

No. 33 APR 2005

# **ave**length

THE UNOFFICIAL **VAN MORRISON** MAGAZINE

*In this issue...*

Books, Books, Books

Live 2004

Live 2005

*...politics and religion, superstition go hand in hand...*

In reality they did have talent, and made some good records.

As a dedicated *Wavelength* SuperSub, I was pleased to see that Howard DeWitt acknowledged Simon Gee and *Wavelength* in many places – and indeed, acknowledged *Wavelength* as the main source for several parts of the book. And not just Simon but also his predecessor (of sorts) Stephen McGinn.

There are some bugbears with the book and these are more than minor because of repetition – the frequent errors of English (“immigrate” instead of “emigrate” and “disinterested” instead of “uninterested”, etc.) are surprising in a work by an American University Professor, but there is worse – poor grammar (too much incorrect punctuation), frequent repetition and several inconsistencies (e.g. band members decided to leave the group in some places and were sacked in others). Moreover, there are mistakes both about Van (e.g. page 351 states that *Gloria* was the B side of *Don't Start Crying Now* whereas it was *One Two Brown Eyes*), and generally (the Animals and the Rolling Stones are said to be the “other big Decca artists”, whereas it was much, much later that the Animals moved from Columbia to Decca).

Notwithstanding, this is a hugely riveting read – well written and interesting in all parts. There is much new information and much more detail on stuff that is not new – even for someone who has read every work on Van published for 40 years (growing up in Belfast, in the early 1960's there was a huge local coverage of *Don't Start Crying Now* and *Baby, Please Don't Go*) and I have original reviews on Van from January 1965 in the *New Musical Express*. Reading on page after page that Van and Them and other groups were ripped off by the music industry in the 1960's readily explains the many Van songs on this subject, subsequently.

Altogether, this is more than a book on Van. It is a comment on Northern Ireland in the Post War years and on the 1960's music scene. However DeWitt is surprised that although his family was quite well off albeit in a working class community, Van was, and remains, haunted by the spectre of unemployment and of poverty. Growing up at the same time and in the same working class streets, all of us were, and remain, committed to saving for the proverbial rainy day and 99% of parents would go to the shop and pay cash when food was needed – something that Howard DeWitt found hard to believe in Van's folks.

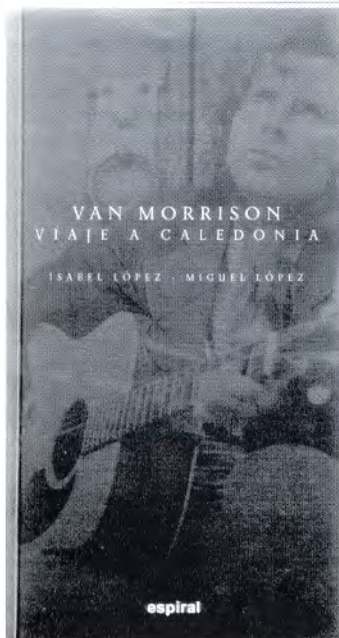
#### JOHN JOHNSTONE

**W** Published this year so far have been two books in Spain. Both, of course in Spanish, one is a translation of Brian Hinton's *Celtic Crossroads*, entitled *El Genial Poeta Del Rock*, from RobinBook on ISBN 8496222152. Quite why this has been translated and published in Spain is a bit of a mystery, since neither Heylin's nor Rogan's new tome look like being published over there. [See above for the cover].

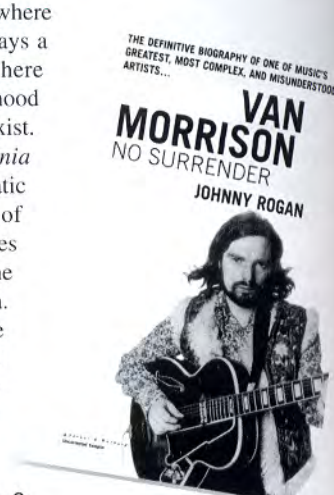
Another Spanish book is *Viaje A Caledonia* by Isabel and Miguel Lopez from Espiral on ISBN 8424510208, available from website

:[www.viajecaledonia.com](http://www.viajecaledonia.com).

The book is a new effort and contains all the lyrics both in English and Spanish. Being the second Spanish book to include Van's lyrics without permission, one assumes that the copyright laws are different over there! Of course I have no idea what the text is all about, but the photos are the usual ones, and a few 'borrowed' from *Wavelength* without permission. Here's a quick review from Magda Mateu from Barcelona :

