

ASTRAL WEEKS? – IT'S NOT JUST ME, ...



THE RECORDING

Van: "The entire LP was recorded in two eight-hour sessions, plus two overdub sessions. That was the whole album." (Yorke p.51).

Astral Weeks was recorded in just two sessions (48 hours) at Century Sound Studios, on West 52nd Street in New York (25 September & 15 October 1968), using NY session (jazz) musicians: Richard Davis (bass), Connie Kay (drums) from the Modern Jazz Quartet, Warren Smith Jr. (percussionist/vibraphone), John Payne (flute/soprano saxophone), and Jay Berliner (guitar), chosen by Lew Merenstein (Producer) in consultation with Richard Davis (bassist).

"Merenstein received a call from Warner Bros: 'We've signed Van Morrison, go up to Boston, see what he's got'. ... Morrison played Merenstein his song *Astral*

Weeks: 'Thirty seconds into it my whole being was vibrating ... I had to be the producer to do it. Not that producer, not that producer, regardless of their accomplishments. It had to be Richard (Davis), not that bass player, I don't want to sound existential, but there was Van, and that was it; there was no band, there were no arrangements, the direction was him singing and playing – that was where I followed. That's why it came out like it did. To this day, it gives me pain to hear it; pain is the wrong word – I'm so moved by it.' (Marcus p.52-8).

Lew Merenstein (Producer): "The musical energy of *Astral Weeks* came from the great players. That was the jazz background that I had, and that I brought in to it. 'Cause I didn't hear it as rock & roll – or *Brown Eyed Girl* – I heard somebody being reborn. I know what *Astral Weeks* was talking about." (Heylin p.90).

"The music that resulted wasn't jazz. It wasn't blues. It wasn't rock 'n' roll in any ordinary or hyphenated manner... They recorded live, Morrison saying nothing to the other musicians in terms of banter or instruction, and saying everything in the cues of his chords, hesitations, lunges, silences, and those moments when he loosed himself from words and floated in his own air...When you listen, you can hear the musicians talking to each other; more than that, you can hear them hearing each other.... After the sessions were finished Merenstein, with Van and conductor Larry Fallon consulting, overdubbed strings and horn parts. Sometimes the songs are unimaginable without them, and the added sounds so layered into the original instruments as to be part of them..." (Marcus pp.51-3).

Richard Davis (bassist): "No prep, no meeting, never heard of (the guy). I was relating to Lew & Bob (Schwaid, Manager), not him. They wanted me to gather a particular group together, guys that I liked to play with. ... As far as Van Morrison goes, he was remote from us, 'cause he came in and went into a booth ... and that's where he stayed, isolated in a booth. I don't think he ever introduced himself to us, nor we to him. He was just somebody who walked into a studio and did something. And he seemed very shy. So that's what it was – just us playing together, and whatever he was doing, in my memory, was beside the point." (Heylin p. 191). "But I tell you man, there's something about that album. It keeps popping up all the time." (*Rolling Stone* Reviews 27 August 1987).

Connie Kay (drums): "I did go and ask Morrison what he wanted me to play, and he said to play whatever I felt like playing. We more or less sat there and jammed." (Heylin p.192).

Jay Berliner (guitar): "They gave us the freedom to play whatever we wanted to do, which was something we weren't used to. It was pretty much left to us ... Everybody was heavily involved. Just by listening to it, you can hear it – all this energy! ... On some of the tunes, Van got very emotional. He got really worked up to a fever pitch. He came out of the booth a couple of times very excited. Especially that first session – they were very, very happy with what was going on. He came and played his tunes, and if he didn't like something or he wanted to do it again, we did it again. It's just that the songs were so much a part of the newness of where he was coming from that they just came out in a wondrous fashion. And the musicians there – because they were so spontaneous – were

able to pick up every nuance and filled it, filled it, filled it. You listened back and there it was. Beautiful. ... I Played a lot of classical guitar on those sessions and it was very unusual to play classical guitar in that context. What stood out in my mind was that he allowed us to stretch out. We were used to playing to charts, but Van just played us the songs on his guitar and then told us to go ahead and play exactly what we felt." (Heylin pp.192-3).

