This Moon is on the rise

Interview by JOEY KILFOIL
Brunswickan Entertainment Editor

Sam Moon has been part of this region's music scene for 15 years. Famous for his energetic stage show, this large, bearded bear of a man first gained notoriety while playing with Matt Minglewood and the Universal Power in the early 70s. He often appeared on stage barefoot, dressed in a loose-fitting caftan; many claimed his versions of Van Morrison songs topped the originals.

He and Minglewood parted ways in the mid-70s and Minglewood and his band went on to a modestly successful recording career. Sam continued improving his stage shows and his writing, sneaking in original material whenever possible. During this time he was backed up by many of the area's finest musicians, most of whom went on to form successful bands of their own.

In 1982, Sam released New Moon, *a superbly consistent album of rock and roll songs. Three cuts were released as singles; "Eclipse" and "See You Tonight" became hits.*

Sam no longer wears caftans, but his stage performance is even more lively now. Traces of new wave are present in both originals and cover versions. A four-song mini-album Moonlight , *will be out in April.*

In the following interview, Sam talks about his early days, memories of living in Fredericton, and his various backup bands over the years. He also discusses songwriting techniques, and talks at some length about his new record.

When and where you were born, and if you'd care to say, how long ago?

February 5, 1950, in Sydney, Nova Scotia.

You probably grew up with the usual assortment of fiddle music and Cape Breton influence - Celtic music and that sort of thing.

Yes. It was there. Mostly from my father's record collection. He had a lot of records by a New Brunswick fiddler named Ed Landry. I think that was his favorite. My sister, she was into different things. She was older than I was and she was into Dave Brubeck and she had Ledbelly records and Big Bill Broomsey and so I kind of liked that stuff. I didn't quite know what it was, but when there was nobody around I'd put my sister's records on even though I wasn't allowed to and listen to that stuff. Although I liked the other music I heard I started to get drawn toward whatever my sister was listening to, and she was pretty neat.

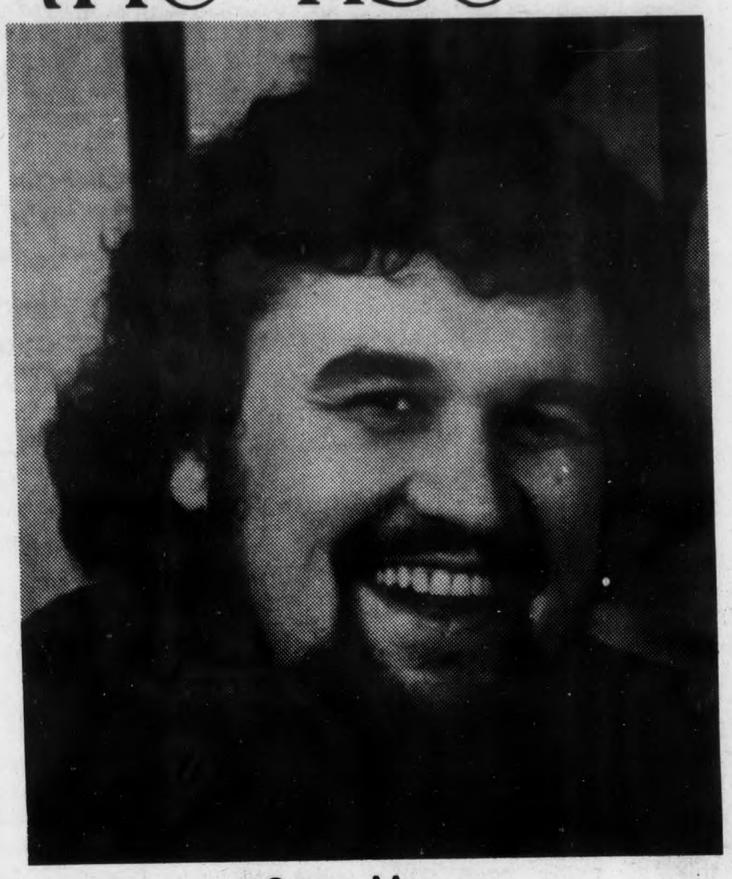
Blues and jazz?

That was basically and still is her--she's still not a rock and roller. She's older now, but she still never got into rock and roll too much.

Around the time transistors came out and everybody was getting a transistor radio for their birthday or for graduation, I started listening to Murry the K and The Swinging Soiree--you pick up New York stations and I started really getting into doo-wop bands. And then all of the sudden the Beatles were on the Ed Sullivan Show. Although I remember liking the Beatles, when the other bands came I enjoyed them more because they had the sort of influence my sister's music had--like the Rolling Stones and the Animals. They sort of went back to a blues or a rhythm-and-blues. Later on I got drawn more towards rhythm-and-blues.

When I got old enough to play in garage bands and basement bands I started really getting into Wilson Pickett stuff and all that.

Was this around the same time you got into Van Morrison? For a long time around here, you were probably known more than anything else for incredible renditions of Van Morrison songs.



Sam Moon

I liked listening to Van Morrison but never really thought of doing him until actually around the early 70s, which was quite a bit after he had records out. So I was always a fan of his but I never really thought of singing him until just around my last two years with Matt (Minglewood)--73-74.

When did you first go on the road?

1969.

Was that with Matt then?

That was just with Matt.

So this was Sam Moon, Matt Minglewood and the Universal Power.

Yes. We left Cape Breton after rehearsing and playing there for a few months and headed out west. We ran out of gas in Fredericton.

That's what Matt says too. Is that true--you really just ran out of gas, so you figured, what the hell?

We went in and saw (booking agent) Joe Bamford--who's doing really well now--and we went to his office, which was in the basement of the Derby Tavern, which is now the Kentucky Fried Chicken store on King Street.

Joe asked up to set up our equipment, which was at the YMCA. There was nobody there in the daytime, so we set up the gear and we did an audition. We did this thing where Matt would sing quite a few songs --like half a set-- and I'd come out. They'd introduce me and I did that whole routine for Joe with nobody there. I came rushing out of a doorway doing a James Brown sort of shuffle and I think he thought these guys were.... I don't know if he thought we were any good or not but he thought we were crazy. He started booking us and we started playing.

Actually quite a bit of my recollections, especially of early music days, are

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