

= Van Morrison : No Surrender =

Van Morrison : No Surrender is a biography of musician Van Morrison , written by Johnny Rogan . It was first published in 2005 by Secker & Warburg , and another edition was published by Vintage Books in 2006 . Rogan interviewed musicians and friends of Morrison , and spent 20 years researching the book and four years writing it . The book is comprehensive , and goes into detail about multiple facets of Morrison 's life . Rogan recounts Morrison 's youth in Belfast , Northern Ireland , and how early experiences there informed his music . He discusses how Morrison joined various bands before experiencing success with Them . Morrison later signed a contract with Bert Berns and moved to New York , where he became quite popular after recording " Brown Eyed Girl " and albums Astral Weeks and Moondance . Rogan comments on Morrison 's exploration of spirituality , and describes how these experiences influenced his musical work . The biography discusses Morrison 's move to Britain and then Dublin , and his relationship with model Michelle Rocca .

The book received mostly positive reviews in the media . Kirkus Reviews called it " a narrative of propulsive drive that is also a reflective , associative piece of social history , " and The Sunday Independent described it as " an exhaustive study " . The Sunday Times noted : " What makes this book worthwhile is its fiercely illuminating angle Morrison , as usual , declined to take part but the author 's scholarly methods lend this weighty volume a real authority . " The Irish Times referred to the biography as a " superb book " , and a review in The Observer stated " This characteristically accomplished biography shows the singer from every angle . " Diarmaid Ferriter selected the book as his pick in The Sunday Business Post feature " Authors ' choices " . The book received negative reviews in The Toronto Star and The Herald .

= = Research and publication = =

Prior to completing the book , Rogan had written music biographies on The Byrds , The Smiths , and Neil Young . According to Kirkus Reviews , " there is nary a word directly from the reclusive Morrison 's lips " in the book . The Irish Independent reported that the author relied on interviews with " friends , acquaintances and musicians " . Rogan spent over 20 years researching the book , and it took him four years to write it .

Rogan recounted to The Irish Times the value he obtained from interviews with Morrison 's first wife , as well as his partner in a later relationship , Michelle Rocca . " Here was a man who had explored all these mystic religions , had undergone Gestalt therapy , who had been told by a Rosacrucian master that he had something called an ' Angelic Knot ' , suddenly hanging around fashionable nightclubs and being written about in gossip columns . The relationship with Michelle Rocca certainly helped , in that I got more out of one single interview done by Michelle Rocca than I did , in entirety , from his first wife , Janet Planet , " said Rogan .

When it became public in early 2005 that the book would be published , representatives of Morrison contacted the publishers of the book . Said Rogan to The Irish Times : " There has been contact with the publishers , I know that much . When the news broke earlier this year that the book was being published , his lawyers asked to see an advance copy of the manuscript . The publishers refused the request . But then this is a man who when he learnt that there was going to be a plaque erected outside his former Belfast home , got his solicitors to write to the Belfast Telegraph dissociating himself from the tribute . " The book was first published in 2005 by Secker & Warburg , and a 2006 edition was published by Vintage Books . Johnny Rogan appeared on a panel of experts in the 2008 documentary Van Morrison : Under Review 1964 ? 1974 , along with Steve Turner , author of the 1993 biography Van Morrison : Too Late to Stop Now .

= = Contents = =

Rogan writes in the book 's introduction : " an important caveat to any serious , well @-@ researched biography or study of Morrison 's life is that the reader should be aware that a number of

allegations against the subject cannot be featured in print for legal reasons . The author may feel that the final portrayal is far too flattering in certain places , while the reader who neglects to read between the lines may think the biographer could have been a little more sympathetic at times . Death alone will open this Pandora 's box . " Morrison himself is quoted on the first page of the book , saying : " Rogan 's got something to hide . What 's he hiding ? I 'd like to do a book on him . "

The biography is comprehensive , covering many different aspects of its subject 's life . The author discusses Morrison 's early life in Belfast , Northern Ireland , and how this influenced his perspective of " no surrender " , a reference to Ulster Unionism . Rogan writes how , a young boy , Morrison exhibited " poor communication skills , aggressive impatience , and absence of empathy " , and yearned for positive relations between his Protestant and Catholic friends . The author notes that a theme of Morrison 's youth was his appreciation of music and his pleasure of creating music influenced by gospel and love . He cites Morrison 's cousin Jackie Stitt who said : " He could have been a good sportsman but he had no interest in it at all . He 'd play along with you for a while until he got bored ? he seemed to tire of it quickly . He 'd go indoors . "

Morrison did not excel at academics , and focused instead on music . He practised his music in solitude , and was not skilled at socialising . " One time he said to me it wasn 't that he didn 't want to talk , but tunes were running through his head all the time . He said he didn 't know whether he 'd been blessed or cursed because the words and music wouldn 't go out of his head , " said his mother Violet .