Warren Smith Jr. (percussion): "Bob Swaid & Lewis Merenstein were expert at selecting people that could do things, rather than specifying what it was we could do. ... They had lead sheets – in other words, the structure of the song was there ... and we would create certain things that would fit in. ... Morrison was very young and very shy. He didn't say a lot ... for the most part he stayed in the control booth." (Heylin p.192).

John Payne (flautist): "It was the first time I had heard the song (*Astral Weeks*) and it was the first time I had recorded with Van ... Van never discussed the song. He never talked about anything. The ending sounds rehearsed but it was the first and only take ... and they named the album after it." (Turner p.89).

Tom Kielbania (Van's concert bassist): "They went right through those songs and then cut all the solos out. If they hadn't done that every track would have been the whole side of an album." (Turner p.89).

Brooks Arthur (Recording Engineer/Century Sound Studios Owner): "A cloud came along, and it was called the Van Morrison sessions. We all hopped upon that cloud, and the cloud took us away for a while, and we made this album, and we landed when it was done." (Markus p.53).

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"...Van pointed out that *Astral Weeks* was 'probably the most spiritually lyrical album I've ever done'. He was right in that it was essentially an album about rebirth that stated the themes of love, childhood, ecstatic experience and personal transformation which have preoccupied him ever since. ...Lester Bangs: 'It sounds like the man who made *Astral Weeks* was in terrible pain...but there was a redemptive element in the blackness, ultimate compassion for the suffering of others, and a swathe of pure beauty and mystical awe that cut right through the heart of the work'." (Turner pp.92)

Van: "I think *Astral Weeks* was definitely the transitional album. ... I was coming from a deeper unconscious level, getting more in touch with the unconscious." (Heylin p.183).

Van: "*Astral Weeks* is like a transformation song – it's like transforming energy, or going from one source to another with it being born again like a rebirth. I remember reading something somebody said about you having to die to be born. It's kind of one of those songs where you can see the light at the end of the tunnel, and that's basically what the song says." (Yorke p.54)

"*Beside You* is the kind of song that you'd sing to a kid or somebody that you love. It's basically a love song. It's just a song about being spiritually beside somebody." (Yorke p.56).

"*Sweet Thing* is another romantic song. It contemplates gardens and things like that...wet with rain. It's a romantic love ballad not about anybody in particular but a feeling." (Yorke p.57).

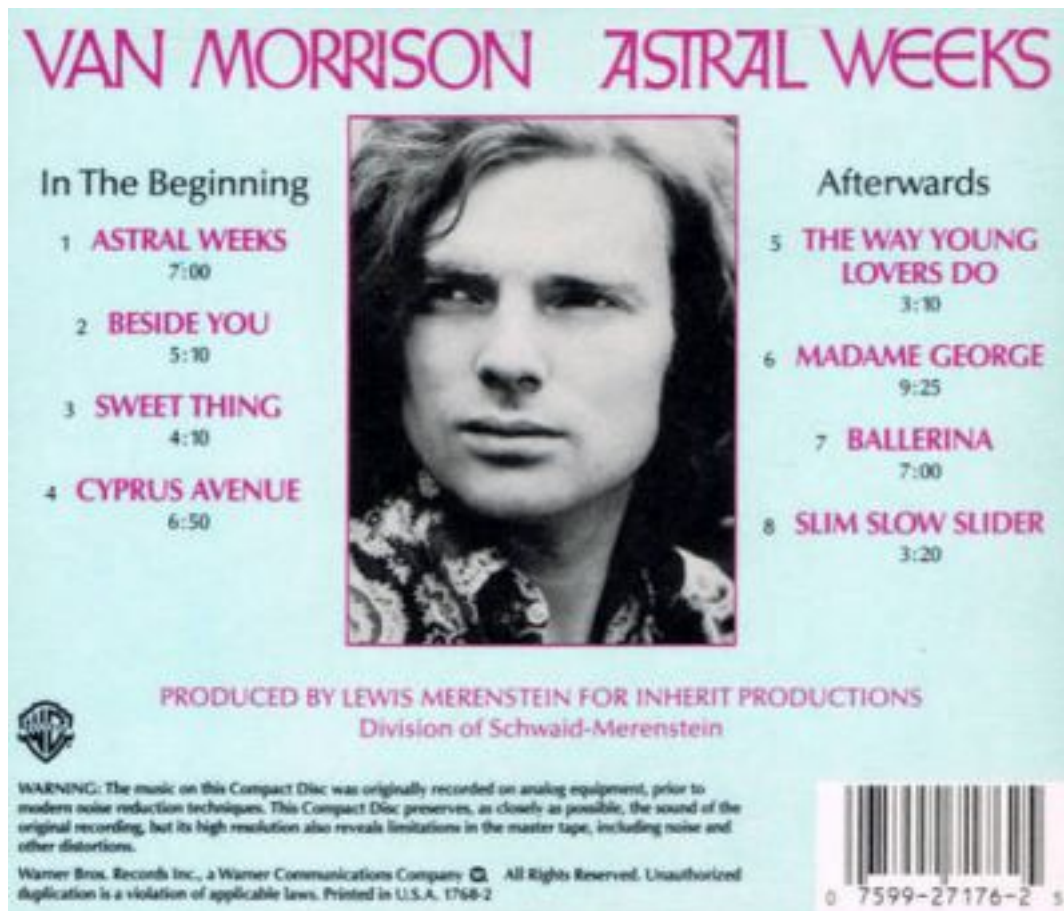
"*Cypress Avenue* is a street in Belfast, a place where there's a lot of wealth...it wasn't far from where I was brought up and it was a different scene, financially or whatever you might want to call it. To me it was a very mystical place. It was a whole avenue lined with trees and I found it a place where I could think. Instead of walking down a road and being hassled by 40 million people, you could walk down Cypress Avenue and there was nobody there. It wasn't a thoroughfare. It was quiet and I used to think about things there." (Yorke p.58).

