

# On “Days Like This” by Van Morrison

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In November of 2018, I found myself standing at the Dublin airport’s taxi queue to begin a year’s stay in Ireland. I had no job, no house, no plan other than “get there and figure it out.” Family, friends, and strangers were questioning my decision to relocate without a concrete path. I was perplexed and anxious. It’s not that I hadn’t moved before. I understood the uncertainty that sat in front of me. I knew the next few months were crucial to establish my footing in Ireland. I knew I was running on limited time. And still, I immediately wanted to find a room and cover myself in familiar comfort.

My brother and I, four and six, were both heartbroken and enamored by our move to the world of snow. We had been dug out of Sonoma County’s soil, everything we’d known, and transplanted to Ohio’s flatlands. We spent most of our first winter either curled up in the house or fumbling through snowbanks. It offered an unfamiliar pastime compared to our previous life by the Pacific. Our hibernation was genetic, our west coast affect stunned by the temperature’s plummet. Combined with the lack of knowing anyone, we didn’t stray far from the new home and guaranteed warmth.

Let’s be clear: hibernating should not be an inherently bad thing. Bears and other animals tuck themselves away during extreme cold spells, so why can’t human beings? A bear begins its deep sleep not because they look to evade the frost, but rather because they lack sustainable nutrition during winter months. When you’re new to an area in the winter, social connection presents itself as sparse. So this transplanted west coast family, my family, began a ritual in our hibernation that I still maintain even with my isolated present.

I spent most of my life never knowing who Van Morrison was. Until recently, I wasn’t even sure if Van Morrison was a band or a singular person. I couldn’t tell you any of his discography by name. People will ask what music inspired me as a child, and at most I manage to mumble-hum, hoping I capture enough of the song’s essence to help identify the piece. There’s a potency to memory that escapes all needs of a name. FRIDAY NIGHT was our family entertainment playlist, a preamble to a night of guests as we tried to weave our way into the snow’s social blanket. I was enraptured with the potential warmth of a weekend evening. Sure, who was coming over held some importance, but it also meant FRIDAY NIGHT would awake from its weeklong slumber and dance with us in the heavy days of winter. Aretha Franklin, Norah Jones, Jack Johnson, Wynton Marsalis, The Who, Sting, and most importantly, Van Morrison—they’d flood our home an embered hug and I would spin on the wood floors with the speakers as high as they could manage.

I fall for Van Morrison’s 1995 album, *Days Like This*, every time I listen to it. All at once, I am seven, I am fifteen, I am twenty-three: I am frostbitten by Columbus’s snowflakes, I am drenched in Atlanta’s summer, I am swallowed by Dublin’s rain. Each monumental change began with the fear of finding my place in those new surroundings and people. Before I moved across an ocean towards Van Morrison’s birthplace of Northern Ireland, I recreated only one playlist for myself. I made sure to choose the correct version of each song; a 1968 live performance is very different from one in 1973. I wanted to take the cocoon my parents swaddled me in, wanted to maintain that piece of comfort, and lay it

VAN MORRISON DAYS LIKE THIS



Van Morrison  
“Days Like This”  
*Days Like This*  
06/1995  
Polydor

over my future friends and our evenings together. I wanted *Days Like This* to melt away the qualms that come with growing up, the uncertainty of the next year or the next five years or the next ten. I'm finding much of life is taking steps towards discomfort to remind myself the growth exists in navigating that uncertainty.

Critics didn't like Van Morrison's 1995 album. I wonder how Van Morrison felt when he was met with that external dissonance. At what points in his life did he also find himself hibernating? How long did it take to reestablish himself in the face of uncertainty? When a bear wakes up from its torpor, it recollects and continues into spring with the strength it had before the season change. As I sit in my living room surrounded by roommates I love in a city I'm still learning about, I smile and sing to myself:

*When it's not always raining there'll be days like this*

*When there's no one complaining there'll be days like this*

*When everything falls into place like the flick of a switch*

*Well my mama told me there'll be days like this*

I think back to the first weeks of arriving in Ireland and how I found substance in lack. How I managed to find a room, a job, and friends all in a month's time. How I imagined my parents laughing with the guests of some snowy weekend, my brother and I wading through our house immersed in Van Morrison's voice, a sunbeam on a snowbank.