The book focuses on Morrison 's musical profession . Morrison joined a band called The Sputniks , which became The Javelins . He joined up with a showband called the Monarchs , then another called Manhattan , and another called the Gamblers . The Gamblers became the group Them , and Morrison developed his stage presence . " He was a wee runt . Offstage you wouldn 't have looked sideways at him . But on stage it was different . There was an animalistic sexuality that he didn 't have in his person , " said a female fan of Morrison 's who witnessed him perform with the band .

The band Them was signed by Phil Solomon , who contracted producer Bert Berns to work with the group , and Phil Coulter came on as a musical arranger and lyricist . The group became popular with songs including " Baby Please Don 't Go " , " Gloria " , and " Here Comes the Night " . Morrison commented of Them : " Them were never meant to be on Top of the Pops . I mean , miming ? lip syncing ? We used to laugh at that programme , think it was a joke . Then we were on it ourselves . It was ridiculous . We were totally anti that sort of thing . We were really into the blues ... and we had to get into suits and have make @-@ up put on and all that shit . "

The group were not sociable with reporters , and according to the book Morrison 's drinking habits made him reclusive . " I regret that we couldn 't have controlled Morrison better ... I think he would have been big if he 'd been straightened out at the beginning of his career , " comments Phil Solomon about Morrison . " He was on a downer and he was drinking . He wasn 't the most bankable of artists . He had been the frontman for another of those R & B bands that had gone up the Swanee and there were three or four versions of Them touring . It was a joke . He was no gift . There weren 't record companies falling over themselves to sign him up . " says Phil Coulter in the book .

Morrison signed a contract with Bert Berns , and just before he left for New York made a speech to his friends and ended with : " One day you 'll see my picture up on the wall and you 'll all say ' I knew him ' . " An acquaintance who witnessed the speech told the author : " He knew he was different and that his music was good but I thought he was such a nasty character ; always rude and quite vulgar . " Morrison recorded the song " Brown Eyed Girl " in New York with Berns , as well as the album Astral Weeks . He became much more popular with the album Moondance , and Rolling Stone commented he had " the striking imagination of a consciousness that is visionary in the strongest sense of the word " . Morrison 's image graced the cover of Rolling Stone a year after releasing Moondance .

Rogan discusses Morrison 's exploration of religion and spirituality . He cites Tom Paulin , a poet based in Belfast , who notes : " Morrison comes out of not traditional Protestantism , but evangelical Protestantism . That 's the foundation of his imagination . He 's testifying . " Rogan recounts how Morrison became exposed to alternative practices including Gestalt therapy and Rosicrucianism .

According to Rogan , Morrison 's exploration of mysticism , Christianity , Jehovah 's Witnesses , and Scientology were influential in his works including Astral Weeks , " Kingdom Hall " , Enlightenment and " Whenever God Shines His Light " . Morrison became wealthy through his music , but he became less successful over the next 20 years of his career . He moved back to Europe , and lived in Britain and then settled in Dublin in the 1990s . He met model Michelle Rocca at a fundraiser held at Leixlip Castle , and they began a relationship .

= = Reception = =

A review of the book in Kirkus Reviews described it as a " nearly breath @-@ by @-@ breath biography " , and comments : " Rogan 's analyses of Morrison 's musical palette , critical standing and public image are exhaustive yet never exhausting Sprightly despite its amplitude , a narrative of propulsive drive that is also a reflective , associative piece of social history . " The title of a review in the Irish Independent referred to the book as " an enthralling new biography of the Belfast cowboy " , and The Sunday Independent called it " an exhaustive study of Belfast 's most famous musical son " . A review in The Observer commented of the book : " This characteristically accomplished biography shows the singer from every angle . "

Robert Sandall gave the book a positive review in The Sunday Times , and wrote : " What makes this book worthwhile is its fiercely illuminating angle Morrison , as usual , declined to take part but the author 's scholarly methods lend this weighty volume a real authority . " The Journal Gazette called the book : " A definitive , provocative and revelatory portrait of an endlessly complicated man and his music . " A review in The Irish Times characterised the book as a " magical " journey into Van Morrison 's life , noting : " Johnny Rogan spent 23 years researching his biography of Van Morrison . It shows . In a book that really should have been titled Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Van Morrison But Were Too Petrified To Ask , this is a magical ' into the mystic ' journey which vertiginously takes you from Edward Carson to Leadbelly , from the Mafia to the Rosacrucians , from drinking stories to Gestalt therapy , and from Bernadette Devlin to Terry Keane . " Brian Boyd of The Irish Times described Rogan 's work as a " superb book " .