"*The Way Young Lovers Do* is just basically a song about young love." And he laughs mysteriously. (Yorke p.59).

"The title of the song confuses one, I must say that. The original title was *Madame Joy* but the way I wrote it down was *Madame George*. Don't ask me why I do this because I just don't know. The song is just a stream-of-consciousness thing, as is *Cypress Avenue*. Both these songs just came right out. I didn't even think about what I was writing...The song is basically about a spiritual feeling. It may have something to do with my Great Aunt whose name was Joy. Apparently she was clairvoyant, that may have something to do with it. Aunt Joy lived around the area I mentioned in connection with *Cypress Avenue*. She lived in a street just off Fitzroy Street which is quite near to Cypress Avenue." (Yorke p.61).

"*Ballerina* is one track that I really don't know much about. I had a romantic image in my head about the San Francisco outlook. I think that's where the song comes from. I was in San Francisco one time in 1966 and I was attracted to the city. It was the first time I'd been there and I was sitting in this hotel and all these things were going through my head and I had a flash about an actress in an opera house appearing in a ballet and I think that's where the song came from. The song may possibly be about a hooker, part of it anyway, but other than that it's just poetry." (Yorke p.62-3).

"*Slim Slow Slider* is about a person who is caught up in a big city like London or maybe is on dope, I'm not sure. A lot of these songs are not really personal and that's why I have to try to interpret them. A lot of them are just speculation on a subject. I think that's what most on *Astral Weeks* are, speculation on a given theme." (Yorke p.63).



JOHN FULCHER

In my view, *Astral Weeks* is the best music ever recorded; the title track is nothing short of perfection – I want it played at my funeral (since to me it best sums up the human experience):

“... To be born again, in another world darlin’,
In another world, in another time,
Got a home on high,
Ain’t nothin’ but a stranger in this world,
I got a home on high,
In another land, so far away,
Way up in heaven,
In another time, in another place,
And another face”

And to my mind, the most stunning poetry ever written comes from *Beside You*:

“... Way across the country where the hillside mountains glide,
The dynamo of your smile caressed the barefoot virgin child to wander,
:
You breathe in, you breath out (x4)

:
On your high flying cloud,
Wrapped up in your magic shroud as ecstasy surrounds you,
This time it's found you
...."

Van didn't need to do anything more after giving us this (yet he did!).

But don't just take my word for it ...



