

MELONCHOLY

Hoon found dead on tour bus

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — After a decade of drug use and runs with the law, Blind Melon singer Shannon Hoon decided to clean up his act, curb his temper and be a good father to his infant daughter.

He also anticipated a creative departure from the breezy, alternative-pop image his band had built up since its self-titled debut album in 1992.

Hoon, 28, never fully realized either goal. He died in his sleep Saturday on a tour bus in New Orleans. The cause of death was not immediately known, and the coroner would say only that autopsy results were expected today.

Blind Melon was to play at the famed Tipitina's music club, where a wreath hung on the door in Hoon's honor.

"He would have electrified this crowd," Josh Stevens, father of guitarist Roger Stevens, said as he surveyed the audience.

Hoon's grieving bandmates gathered at drummer Glen Graham's house in New Orleans, "remembering the good things about Shannon. ... They're like a family," Josh Stevens said.

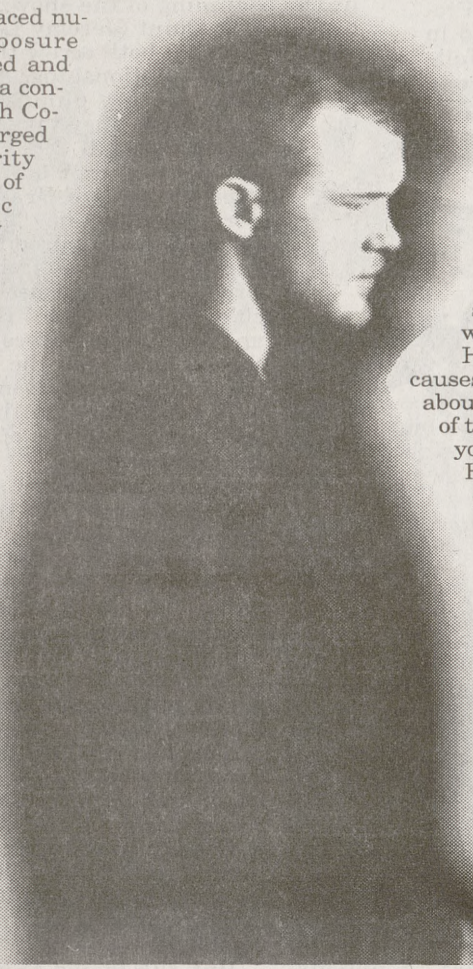
Born in Lafayette, Ind., Richard Shannon Hoon was a varsity athlete in high school. At 17, he moved to Los Angeles, met his future bandmates and began dabbling in drugs and alcohol.

In October 1993, he faced nudity and indecent exposure charges after he stripped and urinated during onstage a concert in Vancouver, British Columbia. He was also charged with attacking a security guard during the taping of the American Music Awards in February 1994.

"I am hotheaded sometimes," Hoon told the Detroit Free Press in a March 1994 interview. "I'm not the peace-loving guy that everybody thinks I am. I've got a lot of bad elements inside me. I'm trying to control them."

Learning his girlfriend of 10 years was pregnant was a turning point for Hoon.

"This is all fun and youth-prolonging, but I'm going to be a father, and it's hard to be when you're away," he told The Associated Press last month. "I need to start caring for myself if I'm going to be the proper father."



Interview gives insight into artist's effect

As I mindlessly flipped through the television channels Sunday at 3 a.m., trying to stay awake for some unknown reason, I stopped on Headline News. On the screen was file footage of Shannon Hoon and Blind Melon performing at Woodstock '94.

Having followed the band since its self-titled debut album in 1992, I stopped, shook off the sleep and listened. What I heard was certainly not what I expected. Hoon died Saturday of unknown causes. As the newscaster rambled about the death, I recalled the events of two years ago, when I, as a young, naive reporter, traveled to Houston to interview Blind Melon on its tour with Lenny Kravitz.

This was a band on the rise, the head bees in the Buzz Bin. The cover of Rolling Stone was only a week away. Two Grammy nominations were on the way. The band's debut album was in the Top 10, and the sky was the limit.

Taking the band from relative obscurity to the top of the charts was "No Rain," a sunny tune complete with a disgustingly cute Bee Girl video that MTV ran into the ground.

But what I found on October 17, 1993 was not a band intimidated by success, nor a band turning its success

into a pretentious lounge act. Instead, the band members were just happy to be there and enjoying the chance to play for so many people.

As I approached Hoon for the interview backstage, he seemed comfortable, cocky and overwhelmed, all at the same time. With his long hair braided neatly, wearing a simple T-shirt, jeans and no shoes, Hoon looked like he was about 15 years old.

Not exactly a rock god. Still, the legions of groupies swooned for Hoon, creating a scene more similar to a Poison video than an interview. He seemed to enjoy the attention — girls hanging all over a guy can do that.

But at the same time, Hoon tried to put a responsible perspective on screaming fans, over-exposure on MTV and a platinum album.

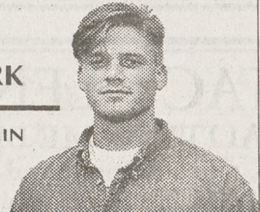
"Finding the humor in all of this is what you have to do," he said. "You let your music be sacred, you let your relationships with your friends and family be what's important. The rest of this — it's all amusing."