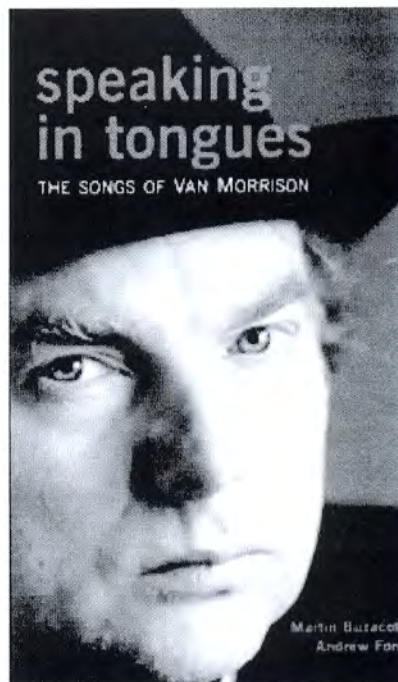


“This is a different Van Morrison biography, written in Spanish, that catches you from the first line up to the end. The plot is following our man's discography and it's riddled with little stories, interview extracts, etc. where we can guess that Van's life it's always a eternal search for Caledonia, where Caledonia the times of the childhood where no business and no sorrows exist. It's across this *Road To Caledonia* where the reader, specially the Vanatic reader, can find many points of coincidence with the writer's tastes and comments about the music, the songs and the Van Morrison persona. The book is specially centred in the beginnings and Caledonia Soul Orchestra periods, arriving up to the latest concerts and with some unpublished photographs as well.”



**W** And what's to come this year? Following hard on the heels of this magazine will come the most exciting project since Clinton Heylin's in-depth biography. In May **Johnny Rogan** publishes his *No Surrender* through Secker & Warburg [ISBN 0436205661]. Contrary to earlier reports this is not just his previous book updated by a couple of chapters, but a complete rewrite including many new interviews and information gathered in the 20 years since the last book was published. Full reviews and stuff in the next magazine in August of course.

Also in May from Australia comes *Speaking In Tongues* from **Martin Buzacott** and **Andrew Ford**, published by ABC Books, ISBN 0733312977. [Hopefully to be stocked by *Wavelength*]. Andrew Ford writes thus about the book exclusively for us :



“Martin Buzacott and I first talked about writing this book in 1988, but it wasn't until 2002 that we began to work on it in earnest. During that time, Clinton Heylin's biography of Morrison appeared and, since *Speaking in Tongues* went to press, two more biographies have come along. This only throws our book into even starker relief, because *Speaking in Tongues* is avowedly not a biography. It is a book about Van Morrison's songs – about his words and his music, and, crucially, about what happens when they collide in his singing.

It seems to Martin and me that Van Morrison's fans are smarter and better read

than most, and that their listening experience is equally wide. Van himself has always assumed that his listeners know who William Blake and W. B. Yeats are (as well, of course, as Muddy Waters and Hank Williams and Mahalia Jackson), and so we haven't been afraid to discuss (and employ) literary and religious imagery alongside often detailed analyses of individual songs.

Naturally we don't have all the answers. There will always be aspects of Morrison's art that remain mysterious. Like you (presumably) we don't know who Madame George was! But, to be bluntly honest, we also don't particularly care. What we care quite a lot about is why the song that bears her name still sounds so good after all these years.

**AUDITORIO ALFREDO KRAUS,  
LAS PALMAS DE GRAN CANARIA,  
SPAIN  
3 JANUARY 2005**

1h 35m :Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart No.1 :Have I Told You Lately [Las Vegas version] :Evening In June :In The Midnight :Whinin' Boy Moan :Carrying A Torch :Choppin' Wood :Don't Worry About A Thing :Into The Mystic :Whatever Happened To PJ Proby? :Fame :The Beauty Of The Days Gone By :Wonderful Remark :Georgia :Stop Drinking :Back On Top :Philosophers Stone > Oh, Didn't He Ramble? :All Work And No Play :It's All In The Game > You Know What They're Writing About > Make It Real One More Time :Brown Eyed Girl \*\*\* :Precious Time [scat ending]



**REVIEW** : One word would be enough to describe the concert: EXCELLENT. Enjoying the lovely weather of the Island, Van felt happy, joyful and energetic. A hi-design hall with perfect acoustics and a respectful audience completed the ingredients for a great show. David Hayes was back now with a grey beard. Jeff Leach was not out of tune at all. Special mention for Matt Holland, almost the band director, controlling and leading.

Bobby Ruggiero lives in his own world, just look at his face while playing, but his creativity helps to keep up with the rest of the band. Joking between Van and the band, specially with Holland, creating a relaxed atmosphere and enjoyment on stage. We have to point out moments like *Into The Mystic*, *Philosophers Stone*, *It's All In The Game* and *The Beauty Of The Days Gone By* as well as variations on *Carrying A Torch*, *Wonderful Remark* even *Precious Time*. An excellent night that keeps the candle alive. **Ramon Felis**, translated by **Miquel Rovira**.

**AUDITORIO ALFREDO KRAUS,  
LAS PALMAS DE GRAN CANARIA,  
SPAIN  
4 JANUARY 2005**

1h 32m :Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart No.1 :Have I Told You Lately [Las Vegas version] :Evening In June :In The Midnight :Hey Mr. DJ :In The Afternoon > Ancient Highway > Joe Turner Sings > Country Fair :Whinin' Boy Moan :Moondance :Saint James Infirmary :Choppin' Wood :Don't Worry About A Thing :Streets Of Arklow > You Don't Pull No Punches, But You Don't Push The River :Help Me :Stop Drinking :Back On Top :Into The Mystic :Precious Time [scat ending] \*\*\* :Brown Eyed Girl :Gloria.