CRITICAL REPONSE

"*Astral Weeks* received critical acclaim soon after being released, but it was not a best selling album with the general public, even though *Rolling Stone* named it album of the year." (Yorke p.66)

"Such a gentle, introspective set of recordings could not be an instant success, but *Astral Weeks* gradually caught on and is now regarded as one of the definitive concept albums of the sixties." (Heatley p.260).

Music Historian Andrew Ford compared its musical sophistication and commercial success to classical music – "neither instant nor evanescent: *Astral Weeks* will sell as many copies this year as it did in 1968 and has every year in between." (Ford pp.164-5)

"The result, released in November 1968, was one of the most stunningly original albums ever recorded in the rock genre, although its originality actually lay in its distance from anything vaguely rock." (Turner p.92).

"When Van Morrison recorded *Astral Weeks* in 48 hours in the summer of 1968, he created a unique fusion of jazz, blues, and acoustic folk that moved with the subtlest hint of a rock rhythm, and was made complete by an obsessive stream of consciousness poeticism. It was an album of stunning beauty and invention: an impressionistic odyssey through childhood, sexual discovery, and death, that found exhilaration at the heart of its tragedy as visions of freedom spiraled through the tormented realities of personal alienation. *Astral Weeks* was a story of isolation and re-appraisal, fractured dreams and the strength to face them, and even now, eleven years after its initial release, it continues to stand as a timeless monument to the genius of Van Morrison." (Magowan p.43).

"...it is difficult to think of any piece of music produced in these last twenty years (or indeed at any time in this century) which has had such a profound impact on its audience as *Astral Weeks*. Individual responses to the magic of this musical album are of sufficient quantity and fervour to fill an entire volume. ... The reaction to *Astral Weeks* transcends language and class barriers and has deeply moved people, it would seem, in all corners of the world. ... It completely dominates one's soul. It achieves a juxtaposition with one's emotions. It seems in harmony with one's flow of life." (Yorke p.47).

"It was almost as if Van Morrison, elusive at any time, had deliberately created an album of music which would indefinitely withstand the vulgarity of music industry image-making. Later they might say that other albums were reminiscent of *Astral Weeks*, but they could never claim that *Astral Weeks* was like anything else." (Yorke p.49)

"For many, it remains an enduring mystery, a song cycle that resonates with a profound sense of longing for a state of rapture that appears alternately tangible and elusive. Its title track is dominated by the lament 'to be born again'..." (Rogan p.243).

"*Astral Weeks* was the album on which Van Morrison fully descended 'into the mystic'. ... soft, reflective, hypnotic, haunted by the ghosts of old blues singers and ancient Celts and performed by a group of extraordinary jazz musicians, it sounds like the work of a singer and songwriter who is, as Morrison sings in the

title track, 'nothing but a stranger in this world.'... (*Rolling Stone* Reviews 27 August 1987).

<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/albumreviews/astral-weeks-19870827>

"*Astral Weeks* is the rock record with the most significance in my life so far." (Bangs p.178) "Van Morrison was 22 or 23 years old when he made this record ... there are lifetimes behind it. What *Astral Weeks* deals in are not facts but truths. *Astral Weeks*, insofar as it can be pinned down, is a record about people stunned by life, completely overwhelmed, stalled in their skins, their ages and selves, paralyzed by the enormity of what in one moment of vision they can comprehend." (Bangs p.182)

For Lester Bangs 'the album was like a beacon of light, a redemptive element in the blackness, ultimate compassion, and a swathe of pure beauty and mystical awe that cut right through the heart of the work' and the listener *Astral Weeks* represents a great search, fuelled by the belief that through these musical and mental processes, illumination is possible. Or at least may be glimpsed. Morrison never came this close to looking life square in the face again." (Hinton p.100-1).

Sean O'Hagan described the album as: "Ultimately unreadable, utterly singular, it remains one of those rare albums that actually lives up to the extravagant claims made on its behalf." (O'Hagan 2004). In another article about *Astral Weeks* in November 2008, O'Hagan wrote that: "Its singularity lies, as Costello points out, in its vaulting ambition. It is neither folk nor jazz nor blues, though there are traces of all three in the music and in Morrison's raw and emotionally charged singing. ... Throughout, there are interludes of breathtaking beauty when the music surges and subsides, rises and falls, around Morrison's voice." (O'Hagan 2008). O'Hagan later declared *Astral Weeks* as "perhaps the greatest work of art to emerge out of the pop tradition."

