



Van Morrison

Group 2: Joanna Hedstrom, Drew Honson,
Charlie Maahs, David Steinman, and
Andrew Taylor

Overview

- Biography
- Musical Influences
- Musical Style
- Musical Analysis
- Other Music of the Period
- Social & Political Events of the Period
- Influence on others
- Conclusion
- References



Biography

- Born George Ivan (Van) Morrison August 31st 1945 in Belfast, Northern Ireland.
- Grew up in a musical household: mother sang, father was a notorious Jazz and Blues music collector (Heylin, 2003)
- Learned to play the guitar, saxophone, and harmonica while playing with a series of local Irish bands (Van Morrison Biography, n.d. b)
- Toured Europe with the International Monarchs, would disassemble following tour



Biography



- Formed Them (1964-1966) following breakup of the International Monarchs
- While with Them, recorded hits “Baby Please Don’t Go,” “Here Comes the Night,” and “Gloria.”
 - Very popular in the UK during the mid 1960s (Macnie, n.d.)
 - Band disassembled after poor 1966 U.S. tour
- Moved to New York to begin a Solo Career
 - Managed by Them’s producer Bert Burns under Bang Records
- Recorded “Brown Eyed Girl” (1967), reached #10 on US charts

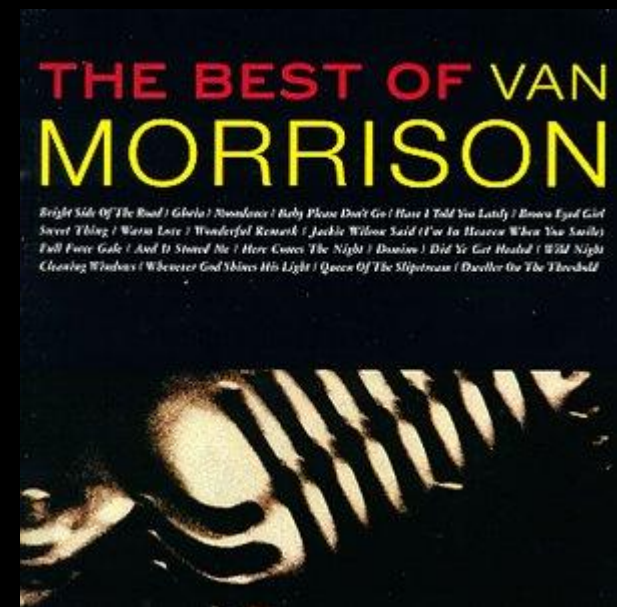
Biography

- Contract bought out by Warner Bros. Records
- Popular album for Warner Bros: Astral Weeks (1968)
 - Noted for its poetic complexity incorporating folk-styled jazz (Sherman, 2010)
 - Voted top Irish album of all time by Irish magazine Hot Press
- Another popular album for Warner Bros: Moondance (1970)
 - Optimistic, cheerful, horn-section R&B bounce that resounded with a mellow attitude (Sherman, 2010)
 - Reached #29 on the Billboard Charts
- During this time, married Janet Planet and relocated to California, have one daughter together
 - Would divorce after next album, Tupelo Honey (1971), and return to Ireland



Biography

- Had a musical hiatus between 1973-1977
- Returned to music, would end up recording 9 albums during the 1970s.
- 1980s: Focused on spirituality and faith in music (Sherman, 2010)
 - Released 8 albums during the 1980s
- 1990s: Reverted back to original musical style and focus (Sherman, 2010)
 - Released 8 albums in the 1990s, starting with very popular The Best of Van Morrison Compilation (1990)
- Inducted into the Rock n' Roll Hall of Fame in 1993



Biography



- Married Michelle Rocca, have two children together
- Owns his own independent label, Exile Productions
- 7 albums released post 2000
- Inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2003
- Continues to write, produce, and perform music throughout Europe and the United States

Musical Influences

Morrison was influenced by MANY different artists and styles of music

- Influenced by **Blues, R&B and Soul** (Shmoop Editorial Team, 2008) (Mills, 2010)
 - Ray Charles
 - Jelly Roll Morton
 - Muddy Waters
 - Lead Belly



Ray Charles



Muddy Waters



Lead Belly



Jelly Roll
Morton

Musical Influences

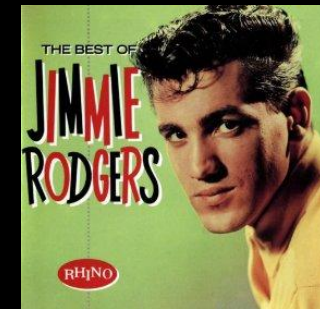
- Influenced by **Folk & Country** (Shmoop Editorial Team, 2008)
 - Woody Guthrie
 - Hank Williams
 - Jimmie Rodgers



Woody Guthrie



Hank Williams



Jimmie Rodgers

Morrison's music was also influenced by various life events and social changes

- Frustration with the music industry's control over artists (They had wrongly been given a tough guy image by their music company)
 - Led Morrison to record four singles, one of which was "Brown Eyed Girl"
- (1967) Producer Bert Berns died of a massive heart attack
 - Freed Morrison of his contractual obligations and allowed him to experiment with new material

Musical Style



- Morrison's style is hard to place given his variety of influences, and also changes over time
 - His origins are in R&B, and Irish dance music, and these tunes and instruments make it into his later music (Hasted, 2013)
 - Much of Van Morrison's music has jazz, soul, Celtic rock, and R&B elements (Hasted, 2013)
 - Some of his work, such as *Astral Weeks* (1968) does not follow a genre (Hasted, 2013)

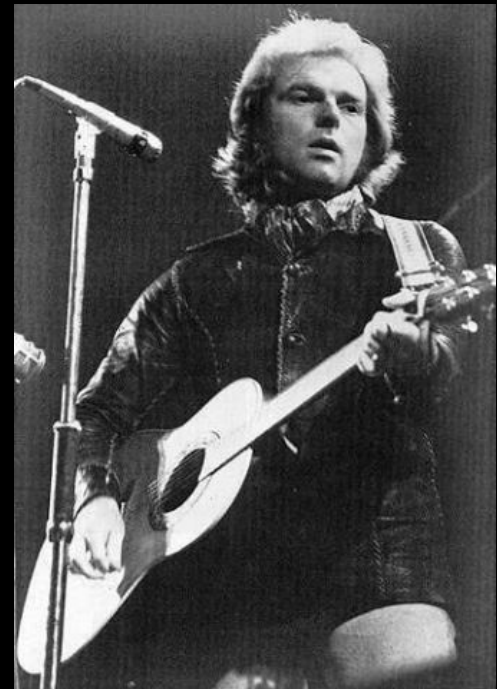
Instrumentation

- Van plays guitar, saxophone, and harmonica (Macnie, n.d.)
- He uses both acoustic and electric keyboards (both pianos and organs) and guitars
- His focus on saxophone, unusual for rock, adds a jazz sound to his music
- He also occasionally uses bowed strings and woodwinds, generally to add another layer of texture, rather than forming a main melody



Vocals

- Van Morrison's vocals are soulful, and typically use some sort of reverb (Morrison, Lowe, & Goldsworthy, 1999)
- He also occasionally uses a more folk timbre, which is focused on enunciating the lyrics
- His voice is unique, and sometimes approaches shouting, but sounds controlled



Style of *Astral Weeks* (1968)

- Uses elements of folk, blues, jazz, and classical music (Van Morrison Biography, n.d. a)
- Uses mostly acoustic instrumentation
- It's often referred to as a concept album, although the concept is not so much a plot as a group of emotions and observations (Macnie, n.d.)



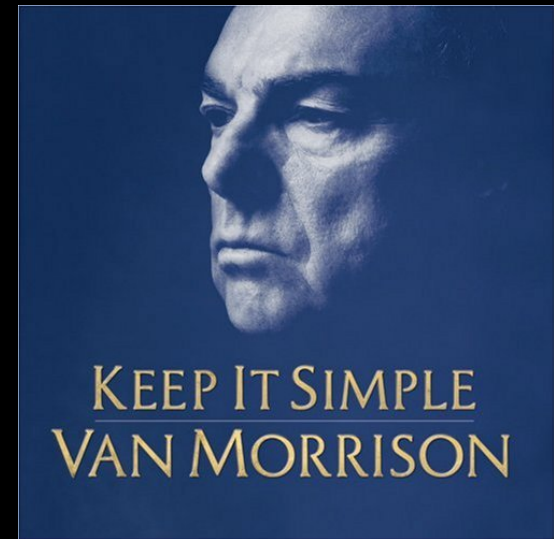
Style of *Moondance* (1970)

- Uses R&B, folk rock, country rock, and jazz (Macnie, n.d.)
- These styles are not blended together simultaneously on the album, but rather appear distinctly in different songs
- This leads to a wide range of instrumentation, as well as some experimenting with recording techniques such as proximity of the singer to the microphone and using instruments to produce sound effects such as the blowing of a foghorn (Macnie, n.d.)



