

= Moondance =

Moondance is the third studio album by Northern Irish singer @-@ songwriter Van Morrison . After recording his commercially unsuccessful 1968 album Astral Weeks , Morrison moved with his wife to an artistic hamlet in upstate New York and began writing songs for Moondance . There , he met the musicians he would record the album with at New York City 's A & R Studios in 1969 .

Morrison abandoned the abstract folk compositions of Astral Weeks in favor of more formally composed songs on Moondance , which he wrote and produced himself . Its lively rhythm and blues music was the style he would become most known for in his career . The music incorporated soul , jazz , pop , and Irish folk sounds into ballads and songs about finding spiritual renewal and redemption in worldly matters such as nature , music , and romantic love .

After Moondance was released in 1970 by Warner Bros. Records , it became both a critical and commercial success , helping establish Morrison as a major artist in popular music . It has since been cited by critics as one of the greatest albums of all time . In 2013 , the album 's remastered deluxe edition was released to similar acclaim .

= = Recording and production = =

After leaving the rock band Them , Morrison met record producer Bert Berns in New York City and recorded his first solo single , " Brown Eyed Girl " , in 1967 . When it became a hit , Morrison was offered a recording contract from Warner Bros. Records and recorded his first album for the label , Astral Weeks , in 1968 . Although it was later acclaimed by critics , its collection of lengthy , acoustic , and revelatory folk @-@ jazz songs was not well received by consumers at the time and the album proved to be a commercial failure .

After recording Astral Weeks , Morrison moved with his wife to a home on a mountain top in the Catskills near Woodstock , a hamlet in upstate New York with an artistic community . Because of the album 's poor sales figures , Morrison wanted to produce a third record that would be more accessible and appealing to listeners : " I make albums primarily to sell them and if I get too far out a lot of people can 't relate to it . I had to forget about the artistic thing because it didn 't make sense on a practical level . One has to live . " He began writing songs for Moondance in July 1969 . The musicians who went on to record the album with Morrison were recruited from nearby .

Morrison recorded Moondance from August to November 1969 . He entered A & R Studios in New York City with only the basic song structures written down and the songs ' arrangements in his memory , developing the compositions throughout the album 's recording . Without any musical charts , he received help with developing the music from band members Jef Labes , Jack Schroer , and Collin Tilton . According to biographer Ritchie Yorke , all of the " tasteful frills " were generated spontaneously and developed at the studio . Most of Morrison 's vocals were recorded live , although he later said that he would have preferred to cut the entire album live .

Moondance was the first album where he was listed as producer . He later said of the role , " No one knew what I was looking for except me , so I just did it . " Lewis Merenstein , the album 's executive producer , had brought in Richard Davis , Jay Berliner , and Warren Smith , Jr. from Astral Weeks for the first recording session , but Morrison , according to John Platania , " sort of manipulated the situation " and " got rid of them all . For some reason he didn 't want those musicians . " According to Shelly Yakus , the album 's recording engineer , Morrison was " very quiet and really introverted " during the sessions , only recalling when Morrison asked him to put " more bottom on his voice " while being recorded .

= = Music and lyrics = =

For Moondance , Morrison abandoned the abstract folk compositions of Astral Weeks in favor of a rhythm and blues sound and more formally composed songs , with more distinct arrangements that included a horn section and chorus of singers as an accompaniment . According to Paul Evans in The Rolling Stone Album Guide (1992) , the album 's " horn @-@ driven , bass @-@ heavy "

music featured upbeat soul music , elements of jazz , and ballads . Rob Sheffield said it marked the appearance of the musical style he would become known for , a " mellow , piano @-@ based " fusion of jazz , pop , and Irish folk styles . In the opinion of Robert Christgau , the album showed Morrison integrating his style of Irish poetry into popular song structure while expanding on his " folk @-@ jazz swing " with lively brass instruments , innovative hooks , and a strong backbeat .

