

Puluche Album Review Rubric ©

Artist: Van Morrison

Album Title: Moondance (1970) - Warner Bros.

Criteria

Rating

Categories	4 - Exemplary	3 - Proficient	2 - Developing	1 - Underdeveloped	Rating
<u>Compositions</u>	Every song is quality and has a distinctive appeal of its own. Tracks have a perfect flow and continuity that enhance the album's overall appeal.	Many quality songs with distinctive appeal. Tracks have a good flow and continuity that enhance the album's overall appeal.	Some quality songs with distinctive appeal but not sustained. Track flow and continuity have little effect on album's overall appeal.	Few to no quality songs lacking any distinctive appeal. Track flow and continuity have little/poor effect on album's overall appeal.	20
<u>Breaking Ground</u>	Has impressive elements of high creativity and is experimentally innovative. Developing own signature sound. Shows extreme growth and/or potential as a substantial and influential artist.	Features elements of creativity and uniqueness. Shows growth and/or potential as a developing and influential artist.	Has very few moments of creativity and uniqueness. Shows little growth and/or some potential as a developing artist. Displays some stagnation or notable regression as an established artist.	Has no creativity and uniqueness. Shows no growth and/or little potential as a developing or established artist.	20
<u>Engagement</u>	Music has a transcending quality with numerous songs that grab the listener on respective emotional/social levels. Many songs have an addictive effect and memorable quality.	Music has transcending qualities with some songs that grab the listener on respective emotional/social levels. Some songs have an addictive effect and memorable quality.	Music has some transcending qualities with few songs that appeal on respective emotional/social levels, as well as having any addictive or memorable qualities.	Music has minimal transcending qualities and few to no songs that appeal on respective emotional/social levels. No positive memorable qualities.	20
<u>Lyrics</u>	Has a strong lyrical voice with multiple thought-provoking messages with clear and/or possible meanings and depth.	Has notable lyrical voice with some thought-provoking messages and/or possible meanings and depth.	Has limited lyrical voice with few-to-no thought-provoking messages, meanings and depth.	Has a weak lyrical voice with no thought-provoking messages or meanings and seriously lacks any depth.	17.5
<u>Production</u>	Masterful sound quality with noticeable studio techniques employed that demand headphone inquiry. Vision flawlessly executed. Overall packaging and artwork effectively compliments and enhances album enjoyment.	Very good sound quality with some noticeable studio techniques that demand headphone inquiry. Vision is acceptable. Overall packaging and artwork compliments album enjoyment.	Inconsistent sound quality with questionable studio techniques employed. Vision is questionable. Overall packaging and artwork fails to compliment album.	Questionable to poor sound quality. Lacks vision. Overall packaging and artwork fails to compliment album.	17.5

Comments

In a time when jazz was resurfacing the music scene between disco and rock, singer-songwriter Van Morrison found a way to intertwine the use of the genres' elements with his poetic words to create an album that had the potential to stand out from its competitors. The Irish artist's drive for perfection, enabled Morrison to craft individual masterpieces out of most every single on his third solo album, *Moondance*. Morrison begins the album with the anecdotal song "And It Stoned Me," said to be inspired by a childhood memory of Morrison's. The song follows two young boys on a fishing outing whose journey becomes affected by the different presences of water. Morrison uses the motif in his line "oh the water" to build imagery and emotion around the two characters. That along with the simplicity of the instrumental lines keeps listeners attention focused on the content of the story.

Following the young boys' story is the album's jazz infused title track. Although "Moondance" was not released as a single until 1977, it was still a notable song at the time of the album's release. While the entire album dabbles in elements of jazz, this particular love song explores the genre to the fullest extent with its lazy swing, steady percussion and heavy brass. Again Morrison works his lyrics to form the imagery of an outdoor oasis "[be]neath the cover of October skies. And all the leaves on the trees are falling to the sound of the breezes that blow."

In case one ever questioned the vocal abilities of Morrison, "Crazy Love" exhibits the singer's incredible use of falsetto throughout the romantic ballad. The lyrics are heartwarming and poetic, written for Morrison's then wife, Janet Rigsbee. He opens with love in the line "I can hear her heart beat for a thousand miles. And the heavens open every time she smiles." The background vocals by Emily Huston and Jackie Verdell, give a punch of soul to the otherwise smooth and melodic voicing as Morrison sings the famous words: "She gives me love, love, love, love, crazy love." The song is short and sweet, but incredibly unforgettable.

With the rest of the album so obviously influenced by jazz, "Into The Mystic" is a refreshing change of pace. The song has a more traditional singer-songwriter style with the two most prominent voices being the beautifully crafted lines of the guitar underlining the lightness of Morrison's singing. The sound slowly builds into the second half of the song as Morrison comes in with powerful vocals during the line "I don't have to fear it. I want to rock your gypsy soul" - bringing an energy that drives the band through the end of the piece.

The energy continues into the uplifting sounds of "Come Running." As the first single off the album, it effectively uses an improvisational piano line throughout the introduction of the song. It is a perfect example of Morrison's loose and naturalistic vocals as he sings out the course "oh, come a-running to me." As the album comes to an end, a familiar sound peaks though the lines of "Glad Tidings," resembling the island jazz feel of Morrison's single "Brown Eyed Girl." While the song has promising qualities, it lacks the innovation and originality of some of the other singles on the album.

The sound quality and overall packaging of the album meets professional standards. The cover showcases four similar headshots of the singer against a tan backdrop with the title in basic text off the left corner. Much like the music on the album, the cover art is simple, yet effective, and oddly memorable.

<p><u>Commendations</u></p>	<p><i>Moondance</i> meets the expectations as Morrison's follow-up album to the commercial success of his previous release, <i>Astral Week</i>. With each new album, Morrison exploits his creative genius, giving fans the opportunity to experience something new, yet still familiar. He uses this album to explore jazz while still staying true to his poetic lyrics; a merger that was done successful at a time when the genre was beginning to gain traction in the US. While the material of <i>Moondance</i> is less vulnerable than that of <i>Astral Week</i>, it still explodes with the same passion of his previous works, creating a number of notable singles. While the initial success of <i>Moondance</i> was substantial, Morrison's music proves itself to be timeless as it continued to collect fans and eventually reached triple platinum status in 1996. In 1999, <i>Moondance</i> was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame, and in 2003, it was ranked number 65 on Rolling Stones 500 Greatest Albums of All Times list.</p>
<p><u>Next Steps</u></p>	<p><i>Moondance</i> was just the start to what would become a lifelong career for one of music's most influential singer-songwriters. Morrison released a total of seven albums during the 70s with almost no time off between recordings. His intense work schedule continued well into the following decades, rounding out his current studio album count at 34. The long hours and hard work paid off for Morrison as he has been the recipient of a number of awards including six Grammy's and a Brit Award. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1993, the Irish Music Hall of Fame in 1999, and the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2003. At 68, Morrison continues to perform and release recordings. His latest studio album was released in 2012, entitled <i>Born to Sing: No Plan B</i>. As the title states, Morrison is doing what he was born to do has no intention of leaving his music any time soon.</p>
<p><u>Reviewer</u></p>	<p>Jessica Braun Gervais IRC: Tom Byrne</p>