**The Van Morrison Band** : Ned Edwards, David Hayes, Matt Holland, Jeff Leach, Bobby Ruggiero, Martin Winning.

**SMART-ARSE REMARK** : Some smart arse, or to give him his full name, **John Clapham**, has noticed that Van and the band are interpolating the tune *Yo* from the *DAYS LIKE THIS* outages into *Moondance*. Exactly when this started I have not yet determined, and

neither has he, but let's just say sometime from late 2004 into 2005 - anyone who identifies the first time it was played will earn my eternal gratitude, maybe.

**REVIEW** : The second day was a good concert but not reaching the highlights of the first one. Cooler atmosphere and the same SetList as lately. Worth mentioning a good *In The Afternoon*, a very good *Streets Of Arklow* and *Into The Mystic* and of great interest the different *Moondance*, *Back On Top* and even the ending of *Gloria*.

The fortunate islands are already past, now waiting for the next Spanish shows in Madrid and Malaga. **Ramon Felis**, translated by **Miquel Rovira**.

**THE HIPPODROME,  
BRISTOL,  
ENGLAND  
10 JANUARY 2005**

1h 31m :Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart No.1 :Have I Told You Lately [Las Vegas version] :In The Midnight :Talk Is Cheap :Don't Worry About A Thing :In The Afternoon > Ancient Highway :Whatever Happened To PJ Proby? :Whinin' Boy Moan :Fame :Rambler's Blues :Baby Please Don't Go :Choppin' Wood :Streets Of Arklow > You Don't Pull No Punches, But You Don't Push The River :Back On Top :Sometimes We Cry :Walkin' My Baby Back Home :All Work And No Play :Bright Side Of The Road :Precious Time [scat ending] \*\*\* :Brown Eyed Girl

**The Van Morrison Band** : Ned Edwards, David Hayes, Matt Holland, Jeff Leach, Bobby Ruggiero, Martin Winning.



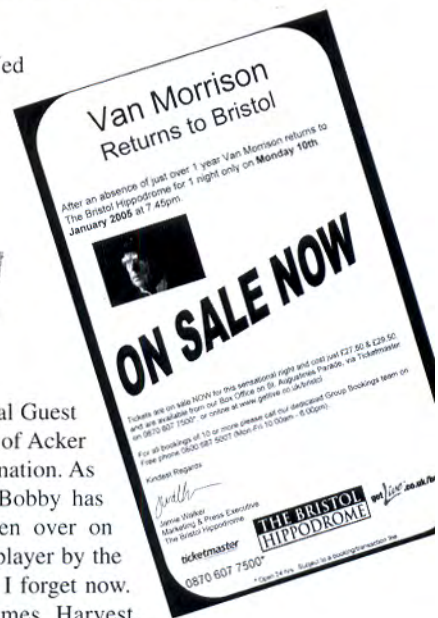
**REVIEW**

: The first thing to say was that the show was advertised as Special Guest Acker Bilk but there was no sign of Acker all evening, and no word of explanation. As Simon had told me in advance Bobby has departed and Ruggiero has taken over on drums. There is a new keyboard player by the name of Leach whose first name I forget now. He used to be in Barclay James Harvest, remember them?. Also David Hayes has returned.

*Inarticulate Speech* was the first number which the people around me ignored and carried on gossiping, SSSH! I shouted, I was tired and irritable. Then Van shuffled on with his sax - and immediately hit a bum note but then played some really nice sax. His hat was shoved right back on his head so he was all forehead and looked a bit silly all evening. *Lately* was next. Good, I thought, that's got that out of the way!. I did notice though that Ruggiero is a much more noticeable drummer than Bobby was. *In The Midnight* was next which I like and Matt's harmonies are a nice touch.

*Afternoon* was excellent with Matt and Martin both excelling themselves. *PJ Proby* was next, another bad choice of song by Van in my opinion. At the end he sang whatever happened to Kent Walton?, grappling fans will remember him as a wrestling commentator in the 60's but Van might remember him for occasionally presenting *Ready Steady Go* [[actually Pat it was *Thank Your Luck Stars!*]].

A new song to me followed, which Simon later told me was called *Rambler's Blues*. I thought it was excellent, Ned played really nice



The group started off with an instrumental version of *Inarticulate* as they have been doing for months, with lots of brass and Van coming on stage nearly unnoticed blowin' his sax. *Have I Told You Lately* is such another starting point of the SetList, but the hit got a swing version which surprised. Van Morrison who is turning 60, doesn't get his inspiration anymore in agitation. In the afternoon he had been visiting record & bookshops. He likes to build up a concert on gospel, folk, blues & swing and he seems to hope that something will happen that will lead towards the end to a sort of highlight of ecstasy.