Style After *Moondance*

- Van continued to integrate a wide variety of genres and styles in his albums following his popularity
- The country rock elements intensified slightly for some time, and then gospel and soul began to be more prevalent (Van Morrison Biography, n.d. a)
- In his most recent albums, there has been an even distribution of the many styles which Van uses

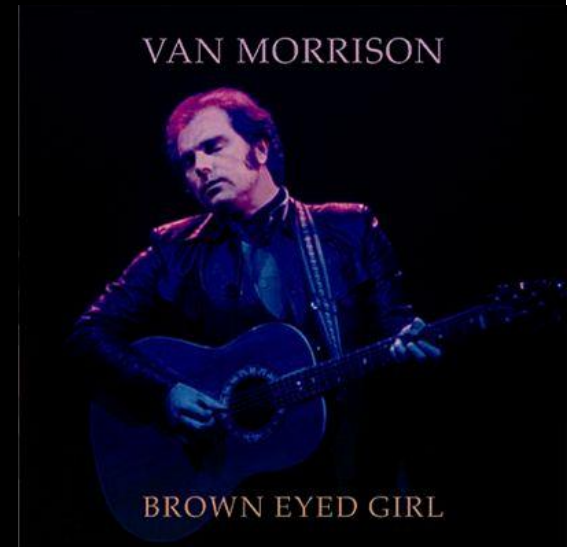


Musical Analysis of “Brown Eyed Girl”

- Album: *Blowin' Your Mind!*
- Instrumentation: Lead vocals, electric guitar (melody and rhythm), background vocals, drums, tambourine
- 4/4 meter division, duple subdivision
- Texture: Homophonic melody and accompaniment
 - Guitar is less important 2nd melody
- Form: Contains a few different relatively simple chord progressions which repeat through all the verses, with the brief exception of the instrumental section
 - New timbres are added, but the guitar chord progressions remain the same
- Tempo: Upbeat and moderately fast

Musical Analysis of “Brown Eyed Girl”

- Melody based on a simple, three-chord pattern
 - follows I-IV-I-V pattern
- Melody is conjunct, especially at the “sha-la-la” part
- Bass-heavy instrumental bridge, one of song’s most prominent hooks (Van Morrison Brown Eyed Girl, 2014)
- Vocal timbre has fluctuations but is controlled
- Lyrics:
 - Based on a tale of rural romance
 - Remembrances of geographic locations
 - Lyrics sound nostalgic and are different than Morrison’s other songs



Other Music of the Period

- Surf music had entered the scene and established itself as a popular style of music
 - Very instrumental and reverb on guitars
 - Sang about simple lifestyle, lyrics didn't have social or political messages
 - Musicians: The Beach Boys, Dick Dale



Other Music of the Period

- Folk Music
 - Gaining popularity in the US, popularity peaked in the mid 1960s (American Folk Music Revival)
 - Frequently used acoustic instruments
 - Folk Musicians: Kingston Trio, Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan



Other Music of the Period

- Soul and Motown genres gain popularity
 - Many songs rose up on the charts, some making it to number 1
- Soul and Motown both had R&B influences
 - Soul drew more from gospel
 - Motown sounded more like jazz
- Musicians: James Brown, Aretha Franklin, The Marvelettes, Stevie Wonder



Other Music of the Period

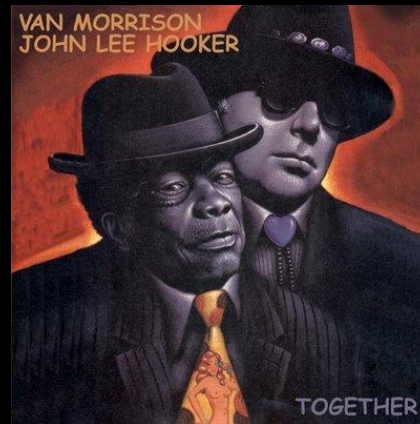


Pink Floyd

- Progressive rock burst onto the scene near the end of the 1960s
 - Prog rock songs were typically very long
 - Music was made with lots of instruments, songs included a lot of solos
 - Musicians were very talented and specialized on one instrument
 - First bands to start using technology to make their music
 - electronic keyboard, synthesizer
- Musicians: Emerson, Lake & Palmer (ELP), Pink Floyd

