



# The Words and Music of Van Morrison (The Praeger Singer-Songwriter Collection)

*Erik Hage*

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Van Morrison is primal but sophisticated; he's accessible but inscrutable; he's a complex songwriter and a raw blues shouter; he's a steady influence on the musical scene but wildly unpredictable as well, and it's these complex and often conflicting qualities that make him such a compelling subject for the Singer-Songwriter series. Journalist Erik Hage here eschews a cold, empirical study of structures and influence, and seeks instead more natural and intuitive means of appreciating all that is unique, eclectic, and surprising about Van Morrison's impressive output. In addition to covering almost all of Van Morrison's musical work and offering new readings of many iconic songs, Hage also provides a biographical introduction and a complete discography that can help listeners find new perspective on Morrison's body of work.

Even in his darkest and most naked moments-in *Astral Weeks* for instance-Van Morrison's songs can still suggest something uplifting. Sometimes these two poles are present simultaneously, and at other times they each find distinct expression in a different musical moment. Even on his first solo album, *Blowin' Your Mind* (which contained the iconic Brown-Eyed Girl) Van Morrison was wrestling with something thornier and deeper, as evidenced by the wrenching T.B. Sheets - a nine-minute opus about the discomfort of visiting a lover in a small room as she lies in bed, wracked with Tuberculosis. Those two songs, at artistic odds with each other and on the same album, are representative of the oppositional forces that fuel much of his work. Hage here provides a guide through all the layers of emotional meaning and musical resonance present in Morrison's work.

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