It has to be said that we had to wait a long time for the highlight. Oh sure, Van played lots of good music. He mumbled himself through *Rimbaud* and gave the audience a first blueskick with *Foggy Mountain Top*. He sang in his typical style, often mumblin', maybe a bit more lyrical than usually. But we had to wait till the British soul singer Chris Farlowe (65) as special guest turned up to sing with Van *Sometimes We Cry* in a black gospel style, before something "higher" happened.

It's that "higher", that "spiritual" that you expect from Van. But when Farlowe left the concert fell back to the level of good mediocrity. When *Moondance* was played very calmly, we wondered if this singer has found a balance, or is just playing on automatic pilot. Strangely enough and also luckily, Van thought it was enough and brought some rock-'n-roll in the house. *Stop Drinking* is a Lightning Hopkins song that Van adapted, but all of a sudden we got rougher guitar solos and for a moment the spirit of the Clash appeared in the theatre [[er, Joe Strummer was there]].

Because the big clock on stage came close to one hour and a half, Morrison decided to play *Precious Time* and the sing a long *Baby Blue*. As a treat we were given *BEG* and *Gloria* [[real treat, that!]].

It was mainly a party like Morrison who made the right choice for these gigs (which fall outside a normal tour), to play a special, nice set for gourmets. The audience considered one hour and half not long enough, but that meant that the hunger wasn't fed. And it's a good feelin' to leave the table with some hunger. **Translated by Diana De Roo.**

## AB (ANCIENNE BELGIQUE), BRUSSELS, BELGIUM 21 JANUARY 2005

1h 32m CF :Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart No.1 > Daring Night :Whinin' Boy Moan :Whatever Happened To PJ Proby? :Foreign Window :Mule Skinner Blues :Sometimes We Cry [CF] :Walkin' My Baby Back Home [CF] :How Long Has This Been Going On? :Choppin' Wood :Georgia :Goin' Down Geneva > Brand New Cadillac :Back On Top :It's A Man's, Man's, Man's World [CF] > When The Clock Strikes > DLMB - JB :Jackie Wilson Said :In The Midnight :Precious Time [scat ending] \*\*\* :And The Healing Has Begun \*\*\* :Gloria [CF]

**The Van Morrison Band** : Ned Edwards, David Hayes, Matt Holland, Jeff Leach, Bobby Ruggiero, Martin Winning. Guest : Chris Farlowe.

**DOUBLE REVIEW 1** : Greetings from Brussels - Van's two shows at the Ancienne Belgique, a nice intimate theatre, showed off essentially an evolving new band and a singer whose voice is as supple and strong and sweet and powerful as ever. Van repeated only seven songs over the course of thirty seven tunes over the two nights.

**Night one** was a more laid back gig in a jazzy vein but Van's phrasing was as inventive as ever. No spine chilling moments but a very nice *Rimbaud* and *Foggy Mountain Top*. The fairly unsurprising set list with Chris Farlowe on for the usual songs pleased the excellent respectful audience. A nice strong new arrangement of *All Saints Day*.

**Night two** took things up two notches - *Inarticulate* directly into the real deal - a prayerful *Daring Night* with all the stars shining so bright in the firmament it moved. A little later came *Foreign Window* like a blessing - absolutely beautiful with David Hayes on bass writhing and bending -

Hayes' work all night long was a wonder. New keyboard player Jeff Leach is terrific, as is drummer Bobby Ruggiero. Horns are tight, Ned is Ned. Van was on top vocal form and in great mood. *Georgia* very special, Van rearing back at the mike. He left nothing behind this night - gave it his all including the sublime *Healing Has Begun*. As one who has found much of the past year fairly routine by Van standards, this night was special. **(IN) - Dan Murray - snowbound on the Interstate twixt Brussels and Sleepy Hollow.**

**DOUBLE REVIEW 2** : The concert venue was exceptional, as good as any I've been to, with great bar facilities, small, even intimate, setting, incredibly good sound, and a very appreciative crowd both nights.

**The first night** was very standard fare, with the exception of the opening *Inarticulate*, which had a very meandering Van solo which I loved. *Foggy Mountain Top* was probably the stand out song, with Ned pretty cool on harmonica. We'd bumped into Chris Farlowe in the lift at Brussels' station and I'd embarrassed him by making a big show of shaking his hand and asking him to sing *Baby Blue* that night. So it was fun when he came out to do the song and stuck a big thumbs up over to me!

We were right in front of the new keyboard player, who is also a good addition, and someone kept distracting him by telling him to play the twiddly bits. Also, *HITYL* was actually listenable for the first time in years. Far less Las Vegas, and a bit more sincerity.

