

= Marquee Moon =

Marquee Moon is the 1977 debut studio album by American rock band Television . By 1974 , the group had become a prominent act on the New York music scene and generated interest from a number of record labels . Television rehearsed extensively in preparation for Marquee Moon and , after signing to Elektra Records , recorded the album at A & R Recording in September 1976 . It was produced by the band 's frontman Tom Verlaine and sound engineer Andy Johns .

For Marquee Moon , Verlaine and fellow guitarist Richard Lloyd abandoned contemporary punk rock 's power chords in favor of rock and jazz @-@ inspired interplay , melodic lines , and counter @-@ melodies . Verlaine 's lyrics combined urban and pastoral imagery , references to lower Manhattan , themes of adolescence , and influences from French poetry . He also used puns and double @-@ entendres to give his songs an impressionistic quality describing the perception of an experience rather than its specific details .

When Marquee Moon was released in February 1977 , it received widespread critical acclaim and unexpected commercial success in the United Kingdom , but sold poorly in the United States . The record has since been viewed by critics as one of the greatest albums of all time and a foundational record of alternative rock . Television 's innovative post @-@ punk instrumentation on Marquee Moon strongly influenced the indie rock and new wave movements of the 1980s , as well as rock guitarists such as John Frusciante , Will Sergeant , and The Edge .

= = Background = =

By the mid 1970s , Television had become a leading act in the New York music scene . They first developed a following from their residency at the lower Manhattan club CBGB , where they helped persuade club manager Hilly Kristal to feature more unconventional musical groups . The band had received interest from labels by late 1974 , but chose to wait for an appropriate record deal . They turned down a number of major labels , including Island Records , for whom they had recorded demos with producer Brian Eno . Eno had produced demos of the songs " Prove It " , " Friction " , " Venus " , and " Marquee Moon " in December 1974 , but Television frontman Tom Verlaine did not approve of Eno 's sound : " He recorded us very cold and brittle , no resonance . We 're oriented towards really strong guitar music ... sort of expressionistic . "

After founding bassist Richard Hell left in 1975 , Television enlisted Fred Smith , whom they found more reliable and rhythmically adept . The band quickly developed a rapport and a musical style that reflected their individual influences : Smith and guitarist Richard Lloyd had a rock and roll background , drummer Billy Ficca was a jazz enthusiast , and Verlaine 's tastes varied from the rock group 13th Floor Elevators to jazz saxophonist Albert Ayler . That same year , Television shared a residency at CBGB with singer and poet Patti Smith , who had recommended the band to Arista Records president Clive Davis . Although he had seen them perform , Davis was hesitant to sign them at first . He was persuaded by Smith 's boyfriend , Allen Lanier , to let them record demos , which Verlaine said resulted in " a much warmer sound than Eno got " . However , Verlaine still wanted to find a label that would allow him to produce Television 's debut album himself , even though he had little recording experience .

= = Recording and production = =

In August 1976 , Television signed a recording deal with Elektra Records , who promised Verlaine he could produce the band 's first album with the condition that he would be assisted by a well @-@ known recording engineer . Verlaine , who did not want to be guided in the studio by a famous producer , enlisted engineer Andy Johns based on his work for the Rolling Stones ' 1973 album Goats Head Soup . Lloyd was also impressed by Johns , whom he said had produced " some of the great guitar sounds in rock " . Johns was credited as the co @-@ producer on Marquee Moon . Elektra did not query Television 's studio budget for the recording .

