

Van Morrison: The Music of the Belfast Cowboy: *How rhythm and blues and Celtic mysticism combined to inspire an artist for the ages.*

Course Description:

Van Morrison's amazing career has spanned 60 years, and in that time he has produced 44 albums containing hundreds of his unique original songs. His eclectic career has seen him range from the early R&B influenced days of his Irish band *Them*, to his acclaimed twin masterpieces, *Astral Weeks* and *Moondance*, into the 1970's where he parlayed R&B-based rock into superstardom. Since then, he has had a performing and recording career that has never slowed down. And in that time, Morrison has eloquently displayed the ability to go from one genre to another, yet always staying true to the twin themes of jazzy rhythm and blues and the Celtic folk of his ancestors, with healthy doses of rock and roll, country and pop. In this class we will break down that extraordinary volume of work into periods, chronicling the artists' evolving development as a man and a musician.

Week One: Early life in Belfast: The misfit becomes a rock star. The early 1960's, and the ahead-of-its-time R&B British invasion band THEM

Week Two: America beckons; Bert Berns; a Top 40 hit—and a timeless masterpiece, 1968's *Astral Weeks*; we break down the record in its entirety.

Week Three: Personal challenges; another classic album, 1969's *Moondance*.

Week Four, 1970-1974 : a move to California, fatherhood, divorce, success, critical acclaim and confusion.

Week Five: 1974-1980: The live performer evolves, and the Irish master reclaims his heritage and spreads his wings artistically.

Week Six: The 1980's: a return to the UK, continuing to explore his Celtic and R&B roots; The Chieftains, Blake, Yeats, spirituality and faith.

Week Seven: The 1990's: sobriety, awakening, compilations, greatest hits, a new love, trials and tribulations: knighthood, the maturation of a true artist.

Week Eight: 2000—present. 41 albums, the road goes on forever. In the words of Harlan Howard, *Three Chords and the Truth*. "It's Too Late to Stop Now." But in 2021 he veers off into dangerous territory with his "record project."

Suggested viewing, reading and listening

Videos/Films:

Van Morrison: Under Review 1964-1974 DVD

Live at Montreux 1974/80 DVD/Netflix

The Last Waltz, 1978: “Caravan” with The Band, dir. by Martin Scorsese

The four-part 1991 documentary: “One Irish Rover”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-1z2LPz08M>

Books:

Can You Feel the Silence? Van Morrison, 2004 by Clinton Heylin

Astral Weeks: A Secret History of 1968, 2018, by Ryan Walsh

When That Rough God Goes Riding, 2010, by Greil Marcus

Studio Albums: *(italicized albums strongly recommended)*

Them: 1964

Them Again: 1965

Blowin’ your mind: 1967

Astral Weeks: 1968

Moondance: 1969

His band and street choir: 1970

Tupelo Honey: 1971

Saint Dominic’s preview: 1972

Hard Nose the Highway: 1973

Veedon Fleece: 1974

Into the Music: 1979

No Guru, No Method, No Teacher: 1986

Poetic Champions Compose 1987

Avalon Sunset: 1989

Enlightenment 1990

Hymns to the Silence (1991)

Too Long in Exile (1993)

Days Like This (1995)

The Healing Game 1997

Pay the Devil (2006)

Keep It Simple (2008)

Keep Me Singing (2016)

Roll with the Punches (2017)

Three Chords and The Truth (2019)

Latest Record Project, Volume 1 2021

What's It Gonna Take? 2022
Moving On Skiffle 2023
Accentuate the Positive

Audio/video playlist for each class: videos in bold

Week One (THEM)

Into the Mystic
Gloria
Here comes the night
Baby Please Don't Go
Mystic Eyes
Could you, would you
Route 66
Baby Blue
Something you got
Turn on your Lovelight
I got a woman
Bad or good
Brown-eyed Girl

Bert Berns and Van (3 videos)

"Into the Music"

Week Two (Astral Weeks)

Astral Weeks
Beside You
Sweet Thing
Cyprus Avenue
The Way that Young Lovers Do
Madame George
Ballerina
Slim Slow Slider

Van on songwriting

Week Three (Moondance)

Moondance
Crazy Love
Caravan, from Last Waltz
Come Running
These Dreams of You

Brand new Day
Everyone
Glad Tidings
Just Like a Woman
And it stoned me
Into the Mystic

Week Four

Domino
I been workin'
Call me up in dreamland
Blue Money
Wild Night
Moonshine Whiskey
Tupelo Honey
Jackie Wilson said
St. Dominic's Preview
Almost Independence Day

Week Five

Warm Love
Bulbs
Wavelength
Kingdom Hall
Bright side of the road
And the healing has begun
Cleaning windows
Dweller on the threshold
Vanlose stairway

Week Six

Tore down a la Rimbaud
Sense of wonder
In the garden
One Irish rover
Van and Dylan
Queen of the slipstream
Irish Heartbeat
Star of the county down with the chieftains
Raglan road—with the chieftains--van on drums

Week Seven

Whenever god shines his light, with Cliff Richard 1989

These are the days

Coney Island

Have I told you lately?

Real real gone

Why must I always explain?

Days like This

When the Rough God goes riding

Healing Game

Precious Time

Week Eight

You win again

Celtic New Year

End of the Rainbow

Stranded

Til I Gain Control Again

Out in the cold

Keep me singing

Bring it on Home

March winds in February

Days gone by

Van and John Lee Hooker

And it stoned me