Ironically, the most profound statement made that night came from Roger Stevens, the band's lead guitarist.

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

In retrospect, Stevens' comments seem almost prophetic.

ROB CLARK
EDITOR IN CHIEF



Hoon will never be considered among the fallen legends of rock — Hendrix, Morrison, Joplin, Lennon and Cobain — but that is beside the point.

What I keep remembering is the first time I saw the band, in a small club in Nashville, before "No Rain" even came out. The crowd was electrified, without the help of MTV.

Watching the progression from the club show to seeing the band open for Kravitz in '93 and Smashing Pumpkins in '94 allowed me to feel like I was witnessing something strong growing even stronger.

And even though the band's follow-up album, *Soup*, was blasted by music critics (including this one), it just can't take away from the raw talent and power I saw in those three concerts and in my few hours of interviews with the band members.

Hoon's death won't prompt special memorial issues of Rolling Stone or Spin, and MTV won't go on 98-hour Shannon Hoonathons as it did with Kurt Cobain. But even the thought of comparing tragedies is ridiculous and disrespectful.

Hoon's short career prevented him from leaving a large legacy. But he did make a mark on those who appreciated his music, and that is more than most ever leave.

Rob Clark is a senior journalism major

'The unicycle guy'

Student makes routine traveling across campus into an every-day challenge

By Amy Protas
THE BATTALION

It is not hard to spot Mark Drew on campus. He does not walk, ride a bike or roller blade to class. Instead, he chooses an untraditional mode of transportation — the unicycle.

Drew, a sophomore physics major, said when he arrived at A&M, he knew his unicycle would single him out of the crowd.

"I always planned on riding it to class for convenience and to be different," Drew said. "Everyone walked and rode bikes around campus, and I thought this would be my distinction."

Drew bought his unicycle on a whim in high school. He said unicycle riding has always intrigued him, so he decided to teach himself to ride.

Being known as "the unicycle guy" doesn't bother Drew. He said when people approach him, he tries to talk them into giving the cycle a try.

"I get a wide variety of looks," Drew said. "Some people look like, 'look at that idiot' or 'hey that's cool.' When

people ask me where is the other half of my bicycle, I say I couldn't afford the rest of it."

Drew said despite the skepticism, people should try unicycle riding. It's much faster than walking. A bike has to be locked up, but a unicycle can be brought into class.

However, he said people should not assume riding a unicycle is easy. There is a high degree of concentration and balance involved. He has taken many falls misjudging the streets and sidewalks on campus because on a traditional bicycle, a person can only fall to the right or left. On a unicycle, the rider can fall in any direction.

Drew said these differences make people reluctant to ride a unicycle.

"A lot of people could learn to ride the unicycle," Drew said. "It takes a lot of prac-

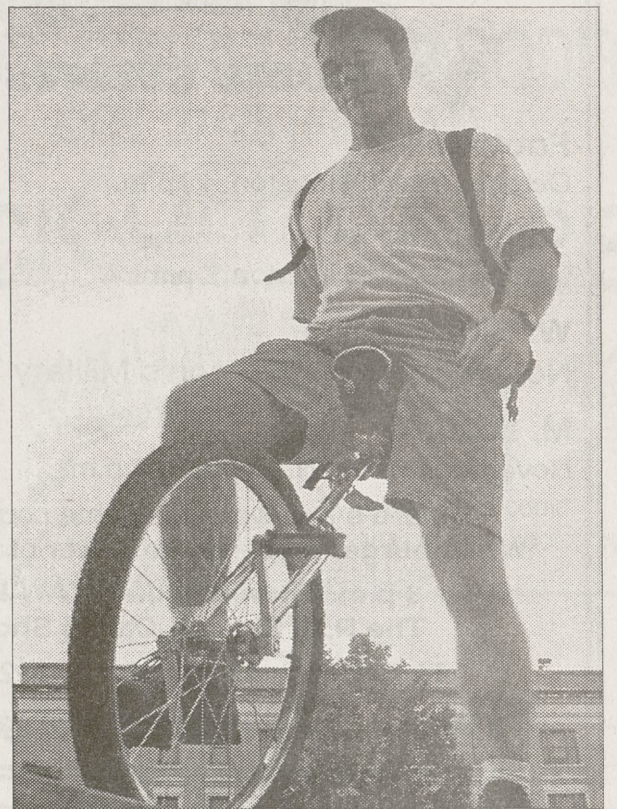
tice, and most people just get too frustrated."

Drew said he has heard of another student on campus who rides a unicycle, but he has never seen him. The idea of a unicycle enthusiasts club appeals to Drew, but he said it probably would not have many members.

"I joke about a unicycle club all the time," Drew said. "It would probably be me and one other person. One of my math professors said he used to ride as a kid. He'd make the perfect adviser. I think it would be fun, but I've never done anything about it."

Drew said the biggest advantage of unicycle riding is the constant challenge.

"I enjoy it because it's so much fun," he said. "It's something you can do, but you have to work at it. I feel like it's a challenge every day."



Mark Drew

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