Television recorded Marquee Moon in September 1976 at A & R Recording in New York City . In

preparation for the album 's recording , Television had rehearsed for four to six hours a day and six to seven days a week . Lloyd said they were " both really roughshod musicians on one hand and desperadoes on the other , with the will to become good " . During preparations , the band rejected most of the material they had written over the course of three years . Once they were in the studio , they recorded two new songs for the album ? " Guiding Light " and " Torn Curtain " ? and older songs such as " Friction " , " Venus " , and the title track , which had become a standard at their live shows . Verlaine said that , because he had predetermined the structure of the album , only those eight songs and a few others were attempted during the recording sessions . For most of Marquee Moon , Johns recorded Television as they performed live in the studio . A few songs were recorded in one take , including the title track , which Ficca assumed was a rehearsal . Johns suggested the group record another take of the song , but Verlaine told him to " forget it " . Verlaine and Lloyd 's guitars were recorded and multi @-@ tracked to left and right channels , and the final recordings were left uncompressed and unadorned with studio effects .

The front cover for Marquee Moon was shot by photographer Robert Mapplethorpe , who had previously shot the cover for Patti Smith 's 1975 album Horses . His photo situated Verlaine a step in front of the rest of the band , who were captured in a tensed , serious pose . Verlaine held his right hand across his body and extended his slightly clenched left hand forward . When Mapplethorpe gave Television the contact prints , Lloyd took the band 's favorite shot to a print shop in Times Square and asked for color photocopies for the group members to mull over . Although the first few copies were oddly colored , Lloyd asked the copy worker to print more " while turning the knobs with his eyes closed " . He likened the process to Andy Warhol 's screen prints . After he showed it to the group , they chose the altered copy over Mapplethorpe 's original photo , which Fred Smith had framed and kept for himself .

= = Music and lyrics = =

According to Rolling Stone , Marquee Moon was a post @-@ punk album , while Jason Heller from The A.V. Club described it as " elegantly jagged " art punk . Robert Christgau deemed it more of a rock record because of Television 's formal and technical abilities as musicians : " It wasn 't punk . Its intensity wasn 't manic ; it didn 't come in spurts . " Both sides of the album began with three shorter , hook @-@ driven songs , which Stylus Magazine 's Evan Chakroff said veered between progressive rock and post @-@ punk styles . The title track and " Torn Curtain " were longer and more jam @-@ oriented . " As peculiar as it sounds , I 've always thought that we were a pop band " , Verlaine later told Select . " You know , I always thought Marquee Moon was a bunch of cool singles . And then I 'd realise , Christ , [the title track] is ten minutes long . With two guitar solos . "

Verlaine and Lloyd interplayed their guitars around the rhythm section 's drum hits and basslines . Their dual playing drew on 1960s rock and avant @-@ garde jazz styles , abandoning the layered power chords of contemporary punk rock in favor of melodic lines and counter @-@ melodies . Verlaine established the song 's rhythmic phrase , against which Lloyd played dissonant melodies . Lloyd had learned to notate his solos by the time they recorded Marquee Moon , allowing him to develop his solo for a song from introduction to variation and resolution . The two traded rhythmic and melodic lines several times on some songs while producing tension . " There weren 't many bands where the two guitars played rhythm and melody back and forth , like a jigsaw puzzle " , Lloyd said . Most of the solos on Marquee Moon followed a pattern wherein Verlaine ran up a major scale but regressed slightly after each step . On " See No Evil " , he soloed through a full octave before playing a blues @-@ influenced riff , and on the title track , he played in a Mixolydian mode and lowered the seventh by half a step . Lloyd opened " Friction " by playing octaves before Verlaine 's ringing harmonics and series of descending scales .

Verlaine 's lyrics on Marquee Moon combined urban and pastoral imagery . Although it was not a concept album , many of its songs made geographical references to lower Manhattan . According to Bryan Waterman , author of the 33 ? book on the record , it celebrated stern adolescence in the urban pastoral mode . Its urban nocturne theme was derived from poetic works about Bohemian decadence . According to Spin , the album was about urban mythology ; Verlaine brought " a

sentimental romanticism to the Bowery , making legends out of the mundane " . The lyrics also incorporated maritime imagery , including the paradoxical " nice little boat made out of ocean " in " See No Evil " , the waterfront setting in " Elevation " , sea metaphors in " Guiding Light " , and references to docks , caves , and waves in " Prove It " .