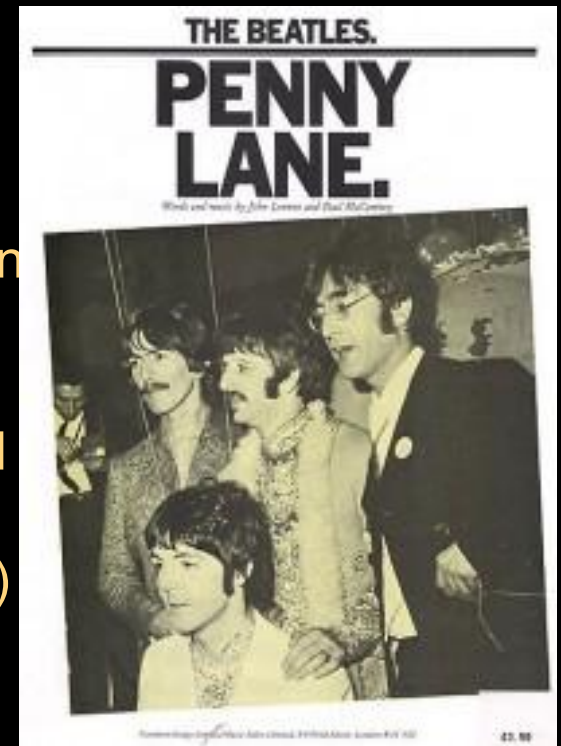
Other Music of the Period

- At times, Van Morrison would collaborate with other musicians to produce several hits
 - Won Grammys while collaborating with: The Chieftains, John Lee Hooker
 - Other notable collaborations: Ray Charles, Tom Jones



Other Music of the Period

- Notable #1 songs of the period
 - “Penny Lane” The Beatles (1967)
 - “Mrs. Robinson” Simon & Garfunkel (1968)
 - “I Heard It Through the Grapevine” Marvin Gaye (1968)
 - “Suspicious Minds” Elvis Presley (1969)
 - “Leaving on a Jet Plane” Peter, Paul, and Mary (1969)
 - “Brown Sugar” The Rolling Stones (1971)
 - “Superstition” Stevie Wonder (1973)



Social and Political Events of the Period

- Although Morrison was likely influenced by social and political events of the period, instead of writing about the social, political, and cultural upheaval of the time, he “rail[ed] against the industry in which he was entangled” (Hage, 2009)
 - **Example:** In his song “The Great Deception,” (*Hard Nose the Highway*, 1973) Morrison criticizes musical artists who “dared adopt politically conscious pretensions” (Hage, 2009)
 - wealthy pop singers “with three or four Cadillacs”
 - John Lennon who sings “power to the people”
 - Sly Stone who “dance[s] to the music”
- (*Words in purple are lyrics from Morrison’s song “The Great Deception”*)



Significance--Who Morrison Influenced

Numerous artists have cited Van Morrison as one of their musical influences, thus showing the large impact he has had on the broad genre of rock 'n' roll: (Shmoop Editorial Team, 2008)



Elvis Costello



Bob Seger



Thin Lizzy



Bruce Springsteen



Ray Lamontagne



Counting Crows

Significance--Who Morrison Influenced

Morrison also influenced:



John Mellencamp



Tom Petty



Rod Stewart



U2



Ed Sheeran

Conclusion

Van Morrison is an important figure in rock due to his ability to combine many styles and perform them all exceptionally. He incorporates soulful vocals, a wide variety of instruments, and lyrics which range from boy-girl romance to deep political and spiritual statements.

