

Blind Melon sees success with 'No Rain'

By Rob Clark

THE BATTALION

It's hard to define a rock group's success by a girl dancing in a bumblebee suit.

But for Blind Melon, success has come in strange ways.

After releasing their self-titled debut album in 1992, Blind Melon finally struck platinum this September with their hit single "No Rain."

Guitarist Christopher Thorn said, "We were just glad it happened at all. We were prepared to be finished and to go make a second record but the whole thing kind of took off with the 'No Rain' video."

MTV featured "No Rain" in their "Buzz Bin," and it became one of the channel's most popular videos, featuring the now-famous bee girl whirling in the fields.

Most bands need exposure on MTV to gain success, whether they like it or not.

"MTV is just so powerful, you have to have them if you want to continue to sell records for a living, and not have a day job. And I sure as hell don't want a day job," Thorn said.

The Southern, small-town sound of Blind Melon can be an unpredictable one. The light, easy style of "No Rain" and "Sleepyhouse" can be quickly transformed into the harder sound of "Seed to a Tree," and "Tones of Home." Shannon Hoon's piercing vocals and frantic delivery are especially effective during live performances.

The band has been on tour with Neil Young and is now opening for Lenny Kravitz.



Band members (l-r) Shannon Hoon, Brad Smith, Christopher Thorn, Glen Graham and Rogers Stevens are eager to cut a new album after the success of their self-titled release, 'Blind Melon.' The band is currently touring with Lenny Kravitz.

But Thorn said touring can take its toll on a band.

"You forget where you are, you forget what day it is," he said. "The only thing you really have to look forward to is playing that show. That 45 minutes you get per night to exert all the

energy you have — all the pent up frustration from being on a bus for 10 hours a night."

But the band's travels do provide some unusual moments, Thorn said.

"It's really interesting when we go to different countries and

try to order a turkey sandwich in Germany and they bring out something that you know is not anywhere near turkey, and it looks like somebody's intestines," he said.

After seeing their album near the top of the charts, Thorn said

it hasn't really sunk in yet.

"It's weird, it doesn't look real," he said. "It looks like somebody just wrote our name in for us. It's hard to digest it and get a grip on it. I don't know what the hell happened. I feel extremely fortunate."

Drummer Glen Graham sarcastically denied any knowledge of success at all.

"Contrary to popular belief," he said, "Blind Melon has no success whatsoever."

Lead guitarist Rogers Stevens said, "This is nice, but we don't really expect it to last. It's a here-today, gone-tomorrow type world."

Band members said they expect to tour for a while, but they are eager to start on a second album.

The focus of the group seems to be intact, even with all the hype surrounding them.

"Finding the humor in a lot of this is what you have to do," Hoon said. "You let your music be sacred, you let your relationship with your friends and your family be what is important. The rest of this is all amusing and you have to find the humor in it or you have no business doing it."

After opening up for Kravitz in Houston Sunday night, Hoon was signing autographs backstage for several people. Two young children peeked in below the outside barriers and put their arms through the small space, trying desperately to get Hoon to autograph their concert T-shirt. When Hoon saw this, he smiled and said, "I gotta do this," and bent down to talk to the kids, and sign their shirts.

Thorn said despite the different personalities in the band, it all works somehow.

He said, "All I can say is there's five of us and we all write songs, and we all have our influences that we're bringing into the band, and we're trying to pull the songs certain ways and what ends up is just Blind Melon."

Video contest seeks Generation X perspectives

By Margaret Claughton

THE BATTALION

Attention aspiring filmmakers of Generation X! Blackboard Entertainment has launched the second annual America's College Video Competition.

One hundred college campuses nationwide have been chosen to participate in this year's college camcorder competition. The contest, co-sponsored by Videomaker Magazine and Birkenstock Shoes, urges students to define the issues of their generation in video.

"X'ers are ready to stand up and be counted," said Aaron Barnes, co-director of the competition. "Our ultimate goal is to provide a fo-

rum for the variety of ideas and perspectives fostered by X'ers in the college environment while, at the same time, encouraging young talent in the filmmaking business that has been historically difficult to break into."

The competition targets both graduate and undergraduate students, and entrants can be of any major. There are no formal categories to the competition. Students are encouraged to express their views of the issues facing their generation using drama, music, comedy and sociopolitical commentary.

"We are asking students to create short videos that can be funny and creative, they don't need to be completely dry or serious," Barnes said.