Although Verlaine was against drug use after Television formed , he once had a short @-@ lived phase using psychedelic drugs , to which he makes reference in similes on songs such as " Venus " . The vignette @-@ like lyrics follow an ostensibly drug @-@ induced , revelatory experience : " You know it 's all like some new kind of drug / my senses are sharp and my hands are like gloves / Broadway looks so medieval , it seems to flap like little pages / I fell sideways laughing , with a friend from many stages . " According to Waterman , although psychedelic trips informed the experiences of many artists in lower Manhattan at the time , " Venus " contributed to the impression of Marquee Moon as a transcendental work in the vein of 19th @-@ century Romanticism : " Verlaine is into perception , and sometimes the perception he represents is as intense as a mind @-@ altering substance . " Christgau said the lyric about Broadway contributed to how writers have associated the album with the East Village , as it " situates this philosophical action in the downtown night " .

The songs on Marquee Moon inspired interpretations from a variety of sources , but Verlaine conceded he did not understand the meaning behind much of his lyrics . He drew on influences from French poetry and wanted to narrate the consciousness or confusion of an experience rather than its specific details . He compared the songs to " a little moment of discovery or releasing something or being in a certain time or place and having a certain understanding of something " . Verlaine also used puns and double @-@ entendres in his lyrics , which he said were atmospheric and conveyed the meaning of a song implicitly . " See No Evil " opens with the narrator 's flights of fancy and closes with an imperative about limitless possibilities : " Runnin ' wild with the one I love / Pull down the future with the one you love " . In the refrain to " Venus " , the narrator falls into " the arms of Venus de Milo " . Verlaine explained his reference to the armless statue as " a term for a state of feeling . They 're loving [ubiquitous] arms " .

= = Release and reception = =

Marquee Moon was released in February 1977 in the United States and on March 4 , 1977 , in the United Kingdom , where it was an unexpected success and reached number 28 on the country 's albums chart . The record 's two singles ? the title track and " Prove It " ? both charted on the UK Top 30 . Marquee Moon also received widespread acclaim from critics , and its sales were partly fueled by Nick Kent 's rave two @-@ page review of the album for NME . Kent wrote that Television had proven to be ambitious and skilled enough to achieve " new dimensions of sonic overdrive " with an " inspired work of pure genius , a record finely in tune and sublimely arranged with a whole new slant on dynamics " . He deemed the album 's music vigorous , sophisticated , and innovative at a time when rock is wholly conservative . In a five @-@ star review for Sounds , Vivien Goldman hailed Marquee Moon as " an obvious , unabashed , instant classic " , while Peter Gammond of Hi @-@ Fi News & Record Review gave it an " A + " and called it one of the most exciting releases in music , highlighted by Verlaine 's steely , Gábor Szabó @-@ like guitar and authentic rock music . In Audio , Jon Tiven wrote that although the vocals and production could have been more amplified , Verlaine 's lyrics and guitar " manage to viscerally and intellectually grab the listener " . Joan Downs from Time felt the band 's sound was distinguished more by the bold playing of Lloyd , who she said had the potential to become a major figure in rock guitar . Christgau gave Marquee Moon an " A + " in The Village Voice and believed Verlaine 's " demotic @-@ philosophical " lyrics could have sustained the album alone , as would the guitar playing , which he said was as penetrating and expressive as Eric Clapton or Jerry Garcia " but totally unlike either " .

In a negative review , Noel Coppage from Stereo Review was critical of the singing and songwriting , likening Marquee Moon to a stale version of Bruce Springsteen . Nigel Hunter wrote in Gramophone that Verlaine 's lyrics and guitar playing were vague and that listeners would need a " strong commitment to this type of music to get much out of it " . In Rolling Stone , Ken Tucker said the lyrics generally amounted to non sequiturs , meaningless phrases , and pretentious aphorisms ,

but were ultimately secondary to the music . Although he found Verlaine 's solos potentially formless and boring , Tucker credited him for structuring his songs around chilling riffs and " a new commercial impulse that gives his music its catchy , if slashing , hook " . High Fidelity felt the music 's " scaring amalgam of rich , brightly colored textures " compensated for Verlaine 's nearly unintelligible lyrics .