References

1. "Billboard "Hot 100" #1 Songs." *Billboard Hot 100 #1 Songs 1960s*. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 June 2014.
http://www.digitaldreamdoor.com/pages/best_billbord2.html
2. Brighenti, J. J., Lee, B. L., & Elsis, M. R. (n.d.). Van-Morrison.com - Biography. *Van-Morrison.com - Biography*. Retrieved , from
<http://www.van-morrison.com/bio.htm>
3. Hage, E. (2009). *The words and music of Van Morrison*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers.
4. Hasted, N. (2013, May 9). Van Morrison. *The Independent*.
5. Heylin, C. (2003). Can you feel the silence?: Van Morrison, a new biography. Chicago Review Pr.
6. Macnie, J. (n.d.). Van Morrison Biography. *Rolling Stone*. Retrieved June 28, 2014, from
<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/artists/van-morrison/biography>
7. Mills, P. (2010). *Hymns to the silence inside the words and music of Van Morrison*. New York: Continuum.
8. Morrison, C., Lowe, D., & Goldsworthy, J. (1999, January 1). Morrison, Van. *Encyclopedia.com*. Retrieved July 1, 2014, from
http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Van_Morrison.aspx
9. "Popular Music from the 60s." *The People History*. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 June 2014 Retrieved from:
<http://www.thepeoplehistory.com/60smusic.html>
10. Sherman, T. (2010). Van Morrison. *The History of Rock Music. : biography, discography, reviews, links*. Retrieved from
<http://www.scaruffi.com/vol2/morrison.html>
11. Shmoop Editorial Team. (2008, November 11). Van Morrison Influences. *Shmoop.com*. Retrieved June 29, 2014, from
<http://www.shmoop.com/brown-eyed-girl/influences.html>
12. Van Morrison Biography. (n.d.). *Band Biographies*. Retrieved from
http://www.bandbiographies.com/van_morrison/biography.htm
13. Van Morrison Biography. (n.d.). *Rock and Roll Hall of Fame*. Retrieved June 28, 2014, from
<http://rockhall.com/inductees/van-morrison/bio/>
14. Van Morrison Brown Eyed Girl. (2014). . Retrieved June 30, 2014, from
<http://www.allmusic.com/song/brown-eyed-girl-mt0027760000>
15. Wolf, P. (2004, April 15). The 50th Anniversary of Rock: The Immortals - 42: Van Morrison. *Rolling Stone Magazine*, 130-131.

Photo Links

- <http://johannasvisions.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/van-morrison-Moondance.jpg>
- <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/f/f7/VanMorrisonAstralWeeks.jpg/220px-VanMorrisonAstralWeeks.jpg>
- http://i.telegraph.co.uk/multimedia/archive/02251/vanmorrisson_2251642b.jpg
- <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5a/Moondance.jpg>
- <http://jmeshel.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/van-morrison2.jpg>
- <https://localrhythms.files.wordpress.com/2008/04/van-simple.jpg>
- <http://static.guim.co.uk/sys-images/Music/Pix/pictures/2011/8/31/1314784585318/Beach-Boys-007.jpg>
- http://johannasvisions.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Bob_Dylan-Town_Hall_1963.jpg
- <http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-FvbNmFWT8Q/UMK-TaMUGml/AAAAAAAAAD4/vtKAyFYR5iM/s1600/Soul-Music.jpg>
- http://untossedcoin.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/vm_john_lee_hooker_together_front1.jpg
- <http://www.cinemablend.com/music/Van-Morrison-Keeps-It-Simple-8353.html>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Van_Morrison
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_Eyed_Girl
- <http://www.amazon.com/The-Best-Van-Morrison/dp/B000009DDJ>
- <http://www.fotolog.com/juanlu/36177390/>
- <http://www.amazon.com/The-Best-Of-Jimmie-Rodgers/dp/B001PIYHP0>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woody_Guthrie
- <http://www.pigriver.com/hank-williams-interview/>
- <http://rapgenius.com/Maitre-gims-sharingan-lyrics#note-1485642>
- http://www.musicweb-international.com/jazz/2006/Jelly-Roll_8120824.htm
- http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2014-01-28/entertainment/chi-muddy-waters-home-museum-20140128_1_muddy-waters-mckinley-morganfield-museum
- <http://rockhall.com/inductees/lead-belly/bio/>
- <http://www.jmeshel.com/038-van-morrison-astral-weeks/>

Photo Links (continued)

- <http://www.billboard.com/artist/338856/pink-floyd>
- <http://www.prestoclassical.co.uk/sm/7027076>
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U2>
- <http://www.billboard.com/articles/events/grammys-2014/5869489/ed-sheeran-grammy-s-best-new-artist-nominee-spotlight>
- <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129303836>
- <http://www.nndb.com/people/100/000025025/>
- <http://www.decca.com/artists/rod-stewart/>
- <http://www.nndb.com/people/509/000024437/>
- <http://ultimateclassicrock.com/tags/bob-seger/>
- <http://www.birminghamrecord.com/brc/st-patricks-day-and-irish-tribute-heart-soul-of-rock-roll-show-1012/thin-lizzy/>
- <http://www.riffraf.net/2014/01/top-five-bruce-springsteen-albums/>
- <http://www.pitch.com/EastPitch/archives/2014/03/11/ray-lamontagne-is-at-starlight-this-june>
- <http://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/news/legal-and-management/6092167/counting-crows-sign-with-capitol-records-for-new>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hard_Nose_the_Highway
- <http://www.allmusic.com/album/brown-eyed-girl-musical-memories-mw0001481152>