascinates me, even though it horrifies me at the same time. How do you explain the core of evil that makes people, or even a race of people, wish to perpetrate such acts of barbarism? It's just tongue in cheek. There are two sides to the same coin, and you can't take 'Skinned' too seriously. After all, it even features a kazoo solo!"

K!: One of those plastic things you get in Christmas crackers?

Shannon (laughing): "Yeah, they're great. You don't need to have any talent to play one!"

K!: Okay. Let's move on to the last time you played live. Looking back on your appearance at Woodstock '94, would you agree that the spirit of the original festival was lost?

Shannon: "Yeah, it was a travesty. The thing I liked about Glastonbury was that there was far less emphasis on corporate backing. In America, you can't put on a big show without a million lawyers firing lawsuits about. This year, however, we'll be playing Reading, which will be a different atmosphere altogether."

"The reason the first Woodstock was such a success was because it was so disorganised, and came together naturally. This time, Woodstock was so organised that it ended up kinda chaotic. Any community spirit was suppressed by organisation. But I do have fond memories of that gig. Seeing Joe Cocker was amazing. When it was our turn to play, I was still on a complete high."

K!: How close were the band to cracking up at the end of that arduous, two-year-long tour?

Shannon: "Too close for comfort. Everything will be more staggered this time around. With the first album, we had no way of gauging how successful it was going to be. We used to stir up internal band warfare just for something to do. You get so numb that you have to throw shit in your soup just to make it taste different. It was self-sabotage. We had to get off tour after Glastonbury because we were all getting sick and we were insulting the intelligence of our fans."

"In retrospect, I think the reason I enjoyed (last year's) Glastonbury Festival so much was because we knew it would be our last show for a while. The tour had come to a natural end, and fortunately our management understood. Friction had just boiled over. Now of course, I am once again overwhelmed with undying love for my bandmates!" ■

● Blind Melon's new LP, 'Soup', is out this week. The band play the Reading Festival on Sunday, August 27.

BLIND MELON:
obviously
disturbed

YOU WOT?!

SHANNON HOON shoots his mouth off!

"We all enjoy the band and what we're doing, but we know this isn't gonna last forever..." *Kerrang!* 467, October 1993.

"If some Bee Girl goes dancing down some mall promoting Blind Melon, I hope our fans wouldn't think it was our idea!" *Kerrang!* 467, October 1993.

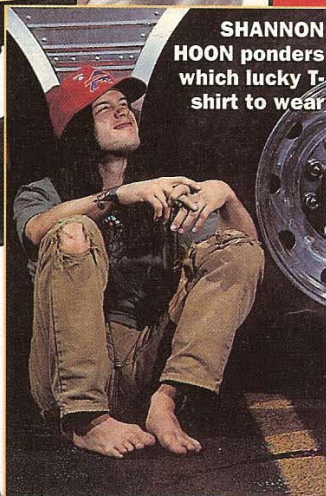
"Life isn't a tiptoe through the tulips..." *Kerrang!* 467, October 1993.

"Drugs have made adapting to everyday life a real bitch for me..." *Kerrang!* 502, July 1994.

"I've been wearing the same T-shirts for five years. I'm very superstitious about certain clothes!" *Kerrang!* 502, July 1994

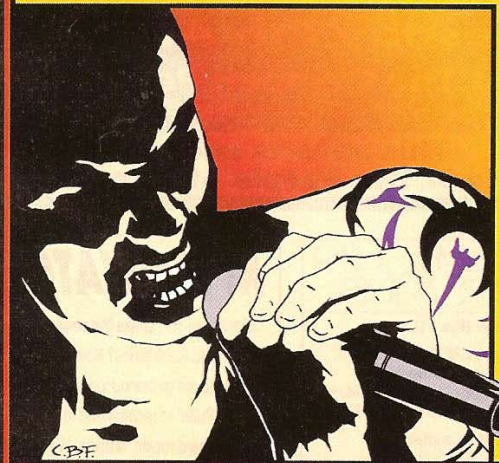
"I hate the word 'hippy'. I hate a lot of people, and hippies don't do that!" *Kerrang!* 502, July 1994

SHANNON HOON ponders which lucky T-shirt to wear



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