



# When That Rough God Goes Riding: Listening to Van Morrison

*Greil Marcus*

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“Van Morrison,” says Greil Marcus, “remains a singer who can be compared to no other in the history of modern popular music.” When *Astral Weeks* was released in 1968, it was largely ignored. When it was rereleased as a live album in 2009 it reached the top of the *Billboard* charts, a first for any Van Morrison recording. The wild swings in the music, mirroring the swings in Morrison’s success and in people’s appreciation (or lack of it) of his music, make Van Morrison one of the most perplexing and mysterious figures in popular modern music, and a perfect subject for the wise and insightful scrutiny of Greil Marcus, one of America’s most dedicated cultural critics.

This book is Marcus’s quest to understand Van Morrison’s particular genius through the extraordinary and unclassifiable moments in his long career, beginning in 1965 and continuing in full force to this day. In these dislocations Marcus finds the singer on his own artistic quest precisely to reach some extreme musical threshold, the moments that are not enclosed by the will or the intention of the performer but which somehow emerge at the limits of the musician and his song.

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