Alan Light of *CNN Time Magazine* wrote in 2006 that: "Morrison sings of lost love, death and nostalgia for childhood in the Celtic soul that would become his signature. ... *Astral Weeks* didn't reach the charts, but its mystic poetry, spacious grooves, and romantic incantations still resonate in ways no other music can." (Tyrangiel 2006).

Again, noting the album's rare hypnotic effects, *Allmusic's* review describes its "unique musical power." (Ruhlmann 2006).

"The greatest music since the late sixties...has tried to find a method of consolation...then transform it into something else completely...Meanwhile we have *Astral Weeks*. For an album which means so much, I refuse to supply any kind of smart-alec interpretation which could harm the perception of this extraordinary work, either the reader's or my own. Fortunately, we have Morrison's own comments, courtesy of Ritchie York, to light the way. For all that, *Astral Weeks* remains as impenetrable and coldly majestic as the Sphinx." ... Brian Hogg identified the strength of *Astral Weeks* to reside not in individual songs but in 'its cumulative air of passion and mystery'. Even the excellence of the best of Them had not prepared us for this shock of brilliance." (Hinton pp.95-9).

"*Astral Weeks* is an album that startles and consoles the listener on each new playing, reaching deep into universal emotions and memories as only great art can. It has the strange bitter-sweet atmosphere of Shakespeare's last plays, with their mysterious transformations, the dead coming back to life." (Hinton p.98).

"... As the very title suggests, it is as if Van is looking down on his inert body from above, from the 'astral' plane, and indeed he has often spoken of just this kind of out-of-body experience, and how as a child he could enter it, almost at will." (Hinton pp.100-1).

"...it wasn't any yearning for the strife and revelations of another time that accounted for the fact that a few years ago, in a class I was teaching, four students out of sixteen, none of them older than 21, named it as the album they most loved. How did it reach these people ... how did it enter their lives, music that was made well before they were born and yet spoke a common language? The record spoke to these people then; as far as they cared it was made for them, they understood its language as soon as they heard it. No one had to translate it for them, no one had to contextualize it, no one had to offer them any lectures about the music or the politics of the late sixties or the career of Van Morrison. ... It was 46 minutes in which possibilities of the medium (rock 'n' roll/pop music) were realized, when you went out to the limits of what this form could do. I no longer altogether trust the sort of explanations that, along with other people, I used to pursue so passionately. ... I've played *Astral Weeks* more than I've played any other record I own; I wouldn't tell you why even if I knew. In the face of work that became part of my life a long time ago and remains inseparable from it – whether it's *The Great Gatsby* or *Astral Weeks* – what I value most is how inexplicable any great work really is." (Marcus pp.51-9).

Lieb Liebovitz called the album: "One of the very few albums I know that possess the quality of redemption. No matter what afflictions you, the listener, might bring into the experience, no matter how much woe or heartache or ennui or sweet melancholy, Morrison howls – and the swirling musical notes that accompany them – will purge you of your sadness." (Liebovitz 2010)

Astral Weeks is often referred to as a song cycle or concept album, with lyrics described as impressionistic, hypnotic, and stream-of-consciousness.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astral_Weeks)

(Amazon.com)

Editorial Review:

Never mind that Van Morrison is one of the most indelible songwriters of the 20th Century – take each album on its own terms. On 1968's seminal *Astral Weeks*, a twenty-something Van Morrison can be found belting his gospelly, bluesy vocals in just as fine a form as he would be 20 years hence. In the socio-political context of the times, the album cried out about such ubiquitous '60s themes as cultural oppression and social upheaval. But it is Morrison's vocal dexterity and passion that maintains such timeless appeal. Take tracks like *Madame George* or *Cyprus Avenue* and you'll find such beautiful mourning, it'll be clear why modern songwriter Sinéad O'Connor once publicly exclaimed: "Van Morrison should be friggin' canonized." – Nick Heil.

Product Description:

Possibly the most profound “rock” album ever, with Van Morrison sounding like some Celtic bard over the jazzy accompaniment of bassist Richard Davis and MJQ drummer Connie Kay. Utterly unique.