Morrison 's lyrics dealt with themes of spiritual renewal and redemption . Unlike his discursive , stream @-@ of @-@ consciousness narratives on Astral Weeks , Moondance balanced his spiritual ideas with more worldly subject matter , which biographer Johnny Rogan felt offered the record a quality of " earthiness " . As the " yang to Astral Weeks ' yin " , AllMusic critic Jason Ankeny believed it " retains the previous album 's deeply spiritual thrust but transcends its bleak , cathartic intensity " by rejoicing in " natural wonder " . According to Christgau , the essence of Morrison 's spirit was , much like the African @-@ American music that inspired him , " mortal and immortal simultaneously : this is a man who gets stoned on a drink of water and urges us to turn up our radios all the way into the mystic . "

The opening song , " And It Stoned Me " , according to the singer , depicts a true tale of a day in his childhood . The lyrics show that the setting of the song is rural , including references to a county fair and mountain stream . The title song is mostly acoustic but also includes electric bass and piano , guitar , saxophone , and a flute over @-@ dub played softly behind Morrison 's voice , which imitates a saxophone towards the song 's end . Musicologist Brian Hinton says , " This is a rock musician singing jazz not a jazz singer though the music itself has a jazz swing . " " Crazy Love " was recorded with Morrison 's voice so close to the microphone that it captured the click of Morrison 's tongue hitting the roof of his mouth as he sang . He sings in falsetto , producing what Hinton felt was a sense of intense intimacy , with the backing of a female chorus . " Caravan " is about gypsy life , which fascinated Morrison , and also about the radio . The song opens with Jef Labes trilling on piano , the drum kit then comes in , whilst Morrison sings the line " And the caravan is on its way " . The non @-@ lexical vocable " la la la la , la la la " is sung by him and the band as the song 's chorus . John Platania then improvises around Morrison 's voice with softly plucked guitar notes . Journalist and Morrison biographer Erik Hage called the song " a joyful celebration of communal spirit , the music of radio , and romantic love " .

According to Morrison , " Into the Mystic " was originally called " Into the Misty " but as he had thought there was " an ethereal feeling to it " he changed the name . Morrison has also said that some of the songs lyrics could have more than one meaning : " I was born before the Wind " could also be " I was borne before the wind " as well as " Also younger than the son , Ere the bonny boat was one " being " All so younger than the son , Ere the bonny boat was won " . The song includes Collin Tilton 's tenor saxophone imitating a foghorn blowing , and ends with the words " Too Late to Stop Now " ? a phrase he would famously use to conclude concert endings in the 1970s . After a dynamic stop @-@ start ending to " Cyprus Avenue " , Morrison would bellow this phrase and then stalk from the stage . This phrase also served as the title to his acclaimed 1974 live album . These lyrics have also been used at the end of " Friday 's Child " in his concerts . According to Evans , " Into the Mystic " reconciles Moondance 's R & B style with the more orchestrated folk music of Astral Weeks , along with " the complimentary sides of Morrison 's psyche " .

" Come Running " was described by Morrison as " a very light type of song . It 's not too heavy ; it 's just a happy @-@ go @-@ lucky song . " The song starts with Jef Labes improvising on piano . The two saxophones then split apart , playing different rhythms during the chorus , and come back together for " You gotta rainbow if you run to me " . According to Hinton , " These Dreams of You " manages to be simultaneously accusatory and reassuring . The lyrics cover such dream sequences as Ray Charles being shot down , paying dues in Canada , and " his angel from above " cheating while playing cards in the dark , slapping him in the face , ignoring his cries , and walking out on him . Morrison said he was inspired to write " Brand New Day " after hearing The Band on FM radio playing either " The Weight " or " I Shall Be Released " : " I looked up at the sky and the sun started to shine and all of a sudden the song just came through my head . I started to write it down , right from ' When all the dark clouds roll away ' . " Ritchie Yorke quoted Morrison as saying in 1973 that " Brand New Day " was the song that worked best to his ear and the one with which he felt most in

touch .

" Everyone " opens with Jef Labes ' clavinet in 6 / 8 time . A flute comes in , playing the melody after Morrison has sung four lines , with Jack Schroer playing the harmony underneath on soprano saxophone . Although Morrison says the song is just a song of hope , Hinton says its lyrics suggest a more troubled meaning , as 1969 was the year in which The Troubles broke out in Belfast . The album 's closing song , " Glad Tidings " , has a bouncy beat but the lyrics , like " Into the Mystic " , remain largely impenetrable , according to Hinton . In his opinion , " the opening line and closing line , ' and they 'll lay you down low and easy ' , could be either about murder or an act of love . " According to biographer Erik Hage , " ' Glad Tidings ' was a premonition of the future , as for the next four decades , Morrison would continue to use a song here and there to vent about the evils of the music industry and the world of celebrity . "