So, nothing really to get pumped up about but, nonetheless, delivered in a very competent fashion and I went out happy

**The second night** was significantly better. The band were still on form but the choice of song gave a bit more to the discerning concert goer. *Daring Night* was a nice start but when he picked up his guitar and started into *Foreign Window* I was gob-smacked. Robert, from US had asked earlier to shout for *Foreign Window* and I'd said he had no chance!!!! How weird is that?!! The performance was so good, and Van seemed to be so into it, that I honestly at least half expected that he'd go over to the new keyboard player and tell him to start up *In The Garden*! But then , reality kicked in!

We did, however, get a magnificent *Georgia*, with lungs in full blast mode, and an enjoyable *Man's Game* with Farlowe, who had already raised a laugh earlier during *Walkin' My Baby Back Home*, by throwing a line in about making Van Morrison Smile! Then, towards the end we got an above average *Healing*. I say above average, rather than stellar, not because of anything to do with the performance per se. In fact Van had his voice and his guitar and his body movements completely wrapped around this song and I thought he was genuinely getting into the music. But then he gave a quick glance over to the big red clock, saw that he was running out of time and brought things to a quick conclusion so he could get Chris back on for *Gloria*.

Such a pity, but I went home happy. **(IN) - Bernard McGuinn.**

## PALACIO DE CONGRESOS, MADRID, SPAIN 29 JANUARY 2005

1h 34m :Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart No.1 > No Prima Donna [instr.] :Have I Told You Lately [Las Vegas version] :Whatever Happened To PJ Proby? :Don't Worry About A Thing :Talk Is Cheap :In The Afternoon > Ancient Highway > Joe Turner Sings :Into The Mystic :Days Like This :Back On Top :Tore Down A La Rimbaud :Going Down Geneva > Brand New Cadillac :Rough God Goes Riding :Stop Drinking :Cleaning Windows > Be Bop A Lula :All Work And No Play :In The Midnight :Help Me :Moondance \*\*\* :Brown Eyed Girl

**REVIEW** : Van arrived in Madrid in freezing temperatures but received with the very warm welcome he deserves. The city has always been excessive with Van, to the point of leaving the stage because he didn't like the audience behaviour. The people are sometimes too

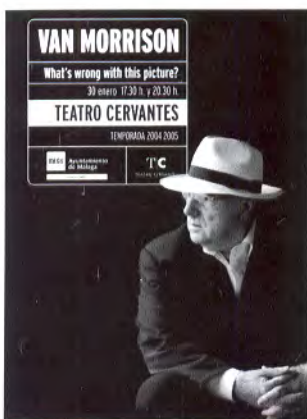
effusive when Van demands an intimate moment. But today the audience was very respectful and Van was very pleased. We can describe the show as: energy, power, intensity and wanting to like. An excellent show with high moments like *In The Afternoon*, *Into The Mystic*, an amazing acoustic *Tore Down A La Rimbaud* full of refinement and beauty, *Rough God Goes Riding* and *In The Midnight*. There were moments of silence, and from these climbing to the top. He was even asking for more volume to his sound crew. And tomorrow a couple more in Malaga. Van's weekend in Spain will be really a musical pleasure. **Ramon Felis**, translated by **Miquel Rovira**.

**TEATRO CERVANTES,  
MALAGA,  
SPAIN  
30 JANUARY 2005  
EARLY SHOW : 17.30**

1h 20m :Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart No.1 > No Prima Donna [instr.] :Whinin' Boy Moan :Goldfish Bowl :Days Like This :Evening In June :How Long Has This Been Going On? :Don't Worry About A Thing :I Like It Like That :Foreign Window :Little Village :Cleaning Windows :There Stands The Glass :Lost John :Back On Top :In The Midnight :Precious Time [scat ending] :Brown Eyed Girl

**REVIEW :** It doesn't look that great but was really one good show. Seriously. Highlights : *Little Village* - Ned gets a worthy applause for his mandolin solo. There's a lovely piano solo by Jeff. Van's sax solo takes it right down, you can hear Ned's mandolin in the background, just wonderful. Martin & Matt meet Van stage centre for a "blow". *In The Midnight* - Van ends this by singing "My fingernails are too long" "I need more Videos / DVDs" "My hair is so long" ... (IN) - Nosey.

**TEATRO CERVANTES,  
MALAGA,  
SPAIN  
30 JANUARY 2005  
LATE SHOW : 20.00**



1h 21m :The Beauty Of The Days Gone By :Wonderful Remark :Rough God Goes Riding :Whatever Happened To PJ Proby? :Have I Told You Lately [Las Vegas version] :In The Afternoon > Ancient Highway > Joe Turner Sings > Summertime In England > Burning Ground :Moondance :Sack O'Woe :Mule Skinner Blues :Streets Of Arklow > You Don't Pull No Punches, But You Don't Push The River > Country Fair :Jackie Wilson Said :Help Me :Brown Eyed Girl :Stop Drinking :Gloria

