

# VAN MORRISON

## Another One Of These Things

By Kirby Ferguson

After covering Elvis Costello last week, since I have no one else to review, I have decided to cover the career of Van Morrison. Like Costello, Morrison has a pretty tough catalogue, not too many stinkers here. I recommend his early Warners material over anything on God's green earth. For the curious, *Moondance* is the ideal introduction, but any of his first five albums will astound you (though in different ratios) with their spine tingling dynamics and deceptively powerful, surging arrangements. Several albums have been left out here simply because I haven't heard them - nor do I care to (except for the live set, *It's Too Late To Stop Now*).

*Them Featuring Van Morrison* (Compilation) - Archetypal blues rock. The roots of what he'd become are right here; the disc is fascinating if only for that. Contains one of Van's best rockers, "Gloria," as well as "Baby Please Don't Go," "Here Comes the Night" and "Mystic Eyes." Some may be disturbed by the fact that Morrison would never again return to the almighty guitar.

*T.B. Sheets* (Compilation) - The transition piece between Them and the Warner years. Fairly standard r&b. Features Van's best known - though far from definitive - song, "Brown Eyed Girl" and the critically revered (though I don't know why) title track, a song about Morrison watching his

girlfriend die of tuberculosis, which he broke down in tears after recording.

*Astral Weeks* - My favourite album of all time. Too beautiful for words.



alinity a la *Astral Weeks* to soul. "Caravan" is one of his greatest songs.

*His Band and the Street Choir* - Continues in much the same vein as *Moondance*. It lacks the ebb and flow of that album in exchange for a (fairly) good time, soul atmosphere. Not quite the equal of that album, but few are. For me, "Crazy Face" and "Virgo Clowns" stand out. Contains several of Van's minor chart successes in "Domino," "Blue Money" and "Call Me Up In Dreamland."

*Tupelo Honey* - Another solid effort, but the pain is gone, Van sounds like a happy hippy here. "Wild Night" is one of his better up-tempo numbers (never his specialty).

*Saint Dominic's Preview* - Van gets divorced and it proves to be the saviour of his art. "Gypsy," "Redwood Tree" and "I Will Be There" are functional, but the rest ranks amongst his best work. "Jackie Wilson Said (I'm In Heaven When You Smile)" is his best rocker.

*Hardnose the Highway* - Lambasted by the critics, this is really not that bad. I'll take this over the best of his eighties work anyday. True, it's sometimes nauseating ("Snow In San Anselmo") and frequently forgettable, but "Warm Love," the title track, "Wild Children" and "Purple Heather" work fine. And the voice is at its best, which may be enough in itself. Morrison's Goat's Head Soup. Take that as you will.



*Moondance* - Van's most accessible album. A perfect piece, excellent from top to bottom. His most successful marriage of yearning spiritu-

