

*Friday, March 10, 2006*



I have travelled to Arnhem to watch Delia dance at the opening of Kathleen's exhibition. In the intercity train I had plenty of time to listen to a cd which a friend once gave me. It was a copy of Van Morrison "His band and the Street Choir". Generally it is not considered as his best album, but still very good. I was particularly struck by the song 'Virgo Clowns'. It was recorded during a happy period of his life. You can hear a young Van exuberantly singing on a powerful sound driven by acoustic guitars and a mandolin. The ambience is raw, unrehearsed like a jam session. It is the kind of song which brings the listeners in a state of trance or ecstasy. The lyrics confirm this feeling : *Hey let the trumpets ring it Oh, let the angels sing it Let your pretty feet go dancing Let your worn out mind go prancing.* The same mood comes from his songs 'And the Healing has Begun' (*When you hear the music ringin' in your soul And you feel it in your heart and it grows and grows*) and 'The Daring Night' . To reach these heights some phrases are often repeated. The spiralling repetitions of wails and whispers bypass the confines of language to articulate emotions beyond the scope of literal meaning.

Van Morrison is not only trying to enter a 'higher ground' with his music, but he can act very down-to-earth as well This can be illustrated by next anecdote. Being with my brother in Prague we entered a local record store where a funky jazz sound was coming from the loudspeakers The voice was unmistakably Van's. It appeared that it was a bootleg cd with a live recording of him at the Montreux jazz festival of June, 30th 1974. I was happy to discover this rare cd with the title - be prepared - 'If you Don't Like it, Go Fuck Yourself' . The quote has come from a line near the end of the concert spoken by Van Morrison in reply to someone in the audience: a fan who disagrees with Van who was taking a long time (4 minutes of clapping) to return for an encore. Van 'The Man' shows his short tempered

character by replying with these infamous words. listen to the audio clip:

<http://www.harbour.sfu.ca/~hayward/van/discography/fuck.html>

I have seen Van Morrison several times in concert. This is a sketch which I have made of him during the performance at Paradiso, Amsterdam in May 3rd, 1993. He was surrounded by a tight blues band of first rate musicians. Van was blowing on his horn and I was struggling in the dark with my pen.

Van's connection with fine arts is not known to me, but there is one remarkable quote by him: "A painting is not real life; you can't live in a painting"

postscript 10/06 : Van's record company has released the Montreux 1973 concert/ The last song with the incident described here was omitted

postscript 06/06: At Waterloo fleemarket I have found a rare Van Morrisson cd . On "Unplugged in the studio" Van sings "Funny Faces" a demo for 'Virgo Clowns"