

# Van Morrison – live in Edinburgh

It's a fresh Spring night in the city centre and an eclectic group of fans file into the elegant splendour of the Usher Hall. With no support, Van Morrison walks on stage at 7.55 pm looking slim in a neat light blue suit and white Panama hat.

He takes up his saxophone for an idiosyncratic but enjoyable rendition of The Skye Boat Song. Sunglasses are removed only once to read some lyrics during the entire performance. Backing singer Dana Masters is impressive as always but especially during Did Ye Get Healed? and Have I Told You Lately. There were some real gems in the set-list for hardcore Vanatics including Dweller On The Threshold. Morrison will turn 80 in August with no signs of his voice diminishing.

Many of his contemporaries continue to tour long after the muse has vanquished but with his 47th long-player Down To Joy in the pipeline Morrison's shows no sign of diminishing. There's an arresting version of Star of the County Down. Van's sax adds an early rock n' roll flavour spliced with Celtic soul to the Irish standard he recorded in 1988 with The Chieftains for their collaboration Irish Heartbeat. The Belfast-born singer is in fine form and even delivers a few chuckles, one noticeable when introducing the band.

There's no mistaking the infectious smile of Sticky Wicket on washboard. Dave Keary's Gibson 335 rings out some sweet tones throughout the night, but there's no mistaking the grittier sound as Gloria's opening chords ring out across the hall. When Morrison gives the harmonica a blast the atmosphere ramps up another level during this storming set-closer.

After Morrison says goodnight he's off but the band plays on to rapturous applause, and the audience is on their feet in appreciation.