**The Van Morrison Band :** Ned Edwards, David Hayes, Matt Holland, Jeff Leach, Bobby Ruggiero, Martin Winning.

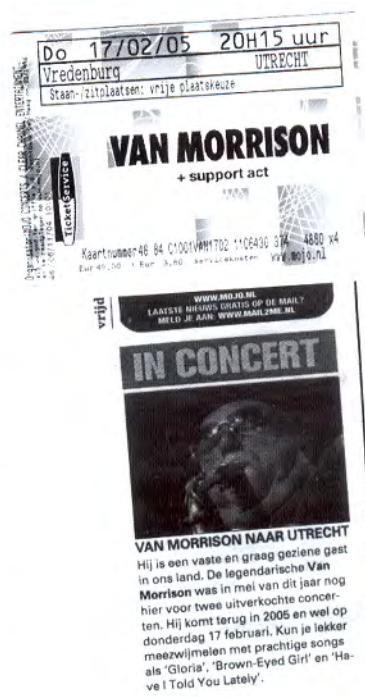
**REVIEW 1 :** Highlights : *In The Afternoon* - Jeff gives us some lovely piano in the background (very similar to what Robin Aspland gave us). Another grand solo by Matt. Even Martin gave the audience cause to applaud his solo. Van takes us along the *Ancient Highway*, Driving all



night long, then blows a sweet sax solo. The band just maintain the same riff as Van takes us Down "Yeah, don't stop playing" says Van, and we're off to that place where only Van can take us. "Meet Me Down" alternated by sax. "Church of St. John" repeated then *Burning Ground*, scating at the end of this is something different. "Oh Yeah" someone shouts and he takes it down yet again "Swedenburg Church", "The Mystic Church" "To Meditate" another sax solo by Van. Truly wonderful version of this song. *Streets Of Arklow* - Van gives a downward thrust on his acoustic, Ned super on harp (easily his best instrument). Flute and piano are wonderful in the background, then comes Jeff's solo (wow). Van takes us away (again) with a sax solo. "Way back down in a shady lane" he sings "You don't pull no punches, but you push the river" all the while there's a flute and piano playing in the background. We even get a "Golden Autumn Day". (IN) - Nosey.

**DOUBLE REVIEW 2 :** And it goes on. The two shows in Malaga seemed like a long one with a break. The interesting first half towards the middle with an acoustic traditional set including *Foreign Window*, *Little Village*, the classic country *There Stands The Glass* and *Lost John* (he always remember Lonnie in Malaga). Van playing the sax concentrated and David Hayes playing devoted. The band didn't sound as powerful as in Madrid but very efficient. After the break the very best was to come, starting with *The Beauty Of The Days Gone By*, followed by a brilliant *Wonderful Remark*. Then came the highest moment in all the weekend *In The Afternoon*, mixed with *Summertime In England* and *Burning Ground*. Playing the sax, playing with his voice and playing with our passion for him. Not much more we can say after this. But that was not all, then came *Streets Of Arklow* with *You Don't Pull No Pushes*, *And You Don't Push The River* and *Country Fair*. That was heaven for our soul and ears. Our good friend from Canterbury, Nosey, said it was the best show in the last six years. We can't go that far, but was a magic evening and a weekend to keep in the memory of our musical dreams with Van. **Ramon Felis**, translated by **Miquel Rovira**.

**MUZIEKCENTRUM VREDENBURG,  
UTRECHT,  
THE NETHERLANDS  
17 FEBRUARY 2005**



1h 33m :Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart No.1 [\*] :The Beauty Of The Days Gone By :Don't Worry About A Thing :In The Midnight :Listen To The Lion :Fame :Whatever Happened To PJ Proby? :Moondance :Rambler's Blues :Have I Told You Lately [Las Vegas version] :Philosophers Stone :All Saints Day :Back On Top :Streets Of Arklow > You Don't Pull No Punches, But You Don't Push The River > River Of Time :Precious Time [scat ending] :It's All In The Game > You Know What They're Writing About > Make It Real One More Time > :Brown Eyed Girl \*\*\* :Help Me > Batman Theme [\*, horn instr.]



A delighted sigh went round the crowd and a sotto voce whisper started: "Van's in good form". From then, it's hard to pick out highlights, simply because there were so many. Mr Morrison selected, seemingly at random, a selection of songs from five decades. Some were new, like *Fame*, the searing satire on stardom from *WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?*; or the poignant traditional lament, *Saint James Infirmary*, from the same album; also, the resolutely uptempo *Whinin' Boy Moan*, again from the Blue Note CD.

Others we snatched at like starving children allowed to dive for scraps. We played with Van as he tossed iconic tracks to us, like *Jackie Wilson* and *Brown Eyed Girl*, and had a laugh with him on *Walkin' My Baby Back Home* and *That's Life*, on which he giggled through a line. Oh, sublime February night, we knew that this was one of "those" Van gigs, that would be carefully unwrapped for years afterwards, re-sung and retold to grandchildren. *Back On The Top* [sic] and *Philosophers Stone* were other classics we drank in and sometimes it was almost too much emotion for a big Belfast audience bursting with pride for one of their own. Snatches of sax, organ, piano, brass and guitar soared up to the rafters of the Ulster Hall from the Van's top-notch band and the man himself came the closest to grinning I've ever seen.

