

The Electric Review

VAN MORRISON – UNDER REVIEW. 1964-1974. Sexy Intellectual Films. Distributed by MVD Entertainment Group.

By John Aiello

Van the Man is a musical institution – the Irish poet having risen from the ranks of the unknown into international stardom, this phenomenon based not so much on hype and marketing as on the fact that Van Morrison is the greatest living soul-singer of his era (in addition to being an ingenious writer who’s been able to codify the random-ness of poetry into soft perfect frames of ‘song’). In **Under Review (1964-1974)**, Morrison’s formative years are given a long look in an unauthorized documentary that’s likely to hold both long-time fans and curious listeners spellbound. The film is important because it examines Morrison’s biggest records (*Astral Weeks* and *Moondance*) in relation to his evolution as both a writer and singer. Moreover, rather than waxing nostalgic and disregarding all the work that follows these near-perfect albums, the producers instead use them as a vehicle to peer into singer’s penchant for taking risks in quest of *personal* artistic fulfillment. Accordingly, interviews with the likes of Jim Rothermel (who played in the *Caledonia Soul Orchestra*) and music writer John Wilde allow the viewer a deep glimpse into the complex consciousness of a performer who is often unjustly jabbed by a media that has mostly missed the point behind Morrison’s ultimate mission – which is to attain some level of spiritual enlightenment via poetry and music. In the end, this film shows us that instead of analyzing him to death, perhaps all that he wants (*and all that should happen*) is for us to sit back and listen to the sweet songs unfurl. In this respect, **Under Review (1964-1974)** offers a fine starting point. *Bonus: Live and studio recordings of Morrison classics, including a mesmerizing waltz down the heels of “Madame George.”*

<http://www.electricrev.net/cdwatch1.html?1871820847#DVDS>