(<http://www.amazon.com/Astral-Weeks-Van-Morrison/dp/B000002KAT>)

FELLOW ARTISTS

Elvis Costello: “*Astral Weeks* is still the most adventurous record made in the rock medium, and there hasn’t been a record with that amount of daring made since.” (Heylin p.183).

“Bruce (Springsteen) got (Peter) Philbin (rock critic for the *Los Angeles Times*) going on his favourite records and bands, and when it emerged that the writer was a Van Morrison aficionado with a serious passion for the ethereal *Astral Weeks*, Bruce’s eyes lit up; that was one of his favourite albums too!” (Carlin p.156)

Steven Van Zandt (Bruce Springsteen’s E Street Band) has said: “*Astral Weeks* was like a religion to us.” [81] (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astral_Weeks)

Robbie Robertson (The Band): “One of my favourite musicians around this time was Van Morrison. His album *Astral Weeks* was one of those records you could just leave on repeat. Beautiful images in the lyrics, and that *voice*. (Robertson, p.338).

Joan Armatrading has said that *Astral Weeks* was the first album she purchased as a teenager and that it opened her up musically. [82] (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astral_Weeks)

Glen Hansard of the Frames says that he was captivated by the feeling of freedom when he first heard the album: “It made me realize that so much of what makes music great is courage, and up to that, what I thought made music great was practice and study ... This album says there’s more to life than you thought. Life can be lived more deeply, with a greater sense of fear and horror and desire than you ever imagined.” [27] (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astral_Weeks)

Paul Kelly: “Back at Cat Wallaby Manor, I’d finger the chords to *Madame George* and sing along with Van. I hadn’t written a song myself yet but I was writing words in a journal. ... *Astral Weeks* was so beautiful and so beyond me it made me depressed...” (Kelly p.16).

Johnny Depp, in a *Rolling Stone* interview in 2008, recalled how when he was a pre-teen, his older brother (by 10 years), tiring of Johnny’s favourite music of the time said: “Try this.” And he put on Van Morrison’s *Astral Weeks*. “And it stirred me. I’d never heard anything like it.” [80] (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astral_Weeks)

PUBLIC RESPONSE

Astral Weeks became and remains a cult favourite, despite the fact that it failed to achieve significant mainstream sales success for decades; after 33 years, it finally achieved gold in 2001. [3]. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astral_Weeks)

“The album sold slowly but acquired a following. It took 35 years to sell its millionth copy and “go gold.” Many Van Morrison fans don’t know the album and many who know *Astral Weeks* are not fans of the Van Morrison famous for *Moondance*, *Domino*, and *Wild Night*.

Sometimes an artist captures lightning in a bottle. Usually they aren’t sure how it happened, and few can repeat the magic regularly. In 1968, Van Morrison recorded *Astral Weeks* under awful circumstances. Today, it is widely recognized as a transcendent work, truly one of the greatest albums ever recorded. It is an album that has made me think and feel alive for four decades. ... *Astral Weeks* never reached the *Billboard* 200, but it got an extraordinary review by Lester Bangs in 1979, and when *Rolling Stone* reviewed the album for a second time in 1987, it was to declare *Astral Weeks* a masterpiece. They declared that the album: “sounded like nothing else in the pop music world of 1968: soft, reflective, hypnotic, haunted by the ghosts of old blues singers and ancient Celts, and performed by a group of extraordinary jazz musicians, it sounds like the work of a singer and songwriter who is, as Morrison sings in the title track ‘nothing but a stranger in this world’.

More than any album I know, *Astral Weeks* profoundly affects people. I discovered it in the seventies when I was about the age Van Morrison was when he wrote the music. Producer Lewis Merenstein said in 2009: “To this day it gives me pain to hear it. Pain is the wrong word – I’m so moved by it.”

Astral Weeks has been compared to an impressionist painting – it evokes without directly portraying. It’s a poetic, even mystical album with syncopated rhythms, frenzied and painful vocals, and lyrics that evoke images instead of ideas or stories. It is, in many respects, vocal jazz without the customary extended solos and improv. Some find loose or hidden narratives in the music, which Morrison describes as largely stream-of-consciousness fit to a melody.