Fighting back a tear, as Van sang *Sometimes We Cry*, I remembered that I'd played the classic on my radio programme when motorcyclist Joey Dunlop died. *And The Healing Has Begun* as one of the encores was another moment's poignant pause.

One of Van's chorus mantras "from the backstreets, from the backstreets" grew into "that's where I'm from". He's risen from the back streets of East Belfast to the top and, when you're at the top, there's nowhere left to climb.

He's still there; keep lifting your mike stand and throwing it over your shoulder, Mr Morrison. Van, you really are the Man.

## AUDITORIUM EUSKALDUNA, BILBAO, SPAIN 28 FEBRUARY 2005

1h 31m :Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart No.1 > No Prima Donna [instr.] :Have I Told You Lately [Las Vegas version] :All Saints Day :Philosophers Stone :All Work And No Play :Whatever Happened To PJ Proby? :Don't Worry About A Thing :How Long Has This Been Going On? :Back On Top :In The Midnight :Moondance :Sometimes We Cry :Precious Time [scat ending] :Stop Drinking :Brown Eyed Girl :Sack O'Woe :Centerpiece > Blues Backstage :Jackie Wilson Said :Bright Side Of The Road :Gloria

## AUDITORIUM EUSKALDUNA, BILBAO, SPAIN 1 MARCH 2005

1h 30m :Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart No.1 :Have I Told You Lately [Las Vegas version] :Into The Mystic :Whinin' Boy Moan :Sack O'Woe :Choppin' Wood :Days Like This :Jackie Wilson Said :Tore Down A La Rimbaud :Wonderful Remark :Little Village :In The Afternoon :Precious Time [scat ending] :Moondance :Mule Skinner Blues :Stop Drinking :Saint James Infirmary :All Saints Day :Brown Eyes Girl \*\*\* :Gloria

**The Van Morrison Band** : Alec Dankworth, Ned Edwards, Matt Holland, Jeff Leach, Bobby Ruggiero, Martin Winning.

**DOUBLE REVIEW** : He had everything needed for a good show, almost 2000 people in the hall, completely full. The *Euskalduna* is a beautiful hall similar to the Belfast's Waterfront Hall, but it was not the

day. The **first show** started with *Inarticulate* and a sax duel as Van came on stage. Jeff Leach improving everyday, very elegant and wearing a tie, but Van was not in a good mood. He was apathetic, complaining most of the show. The metals were powerful. In *Philosophers Stone* a good bass solo by Alec Dankworth, back playing with the band. Matt conducting the band. They played *How Long Has This Been Going On?* with feeling. And really I preferred that Ned Edwards didn't choose the songs to play, and then we definitely sang. During *Moondance* Van left stage and Matt presented the musicians as they were playing solos. Good and rich instrumental intro for *Centerpiece*. And ending again with *Gloria*, this time a slightly different version. Towards the second half of the show Van really was looking to go back to the hotel.

**Next day** was quite different. He was much more up to the job but the SetList was again very predictable. He only gave the audience only just enough, but well delivered. The sound at some moments, like the day before, seemed to have a bit of echo but was put right. The best of the night was *Little Village*, each musician playing solos and a big ovation to finish. The good concerts are not only the band, the audience, or even Van, they are made by the songs, and his choice of the set list can be a huge success or just another show. In the night to emphasise the excellent work of Alec Dankworth on bass, and the positive attitude of Ruggiero. The ingredients were all in Bilbao but the result was not as expected. We ended with a bittersweet flavour. **Ramon Felis**, translated by **Miquel Rovira**.

## SYMPHONY HALL, BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND 5 MARCH 2005

1h 31m :Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart No.1 :Have I Told You Lately [Las Vegas version] :It Once Was My Life :Back On Top :Georgia :Don't Worry About A Thing :The Beauty Of The Days Gone By :Dead Or Alive :Jackie Wilson Said :Sometimes We Cry :Walkin' My Baby Back Home :Cleaning Windows :Precious Time [scat ending] :Moondance :Saint James Infirmary :Bright Side Of The Road :All Work And No Play :Brown Eyed Girl \*\*\* :Stop Drinking :Gloria

**The Van Morrison Band** : Alec Dankworth, Ned Edwards, Matt Holland, Jeff Leach, Bobby Ruggiero, Martin Winning.

**REVIEW** : Oh dear - are the bad old days back again? Or was it the sterile venue, or the Van-rent-an-audience? Whatever it was, there was nothing much inspiring in this show. No workout at any point, and Van only appeared to get animated during a dynamic *Saint James*. Another great *Georgia* to add to the canon, and a fine *Beauty*, but that was about it really. Apart from the welcome return of Alec Dankworth to bass duties there is not much else to say. The sound of Alec's double bass booming across Symphony Hall was wonderful, and his bowing technique on the opening of *Saint James* produced a startling and novel sonic effect. Great replacement for David Hayes indeed. All competently sung, played and delivered, but we know from Utrecht 2 and elsewhere this year that Van can still bring us more, even as 60 approaches. This one was for completists only, and those who like to hear band introductions - as Matt said after another embarrassing guitar solo in *Moondance* - "Say hello to Ned Edwards".. Say goodbye more like. **Simon Gee**.