While holidaying in London after Marquee Moon 's completion , Verlaine saw that Television had been put on NME 's front cover and called Elektra 's press department , who encouraged Television to capitalize on their success there with a tour of the UK . However , the label had already organized for the band to perform on Peter Gabriel 's American tour as a supporting act . Television played small theatres and some larger club venues , and received more mainstream exposure , but were not well received by Gabriel 's middle @-@ American , progressive rock audiences and found the tour unnerving . In May , the band embarked on a highly successful theatre tour in the UK and were enthusiastically received by audiences . Verlaine said that it was refreshing to perform at large theatres after having played clubs for four years . However , he felt that supporting act Blondie did not suit their show because they were too different artistically , even though both groups had emerged from the music scene at CBGB . Blondie 's Chris Stein said that Television were " so competitive " and unaccommodating on the tour and that they did not treat it like a joint effort . He recalled one show where " all our equipment was shoved up at the [Glasgow] Apollo and we had like three feet of room so that [Verlaine] could stand still in this vast space . "

At the end of 1977 , Marquee Moon was voted the third best album of the year in the Pazz & Jop , an annual poll of American critics nationwide , published in The Village Voice . Christgau , the poll 's creator and supervisor , ranked it number one on his own list . Sounds also named it the year 's best album , while NME ranked it fifth on its year @-@ end list . Verlaine later said of the overwhelmingly positive response from critics , " There was a certain magic happening , an inexplicable certainty of something , like the momentum of a freight train . That 's not egoism but , if you cast a spell , you don 't get flummoxed by the results of your spell . " By the time of Television 's return to the US , however , Elektra had given up on promoting Marquee Moon , which they dismissed as a commercial failure . Marquee Moon sold fewer than 80 @, @ 000 copies in the US and failed to chart on the Billboard 200 . The group was dispirited by their inability to meet commercial expectations , which led to their disbandment in 1978 .

= = Legacy and influence = =

According to Tony Fletcher , Marquee Moon was difficult to categorize in 1977 and was hailed as " something entirely original , a new dawn in rock music " . Since then , it has been cited by rock critics as one of the greatest records of the American punk rock movement , with Mark Weingarten of Entertainment Weekly calling it the masterpiece of the 1970s New York punk rock scene . According to English writer Clinton Heylin , Marquee Moon marked the end of the New York scene 's peak period , while Spin said it was the CBGB era 's " best and most enduring record " and ranked it as the sixth greatest album of all time in its April 1989 issue . Q included it in the magazine 's 2002 list of the 100 greatest punk records , while writer Colin Larkin ranked it ninth and Mojo ranked it 35th on similar lists . The album has often been voted high in critics polls of the greatest debuts and has also been named one of the greatest records of the 1970s by NME , who ranked it tenth , and Pitchfork , who ranked it third . On September 23 , 2003 , Marquee Moon was reissued by Rhino Entertainment with several bonus tracks , including the first CD appearance of Television 's 1975 debut single " Little Johnny Jewel (Parts 1 & 2) " . That same year , it was named the fourth greatest album of all time by NME , while Rolling Stone placed it at number 128 on its list of the 500 greatest albums of all time . The record was also ranked 33rd by The Guardian and 25th by Melody Maker on similar lists . According to Acclaimed Music , it is the 23rd most ranked album on critics ' all @-@ time lists . It has been viewed as one of the greatest rock albums ever by English radio DJs Marc Riley , who said that " there 's been nothing like it before or since " , and Mark Radcliffe , who called it " the nearest rock record to a string quartet ? everybody 's got a part , and it works brilliantly . "