Morrison wrote all of the songs on *Astral Weeks* in 1966-7, when he was 21 or 22 years old. He told the *LA Times* that *Astral Weeks* is: ‘poetry and mythical musings channeled from my imagination.’

People who got the album under their skin (including, obviously, me) never let it go. As a result, the album born of desperation, death, and pain now regularly outpolls its modest sales.” (Manley)

“It was Lester Bangs who put it best: “ *Astral Weeks*, insofar as it can be pinned down, is a record about people stunned by life, completely overwhelmed, stalled in their skins, their ages and selves, paralyzed by the enormity of what in one

moment of vision they can comprehend. Maybe what it boiled down to is one moment's knowledge of the miracle of life.

It baffled many upon its release, listeners thrown by its strange rhythms and peculiar lyrics, but over the following decades it would acquire towering cult status. Much of this is down to the record's remarkable ability to prompt an overwhelming emotional response – the album's Producer, Lewis Merenstein, has described how upon hearing the title track, he began to cry: 'It just vibrated in my soul.' he said.

This is an album I grew up with, and that embodies everything I love about Morrison's work – the great rich stew of it, the beguiling swarm of the music, lyrics that are proved on the pulses, a voice that sounds like rain against granite – dour and swarthy and half-grunted, barking and nickering its way through the 'clicking, clacking of the high-heeled shoe'. It stands to me as a masterpiece, a maverick, a quite extraordinary creation." (Barton).

BEST MUSIC POLLS

"*Astral Weeks* has won so many plaudits over the past 25 years, as one of the ten most influential albums of the rock era, that it is often forgotten that it was never a hit album and that its total US sales to date are barely more than 250,000..." (Turner p.93)

"...Even the excellence of the best of Them had not prepared us for this shock of brilliance. The album has gained a legendary reputation, usually appearing near the top of any poll of the greatest moments in rock." (Hinton p.99).

"...Critics then and since recognized the genius in Morrison's startling solo effort, and *Astral Weeks* regularly troubles the upper echelon of best-album polls." (Dimery p.154).

In 1987, as part of their 20th anniversary, *Rolling Stone* magazine ranked it number 7 on "The 100 Best Albums of the Last Twenty Years." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astral_Weeks)

Astral Weeks has often appeared on "best of all time" album lists, including the No.2 rating by *Mojo* in 1995, and the No.19 ranking by *Rolling Stone* in 2003 [84, 85] (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astral_Weeks)

'The 100 Greatest Albums Ever Made' *Mojo* August 1995:

1. Pet Sounds *The Beach Boys*
2. ***Astral Weeks Van Morrison***
3. Revolver *The Beatles* ...

"*Astral Weeks* was not immediately recognized as a high-water mark in rock music. Press reaction was subdued." Robert Schwaig (Manager): "...At the time none of us thought that it fitted into any category (jazz, folk, blues, gospel, rock)..." No one involved in the sessions can boast that they knew they were

making a masterpiece “I thought it was a great record at the time, but initially it was a failure. I don’t think we did 20,000 copies. It wasn’t until years later that people started to come up to me and tell me that their lives had been changed by *Astral Weeks*.” (Collis p.111).

Time Magazine declared it the eighth greatest album of all time in 1996. [<http://entertainment.time.com/2006/11/02/the-all-time-100-albums/slide/astral-weeks/>].

The Times listed *Astral Weeks* at No.3 of “The Times All Time Top 100 Albums” [86].

The Guardian 100 Greatest Albums of All Time (1997):

1. What’s Going On *Marvin Gaye*
2. Pet Sounds *The Beach Boys*

:

10. Astral Weeks Van Morrison

In 1997, *MTV* said it was the 9th greatest album of all time.

In 1998, it was voted the 9th greatest album of all time in a “Music of the Millennium” poll conducted by HMV, Channel 4 and *The Guardian* [87].

In 1999, *Astral Weeks* and *Moondance*, Morrison’s next album, were inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame. [<https://rockhall.com/inductees/van-morrison/bio/>].