Late April 2005 - Since I wrote that things have picked up considerably and with the new songs from *MAGIC TIME* being slowly introduced into the set, the band have become much tighter, enjoy playing again, and Van is back on form. Look out in the next mag for reviews from the Shaw Theatre show and much more. **SG**



## Gerald Dawe

writer, new book *Lake Geneva*, reviewed by CL Dallat in *The Guardian*, 18 October 2003 :

Another poem, *The Jazz Club*, might seem a ritual nod to pre-Troubles Belfast's links to America (jazz and its post-war exponents feature prominently in the work of James Simmons, Michael Longley and Seamus Deane). But in the sequence Dawe successfully annexes the older poets' territory with his recurring terraces and his mother's laconic, spondaic exuberance after an "Ella" performance - "I'm sent" - much as Van Morrison hops from Kerouac and Bechet to a physical Belfast of fanlights and street lamps. It would be easy to over stress parallels: Dawe has written on Morrison; both attended Orangefield School; and Morrison has his own extended riff on *Goin' Down Geneva*. Both are allusive. While Morrison shamelessly raids Woody Guthrie and Howlin' Wolf alongside Dylan Thomas and John Donne to map his "Caledonian" soul, Dawe finds reference for his own more restrained map-making in Melville, Barzini, F Scott Fitzgerald and De Chirico.

## Catherine Zeta-Jones

actress, interviewed in *Maxim*, 5 November 2003. Translated by Andrea Without :

"That image is disturbing to me. What kind of music do you listen to?"  
"Soul. I'm obsessed with Gladys Knight. [Lying with pathetic obviousness] I used to be a Pip".  
"No you weren't".  
"Yes, during the in-between years. I can do the dances. [Stands up and performs Pip-like twirl]. I love Elvis Presley and Van Morrison, too. Every Sunday morning for 15 years, my father woke me up to Elvis Presley singing *American Trilogy* or Van Morrison's *Moondance*. I love that about music: how emotionally involved you become with it".

## Apocryphal story

repeated in *The Frenzy Of Renown*, an article by John Walsh on the Hay Festival in *Word*, August 2003 :

And Van Morrison has played two concerts in the AOL tent. He is a hardy annual at Hay. He has come every year since 1995 [[NO!]]. After his first-ever gig to a literary crowd in a tent, he emerged dripping with sweat and met the festival organiser, Peter Florence. "I've never been so close to an audience in my life", he said. "Oh really", said Florence, you mean you felt a really warm kinda empathy with them?" "Naw!", shouted the irascible Van, "I mean, they were sittin' right in front of mah fuckin' knees!"

## Dylan Jones

writer, *Word Of Mouth*, *Word*, August 2003 :  
Gadgets :

Years ago I would have devoured iPod technology and made endless Van Morrison, Buzzcocks and Steely Dan compilations, but now I don't have the time.

## G. Marq Roswell

Music Supervisor of the Alan Parker Movie *The Commitments*, unknown website :

"Another great story is when I met with Van Morrison. Our thought was to have Van play Joey The Lips, the trumpet player, and also have him produce the album tracks. So I went to meet Van at his little local pub in Holland Park. I'm such a fan that it was hard to maintain composure, but I managed to keep it together 'cause I'm a pro [laughs]. So, I asked him if he was interested in the part and in producing the band's tracks. He said yes, that he'd love to, which was very exciting. When the day came for Van to meet Alan Parker, Van was hours late, and basically, it didn't go well with Parker. I got a call from Alan at the hotel afterwards, and he said, 'This world is not big enough for both of our egos', meaning his and Van's. And then he added, 'And we know which ego will prevail.' [laughs] It was great, classic stuff".

## Tom Jones

singer, interviewed in *Rolling Stone*, 30 October 2003 :

While [Tom] Jones and Wyclef prepared for their recordings by hitting a series of London clubs, a duet with Van Morrison on Morrison's *Sometimes We Cry* was more hard won. "If you're doing something Van understands and likes, he's great", Jones says. "And if the musicians are playing the way he wants them to play, he's great. But if there's a fly in the ointment he just walks away. He didn't like the drummer on the session so he said, 'I want you to change places with the percussionist'. So the drummer changed places with the percussionist and the percussionist played drums, and Van didn't like him either. Instead of trying to explain to these drummers what he did want, he walked out of the studio".

Jones continues, "I said to the guy that handles him, 'What now? What are we going to do now?' He said, 'Van doesn't like these drummers, so we have to send to London for a drummer he knows and then we'll have another go at it'. The session was at Van's studio in Bath, so we had to wait about four or five hours to get this drummer from London. But once Van heard him play and it gelled, he was good as gold".

