

# A New Van Morrison

Mike Kerman

1969

a review of

Van Morrison "Astral Weeks" (Reprise)

Van Morrison is partially responsible for people leaving the beach early in New York.

There is a song called "Gloria" that is sung by every would-be rock and roll singer on the beach.

G-l-o-r-i-a, it starts, never stops, and seems to have no other lyrics. Van Morrison wrote "Gloria."

He also was the leader of Them, who were considered the scruffiest, dirtiest bunch of low-down musicians in England. They supposedly even outdid the Stones.

Morrison went solo and had a hit with "Brown Eyed Girl" which I liked despite my prejudice against top forty songs. He is now a ripe old twenty-three and coming into his own with his new album. Like the Incredible String Band or Detroit's Passing Clouds, a first listen will probably produce an unsure initial reaction. It's different.

Morrison's raspy guttural voice sounds like he should be singing songs like "It Ain't Me Babe," especially the "No, no, no, it ain't me babe" chorus. Instead his songs are gentle and lyrical with a heavy jazzy backing of flute, sax, strings, and percussion.

Although he is doing his own thing now, his blues and rock background is quite prominent. The beat is kept by a powerful bass, drums or flute, and is accentuated and always prominent.

Like Dylan, his words are clouded by his music. At first you want to listen to the complex, soft, uneven arranging, tap your feet, snap your fingers and then realize after a few listenings that he is saying something.

Seemingly simple, yet complex, he weaves his words well. He presents us with a lyrical stream of poetic verse that flows rather than being confined to phrases. And what is different and effective is that the backing of brass and strings, which often is so schmaltzy, follows and accompanies Morrison's jerky guitar and melodies.

"Astral Weeks" sounds like a great first album. But the beauty of it is that it is not. Morrison has been around for a while and is finally coming into his own.

# fifth Estate

Mike Kerman  
A New Van Morrison  
1969

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/71-january-23-february-5-1969/a-new-van-morrison>  
Fifth Estate #71, January 23-February 5, 1969

**[fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net)**