In 2000, *Q Magazine* placed it at No.6 in its list of “The 100 Greatest British Albums Ever.” [88]

It was listed, along with *Moondance*, among “The All-Time 100 Albums” by *CNN/Time Magazine* in November 2006. [74]

In 2009, it was voted No.6 on “The 100 Greatest Singer-Songwriter Albums of All Time” by the Editors of *Amazon.com*. [89]

Niall Stokes of *Hot Press* magazine praised the album upon its being voted as best Irish album of all time by a poll of leading Irish musicians in December 2009: “Van Morrison’s *Astral Weeks* is a worthy poll-topper. It’s an extraordinary work, packed with marvelously evocative songs that are rooted in Belfast but which deliver a powerful and lasting universal poetic resonance. *Astral Weeks* has consistently appeared in polls of the Greatest Albums of All Time, in the US, the UK, and all over the world – so it has been widely recognized as a really important work of art.” [76, 90] (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astral_Weeks)

Rolling Stone’s 500 Greatest Albums of All Time (2003/2009):

1. Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band *The Beatles*
2. Pet Sounds *The Beach Boys*

:

19. Astral Weeks Van Morrison

Van Morrison never sounded more warm and ecstatic, more sensual and vulnerable, than on his enigmatically beautiful solo debut. Fresh off the success of "Brown Eyed Girl" and newly signed to artist-friendly Warner Bros., he explored the physical and dramatic range of his voice during extended poetic-scat singing, and set hallucinatory reveries on his native Belfast to wandering Celtic-R&B melodies. The crowning touch was the superior jazz quintet convened by producer Lewis Merenstein to color the mists and shadows. Bassist Richard Davis later said that Morrison never told the musicians what he wanted from them or what the lyrics meant. Maybe he didn't know how to. He was going deep inside himself, without a net or fear. Read more: <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/500-greatest-albums-of-all-time-20120531/van-morrison-astral-weeks-20120524#ixzz2x1kaySaD>

http://rateyourmusic.com/list/Mr_1337/100_greatest_albums_of_all_time/

1. Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band *The Beatles*
2. Are You Experienced *Jimi Hendrix*

:

39. Astral Weeks *Van Morrison*

References

L. Bangs (1979) in G. Markus (ed.) *Stranded: Rock and Roll for a Desert Island* Da Capo Press.

L. Barton (2011) Review of 'My Favourite Album' *theguardian.com* 4 August (<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/aug/03/van-morrison-astral-weeks-review>)

P. Carlin (2012) *Bruce* New York: Touchstone.

J. Collis (1996) *Van Morrison: Inarticulate Speech of the Heart* London: Little, Brown.

R. Dimery (ed.) (2005) *1001 Albums You Must Hear Before You Die* Sydney: ABC Books.

A. Ford (1997) *Illegal Harmonies: Music in the 20th Century* Sydney: Hale & Iremonger.

M. Heatley (ed.) (1994) *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Rock* Carlton.

C. Heylin (2002) *Can You Feel the Silence? Van Morrison* London: Penguin.

B. Hinton (1997) *Celtic Crossroads: The Art of Van Morrison* London: Unwin.

P. Kelly (2010) *How To Make Gravy* Camberwell, VIC: Hamish Hamilton.

L. Liebovitz (2010) Astral Prophecy. *Tablet magazine* 31 December.

- J. Magowan (1979) Listen to the Lion. *Record* 1(1) p.43.
- M. Manley (2011) <http://jamsidedown.com/2011/02/astral-weeks-venturing-in-the-slipstream.html> (16 February).
- G. Marcus (2010) *Listening to Van Morrison* London: Faber & Faber.
- S. O'Hagan (2004) Astral Weeks, Van Morrison *The Observer* 20 June.
- S. O'Hagan (2008) Is This the Best Album Ever Made? *The Guardian* 2 November.
- R. Robertson (2016) *Testimony* London: William Heinemann
- J. Rogan (2005) *Van Morrison: No Surrender* London: Secker & Warburg.
- W. Ruhmann (2006) Astral Weeks. *Allmusic* <https://www.allmusic.com/album/astral-weeks-mw0000190975>
- S. Turner (1993) *Van Morrison: Too Late To Stop Now* London: Bloomsbury.
- J. Tyrangiel (2006) The All-time 100 Albums: Astral Weeks *Time* 13 November.
- R. Yorke (1975) *Van Morrison: Into the Music* London: Charisma.