Marquee Moon was also one of the most influential records from the 1970s and has been cited by critics as a cornerstone of alternative rock . It heavily influenced the indie rock movement of the 1980s , while post @-@ punk acts appropriated the album 's uncluttered production , introspective tone , and meticulously performed instrumentation . Hunter Felt from PopMatters attributed Marquee Moon 's influence on post @-@ punk and new wave acts to the precisely syncopated rhythm section of Fred Smith and Billy Ficca . He recommended 2003 's " definitive " reissue of the album to listeners of garage rock revival bands , whom he said had modeled themselves after Verlaine 's Romantic poetry @-@ inspired lyrics and the " jaded yet somehow impassioned cynicism " of his vocals . According to Sputnikmusic 's Adam Downer , Television introduced an unprecedented style of rock and roll on Marquee Moon that inaugurated post @-@ punk music , while The Guardian said it scaled " amazing new heights of sophistication and intensity " as a " gorgeous , ringing beacon of post @-@ punk " despite being released several months before the Sex Pistols ' Never Mind the Bollocks (1977) . AllMusic editor Stephen Thomas Erlewine believed the record was innovative for abandoning previous New York punk albums ' swing and groove sensibilities in favor of an intellectually stimulating scope that Television achieved instrumentally rather than lyrically . Erlewine claimed " it 's impossible to imagine post @-@ punk soundscapes " without Marquee Moon . Fletcher argued that the songs ' lack of compression , groove , and unnecessary effects provided " a blueprint for a form of chromatic , rather than rhythmic , music that would later come to be called angular " .

In Erlewine 's opinion , Marquee Moon was radical and groundbreaking primarily as " a guitar rock album unlike any other " . Verlaine and Lloyd 's dual playing on the record strongly influenced alternative rock groups such as the Pixies , noise rock acts such as Sonic Youth , and big arena bands like U2 . Greg Kot from the Chicago Tribune wrote that Television " created a new template for guitar rock " because of how Verlaine 's improvised playing was weaved together with Lloyd 's precisely notated solos , particularly on the title track . As a member of U2 , Irish guitarist The Edge simulated Television 's guitar sound with an effects pedal . He later said he had wanted to " sound like them " and that Marquee Moon 's title track had changed his " way of thinking about the guitar " . Verlaine 's jagged , expressive sound on the album made a great impression on American guitarist John Frusciante when he started developing as a guitarist in his early 20s , as it reminded him that " none of those things that are happening in the physical dimension mean anything , whether it 's what kind of guitar you play or how your amp 's set up . It 's just ideas , you know , emotion . " In Rolling Stone , Rob Sheffield called Marquee Moon " one of the all @-@ time classic guitar albums " whose tremulous guitar twang was an inspiration behind bands such as R.E.M. and Joy Division . Joy Division 's Stephen Morris cited it as one of his favorite albums , while R.E.M. ' s Michael Stipe said his love of Marquee Moon was " second only to [Patti Smith 's] Horses " . English guitarist Will Sergeant said it was also one of his favorite records and that Verlaine and Lloyd 's guitar playing was a major influence on his band Echo & the Bunnymen .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written by Tom Verlaine , except where noted .

" Marquee Moon " , shortened on the original LP , was restored to its complete length of 10 : 40 on the 2003 remastered CD .

= = Personnel = =

Credits are adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = = Television = = =

Billy Ficca ? drums

Richard Lloyd ? guitar (solo on tracks 1 , 4 , 5 , and 6) , vocals

Fred Smith ? bass guitar , vocals

Tom Verlaine ? guitar (solo on tracks 2 , 3 , 4 , 7 , and 8) , keyboards , lead vocals , production

= = = Additional personnel = = =

Jim Boyer ? assistant engineering

Greg Calbi ? mastering

Jimmy Douglass ? assistant mixing

Lee Hulko ? mastering

Andy Johns ? engineering , mixing , production

Tony Lane ? art direction

Billy Lobo ? back cover artwork

Robert Mapplethorpe ? photography

Randy Mason ? assistant mixing

John Telfer ? management

= = Charts = =