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Van Morrison: Under Review: 1964-1974

Van the Man has been around nearly as long as the **Rolling Stones**, but, where the Stones continue to rest on their laurels, Morrison churns out material that is fresh, vital and surprising. In the years 1964-74, the diversity of his repertoire was unmatched by any rocker, British, Irish or American. *Astral Weeks*, which is no less enchanting today than it was 40 years ago, was decades ahead of its time in its fusing of rock, jazz, folk, poetry and rap. It followed in the wake of such all-time classic bar songs as *Brown Eyed Girl* and *Gloria*, and would set the table for *Moondance*, *Domino*, *Wild Night*, *Tupelo Honey*, *Into the Mystic*. The period scrutinized in the latest addition to MVD's **Under Review** series takes Morrison from his relationship with **Them**, to the release of the introspective *Veedon Fleece*, an album clearly influenced by the writings of William Blake and Celtic mythology. The only real drawback to the **Under Review** series is the lack of anything but snippets of songs performed by the artist in question. Licensing costs are prohibitive, and most artists and labels prefer to keep the juicy stuff for themselves. Here, the commentary by critics, musicians and engineers is pretty good.

-- Gary Dretzka