Diarmaid Ferriter selected the book as his pick in The Sunday Business Post feature " Authors ' choices " . Ferriter commented : " Rogan has to be admired for his perseverance and determination when it comes to chronicling the life and times of contrary musical giants ? having previously tackled Morrissey . Well @-@ researched biography is always to be encouraged , particularly when dealing with a difficult and elusive character " . David Sinclair , author of Wannabe : How The Spice Girls Reinvented Pop Fam , reviewed the book for The Guardian , and commented : " Rogan 's scrutiny of Morrison 's work is undertaken with no less care than that devoted to the details of the singer 's life story , and the analysis and appreciation of Morrison 's very real accomplishments as a musician provide some welcome ballast to a personal portrayal that is otherwise almost comically unflattering . Rogan 's book certainly sheds new light on the life and times of this puzzling and reclusive performer . " Sinclair also noted the book takes a negative tone towards some of Morrison 's mannerisms , and concluded his review with : " But it may be as well to get hold of a copy before Morrison 's legal representatives have had a chance to get out their fine @-@ tooth combs . "

Jonathan O 'Brien recommended the book in a review in The Sunday Business Post , but noted it focuses more on his life than an analysis of his music : " If you want a meticulously researched , mind @-@ bogglingly detailed account of his early years growing up in Belfast , his schooldays in Orangefield , his time as an unpopular member of the Olympics showband and so on , then , once again , No Surrender is heartily recommended . If , however , you 're expecting a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of Morrison 's music , of its textures , its surfaces ? how and why it sounds the way it does ? then you 've probably come to the wrong place . " O 'Brien concluded his review by writing : " For all its flaws , No Surrender is a strong , absorbing biography , and never less than well written . It 's just that it could potentially have been far , far better . " John Beck of The Press Democrat observed that the biography " paints him [Morrison] as a mercurial genius at best and a cantankerous lout on a bad day " . In their 2008 book Northern Ireland After the Troubles , Colin Coulter and Michael Murray referenced the biography and stated it puts forth " the view that

Morrison 's persona has been shaped by a specifically Ulster Protestant sensibility " . Bernard Perusse of The Gazette described the earlier biography Van Morrison : Too Late to Stop Now as " more superficial but more positive " than Rogan 's book .

Kevin Courtney reviewed the book for The Irish Times , and observed : " For fans of Van Morrison 's music , No Surrender might seem somewhat blasphemous , focusing not so much on Van the artist , but on Van the not @-@ very @-@ nice man . But Rogan also pays tribute to Morrison 's pure , untainted artistry , and details the development ? and subsequent decline ? of Morrison 's muse over the past 40 years or so . For the serious Van @-@ ologist , Rogan 's painstaking research yields an abundance of detail about Morrison 's early years " . Graeme Green of the Daily Express noted that Rogan " concentrates far more on Van the man than it does on his music , with the singer largely portrayed as difficult , selfish and aloof " . He noted that Morrison would turn 60 the year the book was published , and commented " When the singer celebrates his landmark birthday this year , it 's a safe bet Rogan 's name won 't be on the invite list . "

Nick Krewen gave the book a negative review in The Toronto Star . Krewen critiqued what he saw as the thesis to Rogan 's book , commenting : " Here is the premise of Van Morrison : No Surrender : Because the Belfast @-@ born Morrison was raised in Ulster ... and subjected to violent religious prejudice , the musician embodies a symbolic metaphor of Northern Ireland 's defiant nature . That 's it . " Krewen noted that " the book does capture Van the Man 's evolution into an electrifying showman during his Monarchs and Them years . " The book also received a negative review from Martin Tierney in The Herald , who wrote : " The title here is more than a little contrived as Rogan attempts to draw parallels with the sectarian troubles in Morrison 's home turf and the maestro himself . It doesn 't work , given that Morrison has never been political , thankfully sticking to music . It is , however , detailed and comprehensive in its sources , and as such carries on that great tradition of bashing the odious one . "