The immense budget costs for student film-

making discourages students' creativity. Blackboard's goal is for students to have the opportunity to express their creative ideas and views.

"We hope that students get a sense that they can have a say in the issues said to shape their generation," Barnes said. "We want them to have a larger voice in the baby boomer dominated mass media."

The grand prize winner of the contest will receive an internship for academic credit with MTV News in New York City and \$1000. Second and third place winners will receive cash awards and the first 25 entrants will receive a free pair of Birkenstock shoes.

James Bai of Columbia University created

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Deborah Dickson/Special to THE BATTALION

MUSIC REVIEWS

Anger and angst...

Pearl Jam's new release is dark, pessimistic

By Sean Frerking

THE BATTALION

"Vs." Pearl Jam Alternative Rock Epic/Sony

Desolate fury.

That's what screams through Pearl Jam's 12-track sophomore release, "Vs."

Eddie Vedder's voice has effectively intensified from a rough baritone on the group's debut, "10" into a violent, almost malevolent rasp. While the rest of the band skillfully enhances the current release's sobering and pessimistic tone.

Continuing its gruff and critical assault on American society, Pearl Jam branches into new musical areas of grunge rock. Jeff Ament's clear, throbbing bass lines crisply complement Stone Gossard's experimental guitar riffs. Both musicians play prominent roles on "Vs.," further strengthening Pearl Jam's place as one of the premier rock bands of the 90s.

In "W.M.A.," a haunting dirge dedicated to

a Detroit black man who died violently at the hands of two white police officers, Ament's bass beats out a tribal backdrop, while Gossard teases with a tight, dissonant guitar.

The band takes a playful, pop direction with "Glorified G," but Vedder's clawing lyrics on America's gun culture collide with the less-than-serious musical approach, producing an angst-filled cut.

Pearl Jam also seizes the opportunity to play acoustically, emphasizing Vedder's harsh poetry on three of the release's cuts. These songs reflect the more familiar ballad style of the previous album's "Black" and "Jeremy," while bringing out the release's jaded sentiments.

Through all of this musical meandering, Vedder's desperately hoarse screams anchor Pearl Jam's message of alienation and paranoid rage. "Vs." delves and dives into the dark, depressing elements of Vedder's disillusioned perception of American reality.

Pearl Jam masterfully fulfills Vedder's vision, producing a tremendous release of anxious anger.



'Counterparts' a dream come true for Rush junkies

By Mike Morris

Special to THE BATTALION

"Counterparts" Rush Rock Atlantic Records

After many weeks of listening to the hype and hoopla that preceded the release of Rush's new album, "Counterparts," you may be wondering "was it worth it?" Was it worth waiting in line until nearly 1:30 a.m. to get it?

Hell yes!

"Counterparts" is a masterful mix of both old and new. The old is the producer, Peter Collins. Rush fans might recognize him as the co-producer on "Power Windows" and "Hold Your Fire."

Part of the new is the recording engineer, Kevin "Caveman" Shirley. Shirley was responsible for capturing the instruments in a raw direct fashion.

Also new to the recording team is Michael Letho, the engineer that completed the final mixing. Letho combined Caveman's rawness, the band's musical talent, and a little spit and polish, to get the best Rush album in years. Gone are the multiple keyboards and other electric gadgets. What is left behind is what made Rush famous — pure guitar, bass and drums.

The "pop"

sound is the only thing lost on this album. "Counterparts" shows that Rush is still the most intelligent band in rock-n-roll.

Rush's lyricist and drummer Neil Peart describes "Counterparts" theme as "reflections in a wilderness of mirrors. Not reflections in the conventional sense of looking back, but more of holding a mirror up to our hidden selves, to human nature and its doing in this world, and to the tragedies and inspirations of everyday life."

This theme winds and twists its way through the drumbeats and guitar riffs, putting "Counterparts" on an intellectual scale of its own.

The first track on the album, "Animate," is about a man exploring his female side, the "sister in my soul." The song's message is that in order to be a whole person, a man must understand his entire being.

The rocking tune that has been receiving tremendous radio airplay, "Stick It Out," tells us not to quit. This tune's drum intro is reminiscent of Living Colour's "Vivid" album, but it has Rush written all over it. It's the kind of song that you can piss off your neighbors with. God knows I did.

A homosexual allowing his friends to be a "straight minority" while introducing

them to a "expanded reality" is one of the subjects of "Nobody's Hero." This song is about true heroes, and shows off Neil Peart's songwriting

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