= = Release and reception = =

Moondance was released by Warner Bros. on 27 January 1970 in the United Kingdom and on 28 February 1970 in the United States . Its original vinyl release was packaged with an album cover that folded out revealing A Fable , the short tale written by Morrison 's then @-@ wife Janet Planet , about a young man and his gifts . The cover photo was taken by Elliot Landy , the official 1969 Woodstock Festival photographer . After the commercial failure of Astral Weeks , Moondance was seen by contemporary music journalists as a record that redeemed Morrison , establishing him as a young , commercially successful , and artistically independent singer @-@ songwriter with great promise . The album reached the top 30 of the American albums chart , and although it never topped the charts , it sold continuously for the next forty years of its release , particularly after its digitally remastered reissue in 1990 . In 1996 , it was certified triple platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America , having shipped three million copies in the US .

When Moondance was released , it received widespread acclaim from critics . Greil Marcus and Lester Bangs jointly reviewed the album in Rolling Stone , hailing it as a work of " musical invention and lyrical confidence ; the strong moods of ' Into the Mystic ' and the fine , epic brilliance of ' Caravan ' will carry it past many good records we 'll forget in the next few years . " In the San Francisco Chronicle , Ralph J. Gleason wrote of Morrison 's singing as a focal point of praise : " He wails as the jazz musicians speak of wailing , as the gypsies , as the Gaels and the old folks in every culture speak of it . He gets a quality of intensity in that wail which really hooks your mind , carries you along with his voice as it rises and falls in long , soaring lines . " Jon Landau found his vocals overwhelming : " Things fell into place so perfectly I wished there was more room to breathe . Morrison has a great voice and on Moondance he found a home for it . " Robert Christgau , writing for The Village Voice , argued that he had finally fulfilled his potential : " Forget Astral Weeks--this is a brilliant , catchy , poetic , and completely successful LP . "

According to Acclaimed Music , Moondance is the 102nd most ranked record in critics ' all @-@ time lists . In 1978 , it was voted the 22nd best album of all time in Paul Gambaccini 's poll of 50 prominent American and English rock critics . Christgau , one of the critics polled , named it the 7th best album of the 1970s in The Village Voice the following year . In a retrospective review , Nick Butler from Sputnikmusic cited it as the peak of Morrison 's career and " maybe of non @-@ American soul in general " , while Spin called it " the great white soul album " in an essay accompanying the magazine 's 1989 list of the all @-@ time 25 greatest albums , in which Moondance was ranked 21st . In 1999 , the album was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame , and in 2003 , it was placed at number 65 on Rolling Stone 's list of the 500 greatest albums of all time . Time included the record in its 2006 list of " The All @-@ Time 100 Albums " , and the following year , the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame named it as one of their " Definitive 200 " albums , ranking it 72nd . In 2009 , Hot Press polled numerous Irish recording artists and bands , who voted Moondance the 11th best Irish album of all time .

On 22 October 2013 , Warner Bros. released a deluxe edition of Moondance . It featured a newly remastered version of the original album , three CDs with previously unreleased music from the sessions , and a Blu @-@ ray disc with high @-@ resolution , surround sound audio of the original

album . It was packaged in a linen @-@ wrapped folio and a booklet with liner notes written by music journalist Alan Light and Elliot Scheiner , one of the album 's original engineers . The deluxe edition was met with highly positive reviews from critics , including Record Collector , who called it an aural " marvel " , and The Independent , who said the remastering " strips away centuries of digital compression and makes the music sound as if you ? ve never heard it properly " .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Van Morrison .

= = Personnel = =

Credits are adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = Musicians = = =

Judy Clay ? backing vocals (tracks 3 and 8)

Emily Houston ? backing vocals (tracks 3 and 8)

John Klingberg ? bass

Jef Labes ? organ , piano , clavinet

Gary Mallaber ? drums , vibraphone

Guy Masson ? conga

Van Morrison ? vocals , guitar , rhythm guitar , tambourine , harmonica , producer

John Platania ? guitar , rhythm guitar

Jack Schroer ? alto and soprano saxophones

Collin Tilton ? flute , tenor saxophone

Jackie Verdell ? backing vocals (tracks 3 and 8)

= = Additional personnel = = =

Bob Cato ? designer

Steve Friedberg ? engineer

Elliot Landy ? photographer

Tony May ? engineer

Lewis Merenstein ? executive producer

Neil Schwartz ? engineer

Elliot Scheiner ? engineer

Shelly Yakus ? engineer

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =